

CULTURAL HERITAGE IN UKRAINE: CURRENT THREATS AND CHALLENGES OF SAFEGUARDING

Oksana Mykytenko

The Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnology, Kyiv

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Abstract: Safeguarding is the key notion and objective of cultural heritage. The concept covers both tangible and intangible heritage. Recognition of human rights and sustainability is the first and the main measure of safeguarding. The war in Ukraine has caused and continues to cause the destruction and damage of cultural heritage. General threats of globalization, unresolved legal regulatory issues, changes in cultural and historic landscape, weakness of economic and social development of the regions, migration, replacement of authentic cultural forms are considered as existential risks to the cultural heritage. One of the main threats is destruction of identity or attempts to “instill” a dual identity (including cultural, historic and religious). Contemporary cultural problems require an important geopolitical approach. The problem of international collaboration on the level of experts and institutions has become the urgent task in the sphere of safeguarding both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Ukraine, cultural heritage, safeguarding, challenges

Safeguarding is the key word and objective of cultural heritage, – the concept covering both tangible and intangible heritage. It means identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement and transmission, education, revitalization. According to Article 2 (1) of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003), the ‘intangible cultural heritage’ is understood as “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity”. Mila Santova introduced the notion “generation chain” and stressed its importance which implies that there is no complete interruption of tradition. This concept underlines the unity of vertical and horizontal dimensions, when “we find ourselves in the field of processes that are synchronously oriented towards the future, involving certain efforts in the present and drawing skills and experience from the past” (Santova 2021a: 29). The intangible cultural heritage requires more complex methods than those to protect tangible cultural heritage, which usually consist of the prohibitions to destroy and to

modify. These measures cannot be simply transferred to intangible cultural heritage and mostly depends on the social dimension, because the intangible cultural heritage is embedded in the people and concerns the concept of revitalization (Santova 2014: 50–51). While the safeguarding of tangible monuments is understood as the protection of *cultural heritage*, the safeguarding of intangible “monuments” may be comprehended as the protection of *civilization heritage* (Wieshaider 2021: 38). At the same time the intangible cultural heritage is defined as living heritage. This concept emphasizes the act of execution, the succession process and the selection of cultural facts important to the community. The use of one or the other concept highlights a different importance in their political instrumentalization (Бокова 2021: 224).

General threats of globalization, unresolved legal regulatory issues, in particular, unregulated copyright, which does not provide transfer of knowledge and skills of living traditions, change in cultural landscape (both in the village and in the city), weakness of economic and social development of the regions, migration of youth, carriers of their own culture, replacement of cultural forms for pseudo-cultural or post-cultural etc. are considered as existential risks to the cultural heritage.

Looking not only at the recent events in Ukraine, but also to the history of the whole 20th century, securing and saving cultural heritage is a complicated and complex mission (Skujytė-Razmienė 2024: 47). In a frame of new political and economic strategies a complex system of actions was set up in order to preserve, protect and keep in the active memory of communities all those creations, structures and innovations which led to the development of cultural diversity and different types of identities (ethnic, national, religious, social, professional, age, gender, etc.). In contemporary society with its “consumption-oriented industrial culture” the individual becomes the object of “information bombardment”, which results in the modification of many local, individual or group guide-marks (Ispas 2021: 21–24). One of the main threats is the destruction of identity (including cultural, historic and religious identity). Another is the attempt to “instill” a dual identity, such as the “new” tradition in Ukraine to “celebrate Christmas with Europe together” – a phenomenon of cultural kitsch, which influences cultural and historical heritage inherited by past generations. This, simultaneously, results with the destruction/annihilation of tangible cultural heritage. Every architectural monument has its own intangible cultural dimension which makes it an important part of local memory and element of the narrative tradition. The very destruction of the continuity of the cultural tradition becomes the greatest challenge to the existence of the intangible cultural heritage, elements of which (in order to be recognized as being in conformity with the Convention) must belong to the living tradition and living heritage. No doubt that it is hardly possible to preserve the intangible cultural heritage without preserving tangible cultural heritage.

Recognition of human rights and sustainability is the first and the main measure of safeguarding. As it was stressed at the conference *The Role of the Scholars at BAS for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Bulgaria* held in 2019, these are two principle conditions to qualify the intangible cultural heritage – that is to be compatible with both human rights and the principle of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development is understood as a complex social phenomenon comprising an integral unity of political, social, environmental, institutional and other aspects. In a global context it appears as the development achieved in such a way as to preserve the conditions for satisfying social needs of the present generation as well as of future ones. And in other words, sustainable development is “synchronously oriented towards the future, involving efforts in the present and drawing skills and experience from the past”. On the ontological level the notion turns out to be the integral category that combines certain values organized in opposition to chaos (Santova 2021a: 28–29).

