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## **SOCIO-GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE ODESSA REGION**

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### **Abstract**

The article examines the socio-geographical aspects of the development of the intangible cultural heritage of the Odessa region. The emphasis is on the territorial differentiation of cultural practices, the preservation of ethno-cultural diversity and the role of intangible resources in the formation of regional identity. The key manifestations of intangible heritage are identified - multinational traditions of the Black Sea region, unique musical and gastronomic practices, folk crafts and rituals. The impact of urbanization processes, tourism development and decentralization on the transformation of intangible cultural heritage is analyzed. The importance of intangible resources as a factor in the sustainable development of territories and the integration of the Odessa region into the European cultural space is substantiated.

**Keywords: intangible cultural heritage; social geography; ethno-cultural mosaic; regional identity; Odessa region; tourism.**

# СУСПІЛЬНО-ГЕОГРАФІЧНІ АСПЕКТИ РОЗВИТКУ НЕМАТЕРІАЛЬНОЇ КУЛЬТУРНОЇ СПАДЩИНИ ОДЕСЬКОГО РЕГІОНУ

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## Анотація

У статті розглянуто суспільно-географічні аспекти розвитку нематеріальної культурної спадщини Одеського регіону. Акцентовано увагу на територіальній диференціації культурних практик, збереженні етнокультурного різноманіття та ролі нематеріальних ресурсів у формуванні регіональної ідентичності. Визначено ключові прояви нематеріальної спадщини – багатонаціональні традиції Причорномор'я, унікальні музичні та гастрономічні практики, народні промисли й обрядовість. Проаналізовано вплив урбанізаційних процесів, розвитку туризму та децентралізації на трансформацію нематеріальної культурної спадщини. Обґрунтовано значення нематеріальних ресурсів як чинника сталого розвитку територій та інтеграції Одеської області в європейський культурний простір.

**Ключові слова:** нематеріальна культурна спадщина; суспільна географія; етнокультурна мозаїка; регіональна ідентичність; Одеський регіон; туризм.

**Problem statement.** Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is considered by modern science as an important resource for social and spatial development. UNESCO works emphasize that intangible practices – language, folklore, customs, gastronomic traditions, art forms – not only ensure the continuity of historical memory, but also form the competitive advantages of territories. Odessa region is one of the most multinational territories of Ukraine, where Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Moldovan, Jewish, Greek and other cultural traditions are combined. This creates a unique space for research, preservation and popularization of ICH.

**Formulation of the article's goals.** The aim of the article is to determine the socio-geographical aspects of the development of the intangible cultural heritage of the Odessa region. The tasks are to clarify the spatial features of its distribution, identify the role of ethnocultural factors in the formation of regional identity, assess the impact of urbanization processes and tourism development on the transformation of intangible practices.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The study of intangible cultural heritage in Ukraine is developing mainly within the framework of ethnology, culturology and art history. A significant contribution to the formation of conceptual approaches was made by scientists of the Institute of Art History, Folklore and Ethnology named after M. T. Rylsky of the NAS of Ukraine, where, under the leadership of Hanna Skrypnyk, a number of collections devoted to the problems of identification, preservation and popularization of the NCH were published. These works trace the fixation of ritual practices, musical and song folklore, traditional crafts and gastronomic codes, including in the south of Ukraine.

A number of researchers have drawn attention to the specifics of the multicultural environment of the Black Sea region. Thus, in the collective works of the Odessa National University named after I. I. Mechnikov, cultural processes in the urban environment of Odessa are analyzed, in particular, the transformation of traditions in modern urban conditions, the coexistence of Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Moldovan, Greek and Jewish heritage. These studies focus on the mechanisms of interaction of ethnocultural groups, the role of migrations and the urban specificity of cultural practices.

In the international discourse, UNESCO and its Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) play a key role. In the scientific literature, the works of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet (2004), who considers the ICH as a metacultural production, and Laura Smith (2006), who interprets heritage as a social construct in the field of cultural identities, are important. These approaches are also widely used in the Ukrainian context, in particular when preparing applications for the National List of ICH elements and when analyzing the cultural practices of local communities.

An important part of the source base is the National List of Elements of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Ukraine, maintained by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy. This list includes both local elements initiated by the communities of the Odessa region and translocal practices widespread among the multiethnic population of the region.

Thus, specialized research on intangible cultural heritage comes mainly from the field of ethnology and culturology (Skrypnyk and the staff of the Institute of Cultural Heritage of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Odessa culturologists and ethnographers), while in the international context methodological approaches are outlined in the works of UNESCO, Kirshenblatt-Gimblet and L. Smith. It is these developments that form the basis for the socio-geographical interpretation of the phenomenon of the NCH of the Odessa region..

