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PAGAN ARCHAICS: THE RITUAL FUNCTIONS OF THE UKRAINIAN *PYSANKY* AND THE LITHUANIAN *MARGUČIAI*

Abstract

The article is part of a study aimed at a comparative analysis of the peculiarities of Ukrainian *pysanky* and Lithuanian *margučiai* in the context of pre-Christian and Christian paradigms of world-view: their role in the ritual culture of Lithuania and Ukraine, the symbolism of decoration, and the technique of performance. The aim of the article is to study the ritual functions of Ukrainian *pysanky* and Lithuanian *margučiai*. The research revealed the variability of the names of Ukrainian and Lithuanian ritual eggs in the context of pre-Christian and Christian cultures (the difference between the Ukrainian *pysanka*, the Lithuanian *margutis*, and Easter eggs); the similarities and differences in their use in traditional rites of choosing a pair and commemorating ancestors in Lithuania and Ukraine; and their gradual structural and semantic changes under the influence of Christian culture. The foundations are laid for the reconstruction of the original form and content of the rites in which *pysanka*, *krashanka* and *margutis* were (and are) used.

KEY WORDS: culture, rites, symbolism, Ukrainian *pysanka*, Lithuanian *margutis*, terminology.

Anotacija

Šis straipsnis yra tyrimo, kurio tikslas – ištirti ukrainietišku *pysankų* ir lietuviškų margučių ypatumus ikikrikščioniškosios bei krikščioniškosios pasaulėžiūros kontekste, jų vaidmenį ritualų kultūroje Lietuvoje ir Ukrainoje, ornamentikos simboliką bei atlikimo techniką, dalis. Straipsnyje siekiama nustatyti ritualines funkcijas, kurias simbolizuoja ukrainietiškos *pysankos* ir lietuviški margučiai. Tyrimo metu nustatyta, kad ritualinių kiaušinių įvardijimas (*pysanka*, margutis, velykinis kiaušinis) priklauso nuo ikikrikščioniškosios ir krikščioniškosios kultūrų konteksto. Lyginamoji analizė atskleidė ritualinių kiaušinių naudojimo panašumus ir skirtumus tradiciniuose ritualuose – poros pasirinkimo, protėvių atminų apeigose – Lietuvoje ir Ukrainoje, išryškino šių ritualų struktūros ir semantikos kaitą, nulemtą krikščioniškosios kultūros. Tyrimo rezultatai leido rekonstruoti pradinę ritualų, kuriuose naudotos ir tebenaudojamos *pysankos*, *krašankos* bei margučiai, formą ir turinį.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: kultūra, ritualas, simbolika, ukrainietiškos *pysankos*, lietuviški margučiai.

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Problem statement

The tradition of decorating hen's eggs is associated in modern culture with the religious holiday of Easter, but this ritual has pagan roots, and has existed since ancient times, long before the adoption of Christianity.

Over time, the deep folk tradition, with its ritual roots, began to be transformed into secular egg decoration. The consequence of this transformation may be the loss of knowledge about the symbolic and semantic meaning of the traditional decoration applied to the surface of eggs, which reflected the mythological world-view of our ancestors: their pagan and later Christian ideas about the laws and harmony of nature and the universe. The traditional technical skills of egg painting may also be forgotten.

The general humanitarian crisis in the world, aggravated by wars, makes it necessary to preserve unique traditions of folk culture which contribute to people's awareness of their national identity. This is why research into the study and preservation of authentic art is so important today. A significant part of such ancient cultural traditions in Ukraine is the art of *pysanka*, and in Lithuania *margutis*.

The study and comparison of the Ukrainian *pysanka* and the Lithuanian *margutis* will contribute to the identification of unique features of this art characteristic of each country.

The relevance of this topic is due to the lack of theoretical works containing a comparative analysis of the ritual functions of the symbolism of the Ukrainian *pysanka* and the Lithuanian *margutis*, as well as the need to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Ukraine and Lithuania.

The aim of the article is to identify similarities and differences between the traditional rites of pair bonding and honouring ancestors in Ukrainian and Lithuanian cultures, in which *pysanky* and *margučiai* were used.

Research methods and materials. Comparativism, hermeneutics and comparative analysis were the basis of the research methodology.

Historiographical discourse of the research

The first references to the Easter egg in the context of Ukrainian culture date back to the 17th century and were made by Guillaume Levasseur de Beauplan in his work 'A Description of Ukraine' (Boplan 1990). Describing the Easter holiday in Ukraine, Beauplan records the tradition of greeting with the words 'Christ is Risen, Truly Risen', and the exchange of eggs painted red and yellow.

The main evidence for the early existence of the *pysanka* in modern Ukraine is not written information but artefacts. Scientists believe that the first *pysanka* belongs to Kukuten-Tripolska culture and dates back to the mid-sixth to the fourth century BC. This is confirmed by archaeological discoveries: 'The first signs of painted eggshell on the territory of Ukraine date back to the fourth century BC' (Fedoruk 1999, 214–216). The poor preservation of *pysanka* is explained by the fragility of eggshell. Nevertheless, a *pysanka* made on a goose egg with natural colours was found in Ukraine and dates back to the 15th century (it is kept in the *Pysanka Museum* in Kolomyia).

