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ZOO-ANTROPOMORFINIŲ BŪTYBIŲ NACIONALINIS IR KULTŪRINIS SIMBOLIZMAS UKRAINOS MITOLOGINIAME PASAULIO PAVEIKSLE

National and Cultural Symbolism of Zoo-Anthropomorphic
Creatures in Ukrainian Mythological Picture of the World

SUMMARY

The article analyses the mythopoetic origins of the Ukrainian national and cultural symbolism of zoo-anthropomorphic creatures. It examines how animal names create ethnic symbols, i.e. the peculiar fragments of the Ukrainian mythological picture of the world. The national concepts of zoonyms and their implementation are described in the Ukrainian mythological system. The attention is given to zoo-anthropomorphic creatures: their etiologic function and having their own national and cultural symbolism, an axiological identification of good / evil in the explanation of the universe, the manner they are semanticised by the symbolism and value categories of the Ukrainian mythopoetic consciousness in the plot lines of Ukrainian myths and legends.

SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje analizuojamos Ukrainos tautinio ir kultūrinio zoo-antropomorfinių būtybių simbolizmo mitopoetinės ištakos. Tiriama, kaip gyvūnų vardai sukuria etninius simbolius, t. y. savotiškus ukrainiečių mitologinio pasaulio fragmentus. Nacionalinės zoonimų sąvokos ir jų kūrimas yra aprašytos Ukrainos mitologinėje sistemoje. Dėmesys sutelkiamas į zoo-antropomorfines būtybes, kurios atlieka etiologinę funkciją ir turi savo nacionalinę bei kultūrinę simboliką, leidžia aksiologiškai identifikuoti gėrį ir blogį aiškinant visą. Remiantis ukrainiečių simbolika ir Ukrainos mitų ir legendų siužetinėse linijose įkūnytu mitopoetiniu suvokimu nagrinėjamas semantizacijos procesas.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: Ukrainos nacionalinis ir kultūrinis simbolizmas, zoo-antropomorfinės būtybės, etniniai simboliai, zoonimai.
KEY WORDS: Ukrainian national and cultural symbolism, zoo-anthropomorphic creatures, ethnic symbols, zoonyms.

INTRODUCTION

In the mythopoetic science the animals act as one of the variants of the mythological code (along with plant, food, chemical and colour) in the consciousness of a man (Gura 1997). Predominantly, it is formed based on the "primitive myths and legends" (Davydiuk 1997), where the most typical representations of people about the creation of the world, translations about devils, houses, stupors, witches, etc. are collected (UMDL 1992: 127).

According to N. Zheribko (Zheribko 2005), due to the fact that certain elements of zoomorphic code have permanently fixed values that can be transmitted by other code systems, a system of correspondences between isofunctional elements of different codes is established.

The topicality of the proposed article is determined by the necessity to solve

the problem of elucidating the national and cultural symbolism of zoo-anthropomorphic creatures, widely observed in the Ukrainian mythological picture of the world.

The aim of the article is to analyse the mythopoetic origins of the Ukrainian national and cultural symbolism of zoo-anthropomorphic creatures, as well as to study the implementation of national concepts of zoonyms in the Ukrainian mythological picture of the world.

In the process of analysis, the following tasks are to be solved: 1) to consider how the names of animals are created in the form of ethnic symbols, i.e. the peculiar fragments of the Ukrainian mythological picture of the world; 2) to describe the national concepts of zoonyms, their implementation in the Ukrainian mythological system.

MYTHOPOETIC FUNDAMENTALS OF UKRAINIAN NATIONAL AND CULTURAL SYMBOLISM OF ZOO-ANTHROPOMORPHIC CREATURES

According to O. Afanasiiev, the main motifs of folk myths and legends were various natural conditions that influenced the everyday routine, everyday life of humans and animals, defining human behaviour within the framework of industrial cult (and its core of industrial magic) (Afanasiiev 1995). From time to time these motifs remained at the level of some instruction that had a verbal form and regulated human behaviour in a given situation (Makovskii 1996). According to L. Dovbnia, the peculiarity of myths and legends, whose plot lines were constructed with the participation of representa-

tives of the animal world, was that the element of animism was reproduced: first, with the forces of nature; second, with the person who came in contact with the nature forces, trying to find the explanation for various elements, primarily because of the connection with the animals; third, with the deity or spirit of the alternate of one or another animal (Dovbnia 1999: 60). Bi-natural (human and animal) is emphasized and semantically played out in every legend or myth. In this regard, the most significant myth is the myth about "How the stars appeared in the sky "Viz"" (Ukr. "Як вийшли на

небі зорі “Віз” – Як vyyshly na nebi zori “Viz”) (UMDL 1992: 7).

