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KLECHALNY CUSTOM AS A SPIRITUAL PHENOMENON OF UKRAINIAN CULTURE

Abstract. The Purpose of the Article. The research paper aims at introducing a scientifically substantiated characteristics of the klechalny custom, its origin and content within the context of the Ukrainian spiritual culture. **The Methodology of the Research.** The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity and comprehensiveness. The authors have applied the methods of a typological and comparative historical analysis. **The Scientific Novelty.** The scientific novelty of the obtained results consists in the attempt to reconstruct the tradition of decorating dwellings and farm buildings with tree branches and herbs as well as to present a new perspective on its origin and semantic content. **The Conclusions.** In the research it has been proved that the Ukrainians used ritual greener, primarily, to invite deceased relatives to their homes on the eve of Zeleni Sviata (Pentecost holidays) and Holy Trinity Day. Indeed, according to traditional beliefs, all major calendar holidays should occur with the obligatory presence of deceased relatives, since the success of the living people in household management and family life depended on their support and help. The meticulous analysis of the data-based materials suggests that the klechalny custom is very ancient in origin, its roots go back to the historical

period when there was no division of deceased people into different categories. The absence of ancient ideas about demons in the Ukrainian worldview testifies to the vague reception of them, their predominant identification with the spirits of ancestors (anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, phytomorphic, not personified); all traditional ceremonies were ended with the ancestors' send-offs, rather than the destruction of "evil". Just only later, the reception of "close ones" (forefathers) and various demonological characters were formed on the basis of the cult of the dead. Simultaneously, we can observe the differentiation in using verdure embellishment, that is to say, in the interior the greenery was designed for "didy" (ancestors) and in the exterior the greenery was designed for "rusalky" (mermaids). In turn, this fact explains the existence of different ways the Ukrainians treat and deal with the Trinity greenery after the holiday.

Key words: spiritual culture, calendar ritual traditions, klechalny custom, the Trinity greenery, mermaids, "didy", "Provody".

КЛЕЧАЛЬНИЙ ЗВИЧАЙ ЯК ДУХОВНИЙ ФЕНОМЕН УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ

Анотація. Метою статті є науково обґрунтована характеристика клечального звичаю, його витоків та змісту в контексті духовної культури українців. **Методологія** дослідження ґрунтується на принципах історизму, об'єктивності та комплексності. Застосовуються методи типологічного та порівняльно-історичного аналізу. **Наукова новизна** одержаних результатів – спроба реконструкції звичаю замаювати житлові і господарські споруди зеленню та новий погляд стосовно його походження і смислового наповнення. **Висновки.** Дослідженням доведено, що українці встановлювали обрядову зелень передовсім для того, щоб запросити померлих родичів до своєї оселі напередодні Зелених свят. Адже за народними віруваннями, усі найбільші календарні свята в році повинні відбуватися за обов'язкової присутності померлих родичів, позаяк від їхньої підтримки і допомоги залежав успіх живих у виробничому та сімейному побуті. Скрупульозний аналіз фактичних матеріалів дає підстави говорити, що клечальний звичай є дуже давнім за походженням, його джерела сягають того історичного періоду, коли ще не було поділу покійників на різні категорії. Відсутність давніх уявлень про демонів в українському світогляді засвідчують розмитість уявлень про них, їхнє переважне отождошення з духами предків (антропоморфних, зооморфних, фітоморфних, не персоніфікованих), завершення обрядів вирядженням предків, а не знищенням "зла". Лише згодом на основі культу покійників сформувалися уявлення про "своїх" (родителів) та різних демонологічних персонажів. Синхронно виникла диференціація стосовно використання маю: всередині житлового приміщення – для "дідів", зовні – для русалок. Зі свого боку, цей факт пояснює розбіжності у способах поводження із троїцькою зеленню після завершення свята.

Ключові слова: духовна культура, календарна обрядовість, клечальний звичай, троїцька зелень, русалки, "діди", "Проводи".

The Problem Statement. In the traditional spiritual culture of the Ukrainians an important place is occupied by Zeleni Sviata (Pentecost, Whitsunday, the Trinity), which despite a negative impact of globalization processes remain an important set of beliefs and a rich layer of ancient folk customs. Among them, it is worth paying attention to the all-Ukrainian custom of decorating residential and farm buildings with the Trinity greenery. It is also called "the klechalny custom", which originates from the Ukrainian word "klechannia" (кличання – in Ukrainian), which is a synonym for the word "may" (май – in Ukrainian).

