



The Sanctification of Woman and Family in the Ukrainian Spiritual Tradition: Ethnic Mentality and Language

Ukrayna Manevi Geleneğinde Kadının ve Ailenin Kutsallaştırılması: Etnik Zihniyet ve Dil

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the consideration of family and woman sanctification in the Ukrainian spiritual tradition. The study reveals the feminine motives of the Ukrainian language culture and ethnic mentality and represents the issue of dual consideration of religious phenomenon and religion as a spiritual paradigm of ethnic and mental themes in the Ukrainian ethnic culture. The authors study ethnic and social dimensions of the Ukrainian mentality in light of the crisis of traditional religion and family communication culture. The multi-vector post-industrial world is inconsistent with the sense of traditional Ukrainian religion that has caused its crisis. Consequently, the vital issue for the Ukrainian nation is the Ukrainian ethnos, which nature considers spiritual and historical national experience. The true spiritual Renaissance of Ukraine and tolerant attitude to the other values are possible only when the true Ukrainian values are popularized and respected.

Keywords: Mother, family, sacral tradition, ethnic mentality, spirituality.

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Introduction

Attitudes towards a woman, mother, family, motherland, and religion come as criteria for assessing the moral and cultural status of a particular person or community. The phenomena are sacral for the enemies and friends, surrounding community and far unknown people, all nations and ethnic groups. These factors culturally unite the past with present and future; integrate a person's spirituality with humanity's spiritual greatness.

Every nation has its own and unique attitude to religion as well as the expression of religion. The same unique is the phenomenon of ethnic and mental concepts. A lot of scholars understand the Ukrainian idea of religion as "cordocentric" (in Latin *cordis* means *heart*) (Kolodny, Fillipovych, 1996, p. 15). This cordocentric focus implies that the motivational and driving role in a person's life is played not by rational factors but rather by emotions, feelings, the so-called power of a human heart. The cordocentric understanding of religion implies the practical simplicity of faith expression, which results in natural faith and rituals, clanship or nepotism, superstition, a complete absence of fanaticism, confessional indifference, and plurality of worldview. These features cause anticlericalism and rejection of the orthodox foundations. The idea of the so-called "heartfelt faith" (Grygoriev, 1941, p. 18), "sincere perception of God", and cordocentrism of the Ukrainian character can be seen in the common phrases as "a person of a holy and sincere heart", "open your heart to God", "God does not live in her heart", "if there is God in a man's heart, then a man is a man", "if there is no conscience, God does not live in this person's heart", etc.

The purpose of the article is to systematize and highlight the issue's peculiarity that is in consideration family and female sanctification in the Ukrainian spiritual tradition in general and its religious nature in particular via structural analysis and application to the hermeneutic methodology. The additional purpose is to consider the level of honor of the female figures (woman and mother) in the traditional perception and to analyze the crucial directions of the spiritual roots of national mentality in the culture of family and land sanctification.

Research and Results

Family focus is a characteristic feature of Ukrainian religiosity. This



tendency can be seen in the desire to synthesize a religious image with the family atmosphere of a family home. So, even the everyday family situation sometimes acquired a festive, holy, and religious connotation. A classic example of this idea is Taras Shevchenko's poem "A Cherry Orchard by the House", in which an ordinary dinner with the family looks more like a sacred rite or religious event. Making bread by the housewife also becomes a ritual, and not everyone was allowed to attend this event or even get an invitation to the table.

We can see that the elements of religious rites of Ukrainians relate primarily to the family nest, and holidays (both Pagan and Christian) with their entire storyline are focused not so much on the church and temple building, but on the family, family dwelling-house (*in Ukrainian, this word means "a house sanctified by the Lord"*). Another characteristic feature of the religious manifestation of Ukrainians is *family-focused ritualism* and not a version of "classical church ritualism".

