

## TWO ETHNOGRAPHIC WRITINGS ON FOLK DANCE

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### ДВІ ЕТНОГРАФІЧНІ ПРАЦІ ПРО НАРОДНІ ТАНЦІ

*Народні танці є видовищним дійством в більшості суспільств і актуальною темою етнографічних досліджень. Багато опублікованих праць про народні танці підвищували інтерес до них і мають розглядатися як попередники цієї статті, оскільки в них наводились як корисні обговорення з конкретних питань, так і обширна бібліографія. Тим не менш, ці праці були написані на основі різних підходів. Тому ми повинні уважно дослідити різні інтерпретації народних танців в етнографічних роботах. У даній статті автор обрав дві праці про народні танці, написані авторами-представниками двох різних культур – України та США. Автор порівнює їх підхід, стиль тощо.*

*Ключові слова: танок, етнографія, етнографічні твори, структурний аналіз, функціональний аналіз.*

#### *Introduction*

Folk dance provides a spectacle in most societies and an obvious topic for ethnographic curiosity. Many writings on folk dance have attempted to stimulate interest, and these should be regarded as precursors of the present work, providing useful discussions on particular points and daunting glimpses of the vastness of the field with extensive bibliography. However, they are written on the basis of different approaches and focuses. Therefore, we need to examine carefully the interpretation of ethnographic writings on dance. In this paper, I choose two works on folk dance from two different cultures, such as Ukraine and the United State. I compare their approach way, focus, writing style, and others, and find the characteristics of the two ethnographic writings.

Every ethnography involves interpretation and includes a selection of data, made more or less explicitly within a theoretical framework. Thus the picture of the people, society, or culture that the ethnography presents must be understood from the perspective of (1) the question or problem that it addresses, (2) the answer, explanation, or interpretation it provides, (3) the data it includes as evidence for the problem, for the interpretation, or for both, and (4) the organization of these elements (problem, interpretation and evidence) into an argument<sup>1</sup>. To understand even the seemingly most straightforward ethnography, it is necessary to analyze and evaluate the arguments it contains. For this study, I focus on "claim" and "data" of both ethnographic writings, and analyze how they warrant each other.

#### *Claim*

Most of ethnographic studies raise question or problem, and also contain its answer, explanation, or interpretation. This chapter devotes to revealing the question and answer, which are called here as "claims".

#### *A. Narodne khoreorafichne mystetstvo Ukrainy<sup>2</sup>*

Humeniuk's book is mainly designed for professional choreographers, ethnographers, theater experts, but it is also recommended for amateur clubs and anyone interested in the history of

dance. The study is mainly based on the written sources rather than on fieldwork. In the introduction part, Humeniuk says the purpose of the book that this book is to provide general characteristic of the development of choreographic art in Ukraine, and to study national peculiarities of Ukrainian dances on the basis of analyses of texts, choreography and music. For Humeniuk, the general characteristic of the development of choreographic art is connected with the general question on the origin of Ukrainian dance: "the question of the origin of choreography is one of the most important problems"<sup>3</sup>. Reviewing all previous explanations about the origin of dance, Humeniuk came to the conclusion that the previous explanations, given by Prints (theory of imitation), Darwin (theory of natural selection), Spencer (physiological factors of language) are mistaken and false. Basing his arguments on the theory of Marxism-Leninism, Humeniuk states that all forms of art, and choreography in particular, are developed during the process of work: "Labor gave the beginning of the art of dance and it is the basis of its further development"<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, his claim is to find the general characteristic of Ukrainian dance in the connection with "the process of labor".

The author emphasizes the collective nature of labor and forms of dance. Humeniuk tries to show the connection between the rhythmical patterns, which accompanied the working process in the early days of human civilization and their influence on the primitive forms of dance. Later in the process of improvisation movements acquired traditional forms, creating new arsenal of expressive means in choreographic art. The author analyses the role of drums in the process of collective labor and choreography. The depiction of labor in primitive dance was reflexive and mechanical. Next step in the development of dance was the creation of an artistic image in people's mentality. In poetry the image is created with the help of language, which was poorly developed in primitive societies. Therefore there was a need for singing in which lies the musical intonation<sup>5</sup>. As the result of synthesis of rhythm, music and poetry there appeared khorovod (round dance). Humeniuk believes that the khorovod is the original type of Ukrainian dance and is evolved into other various dances. He devotes this study to prove it in the following chapters.

Humeniuk tries to persuade the reader of the absolute supremacy of the work in human life and history. He seems to regard that all our activities are connected with "work". Humeniuk says himself that dance rhythms are something that arise out of human creativity, whereas during work, rhythms are conditioned by our bodily constitution and technical means used. Concerning his conception on "work" and rhythms, we may raise a question whether or not one could ever perform any work to some of the intricate dance rhythms. He wants to see work, music and poetry as a unity. However, according to Lange, there are countless examples that show clearly that dance achieves a very sophisticated level as an art with some "primitive" peoples, who at the same time have not developed much of their technical equipment. This means that there is not necessarily a direct parallel to be drawn between the growth of art in human culture and technology<sup>6</sup>.

