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**CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN TRADITIONS IN THE CHURCH HOLIDAYS  
AND CEREMONIES OF BUDJAK  
(BASED ON THE GRAPHICS OF VLADIMIR AFANASYEV)**

*- Abstract -*

In this study, it is our intention to highlight the peculiarities of intersection of Christian and pagan traditions in church holidays and ceremonies of Budjak, a border district in the south of Odessa region, Ukraine. Its distinctive features are multiculturalism and nationally specific forms of communication in the situation of dynamic cultural interference. The material of the study is the album *The World of Graphics...* (2001), by the Bessarabian artist Vladimir Afanasyev, who collected 140 ethnographic sketches with a verbal component created by him during a quarter of a century. The paper with a focus on "Holidays and Rituals" block of pictures continues some previous examinations conducted on the cycles of graphic images of V. Afanasiev, such as "Nature of Budjak", "Work", "Leisure", "Popular Pedagogy". The novelty consists of the conducted examination and the critical opinions, devoted to regional specifics of pre-Christian Old Slavonic ceremonies, preserved in collective memory of local society. The work can be useful to academics and practitioners who have specific responsibilities in the field of Cultural and Art Studies.

*Keywords:* Budjak, graphics, village, Christian, pagan, church holiday, ceremony, artistic impression.

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The phenomenon of harmonious intersection of traditions of the New Testament and pagan culture in ritual practice of certain society is characteristic for the Christian cultural area. Kievan Rus was formed as a state with developed system of pagan beliefs that inevitably became the principles of religious 'dual faith' after the adoption of orthodoxy. Numerous injunctions for fighting with pagan remnants prove struggle with them. However, they are preserved either in open forms

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(caroling, Maslenitsa festival, Christmas divination), or in encrypted ones: symbols of choreography of round dance (circular, ornamental, playful), ceremonies, folklore, fairy tale, etc.

The attempt to study the peculiarities of intersection of pagan and Christian traditions in church holidays and ceremonies of Budjak is undertaken in this article. Budjak is a region in the Dniester and Danubian Watershed, being nowadays the South-Western part of Odessa region (Ukraine). It has different historical names, such as Budjak (Turkish), Southern Bessarabia (Romanian), as well as the Ukrainian Danube Region. The region has an interesting and heroic history, which goes back to antiquity. The favourable geographical position allowed ancient cities to play an important role in ancient trade. In the Middle Age, the region became the Slavic-Turkish-Roman-border, making it the part of the civilized frontier between the Christian and Muslim worlds. In 1812, according to the Bucharest peace treaty the part of Lower Danube Region and the Dniester with the fortresses of Ackerman, Izmail, Kiliya, Khotyn, Tyhina were included into the Russian Empire. Engaged in cattle breeding, Nogai Tatars were deported and Russian government invited the inhabitants of different European countries (Germany, Switzerland and Bulgaria) to colonize the wild and uncultivated land of Budjak, exempting them from taxes. The activities of the local communities of Russian old-believers and Romanians also played an important role in the development of the region. During the last 200 years the power changed here nine times without battles, but due to interstate agreements. Budjak was under the rule of Osman and Russian Empire, Romanian Kingdom, Moldova Principality, the USSR and Ukraine. Unstable state position in the region and its peripheral location in relation to each of the states, which pretended on it, resulted in insufficient attention to its accomplishment and development of the cultural potential.

Professor Iaroslav Kichuk underlines: “Budjak has great potential to be developed precisely in the cultural sphere. We are convinced that the main potential of Budjak is the people of the region. In the XIX century the territory was provided for settlement and cultivation of land for colonists of different countries: Bulgarian (centred in the city of Bolgrad), German (Artsyzy, Tarutino, etc.), Swiss (Shabo) and others. Another category of residents is ethnic Ukrainian, Russian and Romanian population, in particular of the Gagauz, Armenian, Polish, Jewish, Greek, Albanian origin and so on. So, multiculturalism is leading feature of the social development of the region, which laid the foundations of its new collective identity. Multiculturalism has affected Budjak artistic traditions, which are enriched by the achievements of different cultures”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Iaroslav Kichuk, *Higher School as the Activating Factor of Inter-Cultural Collaboration: European Context*, “European Integration: Realities and Perspectives”, Vol. 11, 2016, p. 452.

