

Ethnic Origins of Art as Urgent Problem of Art Studies

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the important but understudied problem of ethnic origins of art. Based on the principles of historicism and dialectics it reveals the continuity of scientific approach in the study of the problem. It considers the experience of art analysis within the context of ethnicity problem in the foreign and domestic art studies, as well as within the boundaries of the concept of ethnic art studies. Ethnic Art Studies as a specialized field of knowledge interacted with the complex of social sciences outlines the coordinates for describing and analyzing the ethnic characteristics of art. It is noted that one of the objectives of Ethnic Art Studies is to get closer to understanding of the historical patterns of art by deepening the knowledge of ethnicity as an objective characteristic of the arts and a source of artistic originality. The article reveals the position that ethnicity in art is expressed by means of archetypal motifs, themes, plots, images; and ethnic mentality is a definite core, a system of conscious and unconscious systems interconnected with ethnic traditions. It is noted that at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries Art History is characterized by the study of international relations in different regions in the context of the dialogue of cultures revealing their interactions and determining the general and the particular.

Key words: Ethnic Art Studies • Ethnic • Ethnicity • Ethnic origins • Archetype • Ethnic characteristics of art

INTRODUCTION

One characteristic feature of the present stage in the development of art is its proximity to the ethnic perception of the world and its artistic and moral aspects. Ethnic origins determine a complex and idiosyncratic searching of artists, they influence the formation of the process that links the present with the national traditions. The foreign and domestic scientific literature presents different research directions of this phenomenon - from traditional art-historical descriptions and art analysis to up-to-date complex and multi-disciplinary approaches. However, the ethnic problem of the present Art History remains controversial and difficult. We see the reasons for that fact in the peculiarities of the terms "ethnic", "ethnicity", "ethnic specificity", "ethnic tradition", which are not at the end of all possibilities of understanding and applications to specific phenomena of art. The difficulty lies in the fact that there is still no generally accepted theoretical and methodological foundations in Art History for the study of ethnic specificity of art.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methods are based on the principles of historicism and dialectics to identify the continuity of approach to the problem of ethnic origins of art in Art History.

The Main Part: The problem of ethnicity as a source of artistic originality caught the attention of thinkers during ancient times. The concepts, terms and ideas developed in the works of Aristotle, Plato, Pliny about the causes of the differences between traditions of the peoples were perceived without any significant transformations by the aesthetics of the Middle Ages and lasted until the XVI-XVII centuries. The Renaissance characteristic anthropocentrism impacted on the search of the base for featured manners of Italian artists in the treatise by G. Vasari (1511-1574) "Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects". The ideas of national originality of Italian art school shared by Vasari were maintained during the XVII century by the growth of

self-consciousness of nations and continued in the works of Karel van Mander (1548-1606) "Schilder-boeck", Joachim von Sandrart (1606-1688) "Teutsche Academie", André Félibien (1619-1655) "Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes". In the age of Enlightenment the research of the origins of artistic originality was strengthened by a new understanding of the idea of geographical determinism, particularly the impact of the environment on people and their art in the writings of Montesquieu (1689-1755), perceptions of ethnic and national traditions in the works of G. Vico (1668-1744), J. Herder (1744-1803). Among the art historians Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) was one of the first who turned his attention in his book "History of Ancient Art" from the accumulation of facts to the analysis of reasons for the differences between art of the peoples, the search of patterns and a scientific system describing the style of the era, nations, generations, personalities on the basis of the study of ethnographic data, monuments of ancient art. He connected the concept of style with a specific ethnic group and the corresponding period in the history of society. [1] That was the basis of ethnic and chronological definition of art monuments based on stylistic features.

In the early modern period the philosophical investigation of the nature of art was conducted by the classic of German philosophy G. Hegel (1770-1831). While searching for an answer to the question of how the arts of different eras become a mental part of modern life, the philosopher comes to the conclusion that art is a part of the development of the spirit. Herewith the spirit of each era is reflected in style. The conception of Hegel defined the theoretical and methodological basis of the History of the fine arts by Karl Schnaase (1798-1875). The *Niederländische Briefe* denotes his scientific position that synthesizes the romantic disposition of the national-religious features of the medieval art with dialectical philosophy of Hegel. Schnaase's idea about art as the most precious and most abundant expression of culture or national spirit anticipated the conceptions of W. Worringer (1881-1965) and M. Dvořák (1874-1921). The idea of the German art historian finds its expression in the sense of style as a certain system of the forms expressing a common spirit, mood, attitude, character of the representative of this style, i.e. age, race, nation. These are the foundations of artistic originality of style in the philosophy of H. Taine (1828-1893). According to the scientist "race", "environment", "historic moment" make the basic concepts of art-historical descriptions.

