



DOI <https://doi.org/10.15407/slavicworld2023.22.174>

КОВАЛЬ-ФУЧИЛО ІРИНА

кандидатка філологічних наук, старша наукова співробітниця відділу української та зарубіжної фольклористики Інституту мистецтвознавства, фольклористики та етнології ім. М. Т. Рильського НАН України (Київ, Україна).

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4048-9114>

KOVAL-FUCHYLO IRYNA

a Ph.D. in Philology, a senior research fellow of the Ukrainian and Foreign Folkloristics Department of M. Rylskyi Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Kyiv, Ukraine).

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4048-9114>

Бібліографічний опис:

Коваль-Фучило, І. (2023) Культура походження, самопрезентація та адаптація біженців. Досвід польського суспільства. [Рецензія]: Katarzyna Kość-Ryżko. *Uchodźczynie – kobiety, matki, banitki. Rol akultury pochodzenia w samopostrzeganiu i akulturacji migrantek przymusowych*. Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy ELIPSA, 2021. 477 s. *Слов'янський світ*, 22, 174–184.

Koval-Fuchylo, I. (2023) Refugees' Culture of Origin, Self-Presentation and Adaptation. Experience of Polish Society [Review]: KOŚĆ-RYŻKO, Katarzyna. *Uchodźczynie – kobiety, matki, banitki. Rol akultury pochodzenia w samopostrzeganiu i akulturacji migrantek przymusowych [Refugees – Women, Mothers, Outlaws. Significance of the Culture of Origin in the Self-Perception and Acculturation of Forced Migrants]*. Warsaw: ELIPSA Publishing House, 2021, 477 pp. [in Polish]. *Slavic World*, 22, 174–184.

The war in Ukraine has unleashed the largest refugee wave in Europe since World War II. According to the UN refugee agency UNHCR during full scale Russian invasion, there are 6-8 million refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe. 50.000 Ukrainians, main-

ly women under 40 and children, have arrived in Finland since the war has broken out. The number of Ukrainian war refugees in different parts of Europe is high, for example, in France it is 119.000. Among the EU-countries, at first time Poland has by far the largest number over 1 million Ukrainian war refugees (see: [3; 5]).

As an expert in Folkloristics and because people start telling their experiences, I have started recording autobiographical stories from people in exile. I have conducted interviews in Poland, France and in Finland. In my project I have focused on the significance of autobiographical stories and other cultural texts, that is, naive poetry, vernacular literature and internet-folklore in these times of crisis. Its scope is on the verbal and nonverbal means in refugees' personal accounts. The main task of my project is to record and preserve oral history autobiographical stories about the experience of wartime survival, the experience of a refugee from war and adaptation in a new place in a foreign country; to analyze the peculiarities of the narrative tradition about refugees as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war. So, I was happy to have Ms. Katarzyna Kość-Ryżko as my boss in Poland and to read her extremely important book for me in the beginning of my work with Ukrainian refugees in Europe.

The new book by the famous Polish researcher in the field of ethnology and anthropology, Katarzyna Kość-Ryżko "Uchodźczynie – kobiety, matki, banitki. Rol akultury pochodzenia w samopostrzeganiu i akulturacji migrantek przymusowych" [Refugees – Women, Mothers, Outlaws. Significance of the Culture of Origin in the Self-Perception and Acculturation of Forced Migrants] (Warsaw, 2021) continues her series of studies devoted to the problems of social groups who, for various reasons, were forced to leave their place of residence and faced the challenge of adapting in another country [1], from one hand, and on the other – continues the series of Polish studies on the refugee phenomenon (see: [4]). The book is the result of several years research among forced migrant women who settled in Poland. These are women, often with children, whose place of origin is the Asian part of the former Soviet Union;

most often these are Chechen women of the Muslim faith. An important factor that caused to the emergence of this study is the fact that the situation of forced migrant women is significantly different from the fate of men from the same regions. It is important that the experience of violence, migration, and cultural alienation become the cause of changes in women's self-esteem. As a result of the long migration route, they change their socio-cultural role and are forced to shape themselves in a new environment. Due to a changing the country of residence, refugees lose their sense of belonging to their group, they experience a sense of cultural alienation in a new place. The main adjustment strategies are due to the fact that women come to Poland, as in other countries, with their children, so their goal is to take care of the safety and conditions for the development of their offspring.

