

## Formation of Ethno-Futurism at the Turn of the XX-XXI Centuries

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### Abstract

The development of the international art movement of ethno-futurism, which arose in the former Soviet Union in the 1990s is analyzed in the article. Ethno-futurism is considered to be a phenomenon of the transition period in the history of culture, the process of addressing by the people to their cultural roots at the background of globalization. There were formation three phases in its formation. At the first, initial, phase from the late 1980s until 1994 movement was aging in Estonia and in the national regions of Russia. It finished by the integration of the movement as the Finno-Ugric one and with the Manifesto of the 1st conference of ethno-futurists in 1994 in Tartu. At the second phase from 1998 to 2006, the movement moved to Udmurtia. The representatives of the Turkic and Russian peoples joined the movement. At the third phase from 2005-2006 till present, the movement has become diversified. Its centers are the International Festival KAMWA (Perm), the International megaproject "Ethno-futurist Symposium" (Udmurtia), the geography of the participants is worldwide. It is obvious that the notion of ethno-futurism is composed of at least three components: a social movement for creating favourable conditions for the nations' cultures development; ideology and philosophy of ethno-futurism and an ethno-futurist creative method. These components can be present in today's culture independently of each other. Therefore, there are phenomena carrying the name of ethno-futurism but not directly connected with it.

**Keywords:** Ethno-futurism, Kostabi Estonian Association, "Odomaa" Creative Group, "Tamga" Creative Group, "Izhkar" Creative Association, KAMWA International Festival

## 1. Introduction

Ethno-futurism as an artistic and socio-cultural movement originated in the late 80s of the XX century and grew stronger during the post-Soviet period. The issues of the national and cultural identity of the former Soviet Union's peoples were made actual in that movement. The major idea of this cultural trend is expressed in its name. It is a pursuit to secure the future for the nation's culture. The actual embodiment of ethno-futurism is found in the synthesis of specifically national and global experience in the arts and culture. The formation of ethno-futurism is to be seen in the peoples' treatment of their cultural roots at the background of globalization. The last century in the ethnic history of many nations was a global act of reflection and self-discovery and searching for their own cultural paradigm. This phenomenon is evolving within the so-called transition period in the history of culture. It comes into being when the previous, sustainable worldview becomes depleted. It was the subject for many philosophers' contemplation, starting with F. Nietzsche and O. Spengler.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Origination of ethno-futurism

In 1989, the Estonian writer Karl-Matine Sinijärv was the first to use the term of "ethno-futurism" to describe the innovative trends in the artistic culture of the Finno-Ugric peoples, representatives of the Ural language family. The term appeared to be soon in demand among the south-Estonian nonconformists.

In fact, ethno-futurism originated in Tartu among the young poets as a marginal and at the same time elitist phenomenon based on addressing to south-Estonian ethno-cultural and linguistic tradition. The founders of ethno-futurism were poets Kauksi Ülle Carl Martin Sinijärv Sven Kivisildnik and an American artist of Estonian origin Kalev Mark Kostabi. Ethno-futurism is called a "soft" anti-globalization trend, which could not be referred to a purely protest ones (Zavyalov, 2007). The young people used to go the rural areas, recited their avant-garde poems, studied the old languages of Itu and Vyrü from the elderly people, sang folk songs and danced with those people, took part in the ceremonial rituals. From this "walking to the people" later Kostabi Association originated, "a special perspective of the

Estonian folklorists, a conservative political party, a special fashion design, Institute of the South-Estonian language, the alphabet was created for this "new-born" language, ethno-futurist project to save the Livs (Latvia), their language and many other things" (Khuzangaj, 2004). Thus, the movement was aimed at solving a range of social and cultural problems: in sphere of arts, science and politics.

