

The Secret Speech of *Lirnyky* and *Kobzari* Encoding a Life Style

Andrij Hornjatkevyč,

Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies

University of Alberta

In Ukraine, minstrels have been part of the folk tradition for centuries. There were two types of minstrels: *kobzari* who played a stringed musical instrument called the *kobza*, later to develop into the *bandura*, and *lirnyky*, who played the crank-driven hurdy-gurdy called the *lira*. These minstrels were traveling musicians – and much more besides. They were major sources of historical and religious information and, interestingly, most of them were blind. This infirmity made them dependent upon others for their livelihood, but they were not beggars. On the contrary, they were well-respected by the general populace. As with other professional groups, they belonged to guilds and new members, young children, went through an extensive apprenticeship period. Minstrels also spoke using a secret language called *lebiis 'ka mova*, henceforth the Lebian language (argot) or Lebian.

It should be pointed out immediately that this was not a full-fledged language with a distinct phonetic, lexical, morphological, and syntactic system. On the contrary, its underlying structure was that of contemporary Ukrainian, but crucial standard Ukrainian lexemes – nouns, pronouns, adjectives, numerals and verbs – were replaced by others. To an outsider, i.e., one not initiated into the guild, who might chance to hear a conversation in this argot, it might sound like Ukrainian, but, except for such ancillary parts of speech such as conjunctions, prepositions, interjections and particles – words that carry only relational information – it would be entirely unintelligible. This was reinforced by the fact that Lebian lexemes would be inflected – declined or conjugated – exactly as analogous Ukrainian words would be.

Furthermore, the speaker of the argot did not have to replace every plaintext lexeme by an argotic one. Let us examine two brief passages. Prayers would always be said in plaintext, but they would be prefaced by the following phrase:

О, фез комуніський, до тебе кизітаю.

О, Боже ласкавий, до Тебе молюся.

O merciful God, I pray to you.

The nominative singular masculine ending *-yj* of the adjective *komunis 'k-* (merciful) is taken from standard Ukrainian, just as the first person singular present ending *-'u* of the verb *kyzitaj-*. Most works quote the humorous song:

Lebian	Ukrainian	English
Коби мені кумса сяна, А до кумси ще й тириня І бутельбух вовчаку, Каравона чорнобрива.	Коби мені хлібець святий, А до хліба трошки сира, А до сира склянка пива І дівчина чорнобрива.	If I had some holy bread, And some cheese to go along with the bread, And a glass of beer, [And] a girl with black eyebrows.

Here again readers familiar with Ukrainian will see that Lebian words are inflected exactly as lexemes in the standard language.

All this must be kept in mind hereinafter whenever the word “language” is applied to the Lebian argot.

Novices learned Lebian during their apprenticeship and mature minstrels used it amongst themselves, and only when they could not be overheard. While the language was a deep secret, eventually certain minstrels were willing to dictate a dictionary of sorts to scholars such as Studyns'ky and Malinka. Thus, we have a good idea of the lexical items which comprised Lebian. What is this language and what was its purpose? What do the lexical items included in the language – and those omitted from it – tell us about minstrel life?

Scholars interested in minstrel life observed the existence of a secret language early on (Hnatiuk: 1-73, Khotkevych: 1: 455-518, Iemets': 81-2). They also noted that training in the Lebian language was part of the learning process. Apprentices would learn it from their master along with their growing command of the instrument, its repertoire, and the repertoire of minstrel songs. This fact is reflected in the etymology of the term used for the language itself, since *lebi* means master minstrel and thus the Lebian language is the language of fully-trained professionals.

As living speech, Lebian had numerous dialects. This applies both to pronunciation and word choice. Different Lebian words might be used for the same concept in different geographical areas. Nevertheless, many lexemes can be found throughout Ukraine. Furthermore, the phonological features of Ukrainian dialects are reflected in the Lebian language and the dialect boundaries of Lebian and Ukrainian are approximately the same.

Scholars are of different opinions as to the purpose of the Lebian language, but two views dominate. One may be called the recognition theory. It maintains that musicians used this language when no strangers were present as a means of mutual recognition. By using the language, musicians let each other know that they had completed the full course of instruction, including the mastery of Lebian, and thus were members in good standing of a guild or minstrel brotherhood. A musician who had not completed the full course of instruction would either be ignorant of the Lebian language or have an imperfect command of it. Thus, lack of language mastery would betray a person who did not have the right to practice the craft of the *lirnyk* or *kobzar*.

The other explanation may be called the conspiracy theory. It maintains that the *kobza* and *lira* players functioned on the periphery of society and were often at odds with the law. According to this theory, Lebian was needed, not for relations within the community of minstrels, but to protect this community from the outside world. Minstrels needed a secret language, it was thought, to hide their activities from the civil authorities, and even the general populace, because some of what they did might be construed as, or was in fact, outside the law. To support this view, scholars cite the fact that having an argot, or secret language, is a characteristic typical of outlaw groups. For such groups, secret speech permits the planning and execution of illegal acts without the fear of detection. Pravdiuk (34-7) actually cites specific and striking examples of the Lebian language being used for conspiratorial purposes.

This is not the place to give a definitive answer to the question of whether Lebian was used for recognition or for conspiratorial purposes. Arguments can be made for both points of view. It is generally

believed the common people respected the *kobzari* and *lirnyky*, so they could hardly have been considered outlaws with a need to conceal their activities. At the same time, it is a fact that tsarist police and other civil authorities often persecuted minstrels, viewing their singing as subversive and thus, illegal. Minstrels have often had to hide from the powers that be, a fact that lends credence to the conspiracy theory. (Kononenko, 30-32)

Conspiracy theory and recognition theory aside, however, Lebian can give us a great deal of information about Ukrainian minstrels, how they lived, and what was important to them. While working on the lexicon (over a thousand lexemes), it became apparent that this argot gives a remarkable picture of the life style of the *kobzari* and *lirnyky*. It shows us what they talked about, the conditions under which they lived and worked, and the people with whom they had to deal.

The most complete dictionary of the Lebian language was prepared on the basis of the materials collected and compiled by Horbach (7-44). It is limited by the fact that the data in it was collected primarily from *lirnyky* in Galicia; less material has been collected from *kobzari* in the eastern half of Ukraine. Still, there is enough commonality between Horbach's work and the information that we do have directly from *kobzari* to assume, as stated earlier, that Lebian is a single entity, reflecting both *kobzar* and *lirnyk* life. It should also be noted that Kononenko has demonstrated that *kobzari* and *lirnyky* were one unit, belonging to the same guilds and often learning from each other, both during apprenticeship and subsequently. Thus, using Horbach's dictionary, supplemented by other materials as available, we can attempt an analysis of the life style of all Ukrainian minstrels as reflected in their secret language. We will group the lexemes of the language into categories, and then examine these categories, discussing both what is in them and what is omitted and what this shows us about minstrel life.

