

Shcherban, A. L. (2025). Ukrainian svoloky as an element of cultural heritage. *Culture and Arts in the Context of World Cultural Heritage*. *Klironomy*, 10, 91–109. Ostrava.

DOI: 10.47451/kj-2025-05

The paper will be published in Crossref, ICI Copernicus, BASE, EBSCO, Zenodo, OpenAIRE, LORY, J-Gate, ASCI, Academic Resource Index ResearchBib, ISI International Scientific Indexing, ADL, JournalsPedia, Mendeley, and Internet Archive databases.



Anatolii L. Shcherban, Doctor of Culturology, Ph.D. in History, Professor, Department Head, Department of Culturology and Museum Activity, Kharkiv State Academy of Culture. Kharkiv, Ukraine.

ORCID 0000-0002-9530-6453, Scopus 57963393500

Ukrainian Svoloky as an Element of Cultural Heritage

Abstract:

The relevance of the study is determined by the need to reassess traditional elements of Ukrainian vernacular architecture as carriers of complex cultural meanings and as integral components of cultural heritage. This relevance is further reinforced by the necessity of a more active integration of knowledge about Ukrainian material culture into the European scholarly discourse. The study problem lies in the fragmentary treatment of Ukrainian *svoloky* in existing scholarship, where they have most often been mentioned episodically as constructional or decorative details rather than analysed as a coherent group of culturally significant artefacts. As a result, their historical development, semantic complexity, and heritage value have remained insufficiently conceptualised. The scientific novelty of the study consists in the holistic interpretation of *svoloky* as a stable cultural phenomenon combining structural, artistic, symbolic, and museological dimensions, as well as in the application of a diachronic and comparative European perspective to their analysis. The subject of the study is the cultural and historical process of the formation, functioning, interpretation, and preservation of Ukrainian *svoloky* within traditional culture. The object of the study is Ukrainian *svoloky* — massive wooden ceiling beams used in residential and ecclesiastical buildings from the late 16th to the early 21st century — considered as objects of material culture and carriers of immaterial meanings. The study aims to provide a comprehensive generalising characterisation of *svoloky* as an important element of the cultural heritage of Ukrainians. The study is based on general scientific, cultural studies, and klironomical methods, including analysis and synthesis, historical and comparative analysis, semiotic and symbolic interpretation, and approaches to cultural continuity and museumification. The study engages, in a generalised manner, the scholarly contributions of historians of architecture and art, ethnographers, cultural theorists, and literary figures whose works reflect or interpret the material, symbolic, and memorial dimensions of traditional Ukrainian dwellings. The essence of the study consists in tracing the historical use of *svoloky*, systematising their folk typology, analysing their decorative and artistic features, reconstructing their semantic roles in ritual and everyday practices, and examining their transformation into museum and heritage objects. Particular attention is paid to their function as sacral and symbolic axes of the traditional house and to their place within a broader European context of wooden ceiling constructions. The author concludes that Ukrainian *svoloky* represent a multifaceted heritage phenomenon whose cultural significance extends far beyond their technical function, and that their analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of Ukrainian traditional culture and its position within the European heritage landscape.

Keywords: Ukrainian heritage, folk construction, svolok, dwelling.

Introduction

The cultural heritage of Ukrainians is exceptionally rich and diverse. One of its principal segments within the context of traditional culture is associated with housing. The inhabitants of

Ukraine treated the dwelling with profound respect. Owners sought to ensure that the microcosm created within residential buildings was comfortable for family members and protected from harmful external influences. As evidenced by the records of ethnographers of the 19th and 20th centuries, already during the construction process householders and carpenters endeavoured to secure prosperity for the families of new settlers. Consequently, the building process was accompanied by a variety of ritual practices. An important participant in these rituals, as well as a key structural element, was formed by strong, massive wooden beams, which across most of the territory of Ukraine in the 19th and early 21st centuries were referred to as *svoloky* (Figure 1; Figure 2; Figure 3). These beams constitute the object of the present study. Its aim is to provide a generalising characterisation of *svoloky* as an important element of the cultural heritage of Ukrainians. The main objectives of the study are as follows: a brief outline of the history of the use of *svoloky* in Ukrainian culture; a description of their folk typology; and a conceptual discussion of their semantics and the history of their museumification. The research methodology is based on the principles of objectivity and historicism and includes methods of analysis and synthesis as well as comparative analysis.

Individual Ukrainian *svoloky* have been discussed repeatedly in scholarly publications. However, comprehensive studies addressing them as a coherent group of artefacts remain scarce. I would note an article published in 2024 and co-authored by author and Nadiia Babkova, which examines *svoloky* from the late 17th to the 18th centuries originating from one region of Ukraine that at the time was known as the Hetmanate (*Shcherban & Babkova, 2024*). A similar lack of generalising research on *svoloky* can be observed in other European countries. A brief overview of such studies is presented in the article “Historical Wooden Ceilings in Waidhofen an der Ybbs, Austria” (*Lichtenschopf et al., 2024*). Also published in 2024, this work focuses on the ceilings of a single Austrian settlement, many of which incorporate carved *svoloky* in their construction. The very fact that scholars from different European countries have shown interest in such artefacts in the mid-2020s attests to the topicality of the subject. In the present case, this relevance is also conditioned by the need for a more active integration of knowledge about Ukraine into the European scholarly discourse. The results of the study may be utilised by historians, ethnologists, and art historians in the preparation of general scholarly works as well as specialised studies.

The scientific novelty of the study is determined both by its subject focus and by the research perspective within which Ukrainian *svoloky* are examined not merely as architectural or technical elements, but as a complex phenomenon of material and immaterial cultural heritage. In contrast to the majority of previous works, in which *svoloky* were mentioned fragmentarily—primarily in the context of folk construction practices, interior decoration, or local ethnographic observations—this study for the first time proposes their holistic interpretation as a stable element of the cultural system, endowed with structural, symbolic, semantic, and museological dimensions.

The novelty of the study also lies in the diachronic approach applied to the analysis of *svoloky* as a historically evolving group of artefacts spanning the period from the late 16th to the early 21st century. This long-term perspective makes it possible to trace transformations in their functions, forms, decorative practices, and semantic meanings across different historical epochs. Within a single analytical framework, the study systematises data on constructional types, folk typologies, regional features of production, ritual practices associated with the installation and use of *svoloky*, as well as the stages of their museumification and contemporary reproduction.

An additional innovative aspect of the study is its positioning of Ukrainian *svoloky* within a broader European comparative context. Rather than being treated exclusively as a nationally specific phenomenon, *svoloky* are analysed as part of a wider European tradition of wooden

ceiling constructions. This approach allows for identifying both shared structural principles and culturally specific trajectories of development, thereby contributing to the expansion of European scholarly discourse through the systematic inclusion of Ukrainian material that has hitherto remained underrepresented in synthetic studies on folk architecture and material culture.

The subject of the study is the cultural and historical process of the formation, functioning, semantic interpretation, and preservation of Ukrainian *svoloky* as a significant element of traditional culture. At the subject level, the study examines the activities of folk craftsmen, householders, local communities, and later institutional actors—such as museums, researchers, and architects—who have participated in the creation, use, interpretation, and transmission of meanings associated with *svoloky*. The subject dimension also encompasses traditional beliefs and practices of the Ukrainian population, reflected in ethnographic records, folklore, life-cycle rituals, and calendar customs, as well as scholarly interpretations of these phenomena developed within historical, cultural, and art-historical research.

