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Review

Oleh Bolyuk, *Wooden sacred artefacts (as based on Ukraine's western regions)*. Lviv: Institute of Ethnology National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine 2020, pp. 520.

Oleh Bolyuk's book is an impressive work in terms of content and editing. Enclosed in hardcovers, navy blue with gold embellishments, with 260 A3-size half-chalk pages, nearly 450 color and black-and-white illustrations in the margins as well as inserted into the text, it entices with its enviably beautiful layout and extreme editorial diligence. At this point, it is worth emphasizing the fact that in Ukraine, researchers often have to apply for funds themselves to publish their own research and are not assisted in this by state institutions. Fortunately, the author found full support at the Institute of Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, which proves the exceptionally high esteem in the results of the research work presented in the book. The expeditionary research which allowed for a detailed study of the collection of church art, was made possible thanks to the support of the NGO Center for Cultural and Artistic Initiatives in Lviv.

The aesthetic qualities are matched by substantive values, resulting from twenty years of scientific practice, which Oleh Bolyuk, Ph.D., gained first as a doctoral student and then as an employee of the Institute of Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Lviv.

Research on church woodcarving in Ukraine has a long and glorious tradition. Modern Ukrainian researchers have eagerly referred to it in recent decades, not only by continuing and expanding the studies begun in the 19th century, but also through reprints of the doyens of research, to mention only Vadim and Danylo Shcherbakivsky's book published in 2015 (Вадим і Данило Щербаківські (2015), *Українське мистецтво в двох томах з додатками*. Харків: Видавець Савчук О.О., pp. 472; first editions in 1913 and 1926) and works on wooden churches: the irreplaceable Mykhailo

Dragan (Михайло Драган (2014), *Українські дерев'яні церкви. Генеза і розвій форм в двох частинах*. Харків: Видавець Савчук О.О., pp. 450; first edition in 1937) and Stefan Taranushenko (Стефан Таранушенко (2014), *Дерев'яна монументальна архітектура Лівобережної України*. Харків: Видавець Савчук, pp. 896; first edition from a manuscript of 1967). The appreciation of the so-called “folk art” and the interest in non-professional wooden sculpture not only in the niche circles of ethnologists, but also in the general public are evidenced by the albums published in recent years with impressive artwork, such as, for example: Yuriy Yurkevych (Юрій Юркевич (2010), *Дерев'яна скульптура Галичини XVII–XIX ст.* Львів: Інститут колекціонерства українських мистецьких пам'яток при НТШ, pp. 376; Юрій Юркевич (2012), *Царські врата українських іконостасів*. Львів: Інститут колекціонерства українських мистецьких пам'яток при НТШ, pp. 386); Oleksa Val'ko (Олекса Валько (2018), *Дерев'яні різьблені хрести XVI – поч. XX ст.* Львів: Інститут колекціонерства українських мистецьких пам'яток при НТШ, pp. 456). It is worth noting that the latter had its venerable predecessor, a now extremely rare book by the eminent scholar of Ukrainian icon painting, Vira Svetsitska (Віра Свенціцка (1939), *Різьблені ручні хрести XVII–XX вв. Частина I та II*. Львів: Друк. Вид. спілки „Діло”). The indicated items from recent years containing high-quality photos and basic data of artifacts, such as dating, provenance, dimensions and inventory number, provide indispensable aid to extended historical, art-historical, ethnological and cultural studies. However, the contributions of modern research on Ukrainian church woodcarving do not end with them. Undoubtedly, among the many books and articles published in recent years, the work of Mykhailo Stankevych, teacher and research supervisor of Oleh Bolyuk, deserves special attention (Михайло Станкевич (2002), *Українське художнє дерево XVI–XX ст.* Львів: Інститут народознавства Національної академії наук України, pp. 479) and Bohdan Tymkiv (Богдан Тимків (2010), *Мистецтво України та діаспори: дереворізьба сакральна й ужиткова*. Івано-Франківськ: Нова Зоря, p. 312).

The long-standing research tradition and the achievements of recent decades in the field of research on Ukrainian wooden sculpture justify the question of the novelty and uniqueness of Oleh Bolyuk's work described here.

