

DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v9i3.2753

Citation: Sokolova, A. (2020). The Traditions of Mummers, Court Masquerades, and Secular Balls. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 9(3), 297-306. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v9i3.2753>

The Traditions of Mummers, Court Masquerades, and Secular Balls

Alla V. Sokolova¹

Abstract

The article examines the origins of the traditions of mummers, which are closely related to pagan beliefs and rituals, the cult of the Sun, solar symbols, traditions of the Greeks, Egyptians, Persians, as well as the Roman Saturnalia and the Scandinavian Yule. The tasks and functions of mummer's rituals are revealed, which are protective, symbolic-mythological, solar-symbolic, magical, imitative, instructive, and pedagogical, as well as an erotic character associated with "human fertility." Wearing a mask or disguise, dressing up in animal skins and in costumes of the opposite sex filled the human personality with new content, sacred meaning, and broadcast the concept of "not - I" or "I am different" to the world. The main rituals of the Slavs associated with dressing (Svyatki and Kolyada), which are a hybrid of pagan and Christian Orthodox traditions, have been determined and characterized. Vechernitsa is specific Ukrainian entertainment, an obligatory attribute of winter Svyatki. The main functions of Vechernitsa are entertainment, sexually developing, sacred, and protective. The Slavic phenomenon of foolishness is considered, which manifested itself as a sacral clowning, a voluntary renunciation of worldly life, and dressing up for the glory of God. The extremely negative attitude of the Orthodox Church to the rituals associated with dressing up and mummering, fortune telling, games, and other kinds of entertainment was determined. A number of prohibitive decrees emanating from the Orthodox clergy did not have the proper effect, since winter rites were becoming part of the culture of the Slavs. Ritual permeated the culture of the Cossacks of the Zaporizhzhia Sich, despite the fact that religion occupied an important place in their lives, enriching it with a high meaning. In the Middle Ages, masquerade penetrates into aristocratic circles and is gradually reborn into the salon-secular style and presupposes the complementarity of two cultural traditions - Western European and native Slavic. The court masquerade balls demonstrate a close connection with the archaic theater, the genre of the English court Masque, the French court ballet, and the Italian intermezzo.

Keywords: Traditions of mummers, court masquerades, secular balls, Kyivska Rus-Ukraine, disguises, mask, Svyatki, Kolyada, Vechernitsa.

¹ Ph.D. (Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences), Senior Lecturer, Department of Theoretical and Applied Cultural Studies, A. V. Nezhdanova National Academy of Music in Odessa, Ukraine. ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0002-0281-7503. E-mail: asmoonlux@gmail.com

Introduction

Masqueraders and mummers have been known since ancient times. Winter rituals are rooted in the ancient celebrations of the cult of the Sun, the Roman Saturnalia, and the Scandinavian Yule festival. Even the Egyptian priests, celebrating the resurrection of Osiris, put on various disguises and solemnly marched through the city. The rituals dedicated to the cult of the Sun were performed by the Persians on the birthday of the Indo-Iranian invincible Sun God, Mithra. From Egypt, India, ancient Rome, and Greece, festivities with dressing up, games and fortune-telling, songs and ritual dances, according to some testimonies, penetrated into Scandinavia, and then into Eastern Europe. However, the fusion of pagan and Christian traditions did not lead to a complete absorption of pagan rituals. On the contrary, pagan traditions turned out to be surprisingly tenacious and continued to exert a significant influence on the European culture (Szymansky, 2009).

The phenomenon of mummers is based on ancient pagan games, images, mythological worldview, folklore sources, on the concept of a holiday, "doing nothing", "fooling around", which was opposed to work, daily duties, and bondage. The true purpose of the ritual of dressing up is the action-drama in which the person acts as both spectator and participant (Kelly, 2003, pp. 57-63).

A mask was a specific form of a mummer's ritual clothing, it partially or completely covered a person's face, therefore, it became difficult to identify a person's personality, as well as his character features, which are usually easily read when communicating with a person "eye to eye". The person putting on the mask temporarily became a different person. "Not-I" was filled with new content, depending on the situation, "not-I" received a positive or negative content. The conscious distortion of the face also acquired a sacred meaning, transmitting the aesthetics of the terrible or otherwise to (alter) the world.