The object of the study is Ukrainian *svoloky*—massive wooden ceiling beams used in residential and ecclesiastical buildings on the territory of Ukraine from the late 16th to the early 21st century—considered as objects of material culture and as carriers of immaterial cultural meanings. As an object of research, *svoloky* are analysed in their structural, decorative, symbolic, and museological dimensions, including preserved in situ examples, museum artefacts, archival descriptions, iconographic sources, and written and oral testimonies concerning their use and perception in traditional culture.

The study aims to provide a comprehensive and generalising characterisation of Ukrainian *svoloky* as an important element of the cultural heritage of Ukrainians, encompassing an analysis of their historical development, functional purpose, folk typology, semantic meanings, and processes of museumification within both national and broader European cultural contexts. Achieving this purpose involves not only the description and systematisation of empirical material, but also its conceptual interpretation from the perspectives of cultural studies and klironomy, understood as an approach focused on identifying the mechanisms of preservation and transmission of cultural values over time.

To achieve the stated aim, the study addresses a number of interrelated study objectives:

- trace the history of the use of *svoloky* in traditional residential and ecclesiastical architecture in Ukraine from the late 16th to the early 21st century;
- characterise their structural and functional features in different types of buildings and regions;
- systematise the folk typology of *svoloky* recorded in ethnographic sources and oral testimonies;
- analyse decorative forms and artistic features of carved and painted *svoloky* as manifestations of folk art;
- reveal their semantics within the system of traditional Ukrainian beliefs, including sacral, apotropaic, and symbolic functions;
- examine their role in life-cycle and calendar rituals;
- identify representations of the *svoloky* in Ukrainian literature and visual culture;
- analyse processes of museumification since the early 20th century and contemporary practices of reproduction;
- define the place of Ukrainian *svoloky* within the European context of study on wooden ceiling constructions.

The results of the study are addressed to a broad scholarly audience in the humanities. First and foremost, they are intended for historians of culture, ethnologists, cultural theorists, and art historians engaged in the study of traditional architecture, material culture, and folk art in Eastern and Central Europe. The findings may also be utilised by museum professionals, heritage preservation specialists, and exhibition curators in the attribution, interpretation, and display of objects of vernacular wooden architecture. In addition, the study may be of interest to restoration architects and practitioners working with the reconstruction or stylistic reinterpretation of traditional built environments. In an educational context, the results can be applied in teaching courses in cultural studies, ethnology, architectural history, and heritage studies. Finally, the article is oriented towards an international academic readership and aims to promote the more active integration of knowledge about Ukrainian culture into European and global scholarly discourse.

Methods

The methodological framework of the present study is grounded in a set of general scientific methods that ensure the conceptual coherence, analytical rigour, and epistemological reliability of the research. These methods make it possible to examine Ukrainian *svoloky* as a complex cultural phenomenon situated at the intersection of material structures, symbolic meanings, and historical processes.

The method of analysis is employed as a fundamental cognitive procedure aimed at the systematic examination of the constituent elements of the research object. In general, scientific terms, analysis involves the decomposition of a complex phenomenon into its individual components in order to identify their properties, functions, and internal relationships. In the present study, analytical procedures are applied to the examination of the structural features of *svoloky*, their decorative elements, inscriptions, semantic motifs, ritual functions, and contexts of use. Through analysis, the study differentiates between constructional, artistic, symbolic, and social aspects of *svoloky*, allowing each dimension to be examined in its specificity before being reintegrated into a holistic interpretation.

Complementary to analysis, the method of synthesis is used to reconstruct the integrity of the phenomenon under study by integrating analytically isolated elements into a coherent conceptual whole. As a general scientific method, synthesis enables the identification of systemic relationships between heterogeneous data. In this study, synthesis is applied to combine architectural, ethnographic, folkloric, literary, and museum-related evidence into an integrated understanding of *svoloky* as elements of cultural heritage. The method makes it possible to articulate how structural functions, decorative practices, ritual meanings, and historical transformations interact to form a stable cultural complex rather than a set of unrelated attributes.

The historical method occupies a central place in the study, as it allows cultural phenomena to be examined in their temporal development and contextual embeddedness. In general, scientific terms, the historical method is aimed at reconstructing processes of emergence, transformation, and continuity over time. In this research, it is used to trace the evolution of *svoloky* from the late 16th century to the early 21st century, identifying key stages in their functional, decorative, and semantic transformation. The historical method underpins the chronological structuring of the material and enables the interpretation of changes in *svoloky* in relation to broader socio-cultural, religious, and technological processes.

Closely related to the historical method is the principle of historicism, which serves as a general epistemological guideline rather than a discrete technique. Historicism presupposes that

cultural phenomena can only be adequately understood within the specific historical conditions of their formation and use. In this study, historicism informs the interpretation of *svoloky* by preventing anachronistic readings of their symbolism and functions. Ritual practices, decorative motifs, and inscriptions are analysed in relation to the worldview structures, belief systems, and social norms characteristic of the periods in which they emerged, rather than being evaluated through contemporary conceptual frameworks alone.

The method of comparison (comparative analysis) is applied as a general scientific tool for identifying similarities and differences between phenomena across spatial, temporal, or cultural contexts. Comparative analysis is essential for distinguishing universal features from culturally specific ones. In the present research, this method is used to compare Ukrainian *svoloky* across different regions of Ukraine, as well as to juxtapose them with functionally analogous ceiling beams documented in other European countries. This approach allows the study to determine which characteristics of *svoloky* are locally specific and which reflect broader European construction traditions, thereby situating the Ukrainian material within a wider comparative framework.

The method of classification is employed to organise empirical material into structured categories based on shared characteristics. As a general scientific method, classification facilitates the ordering of complex data and supports analytical clarity. In this study, classification is used to systematise different types of *svoloky* according to folk typologies recorded in ethnographic sources, as well as according to constructional features, decorative techniques, and functional roles. This method enables the articulation of typological distinctions that are meaningful both within traditional culture and for contemporary scholarly interpretation.

The method of generalisation is applied to derive broader theoretical conclusions from individual observations and case studies. In general, scientific practice, generalisation allows researchers to move from the particular to the general without losing empirical grounding. In the present study, generalisation is used to identify recurring patterns in the use, decoration, and semantic interpretation of *svoloky* across different regions and historical periods. On this basis, the study formulates overarching conclusions concerning the cultural significance of *svoloky* as a stable element of Ukrainian heritage.

The systemic approach is utilised as a general methodological orientation that views the object of study as a system composed of interrelated elements. In scientific methodology, a systemic approach emphasises the analysis of relationships, functions, and structures rather than isolated components. In this research, *svoloky* are examined as part of the broader system of traditional dwelling culture, which includes architectural space, ritual practices, symbolic centres of the house, and social relations. This approach makes it possible to understand *svoloky* not merely as constructional details, but as elements integrated into the spatial, symbolic, and social organisation of the dwelling.