An original feature of Ukrainian religious expression is a traditionally used collocation "Our Lord" (or direct translation from the Ukrainian language is "Master God"). On the one hand, it reflects our predecessors' religious beliefs, on the other hand, it is a continuation of a religious "family-focused" issue. The last one is embodied in God's identification with a household owner – with a "Master" or "Lord". In the given context God is represented as a family charm and has a role of Fateful Logos. Ksenofont Sosenko paid attention to such a notion in his research "Christmas-Carols and Christmas Eve" when the Ukrainian peculiarities of pagan holidays were described. Simultaneously, he mentioned that Ukrainian understanding of God was depicted into ancient ceremonial language sounding, and carols in particular. The word "Lord" dominates in a human address to God, as under it "The Supreme Being", "Lord of World", "Benefactor of Nations" is understood (Sosenko, 1994, p. 118). The issue of "Benefactor" is the central one; as a result, the amount and quantity of "virtue" can be described via "unlimited borders", which is proved by the deeper language analysis of the word "Lord" ("Master") – "Lord of World", "Lord of Destiny", "Lord of a Family". If a household is under God's protection, it will be a profitable one. Otherwise, a household will be impoverished (as a result of God's protection loss); besides a family will be divided into separate



persons (called “nebog” and “nebizchik” – literally translated as a dead man) who have lost God’s guardianship and help. Whereas in the Ukrainian national religious imagination the issue of “Lord” has a central focus on a family, the fact of its essence embodied in unity and wealth is a “proof” of God’s protection. Ilarion Ogienko highlighted this fact in the well-known work: “Ukrainian Pagan Beliefs” saying that “the main religious terms were presented long before the Christianization, new Greek belief was powerless to expel them from common usage,... however, the old religious terms obtained new Christian meaning with unchanged forms...”. (Ogienko, 1994, p. 85). Consequently, the crucial religious word God... was not substituted by the new Greek word “theos”. The Ukrainian words – a rich man, wealth, property – have the same root as the word “God”. Ogienko focuses on the interesting semantic features:

The word “God” is widely derived in us, thus it is a mark that the word is old and widely spread from ancient times... “Property” is something given by God, to lose God’s protection means to become poor. A poor man (“neboga”) is someone who has lost God’s protection, an orphan, a helpless man. As a result, a dead man (“nebizchik”) is a man without God’s guardianship (Ogienko, 1994, p. 85-86).

Ukrainian religious outlook influences the understanding of the family well-being, its prosperity. They are directly related to God’s intercession and good deeds. Also, the religious component of family happiness contributed to the idealization of married life and an incredibly respectful attitude towards the family. So, the very fact of its existence was perceived as a supernatural, divinely sanctioned community. This community was not only a married life. It also meant the path together through all the ups and downs of life that is based on love and friendship. In the Ukrainian outlook, this path is sanctified by the Lord.

The consideration of the concept of family based on friendship has roots in the Ukrainian spiritual depths. The issue of friendship is crucial in the main Ukrainian words related to family: “to marry”, “community”, “couple”, “wife” (*the tendency can be traced in the original language*). Friendship is a union of equal humans based on mutual respect. Hence, the roots of social justice, an image of a woman-mother glorification, and the general respect to family notions came from it.



Ukrainians had an extremely heightened sense of family, which explains the respectful attitude to the parents. The parents should be told with great respect and addressed very formally. Children (even those who were already adults) were not permitted to begin any important action without *their parents' blessing*. This ritual was brightly described by J. Lozinsky in his work "Ukrainian Wedding", which showed the traditional pattern: children (in that case newlyweds) appealed not directly to God but to their parents who blessed them in the name of God with good words and wished them all the best: "God bless you!".

The parents' blessing was necessary before starting a trip: "*God and you, mother, bless me*". The existence of the family blessing ritual confirms that the Ukrainians have believed in an immortal power of a spoken word for centuries, which can inspire work, dispel doubts, and create faith.

Along with the well-known "Ukrainian stubbornness" (which was noticed by D. Mordovtsev, V. Popovych, V. Semenov, N. Grigoriev), the so-called "religiously layered anger" is the same common, which means people did not talk to each other for some time and avoided each other. But despite everything, before Easter, it was necessary to "apologize" – and a sincere "Please forgive me" was followed by "May God forgive you, and I forgive you too." In Ukraine, there was also a unique tradition to apologize to a dying person. It was important to say three times: "Forgive me, we might have quarreled." This established tradition corresponds to the Christian idea of forgiveness.

