

PLOTS OF GOTHIC ORIGIN IN UKRAINIAN FOLKLORE PROSE

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Abstract: The article deals with plot elements of Gothic origin present in Ukrainian folk legends and other prose works: people and cattle sinking into the earth, and witches' curses. Those motifs can be traced back to the Migration Period when the Germanic tribes entered the Circum-Pontic region. Despite the significant time lapse, the relics of those times still remain in the European folklore in the form of certain plots or plot elements. A widespread legend about a person punished by God for tilling the earth at Easter is comparable to an accident with some Gothic troops crossing a bridge across the river in Jordanes's *Getica*. The beliefs about the reasons of the Gothic empire's downfall are to some extent similar to those about the Zaporizhian Sich's demise.

Keywords: Circum-Pontic region, legend, plot, the Goths, Ukrainian folklore

Comparative analysis acquires special significance in the studies of complex cultural phenomena as it allows to reveal things remaining hidden during work with isolated traditions and to reinterpret the already-known facts, their correlation and principles underneath. The comparative approach permits not only to understand separate traits, but also to provide more accurate characteristics of the entire phenomenon and to find its place within the range of other cultural manifestations. A complex study of Ukrainian ethnogeny involves scrupulous work with different kinds of sources, including folkloric ones. The latter still remain largely unexplored in the comparative context, so numerous issues are left without answers. A search for parallels invariably leads to the extensive realm of folklore variations, branching of oral traditions, plurality of historic types of expression, and, along with this, to the sphere of ethnic history in all its specificity and complexity. For instance, it is possible to trace the motifs of

Visigothic origin in Spanish folklore (Menéndez Pidal 1956) regardless of the considerable temporal gap. Similarly, the reminiscences of the motifs of the Migration Period are present in the folklore of the Ukrainians, especially in *dumas* (epic poems) and legends.

JORDANES'S STORY

Recordings of Gothic “folklore” mostly belong to the Early Medieval Period and are included in the context of book learning, primarily, the first Gothic chronicles. It was Vladimir Toporov, a Russian linguist and mythologist, who noted places in the Latin text by Jordanes possessing an undeniable imprint of folkloric origin (Toporov 1987: 164–165). In particular, *Getica* (Jordanes 1960) mentions the arrival of the Goths under Filimer’s guidance to the northern Circum-Pontic region where they suffered an accident while crossing a river:

Searching for the most appropriate lands and places [to settle] he came to the lands of Scythia called Oium in their language (pervenit ad Scythiae terras quae lingua eorum Oium vocabantur). Filimer, having been delighted with great abundance of those lands (ubi delectatus magna ubertate regionum), moved half of his troops there, after which, as it was said, the bridge cast over a river broke irreparably, so no-one could traverse or go back. They also say that those lands are secluded, surrounded by quaking bogs and deeps, so the Nature itself made it inaccessible (inpervitum), by combining both. One can believe travellers’ claims that till these very days voices of cattle sound there and signs of the human [presence], but they are heard from afar (verumtamen hodieque illic et voces armentorum audiri et indicia hominum depraehendi commeantium attestationem, quamus a longe audientium, credere licet) ... (Jordanes 1960: 70; Monumenta 1882: 60).

UKRAINIAN MORAL LEGENDS

Vladimir Toporov found certain correspondences to the motif of audible sounds made by cattle and, apparently, also humans trapped underground or underwater, as Jordanes’s text says, in Romanian, Belarussian, Lithuanian, and Latvian folklore (Toporov 1983: 255; 1984: 133; 1987: 165–167). At the same time, in Ukraine – in western and eastern Podolia, Galicia, Boiko region, Pokuttia, Transcarpathia, western and eastern Polissya, and other places there

exist hundreds of mythological legends about a ploughman who went to till his field on a holiday, Easter (*Velykden*, literally 'Big Day') or Rakhman Easter (*Rakhmans'kyi Velykden*, 'Easter of the ancient wise soothsayers'). This person was believed to have sunk into the ground together with his oxen or horses, and his drover, the latter sometimes being his wife. From under the ground the ploughman can be heard singing and shouting to his oxen, and the animals mooing. The places where the ploughman went underground are known as a trap, a window, a lake, a bog, a swamp, a depression, a hole (*zapadnya*, *viknyshhe*, *vikno*, *viknyna*, *ozero*, *mlaka*, *reveha*, *provalyshche*, *proval*, *yamnytsya*). Sometimes it is thought that at that place there appeared a burial mound holding the ploughman's name, or big stones, or a spring, or a lake. So, the natural landscape itself changed. Such legends are no less numerous than the ones talking about towns that disappeared under the ground, as well as villages, castles, barns, churches, cathedrals, chapels, bell towers, and inns. There are variations talking about a local lord who rode in a carriage with his wife and a coachman, got in a swamp and drowned there together with the horses and the cart (Pushyk 2004: 156).

