

Examining the Harakternik Phenomenon: A Criminological Analysis

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Abstract

This article delves into the intriguing phenomenon of “Harakternik” within Ukrainian culture, specifically its significant role in the southern Ukrainian tradition, which later became criminal. Harakternik, often shrouded in mystique, holds a unique place alongside other renowned facets like Cossacks, Chumaks, and Haydamaks. Drawing parallels between the southern Ukrainian tradition and the Italian ‘Ndrangheta, the study highlights their shared characteristics in criminal activity, focusing on the ‘Ndrangheta’s resemblance to the harakternik tier. The article also explores literary works that depict the criminal landscape in Odessa, showcasing characters like Cherven, Krasavchik, and Ostap Bender. Overall, it provides a fascinating insight into the intertwining of culture, history, and criminality in the southern Ukrainian tradition.

Keywords

Harakternik, Southern Ukrainian tradition, ‘Ndrangheta, criminal tradition

Introduction

Harakternik constitutes not only the utmost mystical and enigmatic phenomenon within Ukrainian culture but also stands as an inseparable facet of the southern Ukrainian heritage, renowned for its other notable manifestations such as Cossacks, Chumaks, and Haydamaks. Contemporary scholarly discourse is more focused on other areas of Ukrainian studies (Davydchik et al., 2018; Kappeler, 2014; Korostelina, 2013). Therefore, the topic raised in this article will be a wonderful addition to the understanding of Ukrainian culture and heritage.

In the context of the “Ukrainian lihva”, which denoted the southern Ukrainian tradition within the pre-revolutionary Russian empire prior to the events of 1917, the scholarly cohort

led by Academician Oleg Maltsev arrived at the deduction that this tradition, when examined from a criminological standpoint, bears striking resemblance to the globally recognized Italian criminal syndicate - 'Ndrangheta. 'Ndrangheta, originating from the Calabria region in southern Italy, boasts an extensive historical lineage, persisting as one of the most affluent and expansive criminal organizations worldwide. It is worth noting that the criminality of Southern Italy is of research interest for various studies (Lavorgna & Sergi, 2014 see also Calderoni et al., 2020; Catino, 2015; Craparo et al., 2018; Nese et al., 2018).

Antonio Nicaso, an Italian professor renowned for his expertise in criminology, advisory roles to governmental bodies, and consultations with law enforcement agencies of multiple nations concerning matters of organized crime, expounded upon the 'Ndrangheta within his work titled "Blood Brothers" ("Fratelli di sangue"), co-authored in partnership with Nicola Gratteri (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2010). Nicaso's depiction of the 'Ndrangheta is articulated as follows: having grown discreetly, the 'Ndrangheta stands today as the most dreaded, powerful, and extensively pervasive criminal organization. Regrettably, within the Italian context, no other entity is presently capable of achieving comparable rates of profit escalation. Boasting a turnover of approximately 44 billion euros—exclusive of proceeds derived from money laundering—the 'Ndrangheta epitomizes the zenith of opulence, aggression, and infiltration prowess. It has excelled in permeating the economy and various institutions, positioning itself as an unparalleled and truly globalized conglomerate. With its subsidiary establishments spanning across nearly every region of Italy, as well as extending its presence throughout Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania (Nicaso et al., 2014).

As the primary focus of this article is not centered on an in-depth exploration of the 'Ndrangheta itself or an exhaustive comparative examination with the southern Ukrainian tradition, a solitary parallel shall be proffered pertaining to the four tiers of training within both the 'Ndrangheta and the southern Ukrainian tradition. The pinnacle tier of training within the 'Ndrangheta is designated as "santos" (saint), which correlates to an analogous tier within the southern Ukrainian tradition titled "harakternik". Three additional strata of training ensue in each respective tradition, with an intricate comparative analysis reserved for forthcoming articles (Maltsev, 2014).

Methodology

In examining the phenomenon of Cossacks-harakternik, our research is grounded in a heuristic model that incorporates a dual verification approach, allowing for the consideration of additional evidentiary types that either validate or refute specific aspects under investigation.

