

STADIAL-SOTERIOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF FOLKLORE  
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BELARUS AND LITHUANIA

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*The purpose of this article is the structural comparison of similar elements of belarusian and lithuanian folklore. This is done in the context of the stages of the historical process at which these elements were formed. Particular attention is paid to these elements as the oral and intangible heritage of people, as well as their soteriological significance.*

Most folklorists consider the preservation and further transmission of the folklore of their people one of the main tasks of their professional activities. Achievements of Algirdas Vizintas [7, c. 251] can serve as an example for folklorists of other countries. Including for neighbouring Belarus, which, already due to its neighbourhood, cannot be spared its ties with Lithuanian history, culture and folklore – it is obvious. However, the protection and continuity of folklore with large volumes of information flow and narrow professional specialization of our contemporaries are possible only when referring not only to the external components of the tradition (language, ethnic art and music, etc.), which can be directly observed, but also to those that exist latently, at the structural, systemic level and ensure the preservation of the self-organization of tradition. Particular attention should be paid to the soteriological component of traditional culture. Soteriology (Greek σωτηρία «rescue» + Greek. λόγος «doctrine», «word») – the doctrine of the salvation and harmonization of man (including by means of traditional culture), variants of which have existed in many cultures for a long time, preserving the elements of worldview and behavior that make a person human [4]. Only the soteriological aspect of folklore study and protection can contribute to the axiological core existence of traditional culture among peoples as a guarantee of their self-preservation – from formation, separation from neighbours to stable and worthy self-affirmation in the historical arena.

The beginning of the formation of the Belarusian nationality is usually associated with the XIV century, when written sources record the phonetic and morphological features of the Belarusian language (local documents of the X–XIII centuries are considered to be associated with the so-called Church Slavonic and Old Russian literature). The long path of development that preceded this stage is the proto-history of the Belarusians. Questions of spiritual culture, which is partly of folklore origin, associated with the activities of the first local medieval Christian enlighteners, are partly considered in the scientific literature of Belarus. But the incomparably more powerful protohistory layer of the Belarusian culture, which is clearly associated with folklore, and also provides some material for culturological analysis, is considered much less thoroughly. Scientists' statements about the spiritual culture and folklore of the period of local protohistory are very cautious and fragmentary. Hence – the amorphousness, blurring of the historical and cultural panorama of the Belarusian past, insufficient strength of logical connections in the textual embodiment of the concepts and typology of pro- and protohistory of Belarusians, their folklore and traditional culture. As a result, a number of stages of the historical process that are directly related to the ethnic and cultural genesis of our people «drop out» from the domestic art history and culturological discourse devoted to traditional culture and folklore.

Among the Belarusian researchers who have successfully studied the typology and axiology of traditional culture and folklore of Belarus are Uladzimir Konan, Engels Darashevich, Edward Zaikouski, Zinaida Mazheika and Siarhei Sanko. Our northern, eastern and western neighbors have a rather significant statistical «head start» here. Among the scientists who have made a significant contribution to solving urgent problems of studying the origins of the Circumbaltic region traditional culture (to which geographically and typologically the culture of Belarusians gravitates), as well as in the formation of directions and methods of its research, we should name Maria Gimbutas, Valentin Danilenko, Vyacheslav Ivanov and Vladimir Toporov, co-author of the last two in fundamental

publications Tatyana Mikhailova (Tsivyan), as well as Yuri Lotman, Igor Matievsky, Anna Chekanovsku, Jonas Trinkunas, Jadwig Churlionite and others.

The purpose of this article is a structural comparison of similar elements of the folklore of Belarusians and Lithuanians in the context of the stages of the historical process at which they were formed. At the same time, special attention is paid to these elements as the so-called «The oral and intangible heritage of mankind» [2: 11], the protection of which both Lithuania and Belarus have declared as a priority of state policy, by joining the corresponding 2003 UNESCO protection convention [8].