It should be noted that Horbach's work lists some thousand lexemes, and, in the opinion of some linguists, a speaker must know a minimum of two thousand words to communicate effectively in any language. If this is true, then the corpus presented by Horbach satisfied half of that need. What minstrels must have done, then, is use Lebian to encode only the most important words; they said the rest of what they needed to communicate in plain Ukrainian, without encryption. This makes Lebian even more effective as a key to minstrel life. If this secret language contains the most crucial concepts only, then it points us to the most important aspects of minstrelsy.

Looking at grammatical categories first, we find that the overwhelming majority of the lexemes are nouns, adjectives and verbs; pronouns, numerals and adverbs are far fewer. The corpus contains no prepositions, conjunctions, interjections or particles, which is hardly surprising because ancillary words have little or no content that would require encoding. It is the nouns and verbs that bear the primary meanings and need to be disguised by a secret argot.

Examining the data by grammatical category, we find that **nouns** can be divided into several semantic groups. First are the words that name and describe human beings:

Lebian	Ukrainian	English
мóздір	людина	human
мех	чоловік	man
ра́ха	жінка	woman

свирит, хведня	дитина	child
лобзюк, теплюх, отерплюшók	хлопець	boy
каравóна, карига, раклі, каравінча	дівч(ин)а	girl
йоруха, йóра киврійка	старуха, стара пані	old woman
херáне, хирáни	люди	people

Next are parts of the body, namely the head:

гла́да, главда́, лавда́	голова	head
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and its parts

чимéрсьи [чимéрся]	волосся	hair
слухóмка, слихтó	вухó	ear
зікрó	око	eye
зікра́	очі	eyes
но́скотинь	ніс	nose
хвéйло, фéйло	рот	mouth
лизинь	язик	tongue
кусьмóрники, мóскутні	зуби	teeth

other body parts include:

херута, хирута, рутáвка	рука	arm, hand
нахирник	палець	finger
ходу́ха, хóдня	нога	leg, foot
пліхті́, стипра́	плечі	shoulders
комрій, химрó	живіт	belly
кузад	зад	behind
стиз, стил, стига	задниця	anus
псил	пеніс	penis
туха	вульва	vulva

Internal anatomy is poorly represented and, if *belly* is discounted, we have only

кохта́вка	кість	bone
кра́сінка, красі́мка	кров	blood

There are names for various human ailments, for example,

ка́ліпний	сліпий	blind man
трóняшний	хворий	sick person
шмура́к	дурак	fool

as well as nouns for such diseases as

трясо́мниця, трахо́мниця, трихо́мниця	гарячка, лихорадка, пропасниця	fever
трунька	тиф	typhus
ругня́чка	холера	cholera

Last in the category of words dealing with people we should include

ха́ля	смерть, труп, мерлець	death, corpse
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and, perhaps also such words as

кирди́мня	життя	life
ко́зум	розум	intellect
кіма́ня	спання	sleep
йо́ристь	старість	old age

Kinship terms are well represented and include the following terms for people and for actions that create kin relationships:

кирдимний	кревний, свояк	blood relative, in-law
яничиня	сватання	wooing
ставёр(а), штаvéра	шлюб, подружжя	marriage
яник, янига, юнико	весілля	wedding
лебій, липетень, швед, шкред	дід(о)	grandfather
штуба, цуба, цюба	баба	grandmother
батій	батько	father
маниця, омáниця	мати	mother
курдиміль	дядько	uncle
курдимілька	тітка	aunt
мех	чоловік	husband
ра́ха	жінка	wife
áндрус, яндрус	брат	brother
áндруска, яндруска	сестра	sister
і́о́нус, юнець, юньчик, нюньчик	син	son
і́о́нуска, юньчиця, нюньчичка	дочка	daughter
бахтій	тесть	wife's father
ставро́чник	кум	godfather
ставро́чниця	кума	godmother
отерплюшо́к, теплюх, терпелюк, трепелюк	парубок	unmarried young man
ра́ха, трепелиця	молодиця	young married woman
поставро́чник	похресник	godson
поставро́чниця	похресниця	goddaughter

as well as

скульба́нка	коханка	lover (female)
кульба́нок	коханець	lover (male)
шлягун	ловелас	lothario
нюнька	пестій(ка)	spoiled child
перекриво́шниця, покриво́шниця	покритка	unmarried mother

Inasmuch as only men could be professional minstrels in the nineteenth century, it should come as no surprise that the words for husband's father or mother are missing from the linguistic corpus.

Society and its classes are reflected in words such as

киврї́й, гаврї́й, каврї́й	пан	mister
каврї́йка, киврї́йка, гаврї́їха	пані	missis
трепе́ла киврї́йка	панна	miss
поха́зник	господар	master
поха́зниця	господиня	mistress
острочинець	гість	guest
шо́сті, острочинці́	гості	guests
мугир	хлоп	peasant
накачитель	начальник	boss
наюхник	наймит	hireling (male)
наюхниця,	наймичка,	hireling (female)
слуго́нниця	служанка	maid
сто́тень, сто́донь	багач	rich man
порутник	бідак	poor man
порутниця	бідачка	poor woman
шуя	бідний	impoverished man
шуйство	біднота	the poor
кубра́к, липетень	прошак	beggar

буций, укираний	п'яний	drunk
укирачка	жінка п'яниця	drunkard (female)
кирака, укирага	п'яниця	drunkard (male)
накирвання	п'яничення	drinking
ряха	чепурня	fastidious woman
неряха	нехлюйна жінка	slovenly woman
кóльба	повія	whore
клімута, клімутник	зłodий	thief
розкульник	розбійник	brigand
кирхушник	карник	criminal

Human relationships and conflicts can be seen in such words as

ошар, ошарник	торг, ярмарок	trade, market
гавлиста	товар	goods
лубуненя	сварка	quarrel
кóпсаня	бійка, драка	fight
клімута	крадіж	theft

The argot also has a lexicon for civil authority:

тирлик	цар	tsar
тирлиця	цариця	tsaritsa
накачур	бурмістр, вїт	mayor, reeve
гóргуль	жандарм	gendarme
накатóрський	соцький	country policeman
йóриста, йóруста	староста	elder
гальóмний накачитель	становий пристав	assistant bailiff
яршина, йоршина	старшина	officer
бецак	салдат	soldier
матлáнник	фінансер	financier
зїтник, скеретник	урядник	official

