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LEGACY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TARAS SHEVCHENKO'S CREATIONS FOR PUBLIC AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY OF MODERN UKRAINE

Background. *The paper examines the legacy and significance of Taras Shevchenko in Ukraine's public and cultural diplomacy. In particular, it focuses on reception of his creations through translation of his works in countries of the Global South, in particular, the subcontinent of South Asia from the late 50's till the end of the 20th century and explores the decoloniality in the writings. Archival texts were analyzed to evaluate the reception of Shevchenko in South Asia during the past century. Portrayal of Ukraine and its identity through poems like "Rozryta mohyla", "Kavkaz" as well as "I zhyvym, I mertvym..." were studied. Shevchenko's ideas were analyzed using the framework of postcolonial theory, especially the ideas of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak. The historical evolution of reception of Shevchenko within Ukraine was studied, in particular, with reference to the revolutions in Ukraine, the on-going war and aggression of Russia, through the active participation of citizens.*

Methods. *The paper uses case study, comparative methods, research and content analysis of historical (archival) and literary texts. Theoretical framework for the paper are interdisciplinary approaches, intertextuality, cultural translation and postcolonial theories.*

Results. *The author shows that Shevchenko was perceived as an anti-colonial hero in the eyes of the leading literary figures and proponents of liberation struggle in many countries of the world. Cultural translation helps us understand the activities undertaken by scholars, who had no knowledge of Ukrainian, but used English or Russian as a medium. Stereotypes of the Soviet authorities did not have any or little impact on these intellectuals. The author also shows the poetic genesis of postcolonial theory in Shevchenko's works, long before the leading theorists proposed their ideas in the second half of the twentieth century. The paper elucidates several activities successfully undertaken by state and non-state institutions*

to promote Ukraine through Shevchenko, which also shows the shaping of Ukraine's identity, dissociation from the Russian cultural space. All these provide the most viable background for building a postcolonial narrative in favor of Ukraine.

Conclusions. *It concludes that Shevchenko's works provide irrefutable historical and political evidence to develop a perfect platform for public diplomacy of Ukraine, something existentially relevant under today's circumstances.*

Keywords: *Taras Shevchenko, decoloniality, postcolonial theory, public diplomacy, Global South, South Asia, Ukraine's foreign policy, cultural diplomacy*

Background

The iconic figure of Taras Shevchenko, his larger-than-life image is central to Ukraine's history of endless foreign occupations, invasions, and national efforts to throw off oppression. Rising from the most neglected and downtrodden class of serfdom in Tsarist Russia, Taras Shevchenko became not only the national bard of Ukraine, but also the father of the modern Ukrainian language. In folk, popular and academic perception of Ukrainian literature, Shevchenko's role is similar to that of Homer in the Hellas, Virgil in the Roman Empire, or Adam Mickiewicz in Polish and Alexander Pushkin in Russian literature. Eminent literary critic and doyen of Ukrainian studies Professor George Grabowicz states that this 'transcendent identity' was a 'product of ...the process of reception; they are, in short, made, not born' (Grabowicz, 2014, p. 421–439) and that the poets do take an active role in shaping this reception through their writings.

During his peak of fame, Shevchenko was highly appreciated as a poet of Ukrainian literature by his Russian and Ukrainian contemporaries; his creations remarkably differed from the secondary "malorossiysky" or "Little Russia's dialect" style of Ukrainian (*kotliarevshchyna* or the burlesque style of Kotljarevs'kyij) (Grabowicz, 2014), charting an independent path for his mother language. While bidding final goodbye to the poet, M. K. Chaliy, the first biographer of Shevchenko said, "the muse of our Kobzar lifted the people in his own eyes" and that "it won the right of literary citizenship for us Ukrainians, in the family of Slavic nations"

(Zaicev, 1955, p. 392). It is in this sense that the present paper analyzes how the translations of Taras Shevchenko's works in other languages are key to understanding decoloniality of Ukraine and thus may strengthen Ukraine's agency and public diplomacy. Given the present circumstances, this is extremely and existentially relevant for Ukraine (Levchenko, 2025, p. 192).

The ground for the above thesis is that no other European literature has a comparable protest against serfdom. No other genius poet sprung from the serfs and exposed the brutality of serfdom with such powerful impact as Shevchenko. "In no other country did so many people die in the struggle for freedom under the banner of a poet's slogans of national liberation, nowhere was the name of a poet, reviled by the occupying power, ever surrounded with such a halo of mystical holiness as in Ukraine, and nowhere else did industrial workers declare a political strike in honour of a national poet" (Bojko, 1955, p. 77).