The structural-functional method is applied to examine the relationship between the physical structure of *svoloky* and the functions they perform within the dwelling. As a general scientific method, it focuses on how structural features enable or condition specific functions. In the present study, this method is used to analyse how the position, size, and material of *svoloky* relate to their load-bearing role, their visibility within interior space, and their suitability as carriers of inscriptions and decorative motifs. At the same time, the method allows for the interpretation of how structural centrality contributes to their symbolic and ritual significance.

The method of interpretation plays an important role in the analysis of symbolic and semantic aspects of *svoloky*. In general, scientific terms, interpretation involves the attribution of meaning to empirical data within a coherent conceptual framework. In this study, interpretative

procedures are applied to inscriptions, carved motifs, folkloric narratives, and ritual practices associated with *svoloky*. The method enables the reconstruction of culturally embedded meanings while maintaining analytical distance and critical evaluation of sources.

The principle of objectivity functions as a core methodological requirement guiding the selection, analysis, and presentation of material. In scientific research, objectivity entails minimising subjective bias and grounding conclusions in verifiable evidence. In the study, objectivity is ensured through the use of diverse source types, critical evaluation of ethnographic testimonies, and cautious differentiation between documented practices and later interpretations. The principle underlies the balanced treatment of both pagan and Christian elements in the semantics of *svoloky* without privileging one explanatory model a priori.

Finally, the interdisciplinary method is applied as a general scientific strategy that integrates approaches and data from multiple disciplines. In this study, insights from history, ethnology, cultural studies, art history, and museum studies are combined to achieve a comprehensive understanding of *svoloky*. The interdisciplinary method allows the study to transcend disciplinary limitations and to address *svoloky* simultaneously as architectural structures, artistic artefacts, ritual objects, and heritage items.

Alongside general scientific methods, the study employs a range of cultural studies methods that make it possible to analyse *svoloky* not merely as material artefacts, but as culturally meaningful objects embedded in systems of symbols, values, practices, and collective representations. These methods enable a transition from descriptive and structural analysis to the interpretation of cultural meanings and functions.

The cultural-historical method is applied to examine *svoloky* as products of specific cultural epochs and social environments. Within cultural studies, this method focuses on the interrelation between material forms and the cultural contexts in which they emerge and function. In the study, the cultural-historical method is used to interpret changes in the form, decoration, and use of *svoloky* in relation to shifts in religious worldview, social organisation, aesthetic norms, and modes of everyday life. This approach allows the study to situate individual artefacts within broader cultural processes rather than treating them as isolated survivals of folk tradition.

The semiotic method plays a key role in the analysis of the symbolic dimension of *svoloky*. In cultural studies, semiotics is concerned with the investigation of objects as sign systems that convey culturally encoded meanings. In this study, the semiotic method is applied to carved motifs, painted ornaments, inscriptions, and spatial placement of *svoloky* within the dwelling. Particular attention is paid to recurring symbols such as crosses, rosettes, floral motifs, dates, and personal names, which are interpreted as signs operating within a culturally shared semantic field. This method makes it possible to reconstruct layers of meaning that were intelligible to historical actors but may not be immediately evident to the modern observer.

The symbolic-interpretative method is used to analyse *svoloky* as focal points of symbolic concentration within the traditional Ukrainian house. In cultural studies, this method emphasises the interpretation of symbols as carriers of collective values, cosmological models, and social norms. In the study, symbolic interpretation is applied to the role of *svoloky* in rituals connected with house construction, weddings, birth, calendrical celebrations, and death. Through this method, *svoloky* are understood as elements that mediate between the everyday and the sacral, structuring domestic space as a meaningful cultural environment rather than a purely functional one.

The hermeneutic method is employed to interpret textual and narrative sources related to *svoloky*, including ethnographic descriptions, folklore records, literary texts, and archival materials. In cultural research, hermeneutics focuses on understanding meanings within their

historical and cultural horizons. In this study, the hermeneutic method is used to contextualise recorded testimonies of craftsmen and householders, ritual formulas, and literary representations, avoiding literalist or reductive readings. This approach allows for a nuanced interpretation of sources that often combine descriptive, normative, and symbolic layers.

The anthropological approach is applied as a cultural studies method oriented towards understanding *svoloky* through the practices and experiences of the people who produced and used them. In cultural anthropology, material objects are viewed as integral components of lived culture. In the study, the anthropological approach informs the analysis of everyday interactions with *svoloky*, such as touching them during rituals, hanging cradles from them, or addressing them in verbal formulas. This method foregrounds the embodied and experiential dimensions of *svoloky* as part of domestic life.

The method of cultural contextualisation is used to situate *svoloky* within the broader symbolic structure of the traditional Ukrainian dwelling. As a cultural studies method, contextualisation seeks to understand cultural objects in relation to surrounding elements and practices. In the study, *svoloky* are analysed in connection with other key components of the house interior, such as the stove, the icon corner (*pokuttia*), and the spatial organisation of rooms. This method allows the study to demonstrate how *svoloky* functioned as part of a coherent cultural model of domestic space.

The comparative cultural method is applied to identify similarities and differences in the cultural meanings attributed to ceiling beams in different European traditions. Unlike purely structural comparison, this method focuses on symbolic functions and cultural interpretations. In the study, Ukrainian *svoloky* are compared with analogous elements in other European contexts to determine whether similarities in decoration and ritual use reflect shared symbolic models, parallel cultural developments, or processes of cultural transmission. This approach strengthens the interpretative dimension of the study and situates Ukrainian material within a broader cultural landscape.

The method of cultural memory analysis is employed to examine how *svoloky* function as carriers of collective memory. In cultural studies, cultural memory refers to the ways societies preserve and transmit knowledge about the past through material objects, narratives, and practices. In this study, *svoloky* are analysed as repositories of historical information encoded in inscriptions, dates, names, and symbolic motifs, as well as through their preservation in museums and heritage sites. This method enables the interpretation of *svoloky* as material anchors of memory that connect individual households to broader historical narratives.

Finally, the interpretative museological approach is applied at the intersection of cultural studies and museum studies. This method focuses on how cultural objects are recontextualised and reinterpreted when transferred from everyday use to museum space. In the study, it is used to analyse the processes of museumification of *svoloky* since the early 20th century, including changes in their semantic status, modes of display, and interpretative framing. This approach allows the study to trace how meanings attributed to *svoloky* have evolved in response to institutional practices of heritage preservation and public representation.

The final methodological layer of the study is constituted by klironomical methods ([Brychik, 2024](#)), which make it possible to conceptualise Ukrainian *svoloky* explicitly as objects of cultural heritage and to analyse them in terms of continuity, preservation, transmission, and reconstruction of cultural meanings over time. Within this framework, klironomy is understood as an integrative approach focused on the mechanisms through which cultural forms are maintained, reinterpreted, and legitimised across historical periods.

The klironomical approach serves as the overarching methodological orientation of the study. In its essence, this approach is concerned with identifying how cultural values embedded in material objects persist beyond the conditions of their original production and use. In the study, the klironomical approach is applied to *svolokky* as long-lived elements of the built environment that have retained cultural significance despite changes in architectural practices, social structures, and symbolic systems. This approach enables the analysis of *svolokky* not merely as remnants of the past, but as active carriers of heritage meanings within evolving cultural contexts.