Researcher I. Zabelin noted: "The dressing served as the personification of the evil world of the undead, which, under the guise of various werewolves, women disguised as men, and men disguised as women, especially monsters in the skins of animals, bears, wolves, and so on, appeared among the living" (1912, p. 20). Turning clothes inside out, changing into suits of the opposite sex, using bright and unusual colors, and smearing clothes with dirt, soot, paint, or blood was an important component of the mummer's appearance.

Mummers and bearers of masks performed several functions: first of all, by dressing themselves in the guise of demons and witches, they protected others from troubles and misfortunes, and they cleansed themselves of devilry on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, bathing in reservoirs and washing away sins. Thus, the mask performed a protective function. Dressing up carried symbolic-mythological, solar-symbolic, magical, and imitative meanings (Danilushkina, 2007).

The methodology of this study assumes the unity of such methodological approaches as system-historical and comparative methods. The system historical method is based on the conceptual theories of Ukrainian and Russian academic-folklorists, historians, and art historians I.E. Zabelina, V.K. Sapiga, V.I. Chicherova, V.E. Guseva, N.I. Savushkina, V.Ya. Proppa, A.V. Tereshchenko, and V.O. Klyuchevsky, exploring the traditions of mummers, masquerades, secular balls, and their functional features in Kievan Rus-Ukraine. The comparative method is based on the concept of Western studies (J. Kelly), which helped to identify the similarities and differences in the cultural system of rituals of Western Europe and the Slavic regions.

Celebration of "Svyatki" and "Kolyada" as a phenomenon of Slavic culture

The concept of "folk holiday" or "folk festivities" among the Slavs balanced between ancient pagan ideas and strict canons of the Orthodox Church. Dressing up in Kyivska Rus was associated with Svyatki. Svyatki lasted from Christmas to the Epiphany of the Lord. Christmas games were held not only in villages but also in cities.

The Russian-Ukrainian word “Svyatki” itself comes from the word "holiness", "holy", "luminous" and should remind true Christians of the significance of the time associated with the Christmas, which people spend with decency, on bended knees, in prayer and pious thoughts (Sapiga, 1993).

Svyatki is a hybrid of rooted pagan and Christian traditions, worship of the sun deity and at the same time the Virgin Mary, who gave birth to the Savior. Traditions date back to ancient pre-Christian times and the era of Kyivska Rus. Nestor the Chronicler, in *The Tale of Bygone Years*, wrote that they converged on games, dances, and all demonic songs (Tolochko, 2005).

Carols (Kolyadki) are Slavic ritual Christmas songs. Carols were small quatrains set on a simple motif with one or two sounds or without a fixed pitch. How the carols were performed was based on a dialogue between the owners. The first carols appeared in pre-Christian Russia. The purpose of singing carols was to appease the Gods (Dal, 1882, p. 136).

Games, various kinds of amusements, dressing up in the clothes of animals, fortune telling, feasting, singing carols — all this is associated with pagan pre-Christian rituals. The mummers' going home (caroling) also has pagan roots. In ancient times, the performance of the rituals involved a tour of the houses, which were performed by the priests. Pagan rituals, which are directly related to the cult holiday of the Sun, not only entered the life of the Slavs, but were categorically not submitted to eradication and exist in one form or another to this day.

In the celebration of Svyatki in Kyivska Rus, not only pagan rituals are well recognized, but also specific features of the entertainment of jesters, buffoons, the Western European holiday of the fool, the English custom associated with the jester's character Lord Misrule, the props and grotesque of Italian masquerades, and the traditions of theatrical art of ancient Greece and Rome. Reincarnation, chaos, public ridicule, and temporary going beyond the established boundaries are characteristic of Svyatki. However, with the adoption of Christianity in Rus, the essence of the holiday of the Christmas rose and acquired a different meaning.

It is necessary to mention the unique Slavic religious phenomenon — the feat of foolishness, which was a characteristic of Byzantium and Russia. Foolishness, a kind of sacred clowning, dressing up for the glory of God. The holy fools dressed in such a way that it caused bewilderment, fear, and disgust among the people around them. The style of dress of the holy fools, which they deliberately followed, resembled a dress. The holy fools dressed in rags, wore caps on their heads, and girded themselves with chains. Without resorting to the help of a mask, the holy fools voluntarily put on someone else's disguise.

