POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
AND PROCESSES

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CHANGING THE SYMBOLIC MATRICES IN SYSTEMS OF POST-COMMUNIST TRANSIT: THE UKRAINIAN EXPERIENCE

This paper is an attempt to build a consistent logic of movement of the Ukrainian society towards the true democracy, finding a modification of master narrative of mass political consciousness, as well as the destruction of the old symbolic forms and replacing them with new ones, corresponding real challenges of the present time. The author concludes that the transitional reality in Ukraine contains the most representative symbolic articulations (products of "bottom-up"-symbolization: a comprehensive system of allegorical images, new political rituals and rites, mythologemes and transformed archetype), which constitute collective emotions and memory. At the same time, there is a need to develop the relevant mechanisms of symbolic "top-down"-control under the transit to ensure sustainable progress towards its ultimate goal.

Formulation of the problem. Any type of political transformations, including changes in post-communist countries, is accompanied by intense symbolic dynamics. Formation of collective representations about the changes occurs on the way of series-parallel processes of reconstruction of symbolic matrices that make up the complex network of cognitive resources of social knowledge. These processes can be tracked most clearly on the examples of significant changes in the societal system (when the state of suspense actualizes the process of value rethinking the political events) as the transformation affects not only simple symbolic forms, but fairly stable constructs, which are the archetypes, myths and rituals. Let's consider the Ukrainian case from this standpoint.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and until the early 2000s, Ukrainian society had been in the state of lost integrity and coherence of the socio-political picture of the world. However, despite the dismantling of the previous political system, the old paradigm of thinking and political behavior was persisted. However, in parallel the new ideological projects began to emerge: these were national-centric projects that had become

the harbingers of Ukrainian democratic transition. We are talking about the 2004 Orange Revolution – the starting point of the transformation of political culture and systemic changes in political management.

It should be emphasized that the post-orange period demonstrated the problem of collisions between alternative symbolic projects of social order, which was characteristic feature of transitive societies. Theoretical justification of this statement can be found in the Prof. Lotman's conclusion about the structural heterogeneity of semiotic space. According to Ju.Lotman there are nuclear constructs and peripheral areas in this space[1]. At the stage of socio-political transformation we can see the situation when the destruction of a single hierarchic semiotic field is occurred and the set of basic symbols is modified, thus the former center becomes the periphery. This oppositioning becomes possible due to the fact that only one of the symbolic projects can be dominant and satisfy the gravitation of the system to stability. In the Ukrainian case at the time of the Orange Revolution, a post-communist identity and symbolic project of Ukraine as a junior partner of Russia held the status of nuclear construct, while the democratic version of the national consciousness was located at the periphery. Maydan-2004 was an effort to displace the old center to the periphery and transform the peripheral symbolic project into dominant one. Thus, since 2004, nation-building in Ukraine has reached a stage of sharpened search for a common semiosis. However, the authoritarian pullback during Victor Yanukovych' governing demonstrated the weakness and immaturity of the emerging civil initiatives.

However, as we know from the ontological "law of hierarchy of signedness of social reality"[2], simultaneous realization of various symbolic models of social life is impossible. The key to a successful social practice is the selection and implementation of a particular symbolic program through "bringing the social reality to a single symbolic denominator"[3]. As a result of the hard collision between two symbolic models (authoritarian and democratic) in Ukraine, this common denominator became Euro-maydan and Revolution of Dignity (2014).

Goals and objectives of the paper. The foregoing sets the goal to construct a logic of changing of symbolic matrices in Ukraine as a political

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[1] Лотман, Ю.М. (2000). О семиотическом механизме культуры. *Семиосфера.* СПб.: Искусство-СПБ, 487.

[2] Цыганков, В.В. (2009). Теоретико-методологические основы исследования знаковости социальной реальности. *Известия Российского государственного педагогического университета имени А. И. Герцена, 29,* 144-147.