Many cultural monuments in Ukraine of world importance are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. After adoption the UNESCO Convention in 2008 Ukraine has registered five elements to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and added two elements in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. One of the items is the Cossack's songs of Dnipropetrovsk region. 26 elements are now listed in the National Register and the Representative List, as well as the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. Now it is very important to discuss the effective protection of already registered elements in the light of their possible commercialization, the way of archiving accompanying documentation, and the significance of various organizations and institutions in the process of safeguarding.

Peace is the main precondition for culture and its sustainable development. The Preamble of the Convention (2005) stresses:

Recalling that cultural diversity, flourishing within a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures, is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels

- peace is a basic precondition for sustainable development.

The task of safeguarding the cultural objects affected by military conflicts is one of the most urgent and is based on the documents concerning the protection of cultural objects in the war conditions: the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and the Paris Convention on the Measures Aimed at Prohibiting and Preventing the Illegal Removal and Assignment of the Ownership of Cultural property (1970). These documents need modern perfection due to the current situation in Ukraine.

A large-scale military invasion of Russia to Ukraine in 2022 and the war in the country that already lasts for three years has caused irreparable human casualties and the destruction of the economy, ecology and culture. We meet one more threat in the context of the large-scale war – quantitative and qualitative changes in all spheres of social and cultural life. According to Yuriy Scherbak, Ukrainian writer, publicist and diplomat, this war has become the most tragic existential event in Ukrainian centuries-old history, raising questions about the very existence of its people and statehood. Nothing like this has ever happened in the history of Ukraine. More than 10 million Ukrainians lost their homes, were uprooted and displaced (Scherbak 2022a; 2022b). According to the United Nations International Organization for Migration, more than 6 million people were forced to change their area of residence. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees claims that further 7.5 million citizens left the borders of Ukraine, of which 3.3 million received the status of “temporary protection”.

However, in the current situation outstanding monuments of our cultural heritage are under threat of destruction. Only after six months of Russian invasion UNESCO has fixed the destruction or damage of 186 objects of cultural heritage in Ukraine. 492 episodes of war crimes against culture have been recorded in Ukraine. 166 religious buildings, 52 monuments, 35 museums and nature reserves, 45 libraries, 74 cinemas and other establishments of culture are destroyed or damaged (Kara-Vasylieva 2022: 211). The number of cultural losses increases every day. The establishing of the catalogue of demolished and / or affected by the war cultural monuments in Ukraine is among the recent urgent tasks.

The problems of safeguarding acquire a special important geopolitical sound under modern conditions. The facts about Ukraine’s resistance to the military aggression which are widely presented both in public expressions on social networks and in numerous artistic reflections of individual authors, become the embodiment and testament of the national combat and therefore need comprehensive scientific generalization, analysis and preservation.

Various conferences and expert meetings have been held in Ukraine and in other countries to discuss the situation and the application of the Convention and practical problems related to the protection of cultural heritage. Research prospects are based on a wide range of theoretical and methodological paradigms. Such discussions are aimed to encourage the exchange of opinions and experience of researchers from different countries and different disciplines. From this point of view, we pay attention to the Balkan experience. Today the situation in Ukraine is often considered in the context of the events of nearly 30 years ago in the former Yugoslavia:

Consideration of the development and completion of the military conflicts on the territory of the republics formed as a result of the break-up of Yugoslavia is a valuable experience for Ukraine, as well as their post-war reconstruction: de-occupation of the Serbian Krajina in Croatia, the conflict between Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims, the settlement of the Macedonian-

Albanian conflict. The study of the history of relation between the former Yugoslav republics and the center, the analysis of the behavior of international organizations and the world community at the time of Balkan crisis are more important today than ever for the projection of the development of the situation in our country and around it

(Karatsuba 2022: 219).

The Web Seminar *Urgent Issues of Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Example of Ukraine* that was organized by the Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine on the 15th of November, 2022 stressed the importance of the scientific cooperation and professional discussions on the problems of protection of cultural heritage today in accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO International Convention (2003). According to the President of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO – Prof. Dr. M. Öcal Oğuz, recently UNESCO has added new articles to its implementing directive on how intangible cultural heritage should be safeguarded in emergencies. The war conditions in Ukraine have led to migration bringing to the emergence of abandoned villages and cities. Discussing the effects of migration, displacement, the distortion and destruction of the cultural properties / elements as a result of war on the transfer of intangible cultural heritage from one generation to the another and seeking precautions and solutions are extremely humanitarian and in line with the UNESCO programs (Oğuz 2022: 228).

