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## ONTOLOGICAL DISPLACEMENT OF THE HERITAGE OF UKRAINIAN CULTURE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF POWER REGIMES

*The article conceptualizes the ontological displacement of Ukrainian cultural heritage as a multidimensional historical and cultural process shaped by the interaction of linguistic, educational, political, and informational mechanisms of influence. It traces the historical conditions that facilitated the marginalization of the Ukrainian language and culture, with particular emphasis on 19th-century regulatory measures that restricted their use in education, publishing, and public communication. These constraints are shown to have established a structural foundation for the subsequent absorption of Ukrainian cultural elements into imperial and Soviet narratives, often accompanied by the erosion or reconfiguration of their original identity.*

*The study further examines contemporary manifestations of cultural appropriation within the digital environment. It identifies key mechanisms such as algorithmic amplification, the reinterpretation and reattribution of cultural origins, the memetic transformation of cultural symbols, and their circulation within mass digital spaces. Within this framework, digital platforms are understood not merely as channels of dissemination but as active agents in reshaping and recontextualizing cultural meanings.*

*The paper also analyzes the implications of these processes for the construction of Ukrainian national identity. It argues that sustained linguistic and cultural displacement has contributed to the fragmentation of cultural memory and the emergence of hybrid identity models. At the same time, these pressures have activated compensatory processes of cultural revitalization and reinforced the symbolic role of language as a core marker of identity.*

*The study concludes that, under contemporary conditions, cultural appropriation functions not only as a legacy of imperial strategies but also as a component of ongoing informational confrontation, influencing the formation of collective memory and national consciousness. Ukrainian identity is thus interpreted as a dynamic and adaptive system, shaped by the interplay between external pressures and internal processes of consolidation.*

**Keywords:** cultural appropriation, Ukrainian heritage, national identity, Russification, historical memory, hybrid war, cultural expansion.

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## ОНТОЛОГІЧНЕ ЗМІЩЕННЯ СПАДЩИНИ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ В РАМКАХ РЕЖИМІВ ВЛАДИ

*У статті концептуалізується інструменталізація української культурної спадщини як багатомірний історико-культурний процес, сформований взаємодією лінгвістичних, освітніх, політичних та інформаційних механізмів впливу. У ній простежуються історичні умови, що сприяли маргіналізації української мови та культури, з особливим акцентом на регуляторні заходи 19-го століття, які обмежували їх використання в освіті, видавничій справі та публічній комунікації. Показано, що ці обмеження створили структурну основу для подальшого поглинання українських культурних елементів імперськими та радянськими нарративами, що часто супроводжувалося ерозією або реконфігурацією їхньої первісної ідентичності.*

*У статті розглянуто сучасні прояви культурної апропріації в цифровому середовищі. У ньому визначені ключові механізми, такі як алгоритмічна ампліфікація, переосмислення та переатрибуція культурного походження, меметична трансформація культурних символів та їх циркуляція в масових цифрових просторах. У цих рамках цифрові платформи розуміються не просто як канали поширення, а як активні агенти у переформуванні та реконтекстуалізації культурних значень.*

*Проаналізовано вплив цих процесів на конструювання української національної ідентичності. У ньому стверджується, що тривале лінгвістичне та культурне витіснення сприяло фрагментації культурної пам'яті та появі гібридних моделей ідентичності. Водночас, цей тиск активував компенсаторні процеси культурного відродження та посилив символічну роль мови як основного маркера ідентичності.*

*Виявлено, що за сучасних умов культурна апропріація функціонує не лише як спадщина імперських стратегій, а й як компонент постійної інформаційної конфронтації, впливаючи на формування колективної пам'яті*

та національної свідомості. Українська ідентичність таким чином інтерпретується як динамічна та адаптивна система, що формується взаємодією між зовнішнім тиском та внутрішніми процесами консолідації.

**Ключові слова:** культурна апропріація, українська спадщина, національна ідентичність, русифікація, історична пам'ять, гібридна війна, культурна експансія.