[3] Цыганков, В.В. (2009). Теоретико-методологические основы исследования знаковости социальной реальности. *Известия Российского государственного педагогического университета имени А. И. Герцена, 29,* 144-147.

system of the post-communist type, in connection with the transitional circumstances of the historical moment. This objective finds its concretization in the formulation of the following tasks:

- − to outline the specific conditions for active re-symbolization over the past year in Ukraine;
- − to identify the steps that have been taken (from the "bottom-up" as well as from the "top-down") to replace the dominant political myth;
- − to determine the consequences of the symbolic actions and their effect on the system stabilization;
- − to reveal directions of subsequent symbolization, which can be effective in terms of increasing of legitimacy and stability of democratic order.

Main material. Retrospective view shows that all post-communist systems in due time faced with crises in one or another manifestations associated with transformations. As we know, rational motives of human behavior are crumbling in a crisis, and consciousness accumulates disorganized elements. There is a perceptible (almost painful) necessity of finding (or even deliberate choice) the myth. Myth reconstructs a picture of the world, allowing to re-master it: thus society restores itself through myth-making. In this regard, N.Berdyaev noted: "The myth can be more real than civilized reality. The societies, in which people are grouped together, create a series of illusions necessary for their existence and development. Perhaps this is the strongest of illusions"[1].

Here we are talking about the fact that S.Langer identified as "the need for symbolization"[2]: the myth becomes a form of ordering the reality, the symbolic tool of political change modeling, the symbolic content of value vacuum. However, basing on the theoretical works of American political psychologists M. Edelman and L. Bennett, we are able to ascertain the specific feature of political myths not only as projections, but also as cognitive maps that provide everyday perception of events and phenomena of social life[3]. Thus, the process of social constructioning of community (as a result of reproducing of political myth) can be implemented, in other words, the formation of its identity takes place.

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[1] Бердяев, Н. (1947). Опыт эсхатологической метафизики. *Творчество и объективация.* Париж, YMCA-Press.

[2] Лангер, С. (2000). *Философия в новом ключе. Исследование символики разума, ритуала и искусства.* Москва: Республика.

[3] Edelman, M. (1967). Myths, metaphors and political conformity. *Psychiatry, 30.* New York, 217-228.
Bennett, L.W. (1980). Myth, ritual, and political control. *Journal of communication, 30, 4.* New York, 166-179.

Efficiency of the myth can be explained due to its integrity of the ideological content and emotionally-sensual expression. According to K.Flood, myth is a "narration, claiming the status of a true picture of the events of the past, present and projected future and perceived by social group as truth in general terms"[1]. Due to these properties, the myth becomes an effective tool for creating symbolic snapshot of transition reality.

If we talk about the functionality of the socio-political myth, then it should be necessarily noted that myth becomes an active and applicable element of the political process only when it is constructed in accordance with the circumstances of the historical moment. The analysis of the events occurring in Ukraine and in the Ukrainian society over the last year lets us talk about the transformation of the active political myth. If prior the abolition of signing the Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union by the President Viktor Yanukovych in November 2013, it was possible to observe only a passive citizens' dissatisfaction with the policy of the ruling political elites; but after this incident, there has been a radical change. Millions of people in Kiev and regional centers took to the streets to protest against the governmental decision. Failure of the AA was the last straw in the rebirth of the Ukrainian political myth, which has become read as follows: Ukraine is a promising European state, and not a weak buffer post-communist country. And in this new reading of the myth, it could guarantee the reproduction of a transformed social order and specify the place to every single citizen in it. In addition, a new myth as "an expression of determination to act"[2] has become a powerful force capable to mobilize citizens for decisive actions.

What symbolic steps have been taken to confirm and consolidate the new myth? According to theoretical schemes produced by political mythology, the substitution of the old myth by the new one occurs basing on:

1) the archetype;

2) the content of a particular experience, empirically obtained in situations united by this archetype;

3) the system of allegorical images with special functional symbolics corresponding the "desired" things with the "proper" ones, i.e. with the existing archetype.