In 1994, the First Ethno-futurist Conference of young Finno-Ugric artists, writers and musicians was held on May 5 - 9 May, 1994 in Tartu. The 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Estonian Kostabi Association was celebrated with that event. All in all, about a hundred guests: the Udmurt, the Komi, the Mari, the Karelians, the Livs, the Erzya, the Sami, the Hungarians and the Vyrusts, the Seto were invited to Tartu. "The Manifesto of Ethno-futurism" was given voice to, based on three reports (authors being Kauksi Ülle, Sven Kivisildnik, Andres Heinapuu and Maarja Lõhmus). It was proclaimed that "Ethno-futurism, putting in motion creative powers, is not an ideology but a way to survive as well as a *modus vivendi*" (KAUKSI ÜLLE, 1994). The original culture (selfhood of culture) was given the role of "the basis of identity and its core value". They decided in every way to support and promote the activities providing "a foot to the ethnic group, i.e. the survival of the people as a nation in the future". The conference participants made a decision that the Finno-Ugric peoples would "survive together". Being small nations separately, all the Finno-Ugric peoples together amount to about 25 million, which is a sufficient to take an influential position among the nations of the world. Besides, being a part of a large community contributes to the growth of self-consciousness. The best way to survive was: "the best way to put across this purpose is to creatively associate the ancient Finno-Ugric frame of mind with the more recent possibilities of post-industrial society". The Manifesto also declared: "The entity and idea of ethno-futurism is to connect the two extremities of culture - to make the indigenous meet the cosmopolitan and urban. At the point where these two find each other the spark of ethno-futurism is born. The spark which appears from this contact is a force that enlivens culture by natural means". (KAUKSI ÜLLE, 1994).

In the course of time, the movement in Estonia became more respectable, but, according to the researchers "simultaneously it was losing the strength of onset" (Zavyalov, 2007). He was supported by the famous mathematician and political scientist Professor Rein Taagepera, a poet and professor of Oulun University in Finland Kari Sallamaa and a world famous poet Jaan Kaplinski. New leaders appeared – a writer Piret Viires and a scholar and a social activist Andres Heinapuu. In 2002, the Estonian officials pointed out that "the concept of ethno-futurism has become vague in the Estonian culture. Perhaps this is due to most Estonians' opinion that we have successfully overcome the crisis". (Heinapuu, 2002), and in 2010 at the jubilee V International Ethno-futurist Festival KAMWA (Perm) Andres Heinapuu stated that there was neither ethno-futurism at all.

## 2.2 Ethno-futurism in Russia

However, having appeared in Estonia, ethno-futurism went beyond its frontiers and became popular with other nations, it gained new features and interpretations. After the first conference of ethno-futurists 1994 in Tartu, another three conferences were held in later years. In 1998, there was a meeting of ethno-futurists in Izhevsk and in 1999 again in Tartu. So, in 1999, in Tartu the ethno-futurism program included village planning, environmental and cultural tour (ETHNO-FU-tourism). In June 2001, the second seminar "Post-modernism, Ethnosymbolism and Ethno-futurism in the Literature of the Volga-region Peoples" was held in the Republic of Mari El, in Kozmodemyansk. In a month, Tartu (Estonia) hosted the fourth conference of ethno-futurists. "Since not only theoreticians but also artists, musicians, poets they are the conference participants, its very form allows us to plunge into the creative process and not to be a passive onlooker", said Professor of Udmurt University N.A. Rosenberg (Rosenberg, 2001).

Even before the first conference of ethno-futurists in Tartu, the artistic life started to recover in the republics of Russia. The professional national art was shaking off socialist realism and turning to the origins of their native cultures. The first meeting of Finno-Ugric writers was held in Yoshkar-Ola. The foundation of the Youth Association of the Finno-Ugric Nations (MAFUN) and the meeting of the Finno-Ugric youth in 1990 were the outcomes of the 1989 meeting. As a part of the 1990 meeting, they also arranged an art exhibition of the young Finno-Ugric artists. According to many researchers, it was the first ethno-futurist exhibition in Russia. "The interest to the roots of the traditional cultures was clearly seen in the paintings and drawings of A. Aleshkin (Saransk), V. Mustaev (Izhevsk), A. Ivanov and Yu. Tanygin (Yoshkar-Ola), a philosophical synthesis of life and nature was demonstrated in the works of V. Astasheva (Syktyvkar), V. Vechkanova (Saransk), V. Bogolyubov, S. Evdokimov and I. Yamberdov (Yoshkar-Ola). Many common things were found then in their ancient cultural layers in embroidery, zoomorphic images, in ceramics, metal by L. Vagatov (Khanty-Mansiisk), T. Pärt (Tallinn), I. Yefimov (Yoshkar-Ola)", writes a Mari art historian, member of the movement V.G. Kudryavtsev (Kudryavtsev, 2005, p. 15). The exhibition showed that the artists understood each other by their works, sometimes not even having a chance to talk to each other. Another important event for the Finno-Ugric artists was an

exhibition in Syktyvkar in 1994, and "Contemporary Art of Finno-Ugric Nations" exhibition in 2000, in Espoo (Finland) in the Gallen-Kallela museum was important for international ethno-futurism development. Paintings, installations, performances were represented by artists from Finland, Hungary, Republic of Karelia, Estonia, Komi, Mordovia, Udmurtia and Mari El (Ugriculture, 2000).

