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Poltava Korolenko National Pedagogical University, Liola@ukr.net**Ukraine, Poltava***PHOTOGRAPHY IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE
OF POLTAVA IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY**

The purpose of the research is to characterize photography as a social, artistic and cultural phenomenon in the life of Poltava in the early twentieth century. The cultural and art approach of the study helps to analyze accomplishments of Poltava photo artists, establish their preferences in work genre-wise, and track them mastering new photographic practices in accordance with the artistic demands of the time. The scientific novelty of this research is encapsulated in the comprehensive analysis of the legacy of Poltava photo artists, characteristic of their work and creativity based on the materials from archival sources.

Key words: *Poltava in the early 20th century, genres of photo art, Poltava photo artists.*

Relevancy of the topic. The recent “anthropological shift» in foreign and domestic science recognized reliance on visual sources during research studies as a valid tool of modern humanitarianism. A whole range of social sciences increasingly focus on visual materials because they, and photography in particular, can help to reproduce a whole story about the life of the person and the society» [4, 67]. While broadcasting perceptions on what a person’s life, relationship between people, tastes, priorities and cultural values looked like at the time they were taken, the photos accumulate tremendous life experience of all individuals related to it.

The modern scientific thought has enough prerequisites to distinguish visuality as a separate area of research. The most important achievements in this regard belong to foreign scholars, representatives of semiotic (M. Alvarado, V. Bergin, A. Berger), discourse (R. Breckner, R. Krauss, L. Malvi), post-modernist (G. Pollock, S. Hall, U. Eco), and post-structuralist (P. Bourdieu, R. Bart, T. Van Dyck, M. Foucault) approaches. Studies of M. Jay, L. Cartwright, and M. Struckner, representatives of the British school, appeared to be closest to cultural studies, as they focused on interpretation of the visual phenomena of a society in the context of its everyday life.

In the domestic humanitaristics, the method of visual research is most actively used in philosophy and history (O. Petrovska, V. Savchuk, A. Usmanova, O. Kolyastruk, N. Kozlova and M. Kotsyubinska).

The purpose of the article is to characterize photography as a social, artistic and cultural phenomenon in Poltava in the early twentieth century.

Main discussion. The photographic experience of Poltava early in the 20th century is an understudied phenomenon, the empirical facts of which are accumulated in little-known archival sources, such as memoirs, letters, and photos of those years. An eye-witness of numerous events of the cultural and artistic life of Poltava at the early 20th century was Leonid Lissowsky (1866–1934), a Ukrainian composer. The musician lived in Poltava between 1899 and 1909, and as a graduate of the St. Petersburg Conservatory led a very active life of a performer, musical critic, teacher, educator and citizen. L. Lyssowsky described his impressions from communicating with local photographers in his memoirs titled «Ten years in Poltava ...», where we read: «They were wonderful spring days, and the city photographers were

walking around the city and taking photos for postcards. I must say that in every Poltava house there were a few fans of photography. In Poltava, there was a ridiculous competition between small professional photographers who lacked practice because of Khmelevsky’s art photography. As soon as I invited a modest photographer (who, rather solicited to be invited) to take a photo of our school group on April 29, another one of the same caliber, but more daring than the first one, somehow sniffed out about this and showed up, unabashed, with his camera, stood up by the side of the first one, and after a scandal that broke out between the two, took pictures of us, and then both photographers, still rambling, went with the policeman to the police department, leaving us unawares which of them would eventually deliver the group photo to us (and what are the chances that we will get it?)» [6].

As you can see, photography in Poltava was a quite popular and at the same time competitive business. The real high-caliber professional in this trade was Yosyp Khmelevsky (1849–1924). As a brilliant portraitist, he worked in various innovative genres of his time and was one of the first in the domestic practice to master the job of a photo-reporter [10, c.12]. From the 1890 s, Y. Khmelevsky took an active part in the public life of Poltava city and of the entire province: he worked as an assistant to the head of the Poltava Photographic Society, a member of the Second Public Assembly and the Poltava Church Historical and Archaeological Committee. The photographer’s name is on the list of the Poltava Academic Archival Commission, and among the participants of the First Ukrainian Art Exhibition, along with the prominent contemporaries, such as Grygory and Ivan Miasoyedov, O. Slastion, P. Martynovich, S. Vasilkivsky, V. Krichevsky, G. Tsiss, L. Posen and V. Korolenko [1, p.213]. On the eve of the celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the Battle of Poltava, Y. Khmelevsky and a famous local historian V. Buchnevich received permission from the Poltava Church Historical and Archaeological Committee to photograph Poltava temples [9]. Subsequently, these works were included into a unique album with 390 pictures. Currently, the album is kept in the Royal Archives in Stockholm [1, p.212-213].

