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Traditions without frontiers - Journey around regional cultures

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National traditions

OUTPUT NR. 3



STŘEDNÍ
ODBORNÁ
ŠKOLA
OBCHODU,
UŽITÉHO UMĚNÍ
A DESIGNU



Vilniaus turizmo ir
prekybos verslo
mokykla



SLOVAKIA



Bee-keeping and honey-picking

- Honey - the favourite sweetener of the Slavs and mead was mentioned in the first written documents about the Slavs.
- Honey-picking from wild bees on the territory of Slovakia is historically proved from 5th century
- Bee-keeping developed from honey-picking. It meant replacing tree trunks with colonies of bees closer to people's dwellings
- Traditional Slovak mead can be tasted or bought at every historical fair





slovakia.travel



Lace-making

- Lace - the typical adornment of clothes, accessories, handkerchiefs and other decoration objects
- Bobbin-lace-making for sale spread on the Slovak territory in the second half of the 16th century
- From 17th century lace-making developed especially in the mining regions as an important supplementary occupation
- Today one can find lace-making in Špania Dolina where laces can even be bought.





Embroidery

- The first embroidery guilds were founded in the 15th century
- The development of folk embroidery culminates in the second half of the 19th and early 20 century
- The Slovak folk embroidery is characterized by richness of colour and techniques, designs and ornamental compositions
- Embroidery - the dominant decorative element on folk costumes and one of the signs of regional differentiation





Mountain sheep farming

- Mountain sheep farming was introduced in our area with Valachian settlers coming primarily to central Slovakia in the 15th century
- Sheep farming, i. e. breeding sheep for wool, milk and milk products such as cheese, bryndza and žinčica, developed in those areas.
- Sheep farm workers could be commonly recognised by wide multi-buckle belts, embellished bags and other items of everyday use.
- Other typical products included musical instruments such as pipes, bagpipes and, of course, the fujara that has been entered in the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- Bryndzové halušky - Slovak national meal, bryndza (unsalted sheep cheese first let to mature, then salted and rolled into lumps



Wool processing

- The basic materials of the Slovak textil production were until recently linen, hemp and wool.
- In Slovakia, the craft of weaving has ancient history.
- Handmade fabrics were an integral part of clothing and home furnishings
- Colour and model combinations, various materials characterized different regions of Slovakia.



Pottery

- Ceramics making from baked clay belong to the oldest occupations in Slovakia and for archaeologists the fragments of ceramics are a lead to dating particular cultures.
- Potters worked especially in winter and sold their goods at markets and fairs (haban culture).
- Gradually, centres of ceramics making developed from folk pottery centres like Modra (Majolica), Pozdišovce.
- Many of them carry on with the tradition even today.
- In Modra tourists can visit a factory producing Majolica and they can try and make their own pieces.





kamNavye.sk

Processing of metal

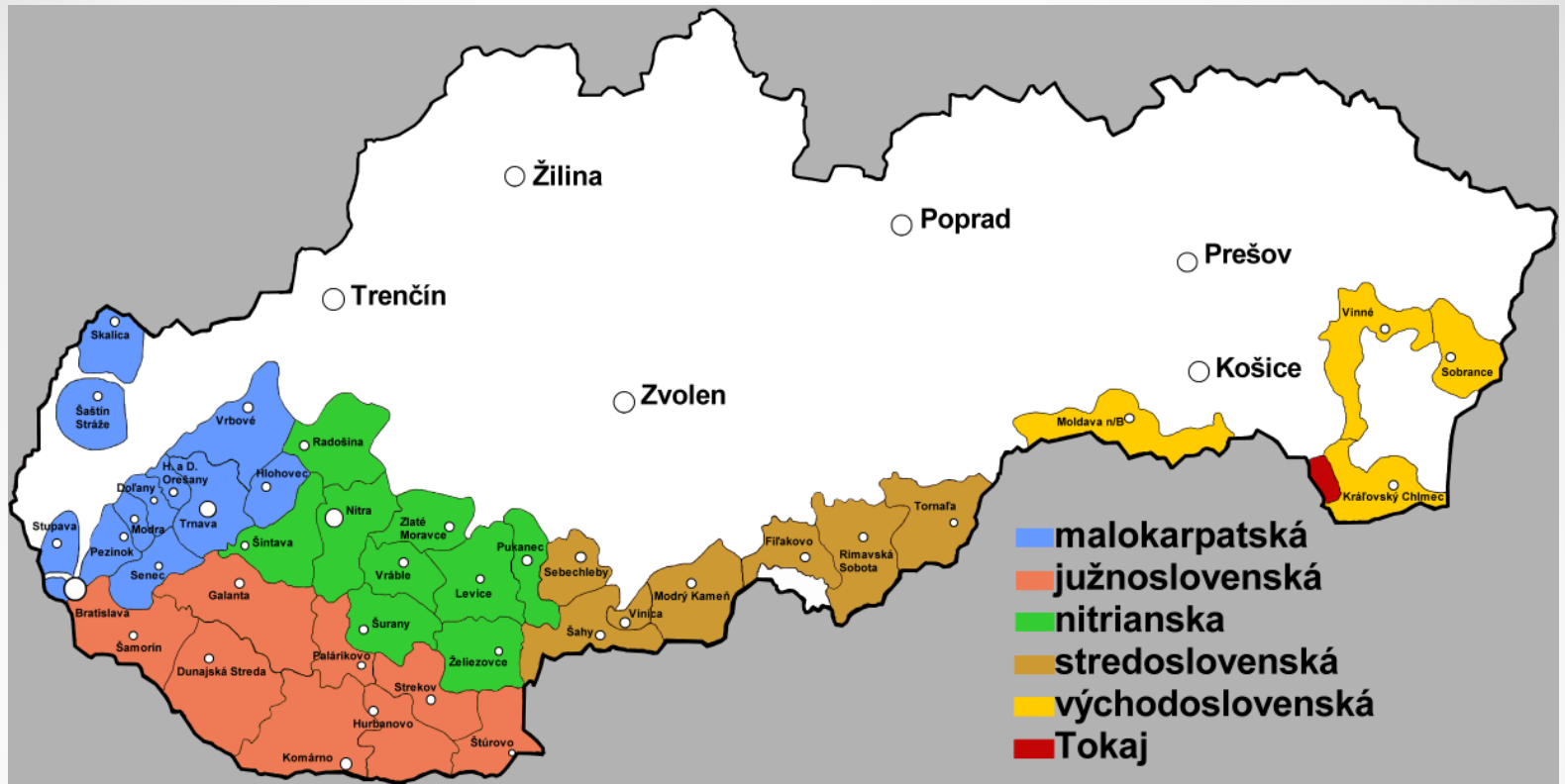
- Tinkering was a specific Slovak craft and Slovak tinkers, who made their living by mending the kitchen ware, tinkering, making and selling products from tinplate and wires, travelled all over Europe and Russia.
- The origins of this occupation, which involved a lot of travelling, date from 18th and 19th centuries.