An important scientific result of the Regional Studies represents some historical, ethno-linguistic and ethnographic researches of Budjak. Among them: the multi-authored monograph *The Functioning of Literary Languages and Dialects in the Territory between the Dniester and the Danube* (Izmail, 2012); the collection of scientific articles “Philological Education in Multiethnic Area: Regional Experience” (Izmail, 2013), “Budjak: Historical and Ethnographic Essays of Southwestern Area of Odessa Region” (Odessa, 2014) being a result of long-term work of Odessa historians and ethnographers. The cultural traditions of ethnic groups in the lands of Budjak are professionally investigated by Izmail scientists: the monograph of Valentine Teleutsya, *Folklore Creativity in Ukrainian Danube Region: Problems of Regional Specificity* (2010); Ivan Pastyр, *Kyrnychky is Our Father's House. 1814-2014* (2014); Andrei Kolesnikov, *Morphology of Ukrainian Sothern Bessarabia Dialects: Genesis and Dynamics* (2015). At the same time, the presented studies do not cover all the aspects of Budjak culture. There are numerous uninvestigated facts in its ancient history, which were not even mentioned in the sources listed.

Unique material – ethnographic observations of a Bessarabian artist Vladimir Afanasyev covering twenty five years at the turn of XX century – has become the object of this research. A member of National Union of artists of Ukraine (2008), he is famous as a talented master who takes an active part in regional and republican exhibitions. V. Afanasyev is also the author of a number of books: *The World of Graphics of Vladimir Afanasyev* (2001); *The Wedding in Graphics of Vladimir Afanasyev* (2008), *Short Stories* (2013), where he appears as a successor of a unique genre – graphic drawings combined with a small informational component. Creolized text of the artist’s graphics concerning the cultural life of the region is near to the genre of graphic novel, the creolized format of which is artistic or scientific literature, including thematic pictures with verbalized message.

More than 140 graphic drawings of the author reflect the scenes of life, work and rest of people of Budjak mainly of Ukrainian, Russian and Bulgarian origin. Submitted ethnographic observations deal with the last quarter of the XXth century. Some of them, as earlier, are still relevant for rural life of Budjak, others (the elements of collective-farm formation, making of homespun clothes, etc.) disappeared and became museum items. The portraying and description of holydays and ceremonies of Budjak take an important place in the system of images in V. Afanasyev’s graphics. Christian and pagan traditions are intertwined inherently here: Christmas, caroling, divination, celebration of the end of winter, Easter, “letting into the water” the remains of sanctified food, Trinity, “Green Yule” etc. The tasks of this research are the retrospective analysis of pagan holidays, the traditions of which

continue to exist on unconscious level, and the specifics of wedding and funeral ritual ceremonies fixed in the album *The World of Graphics...* by V. Afanasiev.

Interdisciplinary approach forms the basis of this research, as its problems are solved on the intersection of several scientific branches: history, ethnography, Cultural Studies, philology and art history. The methodology of the research has traditional empirical basis of collecting and describing the factual material with the help of traditional field anthropologic methods: description, classification, participant observation, comparative analysis.

The topicality of the research is determined by the necessity of scientific comprehension of regional specifics of pre-Christian Old Slavonic ceremonies, preserved in collective memory of local society. It is well-known that many Christian holidays were imposed on the ancient pagan calendar celebrations with the aim of their inherent mastering. Inheritance of mytho-ritual practices is one of the key aspects of cultural life of society. At the same time loss of idea of the real nature of these or those ceremonies and belief in their magic force turns the ancient ritual into variety of rustic fairs, half-comprehended child's play. Their vitality is provided by deep symbolism and archetypal of the system of ritual images.

In the fundamental research of the academician Boris Rybakov *Paganism of Ancient Rus* (1987), the following main pre-Christian calendar holidays are pointed out: "*Winter Yule*", celebrated during two weeks after the day of winter solstice (the 24-25<sup>th</sup> of December); *carnival* as farewell to winter, lasting a week before the day of spring equinox (the 24-25<sup>th</sup> of March), "*Green Yule*" – a complex of summer Kupala celebrations before the day of summer solstice (the 24-25<sup>th</sup> of June); Perun holiday (Elijah's day) and the beginning of harvest at the end of July; autumn holidays of Birth and birth mothers, dedicated to a new harvest.