In Ukraine, Svyatki was also called Koleda or Kolyadki, according to one version, the word came from the Roman "kalendae" or "kalare", from the Greek verb "to call" and from the Sanskrit – «kkla». Researcher Chicherov believed that the word "kolyada" comes from the word "kolo", which meant a circle. The wheel is a sacred symbol for many ethnic groups (Chicherov, 1957, p. 107).

In the Celtic religion, stone circles were also used as magical symbols. The Celts also believed that the symbol in the form of a pole with a round disc at the end, which is held by two angels, protects against evil spirits. The cult of carols was well known to the Scythians. It is known that the Scythians called their first king Koloksai.

According to legend, the Scythians considered Targitai as their forefather, from whom Lipoksai (Mountain), Arpoksai (Water), and Koloksai (Sun) were born. From Koloksai came the royal Scythians, who obeyed all the rest. Thus, for the Scythians, Koloskai personified the element of the Sun.

Kolyada in Slavic mythology is the God of the Magi and the God of the Young Sun, born on the night of the winter solstice, and on the longest night of the year. It was believed that even the dark Gods helped to give birth to Kolyada

Yu. Petukhov in his work "God of Time: Saturn-Kolyada-Bhaga, Veles-Pan-Pushan" noted (2008, pp. 70-78) that the holiday of Kolyada fell on the New Year, at the winter solstice. "Coleo" among the Slavic tribes was endowed with the properties of a talisman. The wheels rolled through the streets, set them on fire, and lowered them from the mountains with the belief that this rite would protect from evil spirits. The rolling of a burning wheel also symbolized the cyclical nature of time, and fire symbolized divine energy (solar symbols). Such a rite was also practiced among the Scythians ("fiery wheel") (Chicherov, 1957, p. 110).

The circle personified the solar symbol of the sun. The light of the new Sun was too weak and unable to disperse the darkness with its weak rays. The Slavs did not perceive darkness as evil. The world needs darkness. Darkness was presented to the Slavs as an eternal movement towards light. The worst evil was seen in Chaos and the absence of Order. According to the ideas of the Slavs, with the onset of the shortest days and longest nights of the year, it was believed that winter defeated the sun, it grew old and gradually faded away. To help the Sun, without which Life was extinguished, the ancient Slavs performed magical rites. They carried with them a circle with rays attached to a pole and symbolizing the Sun. As a reward, the sun gave people hope for a bountiful harvest, offspring of livestock, as well as a happy family life (Buturlin, 1997, pp. 76-89).

The holiday of carols was a walk from house to house and singing of short carol songs, which not only praised Kolyada, but also contained good wishes to the owners. For this, the carolers were presented with food and money. The carolers had a special person to collect gifts – "mekhanosha". "Mekhanosha" followed the carols with a large sack. The owners, who did not let the carolers enter their doorstep, were "presented" with carols-threats or carols-curses.

Carolers used nativity scenes or "raikas", which were two-tiered boxes with which Christmas scenes were played out. Sometimes such scenes were performed by students of theological seminaries who walked around Ukrainian huts on Christmas Day. The nativity scenes are most likely associated with the puppet theater. In Poland, such a theater has been known since antiquity and was called "mansion", "hill", or "pastoralok". Note that in Poland to this day there is a tradition according to which priests visit the houses of their parishioners at Christmas. This visit is called "kolęda".

"Great Veles Svyatki" in Ukraine was associated with the annual cycle and the transition to a new cycle, to new achievements, order, and way of life. Dressing up at Christmas time is an obligatory part of the Christmas program (Buturlin, 1997).

The writer A. Antonov wrote in the work "Voevoda Shein": "In the evening, the mummers walked to someone's evenings. "Walked" is easy to say. It was a march! Who turned the wheel, who moved on their hands - and no one cared that it was snowing! Who made such acrobatic figures like lightning flashed. On their heads they wore homemade goat and bear masks or just huge hats-malakhai, their faces were adorned with soot and lipstick. The harmonica played famously: let everyone know - the mummers are coming ..." (Literary world: Antonov A. I. Retrieved from: <https://www.litmir.me/br/?b=546526&p=4>).

