

## MEANING OF THE “PALYTSIA” AND THE “BATIH” IN UKRAINIAN WEDDING CEREMONY

The traditional wedding ceremony contributes to the regulation of social relations both within legal and psychological contexts. The wedding is a kind of boundary not only for the newly wedded and their families, but for the entire community. The formation of a new family requires, the presence of the laws according to which the relations between families. It also involves psychological aspect that effect the creation of mythological space. The structure of the wedding custom addresses such needs. The presence of this structure creates a system of actions where every participant plays a certain role and assumes a given place. Appropriate symbolical attributes of authority support this structure.

According to N.Zdorovega, in Zakarpattia distinguishing symbols of the bridegroom and his drujba were specially made quirts – “batihs”, “palytsias” – druzhbivky, hatchets<sup>1</sup>. A “palytsia” was used in asking for marriage ceremony and engagement (by elder men, bridegroom); and during the wedding ceremony the bride invited visitors with “palytsia” in hand. In everyday life, “palytsia” was part of the married man’s complex of clothes; the hatchet was a symbol of such distinction in Zakarpattia<sup>2</sup>.

The “palytsia” and “batih” are important symbols of the status of wedding ceremony grades. As G.-L. Boplan wrote, describing wedding customs of Ukrainians in 17<sup>th</sup> century, youth was going in pairs while inviting on the wedding, and leading guy held “palytsia” and extended greetings and invitations on behalf of the whole group<sup>3</sup>.

In wedding ceremonies, the “palytsia” and “batih” is used in several similar instances each with a different symbolical content: in the ritual of palpation; in the ritual action of meeting on the threshold; as a sign of a wedding grade.

Symbolical meaning of the ritual palpation is considered by the researchers to be a wish of good, happiness, and fertility. N.I.Tolstoy notes that ritual of palpation by a willow on Palm Sunday symbolizes fertilization, wish of fertility. He compares ritual speeches that are made at palpation by a willow with wedding folklore, where the form of a wish coincides: “ be rich as the earth and healthy as the water”<sup>4</sup>. Custom to beat by a willow is widespread on the all territory of Ukraine. Willow is also a widespread vegetative symbol which symbolize life. A.V.Kurochkin specifies, that the willow as a symbol in the same meaning appears in ritual of Kupala, and its meaning is rather similar to a symbol of “hiltse” (decorated tree or branch, symbol of the tree of the world) in wedding ritual<sup>5</sup>.

N.I.Tolstoy, analyzing the process of “palpation” in other cultures, notes that this act symbolizes fertilization, thus ritual can be accompanied not only verbal component, and action of giving the presents<sup>6</sup>. In symbolical sense it is identical to ritual sprinkling by grain in Ukrainian wedding.

Ritual beating by a “batih”, which a bride receives from the future husband, is common practice for all Indo-European peoples<sup>7</sup>. Symbolical meaning of beating by a “batih” is found in ceremony when newly wedded are lifted from a conjugal bed by beating by a “batih”<sup>8</sup>. There is a widespread custom when the bridegroom strikes the bride while leaving the house of the bride<sup>9</sup>. The symbolical content of the use of a “batih” is clearly visible in ritual of the “laying” of the newly-weds in Kholmshchyna. Newly-wedded were brought in a barn, and “svakhy” (female relatives of the bridegroom) sang:

“Роди, Боже, пшеницю, Роди,  
Боже, ячмінь, Жеби наші  
молодці Спали собі при купці”.

Newly-wedded were in a barn, while one of the “svahy” was beating by “batih” the furnace in the house and sang:

“Ой, комине, небоже,  
Юж Надюня в коморі...”<sup>10</sup>

In this case not the bride, but the furnace is beaten. The furnace is one of the main symbols that is used while making round loaf – “korovay”. The use verbal symbols “to beat” “to break”, “flog” in wedding folklore is identical. These words symbolize the act of transition from girlhood to womanhood.

“Калина січена,  
Наталка звінчана.  
Червоний чобіт на нозі,  
Золотий перстень на руці,  
Що купив Микола на торзі”<sup>11</sup>.

The form of palpation by “batih” is used only in relation to the girl, but this verbal expression is applied to the bridegroom as well.

“Обсип мати вівсом,  
Червоною калиною,  
Кропи свяченою водою,  
Долею щасливою”.

There is no symbol of palpation in this form, however, the symbol of continuing of the family appears as sprinkling by red berries of snowball tree, which is a symbol of a girl.

Symbol “to beat” is used in wedding not only in relation to married couple, but also for giving sense of creation for the ritual of marriage night. The tour of bridegroom to bride is a symbolic act of creation.

“Золоте зернятко в стіни б’є,  
А зять до тещі в гості йде”.

The “palytsia” as a symbol carries out functions, identical to functions of the “batih”.