In this myth the main motif is human sincerity, goodness, for which God will surely pay tribute to a man. But the symbolic and mythological image of *the dog* (Ukr. *собака* – *sobaka*) appears semantically as a cult, which is a faithful human assistant, and his / her soul, embodied in the star, is a man’s gaze.

Different forms of cult of animals (zoo-latries) extend the groups of mythological motifs and their motivations (both implicit and explicit) interwoven with the motifs of an animal’s metamorphosis to a man, a man per animal, one animal to another, an animal to a cosmic body, or an element of the terrestrial landscape. Due to complex metamorphoses, there are also various monsters, combining the features of several animals or men and animals. The significant ones are the magical images associated with the motifs of werewolves (*wolves* – *вовкулаки* – *vovkulaky*, *man dogs* – *люди-собаки* – *liudy-sobaky*, *man bears* – *люди-ведмеди* – *liudy-vedmedi* in fairy tales, the motif of the Snake, the Fiery Wolf of the Slavs, etc.) and the language counterparts of the werewolves, i.e. the names of individuals, tribes, cities, countries (Suprunenko 1993), etc.

P. Ivanov writes that if in Eurasia the motif of werewolves is often semantised through the image of a wolf (in the south and west) or a bear (in the north and east), then in South-East Asia a tiger often acts in the role of a werewolf, in Africa – a leopard, in South America – a jaguar, in Chinese mythology – a dragon that not only embodies evil, but also performs positive functions: it rains, protects treasures, etc. (Ivanov 1992: 505–

511). Meanwhile, in the Ukrainian metamorphoses, *Dovgomud* (Ukr. *Довгомуд*) takes place, i.e. “A man is not a man, a wolf is not a wolf, his hands are like a man’s, and the body is all covered by the hair [...]” (UKPT 2005: 212), which symbolises evil, causes harm a man, steals a crop and so on. In the human imagination, the werewolves appeared predominantly as evil spirits, demons.

The study of the totality of mythical representations of the people about faith in evil spirits / demons is considered in demonology (MNME 1977 (1): 366–367). According to V. Voitovych, it is “the world of extreme events, which eventually was personified and inspired” (Voitovych 2002: 129).

The demon in Greek mythology is a “generalised idea of a certain undefined and unformed divine power of evil or (less) god” (MNME 1977 (1): 366–367). Early Christian representations of demons are associated with the image of evil, demonic power. “Demons are a symbol of those supernatural characters that are not gods and occupy the place in the hierarchy in comparison with the gods or are at the lower levels of the corresponding mythological system. In a narrower and precise sense, the demons are evil spirits” (Ibid.).

According to F. Medvedev, in the time of the adoption of Christianity the Ukrainian people already had a well-developed demonology (Medvedev 1982). However, over time, it was under the influence of Christianity that the view of demonology changed: the supernatural power of this faith finally turned into unclean power (Mytropolyt Ilarion 1992: 122–123).