On Holy Eve, January 6, a Didukh was built in Ukraine — a sheaf of wheat, rye, or oat ears. The Didukh was decorated with viburnum twigs, ribbons, and dried flowers. The Didukh was placed in the corner near the icon in the most honorable place. The Didukh symbolized the spirit of ancestors, respect for the traditions and spiritual values of Ukrainians. On certain days, on the second day of Christmas or Epiphany, the Didukh was taken out of their homes and burned, accompanying this ritual with the performance of songs and dances. The burning of the Didukh carried a sacred meaning: the souls of the deceased ancestors, who were on earth during the holidays, had to return to heaven. The ashes left over from the Didukh were kept behind the icons until the next Christmas Eve.

The researcher Chicherov (1957, p. 207) comes to the conclusion that the Svyatki feasts and the burning of the Didukh are connected with the cult of the ancestors. Researcher V.E. Gusev (1974, pp.

49-59), studying the Svyatki games, draws a parallel between the Svyatki rites and the Old Slavic funeral rite.

N. Savushkina notes (1979) that the Christmas-tide rites have gradually lost their magical meaning and transformed into an entertaining-delivery action in rural Ukraine, the phenomenon of Ukrainian folk culture is known — Vechernitsa, an obligatory attribute of Svyatki, which were characterized by games, fortune-telling, and mummers. The name "Vechernitsa" is literary. In different regions of Ukraine, there are other names: "parties", "vashnky", "vipryadky", "stupeni", "fazanki".

Ukrainian evening parties (Vechernitsa) traditionally began on the Protection of the Holy Virgin (an Orthodox holiday celebrated by the Orthodox Church), when rural work ended and the villagers finally had more free time.

Ukrainian youth gathered at Velesovy Svyatki from December 25 to January 6, twelve days symbolized twelve months of the year, six of which were light, and six were dark, which signified two semicircles (Vinogradova, 1999).

Vespers were arranged in the house of a widow or an elderly but respected woman in the village who kept order and did not allow debauchery. However, according to surviving testimonies, such a woman could "close her eyes" to certain things, and sometimes she patronized couples in love with small gifts, allowing them to stay in her house after the evening service. Many researchers agree that at Vechernitsa, girls often received their first sexual experience.

The famous scientist Propp emphasized the erotic nature of the Christmas-tide ritual associated with "human fertility and all that is associated with it" (Propp, 1963, p. 120).

It is noteworthy that at the Vechernitsa, which were arranged on Big Velesovy Svyatki, where "Christmas dressing" was widely practiced: dresses were worn inverted, men dressed up as women, and women — men, as if performing the rite of exchange of destinies to the contrary. Thus, noctuaries performed many functions - from entertainment, sexual development to sacral and protective.

The attitude of the Orthodox Church to rituals with pagan roots

The Orthodox Christian priesthood was openly opposed to such rituals and ceremonies. It was forbidden in every possible way to dress up in "shaggy creatures" and buffoonery dresses. The patriarchal foundations in which the aristocracy of ancient Kyivska Rus were brought up was close to Byzantine asceticism, where the excesses manifested in singing, music, and dancing were not encouraged by the church, but were often declared "godless fun." Monks spread religious enlightenment in ancient Russia. Monastic traditions in Kyivska Rus took deep roots and were based on the concept of spiritual growth, which denied pleasure and worldly joys.

All entertainments were considered sinful acts, but humility, taming of the flesh, prayer service, obligatory fasting, obedience, meekness, chastity, non-covetousness (poverty) were encouraged in every possible way. Thus, the Russian aristocracy, which had formed as an independent group in the ancient Kiev state, on the one hand, obeyed the established orders and rules, but in practice, they gladly indulged in worldly sinful entertainment. The Church openly opposed Christmas-tide rites, in particular, fortune-telling was declared a dangerous occupation for an Orthodox person. However, the desire to look into the future was so great that divination at Christmas and Epiphany was recognized as part of the Christmas celebration even among a small part of the rural clergy. In fact, the church turned a blind eye to the fun of this kind (Afanasev, 2008).

Despite the rejection and struggle of the clergy with pagan rituals, which were firmly rooted in Kyivska Rus, the priests were not able to exterminate the winter festivities. In the main canonical collection of the Orthodox Church

"Kormchaya book", published in Kiev in 1624, one can read: "Nowadays masculine Christians put on women's clothes or disguises, which are customary to dress up in Western countries, and also make different faces for themselves" (Joseph, 1912, p. 36). In 1648, Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich issued a decree directed against the activities of buffoons. Masquerades and mummers are outlawed: "And where domras and surnas and beeps and all sorts of demonic faces appear, it is ordered to seize and burn everything in the fire" (Ibid.).

