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Features of National Mentality in Ukrainian Musical Folklore

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Abstract: This article explores the manifestation of the Ukrainian national mentality in the genres of musical folklore, focusing on dumas, schedrivkas, and lyrical songs. This study considers the national mentality as a historically formed system of cognitive and emotional dispositions, culturally coded and transmitted through collective practices such as folklore. Applying a multidisciplinary methodology that combines elements of cultural studies, ethnomusicology, and semiotic analysis, the study identified specific features of the Ukrainian worldview, which are reflected in the symbolic structures and stylistic features of the folk song, namely: individualism, emotional expressiveness, respect for nature and family, and democratic ethos. This study adopts a semiotic approach, which considers folklore as a complex system of cultural signs that convey collective meanings and values. The semiotic analysis focuses on the symbolic structure of folk songs, especially binary oppositions, archetypal images, and ritual motifs, which interpret the Ukrainian national mentality. This study comprises 100 Ukrainian folk songs, including shchedrivkas, dumas, and lyrical songs, collected from different regions of Ukraine, with a particular emphasis on the Central and Western regions of Ukraine because it has been established that the dual cultural heritage of the agrarian and Cossack traditions forms the ambivalent structure of the Ukrainian mentality. By analyzing the textual and musical characteristics of key folklore genres, the findings suggest that musical folklore functions as a means of preserving and transmitting national identity and collective memory. Ukrainian musical folklore reproduces key features of the Ukrainian character, such as emotionality, the desire for freedom, democratic ideals, and a deep connection to nature. Thus, it stipulates reinterpretation of the role of folklore in the formation of cultural identity in postcolonial societies.

Keywords: mentality; national mentality; folklore; folkloristics; Ukrainian song; ethnos.



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1. Introduction

The human race comprises a multitude of distinct nations, peoples, and ethnic groups, each with its own distinctive characteristics. These attributes are evident in all aspects of life. Ethnic groups exhibit distinctive characteristics shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including ethnogenesis, historical experiences, and cultural influences. Mentality represents a constant which serves to distinguish one ethnos from another. An understanding of your people's mentality facilitates the comprehension of your own national features and engenders respect for other ethnicities. In the modern era, the study of people's mentality and their cultures is a pressing and significant issue, as it facilitates comprehension of the distinctive and particular characteristics of each people. The musical folklore of a nation reflects its deeply-rooted cultural characteristics and values; it encapsulates the distinctive mentality and spirituality of the people. Moreover, folklore is a space for creative expression of national features and innovative approaches to the preservation and transformation of traditions.

Ukrainian musical folklore not only reflects national values and mentality but also demonstrates the unique creativity inherent in the Ukrainian people. Creativity in folklore is manifested in the creation of multi-layered symbols, the use of poetic techniques, and innovative approaches to musical composition that help preserve traditions and adapt them to modernity. The use of music in Ukraine serves to express a multitude of emotions, traditions, historical experiences and religious beliefs, collectively contributing to the distinctive and multifaceted nature of the country's folklore. Over the past decade, there has been a noticeable increase in the commercialization and politicization of folkloristics. This indicates a shift in focus from the study of folklore to the search for folklore. Consequently, the analysis of folklore is situated within the context of social and political dynamics, encompassing the folklore of sexual, ethnic, and racial minorities, as well as that of political groups. As Holovakha-Khiks (2011) observes, the study of folklore is currently a prominent area of inquiry within numerous social and cultural disciplines, including gender relations, identity formation, feminization, and commercialization.

The fundamental focus of folkloristics research in Ukraine is the examination of rural traditions and the individuals who convey such traditional narratives are regarded as performers (Holovakha-Khiks, 2011). The ethnographic approach to studying the performer and the text is a dominant force in this field. From the mid-19th century onwards, Ukrainian folklorists were driven to document as many traditional practices as possible. This approach persists to this day. This distinguishes Ukrainian folklore from Western traditions and is a valuable tool for preserving traditional culture.

The formation of Ukrainian mentality was influenced by over three centuries of colonial dependence. In the 20th century, the processes of developing a modern Ukrainian mentality were distorted by the Holodomor, which was a national catastrophe for the Ukrainian people. Three significant periods of social transformation (1990–1991, 2004, 2013–2014) and the hybrid war have contributed to a partial overcoming of the inferiority complex and the associated psychological and behavioral stereotypes that are characteristic of a colonial population among the Ukrainians. Furthermore, these events served to diminish the national trauma that was caused by the genocide. The formation of national consciousness among Ukrainians remains an evolving process. It can be observed that contemporary Ukrainian society is witnessing the growth of a heightened national consciousness, coupled with a growing interest in its historical and spiritual traditions. This, in turn, gives rise to an analysis of the national mentality, its distinctive traits, and the manner of their expression in Ukrainian musical folklore.

Despite the importance of Ukrainian folk music as a reflection of national identity, there is a lack of a comprehensive analysis of how specific elements of the national mentality are manifested in different musical folklore genres. The problem lies in the insufficient study of the relationship between mental archetypes and musical expression, particularly in the context of binary oppositions, emotionality, and social values embedded in folk traditions. This study attempts to address this gap by exploring how the Ukrainian national mentality is encoded in the symbolic, melodic, and narrative structures of musical folklore. The article is aimed at studying the specifics of the Ukrainian national mentality, which are manifested in such genres of musical folklore as *schedrivkas*, *dumas*, and lyrical songs, as forms of symbolic representation of collective consciousness, historical memory, and cultural identity. The focus is on the analysis of how creative means of folklore (rhythm, figurative system, and performance style) reflect such mental dominants as emotionality, individualism, dignity, respect for family, nature, the desire for freedom and internal autonomy. Therefore, in this research, musical folklore is seen as an effective tool for preserving and broadcasting national experience in the face of historical fractures, colonial traumas, and cultural resistance.

