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PYSANKY FROM HUTSULSHCHYNA AND POKUTTIA:
ETHNOLOGICAL ASPECTS AND ARTISTIC SPECIFICITY

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Rezumat

**Ouăle decorative de Paște în regiunile
Huțulilor și Pokuttia: aspecte etnologice și
caracteristicile de artă**

Ouăle decorative de Paște (pysanka) ucrainene și confecționarea lor reprezintă un subiect relevant al studiilor științifice etnologice și de artă, în special în ceea ce privește conținutul caracteristicilor locale ale acestor produse. Prin urmare, ne concentrăm asupra aspectelor regionale și a caracteristicilor de artă ale ouălor decorative de Paște în regiunile Huțulilor și Pokuttia de la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea – prima treime a secolului al XX (timpul confecționării, denumirea locală, participarea la ritualuri calendaristice și familiale, decor, principalele scheme și caracteristicile compoziționale), folosind exemplul colecției Muzeului de Etnografie și Artizanat al Institutului de Etnologie al Academiei Naționale de Științe a Ucrainei (MEA). Colecția ouălor decorative de Paște de la MEA este cea mai mare din Ucraina – este formată din aproximativ 13 mii de unități conservate din multe regiuni istorice și etnografice ale Ucrainei (dintre care regiunile Huțulilor și Pokuttia). Autorii ouălor decorative au fost în mare parte femei și fete, mai rar bărbați. Ouăle decorative de Paște nu au îndeplinit doar o funcție ceremonială, protectoare și decorativă, ci se evidențiau ca unele modele unice („neobișnuite”). În decorul ouălor încondeiate se evidențiază cele mai răspândite motive geometrice, vegetale și zoomorfe, scene religioase și inscripții, preponderent cu salutul pascal. La baza cercetării se află piesele păstrate în fondul MEA, registrele de inventar ale muzeului, precum și publicațiile științifice și de popularizare a științei, albumele.

Cuvinte-cheie: regiunea Huțulilor, Pokuttia, colecția muzeului, pysanka, ritualuri calendaristice și familiale

Резюме

**Гуцульские и покутские писанки:
этнологические аспекты и художественные
особенности**

Украинские писанки и писанкарство – актуальная тема научных этнологических и искусствоведческих исследований, в частности локальных особенностей этих изделий. В статье уделяется внимание региональным аспектам и художественным особенностям гуцульских и покутских писанок конца XIX – первой трети XX в. (время изготовления, местные названия, место в календарных и семейных обрядах, декор, основные композиционные схемы и мотивы) на примере собрания Музея этнографии и художественного промысла Института народоведения НАН Украины (МЭХП). Собрание писанок в МЭХП явля-

ется самым крупным в Украине – составляет около 13 тыс. ед. из многих историко-этнографических регионов Украины (в том числе Гуцульщины и Покутья). Авторами гуцульских и покутских писанок были преимущественно женщины и девушки, реже – мужчины. Писанки выполняли не только обрядовую, обереговую и декоративную функции, но и отличались уникальными («необычными») узорами. В декоре писанок выделяются наиболее распространенные геометрические, растительные и зооморфные мотивы, религиозные сценки и надписи, преимущественно с Пасхальным приветствием. В основе исследования – памятки, которые хранятся в фонде МЭХП, Инвентарные книги музея, научные и научно-популярные издания, альбомы.

Ключевые слова: Гуцульщина, Покутье, музейное собрание, писанка, обряды календарного и семейного циклов

Summary

**Pysanky from Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia:
ethnological aspects and artistic specificity**

Ukrainian pysanky and the practice of pysanka-making prove to be a relevant subject of contemporary ethnological and art critical inquiry, particularly with regard to the local specificities of these artifacts. Therefore, this study emphasizes regional dimensions and artistic features of pysanky from Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia dating from the late 19th c. to the first third of the 20th c. (including chronology of production, local terminology, functions within calendar and family rituals, ornamentation, principal compositional schemes, and motifs). The paper is based upon the collection of the Museum of Ethnography and Crafts at the Ethnology Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (hereafter MEC). The collection of pysanky at MEC is the largest in Ukraine, comprising approximately 13,000 items from numerous historical and ethnographic regions, among which Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia particularly seem outstanding. The creators of pysanky were predominantly women and girls, and less frequently men. Beyond their ritual, protective, and decorative functions, pysanky also served as a means of preserving and recalling distinctive (“unusual”) ornamentation patterns.