The presented book consists of six chapters ending with a summary and provided with a system of extensive bibliographic footnotes; an exhaustive appendix containing: a glossary of terms, author's diagrams (presenting: typology of historical sources useful for the study of wooden orthodox church sculpture, systematization of church monuments, theoretical tools and cognitive methods of the studied subject), instructions for

the scientific processing of the material obtained during the field queries, diagrams of the interior decoration of the churches, description and typology of movable monuments in the interior of the churches, a list of localities covered during the 17 scientific expeditions; a list of illustrations and a list of abbreviations. Unfortunately, the book lacks a name index and a geographic index, which would be very useful, especially when describing field research. The appendix is preceded by a map with point-marked locations included in the query.

The first chapter, following the model layout of scientific papers, is a detailed discussion of the literature and the sources used. With this, the author proposes a typology of primary sources, divided into three groups: material, verbal (written and oral) and behavioral (customary behavior). The second chapter discusses the extensive and multi-layered system of research methods either applied in cultural anthropology or borrowed from other scientific fields: philosophy, philology, archival studies, religious studies, art history, cultural studies and others. The research material, i.e., carved wooden objects, was collected during scientific expeditions in seven regions of western Ukraine, described, analyzed and classified (according to the author's typology) into appropriate groups, types and genres. The extensive third chapter of more than a hundred pages is devoted to the historical analysis of the wooden interior design of the Christian church. The review, surprisingly, begins with the ancient Egyptian temple of Khonsu at Karnak, the Dura-Europos synagogue and the ancient Pompeii basilica, to early Christian churches to contemporary ones. Everywhere, analogous elements of interior design (bema, pulpit, solea) are found, along with objects used in the liturgy (candlesticks). Their forms and decorations were different depending on time, place, local traditions, foreign influences and the individual tastes of their creators. Everywhere, however, they helped arrange a sacred space, symbolizing a microcosm that unites the real and transcendent worlds. Chapter four begins the main and proper section of the book. Here, on the basis of material gathered as a result of field searches conducted between 1995 and 2016 in the areas of Lviv, Volhynia, Rivne, Ternopil, Transkarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi, the author developed and described two models for the arrangement of church interior, which resulted from the symbolic meaning of each part and the liturgical actions performed in it. Thus, liturgical spaces have been specified into: the Eucharist area and the Word area, in addition to ritual spaces for confession and funeral services, and included all the items whose detailed descriptions are given in the following chapters. In chapter five, the wooden objects are arranged according to the typological system developed by the author. The primary division was based on the kinetic properties of the monuments: thus, immovable objects (e.g.,

architectural elements: cornices, arcades, stairs, balustrades, window sills, window frames, portals, wall panels, etc., but also crosses and the altar icon, the kiot, the pulpit, sometimes even kneeler and confessional) and movable objects (candlesticks, crosses, icons, vessels, boxes, and reliquaries). The variety of objects, their location and purpose forced the author to introduce a third type: movable-unmovable, for objects that have movable parts (iconostasis with gates), which can be taken out, for example, for the time of a procession (*ripidion*). All these items are described and characterized. The last chapter is devoted to the analysis of the formal features and techniques for making the objects. Thus, the author leads us through the arcana of carpentry, joinery, woodcarving, woodturning, cooperage, then through decorative techniques: carving (engraving, turning, pyrography, pegging, stamping and chipwork), painting (polychrome, gilding, silvering and patination), on top of ornamentation (inlaying, wood or straw marquetry, appliqué, mosaic and paneling). The author also emphasizes the aesthetic qualities of wood, such as the color and grain pattern, and the carpentry techniques, allowing craftsmen to obtain natural yet harmonious patterns of horizontal lines on walls and vaults laid with logs, as well as the geometric shapes formed by the joining logs. Decorative motifs specific to given techniques, objects, styles, environments are listed, with indication of their provenance and symbolic meaning. The multitude of examples collected here amazes and delights, making the reader revise any stereotypical beliefs about the low level of handicraft in provincial communities, its repetitiveness and uniformity, both in the choice of ornaments and decorative techniques. In addition, the contemporary objects included in the research, although drawing on tradition, are often innovative and fresh, proving that woodworking, seemingly doomed to oblivion, does not cease to inspire, finding worthy representatives even today.

This beautiful and valuable book is convincing as to that the handicraft creations found in the churches of western Ukraine deserve to be classified as the so-called high art.