MESSAGES FROM THE GRAVE: UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANT TOMBSTONES IN EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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Abstract—This study aims to review the tombstones of the first generation of Ukrainian immigrants in Edmonton, Canada, in connection with shapes, epitaphs, carvings, materials and location/direction of tombstones. With this subject, I also considered three elements, religion, age and social status of the dead, which were likely to influence the Ukrainian tombstones. Throughout this study, I attempted to reveal the messages from Ukrainian immigrant tombstones.

Index Terms— Ukraine, Tombstone, Folklore, Ukrainian immigrant

INTRODUCTION

Ritual disposal of the dead is a phenomenon unique to humans. It is also unique that humans build a tombstone and leave a record of the dead. The tombstone reflects many things: religion, age and social status of the dead, people's view on life and death, the variation of the tombstone according to historical, geographical and technological change, foreign cultural influence, ethnic identity, and so on.
Not all tombstones are made of folk materials, because many tombstones have been made by manufacturers. However, many tombstones were made based on folk patterns developed over many generations, individual creativity, foreign models, and so forth.

For this paper, I studied the tombstones of the first generation of Ukrainian immigrants. In my opinion, the many tombstones of the first generation followed the folk tradition. Five topics were studied in connection with Ukrainian tombstones: shapes, epitaphs, carvings, materials and location/direction. With this subject, I considered three elements, which were likely to influence the Ukrainian tombstones: Religion, age and social status of the dead.
In order to conduct this study, I proposed a hypothesis: tombstones of Ukrainian immigrants are different from each other according to the religion, age and status of the dead. While I proved this hypothesis, I also considered several questions: what is the unique folk pattern of Ukrainian immigrant tombstones? how have Ukrainian tombstones changed? and what influenced Ukrainian immigrant tombstones?

I obtained general information of Ukrainian tombstones from "Ukrainian Grave Markers in East-Central Alberta"[1] and "Crosses of East Slavic Christianity among Ukrainians in Western Canada"[2] in *Material History Bulletin*. These articles introduce many additional sources on the study of Ukrainian immigrant tombstones.

The study is mainly based on fieldwork conducted in three cemeteries: the Russian Orthodox and the Holy Cross Ukrainian Catholic cemetery at Skaro, the Ukrainian Catholic cemetery near Skaro and the St. Michael cemetery in Edmonton. I took many photographs of tombstones. And I obtained several photographs of old tombstones in the Smoky Lake area from the Archives Museum of Alberta Historical Sites.

My study is also based on interviews. I found two informants who work in occupations related to cemetery or the church. Even though they are not primary informants, their information helped me to understand the tombstones in the pictures. The first informant is the manager of St. Michael cemetery.

The second one researches Ukrainian churches and cemeteries in Canada at the Archives Museum of Alberta Historical Sites. Also I visited one memorial in downtown Edmonton. Again, people were reluctant to contribute information. In spite of these difficulties, my interview was successful. I could make copies of old Ukrainian tombstones, from a collection of photo albums.

SHAPES, EPITAPHS, CARVINGS AND MATERIALS OF TOMBSTONES

A. The shapes of tombstones

Ukrainian immigrant tombstones have two basic shapes: cross and square. First, cross shaped tombstones are largely divided into two kinds: the three-barred cross tombstone with eight points and the two-barred cross tombstone. However, cross shaped tombstones have additional variations. Second, the tombstones of square shape may have a the three-barred cross or a two-barred cross engraved on the face.

The following are the informants' answers to the question, "Do you think there are differences in the shapes of tombstones according to the religion, age and social status of the people buried therein ?" The informants mentioned religious influence.

Informant A	According to the religion, the shapes of tombstones are different: 1) Ukrainian Orthodox - three barred cross tombstone 2) Ukrainian Catholic - two barred cross tombstone
Informant B	Before 1940, there were no differences among Russo-Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic tombstones. But after 1940, Catholic tombstones were inclined to have a two barred cross. Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox tombstones were inclined to have a three barred cross.

