

TO THE THEORIES ABOUT TUTEISHASTS IN BELARUSIAN LITERARY HISTORY: BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

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Abstract: The formation of the cultural identity of individual nations did not follow the same pattern because the broad spectrum of events and stimuli that determine culture and identity ensures that cultural diversity is shaped not only by geographical, political, and social conditions but also by accepting these conditions and accepting oneself in these conditions. This aspect allows us to address the multi-layered cultural features of the Belarusian cultural complex based on literary texts reflecting the defining periods of the constitution of Belarusian individuality. The starting point is the phenomenon of the so-called *tuteishasts* (local affiliation), which appears in Belarusian literature (and culture in a broader sense) as an attitude guaranteeing a safe position between foreign ideologies and their influence. Existing and own interpretative findings are confronted with theories about the importance of ethnicity and the national identity of modern nations. We perceive self-identification as the specific essence of national identity. The awareness of belonging to a particular culture and accepting the environment's expectations is part of the group identity, a combination of personality and group. Its feature is the sharing of specific social and cultural characteristics. It is gradually being built, developed, and best identified in contact with foreign culture, which allows us to use literary texts as a basis for interpretative explanations of the foundations of national identity in the Belarusian context.

Keywords: Belarusian culture, cultural identity, *tuteishasts*

1. Introduction

Vasyl Bykav, in his essay *Rozhovory o Bielorusku (Conversations on Belarus, 2005)*, among others, wrote that the patriotism of a large nation would inevitably turn into chauvinism or imperialism, and the patriotism of small nations is typical of the focus on survival among other nations. The question of the survival of Belarusians *between East and West* is constantly being updated in many forms – in science, art, and journalism. However, older and newer publications show that the

individual processes leading to this state are often evaluated intuitively and purposefully. At the same time, their conceptual grasp and critical evaluation based on existing knowledge are absent. Speaking of Belarus, we are willing to accept the long-standing cultural struggle as a fact without trying to find objective information that we can interpret (albeit subjectively) to form an opinion – *ours and not that of others* – distorted by stereotypical images.

In stereotypes, Belarus can be described with a few questions: “Is it true that the Poles invented you? (...) Didn’t the Communists invent you? (...) Who invented you?”¹ (Vasiučenka 2005: 71). In the history of Belarusian literature, we find several examples of opposition cultural relations on the axis of *us – they* (not us, foreigners) – especially the delimitation of the so-called *tuteishiya* from other ethnic groups, especially from Russians and Poles. The roots of cultural tradition’s bipolarity and Belarusian cultural features’ bipolarity are related to geographical or linguistic affiliation and several aspects of social status. This topic is found in Belarusian literature of national revival and, for example, in the formation of postmodern Belarusian literature².

¹ “Je to pravda, že si vás vymysleli Poláci? (...) Copak vás nevymysleli komunisté? (...) A kdo vás vlastně vůbec vymyslel?”

² A unique position in the history of Belarusian literature and the cultural identification process was held by Janko Kupala (1882-1942), who, in his works, filled the concept of *tuteishasts* with content understandable to the masses. Kupala’s drama *Tuteishiya (The Locals, 1922)* tells about the roots of the Belarusian national character, the contradictory conditions, and the complexity of the soul of an ordinary man, one of many *tuteishiya* inhabitants, “about the journey from *tuteishiya* to nationhood”, when people tried to overcome their narrow-mindedness, petty bourgeoisie, closed-mindedness, and come to terms with themselves, becoming a nation. The *tuteishasts* of the heroes of Kupala’s drama take two forms: on the one hand, it is the extreme adaptability and “realness of soul” of Mikita Znosak, who can *bear everything*, and on the other hand, it is the simple village righteousness of Janko Zdołnikav, who *handles everything* in his way, albeit naively. The *tuteishasts* of Kupala’s heroes is also critically reassessed as an inability to act, passivity, and negatively perceived over-adaptability. The symbol of *tuteishasts* also appears in Kupala’s lyrics; the use of the term *tuteishiya* in the poem of the same name can be traced in the sense of determining social status and national belonging, but also as an expression of religious affiliation and the relationship of locals to their faith, and last but not least, language is referred to as *tuteishiya*. All of these features are characterised based on comparison to opposition to elements of foreign nationalities. Kupala forms the axiological system of Belarusians based on cultural-identifying elements such as national belonging, religion, language, and all these elements are characterized based on local belonging to a fluidly

We perceive self-identification as the specific essence of national identity. The awareness of belonging to a particular culture and accepting the environment's expectations is part of the group identity, which is a combination of personality and group (sharing specific social and cultural characteristics). It is built gradually, develops, and is best identified in contact with foreign culture. Even today, in the form of a cultural stereotype, the question of the position of the Belarusian language as a second literary language is spread and the image of the dictatorial president is constantly updated. The public is poorly informed about the country:

