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THE HOLIDAY OF IVANA KUPALA

Ukrainian people have a lot of national traditions that date back to ancient times. Some of them arose even before the adoption of Christianity. It is surprising that these ancient traditions have reached our days and inspire modern Ukrainians.

In general, **Ukrainian people** strongly feel their own identity. It turns out that modern youth like wearing national clothes, singing Ukrainian songs and speaking Ukrainian (although they also know other European languages). Ukrainian is not only fashionable, but also something that all Ukrainians carry in their hearts. It unites us and gives spiritual strength in the struggle for our freedom.

National holidays play an important role in the life of Ukrainians. These are not just days off, but first of all an opportunity to learn more about our history, beliefs, mythology and folklore.

One of such holidays is Ivana Kupala. I know that the Japanese have many holidays related to the seasons of nature. We celebrate Ivana Kupala in summer, on certain days.

Before the adoption of Christianity, Ukrainian people followed Pagan traditions, then many of them were transformed and adapted to fit the new religion. However, one Pagan holiday has survived in its original form to this day. Ivana Kupala is celebrated on the night of July 6-7, but historically the holiday was celebrated on the day of the summer solstice. This holiday symbolizes the birth of the summer sun – it was called Kupalo. Who is Kupalo?

According to one version, the name of the holiday comes from the word “bathe” (“купатися”), according to another, Kupala was the name the God of flowers, earthly gifts.

According to the beliefs of ancient Ukrainians, on the night of July 6-7 all evil spirits come out of the underworld into the world of the living and wander among people.

Therefore, on this night, the ancient Slavs burned bonfires, the pure fire of which could scare away evil spirits. Bonfires were lit near water basins, so that water and fire could help to expunge evil spirits.

In addition, the fern flower blooms only on this magical night. It is a mythical flower. No one has ever seen it. No one knows what it really looks like. But in ancient times Ukrainians believed that the one who finds a fern flower will be happy in love.

By the way, the celebration of the Ivana Kupala holiday has now been restored in Mykola Hohol National Museum. If you ever get to this museum on July 6-7, you will see Ukrainian boys and girls in national clothes light a bonfire, jump over it (to cleanse themselves from the evil spirits), swim in the river (also to cleanse themselves of all evil); girls throw wreaths down the river (so the wreath would flow to the bank of the beloved), and also look for a fern flower.

This is a stunning holiday, a theatrical event that allows children and adults to immerse themselves in Ukrainian customs and traditions.

TRADITIONS AND CHANGES

The Main Symbols of the Holiday

Kupalo and Marena. People would make an effigy of Marena (a goddess of the winter, who exhausted the earth and sent diseases and troubles on humans) and Kupalo (a god of flowers) of straw or sticks and burn it on the fire, sometimes they threw the effigies in the water.

A bonfire. One of the main attributes of the Ivana Kupala is a huge bonfire, through which people jump over alone or in pairs. Apart from fun, it was a magical ritual and meant cleansing. It was also believed that if lovers could jump over the bonfire without separating their hands, their love would last a lifetime. The fire scared away the evil spirits, which were believed to leave the otherworldly place on the days of Kupala to the world of living.

The Traditions of Ivana Kupala

Divination. Before the holiday, girls wove wreaths from wildflowers, because our ancestors believed that on this day all the plants have magical properties. At the end of the holiday, when it got dark, the girls went to the river, where they attached candles to the wreaths and let them float on the water. Next, the girls had to watch the wreaths. Wherever it floats, the bridegroom will come from there. But if the wreath sinks, it predicts a serious illness or death. If the wreath remains in place, the girl will be unmarried for another year. But the boy had to catch the wreath on the other bank – this meant that he would take the girl who wove and released the wreath as his wife.

Swimming. Bathing in open water is considered as well-known tradition of the night. According to the omens, this rite will help cleanse the soul and body, as well as cure diseases. Even dew was considered miraculous on Ivan Kupala. It was enough to wash with it to prolong one's youth.

Fern flower. One of the most romantic beliefs of Kupala is about the mythical fern flower, which supposedly appears on the Kupala night. According to legend, it blooms for just one moment on the shortest night of the year. It is believed that only a young man, often unmarried or the only son in the family, can find the flower. Due to the fact that it is guarded by an evil force, the flower is so difficult to obtain. But if it succeeds, the lucky person will receive the gift of seeing the future, the ability to understand the language of animals and birds, heal the sick, and find treasures hidden in the ground.

There is a belief that on the night before Ivan Kupala, trees move from place to place and talk to each other with the noise of their branches. And only the one who found the fern flower can see it.

Mykola Gogol used folk tales about fern blossoms in his story "The Evening on the Eve of Ivan Kupala." On the basis of folk beliefs, the writer describes how that fern flower should look and which undead guard this magical flower. This is a small red flower with an unknown power that lights up the lawn and everything on it. Also, he writes that there are incredible riches under the flower.

TRADITIONS AND CHANGES

Ivana Kupala in the 21st Century

Ukrainians still celebrate the holiday of Ivana Kupala. It is significantly different from the original holiday, because one of the purposes of the holiday was to find a partner and have some rest before the heavy harvest. However, we still make a fire and jump over it, we always swim in open water, and many girls look forward to this day to guess their fate.

In 2022, we could not celebrate the holiday of Ivana Kupala because of the war. But we hope that next summer we will get together at the Mykola Hohol National Museum with all the students of our university to embrace Ukrainian culture and history. We will sing songs, dance, swim, and most importantly, celebrate the victory of Ukraine.