## B. Royce's book

Royce's work is the historical and anthropological study of the form, function, and meaning of primitive, folk and art dance. Royce posits new theory and suggests directions and methods for future research. An early chapter traces the evolution of dance notation and cites available guides for the field study of dance. Royce develops the anthropology of dance around three main issues.

1) The first is to formulate an anthropological definition of dance that accounts for dance as both cultural object and social process.

2) The second is a claim that dance is formally unique and is able to transmit special kinds of information.

3) The third suggests an emerging methodology in dance research that allows the anthropologist to interpret both the performer and spectator roles.

Royce agrees with Merriam that "dance is culture and culture is dance" and "entity of dance is not separable from the anthropological concept of culture"<sup>7</sup>. From this point of view, she insists that dance is a proper subject for anthropological investigation and dance study conform to the same standards and procedures that anthropologists use in studying other aspects of humankind. According to her, "we should be able to talk not only about specific forms and contexts of dance but also about the phenomenon of dance in general"<sup>8</sup>. For the purpose of providing a new methodology, the author reviews anthropological study on dance over the past one hundred years. Then she identify five

approaches popular at different times which have dealt quite differently with dance: 1) evolutionary approach, 2) the culture trait approach, 3) the culture and personality and culture configuration approach, 4) the problem-oriented approach in complex and plural societies, and 5) the approach that focuses on dance as a unique phenomenon<sup>9</sup>.

Instead of connecting dance with a specific concept, such as "work" on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, the author reviews the previous approaches and tries to suggest an emerging methodology. Moreover, she claims that dance can be descriptive and to transmit special kinds of information.

### *Data and its relationship with claims*

#### A. Humeniuk's book

Humeniuk largely divides Ukrainian folk dance into two groups: the dance of everyday life and dance with plot. Then he claims that these dances have been developed from khorovod (round dance), which is one of the most ancient forms of folk dance. In order to prove his claim, the author provides quantitative data mainly on the form of Ukrainian dance, finding the similarity of dance form between khorovod and later dances.

First of all, the author explains the compositional elements and some choreographic ornaments in round dances. According to the author, the simplest way of performing a khorovod is to organize the performers into two groups, where they either form two parallel lines or face each other (Proso – the name of the grain)<sup>10</sup>. More complicated forms of khorovod (like kozachok) involve the combination of such sophisticated elements and figures as "gates of three", "weaving", circles, double circles and semi-circles<sup>11</sup>. Line (or row) with all these variants and elements constitute the compositional basis for all Ukrainian folk dances<sup>12</sup>.

Having analyzed the characteristic features of round dance, the author moves on to the detailed descriptions of other dances, such as metelytsia, hopak, kozachok, kolomyika, hutsulka i verkhovyna, shumka and polka. For example, metelytsia (snowstorm) is a very dynamic dance, famous for quick change of figures and different kinds of spinning in the circle. All the above-mentioned elements aim at the depiction of the snowstorm. According to the author, this kind of dance is a typical khorovod, because "of the initial position (circle) and mass participation of all the performers"<sup>13</sup>. Another example is Kolomyika. In ancient form of kolomyika the initial position was circle, in modern forms – lines.

According to the author, dances with plots are the new stage in the development of choreographic art of Ukraine. Dances with plot remain illustrative-pantomime in their nature, and the working process of the people is depicted here almost in the same order as in round dance<sup>14</sup>. This fact proves that a number of dances with plots originated from khorovods, and received further creative development<sup>15</sup>. Major difference between round dance and dance with plots lies in the rejection of textual accompaniment in the performance of dances with plots. There are remnants, such as exclamations, words and single sentences, which serve to indicate the change of choreographic figures. The most typical example of dance with the plot is "shevchyky" (shoemakers). One of the important features of this kind of dance is the use of movements and figures found in metelytsia, hopak, and other dances. Therefore the author comes to the conclusion that this type of dance is unified genre, which originated from khorovod and everyday types of dances<sup>16</sup>.

Besides the form of Ukrainian dances, Humeniuk provides data on the meaning of them to prove that the khorovod is the origin of Ukrainian dances. Why do people dance? Concerning this question, the author suggests three functions of Ukrainian dance: khorovod – ritual, dance of everyday life – social and recreational, and dance with plot – theatrical dance. However, he does not make clear distinction among borders of three types of dances.

