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“Dynamics of Re-invention of the East-Central European Patriotic Attire (Hungary, Poland and Ukraine) in the 19th and 21st century”.

My new research project, which I started to develop recently within the CCCEE Cologne-Bonn, analyses the current development of neo-nationalist/regionalist patriotic fashion, its performative aspects and its emotional impact in Eastern Central Europe and Central Asia.

I trace and explore this fascinating phenomenon of the revival of patriotic attire, which gathers momentum in many post-Communist countries of Eastern Central Europe (my test cases are Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, Russia) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). This topic has been hardly dealt with in research and my study aims to fill this gap and to examine the political, social and cultural reasons of appearance and popularity of this phenomenon in these areas. It focuses on the cultural, visual, performative and political dynamics of the phenomenon of patriotic clothing in these regions and its historical roots. It analyses the reasons for the appearance of this phenomenon, the agents and institutions who spread it, on the usage done through it on the consumers and its emotional impact on the group identity. My study puts special emphasis on process of reinvention of the past and its visual, emotional, performative self-representation and on the role the religion and religious rites play there.

In the last decade, due to the development of media and socio-political changes, a transnational revival of patriotic attire, which often becomes fashionable can be observed. This patriotic attire, which includes elements of neo-folk, traditional embroidery, historical scenes, religious symbols, photographs of politicians, etc., is on the one hand the result of the current biased re-writing of neo-national historiography within several East-Central European and Central Asian states. On the other hand, this patriotic attire is also conducive to the creation of a new tradition, similar to religious rite in strengthening certain emotions within each group and in bringing a sense of unity to its members. Their re-invented dress demonstrates and visualizes the ideology and the emotions of the groups' members.

A revival of patriotic attire, which can be observed in the post-Communist countries of Central Eastern Europe manifests itself in various ways: neo-folk elements, traditional embroidery, festivals and the reenactment of historical scenes, religious symbols, photographs of politicians, and many more. Combat

trousers and t-shirts with various famous historical battles as well as folk motives on dresses and skirts are now popular in Poland; during their annual patriotic assemblies, Hungarian right-wing activists wear Mongolian inspired attire; Kazakh female pop singers dress themselves up as nomadic amazons; and Russian girls wear blouses with portraits of Putin or emphasize their Russian Orthodox religious belonging by wearing *Sarafan* dresses.

Reconstruction of history:

The question is, then, why these dress practices are gathering momentum again? The connection between dress or attire and nationalist movements is far from new. What is observable in today's patriotic or *neo-nationalist* self-visualization, is a revival of social, cultural, visual and performative patterns which had already been inherent in nineteenth's century nationalism. It strives to classify people into unique groups according to their imagined ethnic origins, which are believed to cut across linguistic, religious or geographic borders. Similar to nineteenth century nationalism, it depends on imagination and emotions: the emotional side of nineteenth century nationalist ideology stressed experiences of atomization of people who were seen as too detached from rural life after having moved into large cities; it emphasized the importance of their unification, in reaction to massive transformation of the social structure. The *neo-nationalism* in East-Central Europe and Central Asia and the rise of patriotic/folkloristic attire more generally developed after the collapse of the communist regime, apparently as a part of post-imperial self-reinvention process.

Focusing on patriotic dress, i.e. its visual, gender, performative and emotional appeal as well as its links to nineteenth century nationalistic practices enables me to analyze not only the processes of reinvention of a neo-national historiography, but also its function and the role dress plays in this. Neo-nationalist historiographies strive to present an alternative to academic historiography and with this aim to strengthen the common identity of a certain population group by re-inventing its glorious past. They are based on the reconstruction of regional ethnic or pan-ethnic "ancient" and especially "medieval" myths and folklore, which had already been popular among nationalists in the nineteenth century. Patriotic dress, that parades these myths and symbols, visualizes these new historical narratives and seeks to strengthen a group's common ideology and to unify its members. The enormous progress of mass-media, which took place in recent decades as well as a new social tendency of self-visualization significantly strengthened the emotional performative aspect of *neo-nationalist* ideologies in the abovementioned post-Communist regions. Visual aesthetical forms of this aspect, often created by the nowadays popular pseudo-medieval fantasy movies (such as "The Hobbit", "Warcraft", "King Arthur", "Thor: Ragnarok" and "The Witcher"), video-games,

together with the pop culture, create a visual fusion with the ideological nineteenth-century revival of pseudo-medieval and folk traditions. In this paper I would like to bring three test cases: of Poland, Ukraine and Russia.

