

## Cultural Identity Markers in the Regional Poetry of Budzhak Ethnic Communities

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In this study, we intend to highlight the specific character of the regional literature of Budzhak. The cultural life of this region develops at the intersection of different ethnic traditions: Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, etc. It is carried out in the framework of the scientific project of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and Izmail State Humanitarian University «Literature and Painting of Ethnic Groups of the Ukrainian Danube Region as a Means of Forming the Collective Identity of the Local Community» (2019-2021), the purpose of which is to study the state of development and aesthetic achievements of modern literature and painting of the southern Odessa region as a means of intercultural communication, harmonization and stabilization of interethnic relations in the multinational region. The authors of the project consider the regional literature and painting a means of intercultural communication of the Slavic-Romano-Turkish peoples of Budzhak in the process of forming the collective identity of the local society.

The foundations of identity are presented by the traditional values of the national culture of any ethnic group, as: *language, history, landscape, cultural traditions* (religion, music, dance, culinary practice). The specificity of the multicultural space development actualizes the problems of perceiving the richness of the cultural heritage of other ethnic group which is clearly reflected in the regional literature of Budzhak. Examples are presented in regional poetry, written in Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, and Bulgarian languages.

### Language

Representatives of each nation aim at admiring and keeping their language intact, with the belief that without a language there is no nation. Ukrainian poets Mykhailo Vasilyuk, Volodymyr Simeyko, Valeriy Vykhodtsev, Tamila Kibkalo and others glorify their mother tongue and are proud of their grace. Challenge to preserve their ethnic traits are constant in the poetry of Bessarabian Bulgarians (Niko Stoyanov, «Stay Bulgarian») and language (Todor Stoyanov, «Bulgarian language»; Tanya Tanasova-Todorova, «My native language»; Niko Stoyanov, «Mother tongue»; Illiya Volkov, «Native word»; Nikolay Suflarsky, «Teacher of Bulgarian» and others). Romanian-speaking poets of Budzhak also glorify their mother tongue. In the poem «Prayer», Ion Bicu dedicates insightful lines to his native Romanian language, in which there is a longing for the Romanian-speaking cultural space and a genuine desire to convey the Romanian poetic word to his listener [1]:

### PREA.....

Limpii Române  
prea multe cuvinte orfane s-au adunat  
la bustul limbii române  
prea multe tăceri înfiate au rămas de ocară  
prea e amurg în zarea frunzelor de nuc  
prea reânvie dorința după albastrul cerului

prea mă întorc dinadins în formă de ploaie  
zorit de amarul din jug  
la bustul limbii române  
vin și eu obosit îngândurat epuizat  
e remediu prescris de Luceafăr  
îndemn fruzele și dorul la pustiu încăpușat  
prea puțin e verde pe colinele limbii române  
prea ciripesc durerile pe timp de poem  
prea mă sfârșesc când noaptea numai vrea întuneric  
prea îmi gonesc dorința de acasa  
o vreau liberă ascetă-n păduri  
decât să slujească docil  
gândului interzis.

Victor Kapsamun, in the poem «Let's unite, Romanians!» urges to unite Romanian-speaking Ukrainians with the goal to appreciate their native word above all and to cherish together the historical memory:

#### UNIȚI-VĂ, ROMÂNI...

Uniți-vă, români,  
Din toată Ucraina!  
Fiți peste plai stăpâni,  
Fiți oameni totdeauna!  
Uniți-vă, români,  
Ca surori, ca frați  
Și graiul din străbuni  
Niticând să nu-l uitați.  
Faceți din orice sat  
O gură de rai,  
Unde să fie cântat  
Versul lui Mihai.  
Fiindc-aveți un sânge  
De la Ștefan cel Mare--  
A curs mereu și curge  
În voi, în fiecare...  
Uniți-vă, români,  
La nevoi cu toți  
Și graiul din străbuni  
Dați-l la nepoți.

#### History

Budzhak poets highlight key aspects of the heroic past of the region: the cult of Achilles-Pontarhas on the Serpent Island (Russians); The Roman Emperor Trojan and the Dacian king Decebalus (Romanians); the founding of the First Bulgarian kingdom of the times of Khan Asparuh (Bulgarians); the foundation of the Danube Sich (Ukrainians); the capturing of the fortress of Izmail as a symbol of victory over the Ottoman Empire), which are targeted by the national communities of the southern Odessa region, reflected in their artistic creativity.