The “batih”, as well as the “palytsia” is an attribute of a wedding grade and is used depending on circumstances. These symbols are used in identical situations. For example, the “drujba” three times blesses the visitors, then three times christens by his “palytsia” doors, which stand all time open; after that everyone enters into the house<sup>12</sup>. In other case the “drujba” three times beats in the doors, using the “batih”, decorated with bells, puts the “batih” on a threshold, and the bridegroom with the bride (but only they) should cross through it, leaving the house (the room); the “drujba” does the same (crosses through the “batih”) on a threshold of the exit to the yard<sup>13</sup>. As it is seen at the given examples, the use of the “batih” and the “palytsia” serves for ritual consecration (opening) of internal space of habitation. The difference is that in a case with the “batih” the internal space opens only for the bridegroom and the bride (or for unmarried youth). This has the ritual meaning of allotment the youth with fertility, health. In the other case “starosta” (the eldest men) uses the “palytsia” for opening the internal space for the visitors. On the one hand, it is the symbolical act – “saver”: making the sign of the cross on house in order to forbid the entry for the malicious (evil) forces. On another hand, this is the symbolic destruction of the internal space. Function of the internal space destruction with the help of the “palytsia” is clearly seen in the example of the use of the “palytsia” by the bridegroom, who while asking for marriage has to stand in the corner for brooms, pokers, and dig up the earthen floor there by the “palytsia”<sup>14</sup>. This has the same symbolical meaning as digging up the furnace by the girl, which wants to marry.

Other destructive function of the “palytsia” is shown at untwisting of the bride’s braid. As Hv.Vovk specifies, sometimes ‘boyars’ (friends of the bridegroom, led by “the drujba”) take part in this ritual, symbolic untwisting braid of the girl by the ends of their “palytsia’s”<sup>15</sup>.

When “the drujba” is christening the door with the “palytsia”, the song is sang:

“Рубай, свату двері,  
Рубай ще й одвірки,  
Рубай ще й одвірки,  
Пускай нас до дівки”<sup>16</sup>.

However, the symbolical destruction, is necessary to consider not as destruction, but as a transition from the one status to another. The destructive function of the “palytsia” also unites in itself the creative function as well. In particular, in the song, characterizing, is sang:

“А в нашого свата  
З верби з лози хата.  
А з трижня одвірки:  
Пускайте до дівки.  
Боявся пустити,  
Щоб хату не розвалити”<sup>17</sup>.

“Willows and withe” house symbolizes the life and the continuation of the family, withe and willow acts as symbols of fertility<sup>18</sup>.

“The drujba”, or “marshalok” (the senior boyar, the marshal) has a symbol of his role the “batih” and the “palytsia” as well<sup>19</sup>. The “batih” and the “palytsia” in this case serves as symbols that designate the symbolical social status of their carriers: “kniaz”, “boyar” in real life. As V.K.Borysenko notes, in the Ukrainian wedding the military features are characterizing the wedding grades: “kniaz”, “boyar”, “marshalok”, “horunjij”<sup>20</sup>. It makes other plan of the contents of symbols of the “batih” and the “palytsia”. The military elements in the wedding ceremony have rather archaic forms, but with current of time there was the transformation of the initial meaning of the main wedding grades: “kniaz” and “kniagynia”. A.Bajburin and G.Levinton note the multiple meanings of the “kniaz” symbol. They noted that the symbol of “kniaz” bears in itself a space code and associates with the sun, moon, star, from the one side and code of exaltation, transition of the bridegroom in a higher social level. It is connected the transformation and legal meaning of the term “knyaz” (in understanding of the ruling person)<sup>21</sup>. With overlaying of the social structure on the form of the wedding grades it becomes possible to connect occurrence of other meanings of the symbols of the “batih” and the “palytsia”. In this case we can speak about the use of the “palytsia” and the “batih” in the form of ritual weapon, which serves to differ the belonging to a privileged ruling class. So we see, that if the cortege of the bridegroom, having come nearer to the house of bride, finds the gates shut and blocked by a tree and the house guarded by a crowd of guys who lift upwards their “palytsia’s, personifying themselves the armed protection. As a rule, it comes to an end by the giving a wolf berry, adhered on the end of the “palytsia”, to the bridegroom. Sometimes they shoot in the air from a gun<sup>22</sup>, if they have it. The symbolical meaning of the “palytsia” as a weapon is visible as well in other episodes of wedding.

The “palytsia” acts as a destructive source in the first and second case, the transition from one condition to another. The “batih” loses the creative function in the second case, and acts only as an attribute of belonging to the wedding grade. And it is used in cases when the use of the destructive force of the “palytsia” is impossible. So, when the cortege of the bridegroom enters into a court yard, mother of the bride in the turned out wooskin oat blocks the road of the bridegroom and three times approaches (scare) him, sometimes the bridegroom and his “starosta” beat her by “the “batih” to show, that they are not afraid of her<sup>23</sup>. In this case the use of the “batih” is inadmissible, the turned out coat on the mother carries out the protective function (to frighten), and further it is a symbol of well being and crop.