Belarus is today in a similar situation as described so aptly in his famous essay Milan Kundera concerning the countries of Central Europe after World War II – as if it did not exist, it is “absent” in European political and cultural thinking. One could almost say that if it were not for the Belarusian dictator and his excesses, we would not know about this country and its ten million inhabitants, who, after the enlargement of the European Union, became our neighbours, perhaps nothing at all.³ (Havel 2005:8),

which leads us to consider the need to uncover the essence of the theories of the cultural feature of *tuteishasts*. The aim of our considerations is to summarize the knowledge about the theory of *tuteishasts* in the existing research. At the same time, we focus our attention on the Central European interpretative field, suggesting the perspective of comparing these contexts, or the overlap of research to other literary contexts that reflect similar issues. Within the framework of the paper's conception, a theoretical method is used to reevaluate existing research, interpret the features of *tuteishasts* in these researches, and present a perspective on the reception of these features in other texts reflecting the cultural code.

delimited geographical area, the boundaries of which have changed based on historical, political, and social changes.

³ “Bělorusko je dnes tak v podobné situaci, jakou popsal tak výstižně ve svém známém eseji Milan Kundera ve vztahu k zemím střední Evropy po druhé světové válce – jako by neexistovalo, je “nepřítomné” v evropském politickém i kulturním myšlení. Skoro by se dalo říct, že nebyť běloruského diktátora a jeho výstřelků, nevěděli bychom o této zemi a jejích deseti milionech obyvatel, kteří se po rozšíření Evropské unie stali i našimi sousedy, snad vůbec nic.”

2. *Tuteishasts* as a cultural feature

The formation of the cultural identity of individual nations did not follow the same pattern because the broad spectrum of events and stimuli that determine culture and identity ensures that cultural diversity is shaped not only by geographical, political, and social conditions but also by accepting these conditions and accepting oneself in these conditions. For us, the starting point is the phenomenon of the so-called *tuteishasts* – “a mythical localness” which appears in Belarusian culture as a central (safe) attitude guaranteeing “protection” from foreign ideologies and their influence. Following this motif, we have come to texts known, but also those that cover the mask of secrecy or censorship⁴. The issue of literary opposition, *our – foreign* in self-identification efforts, thus gains a third degree – *local* (neither our nor foreign). The monitored opposition is subsequently extended to the

⁴ The symbol of *tuteishiya* belongs to the specifics of the Belarusian literature of the national revival. However, it does not disappear from Belarusian culture with Kupala, just as the transitional position between the Slavic East and West does not disappear. In addition to Kupala’s *Tuteishiya*, the text *Адвечны шлях* (1921, The Eternal Road) by Ihnat Abdziralovič played a significant role in the identification process of Belarusian nationality. It was republished in Belarus just in the free period in 1993 as a highly topical work, which brought the tradition of literary-philosophical weeping to Belarusian literature, but also a different view and explanation of national revivalist thinking and the possibility of the development of the nation compared to the contemporary “village” works. Because of naming the causes of the problems with the national consciousness of Belarusians, Abdziralovič’s work remained on the periphery of the interest of the representatives of Belarusian culture. In the text, Abdziralovič thematizes the Belarusian hesitation between East and West and cites several examples, including, for example, F. Skaryna, thus declaring the long tradition of this bipolar thinking, as it is already connected with the first Belarusian intellectuals. Compared to Kupala, Abdziralovič went further in his East and West cultural-identifying characteristics. A direct link to Kupala’s work and Abdziralovič’s essay is represented by the association of young writers *Tuteishiya*, which was founded in response to the need to intellectualize the Russified Belarusian society at the end of 20th century, but also as a reaction to the awareness of cultural belonging to the national literature, whose texts are the result of linguistic practice and the source of the ideological base of the Belarusian culture. The ideological basis of the association was expressed in the Manifesto of the *tuteishiya* (1987), which, however, was not officially published. Scholars who have delved deeper into the conception of the Manifesto have recalled its ideological connection with Abdziralovič. (Read more about a comparison of Kupala - Abdziralovič and the activities of the *Tuteishiya* association in the article Slivková 2022).

relationship of general national symbolism to authorial (subjectively interpreted) symbolism.

The search for the forms of the *tuteishasts* as a cultural feature between East and West was based on cultural-historical and literary interpretations of selected works of Belarusian literature with an emphasis on the depiction of cultural self-identification, as well as identification with the cultural environment and cultural boundaries. The result is the identification of other cultural contexts, which are recorded in the form of national stereotypes, historical, geographical, and geopolitical boundaries, and other similarities and differences in neighbouring cultural areas. Literary texts, the causes of their origin, and their functions co-create the image of national culture. They are evidence of the stratification of social phenomena leading to the interpretation of cultural specificities. Understanding of nation and nationality are initially articulated not in terms of ideology or politics, but in terms of cultural artefacts and symbols. Moreover, it has already been proven that the so-called problematic history of literature is a productive methodological approach to the examination of literary-historical material, which can provide answers to many other questions of contemporary literary thinking (Taneski 2021:33). The historical experience of the individual reflected in the experience of the community initiates changes in the understanding of specific elements of culture. It is similar to the effort to create non-traditional features of national identity and their image in literary works, the function of which is not only appellative but also provocative and polemical. These functions “replace” coping with this “problematic”, e.g., attempts to define the position of Belarusian literature between the Slavic East and West, which is cyclically repeated in the assessment of Belarusian literature⁵.