Wine-growing

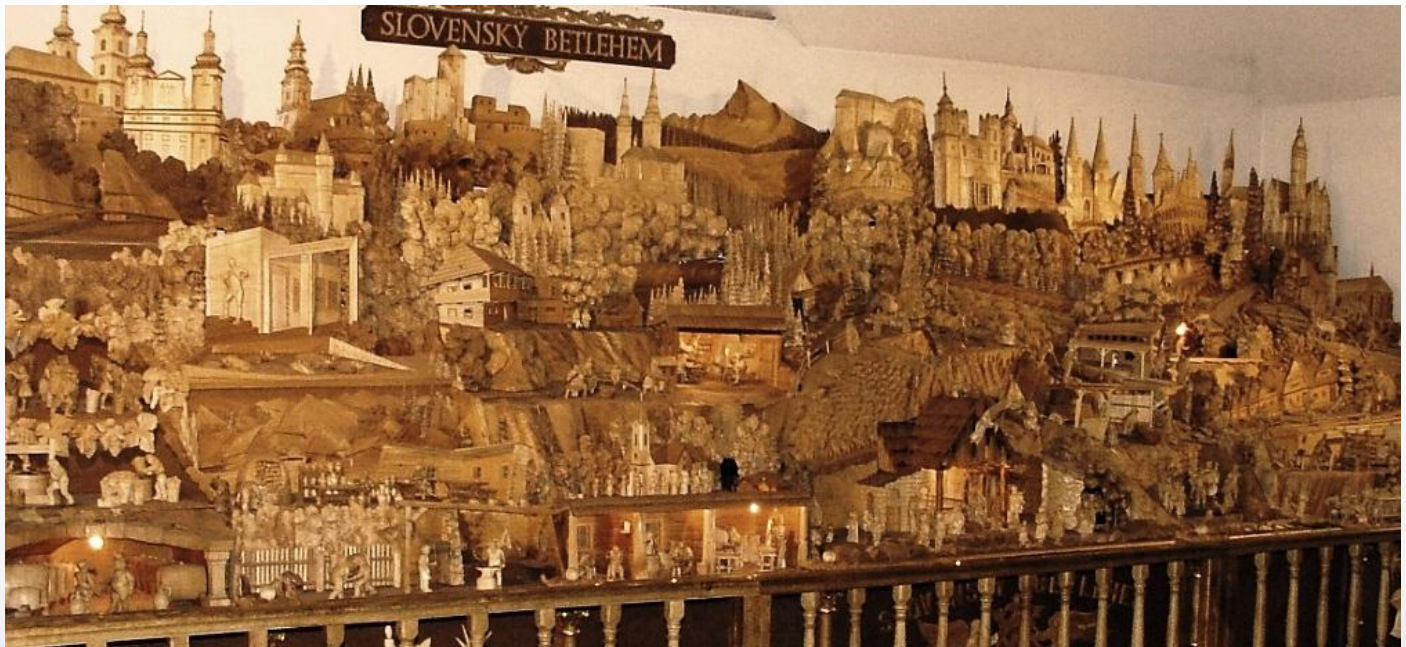
- The first vineyards on the territory of Slovakia were founded by the Romans and the unique archaeological findings of the wine-grower's knives date from 7th century.
- Various customs are connected to the wine-growing tradition; e.g. decorating the statue of St. Urban, the patron saint of wine-growers.
- Gradually wine-growing became more important and wine became an important commercial and export article.





