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**CHRISTMAS EVE RITUAL ROUNDS *НОСІННЯ ВЕЧЕРІ*  
IN TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE UKRAINIANS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA  
(ETHNOLINGUISTIC ASPECT)**

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**Rezumat**

**Ritualul de Ajunul Crăciunului *Носіння вечері* în  
cultura tradițională a ucrainenilor din Republica  
Moldova (aspect etnolingvistic)**

În articolul de față, pentru prima dată se va descrie mersul ritualic cu *вечеря* (bunătați) în Sfânta Seară de Crăciun de către ucrainenii din Republica Moldova, din perspectiva etnolingvistică a unității semantice a elementelor verbale și non-verbale, legate compozițional (după V. Konobrodskaya) prin originea tematică și culturală comună. Bazându-ne pe materialele de teren colectate personal în 53 de așezări locuite compact sau dispersat de ucrainenii pe teritoriul țării, literatură și alte surse, autorul a analizat conținutul discursului al mersului cu *вечеря* de natură idolatro-creștină, semantica și motivele acestora, inclusiv al celor unice, precum mersul cu *деревице / крачок* (cu Pomul de Crăciun), decorate cu produse de patiserie antropomorfe sub formă de păpușă – *лялька*. Cercetate în unitatea planurilor verbale, temporale, locale, de acțiune, mersul cu *вечеря*, în limitele coordonatelor geografice indicate, au dezvăluit: 1) înrădăcinarea lor adâncă în cultura tradițională ucraineană; 2) nivelul înalt al păstrării și viabilității lor; 3) continuitatea tradițiilor; 4) tendința ucrainenilor de a păstra identitatea lingvistică și culturală în condițiile habitatului prefrontalier. Denumirile parțial analizate sunt de origine proto-slavă, din rusa veche și ucraineană, cu un strat distinct de împrumuturi romanice, reflectă moștenirea culturală originală a ucrainenilor din Moldova și contactele de secole cu romanicii răsăriteni.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** ucrainenii Moldovei, Sfânta Seară, mers ritualic cu *вечеря*, etnolingvistică.

**Резюме**

**Обрядовые обходы сочельника *Носіння вечері*  
в традиционной культуре  
украинцев Республики Молдова  
(этнолингвистический аспект)**

В статье впервые рассмотрены ритуальные обходы *ношения вечері* на Святой вечер украинцами Республики Молдова под этнолингвистическим углом в семантическом единстве вербальных и невербальных единиц, композиционно объединенных (по В. Конобродской) общим тематическим и культурным началом. Опираясь на лично собранные полевые материалы в 53 населенных пунктах компактного и дисперсного проживания украинцев на территории республики, литературу и источники, автор проанализировала диктумное содержание языческо-христианских по своему характеру обходов с *вечерей*, их семантику и мотивы, в том числе и таких уникальных, как обходы с «*деревице / крачком*», украшенным антропоморфной выпечкой в виде куклы – «*ляльки*». Исследованные в единстве вербального, темпорального, локативного, реалемного и акционального планов обходы с *вечерей*

в рамках указанных географических координат засвидетельствовали: 1) их глубокую укорененность в украинской традиционной культуре; 2) высокую степень ее сохранности и жизнеспособности; 3) непрерывность традиций; 4) стремление сохранить свою языковую и культурную самобытность, украинскую идентичность в условиях пограничья. Частично проанализированные названия праславянского, древнерусского и украинского происхождения с заметной прослойкой романских заимствований отражают самобытное культурное наследие украинцев Молдовы и многовековые контакты с восточными романцами.

**Ключевые слова:** украинцы Молдовы, Святой вечер, ритуальные обходы с *вечерей*, этнолингвистика.

**Summary**

**Christmas Eve ritual rounds *Носіння вечері* in  
traditional culture of the Ukrainians of the Republic of  
Moldova (ethnolinguistic aspect)**

The article considers for the first time the ritual rounds of bringing dinner (*носіння вечері*) on the Holy Evening by the Ukrainians of the Republic of Moldova from an ethnolinguistic point of view in the semantic unity of verbal and non-verbal units, compositionally united (according to V. Konobrodskaya) by a common thematic and cultural origin. Relying on the field materials collected personally in 53 settlements of compact and dispersed residence of Ukrainians on the territory of the republic, literature and sources, the author analyzed the dictum content of the pagan-Christian by their origin rounds with the dinner (*вечеря*), their semantics and motives, including such unique ones as rounds with a ritual tree (*деревице/крачком*), decorated with anthropomorphic pastries in the form of a doll (*лялька*). Investigated in the unity of the verbal, temporal, local, actional and substantive aspects, the rounds with the dinner, within the specified geographical coordinates, demonstrate: 1) their deep rootedness in Ukrainian traditional culture; 2) a high degree of their preservation and viability; 3) continuity of traditions; 4) the desire to preserve their linguistic, cultural identity, and Ukrainian identity on the borderland. The partially analyzed names of Proto-Slavic, Old Russian and Ukrainian origin with a noticeable layer of Romance borrowings reflect the original cultural heritage of Ukrainians in Moldova and centuries-old contacts with Eastern Romans.