NATIONAL CONCEPTS OF ZOONYMS IN THE UKRAINIAN MYPHOLOGICAL PICTURE OF THE WORLD

The ethnographers believe that the vast majority of images of Ukrainian demonology have a pre-Christian origin (Afanasiiev 1995; Dmytrenko 2000; Suprunenko 1993). "The beliefs of the people in the evil spirits were associated with their perceptions of the surrounding world" (Voitovych 2002: 129). Thus, the forms of werewolves in Ukrainian mythology are quite diverse: 1) transformation into animals in various folklore-mythological plots: wolf, cat, frog; 2) the transformation of demonological beings into people; 3) transformations that were subject to more complex cosmological, topographical, plot schemes: the ability of man to turn into various demonological creatures, the most widespread of which were *vidmy* (Ukr. *відьми*, Eng. *witches*), *rusalky* (Ukr. *русалки*, Eng. *mermaids*), *domovyky* (Ukr. *домовики*, Eng. *housewives*), *upyri* (Ukr. *упири*, Eng. *piruses*), *vovkulaky* (Ukr. *вовкулаки*, Eng. *wolf-dogs*), *zmiyi* (Ukr. *змії*, Eng. *snakes*), *pesygolovtsi* (Ukr. *песоголовиці*, Eng. *pussycattles*), etc. (UMDL 1992). Most of them are a genetic continuation and a peculiar transformation of the image of the *Chort* (Ukr. *Чорт*, Eng. *Devil*) (Ibid.).

According to popular beliefs, the image of the *Chort* arose earlier than the world was formed from the chaos. It is witnessed by the Ukrainian legend "Creation of the Earth" (Ukr. "Stvorennya zemli") (UMDL 1992: 7). V. Voitovych notes that in Ukrainian demonology "the *Chort* was originally a priest of Chernobog (Ukr. *Чорнобог*, Eng. *Black God*) (represented primarily by a man with lion features) that is an evil

spirit, a man endowed with the great magic power given to him by knowledge derived from ancient books written in secret (traits and cut)" (Voitovych 2002: 591).

V. Hnatyuk, the well-known ethnographer, considered the image of the *Chort* folk by origin, but very transformed under the influence of Christianity, in connection with which he lost his original signs (Gnatyuk 1992: 383–406). In general, the lexeme *Chort* (Ukr. *Чорт*, Eng. *Devil*) is a semantic universality, that, according to V. Myloradovych, who investigated the origin of the devil as a fantastic being, has similar analogies among different peoples (Myloradovych 1993: 26–27). In Ukrainian mythology, the devils are zoonotic anthropomorphic creatures, which simulate mysterious supernatural forces, all the bad intentions on the earth (Suprunenko 2005: 123).

The *Chort* and derivatives from them are also evil symbols, despite the fact that they can help people in certain circumstances. "Christianity in the supernatural forces has introduced a certain system. Over time, the *Chort*, now called the *dyuaval* (Ukr. *диявол*, Eng. *devil*), *satana* (Ukr. *сатана*, Eng. *satan*) or *demon* (Ukr. *демон*, Eng. *demon*), is at the head of all evil forces. The latter gradually subjugated the rest of the forces: the owners of the hut and nature and the wreckers of life, who became called *bisy* (Ukr. *біси*, Eng. *demons*) and all of them, for Christianity, passed into the power of evil and unclean" (Mytropolyt Ilarion 1992: 138). The devil can be reincarnated in any animal except the dog, because

the dog is the most daring friend of a man. So, the devil is a generic concept that embraces all the evil.

In Ukrainian myths and legends (UMDL 1992), the conceptualization of the lexeme of *the Chort* (Ukr. Чорт, Eng. Devil) makes it possible to derive its symbolic meanings: “the Chort in the image of the master, who deceived the poor man”; “the Chort is like an unclean power, with which all the millers are connected”; “the Chort in the attic leads people to fear”; “the Chort in the form of a werewolf club”; “the Chort will appear as Satan when he does not recall the Lord God”; “the Chort, which under the arm-pit in the form of an egg cohut was taken by a woman as the symbolic beginning of human evil”; “the Chort in the image of a lover”; “the Chort in the image of a lamb”; “the Chort in the image of a cat”; “the Chort in the image of a chimney”; “the Chort in the image of what they are selling with him”; “the Chort in the image of the one who tempts to suicide”.

Based of this conceptualization it can be argued that in any form this zoo-anthropomorphic demonological creature did not arise, yet the lexical semantics of the syndicator *Chort* has mainly negative connotations that cause the same negative attitude of man to this imaginary being.