**Problem statement.** The problem of this study is to determine the specific mechanism through which the transformation of Ukrainian cultural heritage into an element of someone else's narrative occurs. It is not just about the fact of appropriation, but about the systemic process of changing the semantic framework, within which cultural phenomena lose connection with their own historical context and acquire a new, externally given interpretation. Within the imperial tradition, this was manifested through the integration of Ukrainian historical and cultural markers into the concept of a "single cultural space", which formed a long-term inertia of perception. In modern conditions, the problem is complicated by the fact that appropriation occurs simultaneously at several levels – academic, media and political, which creates a multilayered system of influence on the idea of the origin and belonging of cultural phenomena. An additional complication is the lack of clear analytical criteria that allow us to distinguish appropriation from legitimate forms of cultural interaction. This creates methodological uncertainty that complicates empirical research on the phenomenon, especially in the context of the rapid spread of information and hybrid forms of communication.

Analysis of scientific publications. Recent studies show that the topic of cultural appropriation of Ukrainian heritage has emerged as a separate direction mainly after 2014 and has intensified sharply after 2022. Previously, it was considered fragmentarily within the framework of historiography or Slavic studies, while modern works directly treat it as a systemic imperial practice of control over the interpretation of culture.

A key contribution has been made by researchers of the postcolonial and cultural-political approach. Halyna Koltyuk analyzes appropriation as the “colonization of consciousness”, emphasizing the cognitive dimension of appropriation [9]. Andreas Kepler, Katrin Wanner and Tetyana Zhurzhenko explore memory and decolonization, where the conflict is interpreted as a struggle for historical narratives [10]. In the field of cultural policy, Olena Betli and Elżbieta Olzak show that de– Russification is a reaction to long-term symbolic appropriation [1].

A separate direction is represented by works on art and heritage. Oleksandra Dudko and Anna Hájková argue that Ukrainian art has historically been interpreted through Russian academic frameworks [3], and Nadiya Krasynska analyzes the museum dimension of this problem. At the same time, Olena Mishalova considers modern war as a “war for identity”, where appropriation is a central mechanism [7, p.82].

**The aim of the article** is to systematically identify historical and contemporary mechanisms of appropriation of Ukrainian cultural heritage, analyze their institutional, linguistic, educational and media instruments, as well as determine their impact on the transformation of Ukrainian national identity in a long-term historical perspective.

To achieve this **goal**, the following tasks are planned to be solved: to consider the historical prerequisites of the appropriation of Ukrainian cultural heritage. To investigate the features of contemporary forms of appropriation in the information and media space of Russia. To identify the main mechanisms of cultural appropriation (reappropriation of authorship, transformation of origin, and integration into the imperial cultural canon) and to assess the impact of these processes on the formation of Ukrainian national identity.

**Main part.** The historical prerequisites for the appropriation of Ukrainian cultural heritage are formed as a result of a long process of political integration of Ukrainian lands into the structures of dominant imperial systems, in which the cultural dimension was gradually subordinated to the logic of centralized power.

In the case of the Russian Empire, the defining prerequisite was the formation of asymmetrical relations between the center and the periphery, within which cultural production was under strict administrative control. This became a prerequisite for the incorporation of Ukrainian cultural phenomena into the general imperial canon without proper recognition of their origin, which gradually consolidated the practice of symbolic reappropriation.

An important historical factor was the centralization of historical knowledge and the formation of an official version of the past, which aimed to legitimize imperial integrity. Within this logic, Ukrainian history and culture were interpreted as a regional variant of a single civilizational tradition [3]. The model of “inferiority” of Ukrainians, dictated by imperial ideas, reduced the autonomy of the Ukrainian cultural space

and consolidated it as derivative in relation to the dominant center, which created a structural springboard for further cultural appropriation.

The second fundamental factor was language and educational policy aimed at unifying the cultural space by restricting the functioning of the Ukrainian language in official institutions. The Valuev Circular of 1863 effectively banned the publication of most books in Ukrainian, especially those of educational and religious content [9]. Its logic was straightforward: the Ukrainian language was interpreted as “not existing” as a full-fledged language, which not only limited access to knowledge in the native language, but also undermined the very possibility of forming an intellectual environment.

The next step was the Ems Decree of 1876, which significantly expanded the restrictions: it was forbidden not only to print, but also to import Ukrainian books from abroad, to stage theatrical performances, and to publish texts for musical works in Ukrainian. Thus, culture lost not only its educational but also its public dimension, which sharply narrowed its presence in society [5].

In the field of education, imperial policy envisaged the complete Russification of the educational process. The Ukrainian language was ousted from schools, and any attempts to use it were regarded as a deviation from the norm. This meant that new generations were forced to acquire knowledge through a different language system, which automatically displaced cultural identification [7].

