

ARTS, CULTURAL STUDIES AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Christmas traditions in Ukraine

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Abstract. The article is dedicated to one of the biggest Christian holidays of Ukraine - Christmas. Christmas is associated with many traditions and customs that are passed down from generation to generation. It is the holiday, which will immerse you in the world of rites, customs and traditions of the Ukrainian people. Christmas is the holiday of joy and happiness.

Keywords: *Christmas, Ukraine, carolers, traditions, customs, decorations.*

Every country has its own customs and traditions, which were formed over centuries. This wide range of customs and traditions might vary quite a bit due to the passage of time or difference of circumstances. As for Ukrainian traditions, they are interesting, diverse and mean a lot for local people. National traditions determine the way people live: their language, religion, life values, as well as food and clothing.

The rich heritage of traditions and customs of the winter season is an integral part of every Ukrainian. Although we all know the reason for Christmas, not everyone can know why it is celebrated during this period and when it became a custom of the Ukrainian people.

Let's start with the fact that from a historical point of view, the true date of the event is unknown. Certain sources mention that the Christmas holiday was celebrated on the day of the winter solstice and was dedicated to God the Creator. After all, the ancient calendar of pagan Slavs was based on the annual cycle of the Sun.

The first official mention of the birth of Jesus Christ appeared in church literature only in 742 A.D. This holiday came to Ukraine even later, after the official adoption of Christianity by Kyivan Rus in 988. From this period, in the

ARTS, CULTURAL STUDIES AND ETHNOGRAPHY

process of their formation, Christian holidays gradually supplanted ancient pagan ones, but the rites and customs of our ancestors remained to this day.

Christmas is one of the most important winter holidays for Christians. As we already understood, its history is very old. It is worth noting that earlier it had a slightly different name and sounded like Rodzdvo and meant the birth of two elements - water and fire, that is, all living things. That is why the celebration of Christmas is associated with many traditions and customs that are passed down from generation to generation. People say: "How you celebrate Christmas, so you will live the whole year". Because of this, the celebration of Christmas is treated with responsibility and special awe.

The celebration of Christmas is accompanied by the special evening supper, Sviata Vechera, nativity scenes, costumes, carols and gifts.

According to the Julian calendar, it is celebrated on the night of the sixth of January. It is at this time that the family gathers for a festive dinner, which is prepared from lean dishes. The main dish of this dinner is kutya, which is a symbol of the harvest, and they also prepare holobtsi, beans, fish, and uzvar. In total, there should be 12 dishes on the table. It is probably not by chance that there is a belief in Ukraine that on such a Holy evening, spirits fly home for dinner... And our tradition of "Holy dinner" very symbolically unites people who belong to the same family-tribe - Ukrainians.

Christmas carols are associated with the Holy Supper. In general, carols are almost the most important element of Christmas and the entire winter cycle of holidays. The very word "Christmas" means "glorification". Christmas carols are songs of wishes that are connected with the New Year's holiday cycle, which focuses on the Nativity of Christ and extends all the way to the Epiphany. It is interesting that caroling does not start in all corners of Ukraine at the same time. At the Penance, children begin to sing Christmas carols and glorify the birth of Christ even on Holy Eve; in Slobozhanshchyna and Hutsulshchyna - on the first day of Christmas after the church service. And in Podilly they carol on Christmas Eve.

It is worth noting that during Christmas it was considered an honor when carolers came to your home. They sang many songs and in the end whole family would join in with them. Then the

ARTS, CULTURAL STUDIES AND ETHNOGRAPHY

carolers were offered something to eat or drink, and they also received a certain amount for their worthy cause. That's why kids especially love this holiday. The carol singers should be home by midnight. Christmas celebrations are not allowed in the streets. Otherwise, the year will be spent in need.

Another important part of the Christmas celebration in Ukraine is the Nativity scene, which is called Vertep. The nativity scene is a theatrical scenes of the birth of the Son of God. It is performed by groups of carolers. The nativity scene is divided into two parts - religious and secular. Mandatory characters of such actions are: shepherds, warriors, angels, King Herod, gypsies, devil, Jew, Cossack.

For centuries, Ukrainian families have used special decorations during the winter holidays. Some of them have roots in the pagan past, and some have acquired significance with the adoption of Christianity by the Ukrainian people.

Didukh has very ancient roots in Ukrainian culture. The word "didukh" means "eldest". The Monk Didukh has many names: grandfather, carol, singer, bunch, king.

The didukh was usually made from the best wheat of the field. In some regions, a single type of grain or a mixture of different cereals, such as wheat, rye, barley, buckwheat, or some of the best pasture grasses, may have been used to make didukh.

When the head of the house brought Didukh into the house, he traditionally greeted his family and thanked God for giving them health and good luck.

Then the didukh was placed on a place of honor in the corner, where the icon was hung on the wall. It would stay there until the end of the holidays.

A homemade octagonal star is an attribute that represents the symbol of the birth of Chris. It is identified with Bethlehem, and people call it the Star of Bethlehem, because it was the first that announced the birth of the Son of God.

Christmas holidays are not complete without Christmas tree. Although the Christmas tree is not a very old tradition in Ukraine, but it also has its own traditions that differ from the peoples of other countries.

The Ukrainian Christmas tree is called «yalynka» and decorate it with a variety of ornaments and garlands.

Conclusion.

So, the traditions of celebrating a major religious holiday in Ukraine, namely, Christmas. Which Orthodox

ARTS, CULTURAL STUDIES AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Christians celebrate from the seventh to the ninth of January. It can be observed that the celebration of this holiday in different regions is carried out in different ways, but with the use of its main attributes: carols, almsgiving, nativity scene, commemoration of the Holy Supper, sincere prayer and good mood.

As it is said in the book «A Ukrainian Christmas»: "Christmas brings the indestructibility of hope in times of greatest hopelessness. As long as we celebrate this holiday, we cannot be defeated or destroyed. This is the message that Ukraine is trying to convey to the world".

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