**Key words:** Ukrainians of Moldova, Holy Evening, ritual rounds, ethnolinguistics.

Cognition and interpretation of folk culture encoded in the word is an important task of modern science, which requires a complex interdisciplinary approach, as well as consideration of one or another phenomenon of ethnic culture through the prism of

its linguistic embodiment. In this context, the study and understanding of the spiritual cultural heritage of the Ukrainians of the Republic of Moldova is of special importance, due to many centuries of living apart from the “mainland” Ukraine, surrounded by other languages and cultures, primarily Eastern Romans, which determined a special way of development of the sacred and cultural complex of local Ukrainians and its preservation in the collective memory of generations.

The Holy Evening on Christmas Eve is special for the vast majority of Moldovan Ukrainians, imbued with mystery, magical power and extraordinary solemnity. In the rites and traditions of this evening, the deep faith in the Saviour and the echoes of pre-Christian beliefs were closely intertwined with elements of the solar cult and the cult of ancestors – the ability to “catch” and use the “openness of disordered cosmic forces”, the energies of the ancestors of the family “in one’s own interests” to ensure success in economic activity, to influence one’s future fate, improve health, get rich (Серов 1983: 47). And if certain magic-producing and apotropaic rites (invitation of natural forces to dinner, ritual actions with a sheaf-grandfather, the rite of croaking, tossing *kutya* etc.), as well as Christmas divination, are gradually disappearing (see: Кожухарь, 2021), then the family meal and group/collective and individual visits, accompanied by the exchange of gifts (in some places also by disguising) at the beginning of the 21st century still show amazing vitality.

According to researchers, these rounds on Christmas Eve, which, we should note, are characteristic not only of Ukrainian, but also of many European cultures, help certain magical acts, which have “both a sacramental (sanctifying) character and a purely protective one”, to occur (Жайворонюк 2006: 409-410).

In Ukrainian ethnography, Christmas Eve rites of various ethnographic zones are comprehensively researched and described in the works of Y. Varhol, O. Voropai M. Horbal, N. Gromova, S. Kilimnyk, H. Kozholyanko, O. Kozholyanko, O. Kurochkin, V. Skurativskyi, Ye. Ryzuk, etc.). Profound theoretical remarks, comparative analysis on a pan-European background are presented in a number of monographic and ideographic sources of Polish, Russian and Ukrainian researchers (Je. Bartmiski, N. Veletskaia, L. Vynogradova, O. Tyshchenko, N. Tolstoy) and others.

The Ukrainian terms of the Christmas/New

Year cycle are considered in the works of O. Horbach, T. Grihorenko, V. Zhaivoronok, I. Levkovych, M. Lesiv, N. Hobzei, L. Savchenko and others. E. Gotsa carried out a semantic, word-formation-etymological and linguographic analysis of the names of calendar and ritual holidays (chrononyms) in Transcarpathian dialects. N. Gerasim fixed the vocabulary for marking the calendar ritual of *Nadsyanya*. The ethnosymbolism of linguistic units in the Ukrainian ritual discourse became the subject of consideration in M. Filipchuk’s dissertation. O. Komar investigated the mechanisms of stereotyping ethnocultural meanings of nationally marked linguistic units. I. Tsaryova described the semantic structure, diversity of the nominative repertoire, syncretism and the derived basis of the ritual phraseology of the Holy Evening on the example of East Slobodan sayings. L. Kolesnik considered the Christmas and New Year nominations in Bukovyna sayings. N. V. Plotnikova comprehensively analyzed the microconceptosphere of *Sviatka* and its components: the concepts of Christmas Eve, Water, *Kutya*, Sun, Christ, etc. The structure and peculiarities of the text of the Holy Evening narratives of Western Boykivshchyna were investigated by O. Kolomiychuk. R. Osadchi studied the symbols of the Romanian folk culture. An ethno-linguistic analysis of the Christmas terminology of the Bessarabian Bulgarians and Gagauz people and their ritual Christmas baking was carried out by E. Sorochianu.

As for the Christmas Eve rituals of the local Ukrainian population, very scanty references are found in the posts of priests from the Ukrainian / Ukrainian-Moldovan villages of Bessarabia, printed on the pages of the “Kyshiniv eparchial gazettes” (V. Zavoychinsky; H. Romanchuk, etc.), in P. Nestorovsky and others. A comparative analysis of Eastern Roman calendar rites with Slavic, valuable information about Ukrainian-Moldovan and, more broadly, East Slavic – East Roman influences in calendar rites and folklore are contained in the works of researchers of the second half of the 20th – beginning of the 21st centuries (P. Caraman, G. Kabakova, O. Kurochkin, H. Kozholyanko, O. Kozholyanko, A. Moisei, K. Popovych, Yu. Popovych, etc.). Folklore collector V. Panko mentions the Ukrainian traditions of the Holy Evening of the Glodyan and Ryshkan districts. N. Pastuh and O. Kharchyshyn also did not ignore the customs of the Holy Evening in the preface to the unique publication “Folklore of Ukrainians of Northern Mol-

dova: Songs and Recitatives”.