Apparently, the holidays of ancient Slavs were connected with the movement of the Sun on the annual circle. Astronomical day of winter solstice is represented with the longest night and the shortest day of the year, that was understood in mythopoetical consciousness of the ancient people as a Birthday of the sun, after which Light defeats Darkness and the days become longer. It is important to notice that nowadays as a result of displacement of the movement of the Sun (precession) the day of winter solstice falls on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, whereas in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D. it fell on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December. Respectively, the day of spring equinox (from the 24<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of March) and the day of summer solstice (from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of June) appeared to be displaced. B. Rybakov points out that of all the cycle of calendar holidays winter Yule and Kupala ceremony ("*Green Yule*" as a cult of grass and plants) came till nowadays with minor changes in year cycle. March holidays, dedicated to the day of the beginning of spring, and, on the whole, of a new calendar year, falling on the day of spring equinox and the week of

farewell to winter (Maslenitsa, “komoeditsa”) preceding it were displaced from the 24<sup>th</sup> of March to February under the influence of lent, always preceding it<sup>2</sup>.

Almost all ancient nations (Slavs, Germans, Romans) celebrated the day of winter solstice. The holiday Dies Natalis Solis Invicti was officially marked by the emperor Avrelian on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December approximately in 273. The first three centuries of the Christian church Christmas was identified with the day of Epiphany (the 6<sup>th</sup> of January in the Julian calendar), supposing that Christ’s birthday coincides with the day of his christening. One of the most ancient Christian churches – Armenian Church still celebrates Christmas on the day of christening of Jesus Christ. First knowledge of celebration of Christmas on the day of winter solstice (the 25<sup>th</sup> of December) refers to menology of the IV century, edited by the Roman church. Most likely such bylaw was connected not only with inner church discussions, but also with the fight with the cult of Unbeatable Sun by means of assimilation of holidays connected with it<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, Christmas and New Year holidays appeared in one bunch with ancient Slavonic “Winter Yule”. On the shortest day of the year – the 25<sup>th</sup> of December the Birth of the Sun (Winter Solstice, Carols) was celebrated. The God of newborn Sun was called Koliada. B. Rybakov describes the idea of winter Yule this way: “One of the characteristic features of Yule is dressing up, putting on a sheepskin coats wool up, wearing masks of animal, noisy carnival dances in houses and in the streets. People dress up like a bear, a horse, a bull, a goose, a crane <...>. Many episodes of New Year games also arise to different ceremonies of different months of the year (burning of jack-straw, imitation of funeral, etc.). This suggests that 12 holidays could be dedicated to all the 12 months of the year: among the accessories of Yule holidays we also see a sheaf, connected with the months of harvest in August, and a straw doll (March or June), masks of wild oxen (January, “Veles days”, or April), a horse (April, June), a bear (March). Ceremonial deeds were connected with funeral (“radunitsa”, “parents’ Saturday”) and weddings; songs were connected with plowing (“clicking the plow”) and harvest (September), a part of dances is connected with ancient Slavic spring holiday commemorating the dead... In one word, almost all the elements of ceremonies are met in New Year games that are to be performed next year”<sup>4</sup>.

Religious culture in the second half of the XXth century in the South of Odessa region didn’t suffer from specific persecutions, but as everywhere in post-

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<sup>2</sup> B. Rybakov, *Paganism of Ancient Russia (Язычество Древней Руси)*, Наука, Москва, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> In Zoroastrianism the day of winter solstice is associated with the birthday of God Mithra. During the II-th – IV-th centuries, Mithraism was the main rival of Christianity.

<sup>4</sup> Rybakov, op.cit.

Soviet area, got the second birth in 1990s. Rural holidays mainly coincide with calendar church dates. Due to certain historical reasons mixed national traditions of people festivities were formed in Budjak, frequently obtaining mystery forms with pagan remnants.

In “Christmas” theme of the ceremonial cycle, *The Album of Graphics...*, by V. Afanasyev, the traditions of caroling are described colorfully. Before going around the village, children crowd together, learn new carols and recollect the old ones, store good sticks, in order to chase importunate dogs away, girls sew bags for presents, decorate them with embroidery. Godparents prepare special presents for godchildren in advance (spice-cakes, nuts, sweets), there was a tradition to bake spice-cakes in the shape of horses and Russian nesting dolls: horses were presented to boys, Russian nesting dolls – to girls. Every hostess is glad to have guests on Christmas, giving different sweets to children, and a glass of wine or vodka – to adults. So the procession moves from house to house, along the street.

