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Ростовский государственный университет путей сообщения**ПРИМЕТЫ, ПРЕДВЕСТИЯ И ПОВЕРЬЯ, СВЯЗАННЫЕ СО ВСТРЕЧЕЙ ЭТНИЧЕСКИ ЧУЖОГО, В ВОСТОЧНОСЛАВЯНСКОМ И АНГЛИЙСКОМ ФОЛЬКЛОРЕ***Аннотация*

Статья посвящена рассмотрению особенностей функционирования фольклорных примет и суеверий, связанных со встречей с этнически чужим или человеком другой веры, в наивном сознании носителей восточнославянской и английской лингвокультуры. Актуальность и новизна исследования детерминирована малоизученностью данной темы как в отечественной, так и зарубежной фольклористике. На основе привлечения широкого корпуса источников и материалов полевых исследований автор приходит к выводу, что данные приметы являются языковым способом репрезентации запрета, разрешения, предостережения, совета и т.д. в ситуациях, используемых носителями народной традиции для построения своего поведения с иноэтническими соседями.

Ключевые слова: фольклор, примета, поверье, этнически чужой.

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SIGNS, PRESAGES AND BELIEFS ASSOCIATED WITH MEETING FOREIGNERS IN EASTERN SLAVIC AND ENGLISH FOLKLORE*Abstract*

The article lays bare the peculiarities of the functioning of folkloric signs, presages and beliefs connected with meeting with an ethnic stranger or a person of another faith, in the naive consciousness of the Eastern Slavic and English linguoculture representatives. The urgency and novelty of the research is determined by the lack of knowledge of this topic both in Russian and foreign folk life studies. Based on the involvement of a wide range of sources and field research materials, the author comes to the conclusion that the analyzed signs are a linguistic declaration of taboos, permissions, warnings, advice, etc. in situations used by the tradition-bearers to establish proper relationship with their foreign neighbors.

Keywords: folklore, sign, belief, ethnic stranger.

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Introduction

Folklore is a small area of research in the humanities and it is fairly unique in every country or region. At the same time no branch of study, academic or popular, penetrates as deeply into human's intuitive life or mirrors his contemplative self as clearly as folklore. Folklore depicts and lays bare man's myriad fears and anxieties, while at the same time in full counterpoint it reveals his whimsy, his visions, and his flights of fancy that ennoble and exalt.

W.R. Bascom defines folklore as myth, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, verse and a variety of other forms of artistic expression whose medium is the spoken word [6, P. 333]. S. Thompson draws attention that folklore is a kind of tradition, something handed down from one person to another and preserved either by memory or practice rather than written record [17, P. 4]. A well-known folklorist A.M. Espinosa points out that folklore, or popular knowledge, is the accumulated store of what mankind has experienced, learned, and practiced across the ages as popular and traditional knowledge, as distinguished from so-called scientific knowledge [11, P. 4]. A. Dundes describes folklore as a reflective «mirror» of culture. At an ideational level, the aggregate of folk wisdom in speech, proverbs, and riddles signifies «folk ideas» that constitute a «worldview», or cultural outlook [10, P. 17-18].

As previously mentioned folklore is presented in different forms. One of them is signs, omens and presages. The aim of this paper is to explore the peculiarities and possible sources of English and Eastern Slavic omen lore associated with foreigners and people of different faith. The reason why this paper focuses on omen lore is that signs and omens are verbal formulas representing one of the oldest forms of belief. They begin to predict person's future before his birth, accompany him during his entire life-time and even related to

the events after his death. Besides omenalism is one of the most viable forms of religion which immensely influences the consciousness of the bearers of a particular culture. According to M.A. Kul'kova, alongside with proverbs and sayings signs and omens are a special kind of folk art, the most striking examples of folk thought, the original linguistic embodiment of archaic culture and national traditions [3, P. 3].