The central hypothesis of the study is that the genres of Ukrainian musical folklore, such as *schedrivkas*, *dumas*, and lyrical songs, encode and reproduce the essential features of the Ukrainian national mentality through the symbolic, thematic and performing structure. These traits include emotional expressiveness, individualism, collectivist values, respect for nature and family, and a strong sense of historical memory. Instead of considering folklore as an illustrative or decorative element, the article analyses it as the main means of transmitting and articulating national identity,

in particular in the context of Ukraine's colonial past and the ongoing struggle for identity. In this study, the terms authenticity and national spirit are used not as fixed or metaphysical categories, but as analytical constructs. Authenticity is understood as a socially formed perception of cultural continuity and symbolic legitimacy, while national spirit is interpreted as a repeated model of values and emotional sentiments shared by the imaginary community of the nation (Bendix, 1997). These concepts are used to analyze how musical folklore encodes collective memory and cultural identity in times of historical transformation.

2. Literature Review

While examining the genesis of historical and philosophical thought, the researchers conclude with the formulation of a source theoretical model of mentality, which they term “the spirit of the people”. This model is situated within the context of modern philosophical discourse. Herder (2004) advanced a theoretical model of world history, encompassing the processes of national genesis, through their respective philosophical contributions. Okhitva (2021) posited that the 'spirit of the people' is constituted by language and national self-consciousness. This conception forms the foundation of the theory of nation-building. Hordiichuk (2019) emphasizes the significance of Hegel's perspective on the spirit of the collective, understood as a national mentality. According to this view, social consciousness manifests in various forms of cultural expression. Herder is regarded as an indispensable figure in the history of scientific enquiry during the Enlightenment. The scholar identifies the factors that shape a nation's collective mentality through an analysis of a country's way of life and its socialization. He posits that an examination of a people's history and cultural heritage is a prerequisite to a full comprehension of their content (Herder, 2004).

The concept of mentality was given a new meaning by French sociologist Larin (2022). The researcher considered mentality to be a collective phenomenon, characterized by objectivity and independence from the personal characteristics of the individual (Larin, 2022). The concept of mentality as a collective spirit was further developed in German tradition. Wundt (2018) applied the concept of ethnopsychology to this idea, suggesting that national psychological identity is shaped by the ongoing expansion of individual consciousness.

Contemporary research explores the concept of mentality in a variety of contexts. Accordingly, articles about Finnish oral folklore are collated in an edition entitled “Myth and Mentality Studies in Folklore and Popular Thought” (Ihnatenko, 2016). The group of authors uncovers the fundamental essence of traditional Finnish songs, tales, and

beliefs. The researchers delineate the manner in which oral folklore shapes Finnish mentality, delineating its distinctive characteristics that are transmitted from one generation to the next. The subjects of the book encompass ancient myths from medieval times and the values and shared sentiments of Finnish and Hungarian agrarian communities. Danilyuk & Predko (2019) examine the concept of colonial mentality in relation to the American Philippines. The authors emphasize that a colonial mentality among American Filipinos, whether explicit or implicit, is typified by a reflexive bias towards all things American, and an equally reflexive rejection of all things Filipino. The scholars conclude that a colonial mentality may be conceptualized as a set of automatic associations that cannot be controlled consciously.

With regard to the field of folkloristics, it is important to note that there are notable differences between the Western and domestic approaches. In contrast to the approach typically employed in the domestic discipline, the American school of folkloristics employs the anthropological method, which encompasses the study of gender and performance. In the final decades of the 20th century, folklorists initially focused their attention on the behavior of performers and their audiences during the communication process (Georges, 1980). As Holovakha-Khiks (2011) asserts, it aligns with the conceptualization of folklore in the works of contemporary Ukrainian folklorists.

In the twenty-first century, American folklorists employ a broad definition of folklore that encompasses phenomena of everyday life, including social norms, etiquette, policies, and social behavior. The tendency to perceive everyone as a bearer of folklore traditions was extrapolated into the field of folkloristics from the works of Fedorniak (2020) and became a defining characteristic in the 21st century. The Canadian folklorist Kononenko highlights that in the field of Western folkloristics, there is a tendency towards reciprocal analysis. This entails the folklorist interpreting the fixed text and seeking confirmation from the performer as to whether their own interpretation is correct.

When examining the manifestations of national mentality in Ukrainian musical folklore, the author undertook a comprehensive review and analysis of the works of historians, culturologists, folklorists and musicologists. Hrinchenko et al. (2020) underscored the pivotal role of interpreting the signs of musical text in understanding the nuances of musical expression. In the view of culturologist Sadovenko (2019), folklore constitutes the semantic core of folk culture. The author claims that the folklore reflects a synthesis of pagan and Christian traditions that shaped various aspects of life, including attitudes towards nature, social interaction, personal identity and spiritual beliefs. The Christian and pagan traditions were intertwined within the

cultural fabric. Animism and pantheism became integrated into a broader system of knowledge. The folklore reflects the mythological perspective of the Ukrainians. Thus, folk songs can be considered a multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing various forms of expression, including sacral, ritualistic, aesthetic, and pragmatic elements.

The representatives of the Lviv school of folkloristics, Okhitva (2021) and Lovochkina (2020) conducted research into the distinctive characteristics of Ukrainian folklore. In their foundational research, the scholars considered the perspectives of prominent explorers of oral verbal folklore, including Maksymovych, Bodianskyi, Kulish, Kostomarov (2012), Potebnia, Drahomanov (1900), Franko, Hrushevskyi, and Kolessa (1970a). The approach taken by folklorists to understanding the complex problem is one that is reasoned and analytical. It is based on an examination of the genre-specific nature of oral folklore, its aesthetic and poetic elements. Folklorist Ivanytskyi (2004, 2012, 2015) offers a historical analysis of the development of Ukrainian musical folklore. The scholar provides a comprehensive overview of the diverse genres of folklore, elucidating their genesis, content, role in the lives of the people, and distinctive musical characteristics. The researcher describes the interconnections between agrarian practices, primordial magic, the genesis of ritual music, and its functions.

Musicologists Smoliak, Bankovskyi, Dovhan, Misko and Ovod represent a collection of Galician-Ruthenian folk tunes recorded by the renowned folklorist and composer Liudkevych in 1906 (Smoliak et al., 2021). They investigate the structural and typological characteristics of Ukrainian folk music (Smoliak et al., 2021). Naumovska et al. (2021) examine the binary opposition of life and death in the context of Slavonic folklore. In a similar vein, the folklorist Kuzmenko (2022) traces the evolution of the ethnic stereotype of the Russians in Ukrainian folklore.