Wood carving

- The wood carving craft became one of the most exquisite crafts in Slovakia.
- Shepherds decorated their sticks and tools and carved special jugs called črpák, miners made various wooden figures, millers decorated their mill equipment and bee-keepers were known for their figure-shaped beehives.
- New craft – carving of Christmas cribs – has found its way in Slovakia.
- The beautiful and various products of wood-carving can be seen at folk and historical markets and are counted among popular Slovak souvenirs.



Basketry

- Wicker was the most common material used in basketry in the past as well.
- Straw was the second most widely used material.
- Basket weaving from straw was spread on the whole territory of Slovakia.



12 Things You Can Only Ever Buy in Slovakia

- Traditional folk embroidered clothing
- Decorated wooden crosses
- Slovak wine
- Honey products
- Slivovica
- Valaška, an ornamental shepherd's axe used for ceremonies
- Bryndza cheese
- A shot glass to wear around your neck
- Corn husk dolls
- Herbal teas
- Tatratea
- Horalky





Customs in Slovakia

- Burning of Morena (two weeks before Easter)



- Christmas (24th - 26th December)



Customs in Slovakia

- Easter whipping or bathing (March or April)



- Epiphany (6th January)

Customs in Slovakia

- Lucia (13th December)



- Midsummer Night's Bonfires (23rd – 24th June night)

Customs in Slovakia

- Putting up of the maypoles (1st May)



- St. Nicholas' Day (6th December)

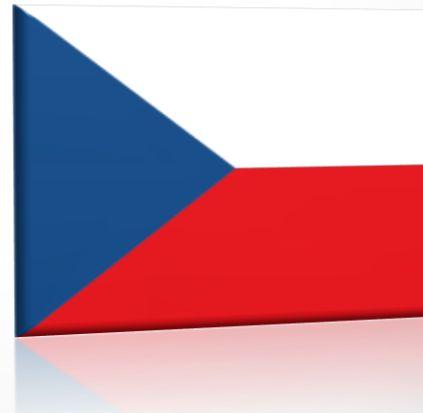
Resources

- <http://slovakia.travel/en/things-to-see-and-do/traditions-and-gastronomy/handicrafts>
- <http://www.welcometobratislava.eu/uluv-galleries-and-shop/>
- <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/slovakia/articles/12-souvenirs-you-can-only-buy-in-slovakia/>
- <http://www.slovakiasite.com/folklore.php>
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Czech folklore



About folklore...

- Folklore in the Czech Republic has deep roots
- It is represented in Bohemia (mainly in Chodsko) and all over Moravia
- National costumes, folk pottery, songs or adages are a typical example of it
- Folk tradition is maintained throughout the Czech Republic by folklore groups



History

- At the time of the arrival of Christianity into the Czech lands, the new religion have already set the calendar, including holidays like Easter and Christmas and also holidays of the saints
- The calendar was set up by the Church and people upgraded holidays themselves

Costume of Tábor Pilsen costume



Costume of Domažlice



Costume of Valašsko Costume of Haná



Carnival (Masopust)

- Carnival is associated with cheerfulness, entertainment, a lots of masks, good food and drink
- First written report about the carnival is from the 13th century
- Our ancestors celebrated carnival wildly and Church didn't like it but the carnivals were still more and more cheerful
- The carnival food was shrove cones and funnel cakes, people were cheerfully drinking beer and wine, singing and dancing
- In some places, mainly in Southern Moravia and in Southern Bohemia, this tradition lasts until today



Burning of Witches



- The burning of witches or Filipojakubská night is a tradition associated with bonfires and belief in witches
- Tradition of bonfires on the eve of the 1st May isn't mentioned in any medieval Czech sources. It may have been organised under German influence
- The original social, protective, and religious significance was replaced by fun and social function
- The tradition of burning a dummy of the witch was re-invented or it persisted from the past
- Nowadays burning is considered as welcoming of spring

The 1st of May / Máj

- This is a very old tradition known mainly from Southern Bohemia and Slovakia
- This tradition has kept until today, single boys go into the forest to chop off the highest and the most beautiful tree and make a traditional maypole (májka) out of it, a symbol of spring
- Boys decorate the tree with wreaths, scarves, flowers, ribbons and streamers
- According to the tradition, girl, who is not kissed on the 1st of May won't be healthy and beautiful. The most typical tree for the kissing is a cherry tree

Easter



- Easter is a religious holiday which became state holiday in the Czech Republic
- Date of Easter is determined on the first Sunday after the first spring full moon
- This day was originally connected with the consecration of the Easter food - lamb, loaves, mazanec and other food which is still present on the Easter table.
- On Easter Monday kids or even adults go trick-or-treating around the neighborhood with Easter whip, which is the symbol of spring and life
- The "trick-or-treaters" also symbolically slap the girls with the Easter whips
- As a reward for trick-or-treating, girls give them a dyed or decorated egg.