As mentioned above, most historians and linguists date the stage of the Belarusian nationality formation, at which our ancient history ended, with the XIV century: the phonetics and morphology of the Belarusian language are visible in the written sources of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania of that time. In terms of language, we were already Belarusians at that time, which also testifies to the formation of a type of culture characteristic of a particular nationality. But the culture of Belarus, in order to become the culture of the Belarusian nationality, by the XIV century went through three very long stages of different «ethnic content». Historian Eduard Zagorulsky offers the following chronology [3].

Table 1 – Stages of the ancient Belarusian history and the stages of the historical process

Pre-Indo-European (Stone Age)	Baltic (Metal era)	Slavic (Middle Ages)
XX (south of Belarus) or X (north of Belarus) millennium BC – boundary III / II millennia BC	boundary III / II millennia BC – VI–X centuries AD	VI–X centuries – XIV century

Belarus was inhabited in the Stone Age: in the XX millennium BC – southern regions; in the X millennium BC – the northern ones, which were under the glacier for a long time. Hunting tribes of the Belarus Mesolithic (IX–V

millennia BC) were already ethnographic groups that had their own language, territory and common cultural features. The ethnic map was preserved in the Neolithic (VI–III or V–III millennia BC) with the flourishing of local communities of pastoralists and farmers of the borderlands of Old Europe (according Marija Gimbutas). The ethnodetermination issue of the Paleo inhabitants of Belarus (as well as Lithuania) is, of course, controversial, one can call them Paleo-Europeans or Old Europeans. They communicated in non-Indo-European dialects and languages. Definitely migrants to Belarusian territories in the IV–III millennia BC belong to the Finno-Ugrians, and the majority of researchers consider the paleopopulation of Belarus to be close to the Finno-Ugrians and Turks.

The Indo-European dialects carriers – the Balts (the ancestors of the Prussians, Lithuanians, Latvians and partially – the Belarusians) – settled Belarus (as well as Lithuania) only in the metal era – with the migrations of nomads-steppe people and the ariaphonization of Old Europe at the turn III/II millennia BC. The Slavs tribes settled here in another two and a half thousand years, after the Great Migration of Nations in the early Middle Ages: in the VI–VII centuries – in southern Belarus, in the X–XI centuries – in the northern Belarus. Naturally, all stages of the ancient history of Belarus have left traces in its folklore. Most researchers consider it to be the basis of the agricultural calendar, some elements of which have survived to this day.

In the Middle Ages, the agricultural population of the Belarusian lands for a long time continued to make up the majority of the Old Belarusian (Polatsk, Turau, partly Valyn) principalities of the X–XIII centuries and the confederate, multinational the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in the functioning of which the population of the territories of Belarus was actively included since the XIV century. The cultural standards of local farmers were transmitted with the help and means of folklore, preserving the ethnic originality and self-identification of the people, while the urban culture of the principality, which began to form in the X–XI centuries, was largely standard-Eastern European. Although the agricultural majority and the peculiarities of its ethnogenesis, as well as culture, could not but

influence the townspeople. It was in the ancient Belarusian language (but in latin letters) that office work was carried out in the principality, later the first constitution was written – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Statute (1529). At that time, our ancestors called themselves «litvins», «rusins», which reflected their Balto-Slavic origin and culture. In addition to Belarusians and Ukrainians (among them there were both pagans and christians from local villages and cities), many nationalities lived in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Baltic pagans, Latvians-Latgalians, Lithuanians-Prussians and Samogitians (they prevailed in the princely and military estates), invited by the princes as horsemen of the military cavalry or the scribes and merchants of the Eastern nation – Muslim Tatars, Judaists-Jews, sky and fire-worshipers Karaites. For a long time, the official state in the principality was the Vaydelots pagan cult headed by the high priest Kriva, which settled even at the court of the Grand Dukes, but a tolerant attitude was emphasized towards other religions. To avoid a complete ethnocide (after the bloody wars of the XIII–XIV centuries with the knightly orders of the crusaders, as a result of which the whole Baltic nation – the Prusians) was destroyed, the principality was officially christianized: the marriage of the baptized Grand Duke Uladzislau Jagaila with the Queen of Poland Jadwiga (1386), and later – the creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569).