According to the data, the shape of Ukrainian tombstones was influenced by religion. All tombstones are related to the cross. Some tombstones have the cross shape and others have the cross engraved on the face of the tombstone. These crosses have two basic forms: the three-barred cross[3] and the two-barred cross[4]. In general, the three-barred cross is recognized as a designation of Ukrainian Orthodox church or Russian Orthodox church, and two-barred cross as a designation of Ukrainian Catholic church. the informant A's statement is a good example of this: "Ukrainian Orthodox tombstones have the three-barred cross, and Ukrainian Catholic tombstones have the two-barred cross." But According to the informant B, there is a bias in this general conception on the cross. He said that we can not regard the three-barred cross as an exclusive character of Ukrainian Orthodox Church, because this cross was also used in Ukrainian Catholic Church. The article, "Crosses of East Slavic Christianity among Ukrainians in Western Canada", supports the informant B's opinion:

These models (the three-barred cross and the two-barred cross) have a universal character and are shared by many Christian denominations. No single one of these models is in its character distinctively Ukrainian.[5]

In western Canada, this cross (the three barred cross) is commonly seen on the top of Orthodox churches and cemeteries, and sometimes in Catholic churches and cemeteries...The most recent Catholic church with a three-barred cross is dated 1944.[6[

Generally considering that many Ukrainians have lived in western Canada and many Ukrainian churches and cemeteries have three-barred crosses, we can understand why people think that the three-barred cross is a symbol of the Ukrainian Orthodox religion. However, judging from the article mentioned above, the three-barred cross and the two-barred cross of Ukrainian churches and tombstones are not by nature distinctively Ukrainian. Also the three-barred cross is not an exclusive designation of Ukrainian Orthodox tombstones.

What is the unique folk pattern of the Ukrainian tombstone? The informant B mentioned several characteristics of Ukrainian tombstones. First, old wooden tombstones, which have already disappeared, were very tall compared to the present day tombstones. The picture of wooden tombstones, which was taken at Kolokreka, shows how tall they were. Secondly, sometimes Ukrainian tombstones have a half-moon engraved on the lower limb of the cross. This half-moon element is regarded as a distinctive Ukrainian folk motif. He also mentioned the cross with the trefoil ends, designed in various ways. Indeed, it has been very popular among Ukrainians in western Canada. But, it is also popular among Christians of other ethnic origins.

Besides the tombstones which have the cross shape, there are several kinds of square shaped tombstones,which are very simple and solid. According to the informant B, this square shaped tombstone became popular because the cross shaped tombstones were likely to be vandalized.

In addition to religious influence, we can easily find non-traditional influences on Ukrainian tombstones. First, pictures of the dead appeared on the tombstones. Several tombstones have a metal case for the picture, but those tombstones look manufactured. In the tombstones which were made of cement, we can find an empty sunken rectangle in the middle of the tombstone. This also seems to be used to provide a space for a picture of the dead. Second, the headstone of several tombstones became smaller than the gravestone. According to the informant B, this is an uncommon style in traditional Ukrainian tombstones.

B. The epitaphs on tombstones

The epitaphs on tombstones are divided into four kinds according to their languages: Ukrainian, Russian, Ukrainian-English and English epitaphs. Also the epitaphs are distinguished into several types according to their contents.

The following are the informants' answers to the question, "Do you think there are differences in the epitaphs of tombstones according to the religion, age and social status of people who were buried?"

Informant A	Young age - "safety in the arms of Jesus" Old age - "Rest in peace"
Informant B	1. language - Ukrainian, Russian, Old Slavonic, English 2. Roman Catholic influence - "Rest in peace" 3. non-Ukrainian influence - "Mama(mother)", "Baba(grandmother)" 4. Education, literacy - English or Ukrainian

According to the data, religion, age and social status are not important factors which influence the epitaph on tombstones. The linguistic differentiation is the most clear cut. Most epitaphs were written in Ukrainian. However, Russian and the Old Slavic language also appears in epitaphs. English epitaphs

already appeared on the tombstones of the first generation, perhaps because it is the 2nd and 3rd generations that buried them.

In most cases, Ukrainian epitaphs start 'ТУТ СПОЧИВАЄ'(he/she rests here). Also the name and the dates of a person's birth and death followed. Уродж. (уроджений: born), Ро. (родитися: to be born) and По. (померти: to die) are abbreviations used for dates of birth and death. Finally, epitaphs usually end with the last sentence, 'Вічна память'(everlasting memory).

ТУТ СПОЧУВАЮТЬ ЮЬСИФАТ І МАТРОНА ЛАПУШІНСКІ	ТУТ СПОЧУВАЄ VERONIA SKITSKO УРОДЖ. 21 МАЯ 1933

<Ukrainian epitaph><Ukrainian-English epitaph>

Among some tombstones, we can find an unusual element in Ukrainian epitaphs. A certain word, such as 'Мама'(mother) or 'Баба'(grandmother), is used to indicate a person's status within the family.