Key words: Hutsulshchyna, Pokuttia, museum collection, pysanka, calendar and family rituals

The Ukrainian pysanka was referred to as a “domestic talisman”, an “apotropaion”, a “charm” or as a “symbol embodying the essence of two religious

worldviews". Within the pysanka is embedded the ancestral belief in a better fate for the nation, as well as glorification of its history, greatness, and beauty. By the late 19th and early 20th cc., the pysanka underwent transformations from a sacred symbol to an object of collection. Consequently, numerous specimens originating from various regions of Ukraine provided scholars with the foundation for systematic scholarly studies of the pysanky.

The Polish scholar Oscar Kolberg was one of the first researchers to explore pysanky from the Pre-Carpathians; in 1882 he published his thorough work *Pokucie* (Kolberg 1882). In 1904 the outstanding Ukrainian ethnographer Volodymyr Shukhevych published his unique book *Hutsulshchyna* (in five volumes) on the life and daily practices of the Hutsul people. In the fourth section, *Church Rituals*, the ethnographer undertakes a detailed analysis of pysanka-making practices within the region (Шухевич 1904: 220-231). Substantive insights into Easter-egg traditions may further be derived from a considerable number of concise scholarly contributions published in periodicals and miscellanies. Of particular significance for subsequent research is Zenon Yelyyiv's album *Twenty Score of Pysanky* (1994), comprising 75 tables (encompassing approximately 1,200 illustrations) of pysanka exemplars – approximately 80% of which represent authentic artifacts originating from diverse regions of Ukraine as well as from diasporic communities (namely the collections of Tania Osadtsa, Odarka Onyshchuk, Demian Horniatkevych and others). A considerable number of these specimens preserve their historical nomenclature and associated ornamental motifs (Єлійв 1994).

The collection of pysanky in MEC is the biggest in Ukraine, as it comprises approximately 13,000 items. The huge funds include pysanky from numerous historical and ethnographical regions, in particular Opillia, Podillia, Middle Naddniproshchyna, Volyn, Polissia, Boikivshchyna, Bukovyna, Nadsianina, Pidliashshia, Lemkivshchyna and Kholmshchyna. However, here we would like to especially highlight pysanky from Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia.

In the late 19th – early 20th cc., pysanky were produced in nearly every household across Ukraine, although individuals were not always able to articulate the rationale for this practice. In the Hutsul region, peasants would typically respond with such expressions as: "it has long been customary", "such is the tradition" or "this is how my mother did it, and so do we" (Fischer 1922: 136). Volodymyr Shukhevych stated that in this region pysanka-makers were pre-

dominantly women and girls, described as "skilled and patient women" (Шухевич 1904: 220). Considerably less frequently were pysanky made by men, and then primarily by unmarried individuals, for instance "a 20-year-old deaf-mute bachelor" (Nezvysko, Pokuttia); or "a 31-year-old deaf-mute householder" (Nezvysko) (Інвентарна 1913: 16).

Women, referred to as *писарки* (pysarky) or *писанчарки* (pysancharky), created pysanky for remuneration for families lacking adult daughters or, more generally, individuals capable of performing this task. While in the Hutsul region prior to 1914, Włodzimierz Fischer wrote that such pysarky were locally designated as "specialists" (Fischer 1922: 135). If there were no such craftswomen in a village, commissions were directed to neighboring villages or even across the border "to the Bukovyna side" (Шухевич 1904: 220).

