

PAGAN CEREMONIES IN POLAND



SUBMITTED BY

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WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ERASMU+ PROJECT LET'S TALK ABOUT SOIL



Drowning of Marzanna

The departure of winter and the rebirth of nature had to be celebrated in a tasteful way, so a Jare Holiday was set for March 21. During this festival people dressed the straw puppet in white robes and put a crown of thorns made of hawthorn branches on its head. Marzanna, prepared in this way, was carried around the village with accompaniment of rattles, all this to burn her or drown and finally say goodbye to winter, death, and disease. It is important to point that the drowning of Marzanna is still presented in our culture. Every year on March 21 in some places the straw puppets are being burnt and drowned. This habit derives from the goddess Marzanna, so important in Polish, Czech and Slovak beliefs.

Easter Eggs, which are also associated with the Christian holiday, originally come from pagan Slavic tribes. With the start of spring, chicken eggs were collected and painted to signify the rebirth of life. The pattern was made by using melted wax, while red or brown coloring was achieved by dipping them in a dish of onion skins or ochre. This custom has its roots in Persia, where eggs were used to cure people, and charms were removed by moving them over a person's body.





ИВАН КУПАЛА. ГАДАНИЕ НА ВЕНКАХ.

The Kupala's Day and Kupala's Night

On the 20th of June, Slavs celebrated the eve of the summer solstice. The celebrations lasted 4 days and were mainly the feasts of fire and water.

Bonfires lit with two pieces of wood were built on the hills to strengthen the participants and to ensure fertility for the fields and animals. People were singing and dancing around the fires and jumping over it. The role of this was to get protection from bad energy.

People used to believe that water has got healing powers. At the time of Kupala's Day, there opened a season of bathing outside in a body of water. The ritual washing of water at Kupala's Night was supposed to chase away the diseases and charms. Also, girls wove a garland of flowers and herbs, then let it go down the river. If a boy fished it out and returned it to the girl, who it belonged to, they started to date each other.

The legend says that Kupala's Night was the only night in the year when the magical fern flower bloomed. The lucky finder of the flower became rich and could become invisible when he was in danger. People also divined from chamomile flowers, elderberries, and even chives (maidens marked the stems with colored thread and gave them the names of their beloved – the chive that grew the most since the morning proved the hottest feelings).

That celebration was so strong in Slav's culture that Christianity church took over it. The Kupala's Night is now known as the Midsummer Night (celebrations are held on St John's Day, June 24th).

Harvest festival

The first day of autumn is the festival of crops, for which the preparations started in August. When the harvest was over, a few uncut ears called „beard” (so that the ground would not be completely devoid of grain), and some of them were collected in the temple. For a few days before the main ceremonies in front of the statue of Światowid (god of war and harvest), a chalice with mead was placed – Slav's holy drink, which was fermented like wine. If the mead disappeared, it was treated as a bad omen, whereas a chalice filled to the brim promised a bountiful harvest.



During the celebration, people thanked the gods for the harvest and asked for a better one next year. Wreaths were woven and cakes were baked. The priest put the bread between himself and the people asking if he could be seen from behind of the bread. If he could hide behind it, it was interpreted as a sign of affluence. The folk character of a Harvest festival survived the test of time as a „harvest Festival/Dożynki”, nowadays in the first Sunday in September after the harvest’s ends. The ceremony is celebrated till this day.