A valuable research source is the 1st volume of another unique publication “The Ethnographic Image of Ukrainians Abroad. Corpus of expeditionary folklore and ethnographic materials”, which reflects field records from 16 settlements in 8 districts of the Republic of Moldova, relating to all spheres of life of the local Ukrainian population, including such an important ethno-creative aspect of cultural and national life as ritual reality and its components: customs and rituals of the evening on Christmas Eve (Українці 2019: 70-154).

Over the past four years, the author has published a number of articles in which various aspects of the ritual of the Holy Evening of Moldovan Ukrainians were examined (Кожухар 2021, Кожухарь 2019, 2020a, etc.), including the traditions of rounds (Кожухар 2021b, Кожухарь 2020b). However, the ethnolinguistics of the Holy Evening rounds of Ukrainians in Moldova in the semantic unity of verbal and non-verbal units has not yet been the subject of research, which determined the novelty of this article.

The purpose of this investigation is to consider, in a broad ethnocultural context, the ethnolinguistic features of the Rounds with dinner *носіння вечері* on the Holy Evening. Rounds with *потана*, walking around the house with *kutia*, visiting the graves of ancestors, walking around with church hymns, walking around the godfathers and neighbours, walking around their own household and carolling rounds, which in some places also began on Christmas Eve, remained outside the scope of the research.

The source base for this study were field materials recorded by the author during 1994–2022, dictionaries, researches on dialectology, ethnography and ethnolinguistics. Some of the materials are introduced into scientific circulation for the first time.

In the Christmas and New Year rituals of the Ukrainians in the Republic of Moldova, like of all Christians, the day on Christmas Eve, which is celebrated mainly on January 6 (according to the Gregorian calendar), and in some localities on December 24 (according to the Julian calendar), is distinguished by a special meaning.

The evening of this day in the vast majority of the surveyed territory is nominated as the Holy Evening – *Святий вечір* in its different phonetic variants: *Св'а'тмій |веч'ір / Св'а'тмій |вечір / С'ва'тмій |веч'ір / С'ва'тмій |вечір*, *С'ва'тмій |вечер / С'ва'тмій |веч'ір / С'ва'тмій |веч'ір and С'в'атвеч'ір, Ба|зата ку'т'а.*

Traditional for this evening there are group/collective or individual rounds. Researchers see their semantics, as well as of other ritual rounds, in “gathering”, binding space and society, which “should be covered by the protection requested by the rite”: “by walking (but also «singing», engaging in dialogue, exchanging gifts, etc.) the cultural space and the people belonging to it are «denoted», their ritual «nomination» and demonstration as objects of attention from higher powers are performed” (Толстая 1996: 99).

An integral attribute of the Holy Evening of the Ukrainians of the Republic of Moldova, known in all Ukrainian lands, is the ceremony of carrying a ritual dinner – *носіння вечері: На С'ва'тмій |веч'ір носили в'і'ч'ер'у* (Rk.); *На Св'а'тмій |вечір ми ходили з в'і'ч'ер'ю* (Pl); *Нанаи'кам / со'с'ідам / |родичам / так во'но треба в'і'ч'еру в'і'д'нести* (Ns.); *І носил'и в'і'ч'ер'у до |д'іда там / до |родич'ю* (Ps.).

The traditional action “to carry dinner” is nominated by the native speakers of the studied Ukrainian dialects with phraseological compounds: *ходити з в'і'ч'ер'ю / іти з в'і'ч'ер'ю, носити в'і'ч'ер'у / нести в'і'ч'еру / в'і'д'нести в'і'ч'ер'у* etc.

Fixed figures of speech expressed by a verb with the meaning of movement – *ходити / приходити / іти / приї'ти / носити / нести / в'і'д'нести* + the noun *вечеря*, are dominant in understanding the deep semantics of the ritual rounds of the Holy Evening. They are verbalizers of the key concepts for the traditional worldview “movement-walking-detours” and “give-take”, associated with beliefs in the possibility of transferring/receiving benefits along with the transferred objects (Плотникова 1999: 13).

The ritual discourse saturates the lexeme *вечеря* with sacred meaning. In this context, the dictionary-reference book “Signs of Ukrainian Culture” gives the following definition: *вечеря* is “ceremonial food intended for relatives and friends, which is usually brought to them by children on Christmas Eve” (Жайвронюк 2006: 81). From a functional and semantic point of view, *носіння вечері* in the surveyed villages of the republic is not limited to the simple transfer of ritual food, but involves exchanging it with the addressee, eating the dinner brought by the addressee, and, importantly, the obligatory treatment of the guests and gifting them.