In Russian epitaphs, we can find Old Slavic character, such as 'ѣ'. Considering that in Russian Orthodox communities, Old Church Slavonic is still the language of official services[7], we can understand why there were several Old Slavic words in the Russian epitaphs. The contents of Russian epitaphs are almost the same as those of the Ukrainian epitaphs.

English epitaphs are quite different from Ukrainian ones. One of the characteristics of English epitaphs is a person's designation, such as father, mother and grandmother. 'Our beloved father', 'In loving memory of our dear father' or 'our beloved baba' is popular in English epitaphs. Ukrainian 'Мама', which is used in the Ukrainian epitaph, seems to be influenced by this western style. 'Rest in Peace' is the most common sentence in English epitaphs. The informant B said that 'Rest in Peace' is unusual in Ukrainian traditional epitaphs and it seems to be an indication of the Roman Catholic influence.

According to the informant B, the choice of language used in epitaphs depends on the degree of literacy and education of the family who built tombstones. In many cases, the descendent of the dead rebuilt the tombstone, and they possibly used English for the epitaph because they did not know Ukrainian.

C. The carvings of tombstones

Ukrainian tombstones have many styles of carvings: Trees, flowers, stars, half-moons, the crucified figure of Jesus Christ, the abbreviations of certain letters, and so on.

The following are the answers to the questions, "Do you think there are differences in the carving on tombstones according to the religion, age, and social status of people who were buried?" and "What is the meaning of these carvings?"

Informant A	1. No differences in the carvings. 2. The meaning of the carvings: INRI: Jesus Nazarenes, King of the Jews, A (Alpha): life, ω (Omega): death, IC, XC: Jesus Christ. star: birth
Informant B	1. Social status: many carvings - expensive - rich 2. Religion: half moon - Orthodox element 3. the meaning of carvings: tree and vine: the symbol of life star: the symbol of energy, protecting against evil.

Christian symbolism is the most clear characteristic of carvings on Ukrainian tombstones. There are many abbreviations, stars and flowers, which are connected with Christian symbolism. There is no big difference in carving between Orthodox and Catholic tombstones.

Carvings reflect the social status of the people who were buried or who buried the dead. With wooden tombstones, it is difficult to distinguish the wealth of the family. But in the case of marble or granite tombstones, it is possible that wealthy people had the tombstones which had many carvings, because the more carvings the tombstone had, the more expensive it was.

Each carving has its own special meaning. According to informants, a star means birth or power. Therefore sometimes a star is used to indicate the birth date. The following is the example of this: * 1874 - + 1952. Also stars are found on some headstones. Considering the informant B's statement, "stars symbolize protecting people against evil", we can understand why stars are a popular carving on tombstones.

Flowers or trees are also popular in carvings. Trees on Ukrainian tombstones are stereotypically regarded as the symbol of life. Considering the following drawing, trees seem to be a common symbol of life in Christian countries.



Tree of Life [8]

On manufactured tombstones, many kinds of flowers appear. According to the catalog which is used in memorials, 'the Easter lily' symbolizes purity and innocence, and 'Grape and leaves' indicate Christian faith. However, these fixed flower carvings are not found on traditional Ukrainian tombstones. They are a reflection of foreign influences on Ukrainian tombstones. Also they are the evidence of manufacturers.

Many abbreviations appear somewhere in between the ornamentation and inscriptions. The inscription 'INRI' is the abbreviation of Latin words 'Iesus

Nazarenes, Rex Iudaeorum' which mean 'Jesus of Nazarenes, King of the Jews'. The Ukrainian version ' ІНЦІ' is also widely used on the top of headstones. 'IC' and 'XC' stand for 'Jesus Christ'. 'A(Alpha)' means 'the beginning' and 'ω (Omega)' means 'the end'.

According to the article, "Crosses of East Slavic Christianity among Ukrainians in Western Canada", the half-moon motif on the lower section of the cross limb was introduced by folk artists to commemorate the Christian victory over Islam. It was retained as an ornamental motif of early Ukrainian pioneer churches, both Catholic and Orthodox.

These carvings, which I mentioned above, have different forms according to individual creativity. For example, different styles of five, six or eight pointed stars are found on the tombstones.

D. The materials of tombstones and making process

The following are the answers to the questions, "What kinds of materials were used for tombstones?" and "What differences are there in materials of tombstones in relation to the religion, age and social status of people who were buried?"