During the 20th century, despite a brief period of “Ukrainization” in the 1920s, the situation changed dramatically under Stalinist centralization. Repressions against the Ukrainian intelligentsia, known as the Shot Revival, effectively destroyed an entire layer of cultural figures. Repressive processes not only interrupted the development of national culture, but also created a cultural vacuum, which, according to the Soviet plan, was easily filled with an ideological cultural product [2, p. 222].

During the Soviet period, the Ukrainian language formally existed, but the actual dominance of Russian was consolidated through administrative, educational, and social mechanisms. Career advancement, scientific activity, and access to a wider audience were all much easier in a Russian-speaking environment. As a result, a significant part of the intellectual product was either created in Russian or adapted to it [6].

The displacement of the Ukrainian language and culture did not occur spontaneously, but through a consistent policy of restrictions. It was this policy that created the conditions under which the Ukrainian cultural product lost visibility, changed form, or was integrated into another cultural space, which opened the way for further appropriation [1].

Modern forms of cultural appropriation of Ukrainian heritage in the information and media space of Russia are characterized by a qualitative transformation compared to previous historical stages. If in the 19th and 20th centuries administrative and institutional mechanisms of assimilation dominated, in the 21st century digital communications, mass culture and algorithmically controlled platforms play a key role. This has led not only to a change in the tools, but also to the complication of the appropriation processes themselves, which become less obvious, but much more effective in the long term.

Modern cultural appropriation is closely related to political functions. It acts not only as a cultural, but also as an ideological tool aimed at constructing a certain picture of historical and cultural reality. Through the appropriation of Ukrainian heritage, narratives about common origin, cultural inseparability and the absence of clear boundaries between national identities are formed [5]. In a broader context, this is used to legitimize political claims and influence, which transfers the problem from the plane of cultural studies to the sphere of information security.

At the same time, the modern stage is characterized by an increase in the level of reflection and resistance to such practices. The Ukrainian information space is increasingly responding to cases of appropriation through public fixation, research activities and popularization of authentic cultural products [4, p. 327]. This forms an alternative discourse within which authorship is restored and cultural heritage is reinterpreted as a component of national identity. As a result, a situation of competition of interpretations arises, where none of them can remain outside critical analysis.

One of the basic characteristics of modern appropriation is the systematic editing of cultural origin. In the media space, there is a purposeful or indirect erasure of the Ukrainian context with the subsequent inclusion of relevant elements in the Russian cultural field. It is implemented through the re-publication of content – musical works, folklore samples, visual images – with changed or generalized descriptions. As a result, the primary attribution is gradually being displaced from the information circulation, and the user is already faced with an interpreted, “recoded” version of the cultural product. It is important that this process does not always take the form of a direct denial of Ukrainian origin; a strategy of blurring is much more often used,

when the object is designated as “folk”, “common” or “traditional” without specifying. The next significant aspect is the role of algorithmic mechanisms in the spread and legitimization of such practices.

Digital platforms operate according to principles that give priority to popularity and intensity of interaction, rather than the reliability or correctness of the source. As a result, content that is actively replicated in the Russian segment of the network receives increased visibility and occupies dominant positions in search and recommendation systems. This creates the effect of cumulative presence: multiple repetition of a certain version of origin forms an idea of its “normativity” [6].

Thus, algorithms become an indirect but influential tool of cultural appropriation, as they reinforce existing narratives and contribute to their consolidation in the mass consciousness. An important feature of the current stage is the institutionalization of appropriation practices. They are reproduced not only at the level of informal digital content, but also within official media, educational programs and cultural initiatives. In these discourses, Ukrainian cultural heritage is often interpreted as a component of a broader “nationwide” or “historically unified” space [4, p. 10]. Such an interpretation allows integrating Ukrainian cultural phenomena into the Russian canon without directly denying their existence, but with a shift in emphasis on their origin and meaning. In textbooks, public lectures and popular scientific materials, there is a gradual formation of the idea of the secondary nature of Ukrainian cultural development, which is typical of imperial models of cultural policy.

A special role is played by mass culture as a hybridization environment. Elements of the Ukrainian tradition – melody, rhythm, symbolism, and individual language forms – are actively used in modern musical, audiovisual, and entertainment products [10]. However, these elements are adapted to the Russian cultural context, losing their original semantics and historical attachment. They are not direct copying, but rather a transformation that ensures a deeper integration of borrowed elements into mass culture, making their perception as “our own” more natural and less critically understood.

