Communication in the Ukrainian Korovay Rite

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ABSTRACT. In the rites, ritual sphere, and worldview of the Ukrainian people, the idea of exalting bread takes on a special significance. Bread acquires its greatest symbolism in wedding ceremonies, where it was called a korovay, and personified the birth of a new family, procreation, welfare, and prosperity.

The article is devoted to the study of the korovay rite as performed in the village of Klintsy, Dubno district, Rivne region. The author explores the communicative specificity of the korovay rite as a symbolic form of social interaction. The focus is on determining the participants in the ritual action, their role and functions, and also emphasizes the special importance of the musical component, which is the leading means of communication in the rite. I also review some key approaches to the study of ritual phenomena, as exemplified in the korovay rite, and communication (ritual, musical, interpersonal, group, sacred, auto-communication), both as individual and as interrelated subjects. The study reveals the importance of the korovay rite in modern Ukrainian society, showing how it ensures communication between generations through the transmission of important sociocultural meanings.

KEYWORDS: rite, korovay rite, communication, Ukrainian folklore, folk traditions.

An important purpose of human society is the development and preservation of the best achievements of culture. One of these achievements is ritual culture and practices, which continue to play a significant role in human life and in national identities. Understanding the essence and significance of traditions and rites, their laws and mechanisms, remains relevant today. As older folk traditions decline, however, a crisis is looming in areas of public life that include a sacred component, with opportunities declining for immersion in the communicative cultural-historical, spiritual and moral processes of society. Many customs and ritual practices have been partially or wholly lost, including some elements of Ukrainian wedding ceremonies, the symbols and meanings of which come from everyday life and practices. The wedding "korovay" occupies a special place in the structure of the traditional wedding ceremonies, and the term has a wide range of distribution throughout Ukraine. The korovay is a high, round loaf of bread, decorated with flowers, cones, birds formed of dough, and has long symbolized not only the birth of a new family and continuation, but also prosperity. Literary sources on the traditions and life of the Ukrainian people testify to the korovay being a necessary part of pre-wedding ritual practice. In present-day urban practice, where the wedding bread is most often ordered from bakeries or confectioneries and baked without any rituals, the korovay tradition is more than ever in need of preservation. This study will focus on the phenomenology and practice of the korovay rite within the folk art / culture system, and explore its social and communicative functions in Klintsy village.

In order to address these questions, I have drawn on research from two fields. The first includes the study of ceremonial communication (Байбурин 1993; Котлярова 2000; Алешина 2005; Никифорова 2014; Нівня 2018) and of musical communication (Орлов 1992; Якупов 1995; Корсакова 2015). The second includes the study of wedding ceremonies themselves. Ceremonial wedding bread and traditions associated with it are described in the works of Nikolaj Sumtsov (Сумцов 1885), Vasil Kravchenko (Кравченко 1920), Lidia Artyukh (Артюх 1977), Valentina Borisenko (Борисенко 1981), Zoriana Marchuk (Марчук 2004), and others. Special attention should be paid to studies concentrating on the regional aspects of the subject. Despite the fact that Ukrainians share many similar ritual actions in practicing the korovay rite, many specific elements can vary in different areas of the country, as shown in many region-specific studies, such as those of Olena Kozholyanko (Кожолянко 2006), Lyudmila Voytyuk (Войтюк 2004), Galina Pashkova (Пашкова 1978), Pelageya Litvinova-Bartosh (Литвинова-Бартош 1900), to name a few.

Consideration of the rite as a communicative framework has been a productive research theme in many fields, with communication continuing to be thought of as central to the existence of human society and, perhaps, its main cultural attribute. The word derives from the Latin *communico* and means interaction, communication, information transfer, etc. This term first appeared in the scientific literature at the beginning of the 20th century, where communication was understood as a means of intercourse. Today the term is interpreted in several ways: as an interchange between and among objects of the material and spiritual worlds, between individuals, and the transfer and mass exchange of information aimed at influencing society.