Let us delve into the logical construction of the heuristic model utilized in our study. We took into account robust scientific characteristics and evidence to form the basis of this model. The following factors, derived and substantiated during our research, contribute to the model's development. These facts are tangible rather than abstract, supported by field research conducted in various countries such as Italy, Germany, Mexico, etc. Our approach involved analyzing diverse sources, linguistic scrutiny, and investigating the cultural heritage of different nations.

1. Numerous references to the Cossacks in foreign sources, including Polish, German, and Italian documents.
2. Historical fact: the Zaporizhian army's participation in the Holy League for over 290 years.
3. Presence of words in the Ukrainian language originating from Polish, German, and Russian.
4. Discovery of architectural monuments in various European cities, such as Heidelberg,

Rothenburg, Vienna, Spyre, and the island of Malta, showcasing similar people with identical external characteristics and typology of appearance across Western Europe. The prevalence of these artifacts in sculpture emphasizes the cultural significance of these individuals in the life of other countries.

5. The word “harakternik” is pronounced similarly in Ukrainian, Russian, Italian, German, and Polish.
6. Exploration of the subculture of Calabria reveals the existence of approximately eight similar Cossack Republics, each flourishing during different historical periods.
7. Noteworthy is the existence of various works of art, including paintings and frescoes, depicting Ukrainian Cossacks. Significantly, these cultural and artistic sources are authored by European masters from Italy, Germany, and other countries.

All these pieces of evidence lead us to posit that the phenomenon of Cossack-harakternik is not confined to Ukraine alone but holds international significance. Consequently, research confined solely to the territory of Ukraine and neighboring countries may lack completeness and reliability, given the broader scale of this phenomenon. In this context, our reliance on sources spanning the XVI to XX centuries is crucial.

The facts presented in this article form the basis for constructing a heuristic model with a dual verification status. Utilizing both the method of similarity and the prototypological