This liberative essence lies at the root of his life's struggles and constitutes the core of his creations, which was subject to interpretations by different political forces and regimes. At present, the issue of decoloniality of Shevchenko's writings are important for both revisiting past stereotypes and throwing new light on the acute issues of Ukraine today. This paper will draw on historical analysis of facts, case study of reception of Shevchenko by South Asian intellectuals, as well as comparative analysis, applying postcolonial theories.

Shevchenko's Struggle against Tyranny and Empire. From the dark abyss of serfdom, wrote Taras Shevchenko in his diary, he entered the enchanting halls of the Academy where his work won acclaim (Chaliy, 1882). Despite his success in studies, cultural life, self-education and sophisticated lifestyle, his concern for Ukraine, the sufferings of people and his family, who are not free, did not wane.

His first resilience was demonstrated in his new passion for writing verses in Ukrainian. He wrote of this period spent in Bryulov's studio: "Knowing that painting was my future profession, my bread, and having such a great teacher as Bryulov, I should have delved deep into the world of art. Instead, I wrote verses, for which no one paid me, for them I lost my freedom. Yet, in spite of the ban

on my pen, I continued to write stealthily. This is my vocation and nothing else" (Shchodennyk, notes of 1 July, 1857, p. 22).

In many of his works, Shevchenko directly condemns the colonial policy of the Russian Empire towards Ukraine. This is especially evident in the satirical poem "Son (Everyone Has His Own Destiny)" written in 1844. He bitterly attacked the Imperial family, ridiculed the Court, thus enraging the wrath of Tsar Nicholas I. In Kyiv during this period, revolutionary ideas of peasant enlightenment, political liberalization of the empire was propagated by a clandestine Pan-Slavic group called St. Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood. Shevchenko was encouraged by them. By February the Brotherhood was suppressed and in April 1847, Shevchenko and his friends were arrested and sent to St. Petersburg. His main indictments were "the outrageous and to the highest degree insolent" poems and the Three Years album was confiscated. On May 30 he was sentenced to serve as an ordinary soldier in the bare Orenburg steppe, Orsk fort, near the Urals. On his sentence file, Tsar Nicholas I wrote in his own hand, "under the strictest surveillance without the right to write or paint" (Litopys, 1947).

In the poem "Kavkaz" "Caucasus", Shevchenko celebrated the struggle of the freedom loving peoples inhabiting the Caucasus mountains and contrasting them with the Tsarist Imperial army and the clerical camouflage of the Orthodox church of the Russian society. The poet criticizes imperial expansion and violence directed not only against Ukrainians, but also against other conquered peoples of the Caucasus. Here, Shevchenko expresses solidarity with the colonized peoples and exposes the imperial rhetoric of the "civilizing mission". He sent this poem to the Polish revolutionary and poet Adam Mickiewicz, a follower of Mazzini. It showed his interest in the cause of freedom not only in Ukraine but everywhere. Shevchenko actively addresses the history of Ukraine, in particular the period of Cossack statehood. In the poems "Haydamaki", "Ivan Pidkova", "Tarasova Night" he recreates the struggle of Ukrainians against external domination.

These texts have a decolonial character, for the following reasons:

- they return Ukrainians their own historical role and agency;
- form the foundations of national memory;
- resist the imperial historical narratives.

Protection of the Ukrainian language and culture and the image of the colonized people was also another major area of decoloniality. Shevchenko wrote mainly in Ukrainian, which in itself was an act of cultural resistance in the imperial system. His collection "Kobzar" became a symbol of the cultural emancipation of Ukrainians. The use of the folk language, folklore motifs, and images of peasant life created an alternative cultural space that opposed imperial cultural hegemony.

In many poems, Shevchenko depicts the tragedy of the enslaved people. For example, in the poem "Rozryta Mohyla" (The Open Grave), he speaks of the destruction of Ukraine's historical memory by the colonial authorities. At the same time, the poet not only describes suffering, but also calls for the awakening of national consciousness.

Decoloniality in the work of Taras Shevchenko is one of the key characteristics of his poetic and artistic worldview. But he was much ahead of his time. His poetry contains elements that are now considered key to decolonial discourse:

- critique of imperial rule;
- restoration of historical memory;
- affirmation of the language and culture of the colonized people;
- solidarity with other oppressed peoples.

His works were formed in the conditions of the colonial situation of Ukraine as part of the Russian Empire, when Ukrainian culture, language and political subjectivity were systematically suppressed. In this context, Shevchenko stands out as one of the first intellectuals who created a powerful anti-colonial discourse in Ukrainian literature. In the contemporary context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Shevchenko's work takes on a new meaning, as his texts continue to be a source of national identity and resistance. His works became the foundation of Ukrainian anti-colonial thought and continues to influence contemporary intellectual discussions.