The main source material of the study consists of the oral narratives of forced female migrants. These oral narratives become a source of information about the peculiarities of their self-esteem, outlook, and living conditions in Poland. The authoress of the book has sought to understand what influence on the situation in which they found themselves in a new place has on the formation of the refugees' identity, as well as how much the culture of their origin affects the process of adaptation, whether it speeds up this process or, on the contrary, slows it down. Katarzyna Kość-Ryżko has paid attention to the language of self-description of the migrant women's own identity, sought to highlight the categories that women use for self-presentation. The researcher comes to the conclusion that the reference point in the formation of self-esteem of refugees is not the social situation and conditions in the new place, but their culture of origin, which determines and often hinders the process of adaptation in the new country of residence, as it devalues and complicates the self-esteem of women.

The work "Refugees..." consists of seven chapters. The methodological and theoretical concepts of the work, the state of research on forced migration, the difficulties of the research process are de-

scribed in the first chapter 'Social mirrors and crooked cultural reflections'. An important anthropological feature of the investigated Chechen refugee community is the fact that in the culture of their origin high fertility is a defining «duty» of a woman and a marker of her social prestige and authority. The number of children often determines a woman's self-esteem (p. 21). a significant challenge for women is the need to perform simultaneously both maternal and paternal functions in their families. This causes a feeling of degradation and depression (p. 22). These emotions of refugees are intensified by the lack of socio-economic and psychological stability, social alienation (p. 23). In the end, the result of such an unfavorable situation is isolation, and then there is a feeling of injustice and humiliation.

The purpose of the analyzed study is to describe the most difficult challenges faced by foreign women seeking asylum in Poland, ways to overcome cultural differences, ways to transform symbolic and axiological identity (p. 26). The authoress singles out the following main factors of adaptation of migrant women: self-awareness of women, attitude towards them in the dominant culture, acculturation policy of the host state (p. 31).

In the second chapter, 'Self-perception of refugee women in the context of culture and traditional gender roles', research attention is focused on the description of the daily life of refugees from the Caucasian regions, the motives of their complex biographies. Ms. Katarzyna's work can help in the future design of assistance programs for refugees, promote their integration in Polish society, and the adaptation of their children in a new culture.

The authoress determines the following self-descriptive categories of refugees: «the one from where I come from», «sick strong woman», «helpless and demanding or resourceful and thrifty», «busy unemployed», «a woman must take care of her appearance and reputation», «a wife without a husband», «a criminal and cursed violator of the law». In the process of self-determination, «the refugee's parental land is of fundamental importance, it is the

backbone to which all the muscles responsible for attitude, movement, and leading life functions are attached» (p. 79). The constant feeling of attachment to the country of origin determines the situation that the adaptation of refugees in Poland is superficial and shallow. They consider moving to a new country as a loss, primarily a loss of health. Emphasis on the loss of health even causes a situation when migrant women forget about natural aging and attribute all responsibility for the deterioration of well-being to forced migration. In the self-description of women, one feels the idealization of the country of origin, and the country of settlement is associated with gray hair, disease, abnormality (p. 88). Such an opposition *the native land - the place of a new life*, where the positive side is the first location, is typical for stories about forced resettlement [2].

The change in the social role of women is among the favorite topics in the stories of migrant women. Refugees can talk for a long time about the fact that in their country of origin they could not even imagine that in a new place they will constantly perform work that is not typical for them. It is primarily about responsibility for the family and the need to earn money. The authoress of the book debunks the stereotype that refugee women are reluctant to look for work, the problem is primarily that their level of education does not allow them to earn enough to support the family, especially since a woman is often the only employed person in a large family (p. 106). Women have to acquire knowledge that in their native country is reserved only for men. This applies, for example, to driver's licenses (p. 116). Getting a permit to drive a car for Chechen refugees becomes a synonym for freedom, a social and cultural advance for future life. The authoress of the book concludes that going to another country did not become a chance for these women to free themselves from patriarchal cultural patterns and restrictive customs. Women place the blame for failures in the new country of settlement primarily on external factors, rather than on their own behavior, while most migrant women try to cope with problems arising from the refugee experience.

An important task that refugees set before themselves is the desire to pass on the foundations of their faith and culture to their descendants. They try to behave in accordance with the prescriptions of their religion, cook food that they ate in their homeland, and the desire to help them can be interpreted as an attempt at forced assimilation. Women interpret their children's attempts to deviate from the social and cultural norms of the country of origin as a failure (p. 176–178). Aware of the great loss of life as a result of Russia's aggression in Chechnia, women want their daughters to marry members of their own ethnic group and not mix with other nationalities. In fact, the children of migrant women find themselves in a situation where their family stands on the obstacle of adaptation in a new country: «Refugee women are in a conflict between the desire for successful accommodation of the child in the local environment and restraining the child from weakening the connection with the culture of origin» (p. 178).