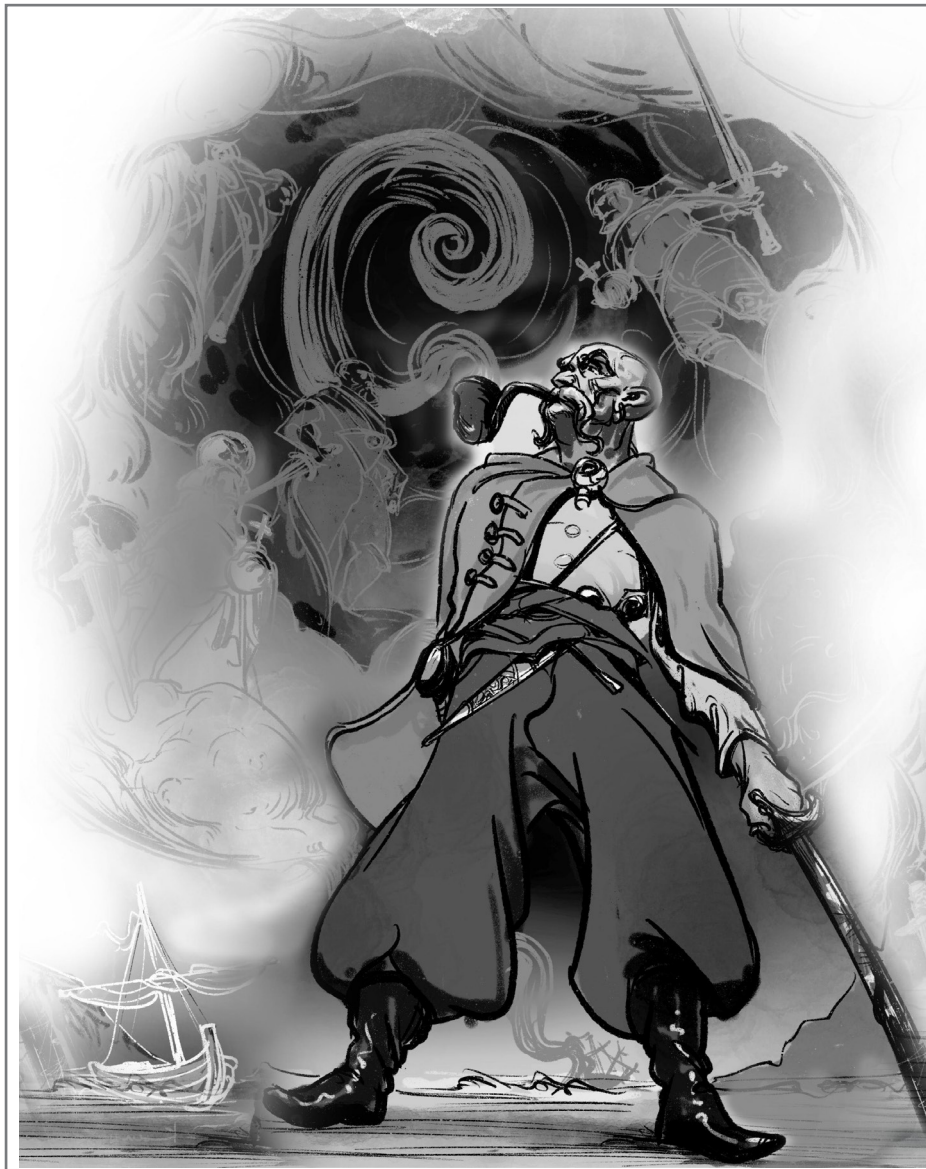


Figure 1. Harakternik (Drawing by Alexey Samsonov)

comparison method, we have devised the following heuristic model. According to the model, we compare phenomenon "X" with various points (facts, phenomena) worldwide, simultaneously comparing these points in a circular manner, and concurrently assessing them in relation to the studied phenomenon "X". This approach ensures a double verification process.

The enumerated sources of evidence, as mentioned earlier, serve to corroborate or challenge hypotheses and conclusions derived from the heuristic model during the research. The list of sources can additionally function as a third tier of verification for the obtained data, collectively forming the fourth tier of verification.

The heuristic model, as derived, lacks a rigid algorithmic sequence, allowing for modification and extension. Introducing additional points for comparison and undertaking subsequent stages of scientific research and verification are possible. For instance, other scientists may have already investigated the same data blocks, points, or phenomena and have their scientific results and proven conclusions, serving as additional sources for data analysis and verification.

Many researchers have explored the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta subculture, as well as the cultural and religious-philosophical aspects of the Rhineland (Germany), Mexico, and Southern Italy. By comparing their findings with our own, we establish a fourth echelon of validation in our heuristic model. This model incorporates a double verification factor, with the third echelon relying on evidence sources used to construct the hypothesis, and the fourth echelon involving the works of other scientists who have delved into related phenomena. Implementing this heuristic model involves subjecting each fact to verification four times, minimizing the probability of error.

The chosen comparative methodology compares all selected "points" with the main cultural source—the cultural heritage of the Cossack-harakternik in Ukraine—and evaluates all points of other spatial certainty against each other. The methodology presented facilitates the construction of verifiable hypotheses through a hypothetico-deductive approach. It draws from an understanding of the common social and functional orientation and archetypal similarity found in the collective unconscious cultural image. This commonality is further illustrated and defined in the comparison of historical artifacts, serving as evidence to determine the similarity or dissimilarity of social phenomena. In the unity of the common, the particular, and the singular.

To conduct a comparative analysis of two similar phenomena in relation to their structural and functional orientation, it is imperative to initially identify a comparative object. Additionally, defining the essential criteria for comparison becomes crucial, enabling the differentiation between the common, the particular, and the singular aspects of these phenomena. Hence, the heroes from Calabria emerge as the most closely aligned in terms of mythologization, frequency of miracles, adeptness in survival, and proficiency in addressing intricate military and social challenges. Given their exposure to mandatory extreme conditions and an overall extreme existential backdrop, these Calabrian heroes have been selected as the focal point for our comparative analysis. While acknowledging the potential for radical differences, similarities in specific properties and attributes, or even complete identity, can only be determined through the process of comparison. An essential prerequisite for this evaluation is a comprehensive source base that aids in discerning the content and form of the designated phenomenon.

