



SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON CZECH PRESENCE IN UKRAINE IN THE 1920S

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to analyse the scientific work on the study of Ukrainian Czechs in the 1920s. The body of work under analysis is found to highlight the reasons and premises for the growing interest in the state and society as driving issues of Czech colonization of Ukrainian lands. The research stems from the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, local scientists and historians, and public activists. The text deals with the Czech national-cultural revival in Ukraine in the 1920s, discussing the history, economic activity, culture, traditions, and lifestyle of Ukrainian Czechs. A significant contribution to the work has been made by Volodymyr Kravchenko, Head of the Ethnographic Department of the Volhynia State Research Museum in Zhytomyr, and his assistant and postgraduate student Nykanor Dmytruk, as well as Kornii Cherviak, Director of the Korosten Museum, Antonín Vodsedálek, Head of the seminar for Czech teachers at the Zhytomyr Education Institute, Stefan Křížánek, writer and inventor from the village of Krošna Česká, and others. This work would not have been possible without the fundamental achievements of Yevhen Rykhlik, a prominent Ukrainian Slavic-scientist of Czech origin as well as a famous philologist, ethnologist, teacher and public figure. Rykhlik founded and directed the Cabinet of National Minorities of Ukraine, carried out a number of expeditions to Czech settlements, collected an archive of the Czech press, organised the collection of materials on Czech colonization of Ukrainian lands, and published scientific articles on the subject. He also contributed to the field with his monograph “Czechs of Volhynia”, which was destroyed in the early 1930s.

Keywords: Czechs in Ukraine – Czech national-cultural revival – Czechs of Volhynia – the Cabinet of National Minorities of Ukraine – Yevhen Rykhlik

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Historical premises in the scientific analysis of the issues related to Czech colonization of Ukrainian lands in the 1920s

In the second half of the nineteenth century, multiple reasons caused Czech migrations to different Austro-Hungarian territories. The significant shortage of land and its incredibly high price, the results of modernization processes and the agrarian crisis of the 1870s in the Habsburg Empire all contributed to a state of landlessness, ruin, and unemployment, which led people, and especially peasants, to leave their home in search of a better life. This migration wave also included representatives of the Czech bourgeoisie, who, due to political and religious oppression by the official power in Vienna, were negated the opportunity for national and cultural development and professional activity.

The majority of migrants were directed to the southern and western lands of the Russian Empire. These areas were favoured as a result of their proximity, the similarity of natural and weather conditions, a sense of Slavic kinship with the local population, and Russophile ideas of the Czech political elite, which opposed the active “Germanization” with a friendly support of Slavic-Russian “brotherhood”. Furthermore, after the Polish uprising of 1863, the

Russian government had interests in Czech settlements in southwestern Ukraine. After Alexander II’s approval of the “Regulations of the Committee of the Ministry on the Establishment of Czechs in Volhynia Province” on the 10th July 1870, Czech settlers received a number of benefits for accepting immediate Russian citizenship, such as exemption from state taxes and cash payments for 5 years, lifelong release of male settlers and their sons from conscription, freedom of religion, and permission to open Czech schools.¹ The economic reforms of the 1860s and 1870s, and the relatively low price of land previously owned by Polish landowners, also led Czech families to choose Ukrainian territories as their new homeland. In the early 1860s, Czech people settled in the Taurida Governorate and the Volhynia Governorate. According to census results, in 1926 there were 15,905 Czechs living in Soviet Ukraine, accounting for 0.1% of the republic’s population.²

Most Czechs settled in the Volhynia, Odesa, and Kyiv region, building neat rural settlements. Some of them migrated to cities – Kyiv, Kharkiv, Zhytomyr and others. From that period onwards, their fate became inextricably linked to that of Ukrainian people. Since then, Czechs and Ukrainians shared all hardships and joys, experiencing losses and successes together, creating a shared history.

¹ Alexander VORONIN, *About foreign settlers in the Southwest Territory*, 1871, p. 12

² Svitlana SHULGA, *Porivnyalnyi analiz stanovischa cheskyoi natsionalnoyi menshini v Radyanskyi Ukrayini ta Polschi v 20–30-ti rr. XX st.*, in: *Aktualni problemi vitchiznyanoyi ta vsesvitnoyi istoriyi*, Rivne 2008, p. 53.

Prior to the establishment of the dominant Soviet power, Ukrainian Czechs underwent a process of intense Russification and pressure from the Orthodox Church, partially assimilating and adapting to new survival conditions. This process was facilitated by four consistent, aggressive and effective factors: 1) the Russian administration; 2) service under the Russian army; 3) communication with the “Russian element” of the surrounding villages; 4) the Russian school system.³ In October 1887, a new law for the subordination of the so-called gentile schools in the South-Western region to the Ministry of Public Education was adopted.⁴ This led to a reformation of local schools in areas with a Czech population by the inspectors of public schools, who replaced Czech community-respected teachers with seminary students. In the early 1920s, Czech migrants lost, to a certain extent, their unique nationality traits, as can be demonstrated by a notable difference in worldviews, levels of culture, education, and national consciousness between the old and new generations.⁵ However, they remained a unique “ethnographic niche” among the large number of national minorities who had long lived on the Ukrainian territory.⁶

This article is devoted to the issues related to the study of 1920s Czech colonization of Ukrainian lands, then part of the Russian Empire, successively belonging to the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic.

This study analyses the scientific relevance of the information collected on the history of Czech settlements in Ukrainian lands, their economic and socio-political activities, education traditions, cultural heritage, relationships and mutual influences with the autochthonous population. Such information derives from the work of Soviet state workers, scientific and educational institutions, several centres and organisations. It further examines the interest of the government in the study of the Czech population, which was a valuable resource in the development of the young republic and a carrier of leading European knowledge, skills, and experience.

The 1920s have special relevance in the history of the Czech colonization of Ukrainian lands. This period is associated with an extraordinary surge of patriotic feelings, hopes for national revival, and a desire for economic and spiritual prosperity. The declaration of equality of all nationalities by the Soviet authorities and the promise to promote their full development prompted the people of Soviet Ukraine, including the Czechs, to be politically, entrepreneurially and culturally active. These processes, observed among the Czech population of today’s Ukraine, are rightly defined as the national and cultural revival of Ukrainian Czechs.