In line with the observance of the patriarchal attitudes of their region, it is possible to interpret the silence of the migrant women about the reasons for their loneliness and the reasons for which they made the difficult decision to leave their home and go with their children to a distant world. Women do not want to talk about the abuse they have suffered from their husbands and their families. Often, a migrant woman believes that her country is a wonderful place to live, but she ended up in another country due to personal failure.

For me, the most interesting part of the reviewed book is the fourth chapter «Family ties of female migrants in the context of a systemic approach», in which Ms. Katarzyna describes the specifics of their adaptation in a new place of settlement using the example of specific families, and tries to find out the reasons that hinder this process. The researcher had the opportunity to talk to all family members. This made it possible to identify differences in how each member of the family understands their situation in a new place. It is interesting that mothers often do not notice conflicts

between their children, idealize their relationships, do not understand that cultural attitudes and social norms of the country of origin become an obstacle to the personal happiness of their children. In a foreign cultural environment, refugee mothers, on the one hand, dream of successful adaptation of their children, and on the other hand, they are afraid to let them go, do not allow them to make independent decisions. Children torn from their cultural environment experience a situation of alienation in a new place, feel that they are different, perhaps worse than their peers. At the same time, mothers keep repeating that the most important thing for them is their children, not realizing that they themselves are making their children's situation more difficult.

Analyzing complex relationships in refugee families, the researcher comes to the conclusion that in many cases a situation has arisen that cannot be corrected by the family members themselves without external social, pedagogical, and psychological help.

In the fifth chapter, «Sexual and cultural violence against forced migrant women and countermeasures», the authoress of the reviewed book summarizes the work of researchers in the field of gender-related crimes. She analyzes a number of new legal acts in the legislation of Poland and other European countries aimed at combating sexual violence. In personal stories, this topic is quite taboo.

The sixth chapter «Official and public representation of refugees» is a thorough analysis of three important scientific gatherings devoted to the problems of refugees in Poland. The first of them has taken place on September 24, 2012 in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland in Warsaw. The participants of the conference are the scientists, employees of centers providing assistance to refugees, representatives of non-governmental aid organizations, as well as women from refugee communities. The purpose of the meeting is to share experiences to improve the work of providing services to forced migrants. Special attention is directed to the problems of refugee mothers. Speakers have voiced the problem of the so-called «acquired helplessness» (p. 294). It is about the fact

that, upon arriving in Poland, refugee women have strong intentions to conscientiously work to improve their situation, but due to bureaucratic obstacles, the language barrier, unclear and opaque decisions of officials regarding granting/not granting refugee status, forced migrants lose their enthusiasm and interest in successful integration in the new society. The discussion platform «Motherhood as a social role» was held on May 21, 2018 at the Lodz Dialogue Center named after Mark Edelman and was devoted to the meaning of motherhood in a cultural and religious context (p. 300). There was one refugee among the speakers, so the conversation quite often related to the problems of adaptation of foreigners, analysis of ethnic social stereotypes, perception of refugees by local society. Another discussion platform was organized in Warsaw on March 8, 2019 and was called «Women's Day with Refugees: About Us Without Us» (p. 311). Dr. Katarzyna Kość-Ryżko, the authoress of the reviewed book, is the organizer of the meeting. She has been aimed at giving a voice to the refugees she knew well, and who were dealing with their decision to leave their homes every day. Workers of aid centers have taken part in the discussions and shared their experience of working with refugees. The subject of discussion includes the problems of forced migration, assistance to refugees, improvement of the system of working with these people. An important conclusion of the conference consists the fact that many refugees want and are ready to share their experiences.

The seventh chapter «Cultural norms of hospitality and their influence on the adaptation of foreigners» is an analysis of the attitude of Europeans towards migrants arriving to their countries. The general conclusion is as follows: «The attitude towards forced migrants in most European countries is reluctant or extremely negative» (p. 332). The authoress analyzes the transformation of the concept of Polish hospitality in the socio-cultural discourse. After all, «hospitality is not always understood as a cultural obligation. Much depends on the context of a certain time and current politics, whether it is a calm time or a time of crisis and threat» (p. 339). The policy

of multiculturalism, which has long dominated in many countries with experience of migrant adaptation, such as Canada, Australia, USA, New Zealand, Holland, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, is criticized increasingly and revised, even there is a thesis about the «defeat of multiculturalism» (p. 339).