Conducting research in Calabria poses unique challenges, particularly regarding the 'Ndrangheta, which is often presented as a criminal community. In academic studies of the Calabrian subculture, notable researchers like Antonio Nicaso et al. (2014), Nicola Gratteri, and Arcangelo Badolati (2017) heavily rely on court records as their primary information source. While these works contribute significantly to 'Ndrangheta studies, it is crucial to acknowledge that court records come with inherent compromises, viewed from an advocacy standpoint. Suspects may provide data during pre-trial investigations or court proceedings that favor their situation, potentially leading to a skewed representation. Moreover, even if a

convicted person is later acquitted, the court verdicts, which may contain inaccuracies, persist in archives as sources of information. This issue has been observed in organized crime trials in Southern Italy.

The study employs an inductive method of proof, incorporating the hypothetico-deductive approach within a dialectical unity of induction and deduction. Unlike deduction, where a hypothesis is initially formed in the abstract and evidence is subsequently sought, the inductive method constructs the hypothesis based on existing evidence.

Results

In the contemporary context, Cossacks, Chumaks, and Haydamaks have not only significantly influenced the culture and traditions of their region but have also come to symbolize national and cultural identity, particularly in Ukraine. Their impact is deeply ingrained in the national history and folklore of Ukraine. Cossack dances, songs, and customs continue to be preserved in Ukrainian culture. Chumaks are depicted in folk tales, songs, and beliefs, reflecting labor traditions and ways of life. Haydamaks have become symbols of resistance and the struggle for freedom. Throughout historical events such as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Khmelnytsky Uprising, Cossacks, Chumaks, and Haydamaks played pivotal roles, shaping the history of the region. Their influence extends to literature, painting, and various forms of art, with artists and writers capturing their vivid and multifaceted images. In modern Ukraine, these figures have become emblematic of freedom, resistance, and heroism, contributing to the nation's identity. Their images are featured in national symbols, emblems, and other expressions of Ukrainian culture. Numerous historical sites associated with them attract tourists, while monuments, museums, and reserves work to preserve the rich historical heritage of the Cossacks, Chumaks, and Haydamaks, fostering an appreciation for the history and culture of the region. Thus, these figures are not merely historical phenomena; they are integral parts of the cultural heritage that has shaped the traditions, symbolism, and national identity of the region.

From a criminological vantage point, the southern Ukrainian tradition, akin to the Italian 'Ndrangheta, mirrors an identical structure for orchestrating banditry, thereby elevating banditry to a professional framework. This transformation transpires when a "bandit" evolves into a professional by assimilating the skillset of a seasoned military operative, thereby transcending the designation of mere banditry or militarism to attain the stature of specialized forces. Examining the historical trajectory of the 'Ndrangheta's genesis, it becomes apparent that, during a specific juncture, while situated within territory influenced by the emerging new governance, it underwent a transition into criminality. Initially, the 'Ndrangheta operated as the Order of Christ. However, with the onset of Italy's unification in 1861, this Spanish order encountered a circumstance of abandonment within the Italian territory, rendering it in a state of occupation (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2010).

The intricate juncture in the historical narrative of the 'Ndrangheta, examined through the lenses of psychological and criminological perspectives, is eloquently elaborated upon in the scholarly monograph titled "Philosophy of Southern Italy" (Maltsev & Lunov, 2020): "As we delve into the stages traversed in the historical evolution of the 'Ndrangheta, a pivotal moment that profoundly influenced its trajectory and shaped its essence emerges when the 'Ndrangheta found itself ensnared within occupied territory, entangled in a state of isolation. This circumstance even led to a double isolation. It can be likened to an individual abruptly awakening as a criminal one morning. For the purpose of illustration, a specific article of the Criminal Code was adopted one day which delineates an individual as a criminal, based on attributes such as having brown eyes or being of Jewish descent, for instance. Consequently, within a single fleeting moment, an extensive group or community became criminals. This

particular occurrence significantly contributed to what is commonly referred to as "in-group identification." This effect was amplified to the maximum extent, as there is nothing that bolsters in-group identity to such a degree as an external contrasting image." It should be noted that in-group identification is now a research interest for scholars in various fields (Cacault & Grieder, 2019; Cho, 2018; Gómez et al., 2019; Hohman et al., 2017; Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2013).