Patriarch Isakim in 1684 describes Christmastide in this way: "Then men and women gathered in many numbers, from old and young, demoniac women and girls walk the streets and alleys with demonic songs that they themselves compose, many swear, copulate and dance ..., being transformed into creatures dissimilar from God, put on disguises ... and other tricks of Orthodox Christians seduce: the same is from the Nativity of Christ within 12 days until the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ ... they create demonic games and shame" (Melik, 2017, pp. 49-50).

The Decree of the Kiev Spiritual Conenetry of 1719 said: "by the decree of his holy royal majesty. ... so that everywhere in the cities and villages of Little Russia, young godless people stop gathering for evening parties Vechernitsa, at which many young men and women gather in heaps at night and do inscrutable atrocities and vile iniquities, play games, dance and fill with all kinds of nasty drink, desecrating the air with songs, exclamations and goat votes, from where the reasons for quarrels come, and then murders follow, during such unholy gatherings excesses, prodigal sins, corruption of girls occur and illegitimate children are born" (Biletsky, 1965, pp. 118-121).

Neither the persecution by the higher or rural clergy, nor the indignation of the pagan "wicked and shameful" customs on the part of the aristocracy, had any effect. Under pressure from the clergy, the villagers, as befits true Christians, began to go to church and gather their families at a large table. However, during the Christmas holidays, the villagers took part in merrymaking, mummers, and took part in fortune-telling, dancing and singing. Young people gladly indulged in all sorts of outrages: smeared with soot, depicting devils, wrapped themselves in bearskin skins, dressed up like deceased, whose image symbolized souls who had departed into another world. Thus, they tried to ward off evil spirits. The girls sang songs, wove straw dolls and wondered, trying to look into the future.

Ritualism in the Cossack culture of the Zaporizhzhia Sich

The Zaporizhzhia Cossacks formed a certain ritual, which actually permeated all spheres of the Cossack life. Cossack rituals were formed simultaneously with the development of the military Cossacks. The pagan component of such rituals was expressed in appeasing spirits, magical actions, conspiracies that were designed to protect the Cossacks from enemies. However, the ceremonies and rituals of the Cossacks were subordinated to the main business of their life - conscription.

It is difficult to overestimate the role of the Orthodox Church and the Christian religion in the Zaporizhzhia Sich. Holy See feasts played a huge role in the life of the Zaporizhzhia Cossacks. As a rule, they were celebrated solemnly and magnificently. Orthodox holidays structured the annual calendar. On the one hand, they were closely intertwined with pagan traditions, on the other hand, they enriched human life with high meaning, morality, and moral principles.

Celebration of Orthodox holidays by Ukrainian Cossacks and villagers took place in different ways. This was explained by the differences in the sphere of their activity: the Cossacks were "knights" of the Ukrainian nation, the villagers, as well as the Cossacks living in winter quarters, followed the logic of ritual, the function of which was to increase the yield and fertility of the land.

Cossack chronicles indicate that Christmas was the main holiday for the Cossacks. The main place for celebrating Cossack Christmas was the Hetmanate (in the cities of Baturin, Glukhov), where the clergy, colonels and other high-ranking officials gathered. The Cossacks strictly observed the fast,

and fatty meat food was consumed only after the appearance of the "first star" on Christmas Eve (Golobucky, 1994).

The well-known Ukrainian writer-memoirist Yakov Markovich writes (1913) that the Cossacks on Christmas Eve went to the church for a divine service, where each Cossack hundred stood under their own flag. The frosty weather did not prevent the Cossacks from standing without hats until the end of the festive liturgy. Returning from the church, the Cossacks carried the six-pointed star of Veles (the image of the Star of Bethlehem), which personified the endless cycle of life: the triangle with its top upwards signified the male principle, the top downwards — the female principle, two triangles connected together meant the birth of a new life. With the appearance of the first star in the sky, magnificent celebrations began, which the Cossacks celebrated with large-scale processions of the cross, fireworks from guns and cannons, congratulating the koshevoy and foremen, presenting mementos, fistfights, wall-to-wall fights, belt wrestling, hand wrestling, tug-of-war, and fencing to first blood (Golobucky, 1994).