The phenomenon of memetization of cultural content requires special attention. Short video formats, memes, and other viral units of information operate in a mode of rapid dissemination and simplification of content. In this environment, cultural elements are reduced to recognizable images or humorous constructions, which almost completely deprives them of their historical context [8]. As a result, the issue of authorship or origin recedes into the background, and the content itself begins to be perceived as part of an abstract “common” cultural field. Memetization as a form of cultural appropriation is especially widespread in the youth environment, since the speed of information consumption prevails over its critical analysis.

The impact of the processes of linguistic and cultural displacement and subsequent appropriation on the formation of Ukrainian national identity is long-term and multi-level in nature, which cannot be reduced to the direct loss or preservation of individual elements of culture. Rather, it is a complex dynamic of deformations, latent preservation and subsequent restoration of identification structures within different historical eras [1].

First of all, these processes caused the fragmentation of cultural memory. The long-term restriction of the functioning of the Ukrainian language in education, administration and public space led to the fact that significant parts of the population lost a direct connection with their own cultural tradition in its authentic form. This created a situation where identity existed not as a holistic system, but as a set of partially preserved elements, often mediated by an alien linguistic and interpretative framework.

The second consequence was the hybridization of identity, characteristic primarily of the urban and educated environment during the period of imperial and Soviet policy. The Ukrainian cultural basis coexisted with dominant Russian linguistic and cultural models, which created mixed forms of self-identification. In such conditions, national belonging was often not denied, but gradually separated from linguistic and cultural practice, which weakened its structural certainty.

A third important aspect is the institutional erosion of Ukrainian cultural representation. When language and culture are displaced from official spheres, they lose their ability to shape the “norm” of social life. This means that Ukrainian identity has long functioned mainly in a private, local, or informal dimension, without equal access to the mechanisms of mass reproduction – education, media, science. Under such conditions, it was not the disappearance of identity that occurred, but its marginalization.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize that these processes also had the opposite effect – the formation of a compensatory national consciousness. Restrictions and pressure contributed to the emergence of intellectual and cultural resistance movements, for which the Ukrainian language and culture became not only a means of communication, but also a symbol of political and cultural autonomy. This was especially

intensified during periods of repression and prohibitions, when the very practice of preserving the language acquired the character of an act of identification.

In the long term, an important consequence was the asymmetric modernization of identity. Ukrainian national consciousness developed not linearly, but through alternating periods of repression and restoration, which created an uneven structure of its distribution in different regions and social groups. This explains the presence of different models of linguistic behavior and cultural self-identification within the same society.

Current historical trends are transformed into a process of reflexive restoration of identity, when society not only returns to linguistic and cultural practices, but also rethinks the mechanisms of their previous repression. It is the awareness of historical trauma and structural limitations that becomes an important factor in consolidation. The impact of linguistic and cultural limitations and appropriation practices did not lead to the disappearance of Ukrainian national identity, but significantly complicated its development, making it discrete, uneven and dependent on historical contexts. At the same time, these same processes paradoxically strengthened its symbolic weight, turning language and culture into key markers of political and civilizational self-identification.

**Conclusion:** Thus, the historical analysis of linguistic and cultural limitations and contemporary practices of cultural appropriation shows that their combined impact on the formation of Ukrainian national identity was contradictory in nature. On the one hand, the systematic displacement of the Ukrainian language from educational, administrative and public spheres, as well as the integration of cultural elements into dominant imperial and later Soviet narratives, led to the fragmentation of cultural memory, the weakening of institutional mechanisms for the reproduction of identity and the formation of mixed or asymmetric models of self-identification.

On the other hand, these very restrictions became the catalyst for the processes of internal consolidation and symbolic rethinking of Ukrainian culture. Under pressure, language, historical memory and cultural tradition acquired the status of markers of resistance and the preservation of identity, which contributed to the formation of deep motivations for its restoration. Even during the periods of the strongest assimilation policy, Ukrainian identity did not disappear, but passed into latent forms of existence, retaining the potential for further actualization.

In the conditions of information confrontation, these historical processes acquired a new meaning. They determine both the vulnerabilities of the cultural space and its resistance to external influences. Accordingly, national identity appears not as a static structure, but as a dynamic system, formed under the influence of historical traumas, mechanisms of cultural pressure, and at the same time – practices of restoration and rethinking.

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