Zakarpattia Region

In particular, the appearance of Lake Svyrydove in a legend from the village of Pidpolozzya of the Volovets District of the Zakarpattia region is associated with a sin committed by a poor man who started tilling his land on Easter and was swallowed by the ground together with his bulls. The Christian elements are intertwined with the old motif of petrification: there are two stones believed to be Svyryd and his wife who turned into stone (Sokil 1995: 123).

This tale relates that between the villages of Vyshni and Nizhni Veretsky (now Verkhni Vorota and Nizhni Vorota) of the Volovets District there is a small pond (lake) the size of half a morgen of land. That lake is called Svyrydove. In summer, in time of severe drought, it becomes so shallow that cattle can go through it. A certain part of this lake is very deep and called "a window" by the locals. No streams come in or out of the lake, yet it has still remained the same for many years. Svyryd was a rich farm owner of Vyshni Veretsky in the year dot, and this lake was named Svyrydove after him. This landowner had servants and housemaids to help him in his household and did not pay them every month as now, but for a year, and the pay for one servant consisted of footwear and outerwear as well as the right to plough one morgen of land for themselves and sow it with oats within one day. One of Svyryd's servants, receiving such a payment, persuaded Svyryd to allow him to cultivate his land on

Velykden ('Big Day') to be able to plough as much as possible, because it was the longest day. On Easter, at dawn, they went into the field to plough. The servant hurried the oxen and shouted at them: "Hey, my oxen, hey, today is a big day". Svryd's wife brought them their meals. When a High Mass started in the nearby church and the Gospel was read, the land began to groan and shift. Where they had ploughed, the earth caved in and water came pouring out. And where the plough, yokes, shafts, and the beam were, there appeared a broom bush from shafts and a small birch from the beam in the middle of the lake. There are two big stones near the lake – most probably Svryd and his wife who had turned into stone. People also say that sometimes when you pressed your ear to the ground, you could hear words sounding from underneath the earth's surface: "Hey, my oxen, hey, today is a big day". But no people of faith would ever visit that site anyway (Pysana 1994: 94–95).

Yet another variation claims that there was a poor but miserly man in the village of Nizhni Veretski (now – Nizhni Vorota) of the Volovets District. He did not fast and liked to drink. The man had a small patch of land on top of a hill, but possessed nothing to till it. His prosperous neighbours, having oxen or horses, had long since ploughed their own fields. The man decided to go and ask his neighbour to lend him his plough and bulls on Easter as the neighbour was unlikely to do any work on that day. The latter pitied the poor fellow and lent him a plough, warning him that it was an unforgivable and potentially punishable sin against God. The man did not heed the advice, though. When everybody else was going to the church to consecrate an Easter cake, salted beef, and cheese, he went to the fields with his wife. She was driving the bulls, and he was holding the plough's handles. After the work was done, they started to have a meal of some Easter cake and cheese. The moment they took the consecrated bread, the earth opened up and swallowed the field, the bulls, and the sinful couple. So God punished the sinners who did not worship Easter. Instead of the ploughed field there appeared a seemingly bottomless lake, and in the middle of its waters a stone stood in place of the bulls and the plough. And the tiller's whip turned into reeds around the stone.

In the village of Vyshni Veretsky of the Volovets District old people related that once upon a time there was a farmer called Svryd. It was a rich man who had servants. In ancient times landowners did not pay money for work, but settled accounts with corn. Because Svryd's servant was decent and dutiful, the farmer promised him to have a day for tilling his land to sow oats. The servant wanted to till as much as possible and he chose *Velykden*, because he thought it would be the longest day in the year. When Easter came, the landowner Svryd and his servant went ploughing before dawn. They ploughed, and the servant urged the oxen: "Hey, my oxen, hey, today is a big day". At midday, when

worship took place in churches, the ground shook beneath them and cracked. Water appeared on the ploughed field. It still exists nowadays. A willow and a short birch grow in the middle of this waterbody. People believe that this willow grew out of the shafts of a yoke and the birch – from the servant's beam. According to old people, two big stones near the lake should be Svyryd and his servant. And every Easter during Mass in the church you can hear: "Hey, my oxen, hey, today is a big day!"

