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PRESERVING THE TRADITIONS OF EASTER EGGS IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN OF THE HIGHLANDS

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Abstract. Nowadays the problem of spiritual revival of society is acute. Welfare in general depends on the spirituality of each of us. Spiritual and cultural level determines the strength of the nation. One of the most important tasks of spiritual education is to cultivate the sense of belonging to the people, traditions, art and history. It begins not only with mother's lullaby, parental word, granny's tales, folk songs, proverbs, riddles, but with the subjects of folk art, which provide wisdom of ancestors and human values. Folk art provides an excellent basis for the development of culture. It all passes, generations are dying, everything is turned into ashes; only the spirit of the nation remains embodied in the works of folk art.

Keywords: spirituality, folk art, egg painting.

We, Ukrainians, have to turn to our own history of 1000 years and, facing the future, to preserve the cultural heritage of our young country – its historical past with its culture and good traditions, parental faith and rituals and to revive public schools, not to let our unique songs, colorful traditional patterns, age-old crafts die. These objectives should become main for us.

Rites and rituals have a great value in educating. A number of people over the years established actions related to the implementation of domestic and religious traditions or guidelines. In these forms (especially rituals) actions, thoughts and feelings of previous generations are embodied. They are important for social relations and proper functioning.

In the education of children of the highlands holidays are extremely important. Most researchers define them as forms and manifestations of national cultural traditions and customs.

Ukrainian people implemented in a small egg their soul, thoughts, talent and artistic vision of the world. Pysanka (Easter egg) is a real masterpiece of miniature painting, a creation of hundreds of generations of Ukrainians, their creative thought, heart, long history and culture.

Egg existed in the beliefs and way of life of many people as a symbol of the sun, which was put first yet in the pre-Christian cults. Honoring egg was due to people's association of an egg with the spring revival of the creative forces of nature. Stories about the egg as a source of life and the universe were widely spread among ancient peoples.

Pysanka is an important part of Ukrainian culture and traditions. Being a symbol of Christ's resurrection, it plays an important role in religious rituals. Pysanky and krashanky (painted eggs) are known to many nations. Many legends, superstitions, customs, traditions and ceremonial rituals that originated in pagan days are connected with them. They varied and, with the adoption of Christianity,

gained new functions associated with the consecration rituals during Easter, the most important Christian holiday. Ukrainian pysanky are known to the whole world. They have become a kind of national symbol. This is one of the most striking phenomena of ornamental art in Ukraine.

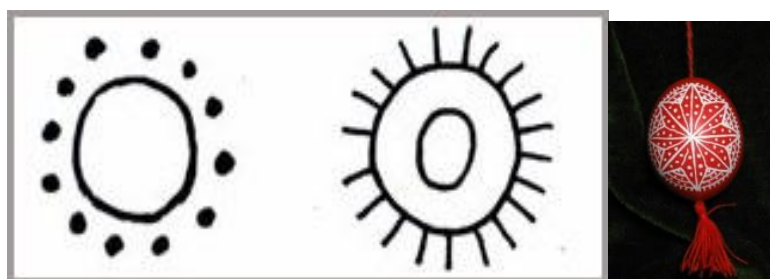
Among Easter eggs of the world, the ornaments of the Ukrainian pysanky of the Carpathians, especially the Hutsul region, stand out for their unique beauty, rich decorative figures and color, diverse elements and motifs painted. In villages, they painted eggs in one color. They, sometimes, scratched patterns on them, then ornamented eggs with wax and painted in several colors; while in the city they resorted to various artificial techniques – glued pieces of colored paper, foil, fabric and thread. For coloring eggs, onion peels (collected in advance), were best used. Depending on the color of the peels, the color of eggs was from light red to dark brown. Geometric motifs were most common on Hutsul pysanky, but they often depicted domestic and wild birds and animals: roosters, hens, fish, butterflies, deer and crayfish.