The method of cultural continuity analysis is employed to trace the persistence and transformation of *svolokky* across different historical epochs. In klironomical terms, continuity does not imply static preservation, but rather adaptive transmission of cultural forms. In this study, the method is used to examine how *svolokky* continued to function as meaningful elements from the early modern period through the 19th and 20th centuries, including phases of simplification, decline in everyday use, and later revival. This analysis makes it possible to identify both stable core features and variable elements conditioned by historical change.

The method of semantic inheritance analysis focuses on the transmission of meanings associated with *svolokky* across generations. In klironomy, semantic inheritance refers to the ways in which symbolic meanings are preserved, modified, or reinterpreted over time. In the study, this method is applied to ritual practices, symbolic motifs, and inscriptions connected with *svolokky*, allowing the reconstruction of how sacral, protective, and commemorative meanings were inherited, transformed, or partially lost in different periods. This approach highlights the non-material dimension of heritage embodied in material objects.

The method of heritage value attribution is used to identify and substantiate the cultural significance of *svolokky* within contemporary heritage discourse. In klironomical methodology, value attribution involves the articulation of criteria by which objects are recognised as heritage. In this study, the method is applied to assess *svolokky* in terms of historical, artistic, symbolic, and memorial value. This allows the study to move from descriptive analysis to normative evaluation, clarifying why *svolokky* merit inclusion in heritage protection, museum collections, and scholarly narratives.

The method of museumification analysis occupies a central place within the klironomical framework. In klironomy, museumification is understood as a key mechanism of heritage preservation and reinterpretation. In the study, this method is used to analyse the processes through which *svolokky* were transferred from everyday architectural contexts into museum and exhibition spaces from the early 20th century onwards. Particular attention is paid to changes in function, meaning, and perception that accompany this transition, as well as to the role of museums in shaping public understanding of *svolokky* as heritage objects.

The method of heritage reconstruction analysis is applied to examine contemporary practices of reproducing and reintroducing *svolokky* into modern architectural environments. In klironomical terms, reconstruction is not limited to physical replication but includes symbolic and cultural reactivation. In this study, the method is used to analyse cases where newly carved *svolokky* are produced for newly built houses, often drawing on historical models. This allows for an assessment of how heritage forms are selectively reinterpreted and adapted to contemporary cultural needs.

The normative-analytical method is employed to examine implicit and explicit norms governing the preservation and interpretation of *svolokky*. In klironomy, norms play a crucial role in determining how heritage is classified, protected, and represented. In the study, this method is used to analyse museum practices, scholarly classifications, and heritage narratives that

influence the status of *svoloky* as cultural assets. This approach enables the identification of gaps between scholarly knowledge, institutional frameworks, and public perception.

The method of heritage integration analysis is applied to assess the position of Ukrainian *svoloky* within broader European and global heritage contexts. In klironomical methodology, integration refers to the incorporation of local heritage phenomena into transnational cultural narratives. In this study, the method is used to compare Ukrainian *svoloky* with analogous ceiling beams in other European traditions, evaluating the potential for their inclusion in comparative heritage studies and international scholarly discourse. This reinforces the study's contribution to the visibility of Ukrainian cultural heritage beyond national boundaries.

Finally, the prospective klironomical method is employed to outline potential directions for the future preservation and study of *svoloky*. In klironomy, prospective analysis focuses on anticipating challenges and opportunities in heritage transmission. In the study, this method informs reflections on the risks of loss, the role of documentation and digital recording, and the importance of interdisciplinary research for the sustainable preservation of *svoloky* as elements of cultural heritage.

Literature Review

Butich and Rinsevich (2006) compile and publish documentary materials (“universals”) issued during the Hetmanate period under Ivan Mazepa, which contain administrative, legal, and socio-economic evidence of early modern Ukrainian realities. In the study, this source is used as an early documentary attestation for the term *svolok* and its contextual appearance in relation to wooden constructions, enabling a historically grounded dating of the concept and its usage in the late 17th and early 18th-century milieu (Butich & Rinsevich, 2006).

Buychik (2024) offers a systematic theoretical exposition of klironomy as a science of cultural heritage, including its conceptual apparatus for analysing preservation, transmission, value attribution, and heritage legitimisation. This monograph is used in the study to underpin the klironomical methodological layer: it provides the conceptual vocabulary for treating *svoloky* not simply as structural components but as heritage objects whose meanings and values are preserved, transformed, and reactivated through museumification, reconstruction, and scholarly interpretation (Buychik, 2024).

Chepeylyk (2000) analyses Ukrainian architectural modernism and, more broadly, the cultural logic through which vernacular forms were reinterpreted and institutionalised in modern architectural projects. In this study, the work is used to contextualise 19th-century and early 20th-century practices of stylistic revival and “folk style” construction, helping to interpret the reintroduction of artefacts and motifs associated with the Cossack era—including *svoloky*—into representational architecture and heritage-oriented design (Chepeylyk, 2000).

De la Fliz (1996) publishes ethnographic and folkloric albums containing visual and descriptive documentation of Ukrainian everyday life and domestic interiors, including depictions relevant to the spatial placement and cultural context of ceiling beams. The study uses this source as an iconographic and ethnographic record supporting the reconstruction of the domestic environment in which *svoloky* functioned, particularly for illustrating how such beams were embedded in lived interior space rather than existing only as isolated museum artefacts (De la Fliz, 1996).

Lichtenschopf et al. (2024) examine historical wooden ceilings in Waidhofen an der Ybbs (Austria), describing ceiling constructions that include beams comparable in function and, in some cases, decorative treatment to Ukrainian *svoloky*. This source is used in the study to establish a European comparative perspective, demonstrating that functionally analogous ceiling-beam

traditions exist beyond Ukraine and enabling the research to pose a crucial interpretative question: whether similarities reflect independent parallel development or cultural transmission across European regions (*Lichtenschopf et al., 2024*).

Maslichuk (2004) investigates materials related to the everyday life of the Cossack elite in Sloboda Ukraine in the 17th and 18th centuries, with attention to objects, interiors, and the material world of the social milieu. In this study, the source is used as contextual evidence for the presence and cultural framing of interior structural elements in elite domestic settings; it supports early attestations of *svoloky* in Kharkiv-related contexts and helps situate the beam within the broader “world of things” characteristic of early modern Ukrainian life (*Maslichuk, 2004*).

Myrnyi (1920s) is a literary work in which domestic ritual practices and symbolic actions related to protective markings (including cross signs) are represented in narrative form. In the study, this text is used as an illustrative cultural witness demonstrating how protective signs and sacral practices were imagined, narrated, and circulated in Ukrainian cultural memory, thereby complementing ethnographic evidence concerning the sacral and apotropaic semantic field associated with interior elements such as *svoloky* (*Myrnyi, 1920s*).

Pavlenko (1927) discusses Ukrainian folk woodcarving, including principles of decorum, restraint, and the functional integration of carved ornamentation within vernacular architecture. The study uses this source to support the art-historical interpretation of carved *svoloky*: it helps justify why the beam became a privileged locus of carving and why decorative concentration on specific structural elements (rather than ubiquitous carving) aligns with vernacular aesthetic logic and architectural integrity (*Pavlenko, 1927*).