Shevchenko as a Symbol of Decolonial Thinking: Comparisons with Postcolonial Theorists. Although Taras Shevchenko lived in the 19th century and did not use the modern terminology of postcolonialism, many of his ideas are remarkably similar to the concepts formulated in the 20th century by such leading postcolonial thinkers, including Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak. Comparing their approaches allows us to understand the decolonial potential of Shevchenko's work more deeply.

Frantz Fanon, in his works *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*, analyzes the psychology of colonial rule and the struggle of oppressed peoples against colonialism (Fanon, 1952). Similar motifs can be found in the work of Taras Shevchenko. In particular, he exposed the violence of the empire. In the poem "Kavkaz" (Caucasus), Shevchenko shows the cruelty of the imperial expansion of the Russian Empire towards the conquered peoples. To recall, one of his first compositions after being freed was the poem "The Neophytes", a daring comparison of the Tsar with Nero. Fanon also emphasizes that the colonial system is based on violence. Likewise, for Shevchenko the arrest was a heavier ordeal than before, away from Ukraine and condemned to live among soldiers in the remotest area of Eastern Russia. Endless drills, absolute deprivation of any creative work told upon his health, but his spirit was resilient. He noted in his diary, "There is something very strange. All this unspeakable grief, every kind of degradation and harshness passed as if without touching me... I am that same myself as ten years ago. Not a single aspect of the inner me was changed" (Shchodennyk, 1861, Notes of 20 June, 1857, p. 20). But despite his valiant spirit, Shevchenko returned broken in body and heart. Loneliness weighed heavily upon him. He thought of getting married and settling in his own hut somewhere near Kyiv, on the banks of the Dnipro. In his diary, he wrote: "What a terrible curse this loneliness is! It will finally push me out of this world" (Zajcev, 1955, p. 365). He sketched architectural designs of this dream hut. In 1859 he came to Kaniv to personally choose the plot of land, but then the local Poles-landowners did not want him as a neighbor, provoked Shevchenko for "seditious" talk through which he was charged with blasphemy and arrested again. Thus, the chain of violence was perpetuated.

Solidarity between oppressed peoples is also demonstrated in this same poem for the peoples of the Caucasus. Fanon speaks of the common struggle of colonized peoples against imperial systems and directly justifies revolutionary resistance. Shevchenko does not formulate a political theory, but his poetry calls for awakening and

struggle. In his Testament, he calls for his compatriots to break their shackles and rise up.

After exile, Shevchenko's hatred of both Tsarism and serfdom became equal. In 1858, an Afro-American actor, Ira Aldridge, who left the US for UK, came to St. Petersburg and played there: Shevchenko had always been deeply influenced by Shakespeare; Aldridge was the first Black actor to play roles, assigned usually to white men. When Aldridge played 'Othello' in English Shevchenko was present at the performance. During an interval the painter Mikeshin looked into the dressing-room and saw "the actor sitting in an armchair, and Shevchenko, with tears streaming from his eyes, expressing his admiration" (Bojko, Swoboda, 1955, p. 94). The two became friends, sharing similar experiences of harshness of fate, slavery and serfdom respectively.

Shevchenko continued championing the causes of justice and liberty without fear of retaliation. He signed a statement defending the civil rights of the Jews, and he consorted openly with the leading revolutionary democrats of the day in Russian empire, including Chernyshevsky who helped publish a new edition of Kobzar, which was allowed in 1860, provided none of the post-exile poems were included in it.

He contributed much to the emancipation reform by influencing liberal public opinion apart from external factors like peasant rebellions, defeat in Crimean war and other institutional crises. On 19 February, a few days before his demise, his friend M. Chernenko came to see him, and he was eager to know if the Emancipation Manifesto annulling serfdom is passed. When he heard it was signed by the Tsar, the order awaited its publication till Sunday, 5 March, so that people do not celebrate in pubs but pray in the churches. Shevchenko at least was relieved that his siblings will be free, but then uttered some harsh words for the ruling gentry in Russia (Zajcev 1955, p. 381). Five days later, he died on March 10.

The subtleties of imperial discourse in Shevchenko's works resemble the approaches proposed by Edward Said in the book *Orientalism*, where he shows how empires create an image of the "Other" to justify colonial rule (Said, 1977). Shevchenko's work also reveals the mechanisms of imperial discourse. In the poem "Son"

(The Dream), Shevchenko satirically depicts the imperial center of power – St. Petersburg – as a place of political tyranny and hypocrisy. With regard to the deconstruction of imperial narrative, Said shows that empires create cultural myths to legitimize power. Shevchenko destroys the myth of the "noble empire" by demonstrating the suffering of conquered peoples.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her famous article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" explores the problem of whether oppressed groups can be heard in colonial discourse (Chakravorty Spivak, 1992). Shevchenko's work can be seen as an attempt to give voice to those whom the imperial system deprived of the opportunity to speak. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak raises the critical issue of representation of the oppressed and she highlights language as a tool of decolonization. In many of Shevchenko's poems, the voice of the peasantry is heard, a social group that had almost no representation in imperial culture. Shevchenko wrote in Ukrainian, elevating it to the level of a literary language, which corresponds to Spivak's idea of the need to return the voice to the marginalized. Shevchenko also paid great attention to the education of children and wrote a book of Ukrainian alphabets for Sunday schools and had it approved by the censors (Zajcev, 1955, p. 367).