One aspect of this revival consists in the scientific work on a wide range of issues related to the formation and development of Czech colonies and the impact of Czech material and spiritual heritage on the socio-political, socio-economic and cultural life of the Ukrainian people. Until the October Revolution, the issues related to the context of immigration policy studies of the Russian Empire attracted the attention of some researchers, such as Kryzhanivskiy,⁷ Florynskiy,⁸ Ritih,⁹ Klaus,¹⁰ Shtah,¹¹ Auerhan¹² and others. However, their work contained disparate data, points and descriptions, without creating a holistic picture of such an important large-scale phenomenon as the Czech colonization of Ukrainian territories.

Valuable information about Czechs’ lives in Ukraine is contained in various calendars and chronicles printed in Czech. These were made especially for Ukrainian Czechs, by patriots from the local Czech intelligentsia. In Kyiv, Jareš, teacher of the College of Paul Galagan, printed the “Český pravoslavný kalendář” from 1888 to 1891, while V. Švihovský printed the “Čechoslovan” from 1911 to 1917. In Lodz, “Českoruské Listy”, a chronicle of Czech colonists, was being published from 1906 to 1907, as well as the evangelical calendars “Kalendář ruských Čechů na r. 1908”, “Myr” in 1909, and “Komenský” in 1910. A Czech missionary named Němeček founded the “Pravoslavný kalendář” in 1895 and published a statistical description of the Czech colonies of Volhynia in the chronicle “Sborník české společnosti zeměvědné” in 1902.¹³

The revival of scientific interest in Ukrainian Czechs in the 1920s was primarily linked to the practical intentions of the new Soviet Union power to change the economy. For more than half a century, Ukrainian Czechs worked effectively in various sectors of the economy, in the educational and cultural fields, demonstrating hard work, talent, and success. Their skills and experience were indispensable to the Bolshevik government for overcoming the ruins left behind by World War I and the events of 1917–1921, avoiding economical imbalance with the leading countries of the world, and consolidating their power.

However, the first attempts to establish close contact with representatives of national minorities, including the Czechs, did not produce the desired results. Soviet workers’ lack of knowledge of national languages, their agricultural peculiarities, traditions and customs led to an overall hostile attitude on the part of the population of national districts: “Practical workers among national minorities, even cultural workers and political workers, including teachers, often do not know the objects of their work and, of course, often make mistakes”.¹⁴

³ Yevhen RYKHLIK, *Z etnografichnih studiy. Selo Vilshanka na Zhitomirschini v svitli leksiki*, 1927, f. 7, p. 197.

⁴ *Istorija Czechiv v Ukrajinii*, Kyiv 2013, p. 279.

⁵ Y. RYKHLIK, *Z etnografichnih studiy. Selo Vilshanka na Zhitomirschini v svitli leksiki*, p. 197.

⁶ Yevhen RYKHLIK, *Doslidi nad chesкими koloniyami na Ukrainii (Zagalni uvagi)*, Kyiv, 1925, f. 1, pp. 33–37.

⁷ Efimiy KRYZHANOVSKIY, *Chehi na Volyni*, Sankt-Peterburg, 1887.

⁸ Timofey FLORINSKIY, *Etnograficheskaya karta zapadnogo slavyanstva i Zapadnoy Rusi*, Kyiv 1911.

⁹ Aleksandr RITI, *Pereseleniya*, Kharkiv 1882.

¹⁰ Aleksandr KLAUS, *Nashi kolonii: Opyity i materialy po istorii i statistike inostrannoy kolonizatsii v Rossii*, Sankt-Peterburg, 1889.

¹¹ Yakov SHTAH, *Ocherki iz istorii i sovremennoy zhizni yuzhno-russkikh kolonistov*, Moscow 1916.

¹² DACHO (State Archives of Chernihiv Region), F.R. – 8840, inv. no. 3, f. 7753, p. 35.

¹³ DACHO, F.R. – 8840, inv. no. 3, f. 7753, p. 35.

¹⁴ DACHO, F.R. – 8840, inv. no. 3, f. 7753, p. 217.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation stressed that it recognises the right of every nation for self-determination, emphasising a contrary view to their position on the national question of autocracy. In 1921, the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) expressed its opinion on the national problem: “Now that privileges have been abolished, equality of nationalities has been implemented and the right of national minorities to national development is guaranteed by the full character of the Soviet system, the party’s task with the working masses of these national groups is to help them fully enjoy this right to free development”. Although the new government’s declaration of commitment to national minorities was not so much motivated by concerns for preserving their national identity as by the need to implement their plans at all costs, it appeared hopeful for the future.

Prospects for studying Ukrainian Czechs in the context of a new direction of USSR national policy

To address these issues, the government resorted to reforming the state apparatus through the creation of a number of specialised institutions dedicated to national minorities. From May 1921 until January 1924, the Department of National Minorities at the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic worked alongside national divisions.¹⁵ The Council of National Minorities at the People’s Commissariat of Education¹⁶ began its work in June 1921, while the Central National Bureau of the People’s Commissariat of Education and its subordinate national bureaus were involved in working for non-Ukrainian populations from August 1922, in accordance with the “Regulation on the Organization of the Education of National Minorities Living in the Territory of the Ukrainian SSR”.¹⁷

This process was greatly intensified after the Communist Party’s XII Congress adoption of a program to resolve the national question in April 1923, the so-called “indigenization”. This program provided for the representation of national minorities in state authorities, with appropriate training of new personnel, the creation of educational institutions with teaching in the national language only, and the opening of state and public institutions aiding national minorities in scientific, cultural and economic spheres. The Congress adopted a resolution: “To issue special laws that would ensure the use of the mother tongue in all state institutions serving local foreigners and national minorities – laws that would persecute and punish with all revolutionary severity

all violators of national rights, especially the rights of national minorities”.¹⁸ In the same year, a number of similar laws were adopted.