After meeting in Kozmodemyansk in 2001, the Chuvash representatives said that ethno-futurism in Chuvash culture is de facto present and the agreement on holding joint ethno-futurist cultural events was reached. Since 2000, a group of Tatar artists "Tamga" joined to ethno-futurism: exhibitions in Yoshkar-Ola and Zelenodolsk, followed by the "Pelnyan" festival (Udmurtia, 2003) and the joint "Chulman Yort" were held. In this way, the movement has expanded its ethnic boundaries.

Festivals took an extreme important niche in ethno-futurist movement in Russia. Art has become a major area for self-expressing by the ethno-futurists, this art immediately revealed the urge towards the synthesis of various kinds, and the festival is the most natural form for this trend. That is, the movement took the shape of the art movement at this stage.

The annual festivals in Izhevsk, Udmurt Republic became the main ethno-futurist Finno-Ugric events arranged by the non-formal creative panel "Odomaa" (a "native land" in the Udmurt language). The international conference on ethno-futurism in 1998 in Izhevsk gave the new strength to this new creative association. The group includes artists of various genres and arts. The core of "Odomaa" are Sergey Orlov, Vyacheslav Mikhailov, Zoya Lebedeva, Yuri Lobanov (Kuchyran Uri). The same year they launched another mega-project "Ethno-futurist Festival" supported by the Ministry of National Policy of the Udmurt Republic. 1998 - 2006 Project drew forth 11 international ethno-futurist festivals. Each festival carried the some poetic name, which informed of the basic idea and the motto of the next festival. They were devoted to the characters of the traditional culture ("Egit gondyr Ouémé" or "House of the young bear" June 1998; "Mushomu" ("Land of Bees"), May-June 2000.; "Idna" ("Legendary Batyr Idna"), May 2002), some festivals set specific emotional attitude ("Jur-jar" or "Noise-Din", July 2004; "Artana" or "Heart Territory of Art", August 2005).

After this ambitious project has been completed, there takes place some reorganization in the ethno-futurist movement. The core is still represented by the group of artists lead by the author of the Udmurt Republic's emblem, Yuri Lobanov (Yury Kuchyran). Others start their own projects, for example, a musician Alexander Yuminov's group, that of an artist Zoya Lebedeva. A team led by Pavel Pozdeev who declared ethno-futurism to have died, is now developing a modern trend of the Udmurt culture in the mainstream of mass or popular culture. The most successful project implemented at the Pavel Pozdeev's suggestion has become sensational "Buranovskiye Babushki".

The team led by Yuri Kuchyran have been implementing a new mega-project "Ethnofuturist Symposium" "Ser no tur" ("The Art of Light") since 2007. At this stage, the core of the movement consisting of the members of the public organization "Creative Association "Izhkar" (Udmurt Republic), creative team "Tamga" (the Republic of Tatarstan), and "Genghis Khan" Association (the Republic of Bashkortostan) (project "Khabar").

The new project brought a new concept into the ethnofuturists' activities and gave radically different vectors to ethno-futurism development on the basis of the Udmurt Center directed "deepward" rather than "broadwise". Now it is not a festival and a concert for the outside spectator but a creative laboratory and plein-air for artists, musicians, actors, performance-makers who immerse for a fortnight in the authentic world of the Udmurt rural life. On the one hand, purely creative goals are put for the participants: the transition from writing to creativity, to be conceived as a "special tool, which runs through the beyond" as a "sacred art of the world, possessing positive and clean energy". It brings about the creation of a "new structural archetypes and *transgressors* on the basis of mythopoetics. In contrast to simulacrum, a transgressor shows the existence of a genuine" (Regulation).