Despite the wide range of research on Ukrainian musical folklore and national mentality, previous studies have often been limited to either descriptive cataloging of song genres or abstract theoretical reflections on national character. Few works provide an integrated cultural and semiotic analysis of how specific features of the national mentality—such as emotionality, individualism, and binary oppositions—are encoded in the structure and performance of folklore genres. This study is an attempt to bridge this gap by proposing a multimethod approach that combines philosophical, ethnopsychological, and musicological perspectives with a close reading of folklore texts. The novelty of this study lies in the synthesis of symbolic and structural analysis to reveal how Ukrainian folk songs function as carriers of mental codes and cultural memory.

3. Methods

This study adopts a semiotic approach, which considers folklore as a complex system of cultural signs that convey collective meanings and values. The semiotic analysis focuses on the symbolic structure of folk songs, i.e., binary oppositions, archetypal images, ritual motifs, which interpret the Ukrainian national mentality (Stepyko, 2011). Thus, folk songs are interpreted as sign systems that encode and transmit shared mental models and cultural memory. The study analyzes how these signs function in the texts, musical structure, and performance practices of selected genres.

The methodological basis is grounded in the assumption that folklore is a symbolic system that expresses common cultural meanings and collective mental models (Fedorniak, 2020). The study explores how repeated cultural motifs and expressive forms contribute to a sense of continuity of collective identity. Selected songs are analyzed not as isolated artistic artifacts but as communicative acts embedded in specific historical and cultural contexts. The study focuses on texts and performances that demonstrate a high density of symbolic markers associated with the Ukrainian worldview, such as the archetypes of the Motherland, nature and freedom. In doing so, the study clarifies the scope and limits of its claims. In other words, it does not envisage a unified or timeless national mentality but explores the repetitive structures of meaning seen in the transmission of folklore by generations.

The first stage of research is the study of literature on Ukrainian musical folklore. The research adopts the multidisciplinary approach that combines philosophy, history, cultural studies, ethnography, ethnopsychology, and musical folklore to present a multi-faceted analysis of folk music. In this regard, well-known examples of Ukrainian carols, *shedrivkas*, *dumas*, lyrical songs that reflect the national mentality through symbols and images inherent in Ukrainian culture are considered in detail. Sources were published collections of folk songs and field records of folklorists, which ensures their authenticity. Songs were selected by the criteria of symbolic significance of texts, historical significance, and genre representativeness (Kolessa, 2021). The lyrics that most clearly demonstrate the key features of the national mentality of the Ukrainian people such as individualism, careful attitude to nature, the role of women in society were selected for analysis.

The study comprises 100 Ukrainian folk songs, including *shedrivkas*, *dumas*, and lyrical songs, collected from different regions of Ukraine, with a particular emphasis on the Central and Western regions of Ukraine. This choice is attributed to the fact that many authentic traditions are preserved in these regions, which are passed down from generation to generation (Ivanytskyi, 2015). Moreover, these regions historically retained greater autonomy, which made it possible to preserve

national cultural identity better. Texts from Eastern and Southern Ukraine were also included to demonstrate other aspects of the Ukrainian mentality, in particular the influence of the border situation and intercultural contacts. Samples were selected based on the frequent use of symbolic imagery and their relevance to the expression of national character traits, such as respect for nature, gender roles, and emotional sensitivity. These texts were qualitatively analyzed using semiotic and comparative systems to identify recurring themes, structures and motifs.

Furthermore, the comparative method is used to determine similar and distinctive features of folk songs. This method is also applied to compare characteristics of the Ukrainian national mentality with representatives of other ethnic groups and to compare the specifics of different genre songs. The semiotic analysis is used to consider culture and its artifacts as a sign system that is passed through generations. Accordingly, the semiotic analysis involves the determination of cultural meanings, their mechanisms, functioning, and decoding. It also helps identify the signs of the Ukrainian national mentality that are embodied in the samples (Naumovska et al., 2021).

The cultural analysis includes a complex of system-forming principles, namely: historical, communicative, and social. It helps explore the signs of the Ukrainian national mentality in the context of the historical development of the Ukrainian nation and the specifics of the formation of Ukrainian musical folklore genres (such as winter ritual, lyrical songs, dumas, etc.). In addition, the content analysis is used to analyze the content of Ukrainian musical folklore genres in order to identify national specifics in them, define their signs in a social context, and understand the content of folklore works as a manifestation and assessment of public life (Naumovska et al., 2021).

4. Results

Given the frequent use of terms such as national spirit and authenticity in discussions on Ukrainian mentality and folklore, it is important to establish their meaning in this study. The national spirit is seen as a symbolic framework through which collective emotional and moral orientations are passed down through generations. At the same time, authenticity is not considered to be inherent in the artifact but a culturally constructed attribute of the folklore as a representative of tradition and identity (Bendix, 1997).

The term mentality has been interpreted in a multitude of ways across various academic disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, history, and political science. These interpretations range from its broad conceptualization as a spiritual entity, a psychological construct, a national character trait, an individual temperament, a

worldview, or an image of the world, to its narrower definition as a specific mode of thinking, a set of habitual thought patterns, an overarching mindset, an individual's mental capacity, the distinctive features of a particular ethnic group's or historical era's worldview, or even a psychological type. The term mentality (from the Latin "mentis" – mind, thinking, psyche, temperament) is used to describe a set of social and psychological guidelines, automatisms and skills of the consciousness. These form methods of worldview and ideas of the people who belong to some cultural society. Mentality is a historically variable social phenomenon, with changes occurring at a gradual pace (Halushko, 2009).