Decolonization of History is something that Ukraine attempts today after the revival of its independence in 1991. Both Shevchenko and postcolonial theorists emphasize the importance of rethinking history. In the poems "Haydamaki" and "Ivan Pidkova", Shevchenko restores the historical memory of Ukrainians, contrasting it with imperial historical narratives. Similar ideas about "rewriting history" are present in many postcolonial studies.

Despite numerous parallels, there are important differences between Shevchenko and postcolonial theorists. Shevchenko wrote in the 19th century, long before the formation of an academic theory of postcolonialism, which emerged in the second half of the 20th century. Secondly, their forms of expression differ. Shevchenko, being a poet, expressed his ideas in poetry, not in philosophical treatises. Last but not the least is the national dimension. For Shevchenko, the problem of the Ukrainian nation is central, while postcolonial theorists often analyze global imperial structures and are

juxtaposed to the phenomenon of the "West". As Oksana Slipushko mentions that Shevchenko's ideas are his innate understanding of Ukraine expressed through his poetic imagery (Slipushko, 2025).

Anti-imperial essence of his writings are proven by the fact that, Shevchenko composed a total of 237 poems, out of which only 28 were published in the Russian Empire. Six others were published in the Austrian Empire during his lifetime. His anti-Tsarist and anti-imperial verses to a large extent are directed towards the Ukrainian identity, tearing it away from superstitious clericalism and all forms of deceit in the form of institutionalized state religion (which Tsarism aligned with). At the same time, his poems "The Caucasus" or "My Friendly Epistle to My Dead, Living, and Unborn Compatriots in Ukraine and Outside Ukraine" (both included in this volume) start with sayings of Biblical prophets. His verses also call for compassion for Ukrainian young women, who were ostracized after falling into love traps of Moscow soldiers (Moskals) who flirted and then left them.

Discussing the fact that Mickiewicz, Pushkin and Shevchenko all wrote poetry, Rori Finnin points out the role of lyrical poetry in shaping national identity or communities is greater than novels (Finnin, 2011, p. 29–55). It is considered by many scholars that Ukrainian nationalism derives itself from Shevchenko's poetry as much as Polish national idea derives from the poetry of Mickiewicz, both of them were imprisoned and tortured by Tsarist regime (Glinski, 2024).

Taras Shevchenko's work contains many elements that today can be called decolonial. His criticism of empire, defense of the oppressed, and restoration of historical memory resonate with the theories of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Thus, Shevchenko can be seen as one of the early thinkers of anti-colonial resistance, whose work predated many ideas of modern postcolonial theory.

The All Purpose Shevchenko. At the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century, thanks to Ukrainian cultural figures like, Panteylemon Kulish, Ivan Franko, Myhailo Hrushevsky, a cult of Taras Shevchenko, revered as the "spiritual father of the nation, unique, incomparable and unattainable" was born. In the following years, there ensued a "fight for Shevchenko", with many lines of

political interpretation of the phenomenon of Taras Shevchenko, often juxtaposed and inconsistent, at times mutually exclusive, as explained by eminent literary critic Ivan Dziuba (Dziuba, 2011, p. 7) and also by writer Yurii Andrukhovych: Shevchenko could be communist (the image of the "big, free, new family" from the "Testament" was characterized as a "union of the family of peoples of the Soviet Union"), nationalist (presented as a poetic vision of the future unified Ukrainian state, prevalent among the Ukrainian diaspora in the West), Christian (in Shevchenko's faith towards personalist Protestantism), atheist (Shevchenko's sharp rejection of everything related to the orthodox church and clerics), dissident and anti-imperialist (an example of the individual struggle of a lonely idealist against the Tsarist regime), anarchist (Shevchenko's limitless intolerance to conventions, class, customs, rituals etc.) (Andrukhovych, 2007).

As a result, what followed was that every social class, every political force could not exist without referring to Shevchenko: "As a pious person refers to the Holy Scripture, so all forces referred to Shevchenko". Therefore, it is a paradox that the Ukrainian poet is alternately and simultaneously a republican and a monarchist, a hetman, a socialist, a radical and a traditionalist, a nationalist and an internationalist (Z zhyttia..., 1961).