Important historical material demonstrating the sacred role of the egg in Ukrainian culture are the ceramic glazed eggs, also known as *pysanky*, produced in Kievan Rus in the 11th to the 13th centuries. Having systematised the works of his predecessors, Viktor Tkachenko has presented the most complete overview of research on ceramic glazed eggs-*pysanky*, concluding that they were produced in Kyiv, and probably also in Galicia-Volyn. They were exported to various European countries (Tkachenko 2018, 328–352).

The Easter egg (*margutis*) in Lithuanian written records from the 16th to the 18th centuries. The first mention of the Easter egg (*Velykų pautas*) in Lithuanian written sources was made by M. Mažvydas in 1549 (Mažvydas 1922, 88; *Baltų religijos ...* 2001, 187). However, it was not stated whether it was dyed or coloured in some other way. The *Bychowiec Chronicle* (second decade of the 16th century) claims that Duke Algirdas promised the Duke of Moscow to be there at Easter and to kiss him with a 'red egg' (*Baltų religijos ...* 2001, 383). It is clear that the duke or the chronicler uses the phrase 'red egg' figuratively, but the context suggests that dyed Easter eggs were already known in Lithuania at that time. Another important detail is that this passage, according to historians,

is dated to between 1368 and 1372. It was in those years (and also in 1370) that Grand Duke Algirdas of Lithuania organised his campaign to Moscow (Baltų religijos ... 2001, 570).

It is only from the work of T. Lepneris (1744) that we learn for the first time how Lithuanians dyed eggs for Easter: 'At Easter they tap boiled eggs against each other, dyed with soot or *brezilija*'¹ (Lepneris 2011, 196). The use of *brezilia* to colour the *pysanka* was also known in Ukraine. At the end of the 19th century Myron Korduba describes the method of dyeing *pysanka* and *krashanka* in Galicia Volyn, and states that 'this paint is called "brezelia or brazolia"'² (Korduba 1899). From the book by Serhei Kulzhynskiyi, we know that: 'purchased paints are used everywhere for the colour red. One of them, a fern or red tree of vegetable origin, is called "brazolia"'³ (Kulzhynskiyi 1899, 177).

From written sources of the 17th century, we also know about the pagan Lithuanian tradition of sacrificing eggs to the Old Gods, and about the use of eggs as an element of evil magic (Baltų religijos ... 2001, 631; Baltų religijos ... 2003, 554), and about the use of eggs as an element of evil magic (Raganų ... 1987, 284–285).

A number of sources confirm the spread of ritual games with Easter eggs (*margučiai*) in Lithuanian culture. The oldest known games (rituals) with Easter eggs (16th to 18th centuries) are the following: giving eggs, egg tapping (the winner gets the loser's egg), and egg rolling (Mažvydas 1922, 88; Lepneris 2011, 196). The same games and entertainment with coloured eggs survived into the 20th century. The following is evidenced by the aforementioned Karlas Kepeleris (Lietuvinkai ... 1970, 376) and Elena Dulaitienė-Glemžaitė (Dulaitienė-Glemžaitė 1958, 216). Motiejus Valančius, in his work 'Palangos Juzė' (first edition in 1869), mentions the popular custom among young people in Aukštaitija of visiting rural farmers. After visiting, they would wish the host all kinds of prosperity, then wash their hands with water and ask for coloured Easter eggs (*margučiai*) (Valančius 1965, 83). The same custom was also described by Mikalojus Katkus in 'Balanos gadynė' (ethnographic material from the mid-19th century) (Katkus 1965).

Lithuanian and Ukrainian sources from the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Data on the Easter holiday and egg colouring in Lithuania were collected and recorded by many ethnographers, folklorists and historians in the

¹ *Brezilija*, mentioned by T. Lepneris, is a plant, *Alkanna tinctoria*, also known in the folk tradition as *maliavūne*.

² 'The name of this dye is "brezeliya or brazoliya"' (translated from Ukrainian).

³ 'Everywhere, bought colours are used for the red colour. One of them, *Caesalpinia echinata*, or mahogany of plant origin, is called "brazolia"' (translated from the pre-reform Russian language which existed before 1918).

mid-19th and early 20th centuries. L. Jucevičius, in his work *Lietuva, jos senovės paminklai, buitės ir papročiai*, written in the mid-19th century, mentions the old custom of starting the festive Easter meal with a *velykaitis* (dyed Easter egg): ‘... the host himself peels it, cuts it into as many pieces as there are people in the house, and divides it among everyone [...] wishing them health’ (Jucevičius 1959, 196). Karlas Kapeleris writes that in the middle of the 19th century, in addition to all other entertainments, Lithuanians also coloured (dyed) eggs at Easter, and that brought children a lot of joy. It can be seen from Kapeleris’ description that at that time eggs were not only dyed (red, yellow, blue), but also patterned using a stick, and then soaked in beetroot juice (*Lietuvinkai ...* 1970, 376). M. Katkus (mid-19th century) mentions the Easter *Boba*. Parents used to tell small children that the Easter *Boba* brings and leaves two red eggs for good children (Katkus 1965, 254–255).

Balys Buračas deserves a special mention, as his individual articles provide a fairly broad picture of the Easter holidays in Lithuania at the end of the 19th century. A significant place is also occupied by knowledge about egg dyeing, various entertainments with eggs, and the walks of *lalauninkai* and other egg hunters (Buračas 1993, 203–236). B. Buračas (like M. Katkus) also describes *Velykė* or the Easter *Boba* in detail (Buračas 1993, 301).