It reflects the country’s geopolitical status, functioning in multinational units that have long corrected the linguistic or religious question of the nation. It reveals the multilayer and multidirectional nature of the cultural history of Belarus. According to Škvarna (2004),

⁵ In the Belarusian literature, a national canon with patriotic overtones, whose central idea is the service of the nation and the centre of attention are important personalities – classics J. Kupala, J. Kolas, M. Bahdanovič in the first place, and which is also transferred to other and further literary periods – U. Karatkevič, I. Melež, V. Bykav, A. Razanav (20th century) to the present I. Babkov, E. Vežnavec, A. Brava, A. Bacharevič, etc. The question of language – use or non-use of the Belarusian language is one of the most stable motifs in the history of Belarusian literature and is one of the most frequent symbols.

the set of national symbols includes various objects, persons, events, and phenomena that are symptomatic and identifying for a given nation. The degree of importance, attractiveness, and frequency of their use varied, as did the means of spreading and cultivating them. They could also be supported and hampered by socio-political conditions, and they could find their image in art or take a public form, such as meetings, events, and demonstrations. In the case of nations formed in the conditions of absent independent statehood, symbols were created more complicated, and their literary image, as well as its interpretation, also seem to be a more demanding process. The typology and attention to such identification of symbolic elements and their interconnection were aptly summarized by Ivan Novik (2021: 93)⁶

Intellectual historians – to whom I am counting – have their peculiar guilty pleasure: to see in the past peculiar “rhymes” that, despite the linear syntax of causal development, combine characters and events that have no connection and are scattered in centuries or space,

thus he supported considerations on the possible adaptation of interpretations in particular historical periods, but at the same time he is emphasizing the stability of symbolic elements in the historical memory of the community.

2.1. Theories about *tuteishasts*

Based on a sociological survey conducted in August 2016 by the *Centre for European Transformation*,⁷ attitudes were published calling on the Belarusian population to choose between *Western and Eastern* identification. When asked whether Belarusian culture is closer to Russian or European (meaning Western), 73.7% of respondents answered that it is closer to Russian culture. 7.4% of respondents associated it with European culture, and 17.8% claimed that Belarusian culture *is unique* and cannot be associated with either option. The Belarusian nation is considered independent by 71.4% of respondents, 10% had a problem with the question, and 5% categorically disagreed with this opinion. Those who said that the nation does not *yet* exist were

⁶ “Intelektuální historici – k nimž se počítám – mají svou zvláštní guilty pleasure: spatřovat v minulosti svérázne „rýmy“, které navzdory lineární syntaxi kauzálního vývoje spojují do jednoho duchovního rejstříku postavy a události, jež nemají žádnou souvislost a jsou rozptýlené ve stoletích nebo v prostoru.”

⁷ The results of the survey were published in an article on tut.by online: <https://news.tut.by/society/537324.html>

further asked what it lacks to call itself a nation – 63.9% of respondents answered that *everything*, and 12.7% of respondents stressed that economic independence is lacking. In the next block, respondents were offered the opportunity to identify themselves with different *social groups* (e.g., Belarusians, locals, Orthodox, etc.). Almost 67% of respondents identified with Belarusians often, and 17.4% only sometimes. Practically never felt as Belarusians, 2% of respondents. As many as 53% identified with *locals* (my town, my village) often and 26.6% sometimes. Based on these results, four types of identification were determined – East Slavic, local, universal, and unidentified/indeterminate. *Localness*⁸ connects people who are rooted in place. According to tut.by, the specific features of these people include a greater trust in the East than in the West. Most people (up to 86%) identified with localness in the Hrodna region, while the least number of people identified with localness in the Mohilev region – 10.5%. Multicultural, and thus universally self-identified, is predominantly the Belarusian metropolis of Minsk.

The question of localness exists in multiple contexts, whether in national literatures or interdisciplinary research. Radoslav Passia (2014) speaks of so-called *moving geography*, which results in the mixing elements of different cultures, mainly in border areas. Writing about the cultural specificities of eastern Slovakia, he identifies local identity as

(...) a meeting point and a place of the encounter and adoption of different cultural influences in the broadest sense of the word. It mixes westward and eastward-oriented populations, ethnicities, religions, and political interests (Passia 2014:7)⁹.