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[1] Флад, К. (2004). *Политический миф. Теоретическое исследование.* Москва: Прогресс-Традиция.

[2] Bottici, Ch., Challand, B. (2006). Rethinking political myth: The clash of civilizations and self-fulfilling prophecy. *European journal of social theory, 9, 3,* 315-336.

Let's start with the last point, that is a set of functional symbols, which served as a proto-form of "bottom-up"-legitimization of the new order. First of all, it is worth to talk about the mass dismantling of memorials related to the Soviet past of Ukraine, in particular, the monuments to Lenin and other Soviet leaders have been tumbled down (among civil society activists this action received the name of *"Leninopad"*). Setting aside the plaque of barbarous treatment with the historical heritage, and thinking only in terms of political science, it can be concluded: Ukrainian society has proved in a "bifurcation point", that is a powerful emotional defaults to the administrative and political practices of the former regime and the desire to become an influential subject of political decision-making.

From the standpoint of the symbolic designing of socio-political space[1], it is logical that in place of the rejected symbols the new ones (relevant to inquiries of mass consciousness at that time) had to rise. And this condition was fulfilled: numerous memorials of the "Heaven hundred" *("Nebesna Sotnya")* have been built in many regions of the country, as well as some avenues and squares were renamed in honor of the heroes of the Maydan. However, the image of the *Other* (within the country and abroad) has clearly taken shape. In this case, the *Other* acts as an alienated subject in the forming of the internal model of social group relations and marks the farewell to the last (post-Soviet) era and the beginning of a new (national democratic) one. During the Eurorevolution in Ukraine and still the image of inner *Other* is implemented in the figures of social movement "Anti-Maydan" and the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU). The selection of these *Others* is not random and it is understandable in the Ukrainian political context. Thus, the confrontation between Maydan and Anti-Maydan comes not from the dispute about the European future of Ukraine, but originates from the conflict of "two Ukraines", which was activated during the 2004 Orange Revolution. This conflict has been constructed and deliberately aggravated by differences in the perception by inhabitants of the Western and Eastern regions of Ukraine of their shared political history. As for the CPU, the explanations are unlikely needed here: in the opinion of the radical public activists, the "party of the past" should be abolished. Thus, we can make a preliminary conclusion that the crystallization of the image of *Me* and the constructioning of ideas about the *Other* have formed the framework of the new Ukrainian political myth and provide its viability up to this days.

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[1] Бергер, П., Лукман, Т. (1995). *Социальное конструирование реальности: Трактат по социологии знания*. Москва: Медиум.

As we know from the political theory, one of the main characteristics of a political myth is the reliance on the archetype. Archetypes are the actively operating settings defining personal thoughts, feelings and actions[1]. This is the primary matrix of social consciousness, while certain social images appear as derivatives (secondary) structures through which hidden meanings matrices are disclosed. Therefore, the archetypal base can be considered as a substratum for mythological system, if we understand substratum as elementary (static and stable) part of its objective content.

As it is clear from the above saying, we found that the dominant myth in Ukraine has undergone the renovation, which means that the transformation with regard to the basic archetype has to happen. The former base archetype manifested itself in connotations of "(post)-Sovietism" and attitudes of "(post)-Soviet man". Therefore, the change of attitudes of mass consciousness has led to the deeper transformation. Thus, the conviction in the inevitability of bad life for citizens, the encouraging of corruption, the acquiescence to the lack of opportunity to influence the policy have been shifted by the perception of the ideas of a deserved better future and national prosperity. The return of respect for the law, the creation of numerous lustration initiatives, projects for the control on budget spending by local governments and, of course, the emergence of the phenomenon of Euro-Maydan as itself speak in favor of the last statement. In this aspect Euro-Maydan serves as generated orientation of the public on European civil and political values, and "Europe" acts as a symbol of axiological, as well as a range of social, geopolitical and economic preferences.