Informant A	1. wood, concrete, marble, granite, terrazzo, iron
Informant B	1. wood, concrete, marble, granite, iron 2. Social status: metal, modern granite - expensive - rich people

It is possible that the materials of tombstones are different according to the social status of the people who were buried or who buried the dead. Because metal and granite are very expensive, these materials were likely to be preferred by rich families. Concerning the informant A's statement that people started to use sand blast in the 1940s, marble and granite seems to have been already used as materials in the 1940s.

Wooden tombstones were the earliest forms used in pioneer graveyards. But it is difficult to find them now because of gradual deterioration, and destruction during the annual spring cleaning. According to the informant B, wooden tombstones were usually homemade and sometimes had many carvings, such as stars and flowers.

Cement tombstones were the next forms of pioneer's grave markers. Cement tombstones were made in a different form and had many carvings, such as trees, crosses and half-moon. Considering the different styles of carvings and epitaphs in which words were not divided and just fitted onto the space, cement tombstones seem to be homemade. The trifoliate ends on crosses is another characteristic of cement tombstones. These cement tombstones were poured into forms supported by crossed metal bars.

Iron, marble and granite tombstones seem to be manufactured, because these materials require special working skills and instruments, such as sand blast and so forth. The tombstones, which are made of marble and granite, are usually square shaped. Because these tombstones were made by manufacturers, the tombstones were likely to reflect not the folk patterns, but a fixed model.

THE LOCATION AND DIRECTION OF TOMBSTONES

The following are the answers to the questions, "Which side do tombstones usually face?" and "where are cemeteries usually located?"

Informant A	1. Tombstones face east, because Jesus was born in the east. 2. Cemeteries were usually located near church, because people usually go to church.
Informant B	1. The head of the people who were buried face east and the feet face west in many cases. : East is the holy direction. 2. Cemeteries were near churches.

The direction which tombstones face is connected with Christian belief. The informant A said that since the east is regarded as the holy direction, priest conducting the liturgy face east. Therefore the head of the person, who is buried, usually faces east, with the feet facing west. According to him, sometimes the head of the dead face west, but rarely face north or south. Considering his opinion, in most cases, tombstones are located above the head of the dead and also face west or east.

The location of cemeteries is connected with the church. Since the cemetery is regarded as a holy place, it is likely to be located near a church. However, we can find a more practical reason from the informant A's interview. According to him, because funeral services were conduced in church, cemeteries were likely to be close to church for convenience. He also mentioned that in western Ukraine, Galicia and Bukovyna, many cemeteries used to be near church..

CONCLUSION

The tombstone of the first generation of Ukrainian immigrants reflect many things. First, Ukrainian tombstones show that Ukrainians were related to three kinds of religious denominations: Ukrainian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic.

Second, Ukrainian tombstones reflect religion, age and social status of the dead. Also sometimes they indicate the position of the dead within family.

Third, Ukrainian tombstones show that Ukrainians' view on life and death is connected with religion. The direction of tombstones and the location of cemetery reflect this.

Fourth, Ukrainian tombstones have many variations. In connection with history, half-moon motif appeared

on Ukrainian tombstones. Also according to the change of materials and working skills, Ukrainian tombstones also change from wood to cement, granite and terrazzo tombstones, and from cross shaped tombstones to square shaped tombstones.

Fifth, Ukrainian tombstones have been influenced by non-Ukrainian or non-traditional elements. Epitaphs of several tombstones reflect English influence. The height of tombstones became smaller. Headstones of tombstones became smaller than gravestones. Also several tombstones have a metal case for a photograph of the dead.

Finally, Ukrainian tombstones reflect ethnic identity. In western Canada, the three-barred cross, trifoliate end on the cross and half-moon motif are regarded as a indication of Ukrainian ethnic identity. Even though except for the half-moon motif, other elements have been used in other Christians,

REFERENCES

[1] B. Medwidsky, "Ukrainian Grave Makers in East-Central Alberta," *Material History Bulletin*, July 1989.

[2] A.M. Kostecki, "Crosses of East Slavic Christianity among Ukrainians in Western Canada," Material Histori Bulletin, July 1989.

[3] The tree-barred cross is composed of a vertical limb and two parallel horizontal arms, plus a third arm in a slanting position.

[4] The two-barred cross is composed of a vertical limb and single horizontal arm. These are two kinds of the two-barred cross: the Latin and the Greek.

[5] A.M.Kostecki, op. cit., p. 56.

[6] Ibid.

[7] B. Medwidsky, op. cit., p. 74.

[8] Symbolic cemblem from a Shaker drawing; United States, nineteenth century. M. Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 7, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987. P. 62.

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