The Mikhail Fridental (1849–1935) photo-studio was very popular with the Poltava citizens in the early 20th century. The studio specialized in salon portraits, however the artist shared his passion to portraits with documentary

photography. A lot of M. Fridental's photos are dedicated to the milestone events in the life of the Poltava province of those years, such as the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Poltava and the opening of the monument to Colonel O.S. Kelin (1909), the guest performance of D.I. Basmanov drama troupe in the Poltava Theater (1913), and the erection of the bust of Ivan Kotlyarevsky in Poltava in 1903 [10, p.12]. Regarding the last picture, we should note that M. Fridental was the only one who immortalized this event of the exceptional national significance, namely, the reunion around the founder of the Ukrainian literature, the national cultural elite and the whole nation.

Dmitro Ivanenko (1859–1943), another well-known Ukrainian activist, the editor of the local newspapers *Poltavskiy Gubernskiy Vedomosti* and *Poltavsky Vestnik* also made a significant contribution to the development of the social and cultural life of Poltava in the early 20th century. Due to his professional duties, D. Ivanenko had to use the services of Poltava photojournalists a few times, as evidenced by photographs on the pages of his periodicals. Upon his initiative, in 1902–1907, local newspapers printed a whole gallery of portraits of Poltava region officials, including the governors Y. Yankovsky, P. Kosagovsky, A. Tatishchev, O. El'gard, V. Tregubov, the heads of the Poltava Chamber of State Y. Anuchin and A. Shidlovsky, practically all members of the Poltava province State Duma, bishops Hilarion and George and many others.

According to archival sources, early in the 20th century, Poltava residents were socially active and were keen to participate in events of social significance. The event, which had huge reverberations of both local and nationwide scale in 1898–1901, was a court case against the brothers Skitsky, two Poltava residents, accused of murdering O. Komarov, the secretary of the Poltava ecclesiastical consistory. During the police investigation Poltava residents were deeply anxious about the fate of the accused brothers, and demonstrated an escalating sense of justice. L. Lissowsky's memoirs say in this regard the following: «On May 28, the whole city was colossally tensed, hourly expecting news about the judgment of the District Court ... <. And when, finally, closer to the wonderful evening, an acquittal was pronounced to both brothers who had already spent in prison almost three years, the whole city, we might say, rushed to the street (the former Novopoltavskaya) to the apartment of the Skitsky's defender, a private attorney Moses Danilovich Zelensky, and greeted him with loud and enthusiastic applause» [5, issue 2].

Obviously, photojournalists could not ignore neither the course of the trial, nor the public reaction to it, and it's no wonder that local newspapers of the time contain many photos of the event. A few photographs from the place of the investigative experiment (taken by Y. Khmelevsky) were included into D. Ivanenko's memoirs with comments by the author: «... And so the court session opened, perhaps the only one of its kind, under the open sky, in the shade of the trees, at the scene of the crime»; «The spot near the bridge where A. Komarov was killed»; «Messrs. Kuzminsky, Karabchevsky, Yezhov and others at Ms. Bogodayeva's house»; «Answering Kuzminsky's questions, father Petersen points with his hand and explains his son's movements»; «The Skitsky brothers, standing between the convoy, calmly look at Peterson's demonstration» [3, p.113-140].

In general, appearance of reportage photos on the pages of local periodicals demonstrate that journalistic photography actively made its way in Poltava. Development of this genre was strongly driven by technical advancement of the equipment used by photographers, which underwent serious upgrades in the early 20th century. Comfortable and light portable cameras came into existence enabling photo reporters taking pictures directly on the spot of important events. Gradually, public and private life of urban residents became one of the main subjects of photography.

It is known that in the early 20th century, in the context of national and cultural uplift, all ethnic Ukrainian things enjoyed increasingly greater attention. In addition to literary, historical, and ethnographic studies of various folk culture phenomena, there arose a new possibility of artistic reproduction and fixation of national flavor, life and livelihoods of Ukrainians by means of the photo art. The realism of the depicted surroundings was an undoubted strength of the so-called «painting with light». There are evidences that photo artists also admitted and appreciated this. Namely, Y. Khmelevsky in the preface to the photo album «Gogol's Motherland» (Kyiv, 1902) wrote: «The reader will find here the neighborhoods and the scenery precious to Gogol's biography, fixed with the help of light, in almost the same form as they were seen by our great writer» [2, p.8]. It should be noted that Y. Khmelevsky was the first to reproduce a unique story of the folk culture of Poltava region in the photographs. Works by the master: «A joke», «Asked for marriage», «Dancing near the railway station», «Spinstress», «On the river», «Waiting for her dear» and many others marked the beginning of genre photography in Poltava region.