Our understanding of the essence of the phenomenon of communication has been greatly influenced by the ideas of Yuri Lotman, who considers communication as a translation of a text from the language of "Self" into the language of "You". In a semiotic study of culture, Lotman speaks of the existence of two models of communication. The first is the "I - He" model, where "I" transfers some constant information, and "He" receives it. Another model - "I - I" involves a qualitative transformation of information and the restructuring of the "I", internally, without an actual transfer as such. We might best think of these two models as (a) receiving information from the outside ("I - He") and (b) receiving information from the inside ("I – I") (Лотман 1973a: 228). "The recipient of the folklore artistic message is only placed in favorable conditions in order to listen to himself. He is not only a listener, but also a creator. This is due to the fact that such a canonical system does not lose the ability to be informationally active", Lotman concludes (Лотман 1973b: 19). Ritual communication, therefore, combines both communicative models. Reflecting on Lotman's communicative concept, Irina Korsakova notes that any culture is built on the principle of "pendulum-like swing" between these two models, but in folklore the orientation toward the auto-communication system ("I – I") prevails (Корсакова 2015: 50). Albert Baiburin also specified the interrelationship of ritual and auto-communication considering, on the one hand, the rite as a means of communication between the human and the divine, and, on the other, as a mechanism for the team of performers itself to transmit and receive information (Байбурин 1993: 30-31).

Viktor Nechipurenko focuses on the fact that the communicative aspect of ritual action contributes to intra-group integration and to the non-verbal understandings of certain groups (members) of society (Нечипуренко 2002: 18). Ritual communication, then, consists of formalized language, singing, body movements, dance, and material symbols that replace words. That is, ritual communication is fundamentally different from everyday communication, being less flexible, more structured, static, and based on the aesthetics of repetition (Почепцов 2009: 19). The same idea may be observed in Baiburin's study, where he notes that in ritual action a person is not identical to his everyday self because, in the ritual, he realizes his spiritual needs without worrying about his own biological status or material circumstances (Байбурин 1993: 17).

The rite as a form of socio-cultural communication is considered in the works of Irina Aleshina and Ganna Nivnya (Алешина 2005; Нівня 2018), with ritual framed as a powerful mechanism for heredity and the preservation of traditions, as it transfers important sociocultural meanings. Only the information most significant and valuable for a certain group is transmitted through these communication channels (Нівня 2018: 43), and, as a result, meanings are mastered by the ritual participants, which ensures the preservation of cultural inheritance.

The structure of ritual communication includes the presence of a communicant (addresser) and a recipient (addressee) and their unity is extremely important for

the rite. So, in the structure of the ritual tradition, Tatyana Kotlyarova notes that the sender of information, before becoming its transmitter, has also acted as a receiver of information. The recipient can act at any time as the carrier and interpreter of information. This system proliferates, because folklore information is transmitted immediately to several receivers, and this movement illustrates the mechanism of continuity of the folklore tradition (Котлярова 2000). Baiburin rightly notes that the addressees of the rite need not be only people, but almost any object, either in material form (earth, stone, tree, house and its parts), or purely conceptual (ancestors, the characters of different levels of religious systems) (Байбурин 1993: 98).

A special peculiarity of ritual communication is found in the fact that it involves not only direct contact between the participants, but also with an external, often otherworldly, addressee (the higher powers, ancestors, God, etc.), who, ultimately, turns from a "spectator" into an "accomplice" of the rite (ibid.). Therefore, one must pay close attention to the figure of the "third" – "transcendental subjectivity", "the highest upper-addressee" (Бахтин 1979) or "the silent third" (after Sargylana Nikiforova). Their role, reduced to ensuring universal consent and the mobilization of all, makes it possible to experience a sense of social community. The external addressee is an ideal communicator, containing meanings and implied expectations which manifest in the rite (Никифорова 2014). It follows that the rite represents the widest field of communication, within which social and sacred communication lines are implemented, in which each participant contacts all possible recipients.

Communication requires a message. In folklore, all means are in unity, creating a synthesized syncretic meaning. This message is always transmitted orally. At the same time, the rite itself performs the function of a language in that it combines the verbal and non-verbal. In the korovay rite, communication between the participants takes place mainly through ritual wedding songs. In The Tree of Music, Genrikch Orlov introduces the important idea that musical art carries out deep communicative actions, returning to the listener a codified image of various aspects of the collective experience of the culture to which it belongs. Music acts as a means of communication of the listener with himself and it is lived as a reality which happens to the listener (Орлов 1992). Izaliy Zemtsovsky emphasizes that the communicative nature of folklore is expressed, above all, in the process of musical-intonational communication which serves as a vehicle for the transfer of content. Musical thinking inevitably materializes through the hearing and is formed under the influence of genetic factors, maternal sound communication, the intonations of native speech, family speech communication, the inborn syncretism of hearing, its internal connection with the characteristic plastic body movements, behavior formed by tradition, the hearing characteristics of tradition bearers, etc. (Земцовский 1977: 149).