Thus, the transformed image of the devil overthrown by *Vyrii*, who fell into the aquatic environment for 40 days and was left behind by the order of God (UMDL 1992), appears as *the Vodyanyk* (Ukr. Водяник, Eng. Merman), i.e. the mythical being, the evil spirit that semanticises and symbolises the water element

as negative and dangerous phenomenon. Thus, the beliefs of the ancient Ukrainians in *the Vodyanyk* reach the pagan notions about the deification of everything connected with the water element (Suprunenko 1993; Myloradovych 1993).

According to L. Dovbnia, the zoo-anthropomorphic image of *the Vodyanyk* (Ukr. Водяник, Eng. Merman) appeared in the imagination of Ukrainians as an old grandfather, covered with algae, with a long beard and tail. It could be reincarnated in different animals – goat, dog, fish, etc. (Dovbnia 1999: 61). It was believed that his possession was limited to the reservoir. An angry waterman could do harm: to pour the rivers, to destroy the dam, mills, to drown people. *the Vodyanyk* symbolises the evil that lurks a man in the water.

One more transformed image of the devil is *the Upyr* (Ukr. Упир, Eng. Upirus). There are several options for interpreting this image. According to some notions (Hnatiuk 1992: 402–403), *the Upyr* is the son of the devil and witch. He lives like an ordinary person, but amongst others he is angered. In the meantime, according to other beliefs (Yefimenko 1992: 499), the nobles have only human appearance, but in essence they are the real devils. There are also such beliefs (Afanasiiev 1995) that the nobles are the corpses of other people who, after death, devours and drove them in motion. Any person can become a stranger if it is covered with steppe wind. His appearance may not be different from ordinary people or different from a very rosy complexion. Quite often, folk imagery divides the abyss into two groups: the

living and the dead (Yefimenko 1992: 499). The main features of the dead abdomen are that they have a red complexion, which is rolled back down in the coffin. Dead *Upry* never smudges. Living *Upry* also has a red complexion and a very strong body that he uses to wear dead spirits on his back. The dead without living cannot be harmful, because he himself has no ability to walk. O. Afanasiiev argues that the wicked are the wicked wandering devils who during the life were sorcerers, wolves or people whom the church did not accept: murderers, heretics, god-transgressors (Afanasiiev 1995 (2): 158–159). At night, the revenge rises from their graves and walk in the snow. They enter the house, throw themselves at sleepy people (most often in infants) and suck their blood, resulting in a person dying. They can walk around the ground before singing the first cocks, and then rush to their graves. To get rid of the *Upry* (Ukr. *Унупи*, Eng. *Upiruses*), people dug their graves and pierced the chest of the dead with an ash-tree whip. If it did not help, the corpse was burned.

Thus, it can be argued that in the Ukrainian demonology at the conceptual level, *Upry* is semanticised through the opposition concepts of the living / dead, top / bottom, but at the lexical-semantic level, through the lexemes of *a / an murderer* – *бвиця*, *heretic* – *еретик*, *apostate* – *боговідступник*, *bloodthirstone* – *кровопивця*. The latter are semantics of lexicosemantic groups with nuclear components of *death* – *смерть*, *trouble* – *біда*, *epidemics* – *епідемії*, *natural disasters* – *стихийні лиха*, etc.

Blud (Ukr. *Блуд*, Engl. *Prostitution*) is a demonological image, a myth that symbolises evil, which, according to the legend, did not have time to fly from heaven to earth and hang in the air (Voitovych 2002: 32). *Blud* has the ability to be reincarnated from an owl or other bird that entices a person behind him until the third cock is singing. *Blud* can also be transformed into *a cat, dog, goat*, etc. (Ibid.). For the person to whom the fornication snared, there is trouble: he / she cannot get home, wanders in one place until complete exhaustion, such as in the legend “*Blud u lisi*” (Ukr. “*Блуд у лісі*”, Eng. “*Prostitution in the forest*”) (UMDL 1992: 7). In demonology of mythology, *Blud* has a national significance and is semanticised through such verbal vocabulary as “*wander and erring* – *блукати і блудити*, *chorboard* – *колобродити*, *drag, and lean* – *волочитися, валандатися*; *wandering or riding, getting off the road and not orienting in the area, getting out of the way* – *бродити або їздити, збившись з дороги і не орієнтуючись у місцевості, wandering, confused* – *збитися зі шляху, блукати, плутати*” (Ibid.).

