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UKRAINIAN EASTER EGGS

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EASTER EGGS

THE EGG, AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE LIFE PRINCIPLE, HAS been associated with mythical and religious ceremonies from earliest pagan times. With the advent of Christianity, the egg transcended its symbolism of nature's rebirth and became the representation of man's rebirth. Christianity absorbed the egg symbol which was likened to the tomb from which Christ arose. During earliest Christian ceremonies commemorating the Resurrection of Christ, rich ornamentation of the egg began, and the egg was kept as a religious memento. In 988 A.D., when Ukraine accepted Christianity, the decorated Easter egg became an important symbol in the Ukrainian rituals of the new religion. After the abstinence of Lent, eggs were also eaten to break the fast.

Of the various types of Easter eggs in the Ukraine, the *pysanka* and the *krashanka* are the most widely known. *Krashanka* (plural *krashanky*) is derived from the word *kraska* meaning color. *Krashanka* is a hard-boiled egg, dyed a solid brilliant color, which may be eaten. *Pysanka* (plural *pysanky*) stems from the verb *pysaty* (to write), as the designs are actually written on the egg, which is then dyed in several colors. *Pysanky* are raw and are not eaten.

Many ancient folk tales about Easter eggs are still commonly told in Ukraine.

EASTER EGG

LEGENDS

From the colorful Hutzuls, in Western Ukraine, comes a story of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During the agony of Christ, it is said, she decorated some *pysanky* to offer to Pontius Pilate when pleading for her Son's life. As she prepared them, her tears fell on the eggs, forming dots of brilliant color. (To this day, dots are often incorporated in *pysanky* designs in honor of Our Lady's tears.) When she came before Pilate, Mary dropped to her knees in grief. As she did so, the *pysanky* rolled from her apron across the floor, and continued to roll until they were distributed around the world. At Easter-time in Ukraine, *pysanky* are still distributed to commemorate His teachings of peace and love.

Among the Hutzuls there is a belief that the fate of the world depends upon *pysanky*. As long as egg-decorating continues, the world will exist. Should the custom cease, evil, in the guise of an ancient, vicious monster chained to a huge cliff, will encompass the world and destroy it. Each year the monster's servants encircle the globe, keeping a record of the number of *pysanky* made. When there are few, the monster's chains loosen, and evil flows through the world. When there are many, the monster's chains hold taut, allowing love to conquer evil.

As preparations for a coming Easter holiday begin, parents throughout Ukraine tell this tale of a Cyrenian peddler to their children:

One day, as a poor peddler was on his way to the market place to sell his wares—a basket of eggs—he came upon an angry crowd. They were mocking a man staggering beneath the weight of a heavy cross on which he about to be crucified.

The peddler, taking pity on him and leaving his basket by the roadside, ran to his assistance. Upon his return, he found his entire basket of eggs had been transformed into exquisite *pysanky*. The man was Christ, the peddler, Simon.

Each province, each village, indeed, almost each family in Ukraine, has its own special ritual, its own symbols, meanings and secret formulas for dyeing eggs. These heritages are preserved faithfully and passed down from mother to daughter through generations. The custom of decorating *pysanky* is observed with greatest care, and a *pysanka*, after receiving the Easter blessing, is held to contain great powers as a talisman.

MYSTICAL
POWERS AS
TALISMANS

A bowlful of *pysanky* was invariably kept in every home, serving not only as a colorful display but also as protection against lightning and fire. Some were emptied and a bird's head made of wax and wings and tail feathers of folded paper attached. These "doves" or "pigeons" were suspended before icons in commemoration of the birth of Christ, when a dove came down from heaven and soared over the Child Jesus.

Peasants placed *krashanka* shells in the thatched roofs of their homes and under hay mounds to turn away high winds. Beekeepers put them under hives for a good supply of honey. On St. George's Day, a *krashanka* was rolled in green oats and buried in the ground so that the harvest would be full and not harmed by rain or wind.

The *krashanka* was also credited with healing powers. A *krashanka*, blessed on Easter eve, was suspended on a string from the neck of a seriously ill person, or touched to infected areas on persons suffering from blood poisoning to effect a cure.

OLD RITUAL
OF EGG
DECORATING

Many variations in the process of egg dyeing are found, as well as in the accompanying rituals. But, throughout the whole of Ukraine, the custom was observed solemnly and with great ceremony. Hutzuls are, perhaps, most noted for their intricately-decorated eggs. Their patterns are predominantly geometric with abstract adaptations of many familiar objects or places.

Dyes were made from dried plants, roots, barks or berries, or any local growth proving suitable. Yellow was secured from the dried blossoms of the woadwaxen. These blossoms were gathered before the Feast of St. John (July 7th—Gregorian Calendar). A pale yellow was extracted from the lowly onion. Red was obtained from Brazil wood and logwood; dark green and violet from seed husks of the sunflower and the berries and bark of the elderberry bush and the bark of the alder tree. A fine black dye was extracted from walnuts.

The eggs usually were prepared in secret, using methods handed down from mother to daughter to attain the necessary brilliance, clarity and lasting color. Often chemical dyes of rare colors were purchased from traders.

During the middle of the Lenten season, the Hutzul woman begins the work of decorating the eggs, putting aside those eggs most perfectly shaped and smooth. About six of these eggs are most important. Each must be the first laid egg of a young hen. At sunrise on Monday of Holy Week, these eggs are cracked against a budding tree and the yolks kept for as long as she is decorating eggs. These are used as a binder for her dyes, and later, for giving a light gloss to the finished eggs.