Before entering the house, the round partici-

pants ask permission: *Можна з ви'чери'їу?* (Pl.). Entering the house, they greet and, using well-established verbal formulas, convey to the owners the request of the parents to accept вечеря: *П'іслала мама / п'іслаў тато / прий'їт на'їшу в'їч'ер'у* (Rk.); *Про'їили мама і тато і їа про'їу / прий'їт на'їшу ви'ч'еру* (Hr.); *Про'її вас тато і мама і їа вас про'їу з ви'чери'їу // ни' цу'раїтес!* (Pl.). The hosts accept the вечеря with reverent awe, taste it and in return give their own вечеря: *Во'ни пробували в мене ту пи'їни'їку / пи'їни'їца / да / п'їхана пи'їни'їца / коле'во // во'ни пробували в мене того коле'ва ти'ї до'бав'їали сво'го т'рохи і то'ди да'вали м'їні в'їже* (Pl.).

Meeting, treating and gifting the participants of the round requires advanced and careful preparation: the purchase of kalach, bagels, cookies, etc. which, according to the memoirs of old-timers, back in the 50–60s were not bought, but baked by the housewives themselves. Small banknotes are saved and certainly the table is laid: *Св'а'їти'ївеч'їр / го'товим'їса / при'ход'їат д'їти, при'нос'їат ви'ч'еру / да'їу го'с'їтин'їца / да'їу з'рош'ї* (Ok.); *Об'а'зат'їлно т'ре'ба бу'ло їїх по'кор'їмити / по'кл'їсти за с'їт'їл* (Rk.); *Ф'їни їак при'ходили / на'при'їм'їер / до к'р'остних там / да / кл'адут за с'їт'їл їїх / у'гош'їч'їїут тих д'їт'її \_от /а по'їтом да'їут їїм то'їже їшото на'зат\_от* (Hr.).

Verbalization of the agentive plan is realized in the dialect names of the performers of the ceremony of bringing dinner – *ви'ч'ерни'їки, ви'чирни'їки, д'їти / г'їти, о'їнуки / у'їну'їи; ф'їн / ф'їна / ф'їни / мо'ло'д'ї, пох'їресник, пох'їресни'їца, пох'їресни'їки* and its addressees: godparents – *бат'їко, ма'їтка, бат'їк'їи; к'р'остн'ї / к'р'осн'ї, на'їна'їш / на'їна'їшко / на'їна'їшу'їл, на'їна'їшка, на'їна'їш'їки / на'їна'їшу'їли / на'їна'їш'їи; grandfather – д'їд'ї(м) / г'їд'ї(м) / д'ї'їдус'їа, д'ї'їдун'їа; grandmother – ба'їба / ба'їб'ї(м)ка / ба'їбун'їа / ба'їбус'їа / ба'їбу'їшка, ма'їка; relatives – ро'їдина, р'їдн'ї, ро'їдич'ї, на'їмури, с'їво'їи; aunt – в'їїна / їїна / т'їт'їка / к'їт'їка / к'їок'їа, т'їот'їа / ме'їту'їша; uncle – д'їад'їко / д'їад'їа / в'їїко / їїко; neighbours – су'їс'їїди, со'їс'їїди; everybody – вс'ї н'їд'їр'їад.*

The generalized names of the participants of вечеря rounds are derivatives *ви'чирни'їки / ви'ч'ерни'їки* in the meaning of “those who bring dinner on Holy Evening”: *При'ход'їат ви'чирни'їки / при'їнесли ви'ч'еру* (Un.) – were recorded in the Ukrainian/Ukrainian-Moldovan villages of the Oknitsa and Rybnitsa districts.

Without considering in detail the names of the performers of the rite, a few of them will be com-

mented. Romanisms *ф'їн, ф'їна, ф'їни* (from Romanian *fin*) are common in Ukrainian dialects of the Prut-Dniester interfluvium and partly in the left-bank regions of Transnistria; known to Bukovinian, Hutsul, South and North Bessarabian and some other dialects of the southwestern dialect. As in the Moldovan dialects, they are used in two meanings: 1) ‘godson’, ‘goddaughter’ and 2) ‘groom’, ‘bride’ in relation to the wedding parents’ (ЕСУМ 2012: 101). In the Ukrainian dialects of the Left Bank, the Ukrainian dialect names *пох'їресник, пох'їресни'їца, пох'їресни'їки* are more common (ЕСУМ 2012, 209). Representatives of the younger generation often use Russified phonetic variants in their speech: *к'р'остн'її (-а, -ї), к'р'осн'її, (-а, -ї)*. The nomens *мо'ло'д'її (-а, -ї)* are inherent in the speech of representatives of the older generation.