Christmas

- Christmas are preceded by four advent Sundays, during which people bake christmas cookies, buy gifts and prepare everything for Christmas
- Christmas Day, celebrated on 24th December, is especially for small children the most beautiful day of fulfilled wishes. The tables are decorated with lots of christmas cookies, the whole house has a typical smell of a christmas tree, which is decorated the day before Christmas Eve
- Every family celebrates Christmas according to their traditions for example: cutting apples after christmas dinner, lead casting and plenty of other folk customs.
- The most important is the christmas dinner, which is traditionally fish soup and carp with potato salad.
- After dinner, the family sits around the tree, where they have gifts from Ježíšek (members of the family) to please their loved ones.



Folklore traditions and games in Lithuania



History of folklore games

The emergence of games is associated with the beginning of humanity and culture. For a long time the ahadi had a magical ritual meaning, but not limited to this. Games always have important elements of the competition, masculinity (all first of all the characteristics of the hunter and warrior). Already in ancient times, a wider range of games has been taken meaning, for example Antique Ancient Greek philosopher Plato emphasized the importance of games for the education of children.

Folklore games

1. Grasshopper
2. Cat and mouse
3. Fox race

Grasshopper

You need to draw a big circle on the ground. One player stands inside the circle, while others, grasshoppers, outside of the circle. Grasshoppers are jumping inside of the circle, then outside of the circle and in the middle of the circle the player tries to catch someone who has hit the circle. When a grasshopper is caught the grasshopper stands in the middle of the circle and the player that stood inside of the circle becomes a grasshopper and so on. Players decide to either jump with one leg or both.

Cat and mouse

The players stand in a circle and keep their hands down. The mouse is selected, which goes to the middle of the circle, and the cat which goes outside of the circle. The cat is trying to catch the mouse. If the cat enters the circle, the mouse runs out. The mouse is free to go but the cat is being stopped with hands. When a cat catches a mouse, the second pair is allocated.

Fox race

Players stand in pairs of two in a circle. Some kind of thing is declared a rooster. The players in the middle of the circle are called foxes. After a signal the foxes turn around and have to run through leg gap, then run around the circle go inside of the circle through the same gap and pick up the rooster. The player that has finished this objective is declared a winner.

Folklore dance

Folk dances are characterized by a symmetrical design; in later times by a compositional complexity, variety of figures. There are various ways of dancing in pairs. The partners can embrace each other in the polka- or waltz-like manner, or they can just hold each other's hands when facing each other or standing in a circle, or hold each other by their bent arms. Dances and games used to be restrained. There were no solo dances. Leg movements are dominant: the steps are short, the feet are not raised high, there are no big leaps. Hand movements are characteristic of imitative dances. The most frequent steps are walking, jumping, waltz and polka steps. Turning, intertwining, going through and changing places are the dominant figures. Purely men's dances are not very popular in Lithuania.



Riddles

A **riddle** is a statement or question or phrase having a double or veiled meaning, put forth as a puzzle to be solved. Riddles are of two types: *enigmas*, which are problems generally expressed in metaphorical or allegorical language that require ingenuity and careful thinking for their solution, and *conundra*, which are questions relying for their effects on punning in either the question or the answer.

- 1. In autumn is born, in spring is dead.
- 2. Flies, flies, but never goes down to the ground.
- 3. Reads hundreds, reads thousands but never succeeds in reading in anyway.
- 4. White as snow, green as a clover, red as blood.

Legend

- Sun, Moon and Earth

In the sky, there lived Sun and Moon. They had daughter Eearth, which they loved very much. Once they tiffed. Then Sun decied that only she alone will protect Earth. But Moon didn't agreed and sued her. Judge Thunder resolved case like this: Sun as the mother, will protect Earth at daytime, and father Moon at night; sisters Stars will also help him. From that time...

- Devil's wedding

- A man was walking from town, from bazaar. And the other goes to city and says: - Wait, a wedding will arrive here soon, we will hold them, we will cut down the spruce- so they will give us vodka. We will drink, and everything will be fine.

- How Earth appeared

There was nothing , but water. A small boat was rowing thoes waters, which God was sitting in it, and the Devil was rowing. Finally they decided to rest, but there is no place where. So God says to the Devil: - Dive into the bottom and pick up a handfull of dirt from there.

