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Edukacja - Technika - Informatyka nr 2(20), 126-130

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2017

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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## Finding Spiritual Core: Union of the Believers of the Ukrainian Native Faith

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### Abstract

In this article considered Union of the Believers of the Ukrainian Native Faith as Ukrainian ethno-confession, described the institutionalization of this religious organization. Author draws the attention to the ideological basis of confession. Aim of this article - show that modern paganism as the religious-ideological phenomenon has become an important part of the cultural life of Ukraine.

**Keywords:** Union of the Believers of the Ukrainian Native Faith, Galina Lozko, ethnology, modern paganism

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### Introduction

To understand what modern paganism, native faith, neopaganism, you have to provide the word to followers of this movement. Today in the very diverse pagan environment was accumulated enough materials so that we can look behind the scenes of this issue. The basis of the study there are publications of pagan organizations, websites, interviews, questionnaires, personal observations. Attention paid to changing ideas about modern paganism from modern pagans, from the time the first communities in Ukraine and up to today.

### Opinions of Native Faith confessors at the revival of pagan religious and philosophical foundations

As recalled in an interview with the priest Vohnedar (Union of the Believers of the Ukrainian Native Faith, ORU), at a certain stage of spiritual quest he realized that “paganism – it is not »paganism« but high culture” (Prist Vohnedar...). Also Vohnedar as virtually all the Gentiles, says the term “neopaganism” completely inappropriate to describe this movement: “The term »neopaganism« appropriate to apply where there is no reliance on tradition. That is it! In addition,

for us is unacceptable in its application to the ORU. Because we are traditionalists” (Prist Vohnedar...).

Originally, themselves the initiators of the movement, its active followers have not yet developed a clear understanding of what would happen. However, there was a strong desire to understand the intricacies of ancient historical religion, to find its cultural core. The most consistent and multifaceted defends her views ORU founder and chairperson Galina Lozko (Priestess Zoreslava). Her book “Ukrainian paganism” (1994) caused a furor in some circles. Printed on newsprint, with inconspicuous cover, actually booklet, it passed from hand to hand as their time underground works. In this book, the author outlined her views “in Ukrainian mythology as ancient Gods on Olympus, who worshiped Ukrainian ancestors”. She clearly stated that “the Ukrainian paganism – it’s ancient national faith of our people. It preserved the rites and customs, legends, wills, legends, myths, written by ethnographers and folklorists. Now it needs organizing, rethinking, removal of later accretions and transmitting to our descendants” (Лозко, 1994, p. 2–3). That is, the author stressed the continuity of paganism. Paganism survived the age of transformation, a conservation, in a state where it needs to “shake” breathe new life and establish a customary practice. The main idea and purpose of the ancient Ukrainian faith Galyna Lozko considers “an organization that is organizing the environment” that “opposes chaos and destruction” (Лозко, 1995a, p. 3). Priestess Zoreslava calls Ukrainian paganism (Native Faith) traditional, indigenous religion. It is necessary in practice to provide equal rights with other religions, in spite of its much smaller financial and material capabilities and human resources (Лозко, 1995b, p. 5). Very clearly what a “Ukrainian paganism” and own “paganism” formulated in her book “Awakened Aeneas. European ethno renaissance”. Therefore, we consider it necessary to quote a passage from the work: “Ukrainian paganism – natural Ukrainian ethnic religion that emerged in Ukraine by Old Russian (or old Ukrainian) language means and folk customs that among the spiritual polished layers, becoming sacred tradition handed down from generation to generation among the people. It has value as a taxonomic species segment Slavic paganism. (...) the word [paganism – O.S.] is consider a neutral scientific term, because it belongs to the Slavic vocabulary, and, in the name of the body (tongue), also indicates the language, tribe, people with a common language, territory and religious practices”. The term “Ukrainian paganism” is conditional, because ethnic groups who lived in Ukraine in ancient times, were not called Ukrainian (Лозко, 2006, p. 263–264). The basis for the revival of the native faith Priestess Zoreslava sees the reflections contained Volodymyr Shayan in his works, including the “faith of our ancestors”. In its reports on various conferences, forums and meetings ORU head repeatedly recalls the philosophical understanding of ancient traditions and their relevance in our time, the ability to function in the modern