In 1927, Eduardas Volteris published the article ‘*Velykų margučiai*’, in which, based on ethnographic material from the 19th century, he distinguished four methods of decorating eggs: a) dyeing (one colour, using vegetable dyes); b) scratching (when a dyed egg was scratched); c) waxing (when a white egg is wax-patterned and then immersed in the dye); d) colouring (when eggs are coloured with various paints using a brush) (Volteris 1927, 114–115).

In 1930, Paulius Galaunė was probably the first to concisely discuss and classify egg-dyeing methods and basic patterns (marks). He also provides examples of coloured eggs (Galaunė 1988, 255–260). Elvyra Dulaitienė-Glemžaitė, based on stories written down in the first half of the 20th century by older presenters (meaning the customs of the middle and end of the 19th century), writes that eggs were dyed in various ways: with onion peel (brown), leaves scraped from birch bark (yellow), and purchased dyes (red, pink, green), wax-patterned and scratched. The author also adds that teenagers made unbreakable ‘resin’ or ‘sugar’ eggs, by blowing an egg and filling it with resin or dissolved sugar (Dulaitienė-Glemžaitė 1958, 220–221).

Jonas Balys is considered exceptional in terms of the abundance of his material, the geographical range of its collection (covering all regions of Lithuania), and his originality and reliability. In one chapter, Balys presents his collected

knowledge about Easter eggs, their magic and symbolism in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century (Balys 1993, 113–159).

The peculiarities of the Ukrainian pysanka have been of interest to historians, ethnographers and art historians for more than a century. The first studies, dating back to the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, were devoted to an analysis of literary sources on the subject, the collection of material, and the recording of its characteristics: the purchase of pysanky, the compilation of museum collections, textual descriptions and the creation of drawings recording compositional and colour schemes, types of decoration, and regional features. Important contributions in this direction were made by Khvedir Vovk (Vovk 1995), Nikolai Sumtsov (Sumtsov 1891), Serhei Kulzhynskiy (Kulzhynskiy 1899), Aleksandr Malynka (Malynka 1899), Myron Korduba (Korduba 1899), Aleksandr Hrepachevskii (Hrepachevskii 1904), Vadym Shcherbakivskiy (Shcherbakivskiy 1926). These authors wrote the first fundamental studies, which became the theoretical basis for their successors.

S. Kulzhynskiy's work contains a detailed survey of all known literary sources from the 19th century (62 items), as well as museum collections of pysanky presented in Lviv, Kyiv, Kalush, Prague, Brno, Vienna, Warsaw and other cities in Ukraine and Europe (29 items) (Kulzhynskiy 1899). In addition, he created an illustrative database of pysanky from different regions of Ukraine (2,219 drawings), which became invaluable for preserving the traditions of the Ukrainian pysankarstvo.

The eminent folklorist, ethnographer and literary scholar Mykola Sumtsov, in his study of the pysanka, states that the scientific study of pysanky in Western Europe began at the end of the 17th century. Sumtsov analyses theoretical works by German authors on the subject, noting that most of them associate the ritual functions of the pysanka and its decoration with Ancient Greek culture. He also writes that interest in the study of this topic disappears among German authors, and returns only at the end of the 18th century (Sumtsov 1891).

The Ukrainian historian, ethnographer and art historian Vadym Shcherbakivskiy reveals the symbolism of pysanka decoration in the context of the ritual culture of Slavic peoples, referring to the works of Polish and Czech authors (Shcherbakivskiy 1925).

After the 1930s, studies devoted to the Ukrainian pysanka disappeared. Folk art, rooted in the mythological world-view, gradually acquired the status of decorative and applied art, deprived of any connection with the religious beliefs and ritual culture of the Ukrainians (due to the Soviet ideology of the time). It was not until the second half of the 20th century that ethnographers, folklorists and art historians returned to the study of pysankarstvo in Ukraine.

A review of studies by Lithuanian and Ukrainian authors of the second half of the 20th century. In the second half of the 20th century, many ethnologists and folklorists, such as Pranė Dundulienė (Dundulienė 1982, 300–305; Dundulienė 1991, 102–120), Stasys Gutautas (Gutautas 1991), and others, wrote about Easter and the variously dyed eggs, as well as various forms of entertainment with dyed eggs, but new data about the holiday is basically no longer provided. Much more attention is paid to the genesis of customs, semantics and individual symbols. Juozas Kudirka's work *Velykų šventės* (Kudirka 1992) is probably the most informative about the Easter holiday and coloured eggs (dyeing, colouring, scratching methods and patterns). A lot of attention is paid to 'vėlių Velykos' (Easter of the Souls), i.e. the custom of taking eggs to the cemetery for deceased ancestors.

In the 21st century, the work *Velykų rytą lelija pražydo: Verbų sekmadienio, Velykų, Jurginių papročiai ir tautosaka*, prepared by a team of several authors, stands out by the scope and depth of research (Velykų... 2006). The work of the ethnologist Arūnas Vaicekauskas *Tradicinės Velykos. Šiuolaikiniai margučiai* is also worth mentioning (Vaicekauskas 2022).

A whole series of publications about Easter, coloured eggs, and other elements of the holiday were published in the 21st century, but they usually summarise the author's personal experience, present collected local history material from a particular area, and compile previous works without providing any references. For ethical reasons, they will not be mentioned here.