Clearly, the musicians had to deal with the guardians of the law, because we have the words

бікуцель, гóргуль	полїцай	policeman
стерегóмник	сторож	guard
дїкончик, дїкунчик	десятник	constable
бікуцельники, шуліція	полїція	police
стерегóмка, шпарута	варта	guardhouse
бікуция, лямос	в'язниця	prison

The musicians dealt with people of various professions, for example:

курашник, кудрипник	музика(нт)	musician
куграчник, либіщак, липкó	лірник	<i>lirnyk</i>
куграчник	скрипник	violinist
повандзóрник, провандзирник	проводир	guide (of the blind)
вкóрник, наукóрник	учитель	teacher
лікорник	лікар	physician
рѣпсаник	писар	scribe
бецак, гóргуль	вояк	soldier
кулашник	стрілець	rifleman
возмóнник	вїзник	teamster
жуклїйник, ковїзник	коваль	smith
махлишник, махличник	косар	reaper
вошарник	купець	merchant
лопóтник	молотник	thresher
лопстирник, таткó, явлідник, авлідник	пастух	herder

махлишник, махличник	різник	butcher
опукáр, лопухáр	швець	cobbler
гертишник	шинкар	tavernkeeper
накévричник, махирник	рукавичник	glove maker

The lexicon dealing with clothing is rather limited. We have the clothing that would be worn by both

sexes:

сип'яг(а)	свитка	coat
махирниця, накévниця, рутáвниця	рукавиця	glove
нахирник	перстень	ring
шуманчá	опанча	overcoat
бучмаки	черевики	shoes
ópук(и), лóпук(и), óбоки	чобіт, чоботи	boot
кравáтка	повивач	swaddling band

Clothing worn exclusively by women includes

филистка, хвельюстка	хустина	kerchief
застіжмóрник	стяжка	ribbon
патéри	коралі	coral beads
чухниця	спідниця	skirt
фартійка, фортійóк	запаска	apron

while that worn typically by men lists

мислюжник, вислюжник	капелюх	hat
камéха, камуха	шапка	cap
сип'яг(а)	сіряк	grey coat
на́сти, на́сики, насті́ги, насті́жники	штани	trousers
звертій	пояс	belt

Nature is reflected in such words as

світомка	світ	world
сянко	сонце	sun
накачій, макохтій, сянник	місяць	moon
рахтій	дощ	rain
ра́хта	сльота	rainy weather
сівер	сніг	snow
тери́га, тири́га, три́га	земля	soil
отропі́ль, стропі́ля, митропі́льи	поле	field
ямóшниця	яма	pit
сві́гра	гора	mountain
де́лька, де́йка, сугá	вода	water
дильма́	ріка	river
де́льман, стичи́нь	став	pond
шалóто, шолóто	болото	mud
шмура	бруд	dirt
дуля́с, дуля́сник	вогонь	fire

Flora is represented primarily by edible plants:

сухéчка, суячка, сéв'ячка	гречка	buckwheat
ризавка, сапсаї	кукурудза	maize
бураві́нь, чухлі́й	овес	oats
цесó	просо, пшоно	millet
яшпу́рка, яшкуру́ниця	пшени́ця	wheat
бурві́нь, бурбі́ль	ячмі́нь	barley
букші́й, гаври́шник	бі́б	lima bean

гавриш	горох	pea
гавришниця, букшійка	фасоля	bean
ботняк, кремёд	буряк	beet
тиріжник, терижник	картопля	potato
білюга	редька	radish
морзуля, мерзуля	цибуля	onion
креміз, кремез, морзник	часник	garlic
орносноп	мак	poppy
оксютина	садовина	fruit
стеблюшниця	вишня	sour cherry
рута́вка, ста́вка, хта́вка, хруста́вка	грушка	pear
степлига	сливка	plum
терна́вка	слива	plum tree
красі́нка, красі́мка	черешня	cherry
веслюко, віслиуко	яблуко	apple
віслиужниця, веслюшниця	яблуня	apple tree
ло́скотні	горіхи	nuts
дулі́би	гарбузи	pumpkins
багла́йка, бала́йка	гриб	mushroom
баглаі	гриби	mushrooms
лепуха, лопуха	капуста	cabbage
красі́нка, красі́мка, сте́блюк	ягода	berry

There are some words for non-edible plants and plant products and these include

о́ксим, вошут	ліс	forest
коно́палки, кадрó	коноплі	hemp
о́брутки	дрова	lumber
дуляс	паливо	fuel
патёр	папір	paper
лоскоти́ра, лоскотирó	полотно	linen
віхрó, вяхрó	сіно	hay
цва́хта, махлярка	січка	chopped hay (fodder)
веслюя, вислюга, мислюга	солома	straw

A similar situation can be seen in the words for fauna. There are many words for animals that serve as food and also a relatively high number of terms for creatures found in everyday life. The groups include aquatic animals:

лешень, лешні	рак(и)	crayfish
пса́лка, пца́лка	риба	fish
алюшник	оселедець	herring

and also amphibians:

парна́та	жаба	frog
зверті́й	гадюка, вуж	snake

There are words for birds:

о́бруте́нь, фіявене́нь, фіяне́нь, фіяне́нь	голуб	dove
таранді́й	горобець	sparrow
га́рбат	гусак	gander
гарбу́т, арбу́тка, гарба́тка	гуска	goose
гарба́тя	гуся	gosling
плаву́те́нь	індик	turkey
ворна́чка, са́павка	качка	duck
ворна́чка, варна́га, арна́чка	курка	hen
арна́к	півень	rooster

and for mammals:

мерхлі́й	баран	ram
ме́рхля	вівця	sheep (singular)
мерхлі́, ме́хлі	вівці	sheep (plural)
швахт	цап	goat
керх, кирха	свиня	pig
кирхуня	порося	piglet
ва́лот, ва́лта	кінь	horse
волотиха, волотиця	кобила	mare
воло́т	осел	donkey
гавлид, явлид	бик, віл	bull, ox
гавлидка, авлида, гавлита	корова	cow
гавлидя, явлидиня	теля	calf

Household animals that do not serve as food can be isolated as a category which includes:

мо́тень, мо́скотень	кіт	cat (male)
мотниха	кітка, кішка	cat (female)
мотня	котя	kitten
скел, скі́л, скі́ць, скі́цяка	пес	dog
ско́лиха, скелиха, скилиця	сука	bitch
скиля	песя, щенюк	puppy
па́сінка	миша	mouse

Words for wild animals are limited and only the set of words

лиха, лига	вовк	wolf (male)
лиджиха	вовчиця	wolf (female)

is widely attested. The insects included in the lexicon are:

цвіхлі́	бджоли	bees
цвіхлі́	муха	fly
циза, сиза	воша	louse
ка́лута	блоха	flea

Here one can place substances of animal origin, namely

мерхлячка	вовна	wool
кидрó	прядиво	yarn
сип'яженя	сукно	broadcloth

Animal "products" such as

балюжник, гнойóшник, осняк	гній	dung
хало́	кал, лайно	feces

might be considered part of this category also.