On 28th April 1924, the Central Cabinet of National Minorities¹⁹ was formed. By the beginning of 1926, the formation of district commissions and commissioners for national minorities in districts was completed, and by the end of 1927 district executive committees were constituted.²⁰ In some City Councils there were organised national sections, and a number of national village and town councils was also created.²¹ They were tasked with surveying Ukrainian territories with a relevant number of national minorities residents in order to gather information on living conditions, the pace of Sovietization, their level of political consciousness, their economic activity, cultural development and more.

In the first half of the 1920s, the Central Cabinet of National Minorities organised a series of sightseeing tours, including to Czech colonies.²² All collected data was archived, becoming a source of invaluable information. However, working on this large set of documents required the involvement of experienced specialists – researchers of particular national minorities.

As early as 1927, the resolution of the First All-Ukrainian Conference on Work among National Minorities included the following clause: “Attention should be paid to research work in the field of language, literature, history, economics, ethnography and art of the national minorities of the Ukrainian SSR, connecting with the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (hereinafter referred to as the VUAN) for this purpose, the Institute of Marxism, the Committee of Local Lore, the Institute of Soviet Construction and other scientific organizations.”²³ In the same year, Butsenko, Secretary of the Presidium of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, drew attention to the problem of the inconsistency of work in state bodies among national minorities to the scientists of Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic: “Serving national minorities requires attracting scientific institutions. The Central Executive Committee has little connection with the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Marxism, and several other scientific organizations. We need to try to fill this gap by all means.”²⁴

Thus, in the late 1920s, the Soviet Ukrainian government began to actively encourage scientific, educational, and cultural institutions and organisations to undertake research into a variety of problems related to the history and modernity of Ukraine’s national minorities. Adopted after the XII Congress of the Ukrainian Communist Party (Bolsheviks),

¹⁵ POLOZHENNYA PRO VIDDILI: *Polozhennya pro viddili natsionalnih menshin NKVS, Postanova VUTSVK, Visti VUTSVK*, 1922.

¹⁶ Boris CHIRKO, *Natsionalni menshosti na Ukrayini u 20-h – na pochatku 30-h rr.*, Arhivi Ukrayini, 1990, issue 1, p. 32.

¹⁷ *Polozhennya pro organizatsiyu spravi osviti natsionalnih menshin, yaki naselyayut teritoriyu URSR*, in: *Ukrayinskiy istorichniy zhurnal*, 1990, issue 8, pp. 94–99.

¹⁸ *The Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks in the resolutions of its congresses and conferences (1896–1824)*, Moscow 1925, p. 365.

¹⁹ *Itogi raboty sredi natsionalnykh menshinstv na Ukraine. K 10-y godovschine Oktyabrskoy revolyutsii. Po materialam Tsentralnoy komissii Natsionalnykh menshinstv pri VUTSIK*, Kharkiv 1927, p. 9.

²⁰ Volodimir ORLYANSKIY, *Tsentralna komisiya natsionalnih menshin pri VUTSVK I ukrayinske evreystvo (1920-I rr.)*, in: *Gumanitarniy zhurnal*, 2000, issue 3–4, pp. 50–53.

²¹ Nataliya STAVITSKA, *Kulturno-prosvitnitska robota Tsentralnoy komisiyi natsionalnih menshin pri VUTSVK*, in: *Istoriya Ukrayini: malovidomi imena, podiyi, fakti: Zbirnik statey*, 1996, issue 3.

²² *Pervoe Vseukrainskoe soveschaniye po rabote sredi natsionalnykh menshinstv 8–11 yanvarya 1927 goda: Stenograficheskiy otchet, rezolyutsiya, postanovleniya i materialy*, Kharkiv 1927, pp. 247–248.

²³ Yevhen RYKHLIK, *Do organizatsiyi kabinetu viuchuvannya natsmeniv pri VUAN*, *Visti Vseukrayinskoy Akademiyi nauk*, 1929, issue 3–4, pp. 85–87.

²⁴ Svitlana VOLKOVA, *Chehi na pivdni Ukrayini (druga polovina XIX – persha tretina XX stolittya)*, Simferopol 2006, p. 87.

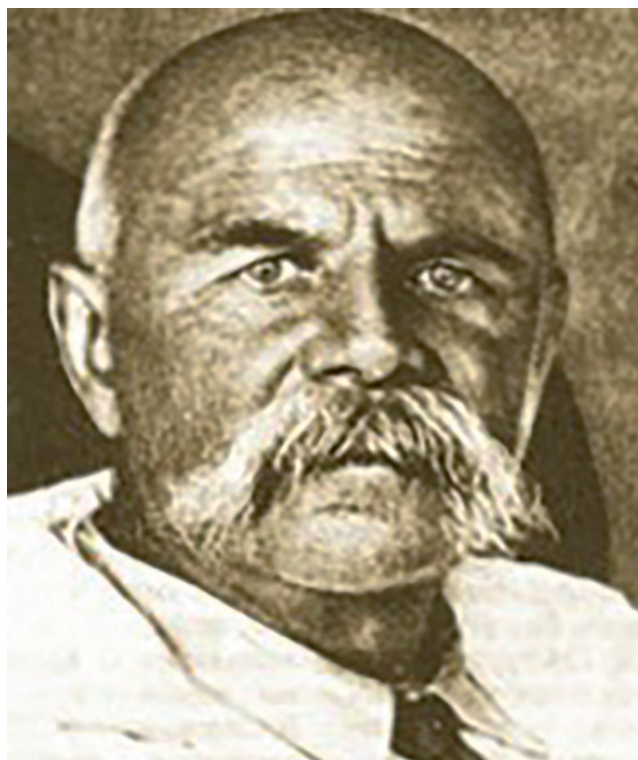
a series of laws on working among national minorities facilitated the collection of “national-conscious” data, thanks to the assistance of state authorities and state funding for research activities.

However, it should be noted that the study of Czech people did not produce the desired results. Scientific research in this direction was sporadic and was mainly focused on local history and ethnography. This is explained by the fact that there were practically no Ukrainian Czechs among the scholars who dealt with this issue with sufficient knowledge of the language, culture, history and lifestyle of Czech national minorities. In addition, these scholars were mainly interested in the district they lived in, without comprehensively exploring the wider range of issues in the context of Ukrainian history. On the contrary, there were no volunteers among Ukrainian Czech specialists, who would have had appropriate education and scientific experience.