world, the need to transfer knowledge to future generations “in a renewed form of pagan customs and heroic actions, moral ethics, natural philosophy, and also important – openly oppose conscious distortion, simplification and distortion of the true native tribal traditions”. Priestess Zoreslava clearly separates modern paganism, native faith and new-age, considering the last dangerous for the development of ethnicity and its culture, spirituality, one that is global threat. It is understood each direction, who considers himself a pagan, should be based primarily on common sense, without imagination and fantasy, with no mystical revelations, based solely on the desire to provide outrageous and significance own person ideologues and leaders of a direction (Лозко, 2011). So, for Galina Lozko modern paganism in Ukraine it is – a natural process of revival of ethnic religiosity (broader-life) as a reaction to certain circles of society on the process of globalization, which, among other things, entail and cultural and ethnic assimilation, causing a natural reaction resist such a development option. This process has encompassed virtually all countries of the Western cultural circle that shows the critical state of Christianity and the ideology of consumer society. Modern Paganism is not identical to pre-Christian paganism. It is inspired by the ideas of the surviving sources of different origin and, combined with the personal vision of the leaders and ideologists of the movement to folklore practice, data archeology, history, philology, which are treated pretty freely, sometimes relying on a serious scientific basis and sometimes nourished fantastic views adapted to the conditions of today’s universe while trying to give him shade archaic. Modern Paganism is quite ambitious, its followers want to take an active civic and sometimes political position. This factor we regard as necessary for movement in particular and society in general. Because the active, creative personality, despite religious and other beliefs still “moving history” does not give “to be the swamp”. The high level of patriotism Ukraine is vital at this stage of development, hard struggle against the aggressor against crafty pseudo-patriots. If you talk about the entertainment side of the pagan movement (festivals, rituals), it attracts people’s attention, causing sometimes a desire not only to stand-see “what kind of people and what they are busy”, but also interested in cultural history, folklore, festivals, is necessary to modern man, especially urban residents, detached from the roots of the earth, from nature in the broadest sense. Another representative ORU, Dobroslav Hirak, head and priest of the community of Gentiles of the Lviv city “Red Russ”, identifies in pagan movement of Ukraine two main areas. To the first he refers ethnic Ukrainians, who study and seek to restore and preserve the spiritual and material values of their ancestors. Representatives of this area consider the aim of activity to provide a basis for a nation state, but their main problem – poor organization and dispersion. Representatives of the second direction are more prone to the occult, meditation, commercialization motion seeks “spiritual occupation in Ukraine, first of all,

from Moscow” [<http://www.ridnovira.org/index.php/tanets/9-bez-kategoriji/689-naruga-nad-obrazaty-bohiv-d-hirak>].

Representatives ORU call their activities “revival of Ukrainian Native Faith” as autochthonous religions Ukrainian ancestors, with more than seven thousand story: “(...) it [religion – O.S.] was created by the people, improved by clergy (priests and magicians) and developed with folk culture as its spiritual component”. After the Prince Vladimir religious reform “confession of Native Faith Russ-Ukraine moved into hiding and lasted a thousand years in hidden forms in parallel with the official Christianity”. Stay Ukraine “under the Moscow Communist occupation prevented its revival”, which launched in 1934. V. Shayan. The full revival became possible only after 1991, when Ukraine became a sovereign state.

### **Institutional development of the ORU**

Over the years, ORU has passed a serious path of organizational design. At first it was a group of enthusiastic romantic who rallied around Galina Lozko and created community of Gentiles of Kyiv “Pravoslaviya” in 1993. Then they have become all-Ukrainian confession with official registration in state government as the religious center of religious communities Association pagans Ukraine. Among their achievements in the field of revival of spiritual culture pagans say: “learning spiritual state of the priest, creating communities of Ukrainian pagans in regions Ukraine”, publishing, translation of “Veles book”, Journal “Svarog”, scientific reconstruction of the astronomical calendar, restoring rituals and customary culture, Sunday schools Ukrainian Native Faith “and the creation of Ukrainian Theological Academy Gentiles” (Релігійна конфесія Об’єднання рідновірів України).

### **Conclusion**

Modern Paganism safely took place in the confessional and the cultural map of Ukraine, announced himself as a bright and original phenomenon. Without serious financial and material resources, without broad support of government and society, paganism in Ukraine is not lost, not damped, but throughout its history has undergone some transformation, rethinking their goals and objectives, more or less divided into areas and the association stayed an important part of the national cultural life of Ukraine. With regard to the ORU, this pagan organization, nevertheless, is authority for many other members of the Pagan movement.

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