Borrowings from Moldovan dialects are the names *на'їна'їш / на'їна'їшко / на'їна'їшу'їл, на'їна'їшка, на'їна'їш'їки / на'їна'їшу'їли / на'їна'їш'їи* (from Mold. *nanaș, nanașul; nanașcă*) known in all Ukrainian dialects of the republic. ЕСУМ registers *на'їна'їшко, на'їна'їшка* in two meanings: 1) ‘godfather’ ‘godmother’; 2) ‘wedding father’(named), ‘wedding mother’ (named) (ЕСУМ: IV, 36). In the surveyed territory, dialect speakers clearly distinguish one more meaning – 3) ‘church wedding father’, ‘church wedding mother’. Basically, both godparents, and named ones, and wedding parents are the same couple. Sometimes these functions are assigned to different couples.

So, as discursive texts indicate, not only *ф'їни* as children (godchildren), but also *ф'їни* as just married carry the ritual dinner to godparents: *при'ходили на'їш'їи ф'їни / д'їти \_от їа'їких ми хри'їїтили* (Hr.); *ї'їдут мо'ло'д'ї до на'їна'їшу'їла з в'їч'еро'їу* (Iv.). It is important that the carrying of the вечеря for *на'їна'їш* is done for life, which indicates a particularly respectful attitude towards godparents and wedding parents. And, as it could be seen, the circle of recipients of dinner rounds, in addition to relatives and godparents, includes neighbours, and in some places all villagers: *На'їна'їш'їкам / со'їс'їїдам / ро'їдич'їам / так во'їно т'їре'ба / ви'ч'еру в'їд'їнести* (Ns.); *З ви'ч'еро'їу їш'їли до на'їна'їшу'їл'їв / ро'їдич'їів і най'їближ'їчих со'їс'їїд'їів* (Iv.); *їш'їли до на'їна'їш'їк'її / да /а по'їтом ї'їже їш'їли до вс'їїх н'їд'їр'їад* (Pl.).

The substantive component of rounds with a ritual dinner on Christmas Eve in the surveyed area should be designated here. In the Ukrainian villages of the Republic of Moldova, according to

the stories of respondents, until the end of the 70s – mid-80s of the XX century *вечеря* was worn in kerchiefs, later – in small bags, packages. The constants of the *вечеря* are *kutya* (*кутя*) and *kalachi* (*калачі*), the rest of the components vary depending on the traditions of a particular village: a *kalach* was placed on a kerchief, a ceramic bowl (now a plate) with *kutya*, cookies, apples, nuts, sweets, and in these last days also tangerines, oranges or other fruits and sweets were placed on top of the *kalach*: *Ў хус'тинку к'л'ал'и кол'ач' / пше'нищу / бум'бони / мед'їуники / ў'баренки / да / і но'сил'и і поздрав'л'ал'и* (Ps.); *С'н'ізу кол'ач' п'ч'еній та'к'її / пл'еч'еній / і з'вер'ху та'р'елка'їл'ї миска пок'ладж'ена с' кут'у'от* (Hr.); *Об'їзат'їлно кал'ач'їк / об'їзат'їлно т'раба'було с' хл'їбом прійс'ти до' хати / бл'їноў т'рох'ї кла'дуть / с'ладост'їў / їак хто' може // і була' мисоч'ка с' пше'нич'койу / та'р'елоч'ка* (Rk.).

According to the definition of ESUM, *kutya* is “ritual porridge made from barley or wheat grains with sweet gravy” (ESUM 1989: 163). The dictionary of the Ukrainian language in 11 volumes gives the following interpretation: *kutya* is “ritual porridge made from barley or wheat grains, consumed with sweet gravy on Christmas Eve or Epiphany” (СУМ V: 419) In the surveyed area, *kutya* is cooked only from wheat, therefore, in the ritual field of the evening on Christmas Eve among the Ukrainians of the Republic of Moldova, *kutya* is ‘a ritual porridge of the Holy Evening, boiled from wheat grains and seasoned with sweet gravy’. Gravy is prepared from crushed poppy, which is diluted in water, flavored with honey or sugar, raisins, nuts, in some place’s *halva*. Wheat grains, from which *kutya* is prepared, symbolize life, wealth, fertility and, in the views of the Slavs, unite the whole kin – the living and the dead (see: Валенцова 1999: 69-71; Горбаль 2011: 165, etc.).

The following names of *kutya* in the surveyed area were recorded: *ку'т'а* (throughout the territory), *пше'нища / пше'нич'ка* (north, center, south), *пше'ниши'ка* (Tts.), *коливо* (Pl.), *кол'е'во* (Bul.).

The name of the ritual dish is also represented by phraseologized combinations containing the names of the ingredients from which *kutya* is prepared and flavored, or indicate the method of its preparation: *ку'т'а із арна'утки бл'їлої* (Ms.), *кол'е'во с' медом / сахар'ом / маком і гор'їхами* (Bul.), *пше'нич'ка іс' маком* (Bul.), *пше'нища з маком / с' гор'їхами* (Gl.), *пше'нич'ка ва'рена* (Blh., Ps., Rk., Ush.), *п'їхана пше'нища* (Pl.).