Other variations also talk about people who sank into the earth, such as a servant to whom a local landlord promised to lend oxen on a Sunday. The next Sunday was Easter. After the consecration of the cakes in church, the servant yoked the oxen and went to cultivate his field in the mountains between the locations of Stiv and Mutvytsia. He began to plough, urging the oxen: "Hey, my oxen, hey, today is a big day!". When these words had been uttered, the ploughman and the oxen turned into big boulders, the field sank under water and a deep lake appeared. Although the lake is already gone and transformed into a swampy marsh, people say that human voices are still heard there in early spring. And if one goes to the lake on Easter after Mass, they can hear how under the earth's surface the working animals are urged: "Hey, my oxen, hey, today is a big day!". In this version the lake is called Svyrydove, because Svyryd was the servant's name (Chori 2003: 108–111). A similar legend about a rich landowner Svyryd, who was turned to stone along with his servant near a lake, is known in the village of Kelechyn (Sen'ko 2003: 29–30).

In the village of Kostrynska Roztoka of Velykoberezne District there is a big swamp feared by the villagers, which is connected with several legends. The marsh is said to have appeared a very long time ago, when people still used wooden ploughs. Those who did not have horses or bulls to drag the plough had to pull it on their own. But it was very difficult to pull the plough; poor people had to expend great efforts. One peasant worked hard and long for a local rich man and did not have time to plough his own field. The peasant went to the master and begged him to give him oxen to plough his plot till Easter. At first the landowner did not want to give him oxen, but then he promised to lend them, but only when he himself had no need for them and his own lands were cultivated. And he said, "You have three days of Easter holidays... Go and plough not till Easter, but on Easter if you want!" At first, the peasant hesitated to commit such a profanity, but he had no choice as he had to feed his family. He took the oxen to the field on Easter. After he had started to plough, the earth underneath him slowly sagged and gradually turned into watery mud, sucking him and the oxen into its depths. The man tried to escape but did not succeed. The mud swallowed up him as well as his oxen. The marsh that replaced the field was called Kostrynska Swamp by the peasants. Older people believed

that the man was so punished for going out to plough on such a big holiday as Easter (Chori 2003: 123).

Old people from the village of Sukhyi in Velykoberezne District said that if somebody went to the landmark Solena Mlaka on Easter, when the consecration of Easter cakes was held, it was possible to hear the voice of a ploughman shouting: "To the left! To the right!" The village has a legend about a faithless man who yoked his oxen and went to plough with his servant when the others were carrying Easter cakes to the church for consecration. He ploughed up the area and then sat down with his servant on a furrow to rest. The piece of land that they had ploughed sank underground together with the landowner, his servant, oxen, and the plough as God was enraged by the unforgivable sin of them working on a great feast of Resurrection. The lake with moss-covered shores that supposedly appeared there later turned into marshland. The man's voice calling out to his bulls, "To the left! To the right!" was still heard at that place on Easter. His relatives cried there, their salty tears falling on the earth. Later the spot was called *Solena Mlaka* 'Salty Swamp' (Chori 2003: 204–205).

Ivano-Frankivsk Region

The motif of the tiller sinking into the earth as a punishment for working on Easter repeats in multiple locations in western Ukraine. In the village of Bortnyky in the Tlumak District of the Ivano-Frankivsk region a tiller sunk into the earth for working on *Rakhmans'kyi Velykden*, that is why it is now forbidden to do any field work on that day. In the village of Viktoriv in the Halych District a field used to be a cemetery for cholera victims. A local peasant tried tilling that land and sank under the earth's surface together with his bulls. Similarly, a man was believed to have been swallowed by the ground for working during big holidays on the Zahadky fields in the villages of Vodnyky and Dubivtsi in the Halych District. Near Havrylivka in the Nadvirna District there is a so-called *viknysche* 'window', where peasants ploughed on Easter, and the ploughman and the ox-driver with a pair of oxen and the plough disappeared into the ground and a spring formed at that place. In the village of Harasymiv in the Tlumach District a peasant met the same fate, and his voice is still heard from beneath the night before *Rakhmans'kyi Velykden* (Pushyk 2004: 156). According to another variant from Harasymiv, if one presses an ear to the earth on the day of Rakhman Easter, they can hear the cattle-driver's cries for help (Kolberg 1882: 199).

In the village of Dovhe in the Tysmenytsia District, in the field *Zapadnia* 'Trap', a ploughman disappeared under the earth's surface with his tool and

oxen or horses on Easter. Several other sites have similar legends attached to them: a man who ploughed on a holiday sank into the earth on the farmstead of Dubrivka in the Rohatyn District, near the villages of Zhovchiv and Uizd. There appeared a spring called *Viknyna* 'Window' feeding a local river of Uizdsky Potik. A place name Uizd is connected with Bohdan Khmelnytsky's¹ entry into the village (Pushyk 2004: 156).