According to the author, the majority of themes in round dances belong to ritual forms, closely connected with agricultural cycle of peasants. He states that despite the ritual character of the round dance artistic images and the conditions under which they are depicted are totally realistic, and taken directly from the working process of the people<sup>17</sup>. This fact is very important to the author, because, in his opinion it proves that early rituals have nothing to do with the latest forms of religion. With the changes in the society themes in round dance were enriched with plots about the working process of blacksmiths, barrel makers and representatives of other trades.

The main motif in the texts of the dance of everyday life is the description of patriarchal family relationships. Again, the author's point here that this category depicts the chores of the woman within the family, and together with the recreation of the typical moments of working process sometimes concentrates on her emotional state<sup>18</sup>. Another important motif in this category is love. Relationships between opposite genders are allegorically rendered as images and typical habits of animals and birds: e.g. "Bird", "Goat"<sup>19</sup>. There is a great deal of humor and satire present in this category of texts of round dance. Then the author talks about the social motifs in the texts of khorovod and indicates the transformation of genre from ritual or love songs to humorous songs<sup>20</sup>. This transformation, in his opinion, promoted the appearance of new genre categories such as metelytsia, kolomyika and tryndychok. The author seems to regard them as social and recreational dance.

Although he tries to be a functionalist, he does not provide enough information on the meaning of Ukrainian dance because he emphasize too much on the relationship between work and dance. His purpose of explaining the meaning of dance is limited to prove the connection between work and dance.

Concerning the context of dance, he explains when ritual dances are performed. For example, in springtime girls used to greet the coming spring with round dances. Outside of the village borders, in the afternoon of early springtime, girls were "calling the spring". The names of spring cycle round dances are "Perepilochka", "Mak", "Podolianka", "proso", and etc.<sup>21</sup>. Besides springtime, the author lists Ivana Kupala (24th of June), Obzhynky (celebration of the harvest), weddings, and Vechornytsi for dance occasions. Although he provides information on the setting – the time, day, place of dancing, the context of dance is not his major concern. He does not give detail explanation on surroundings, such as decoration or stage, participants of dance, and so on. Mainly focusing on the form of Ukrainian dance, the author try to explain the relationship between work and dance as well as between khorovod and later Ukrainian dances.

## B. Royce's book

Since Royce intends to suggest an emerging methodology, which emphasizes structural and functional study on dance, she provides a lot of data concerning the form and function of dance. In order to emphasize the possibility of describing dance form, she introduces the following dance notation: "R" for reverencia, "p" for passo, "de" for doble<sup>22</sup>, basic notation symbols of Feuillet (step symbol) and Floor plan, Symbols for direction, level, and timing of movements and symbols for party parts<sup>23</sup>. According to her, "morphology is concerned with form, whereas structure is concerned with the interrelationship of forms<sup>24</sup>. Seen in this light, morphological analysis of dance is a necessary first step to a structural analysis." After reviewing the structure of Tongan dance, she suggests five potential areas of study for which structural analysis is a necessary foundation. Change in the structure, native categories of the dance, ethno-choreography, which deals primarily with native conceptions of movement segmentation, cultural values and norms regarding creativity.

The author characterizes histories of dance, excerpting studies showing how dance illuminates social history (e.g. in 19<sup>th</sup> century British social dance, democratic waltzes and country dances replaced the minuet and other court dances.)<sup>25</sup>. While she explains the relationship between dance and social history, she gives an example that dance form has changed according to the change of society. For example, she find this in American colonial dance: "What is important to learn from this example of the jig is that there seemed to be a continual exchange of dances, dance steps, and dance forms between the black and white populations. This exchange led to changes in traditional dances of both blacks and whites through incorporation and synthesis<sup>26</sup>."

Although she devotes many pages on the form or structure of dance, the form is not the main subject to discuss. The form of dance is just mentioned in order to support other ideas that dance is an anthropological subjects, which are descriptive and reflect many aspects of society and history.

Concerning the meaning or function of dance, the author insists that various functions of dance come from various perspectives: "The performer enjoys it for the opportunity it provides to master mind and body, to feel a sense of physical release and well-being, and to take pleasure in the camaraderie between performers and between performers and audience. From the other side one may come to dance as a spectator enjoying it for its capacity to entertain, to move, to banish anxiety, or reaffirm the unity of the community"<sup>27</sup>. While reviewing the previous study on the function

of dance, she introduces Gertrude Kurath's "Universality of Purpose"<sup>28</sup> (14 purposes) as well as Anthony Shay's six categories<sup>29</sup>. Then she concludes that what one must keep constantly in mind is that functions change over time and from one situation to the next. We must remember that any particular dance may have several functions, requiring us to determine primary and secondary functions.

According to Royce, dance has been viewed both as an aesthetic activity, culminating in an artistic form and subject to **structural analysis**, and as a folk activity that promotes and reinforces certain value orientations such as ethnicity and is therefore subject to **functional analysis**. Royce claims that the structural-functional dichotomy creates mutually exclusive questions and modes of data collection. The author urges the use of "structural" analysis (the definition of minimal movement units and their interrelation) in the study of aesthetics and creativity and offers a substantial discussion of how dance has meaning.