The korovay rite, as one of Ukraine's most stable ritual forms, has long attracted the attention of researchers who have studied it from many angles, including work on descriptions (Литвинова-Бартош 1900; Войтюк 2004; Кожолянко 2006), origins (Марчук 2004; Болібрух 2011), symbols (Кушнірук 2012), festive dishes (Артюх 1977), and musical accompaniment (Луканюк, Добрянська 2004). A major part of the research is devoted to the Ukrainian wedding as a whole (at the all-Ukrainian and regional levels), and the korovay rite is there described as part of the pre-wedding ceremony. Studies on the regional aspect intend to describe the rite with all the elements that are unique to a region in order to document the authentic tradition of a particular local area. Iryna Kushniruk focuses on the peculiarities of baking the korovay and of its symbolism, paying special attention to the significant elements of decoration - plants, flowers, ornaments: "the predominant color of the flowers is red and pink <...>. In the symbolism of the Slavs, red is the color of life, sun, fertility, health" (Кушнірук 2012: 13). Voytyuk notes that each plant which decorates the korovay has a symbolic meaning: bupleurum means kindness, immortelle - eternity, rue - health, cornflowers devotion" (Войтюк 2004: 107). The combined symbolism of all the elements of the korovay indicates that the bread itself is a symbol of procreation and fertility, and the act of baking conveys a wish of happiness and well-being for the newlyweds (Кушнірук 2012: 14).

Lina Bolibrukh describes several possible origins of the word and concepts attached to the korovay: 1. The korovay ritual could be interpreted as a bread sacrifice to God or gods, replacing an animal offering; 2. The combination of female and male elements – the word "cow" (Ukrainian *korova*) is feminine and symbolic of the bride, while the suffix –*ay* is masculine, symbolizing the bull, and thus the groom; 3. Korovay is a "world tree" (according to Baiburin), which determines destiny and provides the happiness therein, as well as being a symbol for the wealth and well-being of the bride (Болібрух 2011).

I have studied the musical folklore of the Dubno district, in the Rivne region, in some detail. Through Nadia Yatsyuk, a resident of the village of Lypa, I acquired valuable video footage of a 2011 korovay ceremony conducted by residents of Klintsy, a village 17 km east of Dubno in the western ethnographic region of Central Volyn. The video was recorded by a local operator who shot each element several times in connection with the preparation of Rivne poetess, Lyubov Pshenychna's "Beregynya" project for the Dubno TV and Radio company.

My understanding of the intricacies of the korovay tradition of this region was facilitated not only by the availability of this video material, but also through the stories of a real korovay baker, Kovalchuk Tina Yukhymivna, who took part in the ritual process. Kovalchuk, with a rich inheritance of information about

pre-wedding customs, is considered the best korovay baker in the village. She has been baking korovays for a long time and knows old recipes and all the details associated with the ritual. It is worth noting that the Central Volyn korovay rite is generally in line with all-Ukrainian traditions, but includes some specific elements (for example, begging for firewood from neighbors before baking a korovay, a ritual dance of korovay bakers with a baked wedding bread).

In Klintsy, only married women who are in a happy first marriage are invited to bake a korovay. They should represent an example of family life for future couples. An even number of korovay bakers is a prerequisite, a symbol of the fact that the young couple will live their whole lives together as a pair. In 2011, the korovay rite began with begging for firewood from neighbors for baking; the neighbours gave firewood and wished the young people happy and healthy years. As a reward, neighbours were given refreshments in the form of bread and sweets.