This form of cooperation was defined as a "symposium". As before, the organizers give a symbolic name to each of them. "Rural" symposium is held annually in some new area of the Udmurt Republic. The symposium demonstrates a close contact with the local population through the joint artistic events, workshops and informal communication. The finale of the event is the exhibition of the works, several of them are donated to the villagers. In such a way, own art ethno-futurism collections are established in various villages of Udmurtia. During the talk with the author of this article, Yu. Kuchyran said the following about this form of activity: "Love holds the basis of the Udmurt ethno-futurism. People in the village feel subconsciously that we do not make money on ethno-futurism, that we are artists and social activists. We came to them with our open hearts. They do the same. And as a result there is a holiday of the soul!"

Here we can recall that at the dawn of ethno-futurism, the intellectuals would go to the rural areas to learn the traditional culture from the people (Kostabi Association) and now there is "going to the people" with a "reverse" aim: to aggregate the ethnicity of its professional culture, donating their works as a foundation for further work in this direction. In our view, it is extremely impressive on the one hand for the evolution of ethno-futurism as a whole. Of course, we can say that Estonian and Udmurt culture have their own specifics, hence a different vector of "going". It is certainly true, but in both cases, these are different ways of the process of culture integration as an ethno-national phenomenon. According to

Yu. Kuchyran, Estonian ethno-futurism was "painted in the political and cultural rationalism. In Udmurtia it was an irrational splash coming from the heart...".

To date, seven symposia have already been held. Since 2013 another event was added to them, namely an annual International Ethno-futurist Festival of Performance and Video-Art, organized by the same "village" principle by the creative team "Emnoyumno" ("divine elixir"), headed by Yu. Kuchyran (EMNOYUMNO).

Since 2005, another center of world-scale ethno-futurist festivals is located the city of Perm and organized by Perm regional organization to promote cultural and youth projects "KAMWA" headed by Natalia Shostina (kamwa). The festival incorporates the programs related to the "avant-garde" experiments in various art forms, from music and theater to decorative and applied arts and fashion. The specific feature of the Ural region is its multinational character, so folklore and ethnographic project "Anthology of the traditional folklore of the Kama region's nations" has become one of the prominent programs. Several programs dealt with the study and understanding of Perm animal style heritage in various forms, and in the first place, in theatrical productions of N. Shostina ("Mimicry").

Festival in Perm is notable, above all, for the highest level of financial, political and cultural management. Over five years, the festival was attended by more than 180 projects from 40 regions of Russia (KAMWA). In addition, the organizers managed to involve music bands working in the genre of world music from the UK, France, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Germany and India. Strictly speaking, the creative method of this genre is correlated with the method of ethno-futurism in art, therefore, musicians and artists of other arts, do not refer themselves to ethno-futurists, naturally turn out to be them. Festival historian Arthur Arteev wrote: "The organizers of the festival proved that ethno-futurism is not a closed movement of the Finno-Ugric creative intelligentsia, but something widespread, capable of uniting the peoples of all countries and continents ... The main feature of "Kamwa" is to accept courageously new things and make them their own ones. Seemingly, what is there common between the Finno-Ugric nations and the Irish or the Tibetans. However, in the course of the festival, they looked just as naturally as the Komi-Permian or Mari or elderly women. This is the phenomena of "Kamwa" (Arteev, 2010). Subsequently, the organizers expanded the format of the festival, having put the current trends in culture in general in the center. Ethno-futurism has been only one of them.

Ideas of ethno-futurism in 2002 were picked up at the V festival of ethnic music "Living Water" in Novosibirsk and Altai Republic, where ethno-futurism was proclaimed to be the concept and the slogan of the festival. There was no direct connection with the Finno-Ugric ethno-futurism at that festival. There were not only representatives of Russia's peoples of but also from abroad among the participants. The organizers declared the festival "space for the dialogue of cultures but not spectacular costumed folklore performance" (V International Festival).

It is noteworthy that ethno-futurism within the festival gained another "sphere of influence".

It was declared to be a platform of new urban anthropology, which on the basis of real and fantasy ethnographic models of existence distinguishes the latest "urban tribes" who are not satisfied with the "cosmopolitan uncertainty of existence during the era of globalization and transparency of borders" (V International Festival). By "urban tribes", those people are meant who live aloof in a big city and have exotic and who are engaged in somewhat exotic activities (bikers, Tolkienists, "kids", second-hand booksellers, tourists, fans of elite cinema, etc.). These are subcultural groups with their own way of life, "rites", "customs", "traditions", "language", etc., that is all those features that allow us to identify conditionally them as a kind of "ethno-cultural" bands.