Yakov Markovich (1913) also writes about duels being organized among Cossack foremen, sometimes with a fatal outcome. For 12 days of Christmas holidays, half of the annual supply of gunpowder was spent on fireworks. Blind kobzars sang in the squares, gathering crowds of Cossacks around them.

After the end of the Christmas fast, the Cossacks allowed themselves to relax, arranging a kind of "masquerade ball". So, the Cossacks dressed up as all kinds of animals, sang carols, staged nativity scenes, and also changed into women's dress. Disguised as a girl, a Cossack changed his voice, chose an unlucky Cossack for himself, and declared his love. After a while, the couple retired, and women's clothing, amid the general laughter of the Cossacks, was thrown off.

Mykola Marevich noted (1860) that in the intervals between secular entertainments on Svyatki, the Cossacks were engaged in state affairs: they collected seims, discussed personnel appointments, or were actively preparing for military exercises.

The origins of the traditions of court masquerades and secular balls

Gradually, masquerade festivities took root in the circles of the nobles. For the first time in Russia, balls were mentioned during the reign of False Dmitry I. False Dmitry I liked to arrange balls, to which Poles were often invited. In the royal mansion, Polish music sounded and Polish dances were danced - Krakowiak and Mazurka. At such balls, aristocrats of various colors gathered in buffoonish clothes and masks. This clearly manifested the desire to follow and imitate European traditions, in particular the court masquerades in England and Italy (Popovich, 1998).

Queen Natalya Kirillovna, mother of Peter I, nee Naryshkina, was considered a fashionista at court and had a great influence on court life. Thus, many musicians and choreographers were invited from Europe. The musicians played violins, organs, and pipes. The appearance of visiting foreigners, comedians, magicians, and other people who entertained the court nobility, becomes a distinctive feature of the era of the Russian tsar from the Romanov dynasty Alexei Mikhailovich.

The tradition of holding masquerades in Russia was also taken up by Peter I. It is interesting to note that despite the protest of the church, Emperor Peter 1 did not oppose the Christmas games, but, on the contrary, personally took part in them, probably adopting the experience of Christmas masquerades during his travels to Europe.

The dressing up of the aristocrats of the times of Emperor Peter I carried an entertaining, communicative, social, ritual, satirical, and conventionally secular function. As in the English court Masque, the French court ballet, Italian masquerades, the royal entertainment was attended by the courtiers who fought for the location of Peter I (Popovich, 1998). Emperor Peter I, distinguished by his irrepressible imagination, did not adopt the European and English fashion to take on the content of

poets and playwrights, he invented and developed scenarios, personally giving instructions to the courtiers what speech to deliver, how to dance, and in what costumes they should appear in before the public. Sometimes, the masquerades were on-site, similar to some of the court Masque in England during the era of King Charles I Stuart.

The famous Russian historian V. O. Klyuchevsky wrote that in 1721 the year was marked by the longest masquerade in the history of Kyivska Rus, which lasted seven days: "A thousand masks walked, pushed, drank, danced for a whole week, and everyone was happy when it was over" (2011, p. 104).

The courtiers of Peter I dressed up as sea characters, staged dances, and the townspeople-spectators watched with amazement and pleasure the incredible spectacle from the windows of houses and from the roadsides. Thus, the masquerade of the era of Peter I went beyond the royal chambers. "Customs, beliefs, cuisine and drinks of Little Russians" (Markevich, 1860, p. 28).

The Russian Empress Elizabeth was also known for her love of fancy-dress masquerade balls, which were usually held on Fridays and were notable for their unprecedented scale, which made them famous far beyond the borders of the country. At the balls, Elizabeth started a special fashion, which had not been practiced earlier at the courts of the tsars: men dressed in women's dresses, and women dressed in men's costumes. Elizaveta Petrovna was known at court as an inventor, and unlike other royals, who contained a whole headquarters of costume designers, designers, decorators for staging court entertainments, she could sketch a costume design herself. At a ball in 1742 in Moscow, Elizaveta Petrovna appeared before the guests in the form of a French musketeer, a Dutch sailor, and a Cossack hetman. The costumes that the empress and her courtiers wore to balls were particularly luxurious. Expensive fabrics, the finest lace and diamonds symbolized the power of the Russian Crown. The court musicians played violins, trumpets, bassoons, oboes, timpani, French horns, while ladies and gentlemen danced the minuet and a whole series of English dances — angles, allemandes and contradance. People without masks were also allowed to the balls. The hierarchy was especially acute at the traditional lunches and dinners that were held at the end of the ball. The closer the courtier was to the empress, the more he was distinguished by the high social status and disposition of the empress towards him. In fact, the same hierarchical system could be observed at the Royal Palace of White Hall in London at the court musical and theatrical entertainment of Masque. English Masque also bore a conciliatory function, while Russian court balls were primarily intended to emphasize the greatness of the imperial house. Despite the fact that the costumed balls of the era of Elizabeth Petrovna were distinguished by the absence of monologues, dialogues, and theatrical scenes based on the plots of ancient mythology, characteristic of England in the era of the Stuart kings of the first half of the XVIIth century, the ball was undoubtedly a theatrical performance.