The importance of the research does not require any special arguments, as the humanities scholars still debate on the phenomenon of klechalny custom, especially its origin and content. The unresolved nature of this issue is, to some extent, due to the fact that the majority of the researchers of the calendar rituals of the Ukrainians did not study specifically the traditional customs and rites of Pentecost holidays but analyzed the customs superficially only, in the context of their scientific interests.

The Analysis of Recent Researches and Publications. Dmytro Zelenin and Volodymyr Propp laid the foundations for future discussions and debates on the phenomenon of the klechalny custom (Zelenin, 1914; Propp, 1963). These researchers not only collected the information about the Trinity rites and customs of the Eastern Slavs, including the Ukrainians, identified common and distinctive features, but for the first time also put forward a number of well-founded hypotheses about its origin. The monograph by Tetiana Ahapkina is of a great importance as well (Agapkina, 2002), in which the author summarized not only the factual material, but also the views of the previous researchers on the topic. Cornelius Kutelmakh, a Ukrainian scientist and a true connoisseur of Pentecost holidays, deserves a special attention. Among the articles published by the researcher on this topic, the two of them are especially important – “On the Origins of Klechalny Custom (based on the materials from Polissia)” (Kutel'makh, 2005) and “Mermaids in the Beliefs of the Polishchuks” (Kutel'makh, 2001).

The Purpose of the Research. Accordingly, the purpose of the research is a scientifically thorough characteristics of the klechalny custom, its origins and content in the context of the spiritual culture of the Ukrainians. Ethnographic, linguistic and folklore sources from different parts of the spiritual culture of the Ukrainians (primarily, funeral and memorial rites and demonological beliefs) are involved into resolving the issue.

The Statement of the Basic Material. The analysis of fairly unbiased researches on the rituals of Pentecost holidays illustrates the unanimous opinion of scientists that the Trinity greenery is directly related to deceased relatives who, according to folk beliefs, come to visit their homes on the eve of the Trinity. In particular, in Bukovyna, before cutting down the Trinity tree or branch, the owner had to tell to it: “I invite and take you as a guest (guests) on Pentecost holidays, for you to see my yard, house” (Kozholyanko, 2007, p. 250). In other words, the quoted sentence confirms the opinion of the Russian folklorist V. Propp that “[...] the green branch is a certain personification of the deceased” (Propp, 1963, p. 113). Presumably, for this reason, during funeral mourning, the deceased was addressed the following way: “my stalk”, “flower”, “green leaf” (Vinogradova & Usacheva, 1999, p. 311). By the way, the Ukrainians also addressed to a specific trinity tree as a person: “My helper, my relative, you stand near the house (a linden tree grew near each house), you see everything, they don't go to cut you with an ax but to ask for help, they will cut off where you point at” (Makovi, 1993, p. 142). By the way, in funeral rites, the green colour (in this case, the Trinity plants) traditionally acts as a boundary between “that” and “this” world, and the deceased was usually called “guest” during funeral lamentations.

In addition to the identification of the Trinity May with deceased relatives, the Ukrainians simultaneously had a different interpretation of the function of the klechalny custom – as a kind of place where the souls of the deceased relatives were on the Earth during the Trinity period. In particular, in Poltava region, the Ukrainians believed that on the eve of Pentecost holidays, the souls of the dead flew to their native places in the form of birds to look at their house and sway on the branches (Agapkina, 2002, pp. 307–308).

By the way, regional differences in the interpretation of the klechalny custom depended on the category of the dead (“didy” / “ancestors” or mermaids), with whom the population associated the dead. Apparently, because of this, there is still no unanimous answer among the scientific community to the question: for whom (what for) did the Ukrainians clean their houses and yards on the eve of Pentecost holidays?