As a result, today we have the opportunity to observe in the Ukrainian society the overcoming the feeling of underdeveloped society, insolvency and abandonment after the collapse of the USSR. To replace these ideas the new phenomenon comes and we can describe it as unitization, as consolidation of the Ukrainians around the formed idea of national unity between East and West and their common European future. In support of this assertion it is necessary to establish the increasing traction of people to use ceremonial political symbols. Last year, the country showed a lot of patriots who symbolically declare their choice not only by wearing the national costume elements *("vyshivankas")*, but also getting the relevant tattoos, branding cars and other vehicles by colors of the Ukrainian flag and elements of national ornaments, holding public events such as *"Flag in Each Window"*, creating *"Human Chains"* to connect the cities, the banks of the Dnieper, and so on. All these actions can be classified as

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[1] Юнг, К. (1997). *Душа и миф: шесть архетипов*. Москва.

a mental and an operational attachment to certain symbolic matrices, because exactly in this way – combining with symbols – political myth comes to operating and ritualization. Such sign and symbolic embodiment of the myth turns it into a full communicative system. According to R.Barthes: "material media of mythical message ... no matter how different they may be, (as they become a part of the myth), are reduced to the function of signification, they represent only a starting material for the construction of the myth; their unity lies in the fact that they all are endowed with the status of linguistic resources"[1].

From the perspective of the above it should be noted that the change of the archetype of (post)-Soviet man to the archetype of Ukrainian European occurs through the transformation of the type of civic political culture from the patrialistic to activist one (the political culture of participation). This is vividly illustrated by the plurality of non-governmental organizations that have appeared now in Ukraine (or reactivated its activities) and deal with the monitoring the tone of the press, an anti-corruption investigations, support the army and civilians, human rights projects, training initiatives to prepare civil society activists to participate in the political projects.

Summarizing the above noted, it can be stated that the transitional reality in Ukraine contains the most representative symbolic articulation that constitute collective emotions and memory. At the same time, the key issues of transition are projected through the proper ritualism. In this context it is appropriate to speak of the emergence of new socially significant rituals, such as the weekly *Viche* on the Maydan in Kiev and the widespread use of national Anthem of Ukraine. The main functions of these symbolic actions are integrative (assertion of the unity and wholeness of the community of people) and psychotherapeutic (achieving a sense of solidarity in the face of crisis) ones. But the most prominent example is the use of a specific greeting (slogan / spell), which reads as follows: *"Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes! Glory to the Nation! Death to the enemies! Ukraine above all!" («Слава Україні! Героям слава! Слава нації! Смерть ворогам! Україна понад усе!»)*. Repeatability of this action and the number of people who find it necessary to resort to the practice of ritual described, allow us to speak about the formation of a new habitus of culture. At the same time this ritual appears as meta-social language by which we can judge about the urgent requests put forward by the Ukrainian community in relation to the transitive reality. These are the need for a sense of unity and cohesion of the nation,

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[1] Барт, Р. (1994). Миф сегодня. *Избранные работы: Семиотика. Поэтика.* Москва: Издательская группа «Прогресс», «Универс», 72-130.

and the feeling of superiority over the Foreign Enemy, and the desire to be proud of their country, and willingness to support the changes. Mentioned political rituals form a common system of values in the collective consciousness and constitute the frame of socio-political identity (sense of co-participation in democratic transition). At the same time there is an implementation of symbolic communication that allows to legitimate the stage of democratization.

The whole cultural ritual complex is created. It simulates a modern reality in Ukraine in the key semantic codes. We are talking about such symbolic forms and ceremonials as a celebration of the Day of Dignity and Freedom (the Anniversary Day of Euro-maydan), making a documentary chronicles about the events of the civil uprising ("Maydan"), collection of artifacts and ideas for the future "Museum of Liberty / Museum of Maydan" and so on . Thus, here is an emotional consensus in the society, integration and mobilization of teams, increasing the sense of unity and cohesion of the nation.