Kostomarov (2012) defines mentality as "a spiritual disposition of the people, a mindset, a direction of will, a view on spiritual and civic life". The term mentality was first used by the American philosopher Emerson in the nineteenth century. He was eager to integrate the metaphysical and psychological aspects of social moods. The French ethnologist and social anthropologist Lévy-Bruhl introduced the term mentality into scientific discourse. He conducted research into pre-logical modes of thought and the collective ideas (or mentalities) of primitive peoples. As a defining characteristic of mentalities, the researcher identified their inherent opacity to conventional logical, mystical, or ideological frameworks. Lévy-Bruhl's ideas were further developed by representatives of the French Annales School. Febvre and Bloch put forth the argument that the concept of mentality is pervasive throughout all aspects of human existence, manifesting at various levels of consciousness and behavior. Consequently, it is challenging to ascertain its boundaries. Furthermore, mentality cannot be reduced to a mere ideology subordinated to systems of thought. It is not, however, a philosophical, scientific or aesthetic system. Mentality can thus be considered as a level of the public worldview, in which thought is not separated from emotion, latent habits, and techniques of consciousness (Hrabovska & Hrabovskyi, 2018).

Le Goff perceived the appeal of the concept of mentality as an amorphous notion. This vagueness is reinforced by the fact that the concept is situated at the intersection of multiple scientific disciplines (Dzhulai, 2023). Dinzelbacher (2021) elucidated the aforementioned concepts through the lenses of the person, the family, and society; sexuality and love; religiosity; the body and the soul; illness; the lifespan; death; fears and hopes; joy, sadness and happiness; work; leisure; communication; possession; authority; legislation; nature and the environment; space; time; and history. Dinzelbacher (2021) defines mentality as a combination of cognitive processes, including methods and contents of thinking and perception, that are decisive for a specific collective at a given historical period. The manifestation of mentality is evident

in action; its historical development is a phenomenon that is more expansive than the study of the intellectual conditions of elites, individual figures or philosophers.

According to Stepyko (2011), the formation of a national mentality is an early stage in the process of ethnogenesis. At this juncture, a specific mental foundation or core is formed which remains intact throughout the history of the ethnos. The relative invariance of geographic, geopolitical, and biological factors contributes to this phenomenon. Nevertheless, the mobility of cultural, historical, sociological and political factors gives rise to significant modifications and deformations of the mental attitudes of a particular ethnic group. As the philosopher Khramova (1992) claims, a psycho-behavioral invariant exists in the historical retrospective, manifesting on a mutual linguistic, cultural, moral and ethical basis. As a result, the ethnos is able to maintain its identity at all times, while also experiencing crises of ethnic self-consciousness. Each nation is distinguished by its specific characteristics of mentality, which set it apart from other peoples. The Ukrainian mentality is rooted in the juxtaposition of two distinct cultural traditions: that of an agrarian society and that of the Cossacks (Table 1).

Table1: Basic characteristics of the Ukrainians' national mentality in ambivalent structure

The presence of two cultures	
Agricultural	Cossacks (knightly)
veneration of Earth, mother, woman, Ukraine	respect for Cossack, defender, father
Attitude to the family	
respect for parents, older generations	raising children in love, attention to their needs
Traits of character	
ethical attitude to the world, cordocentrism, cordiality, softness, emotionality	logic, strong-willed masculineness
individualism, introversion, self independence	-immersion, ability to unite in a team, extroversion, desire to be useful, to help, freedom, personal dignity
Influence of geopolitical location	
Orientalism	Occidentalism

On the one hand, Nechui-Levytskyi (2019) observes that the archaic forms of shepherd and patriarchal-agricultural life are distinctive. From agriculture, the writer deduces the pantheism of the Ukrainian worldview (Nechui-Levytskyi, 2019). The agricultural type of mental culture is associated with an owner-farmer who symbolizes diligence and thrift. Agriculture is also connected to veneration of earth, mother, woman, and Ukraine. It is for this reason that the archetype of the mother constitutes one of the fundamental tenets of Ukrainian culture. On the other hand, the Cossack type of culture originates from the image of Cossack as the liberator. It is associated with the symbol of a courageous and freedom-loving defender, with developed sense of fairness, dignity, and love for the homeland. Cossack has become the base figure in history and national consciousness of the Ukrainians. That is why in the West Europe the Ukrainians were called Cossacks people and Ukraine was called Cossacks' country.

These two types of culture exist, influencing each other in a complex manner, including the concept of equality between men and women. The qualities of femininity and tenderness prompt a focus on emotional experience, which may be described as sensual anarchism. In the same time, courage and masculinity focus on intellectual fortitude and a proactive stance.

A second contributing factor to the ambivalent mentality of the Ukrainian people is their geopolitical location between the East and the West, which resulted in a combination of Western and Eastern traditions within their cultural heritage. The result of this was the emergence of a mentality that combined Western rational thinking with Eastern contemplation in the Ukrainians' worldview (Drahomanov, 1900). The lack of a Ukrainian state throughout the centuries meant that pragmatism, individualism, melancholy, acceptance of the negative aspects of life, patience, and a lack of ambition became common traits. However, despite the challenging circumstances in Ukraine, its citizens have the potential for self-organization, sacrifice, and courage. Democratic ideals were pervasive in the way of life of these people. The Cossack society provides an exemplary case of democracy, wherein positions were elected. In this regard, Krymskyi (2008) states: "There have always been individuals with a free and independent spirit at the vanguard of Ukrainian history, exemplified by the 'fiery souls' of Cossacks and the Steppe Knights". The nature of free self-activity of the individual provided the foundation for the Cossacks' republic and the freedom of the Bursacks. It also nurtured the character of wandering deacons and the initiative of town citizens, who were granted Magdeburg rights.

Furthermore, it is necessary to examine the manner in which these traits are manifested in Ukrainian musical folklore. Folklorist Okhitva (2021) believes that folklore serves two distinct functions: an integrative one, which unites people into a group, and a differential one, which separates one group from another. Harasym (2024a) proposes that, in the case of Ukrainian folklore, its distinct identity does not operate as a barrier but as an integral part of the broader civilizational tapestry. This assertion gains added significance when viewed in the context of present-day Ukraine, which is asserting its distinct political and cultural identity under global pressures. From Harasym's (2024a) perspective, there is an inherent potential within folklore to foster a sense of cultural self-awareness and belonging. According to Polishchuk (2017) musical folklore is an information code, which could complete the gaps of human cultural genesis terrains. Folk songs contain large amount of cultural and historical information, have educational potential, and affect contemporary people's feelings.