More than one generation of the Ukrainian and foreign researchers tried to answer this question. Thus, a well-known expert on the Slavic folk calendar T. Agapkina is convinced

that “during the Trinity period greenery and flowers were the abode of souls (it seems to us, regardless of whether they were ancestral souls or “hostages”); the thesis about greenery as the incarnation of souls is doubtful for us” (Agapkina, 2002, p. 310). Less categorical opinion was expressed by the researcher L. Vynogradova, who suggests that during a certain period “[...] all vegetation became a container or personification of mermaids-“naviy” [...]” (Vinogradova, 2000, p. 191).

K. Kutelmakh’s hypothesis is of a special scientific interest, as it concerns directly the territory of Ukraine, first of all Polissia. A key role is played by the belief in mermaids, whom the scientist singled out from the category of “ancestors”, who died during the mermaid week or were born and later died or accidentally passed away or drowned during the same period. No less interesting are his following conclusions. In particular, the house was not decorated on Friday, when “ancestors” came (according to Polissia beliefs – the souls of all deceased relatives, regardless of their gender and age – *Author*) for a funeral dinner, in particular on Saturday, when “ancestors” “left”. Instead, according to the Polishchuks’ beliefs, when mermaids came with “ancestors”, mermaids stayed until the second Monday – the first day of Petrivka. Thus, houses were decorated not for all deceased ancestors but only for mermaids, whom people met only once a year, while “ancestors” were met several times. In fact, on the ninth day of mermaid season, houses were decorated (Kutel’makh, 2001, pp. 143–144).

One could agree with such a statement of an authoritative expert on Polissia mermaids, but for a few points that require a serious analysis and clarification. Firstly, we consider too categorical the statement of this researcher that the dead ancestors stay in their native house for such a short period – one night. The main argument of this thesis was the comparison of popular ideas of the Ukrainians about the arrival of deceased relatives on other calendar days of spring and winter cycle.

It is interesting that in some areas of Polissia, where the rite of “mermaid farewells” is unknown, Monday or Tuesday (following the Mermaid week) were also called “Farewells” (Vinogradova, 2000, p. 170). We emphasize this point especially because we believe that in this case “real ancestors” were given a farewell. Thus, K. Kutelmakh’s statement about the one-day stay of the souls of deceased ancestors in their native places during Pentecost holidays is not convincing enough. In our opinion, the “ancestors” left for “that world”, joined the majority together with the mermaids, i. e., only a week after the Trinity.

Obviously, the sources of the relevant ideas of the Ukrainians originate from funeral rites. In this regard, a well-known expert in this sphere F. Kolessa said: “It is generally believed that the soul “circles about the body, guards the body, generally remains at the body in the house until the funeral. When a dead body is taken to the grave, the “soul sits in the heads”, it must follow the body to the cemetery, and it then returns to the house and stays there or visits the house in 3, 9, 12 – up to 40 days” (Kolessa, 2001, p. 16).

Secondly, taking into consideration our assumption about the simultaneous stay of “ancestors” and mermaids during Pentecost holidays, we can doubt the assertion of K. Kutelmakh that houses were decorated only for mermaids. A detailed review of the field materials of Lviv ethnologist revealed an interesting evidence, to which the author paid little attention. In particular, the researcher recorded that the Polishchuks of Kyiv region “went to the forest, cut down birch trees, dug them and nailed them near windows. That was done for the mermaids to go for a walk”; “Around the house, I recollect, when we lived on the farm, so my father, how many windows there were in the house, so many birch trees he cut down. Such birch trees were young to be at the same level with the window. He cut them down and dug them: he punched a

hole and nailed. It is for mermaids to sway” (Kutel'makh, 2001, p. 190). Thus, as evidenced by the above-mentioned facts, there was a prevailing opinion among the Polishchuks, according to which, the klechalny custom was performed, primarily, in the yard, for mermaids because these demonic beings “sway”, “rest”, “sit” on it, visiting their relatives.