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The image of the Danube Sich became a center of cultural attraction for Ukrainian-speaking poets of Southern Odessa region (Valeriy Vykhodtsev, «Oh, behind the Blue Danube») [3]:

Ой, за туманом, за лиманом,  
Ой, за Дунаєм голубим  
Стоять козацькі намети  
На зло всім ворогам лихим.  
То запорожці-задунайці  
В новий похід кують шаблі,  
Вони ще вірне скажуть слово  
За волю матінки-землі.  
Вона за буй-очеретами,  
що аж сягають Сулини,  
Чекають знак, що вже готові  
пустить над плавнями дими.

Local landscapes are the custodians of the historical memory of the Bessarabian Bulgarians, whose poetry is often dedicated to the historical images of the legendary khans of Oguz, Kubrat, Asparuh. The artistic reflection is directed to the sacralization of the Northern Black Sea as a sacred land associated with the beginning of the formation of the Bulgarian ethnic group. The popularization of the heroic history of the proto-Bulgarians by Bessarabian artists has an educational function. It overcomes the ontological drama of separation from the historical homeland and justifies the fact of resettlement and slave labor of the first colonists (Niko Stoyanov, «From Budzhak to Bulgaria») [4]:

Събуди ме, ветре, ведър, сух,  
Та да минем, ветре, пак  
Ний по дирите на Аспарух,  
Тръгнали от древния Буджак.

Да преминем Дунава широк –  
Да се спрем наврѣх Балкана,  
Гдето нявга, като скулест бог,  
Гордо бе застана хана...

Дни, години, векове,  
Като шумата изгарят...  
Оттогава и оттам  
Началото си взе БЪЛГАРИЯ...

In the poem of Ilyya Volkov «Remember, Budzhak!» the conquest of Budzhak by the Asparuh hordes is mentioned among the historical events that took place in the region (such as the Scythian invasion, the capture of Izmail fortress by Russian general Alexander Suvorov, etc.). The author is proud by proto-Bulgarians, who lit their fires under the wide southern sky of Budzhak. In the vision of Yuri Sarsakov's lyrical hero (the poem «The Sunrise in Budzhak») there is a cavalry of Asparuh warriors, sweeping across the land where his father's hut now stands. The images of warlike nomads are heroized: «strong, agile, nameless», «not fallen in

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battles», enriched in faith and courage, they like ghosts, appear in the fog with loud shouts, conquering new lands.

The poetry of the poet of Bulgarian-Gagauz origin, Ivan Dermenzhi, presents an attempt to comprehend the genealogy of the Gagauz ethnic group, which is associated with the image of the legendary Khan Oguz, who is considered the ancestor of a number of Turkic peoples, including the Seljuks, the Ottomans, the Khajars, the Auschars, in the Black Sea steppes known as Pechenegs. The Bessarabian poet is proud of the heroic history of his ethnic group and extrapolates the ancestry mythopoetic characteristics on its contemporary representatives [5]:

Хан Огуз наш славный предок, в битв века и темных друзов  
Основал в начале эры род прекрасный гагаузов.  
От него исходят корни удивительного рода  
Дух пленительной свободы гагаузского народа.

So, in the historical reflection of regional poets the cultural heroes are presented by the legendary national figures whose activities were related to the long or short-term relation to the region.

In the lyrics of Ukrainian-speaking poets, the cultural heroes are:

- Kievan Prince Svyatoslav, who fought on the Danube with the Bulgarians;
- Cossacks of the Danube Sich, settled on the Danube in the late 18th-early 19th century.

*In Romanian poetry:*

- Roman Emperor Mark Ulpius Trojan;
- Decebal, king of the Dacians;
- the ruler of the Principality of Moldova, Stefan the Great.

*In Bulgarian poetry:*

- Khan Asparuh, founder of Danube Bulgaria.

*In Gagauz lyrics:*

- Khan Oguz, considered the ancestor of a number of Turkic peoples, in particular Oguz tribes of the Pechenegs;

*In Russian:*

- Commander Alexander Suvorov.