5. Discussion

5.1. National mentality in Ukrainian musical folklore

The national mentality of Ukraine is deeply rooted in its musical folklore, which reflects the unique worldview and values of the Ukrainian people. Ukrainian musical folklore, in particular folk songs, reveal the essence of the national spirit, with the core concepts of love, nature, community, and identity. Thus, Drahomanov (1900) paid attention to the similarity of Ukrainian songs from the Carpathians to the Don. He attributed this to a common ethnic origin, emphasizing that these songs represent the deep connection of Ukrainians with the earth. Kolessa (2021) also noted the educational impact of folk song, which are examples of pure folk language and poetic expression. Kolessa (2021) argued that these songs foster respect for the Ukrainian language, unite the nation, and nourish the national consciousness “like blood in a living organism” (Kolessa, 2021). Moreover, Lovochkina, (2020) emphasises the interconnection of spiritual cultures of different peoples and national identities. The researcher suggests that despite the mutual influence and interaction between different civilizations, the underlying identity, i.e., the “national genotype”, remains unchanged. In this context, he explains that Ukrainian culture absorbs external influences, remaining deeply rooted in its own traditions.

Folklorists Harasym (2010), Lovochkina, (2020), Zaleski (1883), Kolessa (1970b), Nuhga (1997) agree about the variety of Ukrainian folklore. Polish explorer Zaleski (1883) compared Ukrainian songs to Polish ones. In the preface to 1833 edition of “*Piesni polske i ruskie ludu galicyjskiego*” he complains about poverty and monotony of Polish songs. He asserts that songs belonging to the categories of women's (or lyrical) and historical song are notably underrepresented. However, Krakowiak is a universal genre. The Polish ethnographer emphasizes richness of Ukrainian poetry: “However, the variety of songs and the reverence with which they are held, along with the numerous recollections they evoke from the earliest times, are truly remarkable” (Zaleski, 1883).

Kolessa (1970a) noticed that the Ukrainians have the largest amount of folklore works. He marked that compared to other East-European peoples, the Ukrainians have “the richest, the most harmonically developed folk poetry”. According to Sadovenko's (2021) calculations, nearly twenty thousand Ukrainian songs with tunes were collected. The great wealth of Ukrainian folklore can be attributed to the long and complex history of the Ukrainian people. Lovochkina (2020) attributes this wealth to the Trypillya culture of the 6th-4th centuries BC, which introduced fundamental mythological elements, such as worship of the Sun, Earth, Water, and Fire, into Ukrainian identity. The unique geographical position of Ukraine at the crossroads of

eastern and western civilizations led to the mixing of these two worldviews and the isolation of the western mentality.

Drahomanov (1900) also emphasized the openness of the Ukrainian mentality to foreign cultural influences, in particular from Byzantium and Southeast Europe. He argued that such susceptibility to external ideas was not only due to the geographical proximity of Ukraine to these regions, but was also a defining characteristic of the Ukrainian people, who was at the intersection of different civilizations. Therefore, Ukrainian musical folklore is a vivid reflection of the national mentality, formed by history, geography, and culture. The richness of the songs and their poetic expressions demonstrate the creative spirit of the Ukrainian people, being vital tools for preserving and transmitting national identity to generations.

5.2. Shchedrivka as a unique genre of Ukrainian folklore

Ritual songs represent a distinctive genre of Ukrainian musical folklore, comprising three principal groups: calendar and ceremonial songs, family songs, and ritual songs. A shchedrivka is an example of folk art, which harmoniously combines sacred and secular elements. Its creativity is manifested in inventive texts, rhythmic organization and the ability to integrate various cultural influences, while remaining a unique genre. This genus of folk song creativity is connected to agriculture and veneration of Earth. The cycle of calendar songs was formed, depending on kinds of agricultural activities undertaken by the Ukrainians throughout the year.

Shchedrivkas represent more than an agrarian ritual; they encode a worldview based on cyclical temporality, intergenerational continuity, and cosmological equilibrium. The performative nature of these songs (ritual visits, blessings, symbolic crops) transforms abstract values such as reciprocity, hospitality, and abundance into musical form. Mythopoetic layering (the pagan-Christian syncretism) reveals a mentality attuned to both transcendence and pragmatic survival. Their rhythmic simplicity (4 + 4 structure) supports community participation, while symbolic figures such as the swallow or host advocate social archetypes, encoding both seasonal and social order.

The corpus of winter songs, carols and shchedrivkas is extensive, comprising numerous tunes and texts (Ivanytskyi, 2012). Among these, a notable example is the shchedrivka, which features prominently in the winter cycle of calendar and ritual songs and is unique to Ukraine (Harasym, 2024a; Ivanytskyi, 2012). As Denisyuk (2003) notes, Shchedrivkas have a deep archaic origin, representing a kind of calendar-ritual song. This is especially evidenced by the famous “Shchedryk, Shchedryk, Shchedrivochka” (known in English as “The Little Swallow”), which carries a rich

symbolism associated with agrarian life: the swallow, as a symbol of spring and fertility, brings wishes for a good harvest and prosperity.

“Little Carol, Little Carol,
Little Carol Bird,
The swallow has flown in,
She began to chirp,
To call the master.
Come out, come out, master,
Look at the sheepfold.”

In this example, as the harbinger of spring and renewal, the image of the swallow echoes the Ukrainian cultural tradition, combining pagan and Christian elements. Such symbolic layering is a characteristic feature of Ukrainian shchedrivkas, which distinguishes them from similar winter songs of other Eastern European traditions.

In the preface to the collection of carols and shchedrivkas, Dei (1965) explains that the images and plots of winter songs are rooted in antiquity, shaped by the echo of matriarchate. The matriarchate was a Ukrainian characteristic family structure in which the husband was responsible for securing the family's livelihood, while the wife managed domestic affairs and the household. Ivanytskyi (2015) states that this distinctive form of primitive democracy was shaped by the particular geography and ethnic migrations that characterised the forest steppe lands.