The 'Ndrangheta is a criminal subculture operating mostly in southern Italy, particularly in Calabria. 'Ndrangheta exhibits distinctive characteristics:

1. **Secrecy and Closure:** The 'Ndrangheta functions with a high level of secrecy. Members strictly adhere to rules of silence, avoiding cooperation with law enforcement.
2. **Hierarchy:** The organization adopts a hierarchical pyramid structure with centralized control. Key decisions are made by top-ranking members, emphasizing the importance of loyalty and discipline.
3. **Confrontation with Government:** The 'Ndrangheta frequently clashes with government and law enforcement agencies, resulting in prolonged and violent conflicts.
4. **Legalization:** Some 'Ndrangheta members infiltrate various public spheres, including politics, business, and finance, allowing them to exert influence on different aspects of society.
5. **Criminal Activities:** The 'Ndrangheta is involved in diverse criminal enterprises, encompassing drug trafficking, smuggling, racketeering, extortion, and other forms of organized crime.
6. **Cultural and Traditional Aspects:** Rooted in Calabrian history, the organization maintains specific cultural and traditional traits, incorporating unique symbols and rituals.
7. **Law Enforcement Priority:** The fight against the 'Ndrangheta remains a top priority for Italian law enforcement and international organized crime services.

A parallel development transpired within the context of the southern Ukrainian tradition, which, at a specific historical juncture, found itself no longer existing autonomously but within occupied territory.

The initial conflict involving the southern region of contemporary Ukraine can be traced back to the era of Peter the Great, who led military forces into this region. However, this encounter did not culminate in substantive change: "The Zaporizhian Order, despite shifts within Ukraine, retained its original composition and mode of governance." Subsequently, on July 18, 1717, Emperor Peter the Great, harboring resentment towards those who had betrayed him in the years 1709-1710, instructed the Malorossian authorities to employ armed intervention to prevent the Zaporizhians from settle again themselves in Sich and, more broadly, within territories that were under treaties belonging to the Russian state. Hence, their Kosh, established along the course of the Kamenka River as it flowed into the Dnieper, suffered considerable devastation. Furthermore, stipulations outlined in the treaty of April 5, 1712, inked in Tsargrad, stipulated that Russia relinquished all claims to the Zaporozhian Sich. The august Monarch was resolute in upholding this accord, as conveyed by A. Skalkovsky in his publication "History of the New Sich or the Last Kosh of Zaporozhye" (Odessa, 1841).

Nonetheless, the clash with Catherine II ultimately marked the demise of the Ukrainian Cossacks, for this time, they confronted the formidable might of the regular army, which vastly outnumbered their own detachments. In the same work, A. Skalkovsky expounds upon this matter, stating, "Empress Catherine recognized that the Zaporizhian Lower Army, despite its valor and dedication to military endeavors, in its current composition, could not function as a reliable bulwark and support for the southern frontiers of the Empire."

Confronted with the might of Catherine II's regular army, "lihva" comes to the realization that resistance would be futile. Consequently, it departs for the Danube and later makes its way back to Odessa. "Hence, it does become clear that the folk of Zaporozhye hath stirred

the ire of the Creator, for anon there befell a dire calamity so profound that even the vigilant Falcon's intercession proved for naught in forestalling its onset. A great force of the Moscow army, under the leadership of an individual also recognized as a harakternik, though hailing from Germanic territories, reached Zaporozhye. The German harakternik vanquished Sokol with his captivating abilities, resulting in the expulsion of the Zaporozhians across the Black Sea to Turkey" (Korniyenko, 1919).