Appropriation of the Shevchenko myth by various political forces reached a critical point on the eve of the poet's centenary celebrations in 1914, when, to prevent turning the anniversary into a political manifestation N. Maklakov, the Minister of Internal Affairs, banned any celebrations a month before the event to prevent politicization. However, the ban was a catalyst, which politicized the issue, since previously such celebrations were shaped more by tradition than by political choice. Celebrations took place on local levels in many places in the Russian empire as well as in West Ukraine, then under Austro-Hungarian empire.

Pro-monarchic forces understood the need to honor Kobzar due to his contributions to the development of Ukrainian culture, but also feared that public honoring of Shevchenko can turn into political protest. People regarded the poet as a symbolic father, apostle of truth, and prophet of a better destiny. Messages sent to the editorial of "Prosvita" in Katerynoslav (today Dnipro) on the centennial show

that peasants perceived "their own" Shevchenko, the glorious Father of Ukraine, the singer of people's grief or Ukraine's misfortunes, they wrote messages in Ukrainian. Both the technical intelligentsia as well as the authorities recognized him as a genius through the myth of a humanist writer and singer of civic ideals, calling him a folk poet, founder of Ukrainian folk poetry, but never identified him as their own hero. Most of their messages were in Russian (Silvanovych, 2024, p. 108–132). After 1914 Shevchenko was turned into a Little Russian figure, the Ukrainian component was gradually eroded through the discourse of Slavic unity and the fight against serfdom.

By emphasizing the anti-imperial ideas of Shevchenko fighting Tsarism, the Soviet rule was successful in paving the way for winning international recognition. His dramatic transformation from serfdom to stardom in poetry made him the favorite of most of the authors and intellectuals of the postcolonial countries of the world, something which Pushkin and other contemporaries were unable to achieve. This reception of Shevchenko started during the Soviet era in the late 50's after the death of Stalin, during the thaw, that corresponded to the era of decolonization, the literary movement of the 1960's, similar to the movement of the 1980's perestroika and glasnost.

Reception by intellectuals of the Indian subcontinent. The name of Taras Shevchenko is not new to the Indian subcontinent. Visits by Sir Sahib Singh Sokhey in 1953, famous Urdu writer Ali Sardar Jaffri in 1955 and Sohan Singh Josh, Punjabi writer, in 1958, Prabodh Kumar Sanyal in September 1959 to the National Shevchenko Museum (then called the State Shevchenko Museum) in Kyiv bear the first testimonies in the guest book. First translator of Shevchenko into Punjabi, Sohan Singh Josh in particular, wrote: "What a great man he [Shevchenko] was! How fearless and resilient was he!" (Velyky Kobzar, 1966, p. 41).

Since then, Shevchenko was read and studied primarily through English and later through Russian translations, for those who knew Russian. Translations and interpretations of his texts started appearing in many Indian languages, again, using the medium of Russian and English. Permeated with Ukrainian folk culture and tradition of the wandering musicians (kobzars), Shevchenko's works

were easily understood, because Indian civilization had its age-old tradition of oral narratives in poetry forms that were sung in villages in different parts of India, from Kerala's Kathakali to Bengal's "baul", "kaviyal" and "charan" traditions.

Ukrainian Indologist Vitaliy Furnika, scholar of Tamil and Sinhala literature, who translated Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural into Ukrainian, in his book elaborates the thought that Shevchenko's travels into Central Asia and meeting various nationalities of people, and his realistic depiction of their downtrodden status in the Russian empire through paintings and writings was well received by Indian authors (Furnika, 1989, p. 22–27). He highlights the decolonial aspect, being in intense personal communication with all Indian writers. Furnika also regretted the fact that Shevchenko's paintings on eastern motifs are never known to Indians (Furnika, 1989, p. 28). In 2014, I personally tried to organize such an exhibition in India, using reproductions, similar to that of Tagore's paintings made in Ukraine in 2011, but due to the political situation, the Russian occupation of Crimea and the war in Donbas, these events had to be postponed.

Intellectual cooperation was active under conditions of Khrushchev's thaw of the 1960's and relative loosening of censorship. Tagore centenary was widely celebrated in the USSR, his works were published in 1957 after the gap of thirty years from 1925. Consequently, in 1964, during the 150th birth anniversary of Taras Shevchenko, Indian intellectuals were able to come closer to his works (Furnika, 1989).