In the village of Zahiria in the Halych District there is a mountain called Bobonets. There a peasant went to water his oxen and disappeared underground together with them. In the village of Mezyhircsi in the same district, at the foot of Rostova Mountain, where there is a rocky sanctuary with *Bozhyi Tik* 'God's Threshing Floor', an old heathen altar, and the cave of Babyna Nora, which is called *Manastyr* 'Monastery', a ploughman sank underground with his bulls, a plough, and a dog. On *Rakhmans'kyi Velykden* one could hear the sound of bells from underground. A similar legend about a ploughman in the village of Nizhnia Lipitsia in the Rohatyn District was connected with *Rakhmans'kyi Velykden*. In the village of Olesha in the Tlumach District, on the Annunciation Day a man ploughed the first furrow in the field and sank under the earth's surface (Pushyk 2004: 156).

The same story was known in the village of Klishchivna in the Rohatyn District, on the riverside of Hnyla Lypa. In the village of Korshiv in the Kolomyia District is a field called *Strihovytsia* ('Field of Witches') where a ploughman disappeared with a plough and the oxen, which went to drink water. It happened on a holiday. In the village of Petryliv in the Tlumach District a serf ploughed for the master for a whole week, and the master gave oxen and a plough to the ploughman also on Easter Sunday. When he began to plough, water broke through, a swamp formed, and the ploughman with oxen and the plough disappeared. In the village of Prutivka in the Sniatyn District on *Velykden* a ploughman was able to plough one part of the field before sinking. One could hear from under the ground how he urged: "Hey! To the left! To the right!" In the village of Puzhnyky of the Tlumach District is a field called *Yamnytsia* ('Field of Holes'), which was ploughed by a man on Easter, and this man had the same destiny (Pushyk 2004: 157).

Between the villages of Siltse and Tiaziv (Keziv) in the Tysmenytsia District there is *Rakhmans'kyi Field* where on St. Nicholas Day (or *Rakhman Easter*) a tiller managed to make three furrows in the earth before water came gushing out, and an abyss swallowed him. Local people of Tiaziv show a *reveha* ('hole') in the earth where it happened. Another version places this event near Mount Lysa 'the Bald', where there is a well of Bila Hlyna and a local river called *Drovnych* flows below. A Masurian settler worked in the field though the locals warned him not to do that on St. Nicholas the Wondermaker's Day. The man

blasphemously answered that it would be him who would make another wonder by tilling and raking the field – and paid for the sacrilege in the same way as the other characters. In the village of Tarasivka (Yatsivka) in the Tlumach District, in the place where later on there was a collective farm, is a lake called *Vikno* ‘Window’, in which a ploughman shouts at his oxen who sank underground with him and his plough. In the village of Tysiv of the Dolyne District there is a deep pond which never gets overgrown with aquatic plants. A man ploughing his field is believed to have disappeared there. In Shevelivka, which today forms a part of the town of Deliatyn in the Nadvirna District, at Easter, while people were coming back home from the church, one man ploughed and disappeared with his bulls and the plough underground. According to another legend, a church sank underground and Lake Mors’ke Oko ‘Sea Eye’ appeared (Pushyk 2004: 157).

Lviv Region

The Lviv region is also known for almost identical tales. In the village of Bolozva Dolishnia (Nizhnie) in the Sambir District a rich man ploughed on the Annunciation Day and sank underground with his horses and the plough. When you put your ear to the ground, you could hear him shouting at his horses. Between the villages of Dubyna and Kamianka in the Stryi District there is Lake Chortove (‘Devils’ Lake’) where there used to be a field that consumed a man with his oxen and the plough for working on Easter. In the village of Vovkiv in the Pustomytiv District there is Petro’s Pit into which ploughman Petro fell with his horses and the plough. In the village of Halivka in the Stryi Sambir District a man ploughed at Easter, and the ground collapsed beneath him. One could hear him shouting at oxen underground. In the village of Husiatychi in the Zhydachiv District there is a pit called *Zapadnya* (‘Trap’), where a rich man with a plough and oxen fell when ploughing on Easter, because he forgot that it was a holiday. In the village of Demydiv in the same district there is a cross-shaped lake *Sviate* (‘Holy Lake’) where a rich man with his serf, oxen, and a plough was swallowed by the earth for the sin of ploughing on a holiday. In the village of Kniazhe of the Mostyska District a man ploughed on Easter and fell in with his horses (oxen) and the plough. In the village of Kryvka in the Skole District the same thing happened with a ploughman on Easter. It is still possible to hear his oxen moaning underground. In the village of Ozhydiv in the Busk District a part of this village is called *Boloto* ‘Swamp’ by the locals and it is attributed the very same reputation. Here a man ploughed on Easter

and sank underground. He re-surfaced with a plough and horses at the foot of Pidlyssia Mountain (Pushyk 2004: 157–158).