Annually created, pysanky had the symbols reflecting the diversity of local characteristics of each region; though, there were some common motifs throughout Ukraine. According to the most common elements of ornamental motifs, pysanky are classified into the following groups: symbols of the sun – a source of light, warmth, life and male energy; symbol of water (*bezkonechnyky* (water waves)) – water, female power; symbols of plants – annual rebirth of vegetation and fertility; a symbol of animals – health and life (an ancient symbol of life and death); geometric symbols – the desire for a better life; religious motifs (church) – an earthly image of the cosmos.

They divide the surface of eggs into fields of various shape and size forming the basis for the deployment of elements of ornament. The Analytical Indexing technique is complex and requires a clear sequence. Plants, flowers, birds, animals, crosses, buildings, household of the Carpathian people, work processes, recreation – all of them are reflected on the egg serving as primordial material for ornamental decorations. We, like our ancient ancestors, enjoy first spring leaves, listen enchanted to the singing of a lark, enjoy over the river¹. To express the eternal, our ancestors created characters. Let's look at the most important ones.

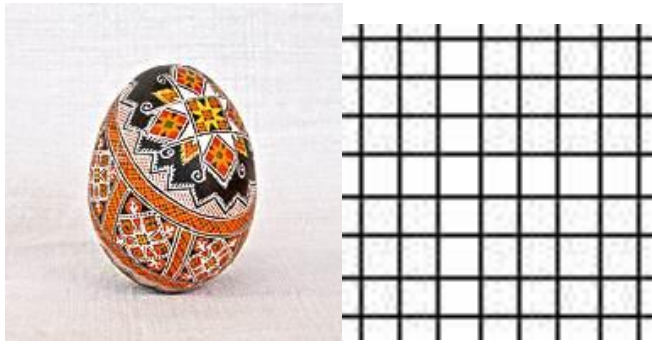
- *Sun*

All the best that there is in human life is connected with the symbol of the sun. In Christianity, the sun was a symbol of God, as God is light.



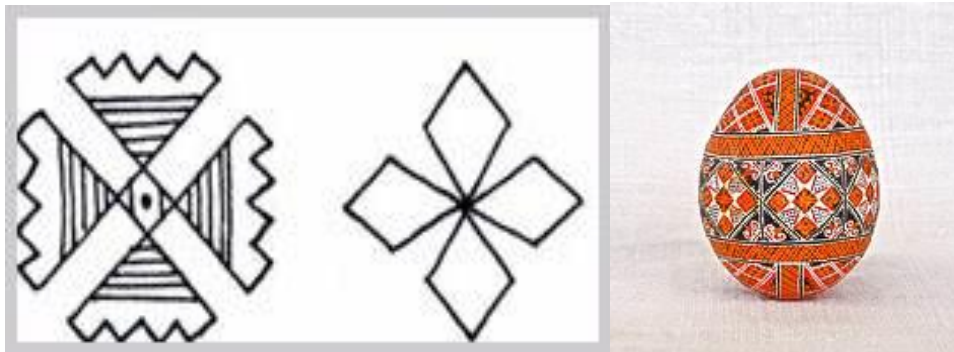
- *Grid*

Grid and sieve, according to ancient belief, like mascots have the force against evil spirits and separate good from evil. Some elements on the egg (circles, squares, triangles etc.) are often filled with grid.



- *Cross*

Cross is one of the signs of the sun, a symbol of the universe, four cardinal points, four winds and four seasons. It originates from the schematic representation of a bird, as in ancient times the sun was perceived as a bird flying in the sky. In Christianity, cross is a symbol of suffering, death and resurrection; with it the church starts everything; it blesses and sanctifies.