While working in the archives, excerpts of an essay in Bengali by the great Prof. Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay, who attended these celebrations, describing his trip in detail were found by the author of this paper. (Archive, A-1008, 1964) He was in Ukraine from 27 May till 3 June, 1964, the celebrations were co-organized by UNESCO and was attended by 63 foreign delegates and almost 400 delegates from the Soviet republics. Earlier, he visited Ukraine in 1958 and also was in Kyiv for 5-6 days. During his 1964 visit, famous Ukrainian writer Mykola Bazhan (who translated some poems of Tagore), Prof. A. A. Biletskiy, Kyiv University's professor of Linguistics, Greek and Sanskrit languages, Alla Volik, professor

of English and Maria Sukhacheva, Representative of Ukraine's Council of Ministers were all there to meet him at the Kyiv railway station. He stayed in Hotel Dnipro for three days, and thereafter left by steamer on the Dnipro river to Kanev, the place of Shevchenko's tomb. He also visited Shevchenkove (earlier Kyrylivka, the birthplace of the poet) and Moryntsi, where Taras spent his childhood. He narrates that on 29 May, 1964, he spoke at the 150th birth anniversary conference in Kyiv and that he left three first translations of "Testament" (Zapovit) into Bengali by Aruna Halder, Bishwajit Roy and Nirendranath Ray. He finished his speech with a short homage to Shevchenko composed by him in classical Sanskrit.

The huge collection of Shevchenko translations into several Indian languages is impressive. In many cases original works of authors on Shevchenko or retelling of Shevchenko's works were found. In Kannada language, Dr. Buddanna Hingamire made an interesting contribution by interpreting the famous poem "Naimichka" (The Maid), which he named, "Kelasadake" and compared it with Karna Kunti Sangbad of Indian mythology. He renamed the characters into Indian names, Trokhim (Vikram), Nastya (Nishtha), Hanna (Harina), Marco (Markandeya or Marku). (Hingamire, 1986) Eminent Punjabi writer Kartar Singh Duggal in an essay on Shevchenko wrote that "Russian empire in the 19th century was the same as colonial India in the 19th century and Shevchenko's works are important to understand how positive changes took place" (Vsesvit, 1986, p. 164).

Tamil literature can boast of a huge number of translations of Shevchenko authored by N. Mohamed Sharif (first translator of the Diaries of Shevchenko into Tamil), K. Ramasubramanian (pen name Kara), T. Kovendan, I. Sathyaraja and K. Ganesh. N. Mohamed Sharif compared the greatness of Shevchenko to that of Subramaniam Bharathi in the journal Thamarai in 1985 (Vsesvit, 1986, p. 164; Thamarai (Lotus), July 1985). The names of Ramvilas Sharma, Madanlal Madhu, Dr. Sarojini Pritam relates to Hindi translations. Dr. Sarojini Pritam also wrote her own poem dedicated to Taras Shevchenko in English. Sohan Singh Josh's Punjabi translations of Shevchenko were the first, followed by Gurbaksh Singh and H. S. Hundal. Karanjit Singh, the famous Punjabi writer, who translated "The Testament",

stressed the role of Taras in the liberation of Ukrainians in Russian empire (Thamarai (Lotus), July, 1985).

"The Testament", hailed as the Ukrainian Marseillaise, has also been translated into Bengali by Arun Som, into Gujarati by Atul Savani, into Malayalam by Perumpuzha Gopalakrishnan, into Nepali by Krishna Prakash Shrestha, into Tamil by Dandapani Jayakantana, into Telugu by Venkateswara Rao, and into Urdu by Manzar Salim. Very recently, eminent Kashmiri poetess and singer, Santosh Shah Nadan has translated Shevchenko's "The Testament" into Kashmiri, making it the first ever translation of any Ukrainian literature into Kashmiri. The author of this paper was actively involved in this process by providing her with a Hindi translation and explanation (Ghosh, 2025, p. 31).

Bengali authors were one of the first to have interpreted Shevchenko. Inspired by Prof. Sunit Kumar Chattopadhyay's speech in 1965 of the 150th Shevchenko anniversary, Manmatha Ray, the great playwright, wrote a play on the life of Shevchenko within a span of 21 days from 16 June to 6 July, 1965 (A-1006, Ray, 1965). Replete with vivid details and dramatism, it was published on 15 August of the same year. I very much hope that it could be played in Bengali theaters again in the future.

It is pertinent to mention here the biographical essay on Taras Shevchenko by Dharani Goswami, published in 1979 (A-1013-Goswami, 1979), which illuminates the Bengali reader about the poet. Manmatha Ray wrote a foreword to this book dated 28 June 1979, where he underscored the significance of the book by Dharani Goswami and compared Shevchenko with the Charan kabi (minstrel) Mukunda Das and revolutionary poet like Nazrul Islam in Bengali culture. He wrote that not many will read his play on Shevchenko, but the book will reach a wider audience (A-1013-Goswami, 1979). A review by Gour Goswami, published in the magazine "Saptaho" (Week) in 1985 states that the great significance of this publication is in the role of Shevchenko as an inspiration for anti-colonial struggle (A-1012, Saptaho, Goswami, 1985). This volume also includes the translation of the poem "Kateryna" which was, in Gour Goswami's words, "transcreated" (A-1012, Saptaho, Goswami, 1985) (edited and rhymed) by poet Tarun Sanyal.