In the village of Oriava in the Skole District, on Dzvyniv Mountain, a man ploughed on Easter and disappeared with his oxen and farm equipment into the earth. In the village of Rozvadiv in the Mykolaiv District there is a hole in a field where a ploughman sank underground on Easter in the same fashion. This field is called Rukove, which could be connected with the Rakhmans. One could hear how he hastens his oxen under the earth's surface. In the village of Rudnyky in the same district a man ploughed with oxen and sank underground on Easter. He was heard shouting there: "To the left! To the right!" In the village of Smozhe in the Skole District there is Lake Hostylyv which appeared on that place where a man ploughed with oxen on *Velykden* and disappeared under the earth. Nowadays he is heard shouting from below the ground: "Hey! Hey!" So he urges the oxen. Once in the village of Ternava in the Staryi Sambir District horses stopped in the middle of a field on a holiday, and the ploughman beat them, shouted at them, until he became dumb. Nowadays one can hear how beneath the surface of the earth he beats the horses and shouts: "Gee up! Gee up!", because he got his voice back under the earth's surface. In the village of Turie of the same district there was a man who did not believe in God and went to plough his land on Easter. His oxen together with him and his plough were swallowed by the earth, and nowadays his shouts can be heard from under the ground. In the village of Yavoriv in the Turkiv District, on Studena Mountain, there is a spring. A man ploughed there on Easter and sank into the ground with his plough and oxen for this sin. Now it is heard from under the ground: "To the left! To the right!" (Pushyk 2004: 158).

Ternopil Region

In the Ternopil region, in the village of Koropets in the Monastyriska District, there is a tale of a rich cattle-breeder who never went to church or prayed. He did not observe religious holidays and made no difference between working days and holy festivals, worrying only about his wealth. He learned from his neighbour that the next day was *Velykden*, and decided to plough his field on that day to test whether this day was big or not. Early on Easter peasants made preparations for taking Easter cakes to the church to be consecrated, but the rich man fed his oxen and went into the field to plough. People went to the church with cakes, but the rich man was trying to plough a furrow, shouting: "Hey, to the left, my grey one!" His dog was with him. When the rich man started his

work, his oxen began mooing, his dog howled, and the earth itself roared and a chasm opened. The earthquake created a lake with poisonous fetid water where neither fish or crayfish nor frogs could live, and even birds died when they flew over that place. During High Mass on Easter one can still hear the man shouting “Hey, hey!” in the lake (Hnatiuk 1902: 102–103).

In the village of Velesniv in the same district a man ploughed on a holiday and sank underground with his plough and oxen. In the village of Vistria of the same district, a farmer went out to a field to plough on Easter, but the ground parted beneath him, and he sank underground together with the oxen and the plough. In the village of Volytsia of the Terebovlya District, now part of the town of Terebovlya, a man went to plough on a holiday and fell underground. According to popular belief the name of the village (Volytsia ‘village of oxen’) is supposed to derive from the fact that oxen still sink underground there. In the village of Honcharivka of the Monastyriska District a man went to plough his field with horses and a plough on *Rakhmans’kyi Velykden* (Mid-Pentecost) and disappeared underground with all of them. In the village of Zadariv of the same district a man took his oxen into a field for ploughing, but fell underground with all of them, and the spring of *Vyknyshe* ‘Window’ emerged instead. During major religious holidays people could hear him moaning and shouting at his oxen. In the village of Kamyanky in the Pidvolochysk District a man said that once it was *Rakhmans’kyi Velykden*, he would have to plough a lot; but the earth swallowed him, and now people can hear how he sings and shouts at his bulls underground. In the village of Narayiv in the Berezhany District, in the Fihurna Valley, on St. George’s Day, a ploughman sank into the earth with oxen and ploughs. In the village of Mozolivka in the Pidhaitsi District there is a field that the locals call Bendera, where on the *Rakhmans’kyi Velykden* a ploughman fell underground with his oxen, because he said that on the big day he would plough more land. In the village of Pechirna in the Lanivtsi District a swamp appeared at the place where a ploughman with his horses and ploughs sank underground when he was ploughing on Easter. In the village of Pidvysoke of the Berezhany District a Polish farmer named Jasko worked on St. Nicholas Day when a hare came running across his way, and his cart fell over the edge of a precipice. In the village of Stari Petlykivsti of the Buchach District a ploughman sank underground in the field with his plough and horses on *Rakhmans’kyi Velykden* (Pushyk 2004: 158).

Khmelnysky Region

In the Khmelnytsky region, outside the village of Svichna of the Letychiv District there is a depression with a well called *Divochka* 'Maiden'. At that place an old man with his daughter tilled their land during a religious festival and, as a result, sank into the earth together with the plough (Pushyk 2004: 158).