Food terminology, besides the aforementioned flora and fauna, includes the following:

трійка	обід	dinner
куче́ря, трійка	вечеря	supper
бо́тень	борщ	<i>borshch</i> [beet soup]
ставре́ники	вареники	<i>varenyky</i> [stuffed dumplings]
фіявні	голибці	<i>holubtsi</i> [cabbage rolls]
букша	кваша	sour mash [a dish made from fermented rye flour and buckwheat grain]
крихти	крупы	grits
ле́кша, ликша	каша	porridge
шутня	кулеша	corn meal
крісо́	м'ясо	meat

степурка	печеня	roast
киршутина	солонина	fatback
сіводне крісо, сіверець	студенець	headcheese
кіта, кита, кіто	яйце	egg
лама́хи	печиво	baked goods
бухта́вка, яшпу́рка	булка	roll
міля́сник	медя́ник	honey cake
скру́тинь	обарі́нок	pretzel
пунді́й, конді́й	пирі́г	pie
пунді́ї курля́ні	варені́ пироги	boiled pies
пунді́ї сти́пурені	печені́ пироги	baked pies
сухмо́рники, сухма́ї	суха́рі	biscuits
сума́к, сунéта, кумса, кунсо	хлі́б	bread
трусня́, трузна	мука	flour
кови́сто	ті́сто	dough
сві́сло, весло	масло	butter
альмо, галі́мо, гаї́мо	моло́ко	milk
тирин(ь), ти́рня	си́р	cheese
ковирхи́на	сметана	sour cream
муля́с, ма́ляс, (г)омиля́с	ме́д	honey
лобзі́й	о́лій	oil
га́лусть	сі́ль	salt
гомиля́с, оме́лясник, омиля́с, солудке́мне	цу́кор	sugar

There are several words designating drinks, such as

головча́к, вовча́к	пиво	beer
бушно́	вино	wine
(г)арти́ха, гериха	горі́лка	whiskey
красі́мник	арак	arrack, raki
баклу́н, матла́н	тютю́н	tobacco
мутла́ха	нюхальна́ таба́ка	snuff
бе́нник, матлі́йка	папі́роска	cigarette

which can be placed in this category also.

The mineral lexicon is limited to such substances as

куві́зо	залі́зо	iron
курі́бло	срі́бло	silver
пі́трус, পে́трос, кетря́к	камі́нь	stone

Physical surroundings are reflected in such words as

шусто	мі́сто	city
хо́ро, хори	се́ло	village

and then

хаза́	хата	house
ші́м, шом	ді́м	home

along with such architectural details as

по́хазь, сві́тлоха, остро́кой	кі́мната, по́кій	room
по́хазь	сві́тлиця	parlor
кути́га	комо́ра	chamber
куви́рх	да́х	roof
сте́пур, сте́пир, остепі́р	пі́ч	stove
остро́комин, свиста́к	ко́мин	chimney
зі́крó	ві́кно	window

ставёрка	квартирка	ventilator
скрипотá, фірта	двері	door
закаплóнниця	клямка	doorknob

Other household and farmstead structures and features include

пóхазь	господа	homestead
обрутяч	пліт	fence
переліскальник	перелаз	passage in a hedge
брамóшниця	брама	gate
скрипотá	ворота	gate
хвірт, фірта, похвітря	двір, подвр'я	yard
дэйниця, сужник,	криниця	spring
сівраниця, сівирка	колодязь	well
кулуйка, лопóтня	стодола	barn
кирхушник, кулуйник, хлівóшник	хлів	stable
обрутниця	дривітня	wood shed
лопóтня, лопóтник	тік	threshing floor
лопстирка	толока	common pasture land
сівгород, свіврóд	горóд	garden
оксют	сад	orchard
бзика, мілясниця	пасіка	apiary
бзичник, мілясник	вулик	beehive
кóтниця	возівня	coach house
кирхушник	свинюшник	pigsty

Words for village buildings, objects, and features outside the farmstead include:

ковізниця, жуклійниця	кузня	smithy
дергун, дергунниця	млин	mill
лобзійня	олійниця	oil press
каня, капілія, капéля, пóхазь	корчма, шинок	tavern

as well as

(в)óстро́ка, востóрка,	дорóга	road
рівóшник	рів	ditch
дéлюшник, перевандзирник	пором	ferry

The lexicon of personal objects is understandably fairly rich. Here we have, first of all,

кугрá, курга, кудóнка	ліра	lira
кугрáчка	скрипка	violin

Such personal items as

чихмóрник	гребінь	comb
матлі́йка	люлька	pipe
бікута́, біштур(á), обруто́к, бікостур	палиця, патик	stick, staff
маскóрник	щітка	brush
ші́нка, шéнька, захарбéла, захарба́ник	торба	bag
захарбу́т	клунок	sack

seem to be important, as are eating utensils:

кóвтур	горщок	pot
кубанок	дзбанок	jar
ковту́рниця	кувшин	ladle
карабéлька, кара́бля	ложка	spoon
мéхир, нéхер, махлич	ніж	knife
скáтэля, скітэ́льня	миска, тарілка	bowl, plate
жуклі́йка, шуфлі́йка	пляшка	bottle

са́басний курля	самовар	samovar
жуклі́йка, шуфлі́йка, буте́льбух	склянка	tumbler
жоклі́я, буте́льбух	чарка	glass

There is a fairly large assortment of words for furniture and household items such as

бурвѐта	верета	coarse cover
хвильник	годинник	clock
по́клюжка, поклюжниця	пості́ль	bed linens
закатло́ха, зака́тлонка, закаплóнниця	скриня, сундук	chest
кулига	лавка	bench
трѐpez, трѐбух	стіл	table

Household implements seem to be important and are represented by words for:

зіврó, токарка, токарник	відро	pail
будáвка	голка	needle
закаплóнник	замóк	lock
закаплóнниця, матло́ха	колодка	padlock
капо́шник, закаплóнник	ключ	key
кулóпата	лопата	shovel
замінниця, маско́рник	мітла	broom
захарбе́ля, захарбаник, захарбут, шінка, шенька	мішок	sack
барлшиджник	плуг	plow
троховило, трусник	решето	sieve
махлишник, махличник	різак	cutter
розкульниця, кула́шниця	рушниця	rifle
ко́тинь	санки	sled
возмо́нник, ко́тинь	віз	wagon
коти́ло, крути́ло	колесо	wheel
махличка	січка́рня	straw cutter
майму́ра, товпи́га	сокира	axe
лопо́тник	ціп	flail
лекшунниця	ступа	stamper
сві́сло	весло	oar
сянка	сві́чка	candle
сянко	сві́тло	light
бату́зник	моту́зка	rope
обру́тник	ремінь	leather strap
куду́ні	дзвіночки	jingle bells
стичник	стіжок	stack (of sheaves of grain)
триховило, трусник	сито	sieve

Religious terminology is fairly abundant and includes words for:

Охвѐс, Фез, Хвесь	Бог	God
Ставе́р	Христос	Christ
Охвѐсова Маниця	Богомати	Theotokos
сяний	святий	saint
клю́са	церква	church (Orthodox)
шандáл	костел	church (Catholic)
клю́сна́рка	каплиця	chapel
клю́сна́р	цвинтар	cemetery
слуго́мка	служба	service
ха́ля	похорон	funeral
ре́псальник	пара́стас	parastasis
шумовина	домовина	coffin

духóмка	душа	soul
крім	гріх	sin
шáтер, шáтар, шатéрниця	молитва	prayer
ставрóчини, ставрóшини	молитвини над новородком	purification prayer service of a newborn
рéпсник	акафіст	akathistos
ставрóхи, ставрóки	христини	christening
кувестіяне	християни	Christians
клюсник, ставéр	хрест	cross
вопарáт	ризи	vestments
вопарáт, óбрут	фелон	phelonion
фез, охвéс, хвесь	ікона	icon
рéпсаня	книга	book
кудóн(ник), кудóвник	дзвін	Bell
корх	піп	priest
корхилиця, корхиня	попадя	priest's wife
корхилия, корхиня, корхиник	попович	priest's son
підпсальний	піддячий	percentor
псáльник, пцáйник	дяк	cantor
ла́бор	збирач (пожертв на направи церков)	collector (for church repairs)
патерик	свято	holy day
свяхта́	свята	holy days
шатéрник	проща, відпуст	pilgrimage
рéпсане кітó, рéпсанка	писанка	Easter egg
спин, термих, хверть	чорт	devil (male)
спиниця	чортиця	devil (female)

Nouns and adverbs that convey temporal concepts have been recorded and can be considered a special category. They include the words for time:

кучас, кузач	час	time
киндик	рік	year
сно́пка	весна	spring
сно́пко	літо	summer
сівениця, сіверка	зима	winter
кудень, кудинь	день	day
кучéрба	вчора	yesterday
куднісь	сьогодні	today
кузавтра	завтра	tomorrow
п'янджатка	п'ятниця	Friday
са́батка	субота	Saturday
ме́ргуля	неділя	Sunday
ме́ргульник	понеділок	Monday
кувечер	вечір	evening
кеміть, киміть	ніч	night
хвильниця, хвильня	година	hour

Quantitative-spatial nouns include:

ста́вра, ставéрка	кварта	quart
кума́т	кусень, шмат	piece
кума́точок, куматок	кусок, шматочок	
лоптовина, шоловина	половина	half
пікота́	ріг	corner

Here one can add the word *money* and the names of various currencies:

хóбень хóбні, хóмні, ховби	Гріш гроші	money (sg.), coin money (pl.), coins
галінець, кури́бник, скіте́льник, скіте́льний	карбованець	karbovanets
клі́мтур	гульден (ринський)	gulden
двєня хобні	копійка	kopek
хóбень	крейцар	kreuzer
плінка, шандрáчка, шмурка	шістка	piece-of-six
охці́юс	сотка	hundred

Besides the aforementioned, there are nouns for such artistic concepts as

пса́льня	пісня	song
скако́мка, скако́тник	танець	dance
ре́псаня	письмо	writing

The lexicon of emotions is limited to

досадо́мка	досада	chagrin
пошутка	лихо	misfortune

while the list of defects consists of

дермо́нка, деро́мка	діра	hole
шмура	пляма	spot

The list of nouns concludes with toponyms including:

Дильман	Дністер	Dnister
Шайлов	Браїлів	Brailiv
Бучпіль	Бучач	Buchach
Легушани	Оківці	Okivtsi
Дельмошник	Птік	Potik
Пітрусянка	Скала	Skala
Швахтинці	Цапівці	Tsapivtsi
Калутинці	Чернівці	Chernivtsi
Будаўниця	Ягольниця	Yahol'nytsia

and ethnonyms

гуд(ла́й), гудзь, гец гудла́йка, ге́циха, гудзі́вка гудла́йик, гудзєня гудзик	еврей еврейка еврейченя еврейчик	Jew (male) (female) (child) (endearing)
шулі́нці	росіяни	Russians
ба́гуз	москаль	Muscovite
клі́мтур	німець	German
ла́нюс, ма́глит	попьяк	Pole
куган, шандрáк	циган	Roma

Cardinal numerals go from *one* to *forty* and then jump to *one hundred*. Numerals from fifty to ninety can be reconstructed and might have been in use, but are not recorded in the dictionary. Of the ordinal numerals, only *first* through *fourth*, and *seventh*, *eight* and *tenth* are attested, although the others could be reconstructed (*) as well.