The study of the typology of winter rituals reveals the existence of a tradition in the Neolithic period that was based on the binary principle (Ivanytskyi, 2012). A notable illustration of this dualistic tendency can be observed in the binary oppositions between carols and shchedrivkas, the two predominant genres within the corpus of winter ritual songs (Zubok, 2015). The sacrality of carols was juxtaposed against the profane humour of shchedrivkas. These genres indicate that a sacral-profane worldview has been in existence since the Neolithic period and has persisted into the present, manifesting in diverse structural-typological (musical and rhythmic) models (Ivanytskyi, 2012). The coexistence of carols and shchedrivkas exemplifies the law of the unity of opposites, a characteristic of pre-Christian beliefs.

Shchedrivkas are Ukrainian folk ritual songs of glorifying type, which are performed at Christmas Eve. After the decline of paganism, shchedrivkas were regarded as a form of juvenile entertainment (Ivanytskyi, 2015). It was during this period that children and adolescents began to perform them as a humoristic genre of profane tradition. Initially, these songs were dedicated to the glorification of mythological deities and heroes. According to Christmas-New Year customs, shchedrivkas serve to glorify the host and his family.

Although there are notable similarities between carols and shchedrivkas, a fundamental distinction emerges when considering the thematic focus of each. Thus, while carols are characterised by their religious or spiritual content, shchedrivkas are distinguished by their secular nature. The distinguishing factor between them lies in their distinct rhythmic structures, with carols exhibiting a 5+5 pattern and shchedrivkas displaying a 4+4 pattern. This observation was made by Potebnia, who noted that a form, and not a content, is a guard of traditions (Harasym, 2024b.). The form is more archaic and established, and the content can vary. Ivanytskyi (2012) presumes that the syntax of ritual songs is as old as the verbal one. However, in comparison to language, music does not have semantic expression of the content; it is oriented to sensuality (emotional perception). Thus, the musical form consists of deeply coded logical and rhythmical figures, rooted in the unconscious, requiring a special method of decoding. The melodies of ritual songs are simple, they are often perceived as primitives. However, the rhythmical-intonation organization is a contemporaneous to verbal exclamations in the Early Palaeolithic. In that epoch, mastering such basic logical figures as diplastia (sameness) and binary opposition (contrast) took place (Ivanytskyi, 2012).

The ritual cries (heykannia) at the New Year eve and the sprinkling (posypannia) at the New Year are connected to agricultural labour, too. Denoting the relicts of pagan worldview, heykannia symbolises plowing as an important method of ground processing. The peasants usually need to exclaim “hey!” in order to drive oxen, pulling a plow. Ivanytskyi (2012) states that at the beginning of the 20th century at Christmas Eve young men used to enter into dwellings with a plow handrail, imitating the act of plowing. Since the latter half of the 20th century, it has been the responsibility of adolescents to perform this ritual. The folklorist points out that, with the lack of any tonality and pitch, there is a precisely coordinated rhythmical component in the “hey!” intonations. It gives notion of old traditions of collective declamation (Ivanytskyi, 2012).

The sprinkling was another obligatory ritual, which marked the beginning of the sowing season. On January 1, boys in the role of sprinklers performed the first ritual event in the house, symbolizing the beginning of agricultural work in the year. These rites are deeply woven into the cycle of nature and the agricultural life of the Ukrainian people (Ivanytskyi, 2012). Due to its developing forms and multi-layered values, shchedrivkas remain a vital expression of Ukrainian folklore, capturing the spirit of the community, the farming life and the cyclical nature of time. They retain a deep connection with the ancient rhythms of Ukrainian life, illustrating the unique combination of sacred and secular elements that define this rich musical tradition.

5.3. Dumas as most important part of Ukrainian epos

The concept of *duma* was introduced into scientific discourse by Maksymovych in 1827. The *duma* is a genre, characteristic only of Ukrainian folklore, as the most important part of Ukrainian epos. Dumas performed by kobzars and lyre players are a purely Ukrainian genre because the heroic epic of neighbouring peoples usually has other forms (for example, Serbian songs-stories). The uniqueness of the genre is attributed to the glorification of plots and themes from Ukrainian history, which sets it apart from other genres (Matiash, 2008). These dumas chronicle the struggles of the Ukrainians for their freedom and independence, and their participation in the defence of their homeland. As Lytovka (2013) establishes, realism, historicism and the combination of tragedy and heroism are distinguishing features of dumas. The connection between dumas and the specifics of Cossacks' cultural traditions has received significant scholarly attention, as evidenced by the seminal work "Ukrainian folk *duma* tunes" by Kolessa (1910, 1913, reprinted in 1969).

The emergence of this genre was caused by the strengthening of the Ukrainian people's fight against enslavement and feudal serfdom oppression by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rzeczpospolita, the Turks and the Tatars. In the 16th century, the Cossacks appeared as a powerful force of self-defence and protection of Ukrainian lands. The struggle with the Turks and Tartars, which was an axis around which the life of the Cossacks revolved, gave content to the greater part of the historical dumas of the older generation (Kolessa, 1970b). The *duma* "On Morozenko" shows the influence of Cossack culture. The images of freedom, military honour, and patriotism are combined with deep emotionality, which is characteristic of the Ukrainian mentality.

"But I will not go to Circassian,
I do not go to the Muscovy,
I will not give in to the Tatars,
I will not go to the enemy!"

In this example, it is possible to notice the motives of national dignity, patriotism, and the struggle for freedom, characteristic of the Ukrainian epic songs. Ukrainian dumas show that even in the most difficult times, the Ukrainian people demonstrate the highest creative potential. As a genre of the Ukrainian epic poetry, dumas demonstrate high creativity in the way of conveying historical events and moral ideals. Kobzars and lyre players who performed dumas added their creative elements, creating unique musical and poetic works that resonated with national feelings.

Dumas are characterised by a high regard for moral principles and ideals that originate in mythopoeic thinking. The ideals are connected to the concept of national independence and personal dignity. The yearning for inner freedom is embodied by the

narrative character and the uninhibited, free rhythm of the dumas. As an epic genre, dumas reflect the historical struggle of the Ukrainian people. The “Duma of Marusia Boguslavka” focuses on freedom and self-sacrifice. Analysing this song, it is possible to observe a combination of heroic and tragic, as well as a high level of symbolism (the image of a clear falcon as the personification of a Cossack).