### **Presentation of the main material**

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is increasingly being viewed not only as a cultural or ethnographic phenomenon, but also as a significant factor in spatial development and the formation of regional identity. In modern socio-geographical discourse, heritage is interpreted as a resource that shapes territorial differences, promotes social integration of communities, and creates additional opportunities for economic activity through tourism and creative industries. In the case of the Odessa region, this issue is of particular importance, as the region combines a number of unique characteristics: the multiethnicity of the population, the border location, the urban specificity of Odessa, and the rich historical and cultural heritage of the Black Sea region[4]. The multiethnic composition of the region's population is a determining factor in the cultural mosaic. The Odessa region was historically formed as a territory of multicultural contacts, where Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Gagauzians, Moldovans, Greeks, Jews, Russians, Germans, and other ethnic groups lived side by side. This has led to a variety of cultural practices, rituals, folk songs, gastronomic traditions and crafts, which together make up a rich complex of the NCC. In the southern regions of the region, unique Bulgarian and Gagauz wedding rituals are still preserved, in Bessarabia, Moldovan and Ukrainian calendar and ritual practices are widespread, and in some communities of Odessa, Jewish and Greek traditions. This ethnocultural diversity is spatially differentiated: each ethnic group has its own localized areas of residence, where traditions are preserved and transmitted to the next generation. Odessa plays a special role in the development of the NCC as a large urban center. The urban environment contributes to the transformation of traditions and their inclusion in modern cultural industries. Many elements of the NCC take on new forms through festivals, cultural events, and tourist events. Gastronomic practices, for example, enriched with multinational cuisine, become not only an element of everyday life, but also a tool for promoting the city at the international level. Traditional music is integrated into modern stage formats, forming the cultural “calling card” of Odessa. This manifests the commodification of the intangible cultural heritage — a process in which intangible elements acquire an economic dimension, but at the same time remain a factor in preserving identity[7,9].

No less significant is the cross-border dimension of intangible heritage. The location of the Odessa region at the junction of Ukraine, Moldova and Romania promotes the circulation of cultural elements and creates conditions for cross-border projects in which the intangible cultural heritage acts as a resource for cooperation. Within the framework of EU programs and local initiatives, festivals, joint ethnographic expeditions, and cultural routes are implemented, which strengthen the integration of cultural practices and ensure their

international recognition. In this context, intangible heritage performs the function of cultural diplomacy, strengthening the position of the region in cross-border contacts[2,6].

An important aspect of the development of the NCH is the process of its institutionalization. The inclusion of elements in the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Ukraine, maintained by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, ensures the official recognition and protection of individual practices. For the Odessa region, this applies to both local elements (rituals, song traditions, crafts) and translocal practices that are common among several ethnic groups. However, official recognition is accompanied by a number of problems, including insufficient funding, limited resources at the community level, and the risk of losing authenticity due to excessive commercialization. Therefore, the issue of preserving and developing the NCH requires a balance between supporting traditional forms and finding modern formats for their presentation[1,4].

From a spatial and geographical point of view, the NCH of the Odessa region forms a kind of cultural framework of the region. Key areas of traditions, ethnic settlements, urban cultural centers, and cross-border routes constitute a multi-level network in which the heritage exists and develops. Within this network, several centers of concentration of intangible practices can be distinguished: Bilhorod-Dniester as a center of multicultural interaction, Bolgrad as a symbol of Bulgarian tradition, Tarutine as a center of Gagauz culture, Odesa as a metropolis with a synthesis of various cultural codes. Such a system requires cartographic modeling, which would allow not only to record the existing state, but also to predict the directions of transformation and the risks of losing individual elements.

In modern conditions of tourism and creative industries development, the NCC is becoming a strategic resource for socio-economic growth. Festivals, gastronomic tours, cultural routes ensure the inclusion of heritage in the economy, creating additional jobs and increasing the investment attractiveness of territories. However, such an approach must be accompanied by mechanisms for protecting and supporting authenticity so that commercialization does not lead to the destruction of cultural practices[9].

Thus, the socio-geographical aspects of the development of the NCC of the Odessa region are manifested in several dimensions: territorial (areas and centers of distribution), socio-institutional (the role of groups).

### **Conclusions.**

The socio-geographical analysis showed that the intangible cultural heritage of the Odessa region is a multi-level phenomenon that combines spatial, ethno-cultural, social and economic aspects. The multi-ethnic composition of the region's population has led to the

formation of a unique mosaic of traditions, rituals, musical and gastronomic practices that have a distinct territorial localization and areal differentiation. The urban context of Odessa ensures the transformation and modernization of traditions, promotes their commodification and integration into the sphere of creative industries and tourism, which gives intangible heritage additional economic significance. An important feature is the cross-border dimension, within which heritage acts as a factor in interregional cooperation, cultural diplomacy and social integration. EU programs and cross-border initiatives contribute to the popularization of elements of the NCH and the strengthening of the international cultural image of the region. At the same time, the institutionalization of heritage through the National List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Ukraine and the possibility of submitting elements to the UNESCO lists form new mechanisms for protection and preservation.

In the geographical dimension, the intangible cultural heritage of the Odessa region forms a kind of cultural framework, within which separate centers and areas of concentration of traditions stand out - Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi, Bolgrad, Tarutine, Odesa. These centers function as nodes of a cultural network that determine the spatial organization of heritage and at the same time act as support points for the development of regional identity.

At the same time, a number of problems have been identified: insufficient funding for protection programs, risks of loss of authenticity due to excessive commercialization, weak integration of cultural policy into local development strategies. Overcoming these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that combines support for local bearers of traditions, the creation of modern mechanisms for presenting heritage, and the development of spatial models of preservation.

Therefore, the intangible cultural heritage of the Odessa region appears not only as an object of culturological or ethnographic study, but also as a system-forming factor of spatial development that forms regional identity, ensures social cohesion, and integrates the territory into cross-border and European cultural spaces.

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