The number of pysanky to be ordered often depended upon the economic means of the household: in some cases, as many as half a kopa (i.e. a score) of pysanky were ordered, and the payment was given in cash. Compensation was sometimes provided "voluntarily", most commonly with eggs. In the Hutsul region, the price for a pair of pysanky ranged from 2 to 10 kreuzers (Шухевич 1904: 220). Professor D. Horniatkevych witnessed an elderly pysankarka in the Hutsul region who, "over the course of three days, decorated 30-36 pysanky", all while attending to her domestic responsibilities and caring for a small child (Горняткевич 1931: 4).

Especially interesting are the issue of traditional colors used in pysanky, specific combinations of colored patterns, and the symbolism of colors. For example, in the Horodenka district (Pokuttia), it was recorded that those wishing to have black lambs would give the shepherd black dyed eggs *галунки* (halunky) at Easter, whereas those desiring white lambs would provide boiled eggs (Krčák 1898: 226). In many localities, certain pysanky were preserved throughout the year – not only due to their protective function (ensuring family prosperity, abundant harvests, protection against thunder, disease and fire) or decorative purpose (displayed beneath icons), but also to safeguard unique or unusual patterns (Krčák 1898: 228). In Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia, as in other historical-ethnographic regions, girls traditionally presented pysanky to young men, while older men exchanged them *на простубіг* (na prostybig) as a token of reconciliation and friendship (Гоберман 1979: 27).

The pysanka represents one of the most vivid forms of folk art associated with the decoration of eggs – primarily chicken eggs, and less commonly

goose, duck, pigeon, or crow eggs. The most widespread technique was the stylus method: a wax pattern was applied to the egg, which was subsequently immersed in dyes, progressing from lighter to darker shades. In some cases, up to four or five colors were used on pysanky from the regions under study. Dividing an egg into fields proves to be a central aspect of this practice. The most common division is longitudinal, into two fields ("faces"), which allows for the placement of large-scale motifs. Longitudinal lines sometimes divide the egg into four fields, producing a "four-field" pysanka. If an additional transverse line is made, the pysanka is considered "eight-field". The lines may be thin, while the bands vary in width: some are double, containing a row of dots or curvilinear motifs, or a combination of triangles, diamonds, or "grid" patterns. On certain Hutsul pysanky one can see such wide and detailed bands that the compositions within medallions appear really small. Interestingly, dividing bands are occasionally formed by motifs such as rows of Greek-type crosses, deer and horses (Kosiv district). Less frequently schemes include two transverse lines ("the barrel" type) or irregular rhombus-shaped divisions *бесазу* (besahy) (type, i.e. irregular diamond-field type) (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. A pysanka. 1929. Kolomyia district. Pokuttia

Painting pysanky with wax is often compared to embroidery, ornamental needlework, batik, carpets,

painted wood or ceramics. This is evident both in certain stages of the technique and in specific motifs and designs, such as the following pysanka patterns: *звїздчаста* (zvidchasta), *віночок* (vinochok), *хрестата* (khrestata), *хрестом* (khrestom), *вуставка* (vustavka), *вуставка з поясками* (vustavka z poiaskami), *яворівських рукавів вуставка* (yavorivskykh rukaviv vustavka) (Інвентарна, 1913: 7, 16, 36), etc. At the same time, in comparison with the embroidery motifs from Kosmach, which are marked by strict geometric order, pysanka decoration appears somewhat more free and spontaneous, since the stylus often seems "to dictate" the pattern, i.e. it leads the author. That is why the image of a horse or a deer often have individual features. This can be illustrated by the arrangement of antlers belonging to a pair of deer, placed not vertically but almost parallel to their bodies, owing to the limited space within the medallion of the pysanka.

Every pysanka-maker had her own "stable repertoire" of motifs which she practically never altered (Sydorowycz 1927: 39). Not all the decorative elements carried a symbolic meaning, since "a modern pysanka-maker often rose on the wings of her imagination and transformed the ancient motifs or introduced her own ones" (Горняткевич 1930: 3). At times it is difficult to understand why a given pysanka bears a particular name, since the name may derive from some rather primitive form (Шухевич 1904: 224).