“How to live without a mother,
without a father, without a home,
without a native land?
My bitter fate, my bitter one!”

This example emphasizes the symbolism of connection with the family, which is an important aspect of the Ukrainian mentality, reflecting the tragic heroes' fate. The performance of dumas by bandurists, kobzars and lyre players serves to reinforce the authentic character of the epic genre. Kobzars were held in high esteem by their audience due to their status as proponents of high spirituality and national self-consciousness (Matiash, 2008). Ostap Veresai (1803–1890) was one of the most renowned kobzars. In 1874, he performed at the archaeological congress in Kyiv, thereby fostering interest in dumas throughout Europe. However, during the 1930s, the Soviet authorities executed a campaign of repression against kobzars, perceiving them as a symbol of Ukrainian national identity (Antoniuk, 2020).

The symbolism of dumas reveals the specifics of Ukrainian mentality. Matiash (2008) explains that the mythopoetic consciousness inherent in the epic genre is realised through the understanding of the harmonic unity between humans and nature. In this context, the authors-performers use the metaphorical comparison of Cossack or slave to animals or birds. Moreover, the significant role of glorification of family ties in dumas, particularly the magic power of father's blessing and mother's care for the child (Matiash, 2008). The Ukrainian mentality, marked by a respectful attitude to the family, perceiving it as a value, as an educational potential, manifests itself in all these things. In captivity, prior to their death, Cossacks recall their mother and homeland, conveying them a message of their impending demise. As Matiash (2008) points out, these epic motives were of great moral importance and characterised dumas as a peculiar Ukrainian phenomenon. Furthermore, Kostomarov (2012) proposed a classification of dumas into three cycles.

- The Turkish-Tatar one is an extensive body of literature encompassing a variety of themes. It includes accounts of Cossacks' heroic acts in the Danube shores, as exemplified by the song “Duma on Baida” and “Campaign of Serpiaha”. It also depicts Cossacks' marine campaigns such as “On Oleksii Popovych”, “Slaves' Cry”, and “Samiilo Kishka”. Furthermore, the Turkish-Tatar subject extends to Tatar raids and the war with

the Tatars in the steppe, as illustrated in works “Duma on Ivan Konovchenko”, “Duma on the Azov brothers”, and “Duma on Holota”.

- The period known as the epoch of liberation is characterised by a body of literature focusing on the events of the Ukrainian People's Liberation War, which was led by Bohdan Khmelnytskyi to establish an independent state.

- The Russian period pertains to the accession of Ukrainian territories to the Russian Czarist domain in 1654, which marked the onset of a new historical epoch for the hetmanate. This literary period is exemplified by songs such as “The Widow”, “Oleksii Popovych”, “Sister and Brother”, and “Hvedir Rootless” (Kostomarov, 2012).

The “Duma of Ivan Konovchenko” emphasizes the idea of inner freedom and the Cossack spirit, which is an essential element of dumas as a genre:

“My Cossack, old Cossack,
on a horse without a saddle,
he was not afraid of death,
for his soul was free!”

The distinctive qualities of the epic genre are characterised by its performance, structural framework, rhythmic patterns, poetic style, moral and patriotic themes, and “heroic aesthetics” (Drahomanov, 1900). Lesya Ukrainka (2021) recognised dumas as a national treasure, characterising them as “most wonderful monuments of creativity of our people, the only ones in the whole world”. She regarded them as a source of national pride, emphasising their distinctiveness and the inability of neighbouring nations to emulate them.

Instead of a simple chronicle of events, Ukrainian dumas function as performative reconstructions of collective trauma and ethical ideals. Their repetitive melodic structures, modal intonation, and narrative pace convey historical meaning and encode values such as dignity, sacrifice, and freedom. The image of the Cossack, repeated throughout the body, serves not only as a heroic archetype, but also as a moral compass that forms Ukrainian concepts of courage, justice, and community memory. Through symbolic speech and oral transmission, dumas discover collective memory, with an emphasis of the national mentality on moral responsibility and emotional introspection.

5.4. Lyrical songs as a trait of the Ukrainians' national mentality

The next genre of Ukrainian folklore is lyrical songs. Sadovenko (2021) asserts that the world recognizes the great merits of the Ukrainian people in the creation of the original song and music treasures which have universal value and were used to decorate culture with the achievements of the human spirit. Lyrical songs are expressions of

emotional and individual creativity. Their melodic and rhythmic way, the development of a solo style of performance and the use of bright images, symbols and poetic parallels are evidence of the creative potential of the Ukrainian people. Lyrical songs emerged as a distinct genre at a later point in time than ritual songs. As Lytovka (2013) claims, the genre may be regarded as having attained a state of maturity by the 17th century. Distinct from the epic works, lyrical songs focus on feelings, emotions and moods as their central themes rather than events or physical objects. The characteristic features of the Ukrainians – emotionality, cordiality, softness of the character, introversion, and individualism – are manifested in lyrical songs.

The cordiality and introversion of Ukrainians are exemplified by the content of lyrical songs, in terms of both melodically and rhythmically. Hence, the prevalence of love songs is a salient feature within this genre. Family, social, and household songs also feature in this list. The evolution of human consciousness, the personification of introspective self-expression, and the deepening of reflection in creativity through introspective contemplation can all be observed in lyrical songs. Lyrical songs are frequently structured as monologues or narrations from the perspective of the third person. The concept of individualism, deepening into oneself, and introversion are reflected in the style of solo song (Ivanytskyi, 2015). The emotional content of such songs is characterized by a need for solitude and introspection. The evolution of the solitude style corresponds with the progression of lyrical songs' melos, which transitions from a recitative-declamatory form to a cantilena, a development that Ivanytskyi (2015) identifies as “the highest development in the household lyrical song”.

