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Kostyantyn RAKHNO

Ceramology Institute – the branch of the
Ethnology Institute of the National Academy
of Sciences of Ukraine

krakhno@ukr.net

**THE MAGIC MEANING OF DRY
VEGETATION IN THE CEREMONY OF
BUYING OF DAIRY CROCKERY**

Ключові слова: Україна, Білорусь, гончарство, глиняний посуд, купівля і продаж, обряди, вірування, суха рослинність.

Костянтин Рахно. Магічне значення сухої рослинності в церемонії купівлі молочного посуду

Купівля глиняного посуду в українців і білорусів оточувалася різноманітними обрядами й віруваннями. Особливо вони були характерні для купівлі глечиків і горщиків, призначених для молочних продуктів. У статті аналізується використання сіна й соломи в обряді купівлі, їхнє символічне значення й семантика в слов'янській обрядовості, звичаєвості й магії.

The buying and the selling of earthenware among the Ukrainians were not so much and not only economic agreements, as the acts of communication between individuals, in consideration of which the cultural details, such as the ritual and customary design of buying, should be considered by researchers in the context of the entire ethnic world outlook. Earthenware acted as the means of the maintenance and the transmission of the complicated complex of information, in which such aspects as the utilitarian one, the aesthetic one, the token one, and others could be singled out. Only the whole set of these properties, the polyfunctional character of everyday items, which have to satisfy both practical requirements, and the symbolic ones, made it to be the fact of human culture proper. The society assessed earthenware in the process of buying and selling. Magic, connected with the purchasing of earthenware and its implementation into a new household, and ranked high among the non-calendar cycle of everyday ceremonies and magic of the Slavs.

The specificity of ceremonies and magic methods, to which people had appealed in the connection with buying and selling, was conditioned with the fact, that they expressed the antagonism of partners, who took part in a bargain, the confrontation of two main personages of a peculiar trade duel, who pursued contrary purposes in this operation: a consumer was interested to carry profit and good fortune into his dwelling together with purchased crockery, while a customer was, naturally, rather afraid of losing it, handing over to a strange household. Per se, all the separate magic techniques, that superimpose on the plot storyline of buying and selling and the implementation of new-purchased clay utensil into the household

(and this storyline is created by a whole number of independent sections and could be at times, in concrete ethno dialectal traditions, quite detailed), aimed to one and the same thing: to purchase (not to lose, of course) certain good. Both lines of plot are thereby dual: the pragmatic side (actually buying and selling, the purely commercial aspect of the act) was always accompanied, obviously or in a hidden fashion, with the magic sense (concern for good fortune, luck). Especially it was characteristic for the buying of earthenware, intended for the keeping of dairy products.

Ritual operations, executing by Ukrainian women, buying milk jugs, have been already investigated. Their semantic and palaeontological analysis has shown that the matter concerns the manifestation of the archaic female household magic, connected with the ancient cattle-breeding traditions of certain regions¹. However the numerous beliefs, pertinent to the purchasing of dairy pottery, deserve to be researched as well. In contrast to household sayings, that have been formed on the basis of real observations, they were built on views, basing not on the real, logically interpreted empirical experience, but on the logic of the figurative and symbolic semantics, associations, and ideas of supernatural relationships in the world, comprehended and interpreted within the framework of the mythological picture of the world.

One of such beliefs was fixed in the Left Bank Dnieper Ukraine in the late 19th century. In the Kupyansk District of the Kharkiv Region during the buying of earthenware, if the straw of a potter's *kucha* (a cart with pottery) was scattered into a jug, it was considered to be a positive sign. Again that was associated with the

quality of dairy products, essentially with sour cream, that was believed to curdle better because of this occurrence. Therefore, if straw happened to be strewn into a jug, it was prohibited to blow it out, or sour cream will be distended, it was necessary to carry a jug home as is². Such concepts were also current in the Podolia Region as early as in the early 20th century. In the village of Hromy of the Uman District in the Cherkasy Region jugs, into which straw got during transportation, were also quickly sold out³. In the Vinnytsya region women intentionally pack just bought vessels between straw⁴. The folk craftsman from the Bukovina Region, a local potter confirmed the existence of the same belief in Bukovina as well. He remembered, that when he was a kid and he and his father carted earthenware to fairs, women, especially in Moldova, asked to not shake straw or hay out from the pots. They say, they do it in order to have a pot or a jug always brimfull⁵.