In the case of Poland, the tradition of visual group self-representation had already been strong during the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, when the so-called *Sarmatian* costume (an Orientalized Polish nobility costume) became the symbol of “Polishness”.¹ In the time of partitions of Poland members of cultural, social and political movements inspired by Romanticism and nationalism attempted to visualize themselves according to their beliefs. In this, the main visual emphasis was put on clothes. Furthermore, during the anti-Russian manifestations and uprising in 1861-1866, the so-called “Black Fashion” and “Black Jewelry” became popular among Polish female patriots as a symbol of protest against the government.²

Today’s Polish patriots continue to use in their dress the same visual messages: folk dresses, symbols and thematic motives which had been in use among nineteenth century Polish patriots. In addition, patriotic activists often turn to depict motives taken from Polish history on their clothes or tattoos: famous battles or faces of political and religious leaders. In the last two years, the online series “Polish Legends”, which transfers medieval fairy tales into current Polish reality, gathered an audience of millions.³

Moreover, dress continues to be a symbol of protest and here, too, takes up imagery that makes reference to past practices – as happened during the recent “Black Protests” in Poland in October 2016. Then, hundreds of thousands of women went to the streets wearing black clothes and protesting the anti-abortion governmental ban. The black dress again appeared as a symbol of political protest in the Polish society.

Another example for this is Ukraine: In recent years, due to the political developments and the war, the embroidered blouse *Vyshyvanka* became a more powerful symbol of Ukrainian ethnic identity, regardless of religion or language and unifying Western and Eastern, Russian and Ukrainian speaking Ukrainians. In the recent decade, an international “*Vyshyvanka* day” was arranged, unifying Ukrainian patriots around the globe. From 2015, *Vyshyvanka* also started to appear at the catwalks during the Fashion Weeks’ shows,

¹ Wasko, Andrzej, *Romantyczny sarmatyzm: tradycja szlachecka w literaturze polskiej lat 1831-1863*, Arcana: Krakow, 1995, Grzybowski, Stanislaw, *Sarmatyzm*, Krajowa agencja wydawnicza: Warszawa, 1996

² Bauer, Anna Maria, *Moda na czarną biżuterię*, *Niepodległość i Pamięć* 21/1-2 (45-46), 53-72 2014

³ <http://legendy.allegro.pl/>

becoming fashionable among the European celebrities.⁴ The sources of the ideological usage of *Vyshyvanka*, too, are in nineteenth century Ukrainian intellectual nationalism, which had been inspired by the people's traditional costumes. The famous Ukrainian writer and nationalist activist Ivan Franko wore *Vyshyvanka* under his modern European suit.⁵

Finally, in the case of nowadays Russia, there are several directions in which the patriotic attire is developed. Here I would like to mention the two significant ones: revival of "traditional" folk dress and portraits of the president on the clothes (T-shirts and dresses). The attire in Russia started to have a political meaning already from the early modern times and continued to have it during the nineteenth century. During the reign of Peter the Great (which lasted in 1682-1725), the traditional Russian dress was abandoned within dominating social groups and was (sometimes by force) changed to the European one.⁶ During the nineteenth century, multiple dress regulations done by the authorities, prescribed each social, professional and ethnic group to dress accordingly to its status, therefore "unifying" its members visually, preventing diversity and creating certain group "uniforms".⁷ During the last two decades, many Russian patriotic activists (a large part of whom are also religious Russian Orthodox Church activists) started to promote the "traditional", "Old-Russian" costumes, which the real Russian patriots would love to wear.

For instance, "The House of Russian Fashion" established in 2011, offers their customers such "Russian" clothes, shoes and accessories, which combine some folk motives with the latest Western fashion trends.

Portraits of Putin appear very often in T-shirts and are so popular that the personality of the Russian president was compared to a "Fashion brand" by one of the designers. Often, the designers of clothes with these portraits emphasize their love and loyalty to Putin, while many female patriotic activists stress their sexual appreciation of the president, locating his portrait on the breasts area. Portraits of Putin are used also in order to emphasize a political statement of support, as for instance in the case of a "Putin dress". In October 2016, at the forum of Arab culture in Moscow, a dress made by famous designer Mona Al Mansouri depicting

⁴ <https://fashionunited.uk/news/fashion/vyshyvanka-ukraine-s-national-costume-conquers-the-catwalk/2016082321513>

<http://112.international/society/queen-maxima-of-the-netherlands-wears-ukrainian-embroidered-dress-8583.html>

⁵ Wandycz, Piotr, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1815*, University of Washington Press: Seattle and London, 1996, 257-258, Грицак, Ярослав, *Іван Франко – Селяньський Син? Україна: культурна спадщина, національна свідомість, державність*, 15/2006-2007

⁶ Забозлаева, Татьяна, *Мода как политика в Российской империи*, *Чистый лист*: Санкт-Петербург, 2013, 8-15,

⁷ *Ibidem*, 8-51, Кирсанова, Раиса, *Костюм — вещь и образ в русской литературе*, *Теория моды: одежда, тело, культура*, N. 23, Весна 2012

the Russian president as an angel, surrounded by cherubs, holding a globe and wearing a judo kit, was presented as a symbol of unification of the Arab and Russian nations.⁸

Region:

The last point my project comes to examine is the reason of popularity of this phenomenon of patriotic Neo-Nationalist fashion within the area East-Central Europe and Central Asia. There, the neo-nationalist patriotic clothing plays a strong political and social role. My project comes to check whether this uniqueness is a result of post-Communist changes and developments (such as a new group self-definition or re-writing of the state or regional historiography) which merged with the recent political and social events in these countries together with the enormous progress of media, populism and trends of the self/group visualization.