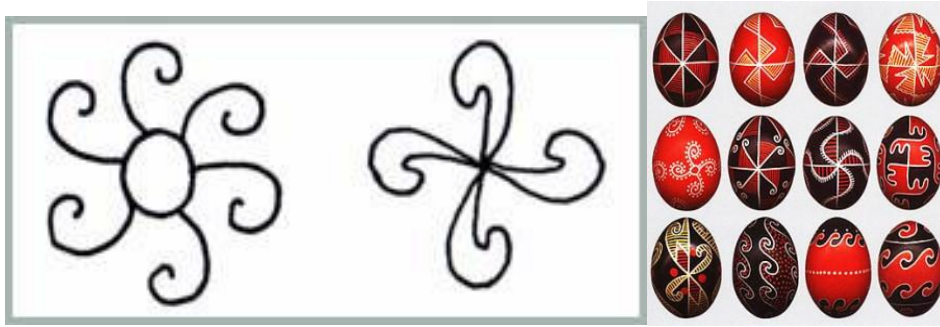
- *Tryrih (a three-horn) or trynih (a three-leg)*

One of the oldest symbols of the sun and the holy sign of the number "three".



- *Swastika, svarga or broken cross*

It is one of the oldest symbols of holy fire, sun and perpetual motion. Its earliest images are found on products of primitive hunters, which is about thirty thousand years ago. According to folk beliefs svarga stood for good and protection from the dark forces. Varieties of svarga are widely used not only in the craft of Easter eggs painting, but also in embroidery, pottery and woodcarving.



- *Horse*

The Horse symbol is associated with sun worship. According to ancient legends the sun travels through the sky in a chariot drawn by fiery horses. In Christianity, Horse is an image of a fearless prophet of faith, irrepressible and ready to sacrifice.



- *Deer*

Deer is a symbol of abundance and wealth. It existed since primitive hunters when the meat of this animal was the staple diet, its skin was needed for clothing and housing construction, and its bones and horns were used for making weapons and jewelry. In folk mythology, the heavenly deer carries the sun on his horns.



- *Bird*

Bird is a symbol of the origin of life, fertility, offspring and wealth, a half-earthly and half-heavenly creature. Rooster was considered the guide of God's sun and the guard against evil; Dove, the symbol of love, loyalty and harmony. In Christianity, a bird is a symbol of ascension to God.



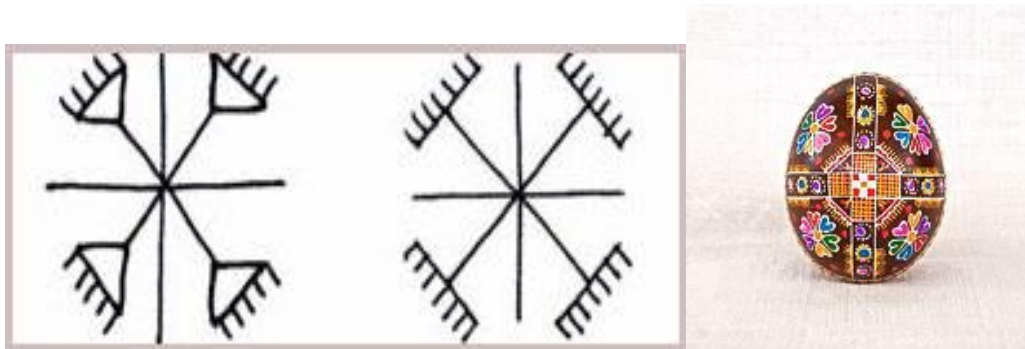
- *Rose, rosette, star*

It symbolizes the sun and the morning star. It contains a saltier, a straight cross and left-hand and right-hand swastika. In folk symbolism it is the constant symbol of love. One presents someone with an Easter egg with a rosette ornament to declare his/her love.