### **Landscape**

The image of the geographical space of the native land, which has blossomed due to the tireless work of the colonists, is shared by common concepts: *the steppe, the endless horizon, the wind, sandstorm, the Danube, lakes, grape, sun, plowman*, etc.

Most authors idealize the image of contemporary Budzhak, built by the hard work of the colonists. Due to the warm subtropical climate, black earth and irrigation systems, the deserted steppe has become a plantation of gardens, vineyards, and vegetable crops. Thus, the typical geographical space of the inhabitants of Budzhak is connected with the awareness of the natural wealth of their land, which from the birth is perceived as the norm (Tamila Kibkalo, «Apricot Summer»; Anatoly Yefimenko, «Morning on the Lake», Georgy Barbarov, «Korten»; Peter Burlak-Volkanov, «My Favorite Land», etc.).

Essential characteristics of Budzhak in the lyrics of contemporary artists are the images of flowering cherry, Danube, morning dawns and majestic sunsets over the endless horizon, which is an integral feature of the steppe space. The lyrical hero of the poem Niko Stoyanov's

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«Forever» is aware of his deep, indissoluble connection with his small homeland, where he feels comfortable, calm, protected.

The southern climate does not always allow a person to feel comfortable in the summer. The depletion of nature during periods of drought and the shattering sandstorms of the Budzhak steppe were also reflected in poetry (Anatoly Yefimenko, «Thirst»). The beauty of Lake Kahul inspires the Romanian-speaking poet Valentin Manmut to aesthetic reflection related to the awareness of the significance of the historical events that took place in Budzhak (Lake with Wonders).

Therefore, the phenomenon of increased attention of the national communities of Budzhak to the issues of their ethnic identification develops not only in the system of physical (climate, landscape, geography of settlement) and mental coordinates (language, traditions, rituals), but also develops dynamically in the space of cultural reflection through the development of historical reflection and mythopoetic plots.

### **Cultural traditions**

Tolerance and readiness for intercultural communication and dialogue of cultures are the distinctive markers of Ukrainian and Russian-language poetry of Budzhak. Romanian and Bulgarian poetry differs by the desire to convey cultural identifiers in the fields of music, dance, and culinary traditions peculiar only to their ethnic group. We can find there only inner national markers: *jok* and *horo* as a dance; *mici*, *placinta* as examples of Romanian cuisine; the Bulgarian one is presented by *kurban*, *pepper*, *manga*, *mirudia*; the Gagausian cuisine – by *turshija*.

The Bessarabian poets of Russian origin, on the contrary, demonstrate the expressive reception of the cultural heritage of all ethnic groups of the region is observed and its perception as a common cultural heritage. So, Russian-speaking poet Eugenia Tomsha in the poem “Welcome to Bessarabia” lists the traditional home-made alcoholic drinks of southern, western and eastern Slavs (wine, liquor, vodka, plum brandy, brandy, beer, hooch), as well as among the traditional dishes of Bessarabian cuisine, the poet distinguishes dishes of Gagauz (*gözlyam*), Russian (pancakes, donuts, pies), Bulgarian (*kurban*, *melina*), Ukrainian (*borsch*, *galushky*), Romanian (*placinta*, *mamaliga*), Jewish (*farshmak*) and Caucasian (*kebab*, *azu*) origin. She is sincerely admired by the diversity of cultures in the region and is happy to live there.

In the culture of self-expression of each nation, a special place belongs to such kind of art as dance. In the poem "Welcome to Bessarsbia" Ukrainian and Russian people of Budzhak are able to dance at parties not only *hopak*, but also by *moldawenyaska*, *gypsy*, *lezginka* and Bulgarian *choro*.

The algorithm of successful Budzhak multiculturalism is based on the formation of mythopoetic picture of the world of regional society by means of numerous borrowings and mythopoetic connection with historical homeland of people living here. The collective memory of the regional society enriches by the mythical poetic relationship with the ancestral homelands of different regional ethnic groups; the socio-historical paradigm of the region, formed on a peculiar crossroads of ethnic cultures, is marked by cultural pluralism. The identification of differential and integral markers of cultural identification in the poetry of ethnic communities of the region demonstrates a successful interethnic dialogue and spontaneous realization of European idea of tolerant boundary.

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