Another major translation of Shevchenko's poems was done by Golam Kuddus, *Swapno o onyanyo kobita* (Dream and other poems), published in 1972 (Kuddus, 1972). It consisted of 52 pages and contained an autobiography of the poet, and sixteen other poems. His Foreword to this book is entitled "The Dream Came True", referring to the poem "Dream" of Shevchenko. In this Foreword, Golam Kuddus wrote that the importance of Shevchenko's poem *Dream* (*Swapno*) is the same as that of "Sonar tori" (The Golden Boat) of Rabindranath Tagore or the poem "Bidrohi" (The Rebel) in the collection "Agnibina" of Nazrul Islam (Kuddus, 1972).

The too canonical, infallible image of Shevchenko can be misleading for scholars and the real Shevchenko may be found in the book by George Grabowicz "The Shevchenko we do not know" (Grabowicz, 2000). In this context, Shevchenko was deeply spiritual, but without religious fanaticism. Another striking aspect of his character was his respect for women. Although having so many broken relationships and refusals in personal life, Shevchenko still did not lose respect for women, understood the pain of oppressed women, championed their cause through his works. Poems like *Kateryna*, *Naimichka* (The Maid), *Knyazhna* (the Princess) and many other creations, criticized the patriarchal paradigm, and challenged the clerical and religious orthodoxy against women. Shevchenko became the voice of these unsung heroines: a rarity not only in the then Ukrainian literature, but also in the literature of Tsarist Russia. In the words of Ivan Franko, the famous Ukrainian poet and writer: "I do not know another poet in who was so consistent, so ardent, so conscious a defender of woman to a full and human life" (Franko, 1925, 9).

Shevchenko in Ukraine's public life and cultural diplomacy. The Ukrainian government always had a consistent policy of promoting and honoring Shevchenko, the most prestigious National Award bears the name of the poet, many institutions bearing his name enjoy the status of being national. However, modern reception of Shevchenko within Ukraine has evolved and has been freed from the Soviet stereotypes as well as opened doors for non-state initiatives. Several of these initiatives are discussed below and they

provide food for thought to further develop the Shevchenko theme in Ukraine's strategy of public and cultural diplomacy.

The first among them is a Museum Complex "The Code of a Nation: Ukraine's Cultural Heritage and Identity" not far from the city of Kyiv is conceptualized and built by Viktor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine during 2005–2010 on his private land (NV, 2025). Among many other buildings, the Museum includes "the Shevchenko Hut", constructed according to the exact drawings of the poet, who yearned all his life for a home and hearth. Overall, just eight months before his death, Shevchenko made five drawings and two sketches. Victor Yushchenko, himself a good painter and art connoisseur, supervised the construction and took care that all designs made by Shevchenko were fulfilled, architecturally and aesthetically. This is a place where Shevchenko researchers can visit and know more about Shevchenko's unfulfilled dreams. This indeed is a unique example of paying homage to the Great Kobzar by the first couple of the country, giving the minimum – a small and cozy home – that he always wanted (Ghosh, 2025, p. 36).

Another incident took place in 2014, the bicentennial year of Shevchenko, when hundreds of protesters launched the Euromaidan in the center of Kyiv (Granchak, 2014). During January 2014, Serhiy Proskurnia, the famous theater and art director, launched his unique Shevchenko bicentennial project, modernizing Shevchenko without mass scale commercial branding. He made videos of people of various nationalities reciting Shevchenko in Ukrainian or in their own languages (Nash Shevchenko, 2014). The author of this paper recited the poem "The Fate". Serhii Nigoyan, an ethnic Armenian, Ukrainian activist from the city of Dnipro, recited fragment of "The Caucasus", standing on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) of Kyiv with the mass movement picketing tents as backdrop. Some days later he was among the first of the protesters to have been shot dead (Memory Book, 2014).

People's Artiste of Ukraine, the nonagenarian veteran actress Halyna Yablonska extended the horizon beyond Ukraine and launched the international project "Shevchenko unites people" (Yablonska et al. 2019). This is another source of inspiration that

brings hundreds of people from all over the world every year to participate in a contest of recitation and play of Shevchenko's poetry and songs in Ukrainian and other languages. In 2018–2019, nine-year-old Aandrita Mahanand from Kolkata made a stunning performance, playing Taras Shevchenko, reciting "The Testament" in Ukrainian and Bengali and won Grand Prix in this contest (YouTube, 2018).