During my analysis of the neo-nationalist patriotic fashion, I take into account the regional historical, social and political differences. Due to these differences, this transnational phenomenon has a different visual and ideological manifestation in each one of the countries my project focuses on. Thus, for instance in Poland and Kazakhstan the same phenomenon of *neo-nationalistic*/patriotic attire will look different, will play different roles and will be used to manifest different political and social views. My previous experience of work with the social and cultural history and visual studies in these countries and my expertise in the dress history field enables me to conduct a broad and a deep cross-regional analysis.

Methodology:

My research has a multidisciplinary character, necessary for an inter-regional study. It focuses on the modern and contemporary East-Central European and Central Asian political, social and cultural transnational history and visual studies. Using methods of cultural history and visual studies, it also cooperates with the neighboring disciplines: ethnology, sociology, dress history and media studies. Various historical and social aspects through the prism of questions of intercultural exchange, visual and clothing appearance, as well as dynamics of identity are my core research foci.

My methodology is based on written and visual sources. I work with archival documents, memoirs, periodicals (of social, cultural and fashion character), interviews and reports from the patriotic meetings and assemblies, writings of significant neo-nationalist leaders as well as blogs containing discussions of various

⁸ <http://dailypegham.com/?p=4961>

<http://www.mk.ru/social/2016/10/10/plate-s-putiny-m-na-intimnom-meste-bet-rekordy-populyarnosti.html>

neo-nationalist activists written in Polish, German, Russian, Ukrainian and Kazakh. The visual part includes such sources as paintings, illustrations, photographs, websites of patriotic clothing stores, films done in the recent decade, photographs from the patriotic meetings and festivals, video clips, posters and commercials.

The result of my project will be a manuscript and a digital database, which will contain all the types of patriotic attire, their performative usage as well as their geographic location. Only recently, scholars have begun to share the sources on which they are working with the public; therefore many valuable materials remain almost unknown. In order to change this approach, I will make the database available open to public already in the course of the project. Each page will contain visual materials, their description and brief information about their history, background and dynamics.

I am convinced that digital databases are useful for the large projects in the humanities in general and in the transnational and multidisciplinary ethnological and cultural studies projects. I have a necessary experience of work with digital databases, since for my current research project "Between Kapota and Siurtuk: The Dynamics of East-Central European Jewish Clothing", I develop a digital lexical database website.

Stay within EEGA

My short-term stay in the Leibniz Science Campus "Eastern Europe – Global Area" in Leipzig (1-23 June 2017) promoted my project significantly. The inter-regional and multidisciplinary character of my study fits into the multidisciplinary research profile of the EEGA. My research foci: East Central European cultural transnational history, historical anthropology and visual studies, link to the profile of EEGA and especially to the profile of the Research Area 2 and 4. The first one investigates the new spatial political forms within Eastern Europe and the political legitimization of new formats and inventions of history. My project analyzes these political forms and re-inventions of history through sartorial and performative manifestations, using dress and visual appearance as a tool of analysis. Thus, my project related to the focus of the Research Area 2 on the fields of New Regionalisms and Eastern Europe and of Geopolitical positioning and the lasting legacies of the "socialist bloc" and of the Research area 4 focus on the global impact of Eastern European developments and of perceptions and appropriations of global cultural and intellectual trends within the context of globalization and identity building.

During my stay, I had an opportunity of the participation, of giving a lecture and of talking at the roundtable "Imaginations of the East in Europe and Asia - Regionalizations and Imaginary Geography in Global Perspective" at the EEGA Summer School "Making and Changing Spaces of Action under the Global

Condition". I also participated at the other EEGA activities such as attending the talk of Prof. Balmaceda. During the research stay I worked extensively in the libraries of GWZO and in the National Library in Leipzig. There, I gathered a large amount of research literature necessary for my article in German, English and Russian about the history of right-wing populism, about the history of East-Central European nationalism and its today's dynamics as well as about the East-Central European political and patriotic movements.

During this time, I also created networking meetings with the scholars in within the EEGA: Prof. Dr. Frank Hadler, Prof. Dr. Mathias Middell, Prof. Dr. Yvonne Kleinmann and Prof. Dr. Stefan Troebst, had research discussions with my fellow colleagues and also had an opportunity to discuss my research with Prof. Dr. Maren Möhring. Finally, all these meetings and discussions as well as the research literature assisted me to develop a very important conceptual part of my research dealing with the questions of feminist practices, female roles and fighting maidens as well as to trace the process of implementation of global media- and video games motives and influences into the ideological and populist self-visualization of the Eastern-Central European neo-nationalist patriots.

Therefore, my stay at the EEGA promoted my research project significantly and assisted me to reach significant conclusions. It is my hope that the EEGA, and the Research Areas 2 and 4 benefited and will continue to benefit from my summer school participation, from the publication and from the forthcoming digital database done on with its support.