On Yule, that is celebrated in orthodox tradition from the 7<sup>th</sup> till 19<sup>th</sup> of January, girls usually tell fortunes to get to know their future bridegrooms. V. Afanasiev gives an example of the following ceremony: gathering into one house, – he writes, – every girl brings with herself a cock or a hen, put a mirror, fill one saucer with the corn, pour water into the second one: “If the cock pecks the corn – the bridegroom will be rich, if the hen drinks water – it means that the bridegroom will be a drunkard. If a cock looks into the mirror, it means that the bridegroom will be a dandy. And if the cocks fight, then the bridegroom will be bully and cockerel”<sup>5</sup>.

According to V. Afanasyev’s observations, winter in Bessarabia is seen off gaily, arranging special celebrations on Maslenitsa festival. The author stresses that this holiday is especially preserved in Bulgarian villages. On the corresponding picture there is the atmosphere of a holiday, music and fun is everywhere, people go to their relatives and treat guests with pancakes, with baked spring lamb, drink wonderful new wine. In the evening everybody goes outdoors, burns fire, and rides horses in sleighs.

Easter holidays are celebrated in the villages with a special magnitude. The ceremony of baking homemade loaves takes place with a certain reverence. The picture of this process is imbued with an atmosphere of idyll: one woman in national dress is kneading the dough intently; another is putting the loaf into the stove; a baby is playing with enthusiasm near the popular in Bulgarian villages low table, set out with forms for baking, where fragrant dough is coming; the host is lying on the stove with a magazine; in the foreground, on the carpet in front of the table a cat is

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<sup>5</sup> Vladimir Afanasyev, *World of graphics by Vladimir Afanasyev. Album of graphic drawings (Мир графики Владимира Афанасьева)*, Альбом графических рисунков. Арциз: типография г. Белгород-Днестровского, 2001.

sitting as a symbol of homeliness and is watching the process attentively. “To bake Easter cakes you need a special talent. Every hostess has her own secret, her stove, roasters, forms, seasonings, kitchen herbs. It is necessary to knead the dough during several hours, that’s why those who are younger do it in turn. Only experienced woman can make heat in the stove. When the Easter cakes are ready, they are put in the front room on the table with a tablecloth or at the window to make everyone see what Easter cakes they have”<sup>6</sup>.

Another Easter plot shows people, expecting the sanctification of prepared food at the end of Easter church service. Everybody lays a small carpet, where he puts a basket with eatables waiting for the priest. Old people sit on small benches, adults and grandchildren stand behind them. Giving comments to this picture V. Afanasyev found interesting Easter traditions of the local people, connected with certain superstitions: “People bring Easter cakes, painted eggs, bacon, cheesecakes, wine. Everything is in small quantity, in order to let the family eat it during the day and not to let the food spoil, the remnants – bones, eggshells are thrown into the river. Bacon is put in a cold place and is used as medicine”<sup>7</sup>.

The description of ceremony of throwing the remnants of ceremonial meal into water has ritual background in different national cultures. So, in cleansing ceremony called “tashlikh” in Judaism (or “sins into the water”) held at the beginning of the New Year according to the Jewish calendar (Rosh Ha-Shana) religious people go to the bank of any nearby water (sea/river/lake/well/fountain), throwing crumbs of bread for fish into the water. Jews also shake flaps of their clothes singing the psalms, trying to escape chametz (any dish based on the fermentation) – it is the ritual act before the holiday of Passover. This ceremony symbolizes cleansing from sins, and is based on the quotation from the Bible “And You will drop all their sins into the profound depths of sea” (Micah, 7, 18-20). According to the researches, on the threshold of the Second World War in Odessa region there lived close upon 270 000 Jews, of which 230 000 persons were killed<sup>8</sup>.

The ceremony mentioned in *The World of Graphics...* by V. Afanasyev has a deep Russian background. Ceremonial act of “letting food into the water” as a sacrifice is described in Russian epic about legendary hero Sadko<sup>9</sup>:

“A young man wanted  
To go to Novgorod;

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<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> A. Kruglov, *Chronicle of the Holocaust in Ukraine (Хроника Холокоста в Украине)*, ПремьерГод, Запорожье, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> K. Dvoretzkova, *The Volga in songs and legends (Волга в песнях и сказаниях)*, Саратов, 1937, p. 30-31.