The widows' surnames belong to the group of surnames derived from the names. A mother's name is infrequently applied to a surname in Ukrainian tradition. Nevertheless, there were some exceptions when a woman remained a widow early and became a head of a family. In that case, a surname was derived from her name. The forms can be easily met in the Transcarpathian region. The ironical male nicknames based on the female names are also included in this category. The reason for their appearance was in the family relations when a woman was the main breadwinner and consequently dominated over her husband (Khrypko, 2019).

The Ukrainian character is characterized by features with *the motif of femininity* being quite vivid: romantic, poetic, economical, submissive, loyal, passive, compromising, peaceful, vulnerable, sensitive, sincere, etc.



Thus, despite the full scope of power and respect given to the father of the family – the owner of the house and master of his family – a special emphasis of reverence and even holiness “are taken by the role and place belonged to a woman.” *The guardian of the family was a woman. Mother and wife – she dominated in the family. Perhaps that is why the cult of Mary the Virgin, who was perceived as the Queen of Ukraine, became so widespread in Ukraine.*

Ukrainian spiritual sacral issues such as sacral land and bread, a mother and a woman, holy family and household are included in the problem of the Ukrainians’ Christianization. *The specific essence of Ukraine Saint Trinity should be taken into account, namely, it consists of Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, and Saint Nicholas.* Such unusual selective understanding of the Christian dogma depicts a harmonious combination of Ukrainian mentality (land, family, and mother are the main elements) and the history of the Ukrainian nation, the Ukrainian state. The causal relationship of “Original Ukrainian Trinity” is searched in the works of A. Kolodny. Particularly, he mentioned that “the acceptance of the Christian dogma resulted in a practical approach. It contained hope for protection from calamities and receiving compensation for them (Jesus Christ’s mission), an idea of family and a woman’s blessing (Virgin Mary’s protection), a search for power in life and economic activity (Saint Nicholas’s example of life and charity)” (Religion in the spiritual life of the Ukrainian nation, 1994, p. 57). Approximately half of monasteries and churches are named after the Virgin Mary (Religion in the spiritual life of the Ukrainian nation, 1994, p. 58); the fact determines the special worship dissemination. Almost all “miraculous icons” of Ukraine have her image (Kolodny, Fillipovych, 1996, p. 13). A lot of legends about the Virgin Mary occurred in Ukraine. Therefore, *Virgin Mary’s presence in the Ukrainian spiritual world is accepted naturally in the role of Queen, Mother-Keeper of the Ukrainian land as well as an “Owner of all Christian Souls” in general.* The power of the Ukrainian mentality is demonstrated in the special Virgin Mary’s worship, which despite all “stereotypical canons and dogmas”, has overcome “suspicious attitude to a woman”, general tendencies about female sinfulness, and finally has reconsidered her role in a family and society. A woman-wife, a family-household have been sacral things from ancient times.

The peculiar textbook of “Ukrainian cultural studies” could be



deemed “The description of Ukraine” by Guillaume Le Vasseur de Beauplan (XVII century) who was fascinated by the natural beauty of the Ukrainian women and their position in society. For instance, according to his observations, even nuns had freedom in Kyiv (Sichynskyi, 1991, p. 21-22).

The national thinkers such as I. Ogienko, I. Franko, I. Nechui-Levytsky, Marko Vovchok, and others paid attention to a preferential female status or at least to “the equal with male” position. Moreover, Lesia Ukrainka focused on the issue of the Ukrainian spiritual world where a woman had never been considered in the context of physical or mental slavery. *The attitude to a woman in “a sacral context” was an echo of the high level of the Ukrainian spiritual life which built a base to the Virgin Mary’s acceptance in a role of Family Keeper and further to Queen of the Ukrainian Land and Nation.*

Nevertheless, the men occupied a crucial and prominent place despite a predominance of “female traits” in the Ukrainian national character. Such a tendency has influenced on religious dimensions of Ukrainian mentality. For instance, *it can be seen in the chivalrous character of the Ukrainian spiritual life, especially in the historical period of Zaporizhian Sich (Cossack Army in the Zaporizhian area).* Among the core features of national character are bravery, even radical courage, endurance and love of freedom, undemanding nature, wisdom, and common sense in life challenges, self-sufficiency, a sense of self-dignity and chivalry, generosity.