In the following chapters, the author characterizes histories of dance, excerpting studies showing how dance illuminates social history (e.g. in 19<sup>th</sup> century British social dance, democratic waltzes and country dances replaced the minuet and other court dances.).

She also categorizes change in dance form and function. There is a long and interesting case study of American Colonial dance. Lomax's choreometrics is briefly explained and critiqued. Why and how dance is used to project ethnic identity in complex dance, which shows how groups select dances to reflect either tribal or Pan-Indian identity.

Royce is most adept at describing culture change using the historical-functional model, particularly where dance is used as an ethnic maker. Examples and case studies are drawn from her own fieldwork in Mexico, from interpretations of historical data, and from the work of other scholars.

She concludes with a discussion of symbol and style, the morphology of dance, and meaning.

1) Style, in Royce's view, is equivalent to tradition – the entire complex of a culture's signs, symbols, and values. Dance is one highly visible way in which a culture can concretize the aspects that define and present a view of the self to outsiders. A symbol, in this instance, is the reinforcement of a style choice.

2) Dance morphology relates formal change, aesthetics, and creativity.

3) Meaning is communicated by multi-channel exploitation of the senses that heightens the kinesthetic and forms dance's primary mode of communication.

### *Conclusion*

Royce's and Humeniuk's books are not easily comparable because they are different in scope and intent. While Royce attempts to establish a theoretical framework for studying dance in general, Humeniuk describe one country's dance. However, his descriptive materials also very certainly have much theoretical content. On the contrary, some specific descriptions of dancing are also found in Royce's book. While Humeniuk focus on diachronic study, seeking the origin of dance, Royce conducts both synchronic and diachronic studies, based on the case study of three cultures.

In Humeniuk's book, the emphasis on working themes of khorovod seem to result in ignoring other factors, which may influence dance. However, attempts at exhaustive description with data make it possible to study the form of Ukrainian folk dance and provide the basis of analytic research.

Royce presents dance as a unique form of expression that must be explained contextually, hence anthropologically. The exact nature of dance anthropology's contribution to general theory, however, is underexplored in this book. A second weak area is the organization and format. It would be more satisfying if the case studies presented were an integral part of the main theoretical argument instead of being peripheral to it. The book is viewed best as an introduction to a new field and as a bibliographic resource.

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<sup>1</sup> David Jacobson, *Reading Ethnography* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Гуменюк А. Народне хореографічне мистецтво України. – К., 1963. – 235 с.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Roderyk Lange, *The Nature of Dance* (London: Macdonald & Evans LTD, 1975), p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Anya Peterson Royce, *The Anthropology of Dance* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Гуменюк А., p. 81.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Royce., p. 39.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66–78.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Puberty initiation, courtship, friendship, weddings, occupations, vegetation, astronomical dances, hunting, animal mime, battle mime, cure, death, esthetic dance, and clown dances. See Royce's book, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Dance as a reflection and validation of social organization, dance as a vehicle of secular and religious ritual expression, dance as a social diversion or recreational activity, dance as a psychological outlet and release, dance as a reflection of aesthetic values or as an aesthetic activity in itself, and dance as a reflection of economic subsistence patterns, or an economic activity in itself.

*Народные танцы являются зрелищным действием в большинстве обществ и актуальной темой этнографических исследований. Многие из опубликованных работ про народные танцы повышали интерес к ним и должны рассматриваться как предшественники этой статьи, поскольку в них приводились как полезные обсуждения по конкретным вопросам, так и обширная библиография. Тем не менее, эти работы были написаны на основе различных подходов. Поэтому мы должны внимательно исследовать различные интерпретации народных танцев в этнографических работах. В данной статье автор выбрал две работы про народные танцы, написанные авторами-представителями двух разных культур – Украины и США. Автор сравнивает подходы, стиль и т.д.*

*Ключевые слова: танец, этнография, этнографические произведения, структурный анализ, функциональный анализ.*

*Folk dance provides a spectacle in most societies and an obvious topic for ethnographic curiosity. Many writings on folk dance have attempted to stimulate interest, and these should be regarded as precursors of the present work, providing useful discussions on particular points and daunting glimpses of the vastness of the field with extensive bibliography. However, they are written on the basis of different approaches and focuses. Therefore, we need to examine carefully the interpretation of ethnographic writings on dance. In this paper, I choose two works on folk dance from two different cultures, such as Ukraine and the United State. I compare their approach way, focus, writing style, and others, and find the characteristics of the two ethnographic writings.*

*Keywords: dance, ethnography, ethnographic writing, structural analysis, functional analysis.*