He cut bread with a big soukra,  
 Salted it, let it into Volga:  
 «Thank you, mother river-Volga»,  
 I have been walking along you for twelve years,  
 And I am going, a young man, to Novgorod.”

With the adoption of Christianity pagan ceremony of letting on the water got a new sense. The idea about cleansing power of holy water, the ceremony of Epiphany, etc. contributed to this. In orthodox anonymous edition of Sretenky monastery of Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate “What prosphora, antidoron, artos mean” it is recommended to burn spoiled prosphora in church and “let it into the river with pure water”<sup>10</sup>. In Ruta Vasilyeva’s work *Russian folk Easter ceremonies, superstitious beliefs and traditions*, it is noted: “People treated the remnants of Easter food carefully. So, all the remnants of Easter cake are gathered and dug in such a place where nobody steps – in order not to stamp on the holy; throw on the water (into the river) to let it go with the water”<sup>11</sup>. Besides the tradition of sanctifying bacon after Easter liturgy and preserving it as medicine is spread not only in Russian, but also in Bulgarian villages of Budjak, this fact shows the borrowing of national traditions in multiethnic area of the region.

V. Afanasyev dedicated a separate drawing to holiday Easter meal. He noted in comments that after coming from church people wake up those who are still sleeping and the whole family breaks their fast in the kitchen or in the sittingroom near the icons. After reading prayers everyone eats an egg, a piece of Easter cake or a cheesecake. After meal people have a rest and wait for the guests to come for the whole day or make visits after evening service in church.

Trinity is not less important holiday in the village – a favorite beautiful holiday of the descent of the Holy Spirit, during which houses and churches are decorated with freshly picked herbs, branches of pussy-willows. Rituals connected with the cult of vegetation symbolize vivifying and renovating power of the Holy Spirit, the joy of regeneration of Nature, people’s gratitude to God for resurrection and their rebirth through Epiphany. The traditions of decorating churches and houses of Parishioners on the Christian holiday of Trinity Sunday with new greenery was probably borrowed from Old Slavonic “Green Yule” – the days of farewell to spring, celebrated a week earlier summer solstice.

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous, *What is prosphora, antidor, artos (Что такое просфора, антидор, артос)*, М.: Сретенский монастырь, “Новая книга”, “Ковчег”, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> R. Vasilyeva, *Russian folk Easter ceremonies, signs and traditions( Русские народные пасхальные обряды, приметы и традиции)*, 2013, Вести сегодня, опубликовано 02.05.2013.



The preparations for celebration of Trinity are shown in one of V. Afanasyev's pictures. A shepherd in national clothes and self-made sharp-nosed footwear made of leather (*tsaruli*) skins the lamb attentively. A host with a decanter of wine controls the process, and a woman hustles about near the cauldron for cooking kurban.

The wedding ceremony is the most important element of spiritual life of the society, as it combines several branches of traditional culture of the society: law, ritual, myth, magic, art, game. In the Southern part of Ukraine they say: "A man is talked about three times in his life: when he is born, when he marries and when he dies". V. Afanasyev showed colorful wedding traditions in Russian and Bulgarian villages of Budjak, paying a special attention to the images of musicians, singing and people. These accents are not accidental, for such types of art as folk music and dance are one of the most important sides of national culture and they deeply influence the formation of collective identity of a certain region.

In one of the pictures the author represented the performance of the ceremonial song "Obmanka", characteristic for Russian villages of Budjak, inhabited by the immigrants from South-western Russia. Traditions of ceremonial wedding songs that they have brought with them go back to ancient times. They have aesthetic, incantatory and legal functions. Certain songs are peculiar for every stage of rehearsal ceremonies and they never sound out of the ceremony. "Obmanka" is performed during the first stage of matchmaking of bridesmaids: an engaged girl who deceived her devoted friends and promised them never to get married is called so. In South-western Russia there are a lot of variants of this ritual song, such lines are represented in the album<sup>12</sup>:

"Oh, uninvited guest has just come to us,  
Uninvited, uninvited he was... "

One of the stages of the wedding ceremony, spread either in Budjak, is baking of wedding loaf: "Then, when around loaf and fancy bread is baked for the wedding, those who helped to do it, sing and dance already more cheerfully with boys, a bit daubed with soot and joy begins from this moment and the wedding expands"<sup>13</sup>. It is necessary to add that only a married woman with a happy fortune is allowed to make dough for the wedding loaf (this rule concerns her assistants as well).