In the second half of the 20th century, a significant contribution to the preservation and continuation of Ukrainian *pysanka* traditions was made by foreign authors, representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora who had the opportunity to study the subject without Soviet ideological restrictions: Honore Ewach (Ewach 1950), Damian Horniatkevych (Horniatkevych 1963), and Odarka Onyshchuk (Onyshchuk 1985). Their works were published in Canada. In Ukraine, Erast Biniashkevskiy's book on Ukrainian *pysanky* was published only in 1968 (Biniashkevskiy 1968).

Since the 1990s there has been renewed interest in the study of Ukrainian *pysanky*, which is linked to the revival of the *pysanka* itself. A considerable number of publications, illustrated books, scholarly articles and conference material from this period reveal various aspects of the art of the Ukrainian *pysanka*. Usually, the attention of researchers is focused on regional peculiarities of *pysanky*: differences in ornamentation and colour schemes, the symbolism of patterns, and techniques of painting and dyeing eggs. The works of Anatolii Kudrytskyi (Kudrytskyi 1992, 869–870), Oleksandr Fedoruk (Fedoruk 1999, 214–216), Li-diia Haidai (Haidai 2000), Vira Manko (Manko 2008), Mykhaylo Selivachov (Se-

livachov 2009), Tetyana Kara-Vasylieva (Kara-Vasylieva 2011, 295–300), Nataliia Surudzhii (Surudzhii 2016), Oleksii Kononenko (Kononenko 2017), Oksana Kushnirenko (Kushnirenko 2019, 172–224) and other researchers are devoted to the revival and preservation of Ukrainian *pysanka* traditions.

The most comprehensive study of the historiographical basis of the Ukrainian *pysanka* (including archival material) is the doctoral thesis of Viktor Tkachenko (Tkachenko 2020). His analysis shows the lack of studies devoted to a comparison of Ukrainian *pysanky* and Lithuanian *margučiai*, which this study updates.

The ritual functions of the *pysanka* and *margutis*. The historical context

Since ancient times, the egg, as a symbol of new life, has been associated with the festivals of the spring-summer cycle, the cult of the sun, and the cult of fertility. The fertility cult is one of the most important components of pagan traditions. It is based on the worship of the productive forces of nature and man. These beliefs were embodied in magic practices and rituals that promoted the growth and multiplication of plants, animals and humans.

Most of these rituals reflected the main idea of our ancestors' world-view, the continuation of life through the continuation of the family. Their main purpose was to influence reality, to change it in a magic way through a certain action, word, symbol or object. One such object that had a ritual function was a bird's egg. Over time, people learned to decorate them, to dye them in different colours and cover them with patterns in different ways. These signs-symbols of Ukrainian *pysanky* and Lithuanian *margučiai* reflect the pagan model of the world, with its inherent spiritualisation of nature, honouring of ancestors, and belief in supernatural forces. Of course, this model was transformed with the adoption of Christianity. However, the tradition of dyeing and painting birds' eggs is genetically linked to the ritual culture of our ancestors, based on their mythological world-view.

In this connection, let us recall an important historical fact that supports our appeal to pagan-archaic Lithuanian culture: the Christianisation of the Lithuanian lands began in 1386 (Žemaitija was Christianised only in 1413). Despite the adoption of Christianity, pagan customs prevailed for a long time in Lithuania, where there was a place for rituals using birds' eggs. For example, it is known that chicken eggs were sacrificed to the ancient gods. A 1605 report by the Jesuits of the Vilnius College writes about Lithuanians' practice of sacrificing eggs to the old gods: 'Two holes are carved in a tree and an egg is placed in each of them: one to the god of the earth, the other to the patron saint of the dead...'

(Baltų religijos ... 2001, 631). Nonetheless, even this report does not clarify whether ordinary chicken eggs were sacrificed, or somehow dyed or coloured.

Similar information is recorded in a 1606 report by the Riga Jesuit College. It is said that some worshipped two special trees, the oak and the linden. They 'call the oak a man and at a certain time bring him two eggs ...' (Baltų religijos ... 2001, 631). It appears from the same report that eggs can also be used to cause harm. It is said that for this purpose a villager placed two eggs in another's field and cursed them (Baltų religijos ... 2003, 554).

Lithuanian written sources from the 17th century also mention the use of eggs as an element of harmful magic. Data is found in the 1667 Witch Trials in Lithuania case that eggshells were used for bewitchment. The defendant admitted that he stuck eggshells strung on a two-pronged stick into the 'fence of Petras Čelka's land' and cast a spell to make bears, wolves and other predatory animals attack, and that all kinds of diseases and other misfortunes would befall their homes' (Raganų ... 1987, 284–285).

The 1680 Witch Trials in Lithuania case establishes that eggs were used to cause harm. Zuzana Šlekinienė, accused of witchcraft, confessed to placing chicken eggs in four places in a man's garden so that 'everything would go wrong for him' (Raganų ... 1987, 284–285). The same Zuzana also testified that three other women 'bewitched men with eggs so that they would die after eating them' (Raganų ... 1987, 284–285).

The Christianisation of Ukraine began during under Kievan Rus (ninth to 13th centuries) in 988, although the transition to Christianity, as in Lithuania, took several centuries. This is evidenced by the pagan roots of a number of customs, among which Easter rituals with the *pysanka* and *krashanka* play an important role.