Lyrical songs represent the inner world of the Ukrainians, their emotionality, and individualism. For example, the song “Oy, in the field three poplars” expresses loneliness and dreaminess through the images of nature. The Ukrainians' national mentality is characterized by a propensity for emotionality. This is illustrated by poetic parallels, symbols, metaphors, and comparisons, which enhance expressiveness of the language. The expressiveness of the songs' texts is achieved through the utilization of lexical, word-forming, grammatical, and stylistic means. For example, the use of diminutive-hypocoristic forms of nouns and adjectives is a salient feature of the language. They add warmth and tenderness to the texts, emphasizing the sensitivity of the national character (soloveichko – little nightingale, synochok – sonny, little boy, barvinochok – dear, little periwinkle, donechka – little daughter, dear little girl, matinka – mommy, dear beloved mother). In Ukrainian songs, an exclamation “oy” is often used to reinforce emotional expressiveness and human feelings (“Oy, a well stood in the field”, “Oy, from behind of the stone mountain”, “Oy, turtle dove flew”, “Oy, you, little moon”, etc.). In lyrical songs, lexemes-symbols (folklore idioms) often become

markers of expressiveness and aesthetic preferences. They are images of the Ukrainians' national worldview: young Cossack, green periwinkle, raven horse, grey turtle dove, young lovely girl, clear starlet, my sweetheart.

Lyrical songs allow the Ukrainians to show personal experiences and emotions through music. This makes each performance unique, adding personal interpretations and emotional tension. Lyrical songs such as "Oy, in the cherry orchard" demonstrate the sensuality and individualism of the Ukrainian people. They are marked by the dominance of personal perception of the world, which is manifested in the use of diminutive-caressing forms (for example, zozulenka - cuckoo, divchynonka - girl) and emotional exclamations (oy). Such features permit the listener to experience the content of the song more deeply, which is a characteristic feature of Ukrainian creativity. Thus, the expressive core of the national mentality is brought to the fore in Ukrainian lyrical songs: isolation, tenderness, and individual autonomy. The frequent use of diminutive words, metaphors, and first-person narratives position these songs as tools of self-construction in cultural space. The cantilena melodic line, which is often performed solo, corresponds to the internalization of emotions, being a key feature of Ukrainian emotional culture. These songs are not just sentimental artifacts; instead, they function as aesthetic mediators of personal and national affects, making possible the continuity of subjective experience between generations.

6. Conclusions

Ukrainian musical folklore represents a significant cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people. Its emergence is connected to the vital activity of the pre-Ukrainian Slavonic ethne, which created various genres of ritual folklore that were aligned with paganism. Despite the adoption of Christianity, this rich tradition persisted, continuing to thrive and evolve. Notable genres include shchedrivka, dumas, and lyrical songs. The geographical and environmental conditions of Ukraine had a profound influence on its traditional life, which was closely connected with the natural environment. These influences shaped the individuality of the inclination of the Ukrainian people towards freedom, mobility, and restlessness. The natural and geographical conditions have determined the way of life of Ukrainians, which is connected with nature. Nature is a factor in the formation of individualism, the desire for freedom, restlessness, and mobility.

The semiotic and cultural analysis allowed to reveal folklore as a complex system of cultural signs. This study showed how folklore genres function as carriers of mental codes that combine philosophical, ethnopsychological, and art historical aspects. It was established that the Ukrainian mentality was influenced by two layers of culture:

the agricultural and Cossacks. The most archaic manifestation of folklore in Ukraine is constituted by calendar and ritual songs, which are linked to agricultural activities. These songs form a cyclical sequence that mirrors the annual cycle of agricultural work. The veneration of the Earth (antheism) is a central tenet of this system of belief, with the archetype of Mother symbolizing not only the Earth itself, but also Ukraine and Woman. This archetype is reflected in the reverence accorded to women, their roles within society and family. The profound connection of the Ukrainians to nature and the land reinforces a sense of dignity and a lyrical attitude towards the world. The Cossack culture is characterized by a profound respect for man, manifesting as militancy, freedom, collectivism, and a profound desire for autonomy. These two cultural types coexist and serve to provide equality between men and women, thereby embodying the principles of democracy in the society.

The shchedrivka occupies a unique position within the genre of calendar and ritual songs. A distinguishing feature of shchedrivka is that it is characterized by agricultural magic. The lyrical content of shchedrivkas focuses on the veneration of the host and the family. It emphasizes equality between the sexes, a respectful attitude towards the family, and democratic principles in society. Furthermore, dumas glorify the struggle of Ukraine for independence. They embody elevated moral principles and ideals, deeply rooted in the mythopoetic worldview of the Ukrainian people. The following features of the national mentality are evident in dumas: respectful treatment of nature, family, and comparisons of the Cossacks with birds and animals. The moral and ethical ideals articulated in these epics are closely linked to the concept of independence, personal dignity, and the reverence for motherhood and family.

In addition, lyrical songs are imbued with the characteristics of the national mentality such as cordiality, softness of character, introversion, and individualism. These qualities are manifested through a variety of expressive means, i.e., solo singing styles, the prevalence of one-voiced singing, the intricacy of melos, and the development of cantilena melodies. The emotionality is also manifested in lyrical songs through lexical, word-forming, and stylistic means, including the utilization of exclamations, tenderness in the expression of some parts of speech, and the use of lexemes as symbols. It is established that shchedrivkas, dumas, and lyrical songs are unique genres of Ukrainian folklore. The following characteristics of the Ukrainian national mentality are reflected in these musical traditions: cordiality, softness of character, emotionality, introversion, individualism, the craving for independence, personal dignity, a respectful attitude to nature, family, and equality between men and women. Finally, the democratic character of social relations was emphasized.

To summarize, Ukrainian musical folklore is not only an important source for understanding national identity, but also an active factor in shaping the modern Ukrainian mentality. It not only preserves cultural memory, but also constantly reproduces key features of the Ukrainian character, such as emotionality, the desire for freedom, democratic ideals, and a deep connection to nature. This research opens up prospects for further research, including the analysis of regional specifics of folklore or the impact of contemporary events, such as a full-scale war, on the transformation of the national mentality. The interaction of folklore with other art forms in the contemporary cultural space can also be studied in further research.

6. References

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