Sacrament of church wedding is represented as the most solemn part of wedding ceremony. The artist reflected the concentration on the faces of newlyweds, parents' and witnesses' excitement, frank curiosity of the bridesmaids and the guests.

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<sup>12</sup> Afanasyev, op.cit., p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

Mass festivities on the wedding is one of the most frequently repeated themes in the album *The World of Graphics...* Traditions of Bessarabia wedding presuppose the widest festivities in the street in the marquees, where half of the village is invited with an opportunity to come with completely unknown people among honorable friends of those who are invited. And today a lot of old rural people are ashamed, if their children and grandchildren don't want to celebrate a big wedding. V. Afanasyev comments the drawing with the corresponding title: "Half of the village and even more is invited to the wedding. They prepare for it thoroughly. Benches and tables are taken from a collective farm. They use their own carpets. The host cuts a goby, a boar and a lamb, and also more than a hundred of poultry, bakes bread. Only relatives or close friends and a Kitchener specialized in wedding dishes cook. The host uncorks a barrel with wine and bottles with home distilled vodka that were prepared beforehand. Musicians, photographers and master of ceremonies are invited. They celebrate for three days, and the preparations last for a week"<sup>14</sup>.

V. Afanasyev points out that on Bulgarian wedding musicians work hard, for the music doesn't stop for three days, and during procession around the village musicians walk in front of the wedding. Accentuation of the role of musicians on wedding festivities emphasizes carnival aspect of this solemn ceremony in folk culture. Having fun and dancing girls are "the decoration and the soul of the wedding". They dance during the whole procession from the groom's house to the bride's, after that they go to the church and godparents, and "all this happens in dance, cheerful songs and triumph of youth"<sup>15</sup>. The culture of performance of folk Bulgarian songs deserved a special attention of the author. He presented a sketch of the well-liked song "A Black Kukoshka" in one of his pictures, representing it as a popular joking text in Bulgarian and Russian. In another picture the artist portrayed the performance of the songs at the wedding table, paying attention at a high level of Bessarabian Bulgarians' folk culture: during singing nobody disturbs the singer, in particular, no one touches just served kurban till a plangent exclamation sounds "E(o)paaaa!", meaning a short pause in the song, talk, communication, after that everybody may divert their attention to other questions.

V. Afanasyev writes that Russian wedding is not held without quick ride. "In winter it is sledding, and in autumn – riding in a cart. A cart is decorated with carpets, horses – with ribbons and flowers, and at a great speed they go around the village galloping. They ride along all the streets. Horses are tired. Everyone is dirty, but happy. All the people in the village know about the wedding. The groom carries the bride into the house. If there is no mud, they pour the water in order to have it.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 92.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 90.

Much mud means wealth. People meet the wedding procession with bread and salt near the house. They give some water to drink and pour the bucket across the road<sup>16</sup>. The author being the native of a Russian Budjak village appreciates the pagan remnant of accepting mud as a symbol of soil filled with water, a source of harvest and growth. With warm feeling V. Afanasyev portrayed the performance of Russian wedding songs by women in the picture “Lioli at the Russian wedding”, while singing which guests “loudly, with humming” join hands and dance. Tempo and rhythm of traditional chorus of great folk songs “Oh liolushki-oli” reflects the peculiarities of composite Russian character, harmonizing with the image of stately smooth flow, characteristic for Russian round dance.

During festivities in Ukrainian villages of Budjak, according to V. Afanasyev’s observations, guests “hop” mainly, “jumping high”<sup>17</sup>. However, he expresses his opinion in comments to the picture “Danced-stomped”, the energy of a live orchestra, representing a Ukrainian song “Chicheri-kucheri”, causes “everybody jump, even the lazy ones”<sup>18</sup>. This interesting observation makes us remember the axiom of dance as a figurative and plastic embodiment of the national character and to look attentively at the specifics of self-expression in Ukrainian folk dance. The noticed elements of “hopping” resonate with traditional for Ukrainian dancing songs exclamation “gop-gop” (in colloquial speech “gopat” means to jump, hop with noise, cries, exclamations<sup>19</sup>, that gave the name to the Ukrainian national dance, “gopak”. In choreographic classics of gopak dancing “hopping” of the Ukrainians got a perfect expression in the figures “raznozhka” (splits in a jump), “polzunok” (jumping with throwing of the leg in squatting), etc. It is also necessary to mention that modern Bessarabian musicians know perfectly the repertoire of the nations living in Budjak, they sing songs in the Ukrainian, Russian, Bulgarian, Moldavian, Gagauz, Jewish languages during one event. Such multiculturalism became a part of regional mentality determining tolerant attitude to the national culture of different ethnic groups, producing their organic perception during cultural events for the representatives of different ethnicities as a part of their own national heritage. Going back to the artist’s observations it is necessary to mention that representatives of different ethnic groups really begin “to hop” when hearing Ukrainian songs, submitting to their rhythm and energy. Respectively the manner of performing other national dances changes under the influence of intuitional reception of their expressive means. Thus at subconscious level the society of Budjak dancing culture