Thirdly, another important point requires a further clarification. The point is that the branches of young trees, with which the Polishchuks decorated the houses from the outside, were mostly burnt or thrown into the river. “On the second Sunday after the Trinity, the bonfire was made of birches and maples, which were used to decorate the houses on the Trinity – to burn the mermaid [...]”; “Those birches should be burnt on mermaid week. Mermaid was burnt” (Vinogradova, 2000, p. 188). By the way, fire and water were a kind of means of communication with the afterlife, or rather – the ways of transition (in this case – the mermaids) to “that world”. In addition, it is known that in pre-Christian times, fire was believed to a cleansing element. Therefore, the “demon” dead ones (which included mermaids) were not buried but burnt. That is, in ancient times the place of burial was not so important as compared to the method of burial. Sometimes the demonic characters could be “stretched” on the branches” (Kutel'makh, 2005, p. 473). Thus, one important question remains unclear: why did the Polishchuks decorate mainly the yard and not the interior of the house for mermaids? Finding it out, it should be mentioned about the local beliefs about the need to hang clothes for the period of the Trinity holidays near the house, as if intended for these mysterious creatures. It should be clarified that this custom concerned, primarily, those who allegedly had mermaids in the family.

We assume that the basis for solving the problem formulated by us are different ideas about the origin of mermaids – from not quite “ancestors” (“native” and “strangers”), to “indisputable” dead, among whom there stood out the category of dead children, especially born dead and unbaptized. It is interesting that the Ukrainians did not bury them as all the others “demon” dead (in fields, crossroads, swamps, etc.), but as the souls of ancestors – in the yard, at the front gate, under the threshold and corners of the house. In this context, it is worth focusing on killed adulterine children, who also belong to the “demon” dead, as they are all united by the motive of premature death. V. Hnatiuk recorded the interesting information about this category of children in Sniatyn region: “when an unmarried girl gives birth to a baby and kills a baby (drowns a baby, buries a baby) on the very afternoon a tree will be seen above the house roof [...]” (Hnatiuk, 1912, p. 323), which is not a coincidence. After all, it is known that in the funeral rites, a branch placed on the roof of the house was a sign of announcing death. In particular, in Hutsul region, if someone died, his entire estate was decorated with birch twigs or some herbs (Petrov, 1994, p. 248).

It is obvious that mermaids belonged to a separate category of the souls of the dead, whose status allowed them to be present on the decorated branches only, which were put outside the house. The only exceptions were dinners for “ancestors” / “diddy” and breakfast or lunch for “ancestors” / “baby”, when mermaids, along with other deceased ancestors, were at home having a common funeral meal. On other days of the Trinity week, these demonic characters were mostly in the rye field, in the woods, near the river and the cemetery, in the swamps (Vinogradova, 2000, p. 156), and if they found themselves in the house, it was quite by accident (Kutel'makh, 2001, pp. 101–102, 108–109, 125]. Sometimes mermaids came deliberately to do harm to people, who did not follow certain prohibitions.

Thus, the above-mentioned information illustrates clearly that for mermaids, the klechalny custom as a kind of invitation was set, primarily, outside the house. Decorating the living

room was, obviously, for the dead ancestors. Appropriate in this case is the statement of K. Kutelmakh that the tradition of keeping the klechalny greenery during the Trinity period still exists even in those villages where the ritual of mermaids' farewell was not observed (Kutel'makh, 2005, p. 476). To confirm the original content of the corresponding custom, even more significant are the individual recollections of the Polishchuks such as: "It is necessary on the Trinity to decorate the house in greenery, and near each window outside there was a tree... in that green tree souls of ancestors are hidden..." (Davydyuk, 2008, pp. 32, 35).

The Conclusions. In the research it has been proved that the Ukrainians set up ceremonial greenery primarily to invite deceased relatives to their homes on the eve of Pentecost holidays. After all, according to folk beliefs, all the major calendar holidays of the year should take place in the presence of deceased relatives, because the success of the living in work and family life depended on their support and help. A meticulous analysis of the factual material gives grounds to state that the klechalny custom is very ancient in origin, its sources date back to the historical period when there was no division of the dead into different categories. The absence of ancient ideas about demons in the Ukrainian worldview testifies to the vagueness of ideas about them, their predominant identification with the spirits of ancestors (anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, phytomorphic, not personified), the completion of rites by the klechalny custom (greenery decoration for ancestors), not the destruction of "the evil". Only later, on the basis of the cult of the dead, ideas about "their" (parents) and various demonological characters were formed. Simultaneously, there was a differentiation regarding the use of greenery: inside the house – for "ancestors" / "diddy", outside – for mermaids. This fact, in turn, explains the differences in the ways of using the Trinity greenery at the end of Pentecost holidays.

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