A similar scheme can be applied to characterizing the Belarusian area, whether in its historical form, e.g., in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or even within its current borders. The oscillation between East and West manifests itself in several directions, while in the cultural identification process, it takes precisely the form of *tuteishasts*, rooted in linguistic awareness but also in literary reflection. Simplistically, it can be said that it is a derivative of the word *mym* (*here*) and is applied as an adjective referring to people, language, culture, etc.

⁸ It can be identified with the observed concept of *tuteishasts*.

⁹ “(...) miesto stretu a preberania rôznych kultúrnych vplyvov v najširšom zmysle slova. Mieša sa obyvateľstvo orientované na západ aj na východ, tiež etniká, náboženstvá a politické záujmy”.

According to Kapranova (2020), the spiritual richness of the Belarusian nation was formed in the context of the East Slavic mentality at the crossroads of Western and Eastern culture. Among the most distinctive features of the self-identification of Belarusians is their connection with their native land, which also organically entered the process of national consciousness. According to Aleňkova (2017), the features of Belarusian culture include moderation, self-irony, Christianity, and reserve towards change. She comments more cautiously on the linguistic issue because the Belarusian language went through the codification process relatively late compared to other European languages and consequently was under Soviet influence for 70 years, in which Russian was not only the language of communication but also a symbol of Sovietness. This is also why the current identifying features of Belarusian nationality do not include ethnicity or language but culture in the broadest sense. She also emphasizes the modern influence of so-called hybrid identities, which can be individual based on the different experiential complexes of an individual, including belonging to two cultures, but also at the nation's level. For example, the cosmopolitan identity of the world citizen is a frequent phenomenon. *Tuteishasts* Aleňkova (2017:42), defines it as

a peculiar form of identity, characterising the attachment of Belarusians to their “small motherland”, “native land”, to their local culture. The *tuteishasts* complex is assessed contradictorily, from the cause of national tragedy to a form of cultural resistance.¹⁰

In 1995 in the magazine *Kultura (Culture)*, Rychor Hrudnicki¹¹ stated:

The *tuteishasts* of a Belarusian is a tacit self-identification, a peculiar coordinate system that determines the form of connection between Belarusians and the world. In this coordinate system, a Belarusian does not exist without the world, and the world does not find its name without a Belarusian. This coordinate network is a space created by Belarusians and created by Belarusians. Through this

¹⁰ “своеобразная форма идентичности, характеризующая привязанность белоруса к „малой родине”, „родному куту”, к локальной культуре. Комплекс тутэйшасці оценивается противоречиво – от причины национальной трагедии до формы культурного сопротивления.”

¹¹ Quoted from the text by Zmicr Padbiarecky from the section *Cytaty minulaha* (Quotes from the past), available: online: <https://www.svaboda.org/a/797419.html>

“subjectivization”, the objective space of life acquires a soul, a living aspiration, and through it, the Belarusian rises above every day, creating the heavenly from the earthly on earth.¹²

Thus, according to Hrudnicki, *tuteishasts* is not only a local belonging but also a kind of connection of Belarusians with the world, their subjective interpretation of the world, i.e., it takes on the contours of a worldview element in Belarusian self-identification, expressing the notion of an ideal coexistence of being.

Valer Bulhakav (1998, see Peršaj 2012) explains that *tuteishasts* can be seen as a transitional (middle) stage in the gradual cultural transformation along the axis *Litvin* (inhabitant of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) – *Tuteishiya* – Belarusians, i.e., a period when there were no more Litvin, but there were no more Belarusians either. According to contemporary sources, *tuteishasts* is evaluated from two sides, e.g., in Janko Kupala, it is “вялікае нішто” (big fat nothing) in the sense that this neutral (non-conflicting) attitude does not help the development of the nation, but Kanstancyja Skirmut, on the contrary, speaks of *tuteishasts* in a positive sense as a local patriotism – “связь з роднай зямлёй, гэта патрыятызм” (connection with the native land, that is patriotism). Ales Smaľančuk notes that the concept of *krajovasc* evolved from *tuteishasts*, which were associated in the noble milieu with the idea of independence of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. And “*krajovasc*¹³ and *tuteishasts* were, in their essence, special cancellers of “Lithuanianness”: each with its own status and defining “sign” – noble and peasant, respectively.”

Thus, Smaľančuk sees the difference between *tuteishasts* and *krajovasc* in social status, but identification with locality is the basis of

¹² “Тутэйшасць” беларуса – гэта маўклівая самаідэнтыфікацыя, своеасаблівая сістэма каардынат, якая вызначае форму злучнасці беларуса і свету. У гэтай каардынатнай сістэме беларус не існуе без свету, а свет не знаходзіць свойго наймення без беларуса. Гэтая каардынатная сетка ёсць прасторай, якую стварае беларус і якая стварае беларуса. Праз гэтую „суб’ектывацыю” аб’ектыўная прастора бытавання набывае душу, жывое памкненне, і праз яе ж беларус узнімаецца над побытавым, будзённым, ствараючы нябеснае з зямнога на зямлі.”