The fact that archaic motifs, primarily geometric ones, such as solar signs and cross-shaped compositions, have been preserved the longest in Polissia, Hutsulshchyna, Boikivshchyna, and Lemkivshchyna is explained by the relative inaccessibility of these areas over many centuries. For this reason, a considerable number of ancient names for the motif of *ружа* (ruzha) have survived in pysanka ornamentation, including a rose (the most widespread one), as well as *ружка* (ruzhka), *шість руж* (shist rush), *поперечні ружі* (poperechni ruzhi), *поздовжні ружі* (pozdovzhni ruzhi), *півружі* (pivruzhi), *півружка* (pivruzhka), and *Божі ружі* (Bozhi ruzhi).

In order to highlight the prominence of this motif in the pysanka tradition of Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia we can distinguish several compositional schemes. In particular, we can mention the *гачкова ружа* (hachkova ruzha) with slightly curved ends (Zabolotiv, Pokuttia; Kosmach, Hutsulshchyna); roses arranged at both ends of the egg (Kolinky, Pokuttia; Daleshiv, Horodenka district); the full rose, covering the fields of the egg, with double "ram's horns" placed between its petals (Kuty, Kosiv district) etc. (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. A pysanka. 1st third of the 20th c. Kosmach, Kosiv district. Hutsulshchyna

In the decoration of wax-painted pysanky, a certain role was assigned to the шахова дошка (shachova doshka) checkerboard motif (Kosmach, Kosiv district, Hutsulshchyna), as well as to small geometric elements, chiefly крапки (krapky), кривульки (kryvulky), зубці (zubtsi), кола (kola), трикутники (trykutnyky), ромби (romby), and сітка (sitka) or ільчасте письмо (ilchaste pysmo). Authors achieved an unparalleled effect in creating numerous colorful patterns that densely covered the fields and dividing bands of the eggs, blending seamlessly with the scarcely noticeable background. Following traditional principles of wax-painted ornamentation was transmitted from generation to generation. Together with established compositional schemes and color palettes, this makes it possible to identify the authorship of craftswomen from specific localities, such as Kosiv, Kosmach, Pistyn, Babyn, Brustury, Richka, Zhabie, Nyzhnii Bereziv, Daleshiv and others. Particularly rare in terms of compositional design are pysanky from Daleshiv (Horodenka district, Pokuttia), dated 1914. Here we can see a two-field egg with the дзигарка (dzyharka) motif, and eight-field examples, the so-called перлова (perlova) (with outlined pearls arranged in triangular forms) and нумерова (numerova) (with vertical rows of digits).

The geometric decoration of Easter eggs, which is based on a combination of numerous elements,

is dominated by cross motifs. Compositions with crosses in Hutsul (*хрест* (khrest), *хресту* (khresty), *хрещику* (khreshchyky), *хрестата* (khrestata); Kosiv district) and Pokuttia (*хрест* (khrest), *хрестата* (khrestata); Horodnytsia, Horodenka district) pysanky are distinguished by their richness of forms. Variation is evident in the crosses of different types: straight (with equal arms), slanted (St. Andrew's), Greek (arms made of triangles), Latin (with an elongated lower end), cross-shaped (with crossed arms), two-armed, three-armed, and other crosses.

Sometimes the structure of the cross, which was used in decoration of various types of folk art, including pysanka, influenced the name of the pysanka: *Березівський хрест* (Berezivskyi khrest), *Космацька* (Kosmatska), *Ріцька* (Ritska), *Ріцькі хрести* (Ritski khresty) or *Паска* (paska), *Воскресна* (Voskresna), *Великдень* (Velykden), *попові ризи* (popovi ryzy), *Голгофа* (Golgotha) (Шухевич 1904: 225; Єлиїв 1994: 52) etc.

Pysanka with a cross motif of different types and large size (occupying the entire field of the pysanka, moving from one crossarm to another, or crosses on both sides of the dividing line) is called *Воскресна* (Voskresna) or *Великдень* (Velykden) (Ластівка 1932: 2). The variants are as follows: 1) an equilateral cross with rounded ends, double hooks between the arms; 2) a large cruciform cross on both fields of the pysanka (1929; Kolomyia district), sometimes with a serrated border (Kosiv district); 3) a large cruciform cross on a pysanka without a dividing belt (1911; Kosiv district).