The enumerated traits are reflected in religious worldview, namely *in an ascetic way of life, material goods neglecting.* Furthermore, Cossacks neglected their own lives in the name of belief in God’s protection. As a result, the radical Orthodox Christian views were particularly presented in the Cossacks’ environment, and they were different from the morals of the rural population. *Nevertheless, an owner of Cossacks’ souls was the Virgin Mary. She was honored as a Goddess and as a Woman. She was the only woman who had a right to power on Zaporizska Sich territory where women were not allowed to, and a right to have a family was a distant dream.*

Notwithstanding the lowest Ukrainian social layers had never lost their religious worldview, which could be deemed as “a psychological footprint of rural life”. On the one hand, the peasant psychology of the Ukrainian grain-growers became a source for piety, superstition beliefs; on the



other hand, the philosophy of land was a core *for vivid natural beliefs and verbal magic*.

Only the Ukrainians could blend in their imagination God's power and opportunities with common agricultural dreams which were to be realized with God's help. Here was a core of *the national understanding of "the greatest sin" which was in separation from land cultivation, agriculture, and everything connected with it*. The peasants' philosophy became the crucial one in the understanding of human mission, and consideration of sin.

The peasant type of national character is shown in the land sanctification context. For instance, it is called "mother" and "The Holy Land", occupies the highest position among other saint figures in the folk culture. Exceptionally the Ukrainian oral folk art could offer descendants a song example where Holy Trinity (*in the Ukrainian way of such concept understanding*) performed agricultural work. The distinguished carol "Saint Ploughers" by K. Sosenko describes that "Saint Nicholas is ploughing a field, Saint Michael is driving oxen, God the Father is sowing the seeds, God the Son is planting crops, and Virgin Mary is preparing food" (Sosenko, 1994, p. 118).

The part of national carol depicts a bright compound example of all Ukrainian religious nuances, such as ritual beliefs, family values, the honor to a woman-mother, land-mother and agricultural work itself, to God in the image of the Master, and ultimately the presence of unique Ukrainian Christian Holy Trinity (Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, the Virgin Mary, God the Son).

Ukrainian atheism (*a belief due to which land is considered holy*) has formed the peasant's worldview with land and agricultural work present (Kolodny, Fillipovych, 1996, p. 8). A notion of land for any Ukrainian is an archetype of national consciousness.

A characteristic feature of Ukrainian spirituality is that up to now the religiosity of Ukrainians has been characterized by *a way too cautious attitude to the world of dark forces, which representatives were "diligently bypassed in all written books" and were not mentioned in the household, which was considered sacred*. In case of mentioning any name that belonged to the dark forces, people would add a "defensive" phrase: "to be not mentioned in the house", or



an original ending “-lo” was added to a word: “naishlo” (*to be seized by something*), “zakrutylo” (*being confused, not having time to stop and think*), zamo-rochylo (*being tricked or fooled by the dark forces*).

If we take into account the idea of A. Sheptytsky where he mentions the power of identifying Ukraine with “the Native House” (Sheptytsky, 1990), it becomes possible to understand the logic of the reasons for the lack of a place of power for representatives of dark forces in the worldview of Ukrainians. After all, “the Native House” is not just a figurative expression. It was the Ukrainian House, the family home – this is the progenitor of the human shelter – that was the cradle of our people, in which the continuity of their spiritual traditions, archetypes, artistic tastes, moral norms, and worldview received its manifestation.