¹³ “Краёвасць і тутэйшасць былі ў сваёй істоце адмысловымі адменнікамі “літоўскасці”: кожная са сваім станавым “знакам” – шляхецкім і сялянскім адпаведна.” For details about *krajovasc* see Ales Smaľančuk – *Krajovasc o belaruskaj i litovskaj historyi 1905 – 1940*. online: https://portalus.ru/modules/belarus/print.php?subaction=showfull&id=1045747648&archive=refcul1126090284&start_from=&ucat=4&

both concepts. Similar attitudes are preserved in the ethnographic and linguistic research of Javchim Karski, who fixed the mode of cultural identification as the answer to the question *Who are you?* The common people answered this question a *Russian* if they were not a Catholic; if they were a Catholic, they answered a *Pole*, but sometimes they also sometimes called their native land Lithuania or answered that they were a *tuteishiya* – “local, of course, contrasting himself with those who speak Great Russian, as immigrants from the western region” (Karskij 1992: 29).¹⁴ Based on these characteristics, one of the characteristics of the *tuteishasts*, along with their religion and social status, was the use of a language other than Russian or a modified language, as the case may be. In contemporary texts, e.g., in the newspaper *Litwa*, which was published in the early 20th century, the editor Miačyslav Davojna-Syŭvestrovič reacted to efforts to Belarussianise the newspaper by saying that *tuteishiya* speakers of “на-просты” (simply) did not consider themselves to be Belarusians, but rather Litvins.¹⁵

Inna Kalita (2010) looks at *tuteishasts* as a psychological subtext of the emergence of a linguistic mix – *trasianka*. It is based on the opinion of V. Kavalenka (1989), who writes in the preface to Kupala’s *Tuteishiya* (*The Locals*) about the main feature of *tuteishasts*, expressed in the feeling of helplessness, “I do not know what to do”. To this, she adds the opinion of Piatro Vasiučenka that in the case of *tuteishasts*, it is a social grief or a syndrome of national immunodeficiency. She finds the opinion of culturologist Julia Čarňavska more acceptable, according to whom it is about the impossibility of identifying with the state due to historic conditions. She speaks of so-called bi-psychologism – a double standard of linguistic and axiological thinking (Kalita, 2010: 122). Čarňavska (2010) highlights the connection to the land and its cultivation and the distrust that stems from this towards the lords and anyone who does not cultivate the land, e.g., the townspeople. Kalita stresses that *tuteishasts* is not only a defensive stance, but it is also a state of the border, a borderness/transitivity, i.e., the ability to receive and sell information in different directions on both sides of the border. Among the features of the *tuteishasts* Kalita, according to Čarňavska, are tolerance and polyconfessionality. Kalita defines *tuteishasts* as a contradictory

¹⁴ “мясцовы, канечне процістаўляючы сябе таму, хто гаворыць па-вялікаруску, як прыхадноў заходнім краі”

¹⁵ Available online: <https://issuu.com/dziejaslou/docs/dz-67/274> according to Historyja filasofskaj i hramadska-palityčnaj dumki Belarusi, Tom 1, Minsk, 2008, NAN Belarusi, Instytut filasofii.

phenomenon combining reconciliation and defiance at the same time as the psychological subtext of the emergence of the *trasiianka*:

Trasiianka is not a language, it is a trans-communication channel, a “channel of tolerance”, which serves to absorb and exchange foreign and domestic elements, it is a way to preserve one’s endosphere through conflict-free resistance. (Kalita, 2010: 125)¹⁶

Aleksandr Peršaj (2012) speaks of the absent homogeneity of Belarusians, the reasons for which are visible in the historical context and led Belarusians in the period of the 18th – 20th centuries to a strong sense of awareness of “отчуждения и различения между “нами” и “ими”” (alienation and differentiation between “us” and “them”) and further between Catholics and Orthodox, between Belarusians, Poles, and Russians. At the same time, this attitude makes it possible to see the multiplicity of the opposition of friends – enemies, ours – not ours, ours – foreign and therefore understands *tuteishasts* as not an individual characteristic but as a way of socio-cultural organization of space in these complex conditions (p. 254), emphasizing the plural “they” in contrast to the Belarusian “we”. *Tuteishasts* is an essential element for Belarusian national discourse in conceptualizing and interpreting Belarusian mentality, national identity, the crisis of national revival, etc. However, it also reminds us that the Belarusian national revivalist intelligentsia attaches more importance to this concept than the Belarusian population. Peršaj views *tuteishasts* as a possibility of social mobility, i.e., by not choosing one of the parties (national, religious, linguistic), the population was allowed to move between social statuses – e.g., to get another job, etc. because, in that period of time “in that system of social relations, nationality was not just an “ethnonym”, a “name” – it regulated the right to access certain social resources. As soon as a person could be “named” Belarusian, Jew, Pole, Russian, etc., he or she became “visible” in the system of social stratification.” The polylingualism of the *tuteishiya* reasons similarly. Only the Belarusian national project – the revivalist efforts of the early 20th century, tried to present Belarusians as an independent nation, opposing the existing structure of “half-Russians” or “defective Poles”.