Vinnytsia Region

In the Vinnytsia region, in the village of Travna of the Sharhorod District, there is a deep ravine turned into a pond. A man ploughed his field on Easter, his bulls went amok and drew him into the gorge. In the village of Tarasivka of the Zhmerynka District there is "a window" (deep water) where bulls drowned with ploughs while drinking water. They were eventually found in the environs of the city of Yampil (Pushyk 2004: 156).

Volyn Region

In the village of Troianivka in the Manevychi District of the Volyn region people say that Lake Bolotsko used to be a field with the soil so hard that nobody could till it. A poor peasant asked it for himself and managed to get it ploughed. A rich man, whose lands were near that field, decided to till a patch of that no-man's land. But he would be ridiculed if he started ploughing together with the poor man. That is why he decided to do that on the third day after Easter, when everybody was in church. At the very dawn he set off and started to plough. But his plough got stuck. The rich man left the plough there and went to the cart, cursing the field: "May you go down!" At that moment the earth started to sink and disappeared underwater. The rich man's wife returned from the church and went to take her absent husband home. Having seen the lake, she understood the predicament and started weeping. Then she heard her husband's distant voice. Pressing her ear to the earth, she heard him urging on the oxen and became dumb forever, also losing her speech and mind. People say that even today one can hear the rich man calling out to his oxen on the very same date that it happened. But no-one who hears that will not tell anyone about it due to the risk of losing their speech forever, similar to that woman (Davydiuk 1996: 91).

Chernihiv Region

It is possible to find traces of the legend outside western Ukraine. In the village of Krasylivka, now in the Bakhmach District of the Chernihiv region, there is a similar tale about a man called Svyryd. When *Velykden* came, he desired to make sure that this was really a big day, and decided to work in the field as much as possible. In the first day of Easter he yoked oxen to the plough and went to work together with his farm labourers. When people were praying to God in the church, he ploughed. Peasants went home with consecrated Easter cakes, the bells in the belfry were pealing, and he was still ploughing. As soon as they began to make the tenth furrow, something hammered very terribly underground, and Svyryd sank into the earth together with his oxen. A mound arose where the man had perished. It is called Svyryd's Tomb to this day. When one comes to the mound and presses their ear to the earth, they can hear someone calling to the bulls: "Hey, hey!" (Kulish 1847: 69; 1857: 30–31).

GOTHIC DESTINY IN UKRAINIAN CALENDARICAL FOLKLORE

The motifs mentioned above are much more ancient than the Christian paradigm. Cult stones, ancient altars, and traces of idolatry in the related toponymy serve as a further proof of that. These motifs show the confrontation of a male ploughman, a bearer of cultural activities and civilization, with natural elements as chaos. Earth (less frequently, water) is an element of life and death, consuming by water means returning to the primeval chaotic state, and at the same time, a possibility for rebirth. At the time of major religious holidays the barriers between the worlds of the living and the dead become thinner (there are Ukrainian legends about revenants in an abandoned/closed church celebrating their own feast, *Navskyi Velykden* ('Easter of the Dead'), coinciding with *Rakhmans'kyi Velykden*). On such days the chaos forces are especially active. The holidays are seams of a kind, in which the supernatural seeps through the fabric of the organized existence. Correspondingly, a person who voluntarily or accidentally approaches the "window" (one of the names for pernicious places in the legends) is at risk of getting to the world of the dead by sinking through the earth. After getting stuck between the two worlds, a person gets a chance to have their voice heard only on this particular religious holiday next year. The transfer to another dimension does not necessarily result in total destruction – the person continues with their everyday chores as before crossing the border. As a punishment for the sacrilege, the victim may be stuck in a temporal loop, repeating the act that broke some sacred laws and reliving that moment

repeatedly. Extremely rarely the ones getting under the earth's surface are able to return to another location; whether they are dead or alive is unclear.

The Goths were similarly divided between the two worlds, having lost any chance of getting back after the bridge had collapsed (a bridge as well as a window/door is a symbol of transitions between worlds). The link to another realm gets severed by the act of blasphemy, destroying the very earth on which the lawbreaker stood. The unhallowed space is lost to "the cultured space" and becomes hostile, unsuitable for agriculture and people's presence. Swamp and/or deep water are a typical "no-man's land" believed to be inhabited by evil spirits, an antipode to farming land.