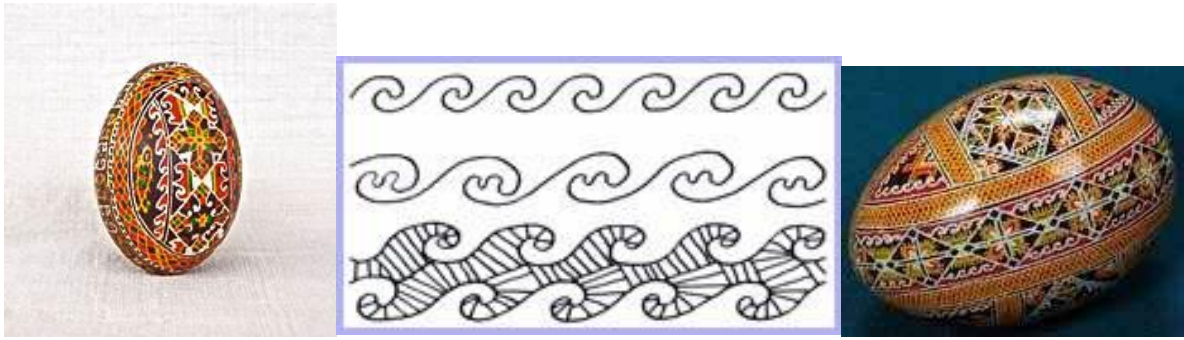
- *Rakes, combs, rakes with triangles*

These belong to symbols that are associated with water, clouds, and rain. People designed pysanky with rakes in times of drought, thinking that by painting this sign, they can call long-awaited heavenly water.



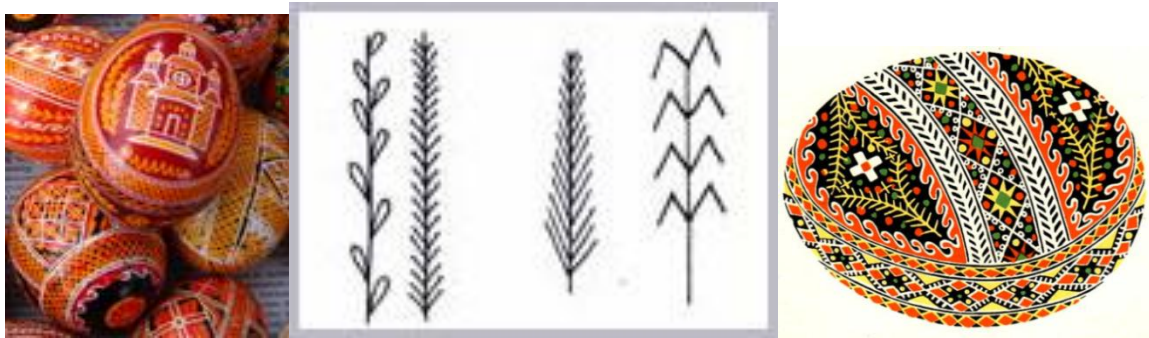
- *Bezkinichnyk or water waves*

It is a sign of one of the most important elements of environment – water. Being essential for all life, yet water could be angry and merciless during spring floods. Marveling over the power and constant flow of water, our ancestors used this symbol to indicate eternity.



- *Spruce, pine tree*

They are regarded as a symbol of eternal youth, health, growth and immortality.



Hutsul pysanky are easy to recognize. They resemble ornaments of the gold Carpathian fall. Mountain features of the region, its geographical remoteness from main roads in the past resulted in isolation in all spheres of its life. This left its mark on the uniqueness of folk art, which preserved features of an age-old Slavic culture, paganism. This is particularly noticeable in the ornaments of Easter eggs. To the most common images belong the following: deer, horses, cows, fabulous birds, cranes, fish, doves, swallows, mythical and fantastic creatures. There are often crucifixes, churches, crosses of various configurations, chapels and other images of sacred content. But the plot and genre motifs are the things that attract the most, as they recreate various scenes of mountaineers' way of life.

Colors of Easter eggs also have their meanings:

Red – a symbol of life and health;

Yellow – a symbol of the sun;

Blue – a symbol of water;

Green – a symbol of nature and vegetation;

Brown and black – a symbol of the earth.

The palette of Easter eggs is based primarily on yellow and green colors of different tonal richness against the dark brown, dark red or black background. In recent years, their traditional palette has enriched with blue, red, pink and purple colors.

Thus, education of pupils of the Highlands on the basis of national and cultural traditions of the Ukrainian people ensures their initiation into high spiritual and material heritage of its people, adoption and enhancement of best practices, moral and aesthetic values, and other items of cultural heritage, the best mental qualities of the Ukrainian people, the specifics of its emotional and intellectual spheres that are kept by the nation, developed and transmitted over the centuries.

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