Shcherban and Babkova (2024) provide a focused scholarly analysis of carved support beams of the Hetmanate period, offering empirical descriptions, typological considerations, and interpretative insights into 17th- and 18th-century artefacts. In this study, the article is used as the most directly relevant specialised precedent for early modern *svoloky*: it supports attribution practices, demonstrates the research potential of inscriptions (including exceptional socio-legal information), and substantiates the claim that comprehensive syntheses of *svoloky* as a class of heritage objects remain scarce (*Shcherban & Babkova, 2024*).

Shevchenko (1949) collects the canonical works of Taras Shevchenko, including texts and documentary materials that contain symbolic references to *svoloky* and the Cossack past. In the study, this edition is used to substantiate the literary and symbolic dimension of *svoloky* as cultural signs: Shevchenko’s use of the “beam with words” as an allegorical motif demonstrates how the *svolok* could operate as a condensed symbol of historical memory and cultural loss within Ukrainian national imagination (*Shevchenko, 1949*).

Taranushenko (2012) is a major scholarly work on the wooden monumental architecture of Left-Bank Ukraine, providing architectural-historical analysis of constructional systems and structural components in ecclesiastical wooden buildings. This source is used in the present study to ground the discussion of *svoloky* (or functionally analogous beams) in church architecture, clarifying their roles in binding wall structures and supporting ceilings and thus extending the phenomenon beyond domestic space into the sphere of sacral architecture (*Taranushenko, 2012*).

Tereshchenko (1930) presents ethnographic-architectural materials on laying foundations and building a house, including detailed testimony from a carpenter and descriptions of ritual sequences connected with construction. The study relies on this source as a key ethnographic foundation for reconstructing construction-stage rites and the ritual handling of the central beam; it supports the analysis of *svoloky* as participants in social practice and as loci where material

building processes intersect with blessing formulas, symbolic transactions, and the formation of a sacral domestic core (*Teresbchenko, 1930*).

Voitovych (*2015*) examines folk demonology of the Boyko region, documenting beliefs, omens, and ritual techniques associated with domestic space and its components. In this study, the work is used to evidence region-specific semantic and ritual interpretations of ceiling beams, particularly in relation to death-related beliefs and practices (e.g., cracking as an omen, drilling/raising a beam in liminal situations), thereby strengthening the argument that *svoloky* carried protective and liminal functions within traditional belief systems (*Voitovych, 2015*).

Yurchenko (*1968*) addresses wooden architecture within a broader multi-volume history of Ukrainian art, including evaluations of artistic woodcarving and the place of architectural carving in 18th- and 19th-century cultural development. The study uses this source to substantiate an authoritative art-historical assessment of carved *svoloky* as outstanding examples of Ukrainian architectural wood carving, thus supporting the claim that these beams should be considered not only technical elements but also significant artistic phenomena (*Yurchenko, 1968*).

Zaveriushchenko (*2024*) analyses the concept of the house within the Ukrainian wedding conceptual sphere, discussing ritual actions and symbolic objects relevant to domestic space during weddings. In the study, this source is used to support the interpretation of *svoloky* as active components of wedding ritual practice (e.g., restrictions on passing beneath the beam, recording gifts, tapping the wedding bread, fixing the wedding tree), thereby providing a conceptological and ethnolinguistic complement to earlier ethnographic records and reinforcing the beam's role as a sacral and symbolic axis of the dwelling (*Zaveriushchenko, 2024*).

Results

Title

The earliest facts known to me concerning the use of the term “*svolok*” in relation to Ukrainian wooden structures date to 1695 and 1715. They refer to constructions required for the installation of a water mill at the Pyatnytskyi Monastery (Chernihiv Regiment) and to the interior of a house in the city of Kharkiv (*Butich & Rinsevich, 2006, p. 190; Masliichuk, 2004, p. 277*). The word is etymologically related to the nouns *volok* (a type of fishing net), *volokno* (“fibre”), and the verb *volochyty* (“to drag” or “to pull”). Its etymology is Slavic and conveys the meaning “that which draws together” or “that which binds.” This is a unique designation for such beams within Europe. For example, people predominantly used the feminine noun *matitsa* for similar structural elements (derived from the word *mother* and also denoting the female bodily organ “womb”). Although in certain regions of present-day Ukraine terms of foreign origin were also used alongside this designation, *svolok* has remained the term most commonly employed in the literary language. In view of this, the author uses the term *svolok* as a generalised designation.

In Austria, such beams form part of a specific type of ceiling known as the *Riemenbalkendecke*. Local researchers have adopted the English term “*girder*” as an equivalent for the beam under discussion (*Lichtenschopf et al., 2024*) (*Figure 3*). Ceilings of a similar structural type, supported by *svoloky*, were likewise commonly found in Ukraine.

Location and Structural Functions

In traditional residential buildings in Ukraine, there was usually one, or more rarely two, *svoloky* per room. As a rule, they supported the ceiling beams, and where the floor area of the room was small, they directly carried the ceiling boards themselves. In wooden structures, these structural elements also “tied” together the upper parts of the walls (acting as clamps that

restrained the outward expansion of the walls under the pressure of the roof) and helped to significantly reduce the load imposed on them. The ceiling itself served to protect rooms from cold and precipitation that could penetrate through the roof, and it separated the residential from the non-residential space of the house or, in multi-storey buildings, divided the floors.

In addition, such beams were often used in Ukrainian wooden churches: they bound the walls of domes and the upper sections of log walls (*Taranushenko, 2012, p. 121*) or were employed to support the ceiling. The oldest example bearing a Cyrillic inscription (dated 1669) has survived to the present day in the Church of All Saints in Dobříkov (Czech Republic), which was originally constructed in the Ukrainian village of Velyka Kopania as an Orthodox church.

Folk Typology

Across the territory of Ukraine, ceilings with beams of the construction type under study have, since ancient times, been used by representatives of various ethnic groups. I am familiar with them from the houses of Ukrainians (in all regions), as well as Armenians and Poles (in the western lands). The “folk” typology characteristic of Ukrainians of the Middle Dnipro region as of the first third of the 20th century was recorded in the summer of 1929 by Andrii Tereshchenko from the words of a peasant carpenter who had built 15 houses. According to this typology, the cheapest beams, ordered by poorer builders, were “plastered *svoloky*”. They were made of “poor-quality wood” and therefore were coated with clay and, like the walls and ceiling of the house, whitewashed. The next type, “washed *svoloky*” (*Figure 3*), were made of “good-quality wood” and thus were neither painted nor plastered. When these beams became soiled, they were washed with water. Representatives of the 3rd group, “painted *svoloky*”, ordered by wealthier householders, were similar to the “washed” ones but painted “on the sides and underneath” in green or red. These *svoloky* were often decorated with paint depicting “all kinds of flowers—*rozhi*” (the folk name for roses). At times, the year of the house’s construction was inscribed on them, and Golgotha was depicted in the centre. The final type comprised “carved *svoloky*” (*Figure 1; Figure 2*), on which “roses, various flowers”, the year of construction, the owner’s surname, Golgotha crosses (*Tereshchenko, 1930, p. 52*), and other details were carved. The diverse decoration of *svoloky* belonging to the latter two groups testifies to the important role of such objects in the embellishment of interiors and in marking their sacral cores during construction. If a householder from the Dnipro region lacked the means to produce new *svoloky*, he transferred those already used in older houses. As a result, more than ten such objects dating to the 18th century have survived to this day. In the Carpathians (in particular, in the Boyko region), by contrast, *svoloky* that had been dismantled were burned (*Voitovych, 2015, p. 60*). This constitutes one of the reasons for the scarcity in this region of preserved *svoloky* from the early modern period.