Legend history

Legend is a genre of folklore that consists of a narrative featuring human actions perceived or believed both by teller and listeners to have taken place within human history. Narratives in this genre may demonstrate human values, and which possesses certain qualities that give the tale verisimilitude. Legend, for its active and passive participants, includes no happenings that are outside the realm of "possibility," but may include miracles. Legends may be transformed over time, in order to keep them fresh, vital, and realistic. Many legends operate within the realm of uncertainty, never being entirely believed by the participants, but also never being resolutely doubted.

Lithuanian folk songs

Lithuanian folk music belongs to Baltic music branch which is connected with neolithic corded ware culture. In Lithuanian territory meets two musical cultures: stringed (kanklių) and wind instrument cultures. These instrumental cultures probably formed vocal traditions. Lithuanian folk music is archaic, mostly used for ritual purposes, containing elements of paganism faith.



Folklore fairy tales

Fairy tale - epic genre, short, fantastic, educational, simple content with almost always a good ending. This genre is characterized by miracles, curses, fairy tales, colorfulness of action, time and space. The fairy tales distinguish between positive and negative actors. In fairy tales, there is a lot of personalities, a magic number. It has been proven that children who follow or read tales grow up more creative. Fairytales - a tool for spreading the folk poetry of the Lithuanian language. Most of the tales are miraculous: international, known in the folklore of civilized nations, and in folk art of African or American nations. Rare story is a property of one nation. For example, the fairy-tale "Eglė žindų karalienė"; is very popular in Lithuania, known in the folklore of Latvians, Eastern Slavs and Moldavians. Animal tales are also popular in the Lithuanian folklore. The characters here are beasts, animals, sometimes people. These tales are somewhat reminiscent of fairytales, because animals, beasts, and their interrelations are allegorically portrayed - it speaks of them, but the lives of people are shown. Some fairy tales still have a clear connection with old myths, beliefs, customs.

The man and the fox

Once when a man was plowing his fields at the edge of the forest a bear said from the bushes and growled: I'll eat your oxen!

Then a fox came running up to the man saying: "What will you give me if I save your oxen?"

"I'll bring a sack full of chickens," the man promised.

After the fox had agreed to these terms he ran off into the woods. A moment later he came out of the woods from another direction and when running up to the man and said: "Man, man have you seen any bears hear, deer, wolves, and boars?"

The Lord makes up a bustle in the forest."

"No," the man replied.

"Eh, what is there in the bush?" The fox asked.

"It's a stump," replied the man.

"The stump should be chopped with your ax," the fox told the man as he ran off into the forest once more.

Now the bear called: "Man cut my head off with an ax!"

"You see, I've saved your ox from death just as I promised. Now keep your end of the bargain and bring me a bag full of chickens tomorrow," the fox told the farmer.

The next morning the farmer brought a bag with two dogs hidden away inside of it instead of chickens.

When she saw the bag the fox got excited thinking that it was filled with chickens as the man had promised.

"Let the chickens out so I can chase them!" the fox pleaded with her mouth drooling.

So the man shook the dogs out of the bag who immediately began to chase the fox. Just as the fox started to dart down her hole the dogs grabbed hold of her tail and pulled her up out of the hole and tore her to pieces.

Dummling and his white horse

There once was a man who had three sons, two were clever but the youngest was a simpleton. The man bought each of his sons two horses.

Some time later something came ate their barley during the night so the father sent the eldest son to see what had happened. But the eldest son fell asleep during his watch and so saw nothing.

The second night the second oldest went out to keep watch but he too fell asleep and saw nothing.

On the third night the Dummling went out and sat on a stone to keep watch. Just at midnight he saw a white horse approaching. The horse was so white that it seemed to light up the night, and as it went to eat the barley the Dummling captured it.

“Please, please, let me go,” the white horse begged. “If you do I’ll help you when you need it.”

Once upon a time the news came that the King wanted to give his daughter to the man who could jump with his horse from the court yard to his daughters room on the third story. Wanting to try to achieve this feat with the white horse the Dummling told his father he was going to gather mushrooms in the forest. Once he went out the Dummling threw his basket down and called out, "white horse." And sure enough the white horse came running. And the Dummling crawled into one ear of the horse as a poor man and out the other dressed as a handsome portly squire. Then he rode to the castle and his horse jumped to the third floor where the princess lived. Seeing that the Dummling had done this the princess gave him a gold ring. The dumbling then rode home, and returned to his normal self before dismissing his horse.

He then picked up his basket and filled it with sponges to make it appear that he'd gathered the wrong thing. When he got home and gave these to the kitchen maid she called him a fool. But the Dummling didn't care he went to the stove to examine his ring in the light. And when he looked at the ring it shone with such bright light that it made the whole room see to glow. But his family still called him a fool and worried that he might infect the whole house with some strange magic.

Some time later the king sent out an invitation to the feast and the Dummlings father and two brothers went to the feast. Now the Dummling went out to give the guests a drink, and at last she came to the Dummling when she noticed the ring on his finger.

"Why do you have that ring?" the princess asked him.

And just then the ring began to glow with a bright light. The princess then took the husband by his hand and lead him over to her father and told him that this would be her husband. She then led him away, bathed him, dressed him in nice clothes, and lead him back to the feast to sit beside her. And the Dummling and the princess became husband and wife.