SUM explains the lexeme *kalach* as ‘white bread of a special shape, baked from twisted and plaited dough’ (СУМ 1973: 75). In the ethnolinguistic dictionary *Slavic Antiquities*, the following affirmation can be found: *kalach* – “bread in the form of a ring or with a small hole”, the apotropaic functions of which are defined to the symbolism of a vicious circle, as evidenced by its name itself (Гура, Плотникова 1999: 439). According to V. Zhaivoronok (2006: 268), *kalach* is a sign of ‘abundance, non-everyday life’. L. Boris (2015: 274) draws attention to the ritual function of the *kalach* in the culture of the Bukovinians: *kalach* is ‘a round-shaped product used in family and calendar rituals’. The ritual function of *kalach* among the southern Slavs and Russians is recorded by ESUM (1985: 348).

So, in the ritual field of rounds with dinner, *kalach* (*кол'ач'кал'ач*) is ‘ritual wheat bread in the form of a ring, baked from twisted and intertwined dough’. For the ceremony of bringing the *вечеря*, small *kalach* were baked, which in the studied area exist in phonetic versions of the ancient name. *кол'ач' / кол'аш'* (from the Proto-Slavic *koláčь*, probably from \**kolo* – ‘wheel, circle’) (north, center) and later *ка'л'ач* (Left Bank, south), and are also represented by stable combinations *кол'ач' / кол'аш' пл'еч'еній* (Bul., Hr., Tts.), *кол'аш'у д'в'ї п'їл'устк'и* (Gl., Hr.); *кол'ач' пл'еч'еній їд'воїе* (Bul.).

Other components of the evening are represented by names denoting sweets – *бом'бани* (Ml.), *бум'бони* (Ps.), *кам'фети, кон'ф'ети* (everywhere), *цук'ерки* (Dns. Klb., Kr., Vr.), *цукорки* (Bel., Tts.); *bagels* – *бу'блик* (Ot., Br., Hlsh., Hr., Klb., Kd., Kl., Kr., Lch., Mn., Ms., Ok., Pl., Vyn., Vl., Vr., Un.), *бу'бл'ек* (Bel., Blt., Brt., Gl., Ps., Sl.-Sh.); *ка'л'ачик* (Hr. Klb., Kr., Vr.), *кол'ач'їк* (Gl., Blt., Dn., Nk., Sr., St., Yb.), *ков'риг* (Bul.), *о'баренок* (Bl., Blh.), *(w)о'баренок* (Bl., Sg., Sl.-Sh., V. S.); *о'бар'їнок* (Ml., Nh. Ps.); pastries – *гол'убик'и* (Gl.), *гол'уп'к'и* (Hr., Pl., Ush.), *гол'упч'їк'и* (Bul.), *г'решник'и* (Bul.), *кач'еч'к'и, г'усоч'к'и* (Blh.), *мед'ївники / мед'їуник'и, п'їч'ен'а / п'їч'ен'їе, п'раник'и* (north, center), *п'ран'їк'и* (Left Bank); names of fruits and nuts: *го'п'р'їх'и, їабл'їука / їабл'їоки* etc.

As you can see, among the recorded names, the largest group is Ukrainian names, including dialectal ones, for example, the original Ukrainian *бу'блик* (ESUM 1982: 274), *ков'риг*, which has Old Russian roots *коврыгъ, коврыгъ* ‘bread’ (whole),

which in modern Russian functions in the same sense; Bulgarian *ковриг* ‘cake’ (ЕСУМ 1985: 486); *обáренок*, which ESUM fixes in the form of *обарáнок* in the meaning of ‘bagel’ and interprets it as a possible borrowing from the Belarusian language *абаранак* with the same meaning (ЕСУМ 2003: 126), *пичэня* from Proto-Slavic \*pekŭti (ЕСУМ 2003: 329), a *пряник* from the Old Russian ‘spice’ as a result of phonetic simplification of *пъпърянии*, derived from *пъпърь* ‘pepper’ (ЕСУМ 2003: 620) and others. Proto-Slavic roots also belong to the names of the zoomorphic shape of pastries: *голубчик* (голубь), *гусочка* (гусь), which are formed in a semantic way, due to the similarity of products to animals (birds). Some of the listed names got into the Ukrainian language and its dialects through other Slavic or non-Slavic languages: *цукерки/цукорки* from German through Polish (ЕСУМ 2012: 265); *камфети, конфети*, marked in ESUM as a colloquial borrowing from Italian, presumably through the mediation of German (known in many Slavic languages, including Russian, Belarusian, Czech, Serbian, etc. borrowings from the Romanian language *botboană* (from the French *bonbon*) *бомбáни / бумбóни* (DEX online). Note that some of the names we recorded also function in other Ukrainian dialects, for example, *мédивник* in the meaning of ‘brioche’ is known to Bukovinian dialects (Борис 2015: 286-287), like a *обáренко* (СБГ, 343), etc.