Methodology

To compare and visualize the area of foreigners-related omen lore in Great Britain and Eastern Slavic countries we use the materials of our field research conducted in 2013-2016 in Belarus, western parts of Ukraine and south-western regions of Russia and materials from books published by British folklore researchers and amateurs in XIX — XX centuries. The survey of the collected data was done using the following methods and approaches: *ethnolinguistic analysis of linguistic units (vocabulary and phraseology) and folklore texts (myths, legends, and beliefs), that reflect the archaic notions of "foreigners / ethnic strangers"; structural and typological analysis of folklore texts.*

There has been no consistent or thorough effort to trace the origin of the presented omens and signs; as such a study would be endless and beyond the purpose of this paper. Only occasionally have comments been made as to the possible ancestry of certain of the signs. It is of interest to remember that Eastern Slavic and English omens, signs and presages are of inconceivable age and have been influenced by neighboring nations, so it is not possible to analyze individual signs or superstitions.

Discussion

The study of signs, omens, portents observed in the physical and social worlds indicting the will of supernatural agents and the course of the future events, is undoubtedly

important in Slavic and English cultures. The first written statement for a concept of sign, anyhow, comes from cuneiform texts of ancient Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C. At that time a sign was described as a will or a judicial decision of the gods, who gave "a verdict against the interested parties on the basis of the elements in the omen" [9, P. 3]. Nowadays a sign is understood as a fairly broad concept. It is defined as a stable link between two phenomena of objective reality, one of which is understood as a sign, and the second as its interpretation, usually in the form of a prediction about the future. Sign in popular and traditional belief is a natural event thought to presage a future event [15, P. 121]. G. Bennett considers sign to be an external omen and token signifying future events [7, P. 126]. Typologically, signs are closely related to other forms and types of predictions – presages, dreams, omens, fortune-telling, beliefs, and superstitions.

J. Kupcevičová points out that sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish a sign from a proverb, as they may have a similar content, based on the principle of "elementary" observance [12, P. 35]; rus. Если жид тебе дал, то весь век ему должен будешь; ukr. Лях тоді добрий, як спить, а пробудіцца, то біда. Ити до ляхів – не їсти пирогів; bel. Прыйшлы паляки: ані хліба, ні табаки; eng. Never trust an Indian. Where the Turk's horse once threads the grass never grows. But despite the impossibility of a clear delineation of these two folklore genres, the proverbs like that rus. Кому чего, а цыгану – сало. Русак до читанья, хохол до спеванья; bel. Мудзёр лях на шкодзе; ukr. Москаль як ворона, та хитріший чорта. eng. Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar have regard neither to signs nor tokens.

In our study we stick to such features of the sign whose ultimate constituent is common, stereotype and stable form of expression, since many of the surveyed foreigners-related signs are deeply connected with ritual actions, customs, and traditions.

Results

Foreigners-related signs bulk large in the folklore which has survived in England, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. Their number indicates the importance of ethno-cultural contacts in the border areas of the countries. A naïve consciousness is always experiencing something "foreign", "strange" as dangerous, sinful, magically harmful, and threatening. For instance, in England in XV-XVIII centuries Spain and Italy were considered to be countries in which black art was most flourishing and most skilful sorcerers and magicians came from there. Besides, a representative of another ethnic group is perceived as an archetypal embodiment of evil and otherworldly forces [13]. In Germany and Holland England itself was regarded as native country of witches and night hags. All over the north of Europe Russians, Finns and Lapps are still accounted wizards by other nations. The similar beliefs are specified in the proverbs as well: rus. Бог создал Адама, а черт – молдавана; Первого черемиса леший родил; ukr. Бог сотворив цапа, а чорт – кацана; eng. Wild Scotland is the favourite sojourn of the devil. Scots are like witches, do but whet your pen, scratch till the blood come, they'll not hurt you then.

To a large extent it can be explained by the fact that in numerous folk legends the Devil is a "progenitor" of this or that nation. In the narratives of Medieval England, dedicated to concluding a pact with the Devil, the central figure is a pagan, Jew or Muslim who lead a faithful Christian to an unforgivable sin, offering services of a mediator in

establishing contact with the Devil that will provide him with wealth, love, or power.

In effect, the fear of foreigners being overwhelmed and dominated is explicit in signs connected with a meeting with a foreigner or a person of a different faith, both in reality and in a dream. In particular, in Western Belorussia they believe that rain and hail should be expected if gypsies enter the village against the wind, but if they enter downwind the area will suffer from a prolonged drought [4, P. 133].

Hutsuls and Belarusians think of as a bad omen to meet a Jew on the way to hunting or fishing. Unlike the Slavic peoples, in Latgale meeting a Jew early in the morning means to be successful in all endeavors. Noteworthy in this respect is the Latgalian idiom *Žeida laime* (Jewish happiness) denoting unexpected good luck or fortune [16].