¹⁶ “Трасянка – не язык, это транскомуникационный канал, „канал толерантности”, служащий для поглощения и взаимообмена чужих и своих элементов, это способ сохранять свою эндосферу посредством бесконфликтного сопротивления”

Peršaj sees the silence and passivity of the *tuteishiya* as a form of cultural resistance that allowed this social group to remain “unaligned” and mobile; he speaks of the tactics of cultural resistance. The *tuteishasts* ignored the politics of national identification that gripped Europe in the modernist period because it allowed for differentiation, enabled change, expressed local belonging and patriotism, was uncontrollable, allowed for social mobility, and represented an alternative character of Belarusian national identity. The depoliticized “here” is explained by Peršaj as a possible way of expressing autonomy. In the history of Belarusian cultural transformation, he considers the more important question to be not who they were but how they dealt with the conditions. Moreover, at the same time, like Passia, he stresses the connection of localness with the geographical territory (p. 268), which is always a unique composition/mix of historical, socio-cultural, and political conditions, which in turn determines the arrangement of things in a particular region.

Aleh Latyšonak (2012) attempts to demythicize the *tuteishasts* by developing its idea in various forms, relying on contemporary sources such as *Dziennik Poznański* of 1887, which refers to the Belarusian nation as good and peaceful, but also lazy and non-conflicted, i.e., one that any reasonable government could use for its ends. He also refers to the Belarusian ethnographer Adam Bahdanovič (1895), whose opinion is similar to that of Javchim Karski; when you ask them who they are, they answer – *tuteishiya*. Both views are united by the idea that they are a sign of Slavic culture. The idea of the *tuteishiya* in the interpretation of the writer Francišek Bahuševič is close to the “double consciousness” (Belarusian/Lithuanian and Polish at the same time), i.e., to the later extended form of the so-called *krajovasc* (from the idea of “Kraj” – Grand Duchy of Lithuania). In the sense of the union of the three nationalities, it would be possible to understand *krajovasc* as an idealized form of *tuteishasts*. The common element of the individual characteristics of the *tuteishasts* is that it is primarily about Belarusian-speaking peasants. According to both Smaľančuk and Peršaj, the *tuteishiya* expressed their attitude towards belonging by choosing not to choose. According to these views, Latyšonak (2012: 227) summarizes

The designation “*tuteishiya*” originally meant only the inability of Belarusian peasants to name their nationality. The very term “*tuteishiya*” is apparently of Polish origin and probably was not characteristic of the population not only as a whole but even at least only of Western Belarus. (...) Fyodor Klimčuk, among the authors known to me, took the most extensive look at the existential essence of “*tuteishasts*”,

writing to me that the self-definition of people as local/*tuteishiya* means only that they and their ancestors were born here, and *tuteishiya* people prevail in the whole world!¹⁷

At the same time, he does not perceive *tuteishasts* as a specific character trait, adding that localness or connection to the environment (land, family, ancestors) is a standard part of human identity.

Michal Anempadystav, in the lectures of the so-called *Łatučaha universitetu* (Flying University, 2015¹⁸), among others, spoke about the ways of forming the Belarusian nation. In this lecture, he highlighted the functioning of the Belarusian nationality within the framework of two cultural models. One model is a natural evolution based on the continuous transmission of cultural traits from generation to generation, albeit without awareness of the origin. The second model is post-Soviet and consists of a mix of Soviet and Russian ideology with elements of Belarusian culture, which appears to be very unstable and, if threatened, breaks down into several identities, such as Russki mir, Orthodoxy, etc. These models coexist and thus create two ideas of the Belarusian nation that are incompatible or only marginally compatible. The Kupala perception of the *tuteishasts* is being abandoned in the 21st century, and an interpretation based on regional patriotism is being adopted. In this context, the positives of such patriotism are discussed, for example, by Łavon Tarasevič, who compares it to similar activities in Finland, Germany, or France. At the same time, he adds that *tuteishasts* can be perceived as a negative feature if it is a nation-building aspect. Anempadystav draws attention to the constant need for self-identification, which is also actualized in modern times as a reaction to

¹⁷“(…) тутэйшасць на злome XIX і XX стагоддзяў характарызаваала не толькі беларускіх, але і польскіх сялян, яна з часам стала польскім „крэсовым” міфам адсутнасці нацыянальнай свядомасці ў беларусаў.” (At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, *tuteishasts* characterized not only Belarusian, but also Polish peasants; over time, it became a Polish “kresy (borderlands)” myth of the lack of national consciousness among Belarusians.) (Latyšonak 2012: 228)

“акрэсленне „тутэйшы” першапачаткова азначала толькі няздольнасць беларускіх сялян назваць сваю нацыянальнасць. Сам тэрмін „тутэйшы, відаць, польскага паходжання і, верагодна, не быў уласцівы насельніцтву не толькі цэлай, але і хоць бы толькі Заходняй Беларусі. (...) Фёдар Клімчук найшырэй з вядомых мне аўтараў глянуў на экзістэнцыяльную сутнасць „тутэйшасці”, пішучы мне, што самаакрэсленне людзей як мясцовых/тутэйшых абазначае толькі тое, што яны і іх продкі тут нарадзіліся, і тутэйшыя пераважаюць ва ўсім свеце!”