A korovay may be baked in the house of the bride or the groom, but, as Sumtsov notes, in the bride's house, the korovay is prepared with greater ceremony and more fun (Сумцов 1885: 135). The korovay bakers arrived in festive attire at the house of the parents of one of the newlyweds, bringing with them the necessary materials– flour, milk, eggs, yeast, sugar, butter and sunflower oil. Such a combination of products, gathered from different housewives, hints at mutual support and at firmly connecting the young family to that community (Артюх 1977: 93). Besides the parents (owners of the house) and korovay bakers, a headman is assigned the major role in the rite. The headman is the main representative of a family (it could be a brother or an uncle of one of the newlyweds) and he actively helped the korovay bakers by performing various male duties – bringing firewood, lighting the stove, raking out the hot coals, etc. The presence of the headman symbolizes strength, productivity, participation in the beginning of a new life (Boйтюк 2004: 108).

The idea of baking a korovay without a musical component is unthinkable – an invited female korovay ensemble creates the emotional mode of ritual action. They do not directly participate in the preparation of the bread, but create a musical accompaniment to what is happening, being, on the one hand, participants, and on the other, commentators. It should be noted that during the baking rite, the Klintsy residents sang fifteen wedding ritual songs¹.

Gathered and led by the headman, korovay bakers ask the parents of the bridal couple for blessings three times, not only for making bread, but also for singing songs:

1 The recorded songs represent six different rhythmic types (Луканюк, Добрянська 2004).

Да благослови Боже	God give your blessing
I Пречиста тоже	And Godmother too
I отець, і мати	And father, and mother
Своєму дитяті	To your children
Пісеньку заспівати	To sing a song
Коровай виробляти.	To make a korovay. ²

In response, parents bless the korovay bakers three times before they begin put on their aprons and begin baking. Then the stage of kneading the dough begins, accompanied by songs in which the vocal ensemble consistently describes the actions of all participants in the rite: Галюніна матінка <...> xoдumb <...> cycið cвоїх просить <...> короваю виробляти 'Galya's mother <...> is going <...> to ask her neighbours <...> to make korovay', У Клинуях та й по вулиці 'In Klintsy and on the street', Розвивається, розстеляється ярая рута-зілля 'the ruta-weed is developing, spreading'.

In the songs, requests for help addressed to God and the Virgin Mary are of particular importance:

На калині віття висить	Hanging on the viburnum branches,
Сам Господь коровай місить	The Lord himself kneads the korovay
А Пречиста воду носить	And Virgin carries pure water
Та й Господа просить	And asks the Lord
Та й устань Боже до помочі	Stand up, God, to help
Та спекти коровай в печі.	And bake the korovay in the oven.

When the dough is ready, it is placed in a large pan (or barrel) to rise. While waiting, the korovay bakers again ask the parents for blessings, this time for the baking process. The father and the mother then divide the dough into three parts and transfer it from the trough to the table on a towel. The layers are then laid in a pan: on the bottom of the dough, called the sole, rye ears and pennies are put, so that the life of the young couple may be long, happy, and rich. The main part of the dough is then placed on the sole, and from the third part, ornaments are made.

When the wedding bread is ready for baking, the bakers, led by the headman, again ask for blessings three times. Then the headman gives the korovay bakers a broom and a shovel, and they put the bread in the oven while singing:

2 Folksongs from Ukrainian are translated by Olga Omelchuk.

Ой помело, старосто, помело Ой щоб твоя борідонька печі не мела Ой лопату, старосто, лопату Бо будемо коровай в піч сажати.

Oh, fetch the broom, headman, the broom Oh, so that your beard would not sweep the oven Oh, fetch the shovel, headman, the shovel Because we will put the korovay in the oven.

While the korovay is in the oven, the ensemble sings *A* в нашої печі золотії плечі 'And in our oven there are golden shoulders', *Koposaŭhuyi s micma* 'Korovay bakers from the city', *Oŭ neminu бini zycu* 'Oh, white geese flew'. When done, it is taken out on a tray and decorated with greenery. This process is accompanied by the songs *Oŭ колесом, колесом сонечко вгору йде* 'Oh the sun goes up like a wheel', *Koposaю-раю, я тебе вбираю* 'Korovay-paradise, I dress you'. Green is considered to be a symbol of the vitality of rebirth, youth, and in the wedding ceremony it is also endowed with reproductive and protective properties. Finally, the finished korovay is taken out to the street and the korovay bakers perform a ritual dance with it, accompanied by singing *Oŭ чия то милая під короваєм гуляє* 'Oh, whose sweet baby walks under the korovay'. The korovay bakers walk in a circle while holding the freshly baked bread and, after dancing with it, they carry it back to the house.