№	Cardinal	Ordinal
1	іо́н	йо́ний, ю́тний
2	дві́на, двє́ня, дві́ня	дві́ний, двє́нєшний
3	шкіра́, скєра́, скира́	шкіри́й, скєре́тній, скира́тний
4	ці́сара, сі́сара	ці́сарий
5	п'я́нджа, п'я́нтжа, пє́нтза	*п'я́нджий
6	ша́ндра	*ша́ндрий

7	сѣмптіна, сімптіна, тімара	сѣптіний
8	вісімптіня, вохкімира, вітімара, отімера	отімерий
9	дівера, дівора	*діверий, *діворий
10	дікуна, дікона	діконий
11	дікона й іон	дікона і йоний
12	дікона й двеня	*дікона й двіний
13	дікона й скерá	*дікона й шкірий
14	дікона й сісара	*дікона й цісарий
15	дікона й пѣнтза	*дікона й п'янджий
16	дікона й шáндра	*дікона й шáндрий
17	дікона й тімара	*дікона й сѣптіний
18	дікона й вітімара	*дікона й отімерий
19	дікона й дівора	*дікона й діворий
20	двеня дікон, двіня дікуна, двіна рáза дікона	*двеня діконий
21	дікона двеня й іон	*діконя двеня й іоний
30	скерá дікон, шкірá рáза дікона	
40	сісара дікон	
50	*п'янджа дікон	
60	*шáндра дікон	
70	*тімара дікон	
80	*вітімара дікон	
90	*дівора дікон	
100	дікона рáза дікона	

Personal pronouns are attested only in the nominative case and in the singular. The third person plural is the one exception to number. As for case, the first and third persons singular can also found in the dative case.

	1 st pers.	2 nd pers.	3 rd pers. masc.	3 rd pers. fem.
Nom. sing.	манькó	біти, тапкó	бівін	бівона
Dat. sing.	манькóві	not attested	бієму	not attested
Nom. plur.	біми, маньки	тапки	not attested	not attested

Possessive pronouns are given only in the first and second person singular,

кумуніський, манейський	мій	my
бівій	твій	your

and there are several lexemes for the interrogative pronoun:

кóнто(ль), сконд, бішó	що	what
біак	як	how

The demonstrative pronoun is

біцей	цей	this
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The most common adjectives are the ones used to describe physical condition, for example:

гальóмий, вéлий	великий	large
гальóмий	високий	tall
мékрий, махій	малий	small
мекрѣнький	маленький	tiny
духмóрний	сильний	strong
трóняшний	слабий	weak
сухмóрний	сухий	dry
дулений, дулясний, загрівóшний	теплий	warm
ціхморний	тихий	quiet

сіводний	холодний	cold
цілітний	цілий	whole
кудоровий, нетро́няшний	здоровий	healthy
каліпний	сліпий	blind
троняшний	хворий	sick
буций, укираний	п'яний	drunk

(though the last three words could possibly be viewed as nouns). Then we have:

трепéлий	молодий	young
йóрий, іóрий	старий	old
новіний, новімний, новівний	новий	new
цілітний	увесь	all, whole
босивний, босівний	босий	barefoot

We have adjectives designating professions such as:

лебійський, лобурський	лірницький	lirnyk
шуліце́йський, бікуце́льський	поліцейський	police

and adjectives for social state:

несто́дний	убогий	destitute
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Another adjective group might be the one for characteristics such as:

клéвий, трепеéлий	добрий	good
неклéвий	злий, недобрий	bad
кливéньський	ласкавий	gracious
сура́зний, сура́ський, ся́йний	гарний	beautiful
козумний	розумний	smart
уко́рений	учений	learned
шму́рний	дурний	stupid
крімі́шний, крімовáтий	грішний	sinful
чужі́вний, чужамóрний	чужий	alien
са́басний, сабасні́й	сам	alone

Other types of adjectives include those describing taste, namely:

(о)мі́ясний	солодкий	sweet
гиркі́мний	гіркий	bitter
буквасний	квасний	sour

and those for colors:

плі́ний	білий	white
га́лбин	жовтий	yellow
красі́мний	червоний	red

Verbs can be divided into several semantic fields. Perhaps the largest category is the one with verbs referring to various forms of work such as:

клево́тити	працювати	work
(с)кле́вити	(з)робити	make
право́шити	поправляти	repair, fix
куграти, кургати	грати	play
пса́лити	співати	sing
кумси зіта́ти	жебрати	beg
кубрати, кумси зіта́ти	прошакувати	request alms
слуго́мити, слуго́нити	служити	serve
замі́нчити, маско́рити	замести, замітати	sweep
кле́вити	порядкувати	tidy up
будáвчити	шити	sew

курляти, круляти	варити	cook
степурити	пекти	bake
(п)лінчити	прати	launder
з'яперувати	збирати	gather
копуити, махлува́ти	копати	dig
дерго́мити	молоти	mill
лопо́тити	молотити	thresh
барлу́джити	орати	plough
лопстирити, пасо́рити	пасти (худобу)	herd cattle
дулити, дулясити	палити	burn
махличити, махлува́ти, макува́ти	рубати	chop
сухмо́рити	сушити	dry
ліко́рити, літрити, ліхто́рити	лікувати	heal

Another important category of verbs concerns the body and clothing and what is done with them. This category includes verbs meaning:

тро́їти	їсти	eat
куче́рити	вечеряти	sup
покусьмо́рити	покушати	taste, sample
кус(ь)мо́рити, кучмо́рити	кусати	bite
бен(н)ити, банити	курити	smoke
хе́зити	плювати	spit
лоха́тись, люфта́тися	сміятися	laugh
чихмо́ритися	чесатися	comb
(п)лінчити	мити	wash
(п)лінчитися	купатися	bathe
хизити, вхе́зитися	піти на сторону	urinate/defecate
застіжмо́рити	застібнути	button, fasten
зрутити	скинути	take off
вкле́вити, в'япе́рити	взути	put footwear on
роз'япе́рити	роззути	take footwear off

A group of verbs describes physical states, in the sense that they are actions performed by a human.

These include:

бе́гляти	Бути	be
єпіть, єпить	є	is
не́міть	немає	is not
зіто́мити, кирдимити	жити	live
окирдинитися	ожити	revive
встичувати	вставати	arise
пандіка́ти (на ходу́хи)	ставати на коліна	kneel
покло́житись	покластися	lie down
(по)кло́жити(сь), кіма́рити	лежати	lie, recline
кимати, кімати, кіма́рити	спати	sleep
кимати, кімати, кеміта́ти	ночувати	spend the night
стичити, сто́чити	стояти	stand
ка́чити	сидіти	sit
слихтити	чути	hear
слуха́нити, слихтити	слухати	listen
ке́рити, кирити	п'яничити	carouse
сіверну́ти, сіви́рити	мерзнути	suffer cold
труну́ти	боліти	ache
(с)халі́ти, схалі́ти	вмерти	die

сянитися	світитися	shine
дулясити, дулити	горіти	burn

Some verbs describe changes of state:

(на)чánити, (з)чánити, зчánювати	зли(ва)ти, (на)лити	pour
прокулати	пробити	pierce
відкáпчити, відкап(л)óнити, одскрипотáти	відімкнути	open
закáпчити, закаплóнити	замкнути	shut
виюхтити	вийняти	take out
одчипóрити	відчепити	detach
грівóшити, дулити	гріти	heat
сіверити	студити	chill
дермóнити	дерти	tear
забатузити	зав'язати	tie
задулити	запалити	light
ламусáти	ламати	break
маскóрити	мастити	grease
дермóнити	рвати	rip
махличити, махлувáти, макувáти	різати	cut
клюжити	стелити	spread
трасóмити, тряхóмити, трихóмити	трясти	shake
маскóрити	чистити	clean
кémіти	смеркати	turn dark
рахтить	падає дощ	rain

Verbs of motion are well represented:

бігурáти	бігти	run
льиксáти	лазити	creep
виляксати	вилізти	creep out
пнáти (пнáю)	йти	go
попнáти	піти	depart
хандирити, ханджувáти	ходити	walk
ханджувáти	похожати	walk about
ярдувáти, гардувáти	їхати	ride
скакóмити	скакати	jump
скітити, вскичувати	тікати	flee
когóнити, кургóнити	гонити	drive
викогóнити	вигнати	drive out
докогóнити	догнати	catch up
злобуськáти	зловити	catch
пандічити, пандікáти	падати	fall
вандзóрити, вандзирити	возити, нести, водити	cart, carry, lead
(ви/пере)вандзóрити, (ви/пере)вандзирити, (ви/пере)вандзирувати	(ви/пере)везти	transport (out)
тагнити, тагáнити, тáнити	нести	carry
клюжити	класти	put
мáньчити	минати	pass

There are verbs that refer to communicative acts:

зітáти, кантити	говорити	speak
(с)канти, кантити,	(с)казати	tell
зітáти	мовити	utter
кльиксати, криксати	кричати	shout
рáпсаня клéвити, рéпсати	писати	write
рáпсати	читати	read

шмурити	дурити	fool
авридити	брехати	lie

A large group of verbs describes various relationships:

приохтити	прийняти	receive
шлягáти	зводити до купи	bring together
юничити, яничитись	сватати(ся)	woo
юничитися	женитися	marry
порутити	покинути	abandon
(по)зкóрити	(по)зичити	borrow
пулити, опулити, опульовати	купувати	buy
пропулити, пропульовати	продавати	sell
дякнути, дяхнути, дякáти, горáти, угурáти	дати, давати	give
вiддóнити, оддяхнути, вiддякнути	вiддати	return
вiдóймити, (вiд'/на)япéрити, з'япéрити, в'япéрити	(вiдi/на)брати, взяти	take
платóшити	платити	pay
борщу запарити, козу звеселять	фундувати випивку	buy a round (of drinks)
ханджоляти	виводити гагiлки	dance <i>hahilky</i>
кугратись	гратися	play

A large number of these verbs refer to immoral or censured behavior and its consequences:

лубунитися	сваритися	quarrel
клiмáти	красти	steal
(по)кулати, кóпсати	(по)бити	beat
кéрити, кирити	пити, п'яничити	drink (to excess)
позвiнчувати	позивати до суду	sue
утухмóрити, задухóмити	задушити	throttle
закулати	вбити	kill
вснопити	втопити	drown
вдéльчитись	втопитися	drown oneself
забатузитись, повіхтóмитися	повіситися	hang oneself

Verbs that describe intellectual activities are relatively few:

(на)вкóритись	(на)вчитися	learn
сюрати, сiврати	знати, розумiти	know, understand
скупáти	умiти	know how to
лiтрити, лiхтóрити	числити	count
помiнчити	поминути	recall
забетляти(ся)	забути(ся)	forget

Likewise, there are few verbs that express emotions:

(ви)зiтáти	(ви)просити	request
волiти, вóлити, вóти	хотiти	want
кизiтáти	благати	entreat
кульбáти	любити	love
халiсáти	цiлувати	kiss
нюньчити	пестити	fondle
пликсити, киксати	плакати	weep
кльиксати, криксати	плакати з криком	wail
зшмурiти	здурiти	go mad
хéзитись, скититися	сказитися, встектися	rage

A verb that might be included in this category is

стекляти, слякати, пастикляти	ждати, подождати	wait
дослякатись	дiждатися	wait to a conclusion

There remains a small group of abstract verbs:

назікóритись	називатися	be called
епіти	коштувати	cost
ма́ньчити	мати	have
(об)на́хтити, шукморити	(об)шукати	search
(з)на́хтити	(з)найти	find

As with nouns, there is a significant number of verbs dealing with religion:

ставро́читися	христитися	cross one's self
право́шити	правити (службу)	conduct a service
кудо́нити	дзвонити	ring bells
кизіта́ти	молитися	pray
ша́тер зіта́ти	мовити молитву	recite a prayer

The verbs *kneel*, *read* and *ring* might be included here for a second time because of their possible use in religious contexts.

Many adverbs are derived from adjectives, but their number is limited:

по́со	багато	much
мурго́м, пурго́м	бігом	on the run
близі́мно, кублизько	близько	nearby
куві́зно	важко	with difficulty
бі́вже	вже	already
все́ньки, всяцки	все	everything
сно́пно	гаряче	hot(ly)
шалéко	далеко	far
клéве, клéво	добре	well
сі́верно, сі́водно	холодно, зимно	cold(ly)
неклéво	недобре	badly
сно́пно	парно	steamy
ме́хенький помéкленько	помаленьку	slowly
сяно	свято	solemnly, holy
по́со	чимало	much
мурго́м, пурго́м	швидко	rapidly

As mentioned above, no prepositions, conjunctions, interjections or particles are attested in the corpus.

Whether the purpose of the Lebian language was to hide secret activities or to serve as a way for minstrels to recognize one another, we can be assured that it was used only to discuss matters important in the lives of minstrels. This being the case, we see that the language mirrored minstrel life, the work that they did, and the surroundings in which they lived and worked.

The language confirms that the center of minstrel life was the village. This is where most minstrel personal and professional activity took place and most Lebian words are those associated with village life. Minstrels, we know, did travel to towns and cities. Their activities there were similar to those in villages except for their interaction with civil authorities. The language shows us this by the fact that the only vocabulary specifically tied to urban areas is that for city and town officials and offices.

Minstrels apparently ate reasonably well, or were at least familiar with quite a variety of dishes. The language shows us this in the fact that the list of dishes, especially if one includes edible plants and animals, is quite extensive. Again, this is the food of the Ukrainian village, but this is not everyday food and one can well

imagine that this was not the musicians' typical meal. We know that minstrels were asked to perform at various feasts, especially christenings and weddings, a fact that is again reflected in Lebian vocabulary. During a festival, especially a family event such as a wedding or a baptism, even a poor peasant would do his utmost to receive his guests, including the musicians, as best as he could. Thus, the food terminology includes or even privileges, dishes served as part of celebrations; it is not quotidian food vocabulary.