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<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 95.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Т. Ефремова, *New Dictionary of Russian (Новый словарь русского языка)*, Толково-словообразовательный, М.: Русский язык, 2000.

of different ethnoses as a background of regional multiculturalism and tolerance is learned.

In V. Afanasyev's album sketches of different "interesting and cheerful dances" are represented. On the recognition of the author the most energetic dance is Moldavian one called "Pelenitsa" (or dance with a pillow, in Bulgarian version – with a shawl), popular not only in Moldavian and Bulgarian villages, but also widely represented at city parties in Bessarabian district centers: "If you are to dance, you will remember for a lifetime the speed of rhythm and heartiness of a kiss. And it is not exactly acceptable to kiss a person whom you see in the circle for the first time. But these are the demands of the dance. If you were chosen by a dancer with a pillow, stand on the knee in the center of the circle – and kiss. After that the pillow remains by you, and you choose a partner for a kiss yourself. And it lasts till the musicians fall from exhaustion, in one word, to the point of collapse"<sup>20</sup>.

The final drawing of the wedding circle is dedicated to the description of "the show for a bride", arranged on the second day. To the song and laugh the bride is asked to sweep the yard or room, while guests are throwing up paper money in different places: "If the bride is not stupid, she will understand at once what is what. She will collect the money and give it to her mother in law, and the former in her turn will add "some coins" for a round amount in order to buy a car for newlyweds. They have fun this way"<sup>21</sup>.

Triumph of life, reflected in wedding ceremonies of Budjak, shows hopes and aspirations of local society, connected with the idea of sacral nature of marriage and family relations. An integral part of life of society is funeral ceremony, accurate execution of which is supported by ethnic norms, moral duty of relatives towards the gone, conservative ideas of death, relations between alive and dead. In Budjak orthodox funeral ritual absorbed some remnants of pagan beliefs, connected, for example, with the tradition of bringing food to the grave of the dead, but at bottom it remained deeply Christian. In the album *The World of Graphics...*, V. Afanasyev represented two drawings devoted to the funeral-memorial ceremony. In one of them he noted the tradition of old people to prepare for death in advance, putting materials, towels, shirts, a costume, an icon in "skrynya". Another drawing is dedicated to the visualization of memorial ceremony with the following comments: "After funeral the memorial table is laid, where the cutlery is put for all the members of the mourning procession. They don't sit to eat at once. They sing «Our Father» standing. After that they sit to table and eat all together, drinking with red wine, but

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<sup>20</sup> Afanasyev, op.cit., p. 44.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 94.

not more than three wine glasses. Then they stand up, but don't go away at once. They read the prayer standing and only afterwards they go away"<sup>22</sup>.

Studying of the cultural code of V. Afanasyev's graphics made it possible to create some strokes to the leaning of spiritual culture of people, who settle Budjak, to find out certain peculiarities of its functioning and development. It is necessary to note that it is much richer and multilateral; however the object of the research became only aspects covered by the artist. Communicative options of graphic drawings of V. Afanasyev as a creolized text include visual and verbal components, making sense and functional entity. The album *The World of Graphics...* is noted for its significance; has linguocultural function as the means of transferring information and a form of artistic discourse; acts as a genre of art and the means of mass information and communication.

Found in V. Afanasyev's work mythological, architextual (genre-making) elements in informative, formal and structural plans, serve for comprehension of cultural specifics of the life of the region. It is determined by the atmosphere of self-sufficiency, peace, appeasement, and the leading motives are the motives of unity of a man and nature, world and harmony of coexistence, love of people of this region to their land and its wonderful generosity, their hard work, cult of traditional values, community consciousness.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 119.

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