Results of regional surveys on Ukrainian Czech population

In the 1920s, Czech colonization of Crimea was briefly and fragmentarily described by Den, Nikolskyi, Usov, and Shneur. Members of the Crimean Society of Researchers and Nature Lovers²⁵ were also interested in the Bohemian settlement of Taurida.

The Ethnographic Department of the Volyn State Museum, under the direction of Volodymyr Kravchenko, collected documentation on the history of the Czech colonization of Volhynia.²⁶ This was shown at the exhibition “National minorities of Volhynia”, which included exhibits collected in Czech villages of the region.²⁷ The study of the material culture of the representatives of different nationalities who lived in Volhynia allowed Kravchenko to make a comparative analysis of the Czech and German national minorities.²⁸ The experienced ethnographer managed an ensemble of local folklorists, young researchers, and members of local history groups in gathering data and objects of cultural relevance on the population of Volyn, which included the Czechs.²⁹ After the Cabinet of National Minorities at the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences was founded in 1929, Kravchenko became its volunteer, correspondent and coordinated the work of his department and graduate students.³⁰ According to the plan of researches on the national minorities of Volhynia, doctoral students from the Ethnographic Department of the Volhynia Museum studied the ethnography of the Volyn Czechs, learning under the leadership and influence of the Cabinet of National Minorities of the Ethnographic Commission of the VUAN from 1929/30 to 1933/34.³¹



Pic. 1. Vasyl Kravchenko – Head of the Ethnological Department at the Volhynia Research Museum in Zhytomyr from 1920 to 1929, undated. Accessible at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Vasyl_Kravchenko [retrieved on 21 Apr 2020].

Nykanor Dmytruk (1902–1938) also became a volunteer for the Cabinet of National Minorities. Although Kravchenko and Dmytruk’s main interest focused on the ethnographic study of the Ukrainian, Polish, and German populations of Volyn, data on the Czech population also came into their field of vision. Thus, the Cabinet of National Minorities assigned Zhytomyr researchers the task of collecting and processing the data, having obtained full consent, as evidenced by the Dmytruk’s words, “to work on the advice and assistance of the Cabinet of National Minorities”.³²

In the late 1920s, another Zhytomyr researcher joined the process of gathering documentary materials to study Ukrainian Czech presence. On behalf of the Cabinet of National Minorities of the Ethnographic Commission of the VUAN Ukrainian, the literary critic, historian, local folklorist, teacher and archivist Volodymyr Hnatiuk (1893–1933) worked on the identification and description of Czech cases in the Volhynia archive.³³

This was only the beginning of a cooperative archival attempt, as archives’ workers in Kyiv and other cities agreed

²⁵ S. VOLKOVA, *Chehi na pivdni Ukraini (druga polovina XIX – persha tretina XX stolittya)*, p. 9.

²⁶ Vasyl Kravchenko (1862 – 1945) – famous Ukrainian ethnographer, folklorist, museologist, writer, public figure.

²⁷ Lyubov GARBUSOVA, *Stanovlennya ta rozvitok etnografichnogo viddilu Zhitomirskogo kraeznavchogo muzeyu*, Volin-Zhitomirschina, 1997, issue 1, pp. 63–64.

²⁸ Volodymyr KRAVCHENKO, *Nimetski ta cheski koloniyi*, Znannya, 1927, issue 9, pp. 23–26.

²⁹ Tetyana LOBODA, *Vasyl' Kravchenko, Hromads'ka, naukova ta prosvitnyts'ka diyal'nist'*, Kyiv 2008, p. 64.

³⁰ Institute of Manuscripts of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, f. 1, cf. 71, p. 10.

³¹ Institute of Manuscripts of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, f. 10, cf. 40.

³² Institute of Manuscripts of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, f. 10, cf. 1058, p. 13–15.

³³ DACHO, F.R. – 8840, inv. no. 3, f. 7753, p. 235.



Pic. 2. Volodymyr Hnatyuk – literary critic, archivist, local historian, undated. Accessible at: http://esu.com.ua/search_articles.php?id=30628 [retrieved on 21 Apr 2020].



Pic. 3. Křižánek Stefan-Vaclav Ivanovich – peasant, writer, poet, and inventor who created a private museum of Czech culture. Krošna Česká, October 3, 1928. Photo published in *Chronicle* – 2000, Kyiv 1999, issue 29–30, p. 134.

to keep in their archives all documents on Ukrainian Czech land tenure, pedagogy, and lifestyle. They had to find, describe, create, if possible, copies of such cases. This was to facilitate future research into the history of Czech colonization of Ukrainian lands.

Antonín Vodsedálek (1899–1943) the head of the seminar for Czech teachers at Zhytomyr Institute of National Education, the organizer of courses for the secretaries of the Czech village councils and part of Czech intelligentsia in Volhynia. He assisted in the work of the Cabinet of National Minorities of the Ethnographic Commission of the VUAN, collecting information about Volyn Czechs and contributing to scientific research.³⁴ He studied and analysed the material, publishing his conclusions in Ukraine and abroad. His 15 contributions to the newspaper “Rudé Právo” are also notable, as they present useful insights into the lifestyle of the Czechs from the Zhytomyr region. Vodsedálek was also the author of several articles for the Zhytomyr newspapers “Robitnyk” and “Radyanska Volyn”. It is believed that he had the intention of writing a book about Volhynia Czechs, which he planned to publish in Czechoslovakia. However, he was arrested in 1930 on charges of managing an anti-Soviet spy organisation, which prevented him from completing his work.³⁵

Among the collectors of ethnographic material on the history of the Czech colonization of Volhynia, a special place is occupied by Štěpán Václav Křižánek, a villager of Krošna Česká in the Zhytomyr region. He wrote a number of literary and journalistic essays on the current state of the Czech colonies³⁶, on the Czech patriots’ resistance against Soviet power,³⁷ and on their military-technical inventions.³⁸ In addition, he created a one-of-a-kind Czech Culture Museum, located in his own house. The collection contained everyday objects, posters, and photographs that documents the material lifestyle of the Volhyn Czechs. This unique museum contained 334 exhibits in April 1930. It had visitors from both Greek and French delegations.³⁹

The Museum collected objects related to everyday life, in particular of peasants, including ordinary items made of textiles, glass, porcelain, ceramics, wood, metal and other materials. Czech immigrants owned typical utensils, furniture, decorative items, clothing, accessories, women’s jewelry, musical instruments, children’s toys, and more, which were either brought with them from their homeland, or purchased and handmade during their stay in Ukraine. The large number of exhibits presented in the museum was not typical for the Ukrainian lifestyle. The exposition made it possible to draw conclusions about a fairly high level of material

³⁴ DACHO, F.R. – 8840, inv. no. 3, f. 7753, p. 59.