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*Folk traditions
in Poland*





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Origins of folk traditions in Poland

Each culture develops ways of ritualization of public and personal life in the form of specific holidays, rites, and customs. They become cultural symbols of a given community.

Since the earliest times, the annual folk rituals in Poland have been closely related to the change of seasons. Another factor which shaped Polish folk traditions is the fact that Poland has always been an agricultural country, so the symbols related to nature are strongly represented in our culture and customs. As time passed, the initially pagan customs, such as the celebrating of the winter solstice, were adopted by the Christian tradition and have been cultivated until today.



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Winter





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Christmas Eve supper

Christmas Eve supper (wieczerza wigilijna) is one of the most favourite traditions cultivated in Poland. In the past, there used to be an odd number of dishes served on that occasion. Interestingly, according to the Etymological Dictionary of the Polish Language by Aleksander Brückner, the number of dishes was related to social class: the peasants' supper consisted of 5 or 7 dishes, the gentry usually had 9, and the aristocracy 11 dishes, but finally the even number 12 was adopted to commemorate the 12 disciples. It is obligatory to try a portion of all of them. Some traditions specify that the number of guests cannot be odd. Also, there is a custom of preparing an extra seat and plate at the table for an unexpected guest. Traditionally, some hay is placed under the tablecloth during the supper.



**Examples of dishes:
Pierogi with cabbage
and mushroom filling.**





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**Fried carp with potatoes
Borscht with dumplings**





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Nativity plays / Jasełka

A **Nativity play** or **Christmas pageant** is a play which recounts the story of the Nativity of Jesus. It is usually performed at Christmas, the feast of the Nativity. The creator of Christmas pageant is Saint Francis of Assisi, who put up the first performance in 1223 in Greccio. Its content were some scenes from the life of Jesus.

Many Polish schools prepare Christmas pageant before the Christmas break begins. Schoolchildren dressed in special costumes act as the human and angel characters, and often as the animals and props. The infant Jesus is sometimes represented by a doll, but also played by a real baby. All families, schoolteachers and sometimes the church community in general form the audience.



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Jasełka





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Jasełka performance at a church





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Spring





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Drowning of the Winter Goddess

Drowning the Winter Goddess (in Polish referred to as Marzanna) is a popular Polish tradition celebrated in spring. The celebration consists in creating a dummy which represents Marzanna. It is usually made of all kinds of rags, colorful fabrics and other materials, artificial flowers and various types of decorations. The figure is brought to a river, where it is drowned. People believe that in this way they will defeat the winter and the long-awaited spring will come.



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Children drowning Marzanna





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Painting Easter eggs

The custom of painting eggs was born in Persia. As far as the Slavic tradition is concerned, the oldest Easter eggs in Poland come from the end of the tenth century. In many cultures around the world, the egg is the symbol of a new life. In the process of christianization, Easter eggs were included in the elements of Easter symbolism. Painted eggs are to be a symbol of the reviving nature, and in Christianity they also refer to the faith in the resurrection of Christ.



Easter eggs





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Guards at Christ's tomb / Straże wielkanocne

Another tradition related to the period of Easter is guarding the tomb of Christ. Guards, sometimes referred to as "Turks" keep watch at the tomb of Christ, assist in the ordination of water, fire and food, take part in services and processions on the first and second days of Easter. Each branch of the "Turks" has its own uniforms. In some places, uniforms are decorated with Turkish ornaments until today, and the unit is commanded by a pasha. The "Turks" costumes are characterized by high headgear, called chuks, richly decorated with tissue paper and feathers. In many places, the costumes refer to historical military uniforms. Some units wear typical Roman costumes.



Guards at Christ's tomb





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Easter Monday / Lany Poniedziałek / Śmigus-dyngus

The custom of people pouring water on each other on Easter Monday has a long tradition in Poland. The origins of folk customs celebrated on Easter Monday are associated with the practices of the Slavs who expressed their joy after the end of winter and the arrival of spring. The custom consisted in hitting a person's legs with willow twigs and pouring cold water on each other. This symbolized the spring cleansing of dirt and disease, and later also of sin. The initially Slavic custom was later added to the Easter traditions.

Today, śmigus-dyngus is a movable holiday, treated as a folk game. In contrast to the original traditions, everyone is poured with water, even strangers in the street. The custom generally involves playing with water and it is popular especially among children and adolescents and has little to do with traditional practices.



Getting wet on Easter Monday





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Pentecost / Zielone Świątki

The celebration of Pentecost (the alternative name is Whitsun or Whit Sunday) was a great opportunity to celebrate the arrival of spring. The rural population combined Pentecost with various pastoral and agricultural holidays, and some of these habits have survived to this day. Throughout Poland, the custom of decorating houses, fences and gates was widespread. The farm was usually decorated with birch twigs, and a thick layer of calamus was laid in the backyard and on the floors of cottages. The plant layer was not only to serve as spring decoration, but also protected the house from insects.