In *Getica*, Oium is reported to be surrounded by swamps and deep water, so it can be viewed as a separate realm with limited access for people (Jordanes directly refers to it as *inpervitum*, 'inaccessible'). The bridge's collapse as well as sinking of the earth, the emergence of deep water/swamps can be classified as an act of closing the gate between two dimensions, which irrevocably divides people into two groups. An important feature of the folkloric nature of Gothic legends is that the phenomenon could be heard 'even today'—*hodie*. The foremost question must surely be: how much of this account was preserved in the Gothic *carmina prisca pene storicu ritu*? Was it an entire story, or only parts of it (Christensen 2002: 303)? We can deem it possible to assume that the original legend, only a fragment of which Jordanes presents to us, used to contain a motif of a certain rash action, of breaking a rule of conduct that ultimately led to the bridge collapsing. That incident may have been possibly related to some pagan deities whom the baptized historian was reluctant to mention.

WITCHES AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ZAPOROZHIAN SICH

If one takes into consideration the fact that the Promised Land for the Goths, Oium, serving as the destination of their migration, is associated with the lower Dnieper (Toporov 1984: 130–131), there appears one even more noteworthy motif of Gothic origin: the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich foretold by the witches who were executed by Zaporozhian Cossacks. This legend still spread in the south of Ukraine in the late nineteenth century:

The Sich treasures, as the Zaporozhian Cossacks who survived the destruction complained, were plundered by the Don Cossacks.

– Our Sich perished for nothing! The poor thing went down for all the eternity! Moscow has made a nest inside it! – So spoke the Zaporozhians

about Colonel Norov who remained as an overseer after the destruction of the Cossack Host.

– A woman made our glorious Zaporozhian Sich fall, a woman! It was the truth that the cursed witch foretold. – So explained one old man, a survivor from the Zaporozhian times.

– Why so, Grandpa?, his grandchildren kept asking him.

– So it was. Once upon a time there was no rain in Zaporozhia, everything in the fields turned black, burned down to the last little blade of grass. Hunger was upon us. Wise men suspected that the witches were stealing rain, and found two-three old witches. When the Zaporozhians started to torment them, they confessed on their own. When the witches were drowned in the river, one cried out dying:

– So you, Zaporozhians, destroy us, old women, and a woman will destroy you! And so the curse of the damned witch came true: Czarina Catherine destroyed the Zaporozhian nest – the Sich. (Nadkhin 1876: 146)²

The prototype of this legend is also present in the remnants of the Gothic oral tradition. In *Getica* by Jordanes (1960: 121–122) the Gothic king Filimer found women practicing magic among his tribe and expelled them from his military camp – “female magicians whom he [Filimer] called *haliurunnas* in his own language [Gothic]” (*magas mulieres quas patrio sermone Haliurunnas is ipse cognominat*). In their exile, while roaming the desert, they met unclean spirits of the waste and gave life to the terrible Huns, “small in height, dirty, and weak, hardly resembling human beings, and whose language was hardly human” (Jordanes 1960: 90; Monumenta 1882: 89). In the addenda of Landolfus Sagax to Paul the Deacon’s chronicle (circa the year 1000) and chronicles of Ekkehard of Aura (1125) and Sigebert of Gembloux (1111), these spirits were called the fauns (*quos Faunos Ficarios vocant*) (Monumenta 1878: 344; Monumenta 1843: 123, 301), in other words, minor forest deities. The latter were considered simultaneously protectors of herds grazing in the woods and impersonations of fertility. Roman poets often mention fauns, inhabitants of wood groves, who roamed about at night and disturbed people. Roots of forest plants were thought to be a protection against them, but one needed to dig them out at night in order not to have “a woodpecker peck out their eyes”. Another way was to leave a sacrifice under a sacred tree (Nemirovskii 1964: 46). The forest nature of those spirits can be further proved by Jordanes (1960: 123–126), who claimed that the Hun hunters were sent a deer showing them a route through Syvash to the Crimea (Scythia Minor) by those creatures (Jordanes 1960: 90–91; Monumenta 1882: 60). Therefore, the spirits in question could be an equivalent of a forest deity of hunting connected with deer, similarly to an Ossetian god *Æfsati*.

In both plots it is possible to detect the same dynamics between male and female principles on both macrosocial and microsocal levels. On the macrosocial level of the male-female system, under the conditions of patrilocality of the closed society, the real dominance of the male principle gives rise to its transcendental overcoming in the marginal forms of witchcraft driving the plot conflict. The bipolarity of the male and female principles translates into the interpretation of complex sociocultural and historic events. In accordance with mythological concepts, the feminine is associated with the creative forces of nature, so it is not a coincidence that the witches are exiled to the natural locus where they guarantee life's reproduction in union with the supernatural forces. The Huns produced by the exiled witches destroy the Gothic kingdom as a punishment of a kind. In the Zaporozhian legend similar destructive outcomes are ascribed to the punishment of the witches by the Cossacks. This act symbolically compromises the Cossacks' masculinity. The destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich, a male society, by Czarina Catherine II happens as a consequence of the Cossacks torturing witches who had power over the natural elements and could be regarded as scions of the Gothic *haliurunnas*. In the Cossacks' worldview, a woman on the Russian throne acted as a violation of the natural order of things, a crisis of the masculine matrix, a manifestation of witchcraft itself. That is why Czarina Catherine II got associated with the image of a witch in the Ukrainian folklore (Belova & Petrukhin 2008: 122–124).