The korovay rite is made up of symbolic verbal and non-verbal interactions, and a range of elements, such as the blessing of the bread, a series of actions of a magical nature, and accompanying ritual songs and dances. In addition, the rite prescribes a variety of cautions and taboos, which can be seen not only in the stages of baking and decorating, but also in the specific requirements for the participants in the process. Such a careful approach to baking is necessary, as a well-baked korovay symbolized a happy family life for the young couple and, conversely, the korovay which did not rise, or which cracked, predicted misery and a difficult fate for the newlyweds.

Various types of communication can be traced in the rite: individual (autocommunication) and group (interpersonal, sacred). Since there is no audience, as such, with all those present being participants in some way, there are no passive listeners and we must speak about a process of *auto-communication*. The autocommunicative specificity of the ritual is understood as follows: the collective of performers is the sender and receiver of information, that is, the information does not go beyond their own "I" and unites the thoughts and actions of all involved. More precisely, information goes beyond (without that, this information could not have been transmitted for centuries), but it is internal because it takes place without outsiders (spectators), although in our case in the presence of a cameraman, testament to the participants' commitment to preserving the folklore of their native land. Thus, everyone becomes involved in a process that broadcasts traditional meanings and satisfies the cognitive and social needs of a particular ethnic community. Thus, auto-communication is embedded in the rite itself. All participants of the ceremony are performers and listeners at the same time.

Group communication includes interpersonal, sacred (with higher sources) and mass (or, more precisely, group) communication. The interpersonal communication occurs between the central participants, that is, the owners of the house, the korovay bakers (if we consider them as one person, because all their actions are collective), and the headman, with the help of verbal (words, songs) and non-verbal (gestures, facial expressions, dance) exchange. Here, special attention is drawn to participants' respectful attitude towards each other and the common of actions. So, with the help of the speech, the members of the rite solve organizational questions concerning the korovay; the headman, for example, asks for blessings for baking and putting the korovay in the oven: Батько домовний, матір домовна, прошу благословіння коровай місити чи коровай виробляти... 'Father of the house, mother of the house, I ask for blessing to make and bake a korovay...', parents said Хай Бог благословить 'God bless'. With the help of the song, the korovay bakers turn to the headman: $O\ddot{u}$ помело, старосто, помело 'Oh, [fetch] the broom, headman, the broom'. Nonverbal means of communication include gestures, such as those of worship and baptism, and the ritual dance associated with a baked korovay.

Group communication can be seen in interactions between groups of korovay bakers – those who bake and those who sing. It is embodied through folk songs in a playful manner: *Kopoвaйницi з міста не кладіт в кишені тіста…* 'Korovay bakers from the city, do not put dough in your pockets..., *Kopoвaйницi-душки, да стеліте подушки. Та лягайте під припічок спати, короваю вартувати…* 'Dear korovay bakers, put pillows on the bed. But go to sleep in heat, watch the korovay...' All participants in the rite are partners of mass ritual communication, as well. The reciprocity of their thoughts on the idea of recording it, and the commonality of action in the process of enacting the rite, derives from a collective desire to preserve the musical folklore of their native land.

Communication with the higher powers plays a special role. By making requests to them, participants pursue the goal of providing the young couple with a happy future. This can be defined as a sacred communication. It is characteristic of the rite that this is realized exclusively by musical means, appealing to an inanimate object as a magical symbol and a means of bringing the newlyweds a happy married life. Thus, in the songs, the participants address not only God and the Virgin Mary (*Та й устань Боже до помочі…* 'Stand up, God, for help… ', *Та благослови Боже, і Пречистая тоже* 'God bless, and the Virgin too'), but also the bread itself – korovay (*Короваю-раю, я тебе вбираю* 'Korovay-paradise, I dress you', *А ніхто не вгадає що у цьому короваї* 'And no one will guess what's in this korovay') – and the oven as a symbol of the family hearth (*Haua niч реготіла* 'Our oven grinned', *А в нашої печі золотії плечі* 'And in our oven there are golden shoulders').

To sum up, the korovay rite combines interpersonal, group and sacred communication, as well as auto-communication, forms of interaction inherent in the very nature of the rite and integral to it. These pre-wedding rites take the form of a well-structured system with particular sequential actions of a magical nature. In addition, all the participants in this interactive process are unconsciously included in a single communicative space through the use of speeches, songs, and dances, a range of verbal and non-verbal practices.