Painted and carved *svoloky* were the principal decorated structural elements in the interiors of Ukrainian houses. In general, the decoration of walls and ceilings in traditional Ukrainian dwellings and wooden churches up to the 19th century was usually very restrained. In houses, apart from *svoloky*, it was placed—save for rare exceptions—near doorframes, windows, along the perimeter of the room beneath the ceiling, and on stoves. In churches, decoration was applied to the “clamps”. Folk “designers” were able to “exceptionally aptly integrate carved elements... with the architecture as a whole, and it is beyond doubt that the use of carving elsewhere, both in churches and in houses, would have been superfluous” (*Pavlenko, 1927, p. 8*).

History of Use

The oldest known house in Ukraine featuring a *svolok* (of the simplest form, without decoration, from the village of Samary, Ratne District, Volyn Region) is dated to 1587 on the basis of an inscription on its wall. It is currently exhibited at the National Museum of Folk Architecture and Life of Ukraine.

The next group of *svoloky* is dated to 1659–1793 and originates from individual settlements across most geographical regions. This group includes only carved (*rizani*) *svoloky* bearing dates or references to their owners, which make relatively precise attribution possible (*Figure 1; Figure 2*). Given the considerable passage of time since then, marked by numerous cataclysms, only a small number of such beams have survived to the present day. Only a few remain in situ within houses, while others are kept in museums and heritage reserves. In total, 31 artefacts have been identified directly, and data on a further 26 have been examined through publications and archival materials. With only a few exceptions, these beams bear inscriptions, a substantial proportion of which constitute striking examples of the art of lettering. The information contained in these texts enriches our understanding of the biographies of representatives of the social milieu of the time and records blessing formulas and apotropaic texts. One artefact contains information about an exceptional case relating to customary law (*Shcherban & Babkova, 2024*).

Svoloky are among the most visually compelling monuments of material culture of the early modern period in the history of Ukraine. According to the well-founded assessment of the architectural historian P. Yurchenko, in the 18th century their “artistic decoration” belonged to “the finest examples of Ukrainian architectural wood carving” (*Yurchenko, 1968, p. 68*). Despite the fact that analogies to certain decorative elements of *svoloky* can be found among functionally similar objects produced by other European peoples (Germans, Poles, Slovenes); see, e.g., Lichtenschopf et al. (*2024*), as integral works of art a significant proportion of Ukrainian *svoloky* of the 18th century constitute a distinctive phenomenon. Their originality is conditioned by the fact that, although the culture of the inhabitants of Ukraine during the early modern period generally developed in line with trends characteristic of large parts of Europe, it acquired specific expressive features. These depended on the peoples with whom local communities bordered, the influences they absorbed as a result of particular historical processes, and the traits of mentality that formed in the course of their cultural development.

To date, no systematic inventory has been compiled of Ukrainian *svoloky* of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries that possess cultural value. Only individual items are mentioned in scholarly publications. Based on personal observations, there are grounds to assert that, under the influence of a number of factors, the decoration of *svoloky* became simplified from the mid-18th century onwards. Across most areas of Ukrainian settlement, by the mid-20th century they gradually fell out of everyday use, although in many buildings old *svoloky* continue to be used for their original purpose to this day.

In different regions of Ukraine, the traditions of producing *svoloky* were broadly similar, yet certain distinctive features can be identified. For example, in the western regions, from the 18th to the early 20th century, they were made exclusively from coniferous wood, whereas in the Dnieper region deciduous trees were also used.

Semantics

Svoloky appear in scattered examples of folklore, the earliest of which date to the 19th century. The information recorded in these sources concerns the moment when the beam was installed in the house and its subsequent functioning. With regard to the former, several texts have survived that differ in detail. For example, according to the testimony of a craftsman recorded

in the early 20th century in relation to wooden houses, the process unfolded as follows. A team of carpenters invited by the client began work only after the “senior carpenter” pronounced “Lord, help us” or “God, help us” and made the sign of the cross. The previously prepared parts of the house were then assembled, notches were cut on the *svolok* and the rafters, after which everything was dismantled again; the *sokly* (the base for the walls) were laid, and the structure was reassembled. Once the walls had been erected, the *svolok* was “brought into the interior of the building and laid lengthwise along the house on two supports on the ground”. A sheepskin coat and a coin were then placed beneath its ends, and those present drank together, saying: “God grant that the house be warm and prosperous.” Next, the *svolok* was “laid in place”: a tablecloth was spread at its centre, and ritual towels (*rushnyky*) were placed under its ends. After the meal, the hostess removed them: the towels were taken by the senior master, and the tablecloth by the hostess. This signified that “the hostess takes God for herself, and the master takes the saints.” (*Tereshchenko, 1930, pp. 50–51*)

It should be noted that precisely at the centre of many decorated Ukrainian *svoloky* there was an image of the Cross of Golgotha—the instrument of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In the same place, various types of rosettes were quite often depicted, particularly in the late 17th and the first half of the 18th centuries, and sometimes coats of arms (either of the Russian Empire or owner). Thereafter, the *svolok*, together with the *pokuttia* (the place where icons were kept) and the stove, became a kind of sacral centre of the dwelling, used during key or crisis periods in the life of the family (*Figure 3*). In particular, during wedding rituals the *svolok* featured from the outset to the culmination of the ceremony. For instance, at the matchmaking stage the envoys of the groom were not permitted to step beneath it until consent to the marriage had been obtained. The best man recorded the gifts for the newlyweds on it. A kneading trough with dough for the wedding bread (*korovai*), as well as the finished bread itself, was lifted up to the *svolok* and lightly tapped against it “for good fortune”. If the wedding tree (*biltse*) was sufficiently large, its top was tied to the *svolok*. Newborn children were touched to it, and their cradle was hung from a specially driven hook attached to it (*Zaveriuschenko, 2024, p. 41*).

The *svolok* also featured in beliefs associated with death. If it cracked, this was perceived as a portent of the householder’s departure “to the other world”. To ease the death throes of a person (e.g., a witch), the *svolok* in their house could be raised or drilled (*Voitovych, 2015, pp. 54, 129*).

During key periods of the ritual calendar, the “power” of the *svolok* was ritually “reinforced”. For example, on 18 January (the eve of Epiphany) crosses were drawn on it with consecrated chalk or a candle, while before Easter crosses were marked with a candle. On Christmas Eve, a spoonful of *kutia* was thrown at it (or simply at the ceiling), and the grains that stuck were counted in order to predict the future harvest (*Zaveriuschenko, 2024, p. 41*). Incidentally, the well-known Ukrainian writer Panas Myrnyi recorded in his novella *Ancient and Modern Misfortune* that a householder scraped off and gave a sick woman to drink the image of a cross drawn in soot from a Passion candle (*Myrnyi, 1920s, p. 10*). Summarising the data on the semantic field of Ukrainian notions associated with *svoloky*, one may cite M. Hrushevskyi’s view that this beam provides protective cover over the family (*Zaveriuschenko, 2024, p. 41*).