At the turn of the XIX-XX centuries due to the integration of ethnology and art a new scientific field was developed - Ethnic Art Studies. F. Boas (1858 - 1942) is considered to be the founder of this trend. The main thesis of the scientist was the denial of the application of general patterns in the study of the arts of various tribes and peoples. Cultural-historical method of F. Boas suggested a detailed and comprehensive study of the arts of ethnic groups. It should be noted that attention to the extra-artistic factors in the development of art caused a mixed assessment in the writings of historians of the Vienna School of Art. One of the earliest concepts that determined a formal approach in Art History of the XX century was the concept of A. Riegl (1858 -1905). A. Riegl was known not only for the development of the concept of the *Kunstwollen* ("will to art") but for criticism of the cultural-historical method. According to the opinion of the art historian, the development of art is determined by the laws, which can not be reduced to the laws outside art. However, the influence of psychological and national factors are not rejected either. In his opinion the specific art patterns can be revealed only by studying of art in the context of the actual conditions of artistic development. According to the scientist motif, art form, search for genetic series of the form, a parallel study of other forms of genetic series allow to isolate the general laws of the development of art and to identify the structural principles determining the peculiarities of artistic style [2]. German art historian A. Schmarsow (1853-1936) as opposed to A. Riegl considers an art work to be artistic if only it reaches the accord of subject and object, man and nature. Art historian V. Arslanov, when describing the concept of A. Schmarsow as an anthropological version of the formal art studies, writes, "... the unity of the subjective and the objective is represented in the human body that, on the one hand, is one of the objects of nature and , on the other hand, a human is a spirit; the human soul is not something opposite to the body and , as Aristotle said, it is another name for the whole, the form of forms " [3].

On the basis of the iconological method that was emerged in the German school of A. Warburg and developed by Erwin Panofsky some attempts to identify different levels of individual and collective consciousness in an art work appeared. Thus, in "Perspective as Symbolic Form" E. Panofsky details three aspects: the relationship between ideal, systematic point of view and the detail of historical research; the relationship between the concept of the general theory and private infrastructure of works; the relationship between the images and concepts. The importance of Panofsky's

concept lies in the symbolic approach to the analysis of art works within the intellectual and social context of the era. The inclusion of art works to the defining social groups was developed in the sociology of art. For example in France P. Francastel introduced a fundamentally new concept of social function of art on the basis of the establishment of relations between the society and the style of art. The artists, according to his conception, are not isolated, they belong to the society of their time.

Thus, in the first half of the XX century ethnic studies generally were in the process of establishing. Against the background of explosion of interest in the ethnic problems there were the first humanitarian studies in ethnology including art history studies.

Significant for the formation of ethnic studies in the second half of the XX century was the theory of archetypes by C. Jung (1875-1961). The concept of archetype was defined by the scientist as "original, innate mental structures, the primary schemes of fantasy images contained in the so-called collective unconscious and priori forming the activity of the imagination; they make the basis of human symbols and they are revealed in the myths, beliefs, dreams, works of literature and art " [4]. The use of the archetypal method for art analysis is suitable for the study of the types of art works where there is some imagery, as any images are archetypal to a certain extent. The further development of ethnic studies was influenced by the theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) "Structural Anthropology", "Tristes Tropiques", "Le Totémisme aujourd'hui", in which the main object is art and culture as a set of symbolic systems. For the scientist, different ethnic groups, which have never come into contact with each other, show similar mechanisms of formation of stable symbols and plots, similar types of conflicts and narratives in artistic creativity.

The turn of the XX-XXI centuries was the period of transformation of ethnic studies into an interdisciplinary science. At this time the bibliography on ethnic problems expanded greatly. All abroad ethnic origins of art became a subject of monographs, collections of articles. To keep with this approach national schools, styles and genres, works of some artists have been investigated. An important contribution to the development of the theoretical aspects of ethnic studies made Thomas J. Ferraro in his "Ethnic Passages: Literary Immigrants in Twentieth-Century America" [5], "Feeling Italian: The Art of Ethnicity in America" [6], as well as interdisciplinary essays "The Invention of Ethnicity", which set the diagram of cultural construction of "ethnic group " as

commonly cited in American ethnic literature. The researchers have investigated the issue in a broader historical context focusing on the traditions of the major ethnic groups with the recognized ethnic differences [7].