One of the most colourful characters of Ukrainian lower demonology is *the Vidma* (Ukr. *Відьма*; Engl. *Witch*) (Ukr. synonyms *відюга* – *відюга*, *відюха* – *відюха*, *вириця* – *вургуся*, *лиходійниця* – *лїходіунуся*, *чаклунка* – *чаклунка*, *чародійка* – *чародіика*, *обавниця* – *обавнуся*, *потворниця* – *потворнуся*, *яритниця* – *ярутуся*), whose description and characteristics are represented in details in the ethnographic literature (Myloradovych 1993). In Ukrainian demonology *the Vidma* symbolises not

only abstract evil; she milks cows, causing damage to the owner, and in this context her actions are similar to the vampire (UNVPD 1992: 432); it has the properties of a werewolf, turning into living beings, in particular on animals: a dog, pig (UMDL 1992: 76–77).

The etymologists associate the origin of the word *the Vidma* (Ukr. *Відьма*; Engl. *Witch*) with the ancient noun *вѣдѣ* – “knowledge”: the word *Vidma* was originally used in the sense of “she, who knows everything”. It helped to develop a further “fortune teller”, and later – “evil woman”, “the woman who knows with unclean power” (Tsyganenko 1970: 62).

It is very difficult to recognise *the Vidma* among people: it can be old and young, reincarnated in different images. In the legend “*Sposoby piznannya vidm*” (Ukr. “Способи пізнання відьм”, Eng. “Ways of Wisdom Cognition”) (UMDL 1992: 90) tips are given on how to identify this creature. The symbolic one in the witches’ actions is the following: they directly or indirectly come into contact with the animal world, giving it too magic powers or causing damage to death. After contact of a pet with a witch, as a rule, it was sick and died. Such an explanation was given by people during the illness of animals and tried to prevent such kind of contacts with evil spirits in every possible way. However, there are also such zoomyth creatures, for example, *sobaky-yarchuky* (Ukr. *собаки-ярчуки*, Eng. *feline dogs*) that were capable of destroying impure force, because they themselves were endowed with magical properties (Voitovych 2002: 70–71). The following axiological model is symbolised and se-

manticised here: evil against evil for the victory of light forces, i.e. good.

In Ukrainian mythology, *the Vovkulaky* (Ukr. *Вовкулаки*, Eng. *Wolf-Dogs*) with their supernatural ability to be transformed into a wolf also belong to the wook-ups (ESUM 1982 (1): 412). This is a half-fantastic creature – a wolf person.

According to scholars, the lexeme *Vovkulaka* (Ukr. *Вовкулака*, Eng. *Wolf-Dog*) is the two-component one, the first part of which does not require clarification, but the second part is *dlak, dlaka* (in the Czechs), *kodlak* (in Galicia), *chlaka, chlak* (in Serbs) (Voitovych 2002: 80). It means wool. The lexeme *kudlatyi* (Ukr. *кудлатий*, Eng. *shaggy*) (overgrown with hair, wool) origins from the word *кодлак* – *kodlak* in Ukrainian. Hence, the *Vovkulaka* can literally be derived also as a *woolen wool* (ESUM 1982 (1): 412).

The mythological image of *the Vovkulaka* is semanticised as a man’s impotence before the dark supernatural forces, as anxiety for a real human life. It is also one of many images through which the people warned people of the trouble that could wait for him. This image reminded of the necessity to have in your soul God, never forget about it, not to sin, not to be severely punished for evil deeds or not to do what you do not know (UMDL 1992: 71).

The varieties of *the Vovkulaky* are *the Pesygolovtsi* (Ukr. *Песуголовці*, Eng. *Pussycattles*) that are mythical giants-cannibals, which were distinguished by unbelievable cruelty and had the appearance of a dog or lion (Voitovych 2002: 367). They were very angry and bloodthirsty. *the Pesygolovtsi* caught people, planted in

deep pits, fed, and then ate. *the Pesygolovtsi* looked like a very high, coated creature with a dog's head and one eye in between the forehead. *the Pesygolovtsi* are rawatarians, i.e. those who ate raw human meat, they had one hand and one leg. Coupled on two, they moved very fast.