In addition, in Belarusian Polesie it is bad luck to meet a Gypsy, while dreaming of a Gypsy is a signal that a person will be deceived soon. Compare, rus. Цыгану без обману дня не прожить; Цыган ищет того, как бы обмануть кого [2]; ukr. Циган хитрістю жити хитряється. Обдури, як циган на ярмарку [5]. At the same time, Belarusians have a reasonable to naïve consciousness' point of view explanation of why a person dreams of Gypsies: Галодным цыганы сняцца. Спаць, не павячэраўшы – цыганы будуць сніцца. In Bryansk region of Russia, a Gypsy in a dream is a harbinger of a drought or severe frost, depending on if a person dreams of him in summer or in winter. In Great Britain to dream of a Gypsy means that a person has the desire for more freedom and for living with no routine or schedule. Compare, Lincoln. dial. to gypsy – to wander about from place to place for the sake of change or pleasure [18, P. 620].

According to K. Nath, environment, race, clan etc. are artificial division and they cannot take away man from his intrinsic friendliness [14, P. 117]. Hence, the interpretation of the image of an ethnic stranger is ambivalent both in English and Eastern Slavic folklore. There is a significant layer of signs, tokens and rituals about the necessity of interaction with ethnic strangers for good luck, gaining abundance and prosperity, etc. Thus, a Gypsy or Jew, a symbolic messenger of well-being in the coming year, is still welcomed for the "polaznik" (first foot) ritual, widely common among the Slavs of the Carpathian area. In this regard, we can point to the ethnic label of New Year in Hutsul dialects *Цыганська слава* and ukr. dial. *цыганить* – to urge.

In Transcarpathian Ukraine on Christmas morning hosts invited a Jew to their homes, saying *За полазника поть до мене*. Entering the house, the Jew just uttered *Дай Боже!* Then he was given a glass of vodka, two tods of wheat, beans or peas [1, P. 195]. It was a bad omen if someone came into the house before the polaznik, so there was the following banning proverb: *На Введення: перший полáz, до хатине лазь; на Різдово: другий полáz, до хати не лазь; на Благовіщення: третій полáz, до хати не лазь* [1, P. 234]. Nowadays this ritual has survived only in some villages of Svalyava and Velikoberezhniansky areas. Furthermore, in Podolia Orthodox Ukrainian youth entertain the idea of meeting a catholic priest (ksiądz) and asking him for blessing when singing carols on Christmas Eve, while in English-speaking countries to meet a priest the first thing on New Year's Day means that a person will die within a year.

There is a long tradition of fortune telling especially for non-married girls in every country, some of which are closely referred to meeting a foreigner or person of another race. For example, on Christmas night, at twelve o'clock the oldest person in the house go and walk around a peach-tree,

saying, *Low for a foreigner, bark for a near one, crow for a farmer, screech, tree, screech, if I 'm to die first* [8, P. 49]. Girls of Ohio rural area determine the coming husband by repeating the following words, touching each button of the coat or dress: *Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer, Indian chief* [8, P. 42]. In London it was a rather popular belief among girls of low- and middle-class society that if you count 500 coloured people (Asians, Indians, Blacks), the nearest gentleman you meet will marry you. Besides, in England sporting men have a belief that if they meet a blind Afro-American and moreover can rub the wool on his head, they will have better luck with the bookmaker.

The remnants of the presented foreigner-related beliefs and signs left to us are but faint reminders of the elaborate rites of the past. They indicate something fundamental in human nature; that is, an instinct for self-protection and a desire to be aware of the future.

Conclusion

Signs, tokens and presages related to meeting foreigners are a specific folklore genre. Its key features are that by foregrounding taboos, permissions, warnings, admonitions, advice, etc., they are used by Slavic- and English-speakers to build healthy and correct relationships with the representatives of other ethnic groups and faiths. Despite the fact that many signs and beliefs function only in certain areas of the analyzed countries, they anchor the most crucial interethnic and inter-confessional contacts, creating a robust framework for assessing ethnic strangers. English and Slavic signs associated with meeting foreigners trace back to the *mythical world—outlook*, historical events and *Christian church teachings*.

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