Both plots also show the universal semantic *friend-enemy* opposition that is realized in the narrative folklore as a set of ethnocultural stereotypes related not only to the ethnic neighbours, but also to the entire surrounding world. Time and space are clearly divided into the sacred and the profane. The Ukrainian parallel proves, contrary to Otto Maenchen-Helfen's opinion (Maenchen-Helfen 1944–1945: 245–248), that Jordanes's report about the Gothic witches has folkloric rather than bookish origin.

ERMANARIC AND SAINT SABBAS AS COSSACKS?

As there have already been attempts to reconstruct separate fragments of the Gothic epic texts belonging to the cycle of the Ostrogothic king Ermanaric (*Hermanaricus*, *Eormenric*, *Jörmunrekkr*) subsequently defeated by the Huns, it is noteworthy that according to the oral records taken in the early nineteenth century from the last old Zaporozhian Cossacks, witnesses of the fall of the Sich, the first Zaporozhian *otaman* (military leader) and the founder of the Sich society was a certain Herman (Storozhenko 1957: 246–247; Ustnoye 1842: 85). It is important to remember that the Antes, possible forefathers of the modern

Ukrainians, were a part of Ermanaric's empire. Such identification of the medieval Goths with the Cossacks is oddly reflected in the Ukrainian folk belief that Saint Sabbas (*sviatyi Savka*) comes "from the Cossacks and is very kind to us" (*iz kozakov i duzhe do nas dobryi*) unlike Saint Nicholas who is believed to protect the Russian interests and does things "in the Muscovite favour" (*na moskovs'ku ruku*). This belief was recorded by Nikolai Leskov, a scholar of clandestine folk religiousness and a Russian writer, in his short story "Unbaptised Priest" (1877) (Leskov 1957: 202). It leads to important outcomes in the light of the classic work by Boris Uspenskii about the cult of Saint Nicholas, which also uses works by Leskov as an ethnographic source (Uspenskii 1982: 30, 32). What is more important is that Kostiantyn Tyschenko, a Ukrainian linguist and culturologist, stressed the fact of the Gothic ethnic origin of Saint Sabbas in connection with the above-mentioned ethnographic data (Tyschenko 2008: 460). It proves the possibility of the existence of the cultural substratum of Gothic origin in the Ukrainian inhabitants of the northern Circum-Pontic region.

CONCLUSION

The epic resettlement of the Goths preserved in the heroic legends at the time of Jordanes from Ravenna left an ineffaceable imprint on the national memory of the people who interacted with the Germanic tribes and came to take their place. Their motifs, re-interpreted and adapted according to Slavonic narrative tradition, played a role in the formation of the folklore concepts of Zaporozhian Cossacks' history. Studies of Ukrainian folklore, in which folk prose plays an important role, are going to contribute to solving of numerous other questions, for instance, the issues of the Scythian, Sarmato-Alanian, and Germanic substratum in composing the ethnographically recorded traditional Ukrainian culture.

NOTES

¹ Ukrainian Hetman of the Zaporozhian Host.

² The original text is as follows:

Богатства Сечи, как жаловались оставшиеся от разгрома Сечевики, разграблены Донцами.

– Пропала наша Сечь ни за цапову (козлиную) душу! На веки вечные, сердечная, провалилась! Московская Нора теперь в ней завелась! – так говорили Запорожцы о Полковнике Норове, который в первое время после уничтожения Коша оставлен был начальником в этих местах.

– Од бабы пропала наша славная Запорожская Сечь, от бабы! Правду напорочила проклятая ведьма, – толковал один чубатый старик, уцелевший от времен Запорожья.

– Як так, дедусю? – спрашивали внуки.

– А от воно. Як не було в Запорожьи целее лето доща, все в поле почорнело, выгорело до последней былинки. Настав голод. Знаюцци люди догадались, що дощ крадутъ ведьмы, и нашли двух, трех, таких старых ведьм, и як их пришпарили Сечовики, сами воны и повинились, а як стали их топить в речце, одна, утопаючи, и закричала:

– От же, вы, Запороженьки, губите нас, баб: сгубит и вас самих баба!

Воно так и вышло теперь по заклятью вражой ведьмы: Царица Катерина розорила Запорозькое гнездо – Сечь.

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