³⁵ Yuriy SHEVCHUK, *Vodsedalek Anton Antonovych*, in: *Reabilitovani istoriyeyu*, Zhytomyr 2008, issue 2, pp. 84–86.

³⁶ Štefan KRZHIZHANEK, *De zh radyanska vlada? Satira na Kroshnyu Chesku*, in: *Hronika* – 2000 Kyiv 1999, pp. 134–135.

³⁷ DACHO, F.R. – 8840, inv. no. 3, f. 7753, pp. 125–126.

³⁸ *Vklad robitnika Krzhizhaneka v spravu oboroni krayini*, in: *Hronika* – 2000, Kyiv 1999, pp. 117–118.

³⁹ Scientific Archive of the MT Rylsky Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, f. 7, f. 6a / 30.

security of Czech families, their close ties with relatives in Czechoslovakia, their loyalty to national traditions, attention to comfort and aesthetics, care for the younger generation, love of reading and music, and cooking skill.

Yevhen Rykhlik's Czech study workshops

The study of the Czechs living in the Volhynia and Kyiv region is also associated with the name of professor Yevhen Rykhlik⁴⁰. Czech by birth, Yevhen Rykhlik was born in Czech colony of Vilshanka, in the Zhytomyr region. He was a graduate of the Kyiv Imperial University of St. Volodymyr, a brilliant philologist, Slavist, local historian, ethnographer, teacher, and social activist. His studies focus on the Czech colonization of Ukrainian lands, and he was responsible for various projects on the subject affiliated with numerous research institutions, educational institutions, state authorities, public and cultural organisations, as well as individuals who were involved in the study of Ukrainian Czechs.⁴¹



Pic. 4. Rykhlik Yevhen Antonovich, Nizhyn, Institute of Public Education, undated (not earlier than 1925). Mykola Gogol State University.

Today, he is rightly considered to be one of the leaders of the Ukrainian Czechs' national and cultural revival, during which much data on the history of the Czechs in the sub-Soviet territory was collected, described, analysed and popularised. At that time, Yevhen Rykhlik was the only scholar involved in this research who had Czech origins, shared Czech national character traits and was fluent in the Czech language.

From 1920 to 1924, Rykhlik returned to his hometown to carry on his monographic research on the ethnography of the Czechs of Volhynia and Ukrainian-Czech relations, on behalf of the Ethnographic Commission of the VUAN.⁴² In 1920s, monographic research was considered the most effective and promising method for "national minority studies" in Ukraine. A monographic or stationary study involved a long stay in a certain area for at least an "ethnographic year", which was defined as "one winter and two summers"⁴³, in order to "give a complete description of the village in economic and domestic terms."⁴⁴ Yevhen Rykhlik was able to conduct a thorough study of Vilshanka, given his personal connection with



Pic. 5. Rykhlik Yevhen Antonovich – prisoner No. 373, after his arrest, undated (probably 1931). State archives of Chernihiv Oblast, R-8840 Foundation, inv. no. 3, f. 7753.

⁴⁰ The text of the article uses the spelling of the surname Rykhlik, because it was written by the scientist himself during his lifetime. Rikhlyk is often found in scientific publications of different times.

⁴¹ Lyudmila PAVLENKO, *Evgen Rihlik: formuvannya ta evolyutsiya istorichnogo svitoglyadu*, Siveryanskiy litopis, 2001.

⁴² Lyudmila PAVLENKO, *Uchast E. Rihlika u rusi natsionalno-kulturnogo vidrodzhennya ukrayinskih chehiv u 1920-h rr.*, in: *Visnik CHDPU*, issue 27, Seriya: istorichni nauki, 2004, issue 2, pp. 97–100.

⁴³ Yevhen KAHAROV, *Zavdannya ta metody etnografyyi*, in: *Etnografichnyy visnyk*, 1928, issue 7, p. 27.

⁴⁴ *Prohrammy y ynstruksyyi po monohrafycheskomu obsledovanyyu derevny*, Leningrad 1927, p. 1.