The ancient ritual function of the *pysanka* in Ukrainian culture was manifested in many customs connected with the ritual complex of pagan holidays in the spring cycle. With the advent of Christianity, these festivals were transformed into religious ones, affirming the main tenets of the Christian religion: the Atonement, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ. *Pysanka* became a traditional attribute of Easter Week, which Ukrainians call 'Velykódnia nedilia (Velykódunii týzhden)', and of the Easter holiday itself, 'Velykden', which is etymologically similar to the Lithuanian name of the holiday *Velykos*. As a result of Christianisation, the *pysanka*, a pagan ritual attribute of spring and the birth of new life, began to be called an Easter egg. This name still exists today, coexisting with the old *pysanka* (in Ukraine) and *margutis* (in Lithuania), and has become a synonym for many people. But the symbolic meaning of the Easter egg and

the *pysanka* (as well as the *margutis*) is fundamentally different, although both objects are symbols of birth, new life and rebirth.

The Easter egg is a symbol of new life, new birth, which, according to Christianity, is revealed in the sacrament of baptism and the last rites, after the earthly death of a Christian (resurrection, for those who believe in God). *Pysanka* and *margutis* are a symbol of new life, personified by our ancestors with the spring, giving rebirth to nature, which they spiritualised and worshipped.

The use of the *pysanka* in rituals indicates that it was endowed with transcendental properties, as an object capable of influencing the course of events, capable of adjusting space–time coordinates that are fundamentally inaccessible to experiential knowledge and beyond the visible. The main purpose of the rites was to invoke help from the forces of the beyond in the immanent space of existence. Thus, the ritual culture of using a *pysanka* in Ukraine during the Easter holiday has pagan roots, which were preserved after the adoption of Christianity. This is confirmed by descriptions of Easter customs in various regions of Ukraine, which we know thanks to the efforts of ethnographers.

Let us concentrate on those rites that can be divided into two categories: rites of pair bonding (the selection of a couple) and rites of honouring the ancestors, as they correspond to the basic ideas of man, in which the beginning and the end of life are represented by the binary opposition of Life–Death.

In the first case, we refer to the customs of Ukraine where the *pysanka* played an important role as a symbolic object indicating the demonstration of love and was an attribute of steaming rituals. In the performance of these rituals, the leading role could belong to both a girl and a boy. Many Ukrainian researchers have described such Easter customs. For example, according to M. Korduba: ‘Osoblyve vazhnu roliu vidohraie *pysanka* v vidnosynakh mizh divchynoiu i parubkom [...] Koly divchyna ne maie *pysanky*, parubok zdyraie z nei *khustku*, i vona musyt yei azh *pysankoiu* vykupyty [...] kupuiut parubky divchatam, shcho yikh obdaruvaly *pysankamy*, pyvo, persteni abo ih stiazhky (*byndy*)’⁴ (Korduba 1899, 8).

A. Malinka describes such rituals, widespread in Volyn at the end of the 19th century, when a girl would go to the man she liked, bringing six to nine *pysanky* in her kerchief. If the feeling was mutual, the next day the boy had to return the kerchief with money wrapped in it; if there was no mutual feeling, the kerchief was returned empty. A custom is also described in which a boy visits his beloved

⁴ ‘The *pysanka* plays a particularly important role in the relationship between a girl and a boy [...] If a girl has no *pysanka*, the boy takes off his kerchief and she has to buy it with a *pysanka* [...] Boys buy beer, rings or ties (*byndy*) for the girls who gave them *pysanky*’ (translated from Ukrainian; Galician dialect of the 19th century). *Byndy* are colourful ribbons that girls weave into their plaits.

girl on the second day of Easter. The girl, who reciprocates, ‘ugoshchayet yego i dayet s soboy okolo 30 shtuk pisanok i krashanok’⁵ (Malynka 1899).

In Ukraine, *pysanka* was traditionally used in the rituals of Polyvanoho ponedilka (Monday, when they pour water), which is celebrated on the second day of Easter. At dawn, the boys (parubky, who ‘pour over’) went to families with adult girls, whom they poured water on. In archival material it is stated that ‘v Oblyvanyi ponedilok na Skolivshchyni divchata vidkupalysia vid khloptsiv pysankamy, shchob ti ne oblyvaly yikh vodoiu’⁶ (Naukovyy ...). Vasyf Sapiha writes: ‘Tsoho dnia khloptsi-hutsuly vodyly svoikh divchat do richky y oblyvaly yikh vodoiu — na krasu y zdorovia, otrymuiuchy za tse pysanku’⁷ (Sapiha 1993, 112). In Hutsulshchina, girls put *pysanka* behind their bosoms, and young men had to take them away (which indicates the sexual nature of the ritual); the man took the *pysanka* to the river, or poured water from a bucket on the girl.

On Tuesday, the ritual was reciprocal: the girls poured water on the young men, and the men gave them *pysanka* in return.

Yevhen Onats’kyy explains the use of water in this ritual in the context of its symbolic meaning: ‘*uvaha, shcho oblyvaiut tilky divchat, vkazuie y na te, shcho oblyvannia, vidpovidno do symboliky VODY, maie spryiaty paruvanniu. Zhinok, shcho vzhe sparualysia, vono ne povynno chipatysia*’⁸ (Onats’kyy 1962, 1165). This interpretation of the symbolism of water correlates with the ‘feminine’ signs-symbols traditional for the old Ukrainian *pysanka*: wavy lines called waves (*khvylky*).