The earliest examples of such motifs are pysanky from Moskalivka (Hutsul region) of 1890 with an expressive composition and pastel-colored elements. Single crosses of various shapes on the central line, separated by short vertical bands, gave the pysanka the name *попові ризи* (popovi ryzy): 1) with crosses of the Greek type – Pistyn, Kosiv district); 2) a similar composition was typical of Kosmach pysanka-makers, although similar pysanky could already be called *очката* (ochkata) or *барилко* (barylko) (Єлиїв 1994: 56, 72); 3) the scheme of straight crosses on the middle band of the pysanka-barrel in Hutsulshchyna was also called *попові ризи* (popovi ryzy) (Єлиїв 1994: 48).

The motif of a cross with teeth-like «hooks» between its arms gave a name for another pysanka – *попові плечі* (popovi plechi) (Zhabie, Hutsulshchyna); a variation of a straight cross with other geometric elements created a *попадиста* (popadysta) pysanka (the pattern resembled a Ukrainian word “pip” meaning a priest) (Staryi Hvizdets, Hutsulshchyna) (Єлиїв 1994: 71). The rare composition of the *проскурка* (proskurka) pysanka is based on a combination of crosses of different types and a restrained

coloristic design (Єлиїв 1994: 72). The invariance of cross schemes demonstrates the rich figurative world and creative thinking of Hutsul craftswomen.

The structure of the pysanka with crosses includes a division into square fields with a small Greek cross in the center of each and a combination of the traditional Hutsul color palette of white, yellow, and green on a brown background (Kosiv district). In addition, the cross motif was also used as a complementary motif in the decoration of Hutsul pysanky for “barrel-like” pysanky. Compositional structures in which vertical rows of Greek crosses serve as dividing belts are considered rare and original (for example, in the composition *Великдень* (Velykden) (Kosiv district) or in a four-field goose egg pysanka with small ornamental elements (Kosmach, Kosiv district) (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. A pysanka. 1st third of the 20th c. Kosiv district. Hutsulshchyna

We would like to draw attention to another motif of geometric ornamentation, in particular, *клинці* (klyntsi) – a complex linear pattern of forty triangles symbolizing fields; when they have stripes or specks in the middle, they are perceived as signs of a sown field. In Christian times, such motifs acquired a new meaning and interpretation, in particular, they are associated with the forty-day fast or the forty saints. The following names for Easter eggs are recorded in the Hutsul region: *клинчики* (klynchyky), *півклинчики* (pivklynchyky), *триклинчики* (tryklynchyky), *сорок*

клинчиків (sorok klynchykyv), and *жовтоклинчики* (zhovtoklynchyky) (Шухевич 1904: 226).

One of the most common and mysterious signs symbolizing movement and life is *безконецник* (bezkonechnyk) (the sign of infinity). Its shape was sometimes identified with the “crooked dance” performed on the second day of Easter near the church. The motif has a ritualistic and mystical function. The *bezkonechnyk* is a closed continuous line where it is difficult to find the beginning and end, which is interesting for its plastic curves. In the Hutsul region, such pysanky were called *безконежна* (bezkonechna) or *півбезконежна* (pivbezkonechna) (Шухевич 1904: 226). In the decor of the Kosiv region pysanka (similar in style to painted eggs from the villages of Babyn or Moskalivka), the sign of infinity is represented as a spiral. The drawing is clear and expressive, and therefore, when we focus on it carefully, we see this motif once in a dark brown color (here it serves as a background), and another time in yellow with a barely noticeable grid. The white outline and splashes of yellow and green deepen the mystery of this sign. The motifs of “the signs of infinity” serve as a frame in the images of a cross, fish, little churches, horses and deer in the medallions of two- and four-field pysanky or scenes with a manger (deer and horses are depicted near a conventional painted manger, i.e. *мальованка* (malyovanka) (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. A pysanka. 1st third of the 20th c. Babyn. Kosiv district. Hutsulshchyna

In the painting of Easter eggs from these regions, the *зрabelьця* (hrabeltsya) motif was also used, a graphic scheme based on a line with short spikes laid perpendicularly. This motif, which was a symbol of rain, is used as the main or complementary motif in the compositional schemes of pysanky. In Pokuttia, such pysanky were called *зребінчасті* (hrebinchasti). On Hutsul pysanky, between the rakes made of both fields of a divided egg, the horizontal motifs of straight crosses with dotted filling on their frames could sometimes be found (Шухевич 1904: 225).