Having analyzed the peculiarity of national religious manifestations in the context of the classical features of Ukrainian ethnic mentality and revealing its interactional character, the following synthesis can be made (Khrypko, 2003):

- Religious nature is a practical process of the representation of a given religion representation in the consciousness and behavior of representatives of a particular religious community. Having a lack of monopoly on some features of religion, the Ukrainian nation has a peculiar combination of some typical religious features that are a product of national history and ethnic culture and represent Ukrainian spiritual experience in general and mentality in particular (that, in turn, is reflected in educational ideals of the national culture). The respectful attitude to a mother, family, and motherland is a main theme of the Ukrainian spiritual culture.

- The main theme of the Ukrainian religious nature is a harmonic combination of emotional, aesthetic, and national dimensions that contain all religious manifestations of the national spirituality, particularly, internal attraction to light, good, beauty, peace as the components of the highest Spiritual truth that has been separated into the authority’s ignorance (so-called dark forces), “aristocracy and delicacy of religious spirit”, natural religious tolerance and sanctification of the sense of life. The result is the absence of a clear spiritual polarization of good and evil in the mental experience of the Ukrainians.



- The original and dominant features of the Ukrainian religious nature are the confidence in God's presence, religious syncretic nature, the lack of Christianity and natural inclination to ancient pagan generalizations "Lord-God", etc., national land sanctification (the specific of which is in a combination of God's power with the grain growers dreams and also in the ancient understanding of "the biggest sin" – exclusion from land cultivation).

- The Ukrainian mentality as a worldview and embodiment of national religion is characterized by the dual nature of formation (for instance, the tendencies of land sanctification have led to the anti-bureaucratic nature of a Ukrainian character).

- The "female motive" in the Ukrainian spiritual experience produced the tendencies of peacefulness, moderate diplomacy, religious tolerance, romanticism, sensitivity, mother and family cult creation; it did not negate the features of chivalrous character that were derived from Cossack's period and were opposite from those of the traditional society.

- The family orientation and distinctive sanctification of a family theme was presented via the introduction of the ancient meaning of the word "God" despite the Greek synonym "theos" as well as general identification of God with a landlord of a particular house that was demonstrated in the following examples: "Lord", the direct offers: "Give me God", "Help me God" etc.

- The national philosophy is a demonstration of the Ukrainian character as well as an original illustration of the religious nature of national spirituality. It is proved by the popular image of Lubomudr (*a man who loves wisdom*) that is a typical reflection of native philosophy and a typical feature of the Ukrainian mentality, a common image of a Ukrainian.

- The cordocentric tendencies of the Ukrainian religious character are a base for practical simplicity of belief, pagan beliefs, taboos, a lack of fanaticism, confessional indifference, worldview plurality, anticlericalism, and lack of orthodox foundations.

- The stable tendencies of the Ukrainian religious nature have depicted the results of authors' ethnic and psychological considerations: the majority of the respondents do not have any doubts regarding "God's all



presence”; however, the attempts of God’s specification are impeded by confessional and informational illiteracy regarding a subject of their belief. The method of the direct survey revealed the potential unwillingness to provide any theological discussions and wish to avoid a manifestation of personal spiritual experience in general. The method of indirect questions has proved the stability of the classical features of a Ukrainian religious character, especially a manifestation of the ancient religious form of worldview is predominant. A lack of confessional information has proved the rest of the ancient pagan worldview, particularly, the predominance of ethnic and religious aspects in the religious worldview and Ukrainian internal education culture. The traditional sacral acceptance of a mother is mentioned by all respondents in the light of traditional moral culture.

Every modern nation and country tries to identify itself in the world space, starts a dialogue with representatives of other cultures and civilizations on questions of originality and uniqueness. A right for self-identification, the realization of society's mental spirit is given to every modern country. The rapid evolution of consciousness requires acceleration of reforms of political and social processes, that are continuously influenced by global infosphere and intensification of cognitive and intellectual creative abilities of humans as a result of information technologies' usage, that promote the change of outlook and even the change of the modern world, including the paradigm of educational and methodological processes. Ukraine's today`s reality needs comparative reconsideration of the social and cultural environment in the European context. In the history of philosophy consideration of the problem of comparison evolved from metaphysical conception of proportionality of space in antiquity to logical understanding of comparison as a basic operation of reason in the philosophy of new time. This evolution occurred within two traditions because the question of finding the basis for comparison has been the main question of these issues (Lobanchuk, 2018, p.682).