Thus, in the traditional culture of the Ukrainians of the Republic of Moldova, *вечеря* in the ceremonial sense is ‘ceremonial food, the obligatory attributes of which are kutia and kalach, which are exchanged on the Holy Evening with relatives, godparents, neighbours and other residents of the settlement’.

A special *вечеря* is prepared by *на|нашка* – the godmother, for the little godchildren – *ф’іни*, in the villages Malinovske and Nahoryany of Ryshkan district. An anthropomorphic figure of a doll (*л’ал’ка*) is baked for them which later decorates a ritual tree – *дири́вце*: *Кажут ди́ревца ў нас і нос’а до хати / де г’іти мал’і йе // от ўже С’ва’тій веш’ір / а з’автра Рож’іство / те<sup>а</sup> і на цей С’ва’тій веш’ір те<sup>а</sup> і нос’ил’и де’ревца ц’і* (МІ).

There are made as many trees (*ди’реви’и*) as the number of godchildren: *Ну / к’іл’ко тух ф’іні’ів / хриш’ч’ених д’ітей / к’іл’ко / т’ройе / ч’етви’ро / ўсім дол’ж’на в’іднести // бу’вайе / шо і дес’ім’ іе тух [ф’іні’ів] / і дес’ім’ ди’реу’ц’ів*

*робл’а / ну’сеи / заб’йеш на’терн’а / і так г’іти ди’у’л’аси / і то кал’аш’і: ік там кл’а’дем* (МІ).

A tree – *дири́вце* was made from blackthorn or plum branches: *С сл’у’ж’и в’етош’ку р’іжут; Йа з’найу то шо’терен / Кол’ис робил’и на’терн’а* (МІ).

The tradition of using branches or small trees is known to the Bulgarians (*сурвачки*), Western Slavs (coniferous trees and twigs from Polish climbers, Great Moravian carollers and Moravian and Slovak shepherds): “The ritual tree was decorated with fruits, nuts, ears of corn, sweets, bread pastries, paper flowers, ribbons” (Валенцова 1999: 75-76). Decorating a tree with fruits (apples, nuts), sweets and pastries indicates its important semantic function – the transfer of well-being, health and wealth. (Валенцова 1999: 76). In village Malinovske *дири́вце*, or as it is also called *крач’ок* is decorated with sweets, apples, nuts, gingerbread and other sweets. In the difficult post-war years, homemade “sweets” were made from colored paper, and the paper itself was a kind of decoration: *С’тавл’а п’ран’ік’и / п’іч’ен’йе / кан’ф’ети / йабл’уч’ка // ше кол’ис кан’ф’ет ни бу’ло / с т’ім’рад’і л’ис’ти нарви’мо / каранда’шами / то зил’еній / то к’расній / то с’иній / і кон’ци пос’іч’иши / і в’іти і в’іти то замо’тал’и / і бомб’ани* (МІ).

But the main decoration of the Holy Evening tree is a doll baked from dough with a head, arms, legs, “dressed” in a skirt: *Но гл’аўне / з’нал’и робити з к’іста л’ал’к’и // раст’ач’айу / в’ірубал’и гол’обку / по’том руш’к’и / покру’тил’и руш’к’и / і кот’ра так / а кот’ра так / і тут’йупку зробил’и / нош’к’и / і в’теп’ц’ііі пос’кла’дал’и* (МІ).

Decorating a ritual tree with zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines is familiar to Poles, Czechs, Moravians, Slovaks, Lusatians: a doll could be an addition to a decorated ritual tree: it was planted for “May”, for “summer”, for a wedding tree; the Russians decorated the wedding loaf with “dolls”, the Serbs of Banat handed out *луткице* for the mention of the soul, etc. Ritual bread in the form of an anthropomorphic or other form of “doll” was used as a ritual attribute in calendar and family rituals by various European peoples. For example, the Bulgarians and Serbs – on the day of the Forty Martyrs, on Todor’s Saturday, Palm Sunday, one of the dialect names of which is *Куклинден*, on Easter, when the “Easter doll” (*великденска кукла*) is baked, and, importantly, on Christmas (Виноградова: 2004: 29). Such traditions can be explained by the fact that in different national cul-

tures, in the minds of their bearers, a doll is perceived as a living being, as a substitute for a person, his “model”, as a “prototype of a small child” (Виноградова: 2004: 27-28).

Taking into account the above, the Holy Evening *дири́вце́ / крачо́к* in the ethnic culture of the Ukrainians of the Republic of Moldova is ‘a ritual object of the Holy evening, made from a blackthorn or plum branch, decorated with fruits, sweets, cookies and pastries in the form of a doll’. *Ля́лька* – ‘ritual pastry in the form of an anthropomorphic figurine, decoration of a Holy Evening tree’. The extraordinary sacred power of the Holy Evening tree *дири́вце́ / крачо́к* is formed by the symbolism of life, procreation, which is carried by a branch and a doll in Ukrainian and, more broadly, in Slavic and European cultures.