¹⁸ Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTZVI6rdFOU>

unfavourable conditions, giving as an example the regional “Novorussian” or “Luhansk patriotism” shaping in Ukraine.¹⁹

Historically, the Polish environment, which was influenced by the Belarusian one, significantly impacted the formation of the Belarusian nationality, but in the end, all cultural manifestations were eventually labelled as Polish. Local patriotism later emerged within this model as so-called Litvinism, which the author considers Belarusians’ first self-identification. As an example of the development of this perception, he cites the works of writers U. Syrakom’la or V. Karatynsky, who developed the concept of the “younger brothers” of Polish culture; he is also critical of F. Bahuševič (originally Polish), who, according to him, looked down on Belarusian culture, perceiving it as weak and neglected. Anempadystav sees a real awareness of Belarusianness only in the so-called *Nasha Niva* period, but in subsequent historical conditions, the administration of the state changes hands until finally, the society becomes Sovietized. Perhaps the most interesting part of the author’s reflection is the identification of the so-called dominants of Belarusian culture (fundamental values), which “keep the culture”. Among the pillars of Belarusian culture, Anempadystav includes also *tuteishasts*, which he explains as a deep-rooted way of colonization of the Belarusian territories by Slavic tribes and which, in turn, is related to the natural forest cover, in which there is no notion of distance and remoteness²⁰. Here we seem to find an overlap between the views presented so far – moving away from Kupala’s assessment of *tuteishasts* as undecided and passive but emphasising the importance of pacifist, democratic and centralist positions. This model is also consistent with a typology of perceptions of stereotypical traits of nations, in which the individual tends to evaluate his or her group in an overwhelmingly positive way in auto stereotypes.

The writer Siarhej Zakonnikav in his reflection *Razdvoenasc* (Bifurcation, 2016)²¹, on the contrary, thematizes *tuteishasts* as a

¹⁹ According to Jana Zapofskaj, available online: <https://www.racyja.com/sumezhza/belaruski-tryyalog-u-krynkh>

²⁰ “Тутэйшасць, зацыкленасць на сабе вынікае з закрытай прасторы – далей свайго двара не глянеш. Гэта праблема для паўстання нацыі, бо „тутэйшыя” не могуць ўявіць тэрыторыю сваёй краіны і свайго народа.” (*Tuteishasts* loop up in a closed space – you can’t look beyond your yard. This is a problem for the nation’s rise because the *tuteishiya* cannot imagine the territory of their country and their people.) online <http://journalby.com/news/belarus-dzve-roznyya-kulturnyya-madeli-498>

²¹ Available online <https://sn-plus.com/2016/08/10/razdvoenascz>

weakness because although to be *tuteishiya* means to be neither Polish nor Russian, it does not mean to be Belarusian either. According to the author, this attitude may be historically acceptable in revolutionary or war times because then *tuteishasts* symbolized a protected status, but in the 21st century, it is not. He assesses it as alibism. He gives examples of Kupala's *Tuteishiya* heroes – the adaptable Mikita Znosak “with a real soul” and the prototypical Belarusian Janko Zdołnikav, who characterized the Belarusian situation as follows „overturning from nothing to nothing”. Neither of these heroes in their pure form, according to Zakonnikav, has a place in contemporary Belarusian identity.

Philosopher Ales Ancipenka considers the long-lasting presence of the *tuteishasts* in Belarusian culture as a kind of relapse reminding Belarusians of the need to clarify their cultural identity, i.e., the *tuteishasts* is

a relapse that reminds us that we must finally decide as a nation, who we are, with whom and where we are going, what is our choice – to the West, to the East, or stay here? *Tuteishasts* always reminds us that we have not yet made the final choice”, (...) “*tuteishasts* and language are the first foundations of Belarusian nationalism.²²

He deals with the question of cultural-identifying elements in a rather radical way by stating that alongside language, it is *tuteishasts* language as a historical experience that should be the basis of Belarusian national consciousness.