In Lithuania, *pysanka* rites, in which *margučiai* were used, were also widespread. First of all, it is worth mentioning the custom of *lalavimas*. It is most common in Dzūkija, and was also known in Lithuania Minor. Usually, on the evening of the first day of Easter, a group of young unmarried men (married men are not very desirable) gather together and visit the houses of unmarried girls. They ask to be allowed to sing, and then give an oration. Usually, they wish that the linen will be well worn and that the girls will get married (Velykų... 2006, 190). Girls usually thank the *lalauninkai* with coloured eggs, while the host adds something else (Balys 1993, 142–148).

⁵ ‘Treats him and gives him about 30 pieces of *pysanka* and *krashanka*’ (translated from the pre-reform Russian language which existed before 1918).

⁶ ‘On Pouring Monday in Skolivshchyni, girls buy off boys with *pysanky* to prevent them from pouring water on them’ (translated from Ukrainian).

⁷ ‘On this day, Gutsul boys took their girls to the river and poured water on them to make them beautiful and healthy, receiving a *pysanka* for it’ (translated from Ukrainian).

⁸ ‘Only girls are poured over with water, which also indicates that, in accordance with the symbolism of WATER, pouring should promote the favourable choice of a couple. Women who are already in a couple should not be concerned’ (translated from Ukrainian).

The egg is more common in marriage magic during various other holidays. It is believed that ‘Girls should not eat an egg with two yolks; if you eat one, you will not get married for a long time. A girl who eats a hatched egg will also not get married for a long time’ (Meilès ... 2000, 102). It is also possible to conjure up a future husband. To do so, it is necessary to keep a young chicken’s egg until Christmas Eve. Then it should be cracked and poured into boiling water. If a cradle becomes visible, you will have a child without being married; and if a garland, you will get married; while if the egg forms a ball, there will be neither children nor a wedding (Meilès ... 2000, 34).

The second type of rite dedicated to the cult of honouring the ancestors includes the tradition of bringing *pysanky* and *krashanky* to the graves of deceased relatives, honouring them, and asking for their intercession (Kononenko 2017, 119).

In this tradition we see a strong connection with pre-Christian rituals of the symbolisation of space and ideas about one’s own and another’s space, sacred and profane. This division is connected with categories of *boundary* and *path*, and their reflection in funereal and memorial rituals. It is a symbolic boundary between the world of the real and the world beyond.

Since in Ukrainian culture the direct mention of death has long been taboo, according to many researchers, figurative and thematic codes for it are often used: road, house, marriage, fire, water, etc. For example, Valentyna Konobrodska proves that these images have survived, reflected in the artistic and mythological codes of the lexicon of Ukrainian Polissya, where the road and the path are representatives of the theme of the transition to the beyond (Konobrodska 1999).

In the pagan world-view, overcoming these transcendent boundaries of the visible and invisible is quite possible, and occurs during magic rituals and ceremonies (Nivnia 2018, 30). According to ethnologists and folklorists, the belief that the borders between these worlds open during the Easter celebrations, and that ancestors hear their living relatives calling upon them, was widespread in Ukrainian culture. This is confirmed by material collected by ethnographers in various regions of Ukraine and cited in the book by Oleksa Voropai (Voropai 1958, 157).

This action was (and still is) performed on the first Sunday after Easter, a holiday that is referred to differently in various regions of Ukraine: *Batkivska nedilia* (Parents’ Week), *Pominalna nedilia* (Remembrance Week), *Khomina nedilia* (Foma’s Week), *Didy* (Grandfathers), *Provody* (Seeing-Off), *Radunytsia* (Spring Joy), *Hrobky* (Graves), etc. Analysing the origins of Ukrainian holidays and customs, Vasyl Sapiha suggests that the term *Radunytsia* referred to a whole cycle of spring festivals of the ancient Slavs, a time for commemorating the

dead: ‘*U syvu davnyynu v nashykh predkiv vidbuvalas urochysta tryzna iz zhertvo-prynoshenniam na chest pomerlyk*’⁹ (Sapiha 1993).

This ancient ritual from pre-Christian times later transformed into the custom of a wake at the cemetery, a funeral feast together that took place after the funeral service (prayers for the salvation of the deceased souls). An indispensable attribute of remembrance was the *krashanka* (dyed egg). For instance, in Volyn, when addressing the deceased, they would perfunctorily roll a *krashanka* on the ground and say: ‘*Sviati rodyteli, khodite do nas khliba y soly zisty!*’¹⁰ (Sapiha 1993). After the wake was over, they would again address the deceased: ‘*Nashi ridniaky, ne pomynaite lykhom, bo chym khata bahata, tym i radi*’¹¹ (Sapiha 1993). In this same area, there was a custom of visiting the priest during the seeing-off, bringing him *krashanka* and white eggs (Malynka 1899).

A similar ritual using a *krashanka* is known in Slobozhanshchina: after the wake, people go to the cemetery to meet the deceased, leaving a *krashanka* on the grave.

In the Kherson region, it was common to place a dish of soil with sprouting oats, which had been sown two weeks previously, on the Easter table with the festive dishes. Red *krashanka* was placed among the greenery, the number corresponded to the number of deceased relatives in the household. This symbolic ‘grave’ remained in the house until the seeing-off (Sapiha 1993).