The most important feature of the korovay ritual is the ritual folk songs. Music not only accompanies korovay-related ritual action, it helps the participants in interaction, in understanding each other, and actively influences the participants (animate and inanimate), acting as a primary means of communication. It unites people in a collective feeling appropriate to the situation and adjusts them to the necessary order.

The various demands, warnings, and taboos are preserved from the previous generations, and the particularities of the korovay ritual discussed testify to the fact that the Central Volyn Ukrainians have preserved not only ancient beliefs about the symbolism of the wedding bread and its miraculous power, but also those associated ritual songs and dances related to its production and distribution.

The video of the korovay ritual performed in the village of Klintsy in 2011 is of great value for musical folklore, especially today, when traditional song traditions are becoming a thing of the past. Ritual songs performed during the baking of the wedding bread are therefore an invaluable asset in their representation of the traditional song repertoire, and practices, of Ukrainians.

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Komunikacija ukrainiečių karvojaus apeigose

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Santrauka

Raktažodžiai: ritualas, karvojaus apeigos, komunikacija, ukrainiečių folkloras, liaudies tradicijos.

Straipsnis skirtas ukrainiečių karvojaus apeigų, užfiksuotų Rivnės srities Dubno rajono Klincų kaime, tyrimui. Šias apeigas suvokdama kaip žmonių socialinių ryšių simbolinę formą, autorė nagrinėja jų komunikacinį pobūdį, daugiausia dėmesio skirdama ne tik apeiginio vyksmo dalyvių, jų vaidmens ir funkcijų nustatymui, bet ir ypatingai muzikinio dėmens svarbai, nes karvojaus apeigose muzika yra pagrindinė bendravimo priemonė. Pristatomos svarbesnės *ritualo* (t. y. karvojaus apeigų) ir *komunikacijos* (apeiginės, muzikinės, tarpasmeninės, grupinės, sakralinės, autokomunikacijos) tyrimo kryptys, nagrinėjančios šiuos reiškinius tiek skyrium, tiek atsižvelgiant į jų tarpusavio ryšį.

Tyrimo metu atskleidžiama, kad karvojaus ritualas akumuliuoja ir individualią komunikaciją (autokomunikaciją), ir grupinę (tarpasmeninę, grupių, sakralinę). Autokomunikacija yra būdinga pačioms aptariamoms apeigoms: visi ceremonijos dalyviai yra ir atlikėjai, ir klausytojai vienu metu. Tarpasmeninė komunikacija verbalinėmis, muzikinėmis priemonėmis ir gestais būna išreikšta tarp įvairių apeigos dalyvių: namų šeimininkų, tarp šeimininkų ir karvojaus kepėjų, tarp karvojaus kepėjų ir vadovo, tarp šeimininkų ir vadovo. Grupinė komunikacija vyksta tarp karvojaus kepėjų grupelių (tų, kurios jį kepa, ir tų, kurios dainuoja) ir yra perteikiama liaudies dainomis. Tuo pačiu metu visi karvojaus apeigų dalyviai yra masinio ritualinio bendravimo partneriai. Juos vienija ir siekis įamžinti šias apeigas dokumentinėje juostoje, ir veiksmų bendrumas jas atkuriant, ir bendros visų pastangos išsaugoti savo krašto muzikinį folklorą.

Išskirtinis vaidmuo apeigose tenka žmonių bendravimui su aukštesnėmis jėgomis (sakralinė komunikacija), turinčiomis užtikrinti laimingą jaunavedžių ateitį. Šis komunikacijos tipas perteikiamas vien tiktai muzikinėmis priemonėmis, – jomis kreipiamasi į karvojų, krosnį, Dievą, Švenčiausiąją Mergelę.

Reikšminga vieta karvojaus apeigose tenka ritualinėms dainoms. Muzika veikia absoliučiai visus ritualo dalyvius – tiek realius žmones, tiek negyvus subjektus. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad karvojaus ritualas šiuolaikinei Ukrainos visuomenei yra reikšmingas stiprinant skirtingų žmonių kartų bendravimą ir užtikrinant svarbiausių socialinių bei kultūrinių reikšmių perdavimą.

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