The buying and selling of dairy crockery in Belarus were accompanied by the same ritual operations too. In the Gomel Region when buying a jug people laid hay or straw, taken from a cart of a potter, into it; so, for example, people did in the village of Nisimkovichy of the Chachersk District: *Yeto uzhe kuplyat' horlach, tam troshki syena chi solomy u pohoshnika kradut' – i u horlach. Yon hovorit': Na sho ty kradesh syeno? – A, ka, dyadyechka, na to, shob smetana sobiralasya*⁶. This custom was denoted by ethnographers in the village of Kovnyatyn of the Pinsk District in the Brest Region as well. There a potter sold pots, having hay laid inside them: *Cho ty mni sina naklaŭ ŭ horshchok? – Shob u tebe ŭ horshku nits ne vybyvalo!*⁷.

In Slavic beliefs hay and straw were interpreted as symbols of productivity and fertility, that is they were provided with active fertile and vegetative meaning. They were one of the means of the objectification of this range of ideas in the calendar ceremonies. The productive sense of the rituals with hay and straw is rather transparent⁸. In the Volhynia and in the Chernihiv Regions people tied fruit trees round with straw on New Year's Eve, on Yule or on the Eve of the Theophany, and it had to ensure fecundity for them⁹. In Bukovina the Ukrainians tied orchard round with hay from under tablecloth on Christmas table on New Year's Eve or another feasts¹⁰. In Galicia straw was laid on wooden floor in a house, while hay was laid on a table under tablecloth. On Yule early in the morning people twisted wisps from straw and tied trees in the garden round with them, whereas the rest of straw was taken to the valley and burnt. Hay was given to the cattle¹¹.

The custom of the tying of straw wisps around fruit trees has definitely descended from archaic concepts on the connections and the causes of fertility. In these localities, where no custom of burning Christmas straw existed, it was often fed to the cattle, put into the hen's nests in spring, etc.¹². For example, in the Grodno Government in Belarus and in the Zolotonosha District of the Poltava Government as well as the Kaniv District of the Kyiv Government in Ukraine next day people gave hay away to their cattle to save it from disease, in order that, having it eaten up, it would not be ill¹³. And in the Lemko Region in the Christmas morning people set boys, visiting them as ritual guests, on straw, and later on they made a nest for hen or goose from this straw¹⁴. The last custom has existed in the Middle Dnieper basin too¹⁵. In Polish Beskids the Lemkos on Christmas Eve tied themselves around with straw twisted strips for health¹⁶. The house was paved with hay or straw among the Poles on the eve of Christmas as well, and among the Serbians – on New Year's Eve¹⁷. In Ukraine a culm a spikelet was considered to be the symbol of wealth in the fortune-telling during winter feasts¹⁸. With the help of straw in Poland people forecasted during Christmas, how many shocks of rye sheaves will be in the next year¹⁹ and in Bilorus in the Grodno Government – will flax grow good or not²⁰? Among the Poles in the Sianok region on the eve of this feast people filled carts and sledge with straw, hurled a handful of grain on oven, on mill-stones, watching closely, that nowhere was nothing empty²¹. Straw, been paved a table under a tablecloth on Christmas Eve, in the Krakow region, the Lublin region, and in other localities the Poles tied round a childless woman as well as trees of bad harvest to have fruits to prevent freezing in winter²². In the Krakow region it was also fed to cattle in a yard²³. In Tatra Mountains straw was used in charms²⁴. In Belarus hay, by which the Christmas Eve table was covered, was afterwards burnt, and the received ash was strewn on fields of winter rye to ensure the good quality of this crop²⁵. The Ukrainians of the Chelm region straw was given up to cattle without fail as well²⁶. In Transcarpathia straw, that on Christmas Eve people scattered on benches and on the floor, was believed to possess healing properties, it was preserved as a medicine or means of better growth of fruit trees. A table was paved with hay that should secure prosperity as the opposite for a bare table that meant poverty. That prosperity should have been present in the household according to the law of similarity. Afterwards hay was given to cattle. People scattered straw after feasts about

in a garden to have better harvest, make also litter for lambs from it. It was considered to be the sacred one. In some places it was treated in the same way as straw, that was left after bathing of the deceased. Somewhere it was burnt; sometimes it was taken to such a place where neither people, nor cattle walked. This straw was not to be used for the same reason as water after washing the deceased, because it causes a disaster. According to the belief, *bosurkani* or a devil carouse on Christmas and can add something into this straw. A man could get into trouble, if he will touch it. That is why people cast it to a pit, what was not used²⁷. In the Preshov region people believed, that the place covered with Christmas Eve straw would not be damaged by hail²⁸. The similar notions existed in Serbia, Croatia, and Germany as well²⁹. Among the Romanians straw, that was strewn around on the New Year by children in front of peasant houses, judging by sayings, was ascribed to have an ability to influence on the breed of cattle³⁰. The close interweaving of the agrarian elements with the cattle-breeding ones could be traced out in these calendar rituals and beliefs, connected with straw and hay³¹.