The experts emphasize that now it is important to discuss also those theoretical issues related to the policies of institutional safeguarding of cultural heritage and to intensify state programs for the detection, study and popularisation of national cultural property. Such programs support the national culture and correspond to the modern criteria and recommendations of UNESCO regarding the preservation of ethnic culture and at the same time reflect the world trends towards the growing importance of cultural factors in the civilization process. Representatives of the Ukrainian scientific community develop numerous projects for the fundamental research programs and create an appropriate legal base for the protection of cultural heritage (Skrypnyk 2022: 208).

One among such important projects to support the ethnic memory and identity is the project *Ethnographic Image of Modern Ukraine. Corpus of Folklore and Ethnographic Materials* (in 10 volumes). This scientific initiative has become an example of the implementation of large-scale research project aimed to protect the national intangible heritage initiated by Maxym Rylskyi Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnology in Kyiv. The scientific project forms a powerful source base of information, photo and video materials, which will serve as the basis of ethnocultural studies in a diachronic perspective and create such kind of folklore archives that belong to the institutions involved in the most important complex of

safeguarding and responsible process. Its purpose is to clarify and represent within the entire Ukraine the modern state of preservation and functioning of ethnic culture as an important factor in ethno-identification processes under new geopolitical, educational and informational conditions and under the influence of active migration movements and intensification of inter-ethnic contacts. The narratives of this fundamental multi-volume work, recorded from more than 8.000 respondents, amount to about 6.000 pages of texts, supplemented by several thousand color and black-and-white photographs, which visualize the entire mosaic of the material and spiritual world of the Ukrainian people. As it was stressed by the director of the Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnology, academician Hanna Skrypyk, “there is no doubt that this work of Ukrainian scientists will serve as a good basis for the ethnographic and linguistic atlases, ethnographic databases, an electronic linguistic archive based on spoken (living) texts” (Ibidem).

In this information era, archive management is becoming one of the ways to utilize the information resources of intangible cultural heritage (Lyubenova 2021: 152). The elaboration of the archives of folklore, in the context of storage and preservation of the data related to the intangible cultural heritage, has been in the focus of attention of the institute since the very day of the ratification by Ukraine the Convention (2003) in 2008. Besides continuing to preserve traditional forms and models, archives must detect the emergence of new, transcultural and transnational models (Ispas 2021: 27). Today in Kyiv we formed a new data-base connected with the war in Ukraine. The creation of a new fund of evidence of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the Archive of the M. Rylskyi Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences is now under elaboration. The corpus will include living testimonies of eyewitnesses as a basis of a special volume of ethnographic records called “An Oral History of a Military Crisis” (Vakhnina 2024: 48). It is of great importance to provide all necessary rights and research directions during the process of digitization of this “data bank”.

Intangible cultural heritage is traditional and living at the same time. It exists not only as a memory but also creates the base for coexistence of “now” and “here”, giving the opportunity for the integration and reintegration of different communities. In the present-day situation in Ukraine it is especially important to involve the creative potential of public and cultural movement that includes common national values and traditional views, metaphorical allegories, symbolic concepts and ideas reflected in folklore. “It is the common goal for all of us to establish and support all kinds of mechanisms that will ensure the transfer of Ukraine’s rich intangible cultural heritage from one generation to another without being further disturbed, distorted or destroyed”, – stressed the President of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO – Prof. Dr. Öcal Oğuz (2022: 228). At the same time, functional changes in the sphere of intangible

cultural heritage become more evident today exposing ethnic-integrative, social, domestic and utilitarian, communicative and educational ones. When speaking about intangible cultural heritage as the base of the originality and nourishing source of the cultural vitality, we understand its role to constitute (together with the language) the index of cultural, ethnic and social identities. In both present and future processes of “Europeanisation”, the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage means the protection of identity, as folklore is one of the symbols of every nation. It exists as long as its culture and its language are alive, and is best pronounced in folklore (Mykytenko 2021: 68).

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КУЛТУРНОТО НАСЛЕДСТВО ВО УКРАИНА: АКТУЕЛНИ ЗАКАНИ И ПРЕДИЗВИЦИ ПРИ НЕГОВАТА ЗАШТИТА

Оксана Микитенко

Институт за студии по уметност, фолклористика и етнологија „М. Т. Рилски“, Киев

Резиме

Во трудот стана збор за зачувувањето и заштитата како едни од клучните поими врзани за културното наследство. Војната во Украина, којашто сè уште трае, предизвика и сè уште предизвикува уништување, или придонесува за уништувањето на културното наследство, а општите закани од: глобализацијата, нерешените правни регуларности за заштита на културното наследство, како и миграцијата и многу други фактори, се сметаат за ризици кои ја оневозможуваат заштитата на културното наследство.

Во трудот акцентот беше ставен на тоа како овие процеси влијаат врз уништувањето на идентитетот и како го „замолчуваат“ т.н. „двоен“ (културен, историски и религиски) идентитет.