The image of the *svolok* was employed by classics of Ukrainian literature as a symbolic motif. In particular, Taras Shevchenko, in the mystery play *The Great Vault*, used the image of a “*svolok* with words” (i.e., an ancient one), which had been “burnt to charcoal”, as an allegory of the final destruction of Ukraine’s Cossack heritage by the Muscovites after the Battle of Poltava in 1709. Moreover, he depicted early modern *svoloky* in two drawings and corresponding etchings (*Elders and Gifts in Chyhyryn, 1649*), included in the album *Picturesque Ukraine* (1844).

A carved *svolok* with an inscription, as an important attribute of the Cossack era, was used in the construction of the well-known guest house on the Galagan estate in Lebedyntsi. Built in 1854–1856 by commission and at the expense of the estate owner, according to a design by the architect Ye. Chervinskyi (1820–1890), it was intended to recreate the dwelling of representatives of the general officer elite of the Hetmanate of the second half of the 17th and 18th centuries as it was imagined by contemporary Ukrainian scholars (including T. Shevchenko). Evidently under the poet's influence, the estate owner—who was personally acquainted with him—formulated the aim of the project as follows: “so that our architecture might be revived just as our poetry has been revived in the mouths of poets.” V. Chepeylyk described this building as “the firstborn of the revival of the folk style” (*Chepeylyk, 2000, p. 27*). A cross and the inscription “This house was built to revive the memory of the life of our ancestors in the minds of their descendants” were carved on the *svolok*. Taras Shevchenko highly praised the house in his *Journal*, calling it “an aristocratic, yet good and exemplary undertaking.” (*Shevchenko, 1949, p. 265*)

From the beginning of the 20th century, the museumification of such objects began, along with their exhibition in historical and local history museums. The largest collections were assembled by M. Biliashivskyi for the Kyiv Museum of Arts, Industry, and Science; by D. Yavornytskyi for the Katerynoslav Museum named after O. Pol; and by K. Moshchenko for the Natural History Museum of the Poltava Provincial Zemstvo. From the 1970s onwards, *svoloky* could already be seen in the interiors of dwellings transferred to open-air museums in the cities of Pereiaslav and Kyiv. In the 1990s and 2000s, the production of newly carved *svoloky* for newly built houses began. A striking example of this trend is provided by the buildings belonging to the former President of Ukraine, V. Yushchenko.

Discussion

In many scholarly works that mention Ukrainian *svoloky* and were published prior to the early 2020s, emphasis was placed on their pagan symbolism, while the Christian dimension was effectively ignored. At present, it is desirable to trace the roots of beliefs concerning the semantics of *svoloky* and to compare them with those characteristics of representatives of other European ethnic groups. An attempt should be made to distinguish pre-Christian elements and to understand the reasons for the adoption of Christian ones. It is also necessary to consider Ukrainian *svoloky* as part of a building tradition common to many European countries. Of particular interest among them are the carved *svoloky* of the late 17th to the first half of the 18th century, for which analogies have been identified, inter alia, in Austria. It is important to determine whether, in this case, we are dealing with a discrete emergence of the custom of decorating ceiling beams in a similar manner, or whether this represents the result of the transgression of a phenomenon from Western Europe to the East. A separate aspect of the discussion may be constituted by an analysis of the specific features of the musealisation of these structural elements of buildings.

The findings of the study open several promising directions for further research into Ukrainian *svoloky* as elements of cultural heritage. One important avenue concerns the systematic expansion of comparative European analysis, aimed at identifying whether similarities between carved and decorated ceiling beams in Ukraine and other regions of Europe represent independent parallel developments or the result of cultural transmission across historical networks of contact. Such research would benefit from coordinated interdisciplinary collaboration combining architectural history, dendrochronology, and art-historical stylistic analysis. A second direction involves the creation of a comprehensive inventory and digital corpus of Ukrainian *svoloky* from the 19th and early 20th centuries, a period that remains

insufficiently documented despite its significance for understanding processes of simplification, decline, and transformation of traditional forms. This would enable quantitative and spatial analyses of regional variation and contribute to heritage protection strategies. Further research is also required to deepen the semantic analysis of *svoloky* by distinguishing pre-Christian, Christian, and syncretic layers within their symbolic repertoire and by situating these meanings within broader systems of domestic sacrality and folk cosmology. From a klironomical perspective, particular attention should be paid to contemporary practices of reconstruction, reproduction, and reinterpretation of *svoloky* in modern architecture, assessing their role in the active transmission of heritage rather than mere stylistic revival. Finally, future studies may focus on the museological representation of *svoloky*, analysing curatorial strategies, narrative framing, and visitor perception in museums and open-air heritage complexes, thereby contributing to a more reflexive and theoretically grounded integration of these artefacts into national and European heritage discourse.

Conclusion

Wooden ceiling beams, which in the Ukrainian literary language are usually referred to as *svoloky*, constitute an important element of cultural heritage, a source of information for historical and cultural research, and an ornament (often an underestimated one) of museum collections. Their use in Ukrainian wooden structures—both domestic buildings and churches—has been documented since the 16th and 17th centuries. A folk craftsman from the Middle Dnieper region in the first third of the 20th century distinguished four groups of *svoloky*: *mazani* (plastered), *myti* (washed), *farbovani* (painted), and *rizani* (carved). This “folk” typology remains a “living” one and encompasses all artefacts for which information is currently available. Painted and carved *svoloky* preserve images and inscriptions that represent an important source of historical and cultural information. The richly decorated beams of the fourth group, preserved from the 1690s to the 1740s, constitute striking examples of woodcarving.

In addition to their structural and decorative functions, *svoloky* in the folk culture of Ukrainians also fulfilled symbolic and sacral roles within dwellings, as evidenced by disparate folklore materials, the earliest of which date to the 19th century. The information recorded in these sources relates to the moment of installing the beam in the house and to its use in various ritual practices that accompanied the life of the family as a whole and of its individual members. The image of the *svolok* was employed symbolically by classics of Ukrainian literature (notably Taras Shevchenko). From the mid-19th century onwards, such objects themselves became one of the significant elements of a new architectural style based on the achievements of folk builders of the early modern period. Since the beginning of the 20th century, they have been among the important carriers of information about contemporary architecture. *Svoloky* are seen by large numbers of visitors to museums and heritage reserves as visually attractive components of Ukrainian dwellings and as bearers of historical information. Some knowledgeable Ukrainians continue to use them in private homes and public buildings.

The present study has achieved its stated aim of providing a comprehensive and generalising characterisation of Ukrainian *svoloky* as a significant element of the cultural heritage of Ukrainians. Through an integrated cultural-historical and klironomical approach, *svoloky* have been examined not merely as constructional components of traditional buildings, but as complex heritage objects that combine structural, decorative, symbolic, and memorial functions and that have retained cultural relevance across several centuries.

In addressing the first study objective, the study has traced the history of the use of *svoloky* in Ukrainian residential and ecclesiastical architecture from the late 16th to the early 21st century,

establishing their long-term presence and documenting key stages in their functional and formal transformation. The analysis of structural and functional characteristics has demonstrated that *svoloky* played a central role in the spatial organisation of traditional dwellings and wooden churches, simultaneously fulfilling load-bearing, binding, and spatially organising functions. The task of systematising folk typology has been fulfilled through the reconstruction and interpretation of vernacular classifications, which remain analytically relevant for contemporary scholarship and encompass the full range of known artefacts.