Photo portrait was the most popular genre in the urban environment of those years. Its appearance in the history of domestic photography dates to the 1840's. In Poltava, photo portrait gained popularity much later, in the period of the most powerful socio-cultural and institutional evolution of the region (the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries). That time was marked with the emergence of many state and private educational establishments throughout the province; the growing activity of scientific, social and artistic institutions under the leadership of well-educated intelligentsia, such as famous Ukrainian public leaders, writers, scholars, and musicians (I. Pavlovsky, V. Korolenko, V. Shchepotyev, D. Ashkharumov, G. Markevich, I. Rizenko, Victor and Volodymyr Ogolevets, F. Popadych, L. Lissowsky, Gregory and Ivan Myasoyedov, O. Slastion and many others) [7, pp.48-58]. Almost all of them actively used photographic services. Instead, for ordinary Poltava residents, and for most public figures, having one's photo taken was far from ordinary business. Plain people typically visited photo salons on the occasion of holidays or family celebrations to have pictures of the whole family. They carefully prepared to the visit, paying attention to their looks and attire. In Poltava, photographers were often invited home, sometimes they were filming inside a school, an institute, or behind the scenes of a theater. Customers of photographic services paid a lot of attention to the layout of their photos. Individual, group, and family pictures of the so-called «cabinet-portrait», or «visit» formats were in the greatest demand. The pictures were placed on special printed passe partout, with the most exquisite designs brought by order from abroad. It should be

noted that for Poltava intellectuals, i.e. actors, teachers, doctors, and military men, the photo portrait was not only an object of aesthetic pleasure, but also a modern and rather prestigious means of social self-presentation. The archive of works by Poltava photographers existing today contains a whole gallery of portraits of the intellectuals of Poltava region, e.g.: «Singer Sadovska», «Artist M. Bashkirtseva», «Poltava Aristocracy with Doctor S. Voronova», «Colonel Tessen's Widow with Children», «Portrait of actor A.M. Klimov» (1894), «Portrait of the Vivchenko Sisters and a Lieutenant of the 34th Artillery Brigade» (1900), «The Family Portrait of D. Ivanenko with Wife Lidia Mykolayivna» (1903), «Portrait of Olia Feoktistova», and many other works by Y. Khmelevsky, V. Volkov and others.

It should be noted that Poltava photo artists made a lot of pictures in the genre «Architectural Landscape». The lion's share of these works is dedicated to the sights of the city, including the house of the Poltava provincial council, the Monument of Glory in Korpusny Park (then the Alexander Garden), and administrative buildings of the central square. To this day these buildings are Poltava's landmarks, a testimony to its legendary history. The ensemble of Circular Square, performed in the classical style, was erected in the early 19th century, when Poltava became an administrative center of the Malorossiyska province. O.B. Kurakin, the Governor-General then, invited architect Mikhail Amvrosimov from St. Petersburg, and his design was used to build the city during 1803–1805 by the example of the northern Russian capital; so much so, that Poltava was sometimes referred to as «little St. Petersburg» [8, p.692-693].

Meanwhile, numerous picturesque corners throughout the Poltava province were no less attractive for photographers. The photo artists' attention was almost equally drawn by luxurious mansions of wealthy Poltava families, and by much more modest, but extremely charming rural landscapes. For example, there are a lot of Y. Khmelevsky's photos depicting the estate of Prince V.S. Kochubey in Dikanka village. One of the photos portrays the facade of the Kochubey's house from the side of the Triumphal Gate, erected in honor of Emperor Alexander I's stay at this place in 1820. Some photos clearly demonstrate the scale of the Kochubeys' wealth, as the family owned a horse ranch, a riding hall, an enclosed area for deer, an orchard-house, greenhouses, and an oak grove. Y. Khmelevsky's best works in the landscape genre also include the suburbs of Poltava (Kobyshechany from Stretenskaya street), and photos of the villages of Petrivtsi and Nyzhni Mlyny, etc.

Early in the 20th century, under the influence of commercialization and rapid development of the entertainment industry, photo art gradually became an element of mass culture. Pages of central, provincial, and in particular, Poltava city periodicals published thousands of ads offering photographic services. To promote themselves and their business each photographer tried to create his own business card, which had to both inform the consumer about the services and impress him/her with the aesthetic appearance. Many photographers' business cards not only served as a traditional advertising tool, but sometimes looked like artistic masterpieces.