The same phenomenon was peculiar to family and occasional ceremonies. In Belarus, in the Grodno Government a bride, leaving away, threw away straw from a cart with the aim to precipitate the marriages of girls³². In Ukraine and Russia hay or straw was been laid as a carpet in a house for the time of a housewarming party³³. At the same time they were used in the ceremonies of the remembrance, the propitiation of the souls of the ancestors, destruction of tools, by which a ritual towel was made, and in other ones for the reproduction of the space of death³⁴. The peculiar place of hay and straw on the scale of the opposition between living and dead pointed to it: cutaway, reaped, they are already neither alive, nor completely dead, hiding the potencies of rebirth. The motif of dying, depleted nature rightfully correlated straw and hay with a dying, dead human being, an ancestor³⁵. Not without reason a dying man was laid on straw³⁶. In Belarus, in the Gomel Region one laid a cart, on which a coffin was carried, with hay – using for these journey only oxen, *bo voly – Bozha khudoba*³⁷. In the Eastern Poland people used straw for the same purpose and later scattered it across the road³⁸. The Germans of the neighboring Pomerania after funeral straw from a cart was left near a tomb, in order that a roaming soul could have a rest there and did not need to return home³⁹. In Germany straw, on which somebody has died, was generally scattered about a field. Harvested hay,

according to the German belief, belonged to the dead too, and during reaping ceremonies ears and sheaf have also ritually been given to spirits⁴⁰. The Ukrainians thought, that the ghosts, the souls of ancestors and forefathers inhabit straw and hay. Till winter feasts they remain in woods, steppes, meadows and then return to houses for the Christmas Eve Supper. Invisible ghosts of domestic animals are believed to hide in hay too. That is why hay, while being carried, should be partially lost on the way to the homestead that is why hay and straw are strewn on the sacral place – in the Holy corner⁴¹.

Hay and straw could also be used as occasional talismans. In the 19th century in the Pereyaslav district of the Poltava Government everyone, who went on foot or on horseback past a tomb of a self-murderer, had an obligation to cast a wisp of hay or straw, a twig or a handful of earth according to an ancient fixed custom⁴². In the Kharkiv Government travelers hurled a wisp of grass or a clod on the tombs tchoomaks or another wanderers buried near a road⁴³. In the Ovruch District of the Volhynia Government passers-by, according to the existing custom, threw a wisp of straw from their carts on the tombs of the drowned and hanged, situated on crossroads. People did so in the Lutsk and Zvyahel Districts too⁴⁴. The settlers in the Petrovsk District of the Saratov Government did the same⁴⁵. In the Kholm District of the Pskov Government in Russia was a hill, what was called the tomb of epical hero. Nobody of peasants go on foot past it, not hurling a hay wisp on rising ground and crossing themselves, and those, who went on horseback, had to dismount, pick some grass and lay it there⁴⁶. In Ukraine, in the Sosnytsya District of the Chernihiv Government there was the Baturka tomb. Everybody, who went on foot or on horseback past it, had to throw something on it to propitiate the buried there. It was often hay or a straw wisp⁴⁷. People hurled hay, straw, and branches on the tombs of self-murderers in the Chernihiv, Poltava, Kyiv, and Podolia Governments⁴⁸. When the Ukrainians of the Khotyn District in the Bessarabia Government happened on a priest, that considered to be of ill omen, they cast after him some straws or hay culms, thinking, that hereby they avert the possible unfavorable aftereffects of this convergence⁴⁹. The display of the same custom, when a woman cast straw from a cart at the passer-by, a priest, in Podolia in the early 19th century even caused a witch trial⁵⁰. The mediatory, intermediate role of straw between the worlds is evident: as a part of a plant, cultivated by man, straw falls out of the sphere of the wild one, of the natural one

and, not being the ultimate goal of the creative process, was entirely not included into the field of culture⁵¹. Straw has also apostrophic meaning: «*The straw has also the power and is by all means to take part in feasts. On Christmas Eve people pave floor with straw, stand a nonthreshed sheaf under icons in the Holy corner. At wedding the newly married couple is set on a sheaf in the Holy corner. People make the nuptial bed on a sheaf of nonthreshed straw. Straw roofing covers a peasant house not for fun, but with the aim to drive evil forces off. «Ooh, ooh, straw smell!» – all the sorts of vampires and non-baptized dead infants scream out. Uh-huh, because of this straw smell they can't get anywhere near. Even a threshing floor, where sheaves are thrashed, has power...»*⁵². Sheaves have miraculous power to save cattle from tricks of a house spirit. The researchers considered straw to be a magic charm against evil forces among the Slavs⁵³.