3. Conclusion

A broad-spectrum view of the concept of *tuteishasts* leads to clearly identifiable elements of connection to land and place, while there is also agreement on the understanding of the social status of the *tuteishasts* – the peasant who primarily cultivated the land (Bulhakav, Kapranova, Aleŭkova, Čarŭavska, Kalita, Latyšonak, Peršaj). The difference is visible in the views on the core of social stratification. When

²² “рэцыдывам, які нагадвае нам, што мы ўрэшце мусім вызначыцца як нацыя, хто мы, з кім і куды ідзем, які наш выбар – на Захад, на Ўсход, ці застаемся тут? Тутэйшасць заўсёды нагадвае нам, што мы яшчэ не зрабілі да канца выбару”, (...) “тутэйшасць і мова – першыя падваліны беларускага нацыяналізму.” Available online:

<http://www.svaboda.org/content/transcript/1328704.html>

one evaluates the *tuteishiya* of earlier periods, one speaks precisely of the exclusion of others, including Russians; even Karski writes about any language except Russian; in the current sociological research, the room is declared as an identity close to the Eastern (post-Soviet, Russian). More or less constant is also the view that accentuates the impossibility of identifying with the state structure, which has translated into a “comfortable” position in which there is no need to choose sides. Speaking of sides, mixing cultural elements in the border environment in a broader sense, i.e., not only within the state border but also seems to be an appropriate definition. The mixing takes different forms on the chronological axis, combining national elements and registering penetration within social stratification. Blending is also characteristic of the plasticity of religion (Anempadystav) and the emergence of the modified linguistic phenomenon of *trasianka* (Kalita). The Kupala *tuteishasts* phenomenon is rather critically evaluated as an overcome phenomenon, which, however, as mentioned above, may also be related to the degree of auto stereotyping, when culture bearers tend to have a positive self-assessment. Interesting suggestions include those speaking of *tuteishasts* as a form of cultural autonomy and resistance (the option not to choose) or as a form of dual or alternative identity.

Looking in more detail, the concept is expanded by linking *tuteishasts* with other cultural features – language, literature, and art – but also with identification within the historical and modern Belarus population’s religious affiliation and social stratification. The most common interpretation we encountered concerning *tuteishasts* was that it is related to the impossibility of identification with a particular state due to the unstable Belarusian historical statehood, resulting in the so-called bi-psychologism as a notion of a double standard of linguistic and axiological thinking. The connection with the land and its cultivation and the distrust stemming from that place towards the lords and anyone who does not cultivate the land is also strongly emphasized. It follows that the linguistic competence of peasants, or people who live in areas where the land is traditionally cultivated, i.e., villagers, is also a feature of *tuteishasts*. The definition of the *tuteishasts* language is also varied – either it is the language of the peasants, or it is a language whose basis is to distinguish oneself from Russians or Poles, but not by choosing another foreign language, but by modifying one’s language. There is also a definition of “other than Russian”, a “trans-communication channel or tolerance channel”, which is supported by the existence of *trasianka* as a modified language mix that tolerantly accepts the choice of language elements used based on the personal preference of the language user.

The *tuteishasts* also has the contours of the worldview element of the Belarusians, as it is related to a certain Belarusian-centrism, to their subjective perception of the world from the place they are in, whereby in contrast to the Belarusian “we” is a multiple and diverse “they”. Therefore, too, a possible interpretation of the *tuteishasts* is not passivity but a form of cultural resistance that allowed them to remain unclassified and thus mobile within the country’s social structure. *Tuteishasts* ignored the politics of national identification that gripped Europe in the modernist period because it allowed for distinction and change, expressed local belonging and patriotism, was uncontrollable, allowed for social mobility, and represented an alternative character of Belarusian national identity.

In existing research, it appears that *tuteishasts* is a vital element for the Belarusian national discourse in conceptualising and interpreting the Belarusian mentality, national identity, the crisis of national revival, etc. It can be assessed as a complex cause of national tragedy but equally as a manifestation of strength and cultural resistance.

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К ТЕОРИЯМ О „ТУТЕЙШАСЦІ“ В ИСТОРИИ БЕЛОРУССКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ: МЕЖДУ ВОСТОКОМ И ЗАПАДОМ

В истории белорусской литературы можно найти множество примеров оппозиционных культурных отношений на оси *мы – они* (не мы, чужие) – особенно обособление так называемых *tuteishyh* от остальных этнических групп, прежде всего от русских и поляков. Корни биполярности культурной традиции и белорусских культурных признаков связаны не только с географической или языковой принадлежностью, но также со многими аспектами социального статуса. *tuteishasts* является для белорусского национального дискурса важным элементом концептуализации и интерпретации белорусского менталитета, национальной идентичности, кризиса национального возрождения и т.д. Ее можно оценивать как комплекс, как причину национальной трагедии, но в то же время, как проявление силы и культурного сопротивления. Анализированные теории и примеры из белорусской культуры указывают на положение культурной идентичности на перекрестке западной и восточной культуры. Интерпретация этих признаков и их частое и продолжительное присутствие в литературных текстах показывает, что эти явления в процессе национальной идентификации нельзя маргинализировать, поскольку они являются важной и стабильной частью представлений белорусов о самих себе и о других.

Ключавыя словы: Белорусская культура, культурная идентичность, *tuteishasts*