Despite the occupation of Crimea and the proxy war in Donbas and then the full-scale war in February 2022, Shevchenko continues to be the source of inspiration for youth activists in Ukraine (Granchak, 2014). With the nickname "Shey", Shevchenko is depicted in various forms of graffiti, anime and cartoons: as a yogi, a batman, a rock musician, footballer, as an activist wearing a hoodie, even as a *Shiva dancing in Nataraja* pose. Art college students drew Shevchenko in the style of Durer, Van Gogh, Klimt, Dali, Picasso, Warhol and others. A metro station in Kyiv had all these images as an exhibition during 2014 (Ghosh, 2025, p. 38). Shevchenko's ideas is celebrated in daily life in Ukraine, not through programmatic speeches and protocol events. His verses are proverbial in Ukrainian. Soldiers take a pocket Kobzar with them to the front. Some take a portrait. Statues of Shevchenko, vandalized by shelling and missile attacks since February 24, 2022 are symbols of Ukrainian resistance and resilience (Ghosh, 2025, p. 38).

The above examples illustrate the everlasting role of Shevchenko in shaping the narrative about Ukraine and the Ukrainians in this world. To understand Shevchenko, it is necessary to read his poetry, because Shevchenko defends himself through his words (Dziuba, 2011, p. 6). It therefore is the best defense for Ukraine in its cultural war of appropriation and domination by Russia. Precisely for this reason, Shevchenko has a leading place in Ukraine's public and cultural diplomacy.

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ЗНАЧЕННЯ СПАДЩИНИ ТВОРЧОСТІ ТАРАСА ШЕВЧЕНКА ДЛЯ ПУБЛІЧНОЇ ТА КУЛЬТУРНОЇ ДИПЛОМАТІЇ СУЧАСНОЇ УКРАЇНИ

Вступ. У статті досліджується спадщина Тараса Шевченка та її значення для публічної та культурної дипломатії України. Насамперед увага приділяється сприйняттю його творів через переклади в країнах Глобального Півдня, зокрема на субконтиненті Південної Азії з кінця 50-х років до кінця 20 століття. Предметом дослідження також є деколоніальність у творах. Архівні тексти були проаналізовані для оцінки сприйняття Шевченка в Південній Азії протягом другої половини минулого століття. Було досліджено Шевченкове бачення України та її ідентичності через такі вірші, як "Розрита могила", "Кавказ", а також "І мертвим, і живим...". Ідеї Шевченка проаналізовані через призму постколоніальної теорії, зокрема концепцій Франца Феннона, Едварда Саїда та Гаятрі Чакраворті-Співак. Було досліджено історичну еволюцію щодо сприйняття Шевченка усередині України, зокрема після революції на Майдані 2013–2014 рр. та війни, що триває, й агресії Росії. Вивчена активна участь громадян у різних проєктах державних та недержавних секторів.

Методи. У статті використано кейс-стаді, порівняльні методи, контент-аналіз історичних (архівних) та літературних текстів. Теоретичною основою статті є міждисциплінарні підходи, інтертекстуальність, культурний переклад та постколоніальні теорії.

Результати. Автор показує, що Шевченко сприймався саме як антиколоніальний герой в очах провідних літературних діячів та прихильників визвольної боротьби в багатьох країнах світу. Теорія культурного перекладу допомагає нам зрозуміти діяльність науковців, які не знали української мови, але використовували англійську чи російську як засіб розуміння й вираження. Стереотипи радянської влади про Шевченка не мали жодного або мали незначний вплив на цих інтелектуалів. Автор також показує поетичний генезис постколоніальної теорії у творах Шевченка задовго до того, як провідні теоретики запропонували свої ідеї у другій половині ХХ століття. У статті названо декілька заходів, успішно здійснених державними та недержавними інституціями для просування України через постать та ідеї Шевченка. Це також показує формування української ідентичності, остаточне відокремлення від російського культурного простору. Усе це забезпечує найбільш життєздатне підґрунтя для побудови постколоніального нарративу на користь України.

Висновки. *Твори Шевченка надають беззаперечні історичні та політичні докази для розробки ідеальної платформи публічної дипломатії України, що є екзистенційно актуальним за сучасних обставин.*

Ключові слова: *Тарас Шевченко, деколоніальність, постколоніальна теорія, публічна дипломатія, Глобальний Південь, Південна Азія, зовнішня політика України, культурна дипломатія.*

Автор заявляє про відсутність конфлікту інтересів. Спонсори не брали участі в розробленні дослідження; у зборі, аналізі чи інтерпретації даних; у написанні рукопису; в рішенні про публікацію результатів.

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