It is also known that in some villages in Galicia a *pysanka* was placed in the coffin with the deceased (Korduba 1899, 9). Vira Manko writes that this was related to the deceased during Easter celebrations: ‘*Yakshcho pid chas Velykodnikh sviat pomyrala divchyna, to yii u truni vykladaly pysankamy navkolo holovy niby shliubnyi vinok [...] Po odnii pysantsi klaly v trunu y inshym pomerlym pid chas Velykodnia*’¹² (Manko 2008, 18). The nature of this custom is not absolutely clear; it is variable and not widespread throughout Ukraine.

Among the Lithuanian rituals of honouring ancestors in which *margučiai* were used, the following are the most well known. B. Buračas writes that the people of Kupiškis used to go to the cemetery at Easter to visit the graves of their deceased relatives and place eggs there (Buračas 1993, 223). The aforementioned J. Kudirka only repeats Buračas’ information about taking eggs to cemeteries. J. Balys (also using data from the Kupiškis area) writes that people there used to

⁹ ‘In ancient times, our ancestors held a solemn wake with sacrifices in honour of the deceased’ (translated from Ukrainian).

¹⁰ ‘Holy parents, come to us and eat bread and salt!’ (translated from Ukrainian).

¹¹ ‘Relatives, don’t think badly of us, since what’s ours is yours’ (translated from Ukrainian).

¹² ‘If a girl died during the Easter holiday, pysanky were laid around her head in the coffin, as if to form a bridal wreath ... One pysanka was placed in the coffin with another deceased at Easter’ (translated from Ukrainian).

place eggs on graves at Easter, and afterwards gave the eggs to children so that they would know where their relatives were buried. It is also mentioned that the people of the Pasaŕčiai region also knew about *vėlių velykėles*, but no one remembers how it was celebrated or what was done during it (Balys 1993, 283). In Lithuania, deceased ancestors are remembered and honoured much more on Vėlinės (All Soul's Day), Sekminės (Whitsun), Žolinės (the Feast of the Assumption), and Kūčios (Christmas Eve).

Until the very beginning of the 20th century, it was customary to feed the dead during these holidays. Among other products, eggs were also brought to the graves. All of these customs are reflections of the sacrifices made to the old gods and deceased ancestors even before Christianity (Balsys 2017, 8–100).

The examples of rituals provided are just part of the entire variety of ritual practices that have taken deep root in Ukrainian and Lithuanian culture. Preserved since pre-Christian times, the ritual functions of painted and dyed eggs (the origins of which have long been forgotten by many) manifest even today, transformed according to Christian culture. The same transformation occurred in the names of ritual eggs: *pysanky* and *margučiai*, which have come to be called Easter eggs.

Regarding terminology, the common noun *Easter egg* came into use only after Christianisation, whereas the tradition of decorating birds' eggs was known to our ancestors long before the Easter holiday. In ancient pre-Christian times, they were a mandatory attribute of the pagan ritual culture of both the Ukrainian and Lithuanian peoples. Based on this, in this article, we use the phrase *ritual egg* alongside the familiar term *Easter egg*, as it corresponds most closely to the ancient function of the *pysanka* and the *margutis*.

In the Ukrainian language, *pysanka* means an egg decorated with a decoration created through the application of hot wax, painting and dyeing with transparent colours. According to an article in the etymological dictionary of the Ukrainian language, the word *pysanka* is a feminine noun derived from the verb *pysaty*, which goes back to the same root as *peristy* (colourful), with the original meaning of *robyty strokatym, prykrashaty* (to make colourful, to decorate) (Etymolohichnyi ... 2003, 376). The late Slavic word *p̣sati* (write) is related to *p̣stṛb* (colourful), and is identical to the Lithuanian *piešti* (to draw). Thus, the meaning has shifted from *maliuaty, pestryty, farbuvaty* (to draw, to colour, to paint) to *pysaty* (to write) (which is preserved in most Slavic languages, for example, in Ukrainian *pysanka, krashanka*, etc.).

It is worth saying that *margutis* (a masculine noun) is derived from the verb *marginti*, which in Lithuanian means ‘to make colourful (to colour)’. This indicates the identical semantics of the Lithuanian *margutis* and the Ukrainian *pysanka*.

Conclusions

The results of the research are presented in the following positions:

1. The Ukrainian *pysanka*, like the Lithuanian *margutis*, is a ritual attribute of pre-Christian spring-summer cycle rites, where the key role belonged to the cult of the Sun and, related to it, the cult of Fertility. This reveals the symbolism of the *pysanka* and the *margutis* as embodiments of the Sun, Spring, new Life and Birth.

2. In pre-Christian culture, the Ukrainian *pysanka*, just like the Lithuanian *margutis*, reflects the concept of *the birth of new life* in the mythological world-view: the worship of the reproductive forces of nature and humanity, the connection of the sacred world with the profane world, the honouring of gods and ancestors, the transformation of space and events through magic practices.

After the adoption of Christianity, the term *Easter egg* spread, reflecting the Christian paradigm of perception, where the concept of *the birth of new life* is subordinated to the main Church postulates: baptism, which opens a new life for the Christian in the bosom of the Church, and the anointing, as a path to new life after earthly death, to Resurrection.

Thus, the symbolism of the *pysanka* and the *margutis*, rooted in the pagan past, is completely different from the symbolism of the *Easter egg*.

3. An analysis of scientific sources on ethnography, art studies and folklore studies shows that in Ukrainian culture, the *pysanka* (a decorated bird’s egg) and the *krashanka* (a bird’s egg dyed in one colour) were traditionally used during Easter Week in pairing rituals and memorial ceremonies.