In Russia only since the mid-1960s art historians turn actively to the concepts "ethnos", "ethnicity", "ethnic" to determine the origins of artistic originality of national art styles. The basis for a large group of art history researches was the theory of ethnic group by Y. Bromley, according to which the basic phenomenon consolidating the cultural experience of any particular ethnic group is its ethnic tradition. Under this assumption tradition is identical to traditional ethnic culture as a whole or its individual layers (folklore, folk art) [8]. Despite the fact that almost all authoritative art historians referred to the ethnic origins of art, theoretical and methodological bases of the problem are still recognized as the least understood. Definitions of Ethnic Art Studies as a research direction are quite rare in literature. Here is one of the definitions given by S.I. Weinstein: "In the broadest sense Ethnic Art Studies encompasses ethnic specificity of artistic culture of the certain peoples, folk (traditional) art of different ethnic groups, its genesis, patterns of development, origin, primitive art, the relationship of folk art with professional art, as well as certain types of art, its fate in modern industrial society, ways of storage and exhibition of folk art in ethnographic museums, the use of folk art as a source for studying ethnogenesis "[9]. If we follow this line of reasoning, Ethnic Art Studies is an interdisciplinary field of humanities exploring the ethnic characteristics of art. To the works focusing on revealing of the role of ethnicity in the development of art works belong the essays of S. Ivanov, B. Bernstein, A. Kamensky, A. Zis, D. Sarabyanov, M. Neklyudova, I. Boguslavskaya, E. Kataeva, L. Nemchenko, T. Stepanikaya. While exploring the phenomenon of ethnicity, the researchers confirm the idea of ethnic tradition as the basic category of art analysis.

The turn of the XX-XXI centuries in domestic Art History was the period of particular ethnic art history researches. Scientists delve into the analysis of ethnic aspects of works of fine art. Characteristic is the study of international relations in different cultural regions. The problem of specificity of art schools is considered in the context of the dialogue of cultures revealing their complex interactions, determining the general and the particular. Due to this such phenomena as "ethnofuturism", "ethnic identity", "worldview", "etnopaainting", "etnografic art", "ethostyle" have been revealed. Among a large number of works in this area some of the monographs can be

distinguished: S.M. Chervonnaya "All our gods are with us and for us (ethnic identity and ethnic mobilization in contemporary art of the peoples of Russia)", E.M. Kolcheva "Ethnofuturism as a cultural phenomenon", E.G. Tkatch "Contemporary art in today's society", K.A. Melekhova, L.I. Nekhvyadovich, T.M. Stepanskaya "Russian school of art in the dialogue of cultures", scientific publication "Art and Civilization Identity" (Ed. N.A. Hrenov).

A significant contribution to the development of the Siberian Ethnic Art Studies was made by Doctor of Arts, Professor T.M. Stepanskaya (1939). The research program of her scientific and pedagogical school is focused on a comprehensive study of architecture, fine and decorative art of Siberia and adjacent territories (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China). The main idea of the ethnic art conception of T.M. Stepanskaya is that ethnic traditions as integral formal structures include valuable artistic achievements of ethnic groups, define the peculiarity of creative methods and style of contemporary artists. The researcher leads the development of the problem of artistic traditions in the lines of historical and artistic, theoretical analysis of the "archetypal" roots of artistic imagery; identification of the refractive forms of ethnic traditions in the works of contemporary art. The author defines the art of Siberia in the late XX-early XXI century as a dynamic, multi-level process characterized by: 1) the historical and cultural continuity of national artistic traditions; 2) the influence of ethnic culture; 3) the influence of the unique natural and geographical environment and the interesting historical past; 4) the interpenetration of genres while maintaining the priority of landscape in the fine arts; 5) commitment to the capital's artistic culture (especially at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries) [10].

Summary: In Art History there is no single point of view on the theoretical and methodological basis for studying the problems of ethnic origins of art. History of the formation of ethnic art concepts is related with the formation of the European History of Art as a science - the existence in a diffuse, disseminated state, then the concentration in various aspects of research on the nature and essence of art and finally, the definition of ethnicity as a subject of Ethnic Art Studies.

Ethnic origins in the arts are based on unconscious mental and mythological grounds bringing them to the conscious development and artistic expression. The main research task of Ethnic Art Studies is to identify the characteristics of artistic and imaginative ways of implementation of ethnic themes, motifs and plots in art through an integrated multidisciplinary approach.

CONCLUSIONS

The problem of the ethnic origins of art is relevant to Art History. The study of ethnic origins of art has evolved, but some continuity in the approach to the consideration of ethnicity as a peculiarity of art can be observed in the works of foreign and domestic art historians. The differences in the approaches to the definition of the role of ethnic factors are connected with the level of development of art and ethnological knowledge of the period. The feature of the present period in the investigation of the problem is the recognition of ethnicity as an objective attribute of art. In this aspect the problem is beyond the scope of art categories. It is expedient to allocate an independent scientific direction - Ethnic Art Studies - a special interdisciplinary theory encompassing the ethnic characteristics of art.

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