In Poltava, almost all photographers, including V. Volkov, D. Meyerovich, R. Salitan, M. Fridental, and Y. Khmelevsky, had business cards. We will try to describe what they looked

like. V. Volkov's business card was unpretentious and simple: on a gray background, it pictured an easel, a brush and a short semicircular inscription: «The artist Volkov, Poltava». Compared to it, D. Meyerovich's card had a more glamorous look: against the background of a picturesque landscape there was an image of the monument to I. Kotlyarevsky (by L. Posen). By using the local attribution D. Meyerovich obviously wanted to emphasize his regional affiliation. The business card of Raphael Salitan is more informative in comparison with the previous ones. Besides the owner's name and the address of the photo salon, there is detailed information about the services: «Special branch for magnifying portraits from the smallest to the natural size» and the inscription «we keep photo negatives». Note that this business card tried to meet the highest artistic standards, as it has a magnificent frame with flowers, angels, adornments, and a coat of arms above the center. M. Fridental's business card was simple and elegant at the same time: on a flowery, pastel shade background there was a large autograph of the master, in the form of a monogram, and below was the address of the photographer. Y. Khmelevsky had a few business cards, each of them representing a certain period in the master's career. The first two are concise and feature only the owner's surname and initials. The third one, attributed to the mature stage of the artist's career, is more presentable, even somewhat pompous: the high level of the photographer's mastery is testified by a significant number of awards, such as medals and decorations engraved on the card with gold embossing.

The expansion of the domestic photographic industry in the early 20th century also led to the diversification of photographic practices, and one such practice, the postcard, became very common at that time. Receiving recognition in large cities as a convenient and fairly fast means of communication, postcard also became popular in the province. Postcards with gift inscriptions and original greetings were sent to relatives and friends on the occasion of holidays, or as trip messages. Postcards were useful to track important life events, and to establish memorable dates. For many users, the postal card was a family relic and a collection item.

The first postcards of Poltava photo artists very clearly visualize what Poltava looked like in the early 20th century. The lion's share of them are mostly urban scenes with views of Poltava streets, houses, shops, squares, parks, temples, and monuments. The most replicated are the images of the Cathedral Square, the Monument of Glory, the Holy Cross Monastery, Oleksandrivska street, the Assumption Cathedral, the Samsonivska Church, the buildings of the Poltava Theater, the Poltava Cadet Corps, the School for Noble Maidens, and monuments at the Battlefield of Poltava. In the past, they were successfully printed by famous printing houses from Stockholm (Granberg and Swanstrom), Moscow (Scherer and Nabgolz), and Kyiv («Rassvet»). In Poltava, the leader in the production of postcards was I. Dohman's printing house, which used Y. Khmelevsky's photos to print the series of the most popular albums in the Russian Empire, such as «Human Types of Malorossiya», «Sights of Malorossiya», and «Landscapes of Poltava region».

Photos, postcards, and reproductions by Poltava photo artists have long been documentary rarities, but to this day they have not lost their relevance. Some of them can be seen as illustrations on the pages of historical, ethnographic and

culture books. Nowadays, this is not just a «pastoral nostalgia, but quite a legitimate document of natural climatic, mundane, landscape, and even ecological history» [4, p.67], the records of the mental image of the Poltava region.

Conclusions. Therefore, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the domestic photo art was experiencing rapid development and spreading as a separate, rather powerful mass culture industry. The processes of urbanization, rising living standards of the citizens, in particular, the middle class and the intellectuals, were the drivers of vibrant photography. The desire of cities inhabitants to keep up with the times coincided with the opportunity to record and archive events of their personal, family, and social life by means of the photo art.

In Poltava, the photography was gaining foothold amidst competitive struggle of local enthusiasts who, in addition to commercial gains yielded as a result of employing new photographic practices and art techniques, recognized in photography a possibility to enhance professional mastery.

The legacy of the Poltava photo artists of this period features art products of various genres: from individual, group, and family portraits, views of architecture landmarks and landscapes, photojournalism and genre sketches with folk motives, to business cards produced in response to commercial and business needs, and postcards published in hundreds.

Having actively entered the daily life of Poltava residents in the early 20th century, the photograph found its way among the urban intelligentsia, both satisfying the aesthetic ambitions of the owner, and fulfilling an important function of preserving the people's social, and, in particular, national identity in the cultural context of that time.

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ФОТОГРАФІЯ В СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНОМУ ЖИТТІ ПОЛТАВИ ПОЧАТКУ ХХ СТОЛІТТЯ

У статті схарактеризовано фотографію як суспільне, культурне й мистецьке явище в житті Полтави початку ХХ століття. На основі історико-культурологічного й мистецтвознавчого підходів проаналізовано діяльність полтавських фотомитців, встановлено жанрові пріоритети їхньої творчості й освоєння ними нових фотографічних практик. Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у комплексному аналізі спадщини Полтавських фотхудожників за матеріалами архівних джерел.

Ключові слова: Полтава початку ХХ століття, жанри фотомистецтва, полтавські фотхудожники.