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Farmers believed that new and fresh vegetable and plant juices would ensure the success of the whole farm and would cause abundant harvest. Decorating (in Polish the word 'majenie' is often used in this context) was also supposed to prevent plague, illnesses, evil spells, charms and all the evil that could have fallen on the house and its residents.

Pentecost is a religious holiday, one of the oldest in Christian tradition, initially strongly associated with Easter. However, since the 4th century, Pentecost has been treated as a separate holiday. Whit Sunday falls on the Sunday and Monday fifty days after Easter, between May 10 and June 13 which is the period of the greatest flowering of plants and the fullness of spring.



A chamber decorated for Pentecost





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Corpus Christi / Boże Ciało

Initially, the celebration was established in Belgium in 1246. The feast of Corpus Christi came to Poland in 1320, when the liturgy of Corpus Christi was celebrated in Krakow by Bishop Nanker for the first time. The Corpus Christi processions were introduced 200 years later, Poland is the only country where parishes have held processions from the fifteenth century to the present day. After leaving the church, the processions walk to four outdoor altars, and at each of the altars, the Gospel of one of the four Evangelists is read or sung. There is also the habit of breaking off the birch twigs with which the altars are traditionally decorated. It is believed that these twigs have protective properties. The twigs are brought home, clogged behind sacred paintings or door frames and are believed to protect households from lightning.

Corpus Christi procession





An outdoor altar decorated with birch trees





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St. Andrew's Day / Andrzejki

St. Andrew's Day is a holiday known for centuries and with a long tradition in Poland. Formerly, only girls who wanted to marry as soon as possible participated in the St. Andrew's evening celebrations. Predictions, of course, were related to the future husband - what he will look like, where he will come from and what his name will be. Bachelors did not celebrate the holiday of Andrzejki. Then it has changed, and St. Andrew's games are now focused both on men and women. However, while the custom of fortune-telling remained, the old omens were forgotten, and new ones appeared in their place. A very popular method is pouring melted wax onto water through a keyhole. Once in the water, the wax sets and from its shape you can infer something about your future. St. Andrew's Day was formerly the last moment for fun, just before Advent. It ended the usual period in the liturgical calendar, because the first Sunday after St. Andrew's Day was the first Sunday of Advent. Now, when Advent is seen as a time of joyful waiting for Christmas, it is not forbidden to play and have fun during its period.



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St. Andrew is the patron saint of married couples and an advocate of lovers who helps in matrimonial matters.





Fortune-telling





Pouring melted wax onto water through a keyhole



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National Folk Traditions in Romania



Traditions without Frontiers - Journey around Regional Cultures

New Year's Eve Traditions

The Goat

Capra – all regions of Romania



A man will dress up as a goat, called *capra* in Romania. He wears a multicolored costume and is accompanied by a group of singers during Christmas night. The goat will jump and dance, trying to scare the host.

The Goat



The custom involves props, literary and musical texts and dance. The goat costume is made up of a wooden head, whose lower jaw bone is loose so it can clatter, and multicolored horns that are adorned with mirrors, beads, colored tassels and ribbons, bells and goat or rabbit fur. The costume's body is made up of thick fabric. It can be made of wool, a carpet or goat fur. Its main function is to hide the one who is wearing it.

New Year's Eve Traditions

➤ The Star



Groups of kids or young people will take the star with them when they go carol singing. The star is made of colored paper and often decorated with tinsel, silver foil and sometimes bells, and is put on a pole . In the middle of the star there is a picture of baby Jesus.

The custom of carrying around a star relates to a Biblical story. The star of Bethlehem , also called the Christmas Star, revealed the birth of baby Jesus to the three Magi and led them to Bethlehem.



The first day of the new year however has traditional ties to it. It marks the celebration of Saint Vasile . On this day, which is considered to be magical, children come caroling a carol called Sorcova, wishing people a rich, fruitful year.



Epiphany – January, 6th

Blessing water and Throwing the Cross

The celebration starts on the eve of the Epiphany, on January 5, when the priests across all Orthodox churches begin to bless the waters. The holy water (*agheasmain* Romanian) is then given to the people on the Epiphany day, after the religious mass. The believers use the *agheasma* to bless their houses, goods, and animals, as it is believed that this blessed water has miraculous powers and protects them. They also drink the water every morning, usually before eating, before January 6 and January 14.

Some of the religious ceremonies usually take place near large bodies of water, such as rivers or the sea. After the priests bless the waters, they throw wood crosses into the cold water and young men go in their search. It is believed that the one who finds the cross and brings it back to shore will get purified of all sins and will have good luck the entire year.



The orthodox church has chosen two specific Saturdays during the year to commemorate the soul of the dead people. In these days, Romanians go to church and share food for the soul of their dead ones after it is blessed by the priest.

In the evening, couples visit their godparents and parents kissing their hands in respect and bringing food and presents .