The well-known researcher A. V. Kolesnikova (1976, pp. 23-27) wrote: "Under Elizabeth Petrovna, the complementarity of two cultural traditions - Western European and native Slavic - acquired an even more obvious character. Elizabeth, who is well acquainted with both the European school of salon dance and elements of folk-dance culture, made a huge contribution in the creation of a "refined", "cultured" style of the ball."

Catherine II inherited from her predecessor a love for balls and dressing up. Under her, masquerade balls began to be arranged in private homes and acquired a salon character. Catherine II organized large-scale court entertainment, in which up to 4,000 people could take part. The halls were lit with thousands of wax candles, mirrors in gold frames - a symbol of luxury and court arrogance. The masquerades of the reign of Catherine 1 acquired an increasingly secular character, losing grotesque, props, satirical element, and buffoonery inherent in the assemblies of Peter I.

Over time, masquerades also penetrated into the territory of Ukraine, representing a hybrid of a secular ball and a "noble" Ukrainian evening party. This is how I. M. Dzyuba (2008) described the ball in Moiseevka in his monograph *T. G. Shevchenko. His life and literary activity*: "... at the ball in the

famous Moiseevka, where landowners from the Poltava, Chernigov and Kiev provinces gathered, up to two hundred people gathered, and they stayed for several days in a row. The balls were a kind of Versailles for Little Russia: the most fashionable dresses, the newest figures of the mazurka, the most famous puns were brought there, men played cards, ladies and girls flaunted courtesy, beauty, sophistication and luxury of a dress ...". T. Shevchenko, who was present at these balls, conquered the audience with his poetry and melodic Ukrainian speech

Summing up, we can state that the phenomenon of mummers in Kyivska Rus-Ukraine was born in the depths of paganism, over time it takes shape in folk rituals and other rituals, is directly related to the understanding of Good and Evil, Order and Chaos, Light and Darkness, Paradise and Hell, the cult of the Sun, solar symbols and penetrates into the salon culture of aristocratic houses.

Conclusions

The origins of the tradition of mummers go back to the traditions inherited from the feast of the Roman Saturnalia, where masters served slaves, and slaves for a short time changed into masters' dresses. Disguises are protective, symbolic-mythological, solar-symbolic, magical, imitative, as well as instructive and pedagogical in nature: to ridicule evil, lowering it to the level of buffoonery, thereby making it clear that evil can be defeated.

Ultimately, the dressing up, reincarnation, disguising in various demonic disguises went from paganism through Christianity to the court-salon masquerade and high aristocratic gatherings. Masquerade in court entertainments acquires a secular character with elements of props (court Masque in England, court French ballet, Italian masquerades and intermezzos, Russian masquerade balls, noble evening parties Vechernitsa in Ukraine), gradually leveling off into a means of hiding true judgments and feelings.

The court masquerade demonstrates a new style, aesthetics, a change of eras, worldviews, especially in epoch-making historical periods of time. So, in England, the genre of the court Masque is actually dying out since the execution of the English king Charles I, the French court ballet is in crisis with the death of King Louis XIV. However, the masquerade easily overcomes borders and penetrates into various cultures of continental Europe, sprouting roots in the culture of the aristocratic nobility, mimics, transforms, taking on new forms. An aristocratic masquerade becomes a symbol, decoration, salon pastime, a means of communication, exchange of opinions, and interesting meetings.