It should be noted that the nomen *дере́вце́* in the meaning of ‘a ritual branch of a blackthorn or plum, decorated with sweets, apples, nuts, gingerbread and pastries in the form of a doll, which is prepared for godchildren on the Holy Evening’ is not recorded in any of the analyzed dictionaries available to us. This also applies to the word *крачо́к* (derived from *крак*), known to Bukovinian, Boikovsky, Hutsul dialects in the sense of ‘bush’ (ЕСУМ 1989: 115; Онишкевич 1984: 384; Гуцульські 1997: 104). In the meaning of ‘branch’, ‘twig’, the words *крак* and *крачо́к* function in the Ukrainian dialect of village Bulaesti, Orhei district. In a set phrase *крачо́к на панахі́ду*, synonymous with *вѣлца* is used to designate a tree decorated with sweets and apples in a ritual funeral *kalach* (Романчук 2010: 119, 110). We also fix the lexeme *вильце́* in the meaning of ‘wedding tree’ in the Ukrainian dialects of the north of Moldova.

Thus, the substantive component of the rounds of the Holy Evening with *вечеря* is enriched with such realities as *дере́вце́ / крачо́к, ля́лька*.

The ethnolinguistic approach to the study of rounds with dinner (*вечеря*) on Holy Evening in the spiritual culture of Ukrainians in the Republic of Moldova made it possible to identify and partially describe the realization of deep sacred meanings and motives of the rounds under consideration in the unity of their verbal and non-verbal components (temporal, local, actional and substantive). The analysis revealed the deep rootedness of the rite of bringing the dinner in Ukrainian traditional culture, a high degree of its preservation and viability (despite some erosion of the tradition). It is important to note the role of the connection between

generations, the continuity of tradition, the desire to preserve their linguistic, cultural and Ukrainian identity in conditions of active interaction with a foreign ethnic/cultural environment. These conclusions are based on the analysed names of the components of the rite of Proto-Slavic, Old Russian and Ukrainian origin with a noticeable layer of Romance borrowings, which reflect, on the one hand, the originality of the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Ukrainians in Moldova and, on the other hand, their centuries-old contacts with Eastern Romans. The prospects of the research lie in the further study of the ethnolinguistics of the traditions of rounds on the Holy Evening and, more broadly, the calendar rituals of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova.

### Notes

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### List of abbreviations

DEX – Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române.  
 ESUM / ЕСУМ – Етимологічний словник української мови в 7 т.  
 SBH / СБГ – словник буковинських говірок.  
 SUM / СУМ – Словник української мови: в 11 тт.  
 Ot. – Otaci, Ocnița; Bl. – Bălțața, Criuleni; Blt. – Bălți, Br. – Berezovca, Ocnița; Bel. – Beleavița, Briceni; Brt. – Brătușeni, Edineț; Bul. – Bulăiești, Orhei; Blh. – Bulhac, Rîșcani; Vyn. – Vinogradovca, Taraclia; Vl. – Vălcineț, Ocnița; Vr. – Vărăncău, Rîbnița, Gr. – Gherșunovca, Rîbnița; Hr. – Hîrjauca, Călărași; Hlsh. Holoșnița, Soroca; Gl. – Goleni, Edineț; Gs. – Gașpar, Edineț; Dn. – Danu, Glodeni; Dns. – Dnestrovsc, Dl. – Dolinnoe, Criuleni; Ed. – Edineț; Iv. – Ivancea, Orhei; Kl. – Calarașovca, Ocnița; Km. – Camencuța, Glodeni; Klb. – Colbasna, Rîbnița; Kd. – Codreni, Ocnița; Kr. – Crasnencoe, Rîbnița; Lch. – Lucești, Cahul; Mk. Maximovca, Anenii Noi; Ml. – Malinovscoe, Rîșcani; Mn. – Mîndra, Călărași; Ms. – Musait, Taraclia; Nh. – Nihoreni, Rîșcani; Ns. – Naslavcea, Ocnița; Nk. – Nicolaevca, Glodeni; Ok. – Oclanda r-l Soroca; Pl. – Palanca, Călărași; Ps. – Păscăuți, Rîșcani; Rk. – Răcăria,

Rîșcani; Rb. – Rîbnița; Sg. Sagaidac, Criuleni, Sl.-Sh. – Slobozia-Șirăuți, Brictni; Sr. – Soroca, Glodeni; St. – Sturzovca, Glodeni; Tts. – Tețcani, Brictni; Tr. – Tîrnova, Edineț, Un. – Unguri, Ocnița; Ush. – Ușurie, Rîșcani; Yb. – Iabloana, Glodeni.

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