The antique sources testify that the Hyperboreans sent their gifts wrapped in wheat straw to the Mediterranean temples⁵⁴. It obviously had certain significance, and remnants of such rituals can be traced down among the Slavs of the 19th – 20th centuries, particularly among the Ukrainians, and not only in the customs of the earthenware buying. For example, in the Chelm region, in the Hrubieshov District, when people conveyed a pig to a fair, they threw the handful of straw from its litter to a cart, to have the animal successfully sold⁵⁵. Bringing a new-born calf into a house, the Ukrainians of the Ostrogzhsk District of the Voronezh Government wrapped it up with hay or straw⁵⁶. The Russians of Cherepovets District of the Vologda Government and the Nikolsk District of the same Government treated in a similar way too, while in the Soligalich District of the Kostroma Government, when people carried a new-born calf into a house, they took along straw from the last sheaf of oats, in order that it may be alive, not perish⁵⁷. The same ceremonial usage of hay and straw is also especially characteristic for the folk wedding of the Slavs. In Ukraine people paved or strewed the route of wedding procession to a church with straw. In Russia the house of the bride was paved hay or straw. It is worth mentioning that among the ancient Hindus people set a bride on straw, and the even custom has preserved in Germany for a very long time. Hay and straw had, according to folk conviction, to prevent an evil curse and hex, to provide the newly married couple with wealth⁵⁸. Vegetative and productive potential of hay and straw in the ceremonial of earthenware buying and selling corresponds to their functionality in the calendar

and family ceremonies of the Slavs. The idea of wealth, fullness, multiplication, embodied in dry vegetation, was exactly the principal motivation of different actions with it during the buying of crockery. Owing to magic power of hay and straw earthenware were semantically comprehended properly. The theme of the separation of a part from the whole is often recurs in the ceremonies of buying and selling among the Slavs, and so it could be also supposed, that the share of potter's luck was apportioned to a customer thereby too.

All this, in contrast to the above-mentioned ritual of the buying of dairy crockery⁵⁹, are the symbols of agrarian and cattle-breeding magic now. The interchangeability of grain crops and herbaceous vegetation in one ritual represented that period of the agrarian mode of life, when the combination of cattle-breeding and ploughland grain production using draft animals and wheel transport became to be the main economic feature of the population of Ukraine and the neighboring land of Belarus. Just this very economic and cultural type was peculiar to cultural area, what covered Transdnestrria, Podolia, The Southeastern Poland, Volhynia, Polesia including the Lower Prypiat, the Desna basin, the Upper and the Middle Dnieper basin, in the Late Bronze Age. Later on the new agricultural and cattle-breeding cultures of the Late Bronze Age and the move to the Early Iron Age have been created on its basis in the borders of Podolia, Eastern Volhynia, Right Bank Dnieper Ukraine, and, partially, forest-steppe Left Bank of the Middle Dnieper basin. Judging by the diffusion, the ritual operations and beliefs, connected with straw and hay, what have got in the time of buying into a clay vessel, are indebted for their coming into existence exactly to these cultures. Actually, the roots of all the magic were just in the unconscious faith, that the simple being of items together, their spatial touch, such as their conformity, is fraught with mysterious forces. The things that have got once in touch have knit together in magic unity forever. The simple community always had real consequences⁶⁰. It could be distinctly seen on the example of rituals and beliefs that staged of the buying of earthenware.

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Rakhno Kostyantyn. SIGNIFICATION MAGIQUE DE LA VÉGÉTATION SÈCHE DANS LE RITE DES PLATS LAITIERS D'ACHAT

Achat de poterie chez les Ukrainiens et les Biélorusses était entouré les différents rites et croyances. Surtout, ils étaient typiques pour l'achat de cruches et pots, conçus pour les produits laitiers. L'article examine l'utilisation de la paille et de foin dans l'achat rituel de leur signification symbolique et sémantique des rituels slaves, les coutumes, et la magie.

Termes clés: *Ukraine, Biélorussie, la poterie, acheter et vendre, les rituels, les croyances, la végétation sèche.*

Рахно Константин. МАГИЧЕСКОЕ ЗНАЧЕНИЕ СУХОЙ РАСТИТЕЛЬНОСТИ В ЦЕРЕМОНИИ ПОКУПКИ МОЛОЧНОЙ ПОСУДЫ

Покупка глиняной посуды у украинцев и белорусов окружалась различными обрядами и верованиями. Особенно они были характерны для покупки кувшинов и горшков, предназначенных для молочных продуктов. В статье анализируется использование сена и соломы в обряде покупки, их символическое значение и семантика в славянской обрядности, обычаях и магии.

Ключевые слова: *Украина, Беларусь, гончарство, глиняная посуда, покупка и продажа, обряды, верования, сухая растительность.*