In addition to this, here is some kind of symbolic coverage of righteousness and correctness of the chosen path (Ukraine's European choice) occurring through the fusion of understanding of freedom concept and national independence with religious beliefs: *"Ukraine is with us! God is with us"*. We also want to recall that people who were killed during clashes on the Maydan constitute together *the Heaven Hundred* that is composed of the *"Angels of Light", "Angels of Kindness"*. It can be stated that from this point (to some extent) Ukraine inherits the "Polish third way", where the Catholic Church has played a huge role in maintaining Polish identity as a nation. As is well known, the main feature of the Polish value consensus was the anticommunism and anti-Sovietism plus patriotism, nationalism, and Christian commitment. At the moment the scale of the influence of the Church in Poland and Ukraine cannot be compared, but certain religious renaissance in Ukrainian society should be noted.

Such a way we can conclude that some concrete deficiency of the transitional culture of the Ukrainian society has been removed by means of certain instruments of symbolization of political space, and the necessary substantial shift to the formation of a new reality / ideas about the new reality was also taken. In this symbolic system, the folding a functioning myth about the transformation allows to complete the picture of this shift, while the typical rituals perform the task of its adaptation to the rest of society, and memory objects (including the restoration of historical justice policy) allow to fit it naturally into the new context and fix it, and therefore neutralize the unpredictable challenges of transformation.

However, in this case, there is a question that remains to be realized, and it relates to the appearance of the myth-ritual scenario – the main index of maturity of political myth. We want to recall that according to the scheme of E.Cassirer, prophecy is one of the necessary technological components of the myth[1]. No prophecy (mythos-ritual scenario) no new social reality. After all, symbolization of the space of public life has a unique property to be affecting the transformation of reality and at the same time to be changed under the influence of this reality. So the intensification of the democratic transition in Ukraine created a new political myth, which was able to legitimize transitional order of things. Now this myth must be institutionalized (in the form of the new strategy for development of the Ukrainian state, making the necessary reforms, restoration of historical justice, consistent policy of historical memory).

Conclusions. In accordance with the purposes of this paper, we have illustrated changes of a set of basic symbols in the socio-political space of Ukraine in connection with the events of Euro-maydan and Euro-revolution. It was confirmed that a new attempt to construct a political reality in the social macro-level embodied in the emergence of new political stereotypes and symbols as the basic signs of a political myth (which fully corresponds to the classical scheme of symbolization proposed by G. Lasswell[2]). Nationwide changing of mythological matrix led to cognitive-emotional mobilization of elitist and mass opinion. At the same time the groundwork for the formation of a new political identity was laid.

Naturally, the symbolic product of the reaction to such processes should become a certain ideology that can bridge the gap between actual and desired things. However, at the moment, none of the political parties in the run-up to parliamentary elections have offered such an ideological program yet. Partly this task was accomplished by means of parliamentary elections in Ukraine (2014), which resulted with the loss of the Communist Party of Ukraine (it did not win any seat in the Parliament). Now the pro-European democratic forces in Ukraine must demonstrate consolidation in the reconstruction of the state. This can be done through the adoption of restitution laws, reforming the judicial system and law enforcement, as well as the compliance of the Law "On the cleansing of power". These symbolic steps will help to strengthen the stability of the democratic order and the establishment of democratic procedures, to increase respect for the elites, to stabilize the collective sentiments.

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[1] Кассирер, Э. (1990). Техника современных политических мифов. *Политология: хрестоматия.* Москва: Гардарики, 580-581.

[2] Lasswell, H.D. (1965). Language of Power. Language of Politics. *Studies in Quantitative Semantics.* Cambridge (Mass.): The M.I.T. Press, 4-19.