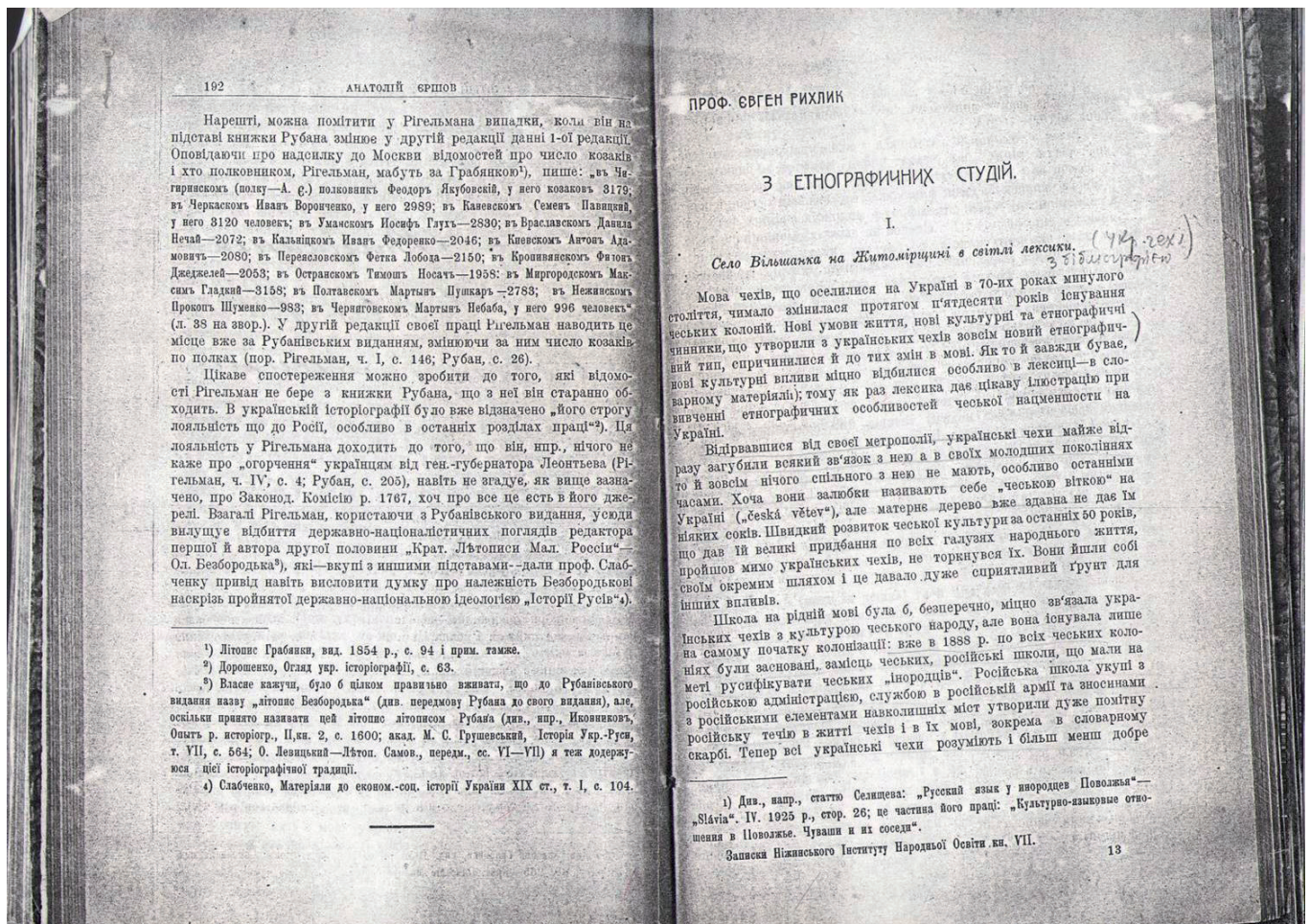


Fig. 6. Article by Rykhlik, 'From Ethnographic Studies. The Village of Vilshanka in the Zhytomyr Region in the Light of Vocabulary'. Published in the scientific publication *Notes of the Nizhyn Institute of Public Education*, 1927, Book VII, pp. 193–220.

the inhabitants of the village, his reputation as a well-known Kyiv professor, and his multifaceted scientific experience in the fields of philology, pedagogy, ethnography, folklore, and history. He collected data on the history of the educational, economic, socio-political and spiritual-cultural development of the Czech colonies in Volhynia. Yevhen Rykhlik analyzed the linguistic-dialectical, mental-psychological and moral-ethical features of the Volhynia Czechs, the mutual influence of the Czechs and Ukrainians, the Czech peasants' relationship with the local authorities and so on. The results of his "Czech studies" were published at the meetings of the Ethnographic Commission of the VUAN⁴⁵ and on scientific and popular scientific publications.

Throughout 1925, Rykhlik researched the history of Czech centres in the Kyiv region. Holding the post of Head of Kyiv Labor School No. 105,⁴⁶ he collected and analysed materials that covered all aspects of the life of the Czech Shuliavka of Kyiv city before and after the establishment of Soviet power with great interest. The scientist explored the history of the Czech press, the fate of the "Bolshevik" plant,

the Czech school in Shulyavka, the Charitable and Educational Society named after John Amos Comenius, and the participation of the Czech community in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the Kyiv region. Particular attention was given to the participation of the Czechs in World War I, the assistance provided to Czech war prisoners, their attitude to the Soviet authorities, and Ukrainian culture. Rykhlik's research is particularly valuable, as it provides the key to understanding the problem of assimilation of the Czech population in the Kyiv region.⁴⁷

Organisation of scientific study on Ukrainian Czechs by the Cabinet of National Minorities of Ukraine

The most fruitful period in the scientific study of Ukrainian Czechs took place between 1929–1930, when a Cabinet for studying the national minorities of Ukraine at the Ethnographic Commission of the VUAN was created, following Rykhlik's initiative.⁴⁸ He became its head and only staff member.⁴⁹ He considered "Czech studies" or the research

⁴⁵ Nizhyn Department of the State Archives of Chernihiv Oblast, F.R. – 6121, inv. no. 1, f. 3301, p. 6.

⁴⁶ L. PAVLENKO, *Uchast E. Rihlika u rusi natsionalno-kulturnogo vidrodzhennya ukraïnskikh chehiv u 1920-h rr.*, pp. 100–102.

⁴⁷ Scientific Archive of the MT Rylsky Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, f. 7, cf. 6a/25; cf. 6a/3; cf. 6v/37; cf. 6v/38; cf. 6v/40; cf. 6g/43; cf. 6g/48a; cf. 6z/69; cf. 6z/71.

⁴⁸ *Programi y anketi Kabinetu natsmen*, Kyiv 1930.

⁴⁹ Nizhyn Department of the State Archives of Chernihiv Oblast, F.R. – 6121, inv. no. 1, f. 3301, p. 76.

of the Czech population of Ukraine as one of the structural units of the “National Minorities studies”, initiated and theoretically supported by the scholar.⁵⁰ In the summer of 1929, Y. Rykhlik made an expedition to Volhynia with the aim of establishing a correspondence network that would cooperate with the Cabinet for the study of Czech colonies in that region, thus attracting a large number of volunteer correspondents from the Czech intelligentsia, ethnographers, historians, workers of local educational institutions and authorities from Korosten, Shepetivka and Zhytomyr.⁵¹

At Rykhlik’s request, the assistants to local scientists in various regions collected and sent information to the Cabinet of National Minorities about their colonies. Among the submitted documents, special attention is paid to the local history essays of Kohout, Vodsed’álek, Křížánek, Martynovský, and Čermák.⁵² Although they were not scientists, the collected data is detailed, consistent, objective and can help to achieve an almost complete reconstruction of the life and atmosphere of Czech villages in Ukraine.