Talking about the archetypes of the Ukrainian nation, it is primarily cordocentrism, i.e. the philosophy of the heart (Kryms'kyy, 1996). Bringing to the forefront not the formalism of the mind, but the "heart" as a metaphor for the intimate depths of the soul, which is the root of moral life, is



a characteristic feature of the Ukrainian culture's consciousness. This archetype of the "philosophy of the heart" is defined as the principle of individuality and feeling God (P. Yurkevich), as the microworld, the basis of humanity (G. Skovoroda), as the path to ideal and harmony with nature (T. Shevchenko), a source of hope, premonition, providence (P. Kulish) and the key to the soul, its journey into eternity, the realm of good and beauty (M. Gogol) (Lobanchuk, 2013). The practical relevance of the study of ethnic mentality is because in complex historical epochs the volumes of socially significant information increase a lot (Dodonov, 1998).

Conclusion

The complexity of the process of national and spiritual revival, apart from the problem of the ecology of the Ukrainian ethnic group, also *revealed the crisis of traditional religiosity of Ukrainians*, since the latter loses its atheistic content. There are quite objective reasons and factors that are caused by the zeitgeist. However, the demands of the post-industrial world should not negate the traditional culture and spirituality of the nation. Respectful attitude, renewal, and popularization of Ukrainian values are the main components of the real national revival process. So, the real chance for the spiritual greatness of Ukraine is concentrated in educational institutions and especially in the subjects of the humanities. Professionally presented Ukrainian-centric information is the revival of the forgotten; it makes people rethink the spiritual lessons of the past, restore the traditions, form the future, outline the intellectual and spiritual level of generations that are the future of Ukraine. Information gives an impetus to thought and thus – to action. The synthesis of thought and action (nationally oriented but balanced and tolerant) is an impulse and a component of spiritual revival. The path of effective information is a real source of national consciousness and unity, a life-giving mode of spiritual revival, and a fateful component of the greatness of future Ukraine. *The revival process can be created through destruction, crisis, reinterpretation. Yet it is never based on denial.* The more negative and critical information a person receives, the less likely that kindness, beauty, mercy, and compassion will be able to become part of the everyday life of society.

Femininity, ennobling of maternal themes, poeticized female beauty



have always been inherent in the classical Ukrainian mentality and spiritual culture. And it is desirable to preserve and study and improve them in view of new modern trends

Thus, expression and improvement of spiritual and religious manifestations of the mentality along with the complex process of spiritual revival of Ukraine should be based not on criticism, shame, and defamation of the past periods of spiritually hard times, but on rethinking of the spiritual lessons of the past for the sake of crowning and enriching the manifestations of the humanistic and spiritual core of the national mentality to ensure the true revival of Ukraine and its dominant place in the world history of mankind.

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Öz: Makale, Ukrayna manevi geleneğinde bir aile ve kadın kutsallaştırmasının dikkate alınmasına ayrılmıştır. Çalışma, Ukrayna dili kültürünün ve etnik zihniyetinin kadınsı motiflerini ortaya koymakta ve Ukrayna etnik kültüründe etnik ve zihinsel temaların manevi bir paradigması olarak dini fenomen ve dinin ikili olarak ele alınması konusunu temsil etmektedir. Yazarlar, geleneksel din ve aile iletişim kültürünün krizi ışığında Ukrayna zihniyetinin etnik ve sosyal boyutlarını inceliyorlar. Çok vektörlü Sanayi sonrası dünya, krizine neden olan geleneksel Ukrayna dini duygusuyla tutarsız. Sonuç olarak, Ukrayna milleti için hayati mesele, doğanın manevi ve tarihi ulusal deneyimi düşündüğü Ukrayna etnolarıdır. Ukrayna'nın gerçek manevi Rönesansı ve diğer değerlere karşı hoşgörülü tutum ancak gerçek Ukrayna değerleri popülerleştirildiğinde ve saygı duyulduğunda mümkündür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anne, aile, sakral gelenek, etnik zihniyet, maneviyat.