Painting Eggs for Easter

Throughout time, painting Easter eggs became an art of its own in Romania's villages, the painter's role being initially reserved only for women. While painting eggs is even today a skill very few master as the process is long and meticulous, some Romanian artisans have transformed these hollowed-out eggs into unique works of art, exhibited all around the world. Although the colors and symbols used to decorate the eggs vary according to the region, usually three-four colors are used, each with its own meaning. Red symbolizes love and solar light, black is the eternity, yellow is about youth and rich crops while green relates to nature and blue to



Easter Eggs

The decorative motifs are also very diverse, mixing symbols like the cross or the star with vegetal and animal representations and traditional elements from the rural culture. The use of symbols is also influenced by regional and local elements. This local specificity is well represented by the artisans from Ciocanesti, Bucovina, who use the geometrical motifs of the beautiful houses from their village to decorate their creations.



Splashing Water on Girls-Easter tradition

Boys from the village get water from a well and, with the splashing, they are wishing upon the women to be healthy, beautiful and to find love.

The boys, wearing traditional costumes, walk around the village singing songs and playing traditional instruments. They stop at almost every house, where they are greeted by girls dressed in folkloric costumes with Easter-specific food and drinks. Then the boys recite a poem and ask for the girls' permission to be "sprinkled".





Sanzienele/ Drăgănice



‘Sanzienele’ is a Romanian tradition with pre-Christian roots which is celebrated on June 24 – which coincides with the Orthodox holiday Ioan Botezatorul (St. John the Baptist). It is a midsummer tradition which celebrates nature and fecundity. Sanziennele are also called Dragaica in some regions of the country (Muntenia, Oltenia). The word “sanziene” is also used for a plant with golden flowers, which are gathered into wreaths and placed in the house (actually also thrown on the roof) to protect the house and its inhabitants from evil spirits. The legend goes that Sanziennele are young girls who give their magical powers to flowers and herbs during this period. During this time, young women can find their destined one – if they put the Sanziene flowers under their pillow during the night before the holiday, they will dream their future husband, the tradition goes.

In more traditional Romanian villages, young girls are dancing Hora Dragaicelor. Hora is a traditional folk dance that gathers everyone into a big, closed circle, with all dancers holding hands.

The Sanziene night (June 23rd to June 24th) is considered a mystical moment, when the nature is at its peak and displays its most vital force. The traditional belief is that miracles can happen during the Sanziene night, when the skies can open.



Călușarii



Căluș dance is performed in the Olt region of southern Romania. The ritual's name derives from the Căluș, the wooden part of the horse's bridle. The Căluș ritual features a series of games, skits, songs and dances, and was enacted by all-male Călușari dancers to the accompaniment of two violins and an accordion.



Young men used to be initiated into the ritual by a vataf (master) who had inherited the knowledge of descântece (magic charms) and the dance steps from his predecessor.

Groups of Călușari dancers, sporting colourful hats, embroidered shirts and trousers adorned with small jingling bells, perform complex dances, which combine stamping, clicking of the heels, leaping and swinging of the legs.

According to tradition, groups of dancing and chanting Călușari, who were thought to be endowed with magical healing powers, went from house to house, promising good health and prosperity to villagers. Until today, Călușari meet to celebrate their dancing and musical prowess on Whit Sunday.



Christmas Traditions-Men's Group Caroling



Each year before Christmas, groups of young men gather in villages throughout Romania and the Republic of Moldova to prepare for the ritual of Colindat. On Christmas Eve, they go from house to house performing festive songs. Afterwards, the hosts offer the singers ritual gifts and money. The songs have an epic content, which is adapted to each host's individual circumstances. Ritual performers also sing special, auspicious songs for unmarried girls and dance with them – a practice said to help them find a husband within the next year. Colindat is sometimes performed in costume, with instrumental accompaniment and choreography. Groups of young men (traditionally unmarried) are the main bearers and practitioners of the element; experienced men, often former group leaders, are responsible for the group's training. The ritual songs are learned at daily rehearsals from the time the group is formed until Christmas Eve. In some areas, children are allowed to attend these rehearsals in order to learn the repertoire. As well as conveying the season's greetings, this cultural heritage plays an important role in preserving social identity and ensuring cohesion.

Christmas Traditions

- Christmas Caroling



Just before Christmas, traditionally men bring home the Christmas tree that will be decorated on Christmas' Eve, December 24. The Christmas tree will stay in the house until January 6, when Orthodox Romanians celebrate Boboteaza, or Jesus' baptism. On this day, the caroling season officially starts. But according to the tradition, the first carolers will come during the morning on Christmas Eve, singing a carol called ' Buna dimineata' (a translation of Good morning).

Families usually either leave the carolers sing outside their door or their windows, and then go out and give them goodies, apples, nuts, cookies, sweet bread – and money, something which has been added into the tradition – or invite them into their home, at the entrance. Usually the entire family gathers to listen to the carolers, with several groups of carolers visiting during the Christmas Eve day.

Thank you for your attention