In addition, responding to the great interest of Czechoslovakian scholars in the historical and present issues of Czechs’ presence in Ukraine, Yevhen Rykhlik also established scientific connections with Polívka, Tichý, Jirásek, Auergan, Jacobson, and others.⁵³

During his short-term management of the Cabinet of National Minorities, the scientist founded the “Archive of Ukrainian Czechs”, which consisted of copies and originals of documents, programs, posters, announcements, handwritten “singer books” and more.⁵⁴ Yevhen Rykhlik personally collected a series of documentations named the “History of the Czech Press in Ukraine”, which included books, brochures, newspapers, magazines, and calendars (just over 100 items).⁵⁵

For developing Czech studies in Ukraine, the scientist curated a series of questionnaires, programs and instructions to gather information on Ukrainian national minorities, including the Czechs. Thus, in 1926, he compiled a special “Program for collecting information about Czech colonists in Ukraine” and a series of questionnaires, each of which was dedicated to a separate issue (“Hopping”, “Obzhynki” – the ritual of completing the harvest of bread, the holiday included rituals associated with the sheaf of dozhin, the ritual of “curling the beard”, dousing the reapers and a festive meal, “Song repertoire”, “Holiday entertainments” etc). Due to technical difficulties in printing in the Czech language, Yevgen Rykhlik was unable to publish some of these materials, so he prepared manuscript copies and sent them to the Czech colonies.

The success of the work of the Cabinet of National Minorities and development of its scientific archive largely depended on the contribution by representatives of Ukrainian national minorities; Rykhlik considered mass scale involvement and participation in his “National Minorities studies” work as one of the main principles behind the research.

At the end of 1930, the scientist managed to communicate with the most remote national settlements of the USSR. Among the cabinet’s correspondents was a vast range of people, including researchers from the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences or local history museums. In addition, during the initial stages of data collections for Ukrainian “National Minority studies”, the Cabinet of National Minorities could make use of its correspondent network, the Ethnographic Commission, which on 1st January 1930 amounted to approximately 2,000 contributors.⁵⁶

In the context of the development of “National Minorities’ Mapping and Statistics”, Rykhlik compiled a “List of Czech settlements of Volyn and Shepetivka districts”, “Statistical description of the national composition of Korosten region”, “National village councils in Volhynia”, “List and addresses of the Kyiv Czechs of former Russia in 1915”, a map of “Czechs of Ukraine” and other maps, charts, diagrams, lists and tables that contained information on quantitative indicators of the Czech population in Ukraine.⁵⁷

Having started the “National Minorities’ Library of Bibliography”, Yevhen Rykhlik created collections of newspaper clippings, such as “Soviet Czechs in the Foreign Press”, “Czech Nationals in the Soviet Press”, a card index of Czech bibliography, and a review of Czech bibliography.⁵⁸ In addition, the scientist gathered a collection of photographic material dedicated to the Czech colonists of Ukraine. About 50 photographs of Czech families from the villages of Visegrad, Kroshna Czeska, Vysoke and more were preserved.⁵⁹

Towards the start of 1931, Yevhen Rykhlik, Head of the Cabinet of National Minorities, was arrested, convicted, and imprisoned in one of Stalin’s Siberian Forced Labor Camps, from which he never returned⁶⁰. The Cabinet of National Minorities ceased to exist and its archive was transferred to the Ethnographic Commission of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Ukrainian Folklore of the USSR Academy of Sciences, which was founded in 1936 (now – Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folklore and Ethnology).⁶¹

On 18th October 1958, the National Minorities’ Fund 7 covered 1869–1931 and consisted of 89 preservation units. On 15th October 1930, the “Description of the Materials of

⁵⁰ DACHO, f.R-8840, inv. no. 3, f. 7753, pp. 271–272.

⁵¹ Nizhyn Department of the State Archives of Chernihiv Oblast, F.R. – 6121, op. 1, cf. 3301, ark. 78, 78 zv.; Institute of Manuscripts of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, f. 10, cf. 18706, p. 1.

⁵² *Z listiv do profesora Evgena Rihlika*, in: *Hronika – 2000*, issue 29–30, Kyiv 1999, p. 1.

⁵³ DACHO, f.R-8840, inv. no. 3, f. 7753, p. 39–40.

⁵⁴ Scientific Archive of the MT Rylsky Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, f. 7.

⁵⁵ Yevhen RYKHLIK, *Do organizatsiyi kabinetu viuchuvannya natsmeniv pri VUAN*, *Visti Vseukrayinskoyi Akademiyi nauk*, 1929, issue 3–4, pp. 86–87.

⁵⁶ *Zvit Etnohrafichno-fol'klornoyi komisiyi VUAN za rik 1929*, in: *Byuleten' Etnohrafichnoyi komisiyi Vseukrayinskoyi Akademiyi nauk*, 1930, No. 15, p. 22.

⁵⁷ Scientific Archive of the MT Rylsky Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, f. 7, cf. 6a/31.

⁵⁸ Scientific Archive of the MT Rylsky Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, f. 7, cf. 6k/85; cf. 1/19.

⁵⁹ Scientific Archive of the MT Rylsky Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, f. 7, cf. 6l/72–78.

⁶⁰ DACHO, F.R. – 8840, inv. no. 3, f. 7753, p. 2, 156.

⁶¹ *Putivnyk po osobovykh fondakh Arkhivnykh naukovykh fondiv rukopysiv ta fonozapysiv Instytutu mystetstvoznavstva, fol'klorystyky ta etnologiyi imeni M. T. Ryl's'koho*, Kyiv 2005, p. 4.