In the Renaissance XVI century, the lands of Belarus in terms of religion began an active movement (characteristic of Circumbaltia) towards the Reformation, which, however, in the XVI century was harshly stopped by the leaders of the Catholic Counter-Reformation with the assistance of the Polish kings. The final of these contradictions was the Cossack-peasant freemen of the middle of the XVI century, the sections of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the XVIII century's end, anti-imperial uprisings in Belarus of the XIX century, as well as the painful but consistent movement towards Belarusian statehood at the beginning of the XX century and the sovereignty of the XX century's end. All this time, the people considered it necessary to preserve their traditional culture (firmly established in the folklore of the agricultural communities of Belarus), feeling its

necessity for their own existence. Marija Gimbutas, in the preface to one of her books, also noted that it was the carriers of the Lithuanian traditional agricultural culture who were able to preserve its rather deep and important content for people's self-preservation in the outwardly laconic and modest symbols of their culture.

To determine the typology and mutual influence of folklore, traditional culture of Belarus and Lithuania at the turn of the XX / XXI centuries, I used the following approaches: correlated frames (models of external parameters) of tradition communication acts (rituals, folk holidays) of two nations; a comparative expert survey was conducted on kinship systems and the folklore transmission in the adjacent regions of Belarus and Lithuania; the comparison of the early traditional classics of songs [6, с. 2–3] has been carried out.

With this kind of analysis, parallel (to varying degrees) cultural phenomena are clearly noticeable: from distant similarities (in the designation of relatives: 'братавая'–'brolienė', 'швагір'–'švogris'; performing folk styles: sutartine – Belarusian Kupalle antiphon, bourdoning in Lithuanian instrumentalism – Belarusian fiddlestick-bagpipe music; as well as similarities in behavioral models of ritual complexes: Юр'я – Jorė, Спленне – Žolinė) to *direct analogies* (валачобны абрад – lalavimas; талака – talkos; Маслянка – Užgavėnės; жніўныя песні – rugiariūtės dainos) and so on [6, с. 3].

When analyzing the folklore of Belarus and Lithuania, it is obvious that in folklore sources using comparative methods, fragments of similar etiological texts explaining the origin of an ordered Universe (space) are easily identified, which ideas exist latently in the worldview and behavior of the carriers of traditions [5, с. 36].

In models and artistic symbols of «Sun cross» folk holidays (Pavasario ligė – Благовешчанне / Velikos – Вялікдзень; Rasa = Kupolių šventė – Купалле; Vėlines = Diedai – Дзяды; Kaledų šventė – Каляды) correspondences are traced to the structure of archaic myths (cosmogonic, anthropogonic, totemic,

eschatological) in the behavioral tradition of both nations, which has partially existed until now [6, c. 13], [5, c. 42].

It is rather problematic to explain the origins of this kind of mutual influence only by medieval, Renaissance and modern borrowings. Their source, apparently, is located much deeper chronologically and is associated with the times of the appearance in the territories of Lithuania and Belarus of a sedentary lifestyle, traditional family law, agriculture, namely, with the Meso- and Neolithic, as well as the Bronze Age. Such stadial parallels indirectly confirm the cultural anthropologists thesis: «nations that are very close in their culture can often speak different languages» [1, c. 83].

In the XXI century, manifestations of the traditional culture of the peoples inhabiting the territories of Belarus and Lithuania are a set of phenomena that are slowly but, unfortunately, irresistibly disappearing from mass use. This is despite the fact that both states declare the need to preserve folklore, issue appropriate regulations and allocate funds for the custodians education and maintenance. A folklore supporting sector has also emerged in public life. According to the communication theory, in order for any phenomena of the semiosis sphere not to be brought to the extinction brink, there should be mutual understanding between those who analyze, store and transmit information regarding: the meaning of their actions, communication intentions (turning strategy into practice), as well as goals their activities. In today's conditions, we, apparently, need to focus on preserving the most authentic forms of the folklore tradition of both nations, since the preservation of its content in the future directly depends on this.

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