Other case of the use of the “batih” as a weapon when “the drujba” expels the guests of the bride from her house where should take place the guests of the bridegroom<sup>24</sup>. The use of the “palytsia” in this case also is inappropriate, as far the “palytsia” has dominantly a destructive source, and the “batih” symbolically is gifting the guests with well being.

The imposing of the two contents in the “palytsia” symbol is clearly seen in the song:

“Ой по під лісом бита доріжка,  
Ой туди йшов Миколо з боярами.  
Йому калина дорогу заступила,  
Вийняв шабельку, став калину рубати,  
Стала калина до нього промовляти  
Не рубай мене гострею шабелькою,  
Обвий мене червоною китайкою,  
Червоною китайкою, долею щасливою”<sup>25</sup>.

In this case snowball tree (the symbol of the young girl) is chopped with a sabre, though the symbol “to chop” keeps constant meaning.

The use of the “batih” and the “palytsia” in Ukrainian wedding ceremony is one of the main symbols. It is necessary to consider symbols the “batih” and the “palytsia” as unity, because they are the form of expression of mythological creation and destruction. The coding on the mythological level results in a plenty of the synonymic forms of expression of these symbols. In symbols the “palytsia”, the “batih” not only mythological content occurs, but as well social one, when they act as the attributes of the social status. Rather frequently in the customs it is

difficult to allocate any separate content, and it is necessary to estimate meanings of the symbols in complex. A vivid example of an interlacing of the different symbolical meanings in the use of the “palysia” we can observe in Bojkivshchyna during the ceremony of preparing the bride for a journey to the bridegroom. “Starosta”, who helps to move to the bridegroom’s house takes on a shoulder a feather-bed, which was given by the mother of the bride, three sackcloth’s with two loafs of bread inside. As “starosta” leaves, the guys with “palysia’s attack him and begin to beat the feather-bed. The “drujba” of the bridegroom keep off them<sup>26</sup>. In this case rite of the palpation by the “palysia” can symbolize an armed attack with the purpose to steal the bride (bride’s bed). Beating the feather-bed can symbolize change of the bride’s status, and the bread aside of it – well-being.

<sup>1</sup> Здоровега Н.І. Нариси народної весільної обрядовості на Україні. – Київ, 1979. – С. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Вовк Х.К. Студії з української етнології та антропології. – Київ, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Весілля. Т. 1. – Київ, 1970. – С.65.

<sup>4</sup> Толстой Н.И. Из грамматики славянских обрядов // Труды по знаковым системам. – Тарту, 1982. – С. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Курочкин А.В. Растительная символика календарной обрядности украинцев // Обряды и обрядовый фольклор. – Москва, 1982. – С. 153.

<sup>6</sup> Толстой Н.И. Op. cit. – С. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Сумцов Н.Ф. Символика славянских обрядов. – Санкт-Петербург, 1996. – С. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Вовк Х.К. Op. cit. – С. 274.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Холмщина і Підляшшя. – Київ, 1997. – С. 299.

<sup>11</sup> Танцюра Г. Весілля в селі Зятківцях. – Київ, 1998. – С. 110.

<sup>12</sup> Вовк Х.К. Op. cit. – С. 242.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. – С. 251.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. – С. 233.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. – С. 250.

<sup>16</sup> Танцюра Г. Op. cit. – С. 152.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. – С. 152.

<sup>18</sup> Толстой Н.И. Op. cit. – С. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Танцюра Г. Op. cit. – С. 131 – 150.

<sup>20</sup> Борисенко В.К. Весільні звичаї та обряди на Україні. – Київ, 1988. – С. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Байбурин А., Левинтон Г. “Князь” и “княгиня” в русском свадебном величании (к семантике обрядовых терминов) // Русская филология. Вып. 4. – Тарту, 1975. – С. 67 – 71.

<sup>22</sup> Вовк Х.К. Op. cit. – С. 262.

<sup>23</sup> Сумцов Н.Ф. Op. cit. – С. 20.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Танцюра Г. Op. cit. – С. 148.

<sup>26</sup> Гнатюк В. Бойківське весілля в Мшанці // НТШ Матеріали до українсько-руської етнології. Т. X., Ч. 2. – Львів, 1909. – С. 25.

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## **ЗНАКОВІСТЬ ПАЛИЦІ ТА БАТОГА В УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ВЕСІЛЬНІЙ ОБРЯДОВОСТІ**

*У роботі розглянуто символіку використання палиці та батога в українському традиційному весіллі. Особливу увагу приділено багатокодовості символів та їх синонімічності, проаналізовано антонімічність розуміння значимості кожного символу, їх руйнуючий та творчий початок. Досліджено взаємопов’язаність вербального символу “бити – сікти” з предметними символами “батіг” та “палиця”. Розглянуто застосування в багатьох випадках батога та палиці, які несуть зміст запліднення та одночасно зброї як ознаки весільного чину.*