In the decor of pysanky, floral ornamentation should be analyzed starting from the simplest components, in particular flowers. In Zhabie, there are pysanky with flowers and *квіти-чички* (kvity-chichky) ("chichka" is a dialect word for a flower), in Brustury – a violet (Hutsul region), in Kolomyia district – grapes motif (Pokuttia). In Hutsul and Pokuttia Easter eggs, the flowerpot motif is often found – with or without a vase, with luxurious (1929, Kolomyia and Pokuttia districts; Kosiv district) or small (first third of the 20th c.; Sniatyn district, Pokuttia) rosettes and leaves, etc. The flowerpot motif was often identified with the tree of life filled with symbolism (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. A pysanka. 1st third of the 20th c. Sniatyn district. Pokuttia

Compositions with vertical structures predominate, where a flowerpot with branches and leaves occupies the space of two-field pysanky. The differences lie in the size of the flowerpot, which is caused by the

width of the dividing belt – large motifs on both sides of a two-field pysanka with a thin belt (Kolomyia district) and, accordingly, the closure of the flowerpot in the medallions of pysanky with a wide belt (Sniatyn district, Pokuttia; Moskalivka, Kosiv district, Hutsul region). The presentation of the flowerpot motif on the surface of a "barrel-like" pysanka is rare and original: Kolomyia artists made the wax pattern delicate and refined on the background obtained from onion peel decoction. The ends of the pysanka are decorated with Greek crosses, and the motifs of the two types of flowerpots are enclosed in rectangular "windows" on the middle belt.

The zoomorphic motifs on the surfaces of pysanky can be divided into the following main groups: images of animals, fish, and birds. A special place in the iconographic tradition of Prykarpattia was occupied by the image of a deer, which was perceived as a symbol of Christ. It is noteworthy that pysanky depicting two deer were given to brides and grooms for their weddings as a wish for a long life in harmony, health, and prosperity. The image of two deer on both sides of the *мальованка* (malyovanka) motif gave the composition the name *ясла* (yasla).

The variety of horse images demonstrates the creative thinking of the authors of pysanky, who tried to present these animals in different ways, in particular, at rest or in motion. We should note the invariance of the compositional schemes of Hutsul pysanky: 1) on the surfaces of four-field pysanky across (1911, Zhabie); 2) three images of horses in the elongated medallions of a four-field pysanka; 3) rows of horses as dividing belts between images of two fish and two compositions of "mangers" (a pair of a horse and a deer on both sides of the *мальованка* (malyovanka) pattern; Kosiv district). The depictions of horses mostly emphasize the plastic curves of their structure; in some pysanky the figures of animals are depicted with straight longer and shorter lines (Nyzhnii Bereziv) (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. A pysanka. 1911. Zhabie, Kosiv district. Hutsulshchyna

The fish as a symbol of Jesus Christ was also among the images of Easter eggs in the Hutsul and Pokuttia regions. Pysanka-makers mostly arrange fish on the surfaces of four-field Easter eggs in traditional colors and with detailed elements (Kosmach, Moskalivka, Pistyn, Kosiv district) (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. A pysanka. 1st third of the 20th c. Kosmach, Kosiv district. Hutsulshchyna

It is also worth highlighting Easter eggs decorated with unique and rare wax paintings of sacred content – these are religious scenes on three Easter eggs from Pokuttia, including Nezvysko (Pokuttia), painted by a 20-year-old local deaf-mute boy. Wax painting and coloring of the Easter eggs depict different religious scenes in a talented way: 1) Holy Trinity, Crucifixion, Annunciation and Christmas; 2) Holy Virgin of Protection and Ascension; 3) St. Stephen, Baptism, Holy Trinity and St. Nicholas (Fig. 8).