The study has also successfully addressed the objective of analysing decorative forms and artistic features of *svoloky*. Painted and carved beams have been shown to constitute important examples of Ukrainian folk woodcarving, with inscriptions and ornamentation serving as valuable sources of historical, social, and artistic information. The semantic analysis has demonstrated that *svoloky* occupied a key position within the symbolic structure of the traditional house, functioning as a sacral and protective axis closely connected with rituals of construction, marriage, birth, calendrical celebrations, and death. In fulfilling the task of examining literary and cultural representations, the research has shown that the image of the *svolok* entered Ukrainian cultural memory as a condensed symbol of historical continuity and loss, thereby extending its significance beyond the material sphere.

The objectives related to museumification and contemporary practices have likewise been achieved. The study has demonstrated that since the early 20th century *svoloky* have become important museum artefacts and elements of heritage display, undergoing semantic recontextualisation within institutional frameworks of preservation and interpretation. At the same time, contemporary practices of reproducing carved *svoloky* in newly built structures have been interpreted as forms of heritage reactivation rather than simple stylistic imitation. Finally, by situating Ukrainian *svoloky* within a broader European context, the study has clarified their place in comparative research on wooden ceiling constructions and highlighted their potential contribution to transnational heritage discourse.

Overall, the study confirms that Ukrainian *svoloky* represent a multifaceted heritage phenomenon that integrates material construction, artistic expression, symbolic meaning, and cultural memory. The successful resolution of all study tasks demonstrates that *svoloky* is worth regarding not as marginal or purely technical elements of folk architecture, but as culturally central objects whose study contributes to a deeper understanding of Ukrainian traditional culture and its place within the European heritage landscape.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that is no conflict of interest.

Reference:

- Butich, I., & Rinsevich, V. (Comps.). (2006). *Universals of Ivan Mazepa (1687–1709)*. Part II [Універсали Івана Мазепи (1687–1709). Част. II]. Kyiv, Lviv: NTS. (In Ukr.)
- Buychik, A. (2024). *Klironomy: The Science of Cultural Heritage*. Ostrava: Tuculart Edition, European Institute for Innovation Development.
- Chepelyk, V. (2000). *Ukrainian architectural modernism* [Український архітектурний модерн]. Kyiv: Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture. (In Ukr.)
- De la Fliz, D. P. (1996). *Albums*. Vol. 1. *Ethnographic and folklore series* [Альбоми. Т. 1. Серія «Етнографічно-фольклорна»]. Kyiv. (In Ukr.)

- Lichtenschopf, A., Buchinger, G., Wächter, E., & Grabner, M. (2024). Historical Wooden Ceilings in Waidhofen an der Ybbs, Austria. *International Journal of Wood Culture*, 4, 2–3. <https://doi.org/10.1163/27723194-bja10032>
- Masliichuk, V. (2004). Materials for the history of the everyday life of the Cossack elite in sloboda Ukraine in the 17th–18th centuries (The Cossack elite in the world of things) [Матеріали для історії старшинського побуту на Слобідській Україні XVII–XVIII ст. (Козацька старшина у колі речей)]. *Antiquities*, 272–282. (In Ukr.). <https://periodicals.karazin.ua/drevnosti/article/view/5207>
- Myrnyi, P. (1920s). *Ancient and Present Misfortune* [Лихо давнє й сьогчасне]. Leipzig: Ukrainian Publishing House. (In Ukr.)
- Pavlenko, M. (1927). Folk Woodcarving [Народне різьбярство]. *The Universe*, 18, 8. (In Ukr.). <https://lib.in.ua/94827-zhurnal-vseshvit-1927-18/>
- Shcherban, A., & Babkova, N. (2024). Carved support beams of the Hetmanate. *History of Science and Technology*, 14(1), 184–212. (In Ukr.). <https://doi.org/10.32703/2415-7422-2024-14-1-184-212>
- Shevchenko, T. G. (1949). Collected works in 6 volumes [Повне зібрання творів : у 6 т.]. Kyiv: Academy of Sciences of Ukrainian SSR. (In Ukr.)
- Taranushenko, S. (2012). *Wooden Monumental Architecture of Left-Bank Ukraine* [Дерев'яна монументальна архітектура Лівобережної України]. Kharkiv: Kharkiv Private Museum of the Urban Estate. (In Ukr.)
- Tereshchenko, A. (1930). Materials for the Study of Folk Ukrainian Architecture (Laying the Foundations and Building of a House) [Матеріали до студювання народньої української архітектури. (Закладання й будування хати)]. *Chronicle of Archaeology and Art*, 1, 49–52. (In Ukr.). <https://www.vgosau.kiev.ua/biblioteka/khram-zarvuak-nziimk-apursr-ksiau/795>
- Voitovych, N. (2015). *Folk Demonology of the Boyko Region* [Народна демонологія Бойківщини]. Lviv: SPOLOM. (In Ukr.)
- Yurchenko, P. (1968). Wooden Architecture [Дерев'яна архітектура]. In *History of Ukrainian Art: In 6 vols.* (Vol. 3: Art of the second half of the 18th–19th centuries). (In Ukr.). <https://irbis-nbuv.gov.ua/ulib/item/0001609>
- Zaveriushchenko, O. (2024). The concept of the house as a component of the Ukrainian wedding conceptual sphere [Концепт хати як складник української весільної концептосфери]. *Transcarpathian Philological Studies*, 37, 37–44. (In Ukr.). <https://doi.org/10.32782/tps2663-4880/2024.37.6>

Appendix

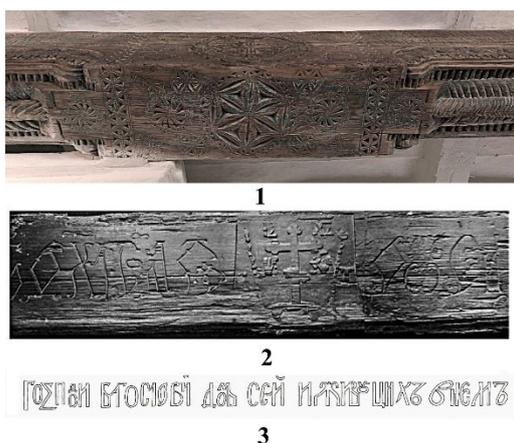


Figure 1. 1. Central section of the lower plane of an early 18th-century svolok in the interior of the “Tanner’s House” at the Museum of Folk Architecture and Everyday Life of the Middle Dnipro Region (Pereiaslav). 2. Central section of the front surface of a *svolok* dated 1716 from Pereiaslav. Exhibition of the Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts of the Kyiv Region at the Museum of Folk Architecture and Everyday Life of the Middle Dnipro Region (Pereiaslav). 3. Fragment of a blessing inscription on a *svolok* dated 1741 from Zhovnyne. Drawing by T. Menchynska.



Figure 2. 1. Fragment of a svolok dated 1705 in the interior of the Ivan Kotliarevskiy Museum-Estate (Poltava). 2. *Svolok* from the 1730s in the interior of the “Miller’s House” at the Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life of the Middle Dnipro Region (Pereiaslav).



Figure 3. Inhabitants of the Yerchyske community of Kyiv Governorate in a room with a *svolok*. Drawing by D. P. de la Fliz, mid-19th century (p. 219)