It merits noting that following the Cossacks' departure to the Danube, a concerted effort was made to repatriate the Zaporizhians from the Zadunai Sich, redistributing them among the ranks of the Black Sea Cossacks. Those Cossacks who chose to register and serve the Empress relocated to Odessa, where their service continued.

Should we direct our attention to the book "History of the New Sich or the Last Kosh of Zaporozhye", written by A. Skalkovsky (1846) and published in Odessa, it is prudent to extract the subsequent lines: "The Russian governance, assented to the Zaporizhians' reclamation unto its realm, laboring under the belief that thereby the flight beyond the Danube shall find a gradual cessation. Consequently, facilitated by local Bulgarians, the Cossacks were instilled with the prospect of being welcomed hospitably. The initial vestiges of such a resurgence are discernible in the year 1805, orchestrated under the patronage of the Duke de Richelieu. During this juncture, a handful of Cossacks belonging to the Baturinsky kuren (within the za-Dunai Sich) made their way to Odessa, both by land and sea. Interestingly, they carried with them authorized credentials from the Kosh, imprinted with the seal of the Turkish procurator at the army".

Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that not all Cossacks who journeyed back from across the Danube to Odessa harbored an inclination to enlist in Catherine II's service and thus become registered. Instead, a portion of these repatriated Cossacks opted to settle within the realm of South Palmyra. They settled on the peripheries of the city, specifically on Moldavanka, Peresyp, and Slobodka. These places bore witness to the inception, proliferation, and consolidation of Odessa's criminal milieu, where it took root, thrived, and gained ascendancy.

Consequently, the Ukrainian lihva emerged as the cornerstone of criminal activity within Odessa. The criminal landscape of South Palmyra finds itself portrayed in vibrant detail, not solely confined to the annals of criminal chronicles from that era, but also finding its depiction within an array of literary compositions. Fiction and historical literature serve as invaluable tools for scholars and researchers to comprehend the intricacies of different historical eras, providing nuanced insights into societal development, cultural shifts, and the human experience over time (Butler, 2017; Grajzl & Murrell, 2019; Pace-Sigge, 2018; Sera-Shriar, 2015).

To illustrate, A.I. Kuprin's "Obida" ("Offense") (published subsequent to his sojourn in Odessa) offers a vivid portrayal of a delegation from the combined Rostov-Kharkov and Odessa-Nikolaev thieves' organizations (Kuprin, 1912). This delegation convened to address the commission investigating the Jewish pogroms in Odessa, vehemently disputing the linkage of thieves to the pogroms (1906). The delegation's leader expounded on the intrinsic calling of thievery: "Certain individuals possess a unique faculty of visual memory, keenness and precision of sight, cold-bloodedness, nimbleness of fingers, and an exquisitely delicate tactile sense. They seem to have been specially bestowed upon by divine providence to excel as adept hustlers. The craft of pickpocketing demands unparalleled agility, unswerving precision of motion, not to mention resourcefulness, acumen, and an unwavering focus. Several individuals possess a distinct affinity for delving into the realm of tampering with cash registers. From the earliest days of their youth, they have felt an inexplicable draw towards unraveling the intricacies of multifaceted mechanisms: be it bicycles, sewing machines, wind-up toys, or even timepieces. Finally, gentlemen of the law, there exists a subset of individuals harboring an innate animosity towards possessions. You may label this phenomenon as degeneration or

employ any term of your choosing. But I will say that a true thief, a thief by vocation, cannot be lured into the everyday life of honest prosperity by any carrots: neither a well-secure service, nor money, nor a woman's love. For herein lies the enduring allure of risk, the captivating abyss of peril, the fluttering of the heart, the exhilarating zest of life, the sheer delight! You are armed with the protection of the law, locks, revolvers, telephones, police, troops,-we are armed only with dexterity, cunning, and courage. We are foxes, and society is a henhouse guarded by dogs. Are you aware that in rural villages, it is often the most artistic and gifted individuals who engage in horse-stealing and poacher-hunting? What can one do? Life thus far has been so lacking, so monotonous, so unbearably dreary for impassioned souls!"