Ms. Katarzyna analyzes the concept of conditional and unconditional hospitality: what becomes the basis for refusing hospitality to people fleeing war, how is it related to the feeling of civilizational and social superiority in European countries? An important cultural factor in the process of (mis)adaptation of migrants is the need to have power in one's own home, which ultimately determines the selection of those who are allowed to live in that home. According to conditional hospitality, the guest must ask the host for hospitality, and the host has the right to ask questions and impose conditions. The reason for such relations is fear of the unknown and strangers (p. 365). The position of a part of the host society is unconstructive, that only the host knows how to behave to migrants, who must gratefully accept everything that is offered to them (p. 370). Under such conditions, the chance to get to know someone else's culture is lost. Migrants perceive this approach as a form of cultural violence and naturally try to distance themselves in such a society. The result of such processes is cultural marginalization and separation.

Today, in connection with the appearance of Ukrainian refugees in Europe due to the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine, the book of Dr. Katarzyna Kość-Ryżko has become especially relevant. My studies of the refugee phenomenon based on the material of oral autobiographical stories, as well as on the material of other cultural texts, such as poetry, visual forms of folklore, give grounds for drawing conclusions that often coincide with the conclusions of the author of the reviewed book. So, an important conclusion is a warning against generalizations and simplifications. The case of each refugee family is unique, even if similar signs can be observed, they can have completely different origins and consequences, and after a closer acquaintance with the families, it becomes clear that

the similarities are only outwardly the same. I was convinced of this during interviews with women who have the status of temporary protection in Poland, France, and Finland. My conversations often have taken place in Ukrainian cultural centers in European countries, where women came with their children. And here is one fact: mothers bring their children to clay sculpting classes, to drawing, to English, French or Finnish language lessons. It would seem that parents want their children to learn something new, spend time with friends from Ukraine. This is partly true, but after talking with each mother in particular, you learn that each has its own way to this place, that someone came here as a normal activity, and someone hopes that it will help the child to alleviate the psychological trauma caused by the war experience, someone has hope that this will be the first step to adaptation in a new place, and someone comes here just to talk with other Ukrainian mothers.

The relevance of the reviewed work is also that its authoress has shown that there are certain adaptation strategies. So, the fact of refugee motherhood is an important factor. It is this factor that often becomes the main reason in the decision to leave one's homeland, namely to ensure a better future for children or, in the case of Ukrainians, to save children from death due to military actions and bombings.

The dominance of a sense of loss because of a change of the country of residence is a similar feature of the refugees who have become the subject of Dr. Kość-Ryżko's research and the Ukrainian refugees due to the Russian-Ukrainian war, with whom I have had the opportunity to communicate. My interlocutors talk about the loss of work, good living conditions, the devaluation of their education, the loss of the usual circle of communication and normal communication in general due to the language barrier, the change in the usual rhythm of life. It is especially difficult for mothers whose children have some chronic diseases that require constant medical consultation, because it is very difficult to find suitable specialists in a new place.

The desire to create their centers abroad is a common socio-cultural tendency of refugees from different countries. Such places are needed in foreign territory to reduce the stress of moving and facilitate adaptation in a new place. Thus, in Helsinki in cultural centers, for Ukrainian refugees because of the war conditions have been created not only for communication, but also for holding the necessary legal and social consultations.

After all, each state must develop certain norms in order to maintain its administrative structures on the one hand, and on the other hand to help those who need help. This assistance should be such that after counting efforts and gains, migrants choose an active adaptation strategy, and not a «temporary aid package» that includes food, temporary jobs, aid from humanitarian organizations.

REFERENCES

1. KOŚĆ-RYŻKO, Katarzyna. *Wykorzeleni. Dylematysamookreślenia polskich repatriantów z Kazachstanu. Studium etnopsychologiczne [Uprooted. Dilemmas of Self-Definition of Polish Repatriates from Kazakhstan. An Ethnopsychological Study]*. Warsaw: Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of Polish Academy of Sciences [in Polish].
2. KOVAL-FUCHYLO, Iryna. The Motif of Lost Paradise in the Stories about Forced Resettlement. *Folk Art and Ethnology*, 2021, no. 2 (389), pp. 87–97 <https://doi.org/10.15407/nte2021.02> [in Ukrainian].
3. MIGRI2023. «*More than 50.000 have Applied for Temporary Protection in Finland*» [online]. Available from: <https://migri.fi/en/-/more-than-50-000-have-applied-for-temporary-protection-in-finland> [in English].
4. PRYMAKA-ONISZK, Aneta. *Bieżeństwo 1915. Zapomniani uchodźcy [Fugitiveness of 1915. Forgotten Refugees]*. 2017. Wołowiec: Czarne [in Polish].
5. ANON. STATISTA 2023. «*Number of Ukrainian Refugees 2023, by Country*» [online]. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1312584/ukrainian-refugees-by-country/> [in English].

Отримано / Received 20.10.2023

Рекомендовано до друку / Recommended for publishing 14.12.2023