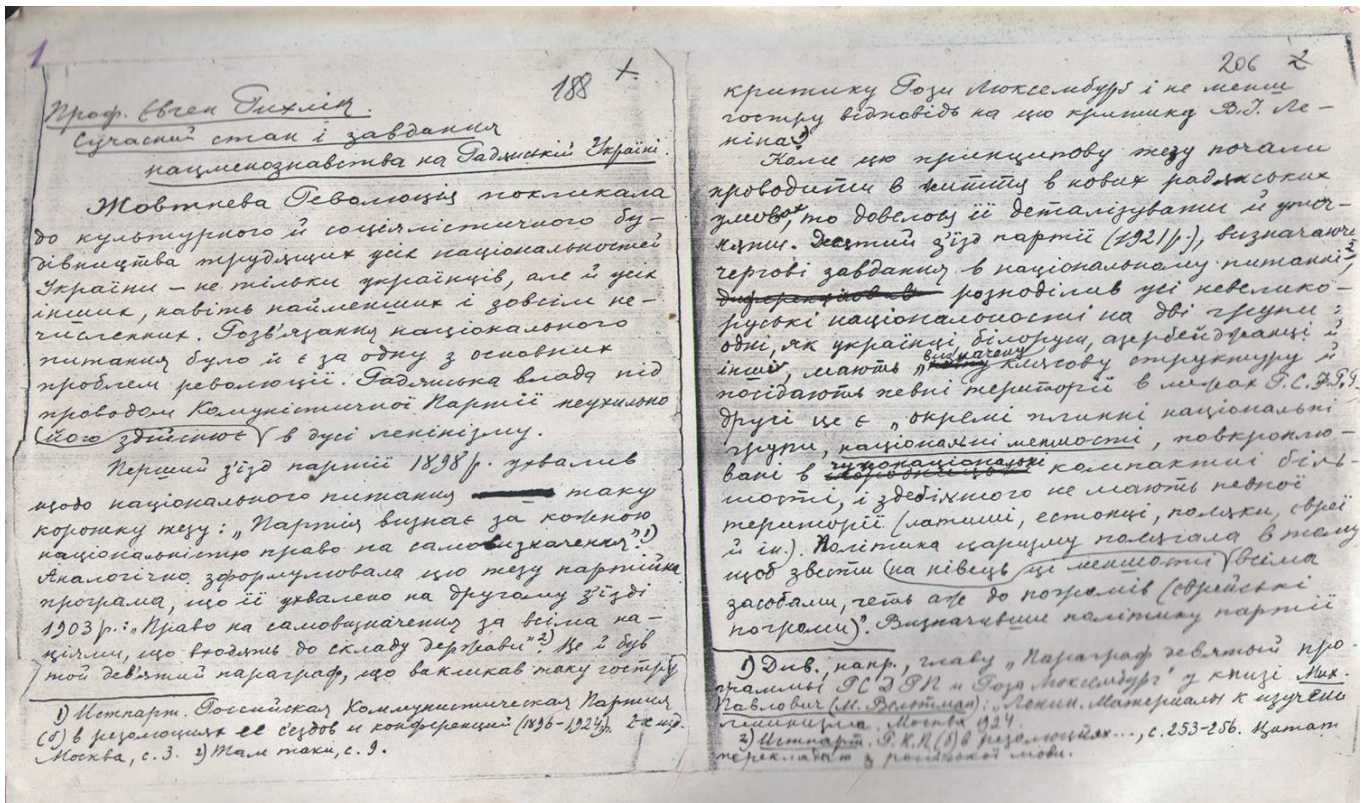


Fig. 7. Programmatic article from the Cabinet of National Minorities of Ukraine at the Ethnographic Commission of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, 'The Current Status and Tasks of National Studies in Soviet Ukraine'. Manuscript of Yevhen Rykhlik, 1930, State Archives of Chernihiv Oblast, R-8840 Foundation, inv. no. 3, f. 7753.

the Cabinet of Nationalists,” compiled by the acting head of the Cabinet of Nationalists, Professor Rykhlik, lists twelve departments, which included 142 cases. It is obvious that the archival materials collected by the Cabinet have been partially lost. Nonetheless, as the collected data presented many similarities, the archive descriptions from 1930 and 1958 are almost identical. However, at the time of the creation of the “short register of collections and materials” of this scientific archive, the Cabinet continued to receive new income from various government agencies and from individuals who were part of its correspondent network. Unfortunately, these never contributed to the archives of national minorities.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the archives. They testify to the level of development of Czech studies in the 1920s, to the degree of interest by the state and the members of the Czech minority in the study of the ethnic history of Ukraine. The Czech data in the scientific archive of the Cabinet of National Minorities of the Ethnographic Commission of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences is still insufficiently studied; it deserves to be included in scientific research and to be more comprehensively analysed.

The analysis of the program and planning documentation of the Cabinet of National Minorities of the Ethnographic Commission of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, developed by its Head Yevhen Rykhlik, gives grounds

to assertions about the extraordinary prospects of studying Ukrainian Czechs.

The research commenced by Rykhlik was aimed at developing into a detailed study of statistics, economics, social and political life, pedagogy, ethics and aesthetics, religious views, mental-psychological and linguistic-dialectical features and other aspects of the development of the Czech Diaspora in Ukraine. Yevhen Rykhlik created a National Minorities’ Library with a section on Czech books, and planned to develop training for Czech specialists at the National Science Postgraduate School.

Thus, the 1920s presented a period of extreme interest within Ukrainian historical science in the issues related to the Czech colonization of Ukraine. Enthusiasts from among Ukrainian scientists – philologists, ethnologists, historians, ethnographers, Czech intelligentsia, employees of administrative bodies, educational institutions, scientific institutions, public and cultural organizations – collected and elaborated unique data, which covered the peculiarities of the national identity of Ukrainian Czechs. This research is still scientifically relevant today and largely unexplored. Of particular importance for its development was the scientific contributions of the Head of the Cabinet for the study of National Minorities of Ukraine, Yevhen Rykhlik, who has been recognised in local modern historiography as the founder of “a separate scientific school of Czech studies”.⁶²

⁶² Oleg RAFALSKIY, *Natsionalni menshini Ukrayini u XX st.: Istoriografichniy naris*, Kyiv 2000, p. 446; Nataliya STAVITSKA, *Diyalnist organizatsiy ta ustanov Vseukrayinskoyi Akademiyi nauk z doslidzhennya istoriko-kulturnoyi spadshchiny natsionalnih menshin. 20–30 rr.*, Kyiv 1994, p. 72.