It is appropriate to mention that O.I. Genisaretsky sees the success of such communities as Tolkienists owes to the fact that Tolkien's "ethnicity has become a matter of the artistic imagination", in detail, comprehensively simulated, as well as in ethno-futurism it turns into the "matter of designing imagination," being studied in depth in the first place in the field of art (Genisaretsky).

Ethno-futurism in Russia today demonstrates different approaches to the use of ethnicity. In the sphere where it has a materially existing basis for today as in Udmurtia, ethno-futurists' creativity becomes a tool to solve actual problems, a way to preserve the nation's culture through art. This is the essence of ethno-futurism. At the same time, there are fantasy practices based on addressing the vanished cultures, such as the mentioned above creative work of N. Shostina, her production of "The Mystery of Chudi", "Mimicry" and other projects. "Merya" ethno-futurists headed by Andrey Malyshev (Kostroma - Moscow) are showing their worth. It is a group of enthusiasts who reconstruct the culture of the Finno-Ugric nation of Meria, seeking to find out the Finno-Ugric roots in the Russian culture (The world of Merya). These forms more indirectly solve ethno-cultural problems, they rather enrich and reinforce the mythological basis of the Russian identity in general.

Lastly, it is important to specify clearly the three fundamental issues of ethno-futurism as a phenomenon of culture: ethno-futurism as an organized ethnic and socio-cultural movement and ethno-futurism as a creative method. The processes of their expansion and diffusion are not identical. The third important component is ethno-futurism as philosophy and ideology, ethno-futurism is developing as a social movement and a creative method is being formed on

their basis. The spread of this method is not necessarily connected with joining those, using this method as applied to ethno-futurism. The interest to the national issue as such was noted in the Manifesto of 1994 as a favorable international factor for ethno-futurism. In reality, it results in the fact that the term of "ethno-futurism" appears to be comparable with the artistic phenomena that both the Finno-Ugric peoples possess and peoples of other language groups do. "The most ethno-futurist productions in Udmurt literature appeared at that time when this term was not known to anyone in Udmurtia", - writes Professor of Udmurt University V.L. Shibanov (Shibanov, 2002). "Living Water" festival demonstrated the same. The proper name, the term is spread and clearly defined principle of synthesis of national and global, ancient and modern, of the "authentic and avant-garde" standing behind the term reveals itself everywhere. Those who are doing their creations in this area, "recognize" themselves in ethno-futurism, accepting or rejecting the term itself (Razumikhina, 2011). Such things often happen to the craftsmen, who are not members of any association, for example, the works of Moscow artist, textile artisan Tatiana Isayeva are referred to ethno-futurist ones by the journalists but not by the author herself (Rybakov, 2003). Often, artists, musicians give their own name to the method. It is either a serious or an ironic, a generalized or more specialized name, for instance, a "chaban-musical", a "tapping, an ethno-design, etc.

### 3. Conclusions

So, the movement of ethno-futurism has had several stages in its development:

The first stage lasted from the late 1980s to 1994 when the "elements" of the movement in the localities, in Russia's national regions and in post-Soviet Estonia were aging. The stage ended with the integration of the movement as the Finno-Ugric one and the Manifesto of the First Ethno-futurist Conference 1994 in Tartu.

The second stage embraces approximately 1998-2006 years. The centre of ethno-futurism moves to Udmurtia, the main form of interaction between the participants being festivals. The representatives of the Turkic and Russian peoples joined the movement.

The third stage is considered to last from 2005-2006 till present. The movement becomes not so much broad as much more diverse: KAMWA International Festival (Perm) owing to high-quality culture management introduced ethno-futurism into the world cultural trends. Implementation of the International megaproject "Ethno-futurist Symposium" solves the problems of integrating the Udmurt culture as an ethno-national phenomenon and deepens the artistic theory and practice of ethno-futurism in Udmurtia.

The complexity of ethno-futurism as a cultural phenomenon is clearly delineated. At least three components are to be distinguished: the actual social movement aimed at the creation of optimal conditions for the survival and development of the peoples' cultures in the context of globalization; ideology and philosophy of ethno-futurism and thirdly, the ethno-futurist creative method. These components in the culture can be present in the modern culture independently of each other. Therefore, there are a lot of facts and phenomena carrying the name of ethno-futurism but not having a direct connection with it near and around the subject of our study being ethno futurism.

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