The list of clothing is not remarkable in any way and we will not comment on it here except to point out that it, too, reflects village life in that it includes men's and women's garments typically found in a rural setting.

The verbs attested in Lebian confirm the centrality of village life and give us some interesting additional information. The verbs that describe work are those that refer to the typical activities of peasants and village craftsmen. The number of verbs related to work might support Kononenko's supposition that work was central to village life and that the blind minstrel's inability to do the sort of work that defined a peasant weighed heavily on his conscience (3-15). The large number of verbs dealing with immoral or illicit behavior is quite striking. On the one hand, this might suggest that the conspiracy theory is correct and that minstrels did engage in activities that needed to be kept secret from others. On the other hand, it is just as likely musicians were the victims of illegal and immoral acts, not the perpetrators of them. Verbs also confirm that the church was an important institution in minstrel life. We know that the life of the musicians was often connected to the church and that their guilds were church-affiliated. Christenings, weddings, and funerals, of course, took place in the church and various churches and monasteries were the sites of festivals dedicated to their patron saints. At the times of such festivals, churches and monasteries were the sites of pilgrimages, attracting both minstrels and potential minstrel audiences (Kononenko, 133-52). If one adds to this the fact that *kobzari* and *lirnyky*, along with other members of the brotherhoods of the poor, often found refuge in church hospitals, then the large ecclesiastical vocabulary in Lebian should hardly be surprising.

Our analysis of the Lebian language should also consider what it lacks. One interesting fact is that, while this language was an argot, a code which allowed free conversation on such otherwise taboo subjects as sex, it did not include a verb for sexual intercourse. Perhaps there was such a verb, but it has not been recorded.

There is a rather rich vocabulary of ethnonyms, showing that minstrels dealt with many groups. Still, certain ethnic terms are lacking. The absence of words for Slovak, Hungarian, Czech, Romanian or Belarusian is not surprising because the musicians might not have had much to do with these peoples. But it is interesting that the word *Ukrainian* or even *Rusyn* are lacking. The reason for this may be that national consciousness was poorly developed in those times. The musicians seemed to know who they were *not*, but they did not know who they were.

Only the most important items of clothing are named in Lebian, but there is no word for *shirt*. Perhaps the word for shirt is missing because this garment appears frequently in minstrel songs where, of course, it is named using the normal Ukrainian terminology. While a shirt was an everyday garment, it apparently had special meaning for minstrels. A number of begging songs sought to arouse the pity of listeners by referring to the minstrel's nakedness and making a specific request for a shirt. (Kononenko 17-19) This would imply, and Lebian confirms, that *shirt* had a significance for minstrels beyond its function as a garment. Thus the special

meaning that a shirt held for minstrels would argue for its encoding. The fact that the incentive to encode seems outweighed by the appearance of “shirt” in songs might support the argument that Lebian was used to hide minstrel activities from ordinary folk.

The lack of terms for internal organs may be surprising. By the same token, discussions of these parts of the body were probably more appropriate to a minstrel’s relationship with a healer or a physician, not to a conversation with other *kobzari* and *lirnyky*. Likewise, only two serious illnesses are named - *typhus* and *cholera*. Perhaps at the time the language was recorded these diseases posed a serious threat whereas others were less important. Also it is interesting that aside from *blindness*, no physical handicaps are named.

There is no word for *autumn* in Lebian. Was this a season when nothing happened in the lives of the musicians? Very likely so: During this season the peasants who constituted a minstrel’s primary audience were too busy to have the time to listen to a performance (Kononenko 11). There are no words for *morning*, nor for the days from *Tuesday* to *Thursday*. This probably reflects the days that minstrels worked and the time of day that they did their begging. It has already been noted that church festivals constituted important occasions for minstrels. These likely occurred on weekends, not in the middle of the week. Similarly, a big secular occasion for minstrel activity, the village or town fair, was more commonly a weekend affair (Kononenko 13-14). As for the time of day, it either reflects begging times or the times that minstrels interacted with each other. In addition to fairs and festivals, minstrels also worked by going from house to house. When they did so, they likely waited until morning chores were done before approaching. And it is in the afternoon or evening, after a days work, that they were likely to gather amongst themselves, either for support and comfort on the road or to conduct guild activities.

The system of numerals can be reconstructed up to one *hundred*. This may well indicate that the musicians' earnings were so meager that small numerals sufficed.

Since minstrels were blind musicians they probably did not need words for color to discuss items and objects in their surroundings. Still, three color terms: *white*, *yellow*, and *red* have been recorded. These might well come from minstrel songs, specifically historical songs and epics (*dumy*) which depict fallen heroes, dying on the battle field, and speak of their white flesh, yellow bone, and red blood. But if colors appear in songs, like the word for shirt, why not omit encoding them, as the word for shirt is not encoded? Perhaps the three encoded colors had meanings beyond denoting hue. Perhaps they were designations of quality of which we are no longer aware. And does the existence of color terminology mean that minstrel poetry was composed by sighted bards? This question has been a topic of much scholarly debate and will not be addressed here.

This analysis of the Lebian language shows that it is a powerful source of information about the lives of Ukrainian minstrels. Minstrels were an important part of Ukrainian culture, but information about them is scant. There are many reasons for this. As already noted, minstrels belonged to guilds which required apprenticeship and thus a certain degree of exclusion of those who had not be properly initiated. But even when minstrels were willing to talk to outsiders such as scholars, many would not listen, considering information about folk performers unimportant. Now that we know about oral composition and the role of minstrels as tradition bearers, gathering information about them is too late because the old system of guilds for the blind is gone. We

must draw on already collected sources and many of these are descriptions provided by scholars; they are not the words of the minstrels themselves. The dictionaries of the Lebian language compiled by Horbach and others are actual minstrel words. As such, they give us a more intimate glimpse of minstrel life, and it is reassuring that this glimpse confirms the descriptions that we do have available. Our look at the secret lexicon of minstrels confirms that their world revolved around the village and that the church and religious events were important. We even learn something about what they ate, if not on a regular basis, then on holidays. We see the days of the week that they probably worked and we can extrapolate information about their view of the body and clothing, including clothing items that might have carried a symbolic value. Lebian provides us a much more direct view into the lives of minstrels than we might hope to get through any other source.

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