Images of churches and bell towers occupy a special place in Hutsul Easter eggs. Their names are recorded as follows: *церква* (tserkva), *церковця* (tserkovtsia), *дзвони* (dzvony), *звіничка* (zvynychka), *капличка* (kaplychka), *монастирі* (monastyri) *манастирі* (manastyri) in Kosiv district (Kosmach, Babyn, Kosiv, Stari Kut) and other areas. The variability of the images lies in the form of presentation and their number. The most common are several compositional schemes of little churches: 1) one in a medallion, mostly framed by an infinity sign; 2) one as

a component of an eight-field pysanka (Babyn, Kosiv district); 3) eight in the monasteries motif (1911, Kosiv district). It is interesting that based on similar structural elements – two tables with teeth-like spikes at the bottom and three crosses at the top – Hutsul pysanka-makers managed to create a new motif – *престоли* (prestoly) (Krasnoillia) (Єлиїв 1994: 52) (Fig. 9).



Fig. 8. A pysanka. 1913. Nezvysko, Horodenka district. Hutsulshchyna



Fig. 9. A pysanka. 1911. Kosiv district. Hutsulshchyna

The décor of some pysanky is based on a combination of many motifs and images – an example is an eight-field pysanka from the Kosiv district, as noted in one of the museum's inventories: God's Eye, a church, a little bell tower, a rose, fish, a painted egg, *кручені рукави* (krucheni rukavy), and wings (Інвентарна 1913: 9).

Inscriptions on Easter eggs can also be considered as decorative elements: they have different meanings and content. Most of the inscriptions are logically related to the Easter holiday: "Christ is Risen" on the longitudinal or transverse dividing bands of the eggs or on both sides of the belt. One of the inscriptions indicates the name of the pysanka: *гач ко ва* (gach ko va) (Kosmach). Other inscriptions refer to the authors of the pysanky, for example, in 1913 from Nezvyso: *Пазя Дробко* (Pazia Drobko), *Михась Дробко* (Mikhas Drobko) and *Стефан Маркович* (Stefan Markovych), the author of the 1929 pysanka *Анна Кубаєвич* (Anna Kubaievych) from Pylypiv (Pokuttia), and *Варвара Бойчук* (Varvara Boichuk) (Kosmach). Sometimes the initials of the authors appear on pysanky, for example, *А. П.* (A.P.) between the branches of the so-called pink pysanka (1913, Nezvyso).

The inscriptions on some pysanky indicate that they were intended personally for a close person (for example, relatives or a boyfriend). Thus, the distribution belt of one of the Pokuttia pysanky of 1923 (Sopiv, Kolomyia district, Pokuttia) has an inscription: "For Ivan Prokopiv, Sopiv on 26/3/1923". That is, the girl prepared a pysanka as a gift for the boyfriend (the Easter holiday in 1923 fell on March 26).

Conclusion. Therefore, the article analyzes a unique collection of Easter eggs of the late 19th and first third of the 20th century from Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia regions, which are kept in the MEC. For the Ukrainians, Easter eggs were and still are a measure of world perception, an indispensable attribute of the Easter basket, a talisman for the family, a kind of emblem representing love and engagement, etc. The precision of the drawing, the division of the spherical surface of an egg, the rhythm and traditional colors – all this contributed to the fact that Easter eggs became real works of art filled with the imagination of their creators. Small geometric ornaments prevailed in the décor of Hutsul pysanky, and talented pysanka-makers, like real jewelers, created numerous exquisite patterns with a combination of elements and bright colors, leaving almost no space for the background. Among the floral motifs, the flowerpot motif stands out as original, where invariability was manifested in vases, branches, leaves, and

rosettes. Images of animals, fish, and birds were less common in the decoration of Easter eggs. Religious themes with images of saints and scenes from the New Testament (Nezvyso) are unique. For the overall picture of the development of pysanky and the role of pysanky in people's lives, in calendar rituals and family cycles, it is important to study the local names of pysanky, their origin, inscriptions, and other artistic features.

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