Discussion

In his literary work "Story of a Life. Time of Great Expectations," Konstantin Georgievich Paustovsky (1892-1989), a Russian Soviet writer, scriptwriter, educator, journalist, and war correspondent) delineates his experiences in Odessa during the year 1920, a period when the Soviet regime had freshly established its presence in the city. During this phase of instability, with the "white" forces having departed and the "red" forces not yet fully established, Odessa became a hotbed of criminal activity. Petty criminals engaged in stealing firewood for profit, heading out with a shotgun. Avaricious vendors inflated prices, and more audacious individuals resorted to street robberies with finesse, employing an unmistakable Odessa flair. "Shpana" (street urchins) was adorned with weaponry from head to toe, and the general populace also carried revolvers for self-defense. Knavery thrived in Odessa, where one needed to possess the skill to "sell the sleeves from the vest" even at the market (Paustovsky, 1967).

As per K.G. Paustovsky's assessment, approximately two thousand criminals, marauders, thieves, informants, counterfeiters, smugglers, receivers of stolen goods, and other illicit individuals resided in the outskirts of Odessa during that era (Paustovsky, 1967).

In Odessa, the term "maravicheras" referred to the hooligans who bargained aggressively at the market, engaged in bazaar thefts, and perpetrated robberies. When negotiations failed to lower prices, merchandise was surreptitiously set ablaze or discreetly slashed with razors. Defective goods were sold at underrate. The new market was a realm of stark brutality: card cheats endured savage beatings to the point of bloody countenance; bundles of newspapers were fastened to roaming lunatics and set ablaze, while thieves were subjected to beatings akin to animals... As per the author's account, the market represented a haven of human degradation and malevolence.

The figures of the southern Ukrainian tradition find vibrant representation in an extensive array of literary compositions. For instance, the narrative "Green Van" authored by A.V. Kozachinsky (1957), whose life is no less interesting than the events of the story itself. Notably, the novels "The Twelve Chairs" and "The Little Golden Calf" penned by I. Ilf and E. Petrov (1928/2011, 1931/2014) equally embrace this tradition. Likewise, K.G. Paustovsky's "Time of Great Expectations" encapsulates its essence. Remarkably, the protagonists of these literary creations - Cherven, Krasavchik, and Ostap Bender - each encapsulate distinct facets of the southern Ukrainian tradition. Compellingly, these literary personas originate from Odessa itself (Paustovsky, 1967)..

Within the literary realm, A.I. Kuprin and I.E. Babel living in Odessa have eloquently depicted this city and its most luminary characters. Take, for example, the figure of Mishka Yaponchik (Benzion Krik), an emblematic persona renowned for his martial prowess, financial acumen, exceptional organizational skills, and leadership abilities. Furthermore, he is an enigmatic figure, shrouded in legend, mystery, and mystique (Babel, 1995). Cherven, the

character of “The Green Van,” is a figure enveloped in legends throughout Odessa. He possesses the remarkable ability to “shoot without withdrawing his hands from his pockets.” As a lawyer, Cherven adeptly confounds the Odessa law enforcement, deftly evading their grasp while leaving no witnesses behind. Indeed, Cherven embodies an authentic *harakternik*.

Shifting our focus to the portrayal of Ostap Bender, we encounter a quintessential representation of a *chumak* – an individual embodying the dual roles of a businessman and a warrior. It is a certain stage of preparation of the southern Ukrainian tradition, namely, the stage of making money. Ostap Bender had “400 relatively legal ways to make the population part with their money” (for an in-depth exploration of the *chumak* phenomenon in Ukraine, encompassing its psychological and criminological dimensions, readers are directed to the article “*Chumak*” in *Literary and Scientific Newsletter of Hrushevsky*) (Tarasenko, 2020).