In Ukrainian mythology *the Domovyk* (Ukr. *Домовик*, Eng. *Housewife*), i.e. the native deity taking care of the life of the whole family living in the same house, was considered to be the positive image. It was the pagan symbol of good and domestic comfort, the guard of the home centre, the protection of the family, well-being, abundance and wealth (Voitovych 2002: 160). The Ukrainian myth about *the Domovyk* relates the origin of this anthropomorphic creature to the animal world, whose fiction is that it does not carry *cohut* eggs, and therefore it is impossible to "drown" them (UMDL 1992: 63). However, the beliefs of people in this myth testifies to the fact that the mythonym-signifier of *the Domovyk* has a zoo-anthropomorphic nature.

After the abolition of paganism in 988, the church made *the Domovyk* a negative image (Myloradovych 1992). Under the influence of Christianity, the image of *the Domovyk* was rethought and began to be perceived as an unclean power that could harm the house. Therefore, the mythology of *the Domovyk* is semanticised as such a syncyt, used to denote various domestic problems, and it is a symbol of the evil spirit and misfortune sent to the family.

Like *the Domovyk*, *the Lisovyk* (Ukr. *Лисовик*, Eng. *Forestlit*) also has a zoo-anthropomorphic origin. Despite the fact that his mythological image appears as

an anthropomorphic one but it still attributed to him by an element of a dress, i.e. the shaggy cap of marigold that is meant not as a proper hat, but as his appearance, which testifies to the connection with the animal world. According to the legend "*The Lisovyk* (Ukr. *Лисовик*, Eng. *Forestlit*)" (UMDL 1992: 56) is a creature symbolised by the death of a man in the woods and is very dangerous for a man. The ethnographers noted (Afanasiiev 1995) that the characteristic feature of *the Lisovyk* was the lack of shadows. However, in Ukrainian ethnography (Davydiuk 1995: 77), there is also such a view of *the Lisovyk* as a "shepherd" that is a being protecting small animals from predators and hunters, i.e. it is associated with good animal life.

The Rusalka (Ukr. *Русалка*, Eng. *Mermaid*) is one of the most iconic images of Ukrainian demonology, which is a goddess of water reservoirs (Voitovych 2002: 449). It was believed that these young, beautiful girls live on the very bottom of the rivers in magnificent crystal palaces. The widespread impression is that *the Rusalkas* (Ukr. *Русалки*, Eng. *Mermaids*) live under water in nests woven from straw and feathers stolen by them in the village during the Green Week. The afterlife of *the Rusalkas* is semantic with darkness: they are dark in that world; their souls have no shelter. *The Rusalkas* are hurt in their souls and cry for mothers for not being able to save their lives.

Now people believe that *the Rusalkas* are the souls of drowned girls and unbaptised children. However, there was a time when the children were not baptised at all, and the people had *the Rusalkas* for the

souls of children or for the human souls. After the death of people, they stayed on some water space and wandered along it, setting on the kingdom of water spirits (Nechui-Levytsky 1992: 50).

Based on the Ukrainian myth "Pro Rusalok, Vidmarya" (Ukr. "Про русалок, відмарья", Eng. "On Mermaids, the Wimmers") (UMDL 1992: 60) one can

conclude that the semantics of the mythology of the Rusalka is associated, on the one hand, with the temptation, the beauty of the water element, and on the other hand, with danger, which is waiting for a man in the water. The broader significance of this mythonym is revealed through the symbolism of spiritual sorrow and the agony of earthly life.

CONCLUSIONS

Consequently, zoo-anthropomorphic images, performing their etiologic function, have their own national and cultural symbolism, axiological identification of good / evil in explaining the universe. They are semanticised according to this symbolism and value categories of the Ukrainian mythopoetic consciousness embodied in the plot lines of Ukrainian myths and legends. They as inhabitants of different natural lands (fo-

rests, fields, mountains, rivers, swamps, etc.) existed in the minds of people as such, which, on the one hand, were guardians of this nature, and on the other hand, they were a danger to man in connection with the inability to explain the nature of this nature.

The future scientific research will address the problem of functional rethinking of zoomorphic images in Ukrainian folklore genres.

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