Despite the variability in the structure of rituals, their typological uniformity is preserved, manifested in the pre-Christian symbolisation of chronotope and ritual changes of the boundaries between ‘one’s own’ and ‘a foreign’ space. This is particularly evident in the rituals for commemorating ancestors, where the *krashanka* plays the role of a ritual offering and ‘opens’ the possibility of communication with deceased family members. In burial rituals, the *pysanka* was used as a Ukrainian’s attribute with powerful protective qualities that protect the deceased on their journey to the afterlife.

The *pysanka* and the *krashanka* played an important role as symbols of love in pairing rituals: gifting a *pysanka* as a sign of love and to find out about recipi-

city (or its absence), redeeming oneself with a *pysanka* (to avoid being splashed with water on Pouring Monday), and gifts and treats from young men to girls in response to the gifting of a *pysanka*.

4. The analysis of literary sources from Lithuania shows that in Lithuanian culture, the *margutis* and *krashanka*, just like in Ukraine, were traditionally used during Easter celebrations. Their use in pairing rituals (the selection of partners) and memorial rites is known, although to a significantly lesser extent than in Ukraine.

Chicken eggs were traditionally used by Lithuanian girls for divination regarding a betrothed, marriage and pregnancy. Among Lithuanian pairing rituals, *lalavimas* is known, involving *lalauninkai*, where unmarried girls thank unmarried young men for their songs, speeches and wishes by gifting them *krashanky* (chicken eggs dyed in one colour). The ritual was performed collectively, which distinguishes it from Ukrainian customs, where this ritual is usually performed within a specific couple of a girl and a boy (in some villages of Hutsulshchyna, it was considered unacceptable for outsiders to see a girl gifting a *pysanka* to a young man). However, for both cultures, the typological uniformity remains, indicating the universal human nature of the complex of beliefs associated with the search for a partner and the inclination towards the continuation of the line.

The commemoration of the ancestors by taking painted chicken eggs to their graves is not common in Lithuania, although the custom is mentioned among the residents of the Kupiškis and Pasarčiai regions. In the traditions of Lithuanian culture, memorial rituals are not associated with Easter celebrations, as they are among Ukrainians. In Lithuania, the main day for honouring deceased ancestors is Vėlinės (All Souls' Day), as well as Sekminės (Pentecost), Žolinės (the Assumption), and Kūčios (Christmas Eve).

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Rimantas Balsys, Maryna Ponomarenko**PAGONIŲ ARCHAİKA: RITUALINIŲ UKRAINIETIŠKŲ
PYSANKŲ IR LIETUVIŠKŲ MARGUČIŲ FUNKCIJOS**

Santrauka

Straipsnis skirtas ukrainietiškos *pysankų* ir lietuviškų margučių ritualinių funkcijų palyginamajai analizei, pasitelkiant ikikrikščioniškas ir krikščioniškas apeigas: atskleista tipologinė *pysankų* ir *margučių* terminų semantikos giminystė; *pysankų* ir margučių simbolikos transformacijos ypatybės, veikiamos krikščioniškos paradigmos; nustatyta, kad apeigos, kuriose naudojama *pysanka* / *margutis*, siekia pagoniškos religijos laikus.

Ikikrikščioniškoje abiejų tautų kultūroje *pysanka* ir *margutis* pavasario–vasaros ciklo apeigose traktuotinas kaip sakralusis tarpininkas tarp gyvųjų ir mirusiųjų, kaip Saulės, Pavasario, Derlingumo ir Gimimo simbolis. Priėmus krikščionybę, *pysanka* ir *margutis* buvo pavadinti *Velykų kiaušiniu* ir įgijo naują simbolinę reikšmę, atitinkančią krikščioniškąją naujo gyvenimo idėją, kaip prisikėlimą iš žemiškos mirties.

Ukrainiečių tradicinėje kultūroje itin svarbus *pysankos* vaidmuo vedybinėse apeigose (meilės ženklas, komunikacijos būdas, poros pasirinkimo priemonė). Tokia pat svarbi *pysanka* ir ukrainiečių laidotuvių bei protėvių pagerbimo apeigose. Šios tradicijos, nepaisant variantiškumo, išlaiko tipologinę vienybę, susijusią su šventos transgresijos ribomis tarp „savo“ ir „svetimo“ erdvės, tarp realaus ir anapusinio pasaulio, tarp gyvųjų ir mirusiųjų pasaulių.

Lietuvių tradicinėje kultūroje fiksuojamos analogiškos pagal prasmę, bet kiek kitokios pagal turinį apeigos. Vedybiniai (poros paieškos) siekiai čia realizuojami lalavimo tradicija. Skirtingai nuo Ukrainos, kurioje mirusiųjų paminėjimo apeigos daugiausia yra susijusios su Velykų savaite, Lietuvoje mirusiųjų atminimas dar siejamas su kitomis kalendorinėmis šventėmis: Vėlinėmis, Sekminėmis, Kūčiomis.

Tyrimo rezultatai sudaro prielaidas tolesnei archajinių apeigų, kuriose naudojami lietuviški *margučiai* ir ukrainietiškos *pysankos*, rekonstrukcijai, jų semantikos ir simbolikos genezei bei analizei, o sykiu ir abiejų tautų bendrai kultūrinei tapatybei atskleisti.