

WINTER CYCLE OF CALENDAR HOLIDAYS AND RITES IN UKRAINE

Calendar holidays and calendar rituals are a very important part of the national identity of the Ukrainians. Thanks to them, we learn more about the mentality and moral values of the Ukrainians of that time. Customs were very closely linked to faith and worldview, which was passed down from generation to generation and in some aspects has survived to this day. It is very important to understand our past and the system of holidays in order not to forget our roots. Many holidays and traditions have come down to us, and it is important to know what these holidays are and why they were important to the Ukrainians in the past.

December, the first month of winter and the last month of the year, is one of the richest in holidays and celebrations. The first feast is the Entrance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is celebrated on the 4th of December. On this day, you should not do laundry, sewing or any other household chores. There was a belief that a witch sits on a poker and goes to take milk from a cow. Therefore, on the eve of the 4th of December, the cow was «saved from spoilage» with a mixture of herbs, in which a rag was dipped and crosses were drawn on it. The main feature was that the herbs were collected with a characteristic smell that was supposed to drive away the witch. It was also on the 4th of December that the first carols were sung, so this holiday is called the First Koliada [2, c. 503].

The 19th of December is the well-known as St. Nicholas Day. Nowadays, it is celebrated mainly by children who receive gifts under their pillows, but only for good deeds. And those who misbehaved receive a thin branch of any bush. And in the old days, the hosts would brew beer and invite all the guests to their house. In the afternoon, they would harness their horses and ride around the village singing merry songs [1, c. 29].

The 7th of January is Christmas, which is celebrated during three days. In the morning, as usual, people go to church and then sit down to dinner. The dishes were

prepared the day before, because «...it is a sin to take a knife on a holiday» [3, c. 259]. It was also believed that on Christmas, as well as on Easter, one should not sleep during the day «because the crops will be lost» [2, c. 513].

In the evening, the children would go to their neighbours to sing carols and would be given small pies baked for the occasion, or nuts and apples, or rarely money. The children would be the first to speak, shouting: «Good evening, sir! We wish you a Merry Christmas, and for this news, six sausages, a patch of oats, and a sausage upstairs. There's money in a pot on the stove in the corner. We need to take it and give it to the carolers! Good evening!» [3, c. 260].

The 14th of January is the New Year, or St Basil's Day. On this day, girls wash their faces and throw red beads into the water to make themselves beautiful. And boys go to sow rye or barley, wishing them all the best. Peas, on the other hand, were strictly forbidden because it was believed that they could be used to wish bad things and symbolised tears and evil spirits.

In summary, it is important to note that, unfortunately, the original meaning of the holidays has already been lost, but the Ukrainians understand how important it is to revive our past traditions. For centuries, people have been trying to destroy and assimilate our culture, so we need to know our past and motivate our children not to forget our traditions.

REFERENCES

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