Ostap Bender is a literary character featured in the novel “The Little Golden Calf” and other works by Soviet writers Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov (Il’f and Petrov, 1931/2014). Penned in 1931, the novel is part of the renowned “The Twelve Chairs” and “The Little Golden Calf” trilogy (Ilf and Petrov, 1928/2011). Ostap Bender is portrayed as an adventurous and masterfully cunning schemer. The protagonist embarks on a journey across the Soviet Union in pursuit of lost diamonds concealed within a chair. Utilizing his charming and dexterous persona, Bender engages in deceptive antics, navigating through various comedic situations. Ostap Bender has emerged as an iconic character in Soviet literature and cinema, embodying an anti-heroic figure – an adventurous and charismatic trickster who cheerfully and ironically challenges the Soviet reality of the 1920s and 1930s.

Even after the novel’s completion, “Ostap Bender” sustained popularity. In subsequent works by Ilf and Petrov, as well as in adaptations and screenings, the character continued to evolve with new features and adventures. He symbolizes freedom from social norms and resilience in challenging periods. Ostap Bender’s image epitomizes playful subversion and mockery of the system and bureaucracy, earning him popularity beyond the literary work. Integrated into Soviet culture and heritage, he boasts a dedicated fan base, and his quotes have become part of common civic vocabulary. The charismatic figure of Ostap Bender underscores the significance of humor, even in the most trying times. Beyond his literary legacy, Bender has inspired several films and television series, with different actors embodying his character, further enriching the portrayal of the savvy adventurer who, despite his dishonesty, garners sympathy from readers and viewers alike.

Conclusions

As a result of this study, a comparative methodology has been developed to explore unknown phenomena in cases where mathematical analysis is impractical. This methodology is particularly applicable to the philosophical and religious analysis of the religious foundations of *Cossack-harakternik* education when conventional research methods, such as gathering representatives or conducting surveys, are not feasible. Many existing research methods are inadequate for this task, prompting the development of a methodology that ensures accurate data with multiple verification criteria. The foundation of this methodology is a heuristic model, providing four echelons of data verification.

1. *Harakternik* is an integral part of the southern Ukrainian tradition, renowned for phenomena such as *Cossacks*, *Chumaks*, and *Haydamaks*.
2. The southern Ukrainian tradition (Ukrainian *lihva*) is criminologically identical to the globally recognized Italian criminal organization, ‘*Ndrangheta*, representing a similar professional basis for organizing banditry.

3. The highest level of training in 'Ndrangheta, known as Santos, corresponds to the level of Harakternik in the southern Ukrainian tradition.
4. Two conflicts involving southern Ukraine mark crucial points in the existence of Ukrainian Cossacks.
5. The return of Zaporozhians from the Danubian Sich and their distribution to the Black Sea Cossacks.
6. Ukrainian lihva serves as the foundation for crime in Odessa.
7. The southern Ukrainian tradition, akin to the northern tradition, possesses its own school, a system of training, and a mechanism for transmitting knowledge and skills across generations.
8. The manifestation of Ukrainian lihva on the territory of modern Ukraine takes an aggressive and active form after the revolution of 1917.

In conclusion, it is worth emphasizing that every tradition, whether southern or northern, inherently possesses its own distinct "school" and system for transmitting knowledge and skills across generations. The southern Ukrainian tradition also boasts such a structured framework. For instance, the Ukrainian author Ivan Kondratyevich Mykytenko (1897-1937), who resided in Odessa from 1922 to 1926, provides a criminological analysis of this distinctive tradition. His narrative "Vurkagany" (1928) offers insight into the lives of juvenile delinquents in Odessa, delving into their hierarchical structure, specialized roles, methods of acquiring expertise in thievery, and modes of criminal activity. These young individuals were commonly referred to as raklyuga, raklenya, thief, bandit, and vurkagan (Transcaucasian Association of Proletarian Writers, 1929). Even before the upheaval of the 1917 revolution, "old men" still inhabited locales such as Odessa, Kherson, Nikolaev, Zaporozhye, and Dnieper, ensuring the continuous perpetuation of this instructional "school", the center of this educational network remained rooted in Odessa. Subsequent to the events of 1917, a phase of anti-banditry initiatives unfolded in Odessa, coinciding with the most active and assertive manifestation of the "Ukrainian lihva" across modern-day Ukraine. This period encompassed figures ranging from Batka Makhno and beyond.

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