Dressing up in the court culture of Ukraine takes on a new image. Now the masquerade is perceived as a kind of theater of masks, in the masquerade one can trace the archaic beginnings of the theater. Over the centuries, the pagan custom of masquerade among the Slavs was transformed, putting on clothes that befitted Christian traditions, sprouting roots in aristocratic circles, reborn into grotesque court, and later into secular-salon forms, where communication, exchange of opinions, reading poetry, dancing, singing songs along with communication, discussing pressing political problems, solving marriage issues and simply having a pleasant pastime becomes the main distinguishing feature of masquerade.

References

- Afanasev, A. (2008). Slavic mythology. Moscow: Eksmo.
- Biletsky, O. (1965). "Aeneid" by I. Kotlyarevsky. Kiev. Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences, Volume 4.
- Buturlin, P. (1997). Christmastide. Holy evenings. Moscow: Publishing house of ZAO RIFME.

- Chicherov, V. I. (1957). Winter period of the Russian agricultural calendar of the XVI-XIX centuries. Moscow: TIE.
- Dal, V. I. (1882). Koleda. Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language. Vol. II. St. Petersburg: Printing house of M.O. Wolf.
- Danilushkina, M. B. (2007). Blessed of St. Petersburg: from Holy Blessed Xenia of Petersburg to Lyubushka Susaninskaya. St. Petersburg: Holy Trinity Sergius Lavra, Resurrection.
- Dzyuba, I. M. (2008). Taras Shevchenko. Life and creativity. Kyiv: Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.
- Golobutsky, V. (1994). Zaporizhzhya Cossacks. Kyiv: High School.
- Gusev, V. E. (1974). From ritual to folk theater / Folklore and Ethnography. Rites and ritual folklore. (pp. 49-59). Leningrad: Science.
- Ivanov, P. (1850). Description of state Archive of old cases. Moscow: Printing house of S. Selivanovsky.
- Joseph, P. (1912). Kormchaya book. Old Slavic edition. Moscow: Church.
- Kelly, J. F. (2003). The Origins of Christmas. Avon: Liturgical Press.
- Klyuchevsky, V. O. (2011). Aphorisms and thoughts about history. Moscow: Direct-Media.
- Kolesnikov, P. A. (1976). Northern village in the XVth century — the first half of the XXth century. Vologda: North-West Book Publishing House.
- Literary world: Antonov A. I. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.litmir.me/br/?b=546526&p=4>
- Markevich, M. A. (1860). Usuals, beliefs, cuisine and drinks of Little Russians: taken from the current folk life. Kyiv: Printing house I. Davidenko.
- Markovich, J. (1913). Diary: Sources for the history of Ukraine-Rus. Kyiv-Lviv.
- Melik, L. (2017). Rites, holidays and customs of our ancestors. Prayers, conspiracies, charms. Moscow: Centerpolygraph.
- Petukhov, Y. D., & Vasilieva, N. I. (2008). Eurasian Empire of the Scythians / God of Time: Saturn-Kolyada-Bhaga, Veles-Pan-Pushan. (pp. 70-78). Moscow: Veche.
- Popovich, M. V. (1998). Draw the history of Ukrainian culture. Kyiv: Artek.
- Propp, V. Ya. (1963). Russian agrarian holidays: the experience of historical and ethnographic research. Leningrad: Publishing house of the Leningrad University.
- Raevsky, D. S. (1985). Model of the world of the Scythian culture. Problems of the worldview of the Iranian-speaking peoples of the Eurasian steppes of the first millennium BC. Moscow: Publishing House of Languages of Slavic Cultures.
- Sapiga, V. K. (1993). Ukrainian folk holidays and customs. Kyiv: Knowledge of Ukraine.
- Savushkina, N. I. (1979). Features of theatrical space in performances of mummers / Theater space. Scientific Conference "Soviet Painter". Moscow: Soviet Painter.
- Szymansky, H. (2009). Christmas Traditions: True Stories that Celebrate the Spirit of the Season. Avon: Adams Media.
- Tolochko, O. P. (2005). Chronicler Nestor: A Tale of Bygone Years / Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Kiev: Scientific thought.
- Vinogradova, L. N. (1999). Caroling. In N. I. Tolstoy (ed.), Slavic Antiquities: Ethnolinguistic Dictionary, Volume 2, (pp. 570-575). Moscow: International Relations.
- Zabelin, I. E. (1912). History of Russian life since ancient times.