Before evening of the same day, the dyes are prepared

and at least two *kistky* made. *Kistky* are the instruments with which wax is applied to the egg. They are made by wrapping a small quadrangle of thin, flexible brass lengthwise around a needle, forming a hollow cone with a minute opening at the tip. This cone is attached at right angles to a small stick, i.e., it is wedged into the flattened, split end and tied, or, simply tied securely to the side of the stick. Horsehair is most often used in the tying, and a hair also inserted into the brass cone to aid the flow of wax.

To heat the beeswax and keep it at an even temperature, it is placed in a small cup, set on coal ashes and wood charcoal in a large earthenware jar. Glowing charcoal is packed from the bottom of the jar to the top-center and encircled by ashes which act as insulation.

After being washed in cold water, or sometimes in sour whey, the selected eggs are wrapped in soft cloth and put in a warming oven to dry. The eggs must be kept slightly warm, as wax hardens too rapidly on a cold egg, preventing the wax from clinging where necessary to shed the dyes.

To begin her design, after the proper prayer and blessing, the craftswoman dips the tip of her *kistka* into the melted wax and tests its flow on her fingernail. She then proceeds to draw the basic lines on the egg. Holding it with the fingers of her left hand, she rotates the egg swiftly as she works. The *kistka* is held between the thumb and first two fingers of her right hand, allowing her remaining two fingers to balance on the egg.

When lines and areas planned to be left white are detailed, the egg is carefully lowered into the first and lightest

color, usually yellow. When it reaches the desired shade, it is removed and dried thoroughly with great care to avoid scratching the wax. If green is to be part of the design it is usually applied with a stick to the necessary area. This is then covered with wax, because a green bath tends to dull succeeding colors. If blue is needed, it is applied by the same method to a white egg.

If orange is to be the next color, the lines and areas that are to remain yellow are drawn in with wax, the egg dipped in the orange bath, and dried. Orange is then incorporated into the pattern by sealing it with wax.

And so the process is repeated, with each color progressively darker until the final and darkest color is reached. Since each successive color is darker than the preceding one, undercolors are always automatically cancelled. For the darkest colors, eggs are often left in dye overnight to achieve the necessary intensity. Since only six or a dozen eggs are decorated at one time, the entire process lasts several days.

Most Easter egg designs are of ancient pagan origin, but each woman applies her own skill and ingenuity in creating, combining and arranging patterns and colors harmoniously. Rarely are two eggs decorated identically. Finished *pysanky* are kept well-hidden from the eyes of prying neighbors, lest someone try to imitate an original design. It is not until Holy Saturday, when food prepared for the Easter Sunday feast is brought to church for the holy water blessing, that *pysanky* are exposed to public view. The peasants present their priests with *krashanky* and *pysanky* saying, "Christ is risen," and receive the reply, "He is risen indeed."

On Easter morn, the Lenten fast is broken by the family's sharing a hard-cooked *krashanka*. Then the feasting begins.

The meal is usually interrupted by the church bell's pealing, indicating that one of the village boys has finished his meal—or more likely has taken most of it with him—in order to be the first to ring the bell. Successful accomplishment of this predicts he will be first in everything in the coming year.

The youngest boys gather in groups on the church lawn to play such games as the "Trial of the *Krashanky*." They test the durability of their hard-cooked *krashanky* by tapping theirs against an opponent's until one is cracked. The victor takes the spoils and another egg is immediately pitted against his winning one. Finally, the winner claims all, or as many uneaten ones as he can get. It is considered sacrilege to toss the shells away carelessly. They can only be disposed of by burning or casting them into flowing water.

The older youths now wait impatiently for the girls to arrive, as it is at this time that the blushing maidens present their favorite beaux with a special *pysanka*. This is an encouragement of fondness, and an engagement is likely to be announced soon. Easter songs and dances, *hayivky*, start in small groups and soon everyone is participating in the festivities.

Pysanky are exchanged throughout the three days of the Easter holiday, each presentation prefaced with, "Christ is risen," and the reply, "He is risen indeed."

On the Monday following Easter Monday, *Blazhenni*, a feast of Slav origin particularly observed by women, is celebrated. *Blazhenni* are mythical, meek, good-natured men, agreeable to God, who live in a distant land beside the "Sunday

Waters." They seem to be out of touch with world happenings and evidently are without a calendar, for they do not know when Easter occurs. Ukrainian women, therefore, throw red *krashanky* shells into a running stream to be carried down to them, so that they will know Easter has come.

When a Ukrainian woman sat down to her solemn task of decorating *pysanky*, made the sign of the Cross and whispered, "God, help me!" she believed He would. Using age-old symbols familiar to her village or province, she would begin her basic design as had been done a thousand times before. And though she used the same plan, she always achieved variety.

BASIC DESIGNS

With the problem of planning the decoration of an egg, one faces the technical difficulty of placing a design on its uneven surface. This is solved by dividing the egg into sections, or fields, with basic lines running perpendicularly and/or horizontally around the egg. The entire design is based on these divisions, for they separate individual motifs which are repeated two, four, six, and sometimes as many as forty times. Secondary divisions are formed by single lines dividing these original fields into smaller sections in which individual parts of the design are placed.

Though sometimes formed by a single line, the basic or primary-division design is usually more complex, varying from two- or three-colored bands to ornate patterns resembling embroidery. (The arts of embroidery and egg decorating have influenced each

other in Ukraine, and it is disputed as to which is the earlier.) Primary divisions usually run lengthwise around the egg, thus dividing it into two equal parts, each to be filled with the same design.

The egg was rarely divided in half horizontally, centering the design on either end. Also, it was seldom divided by lines which formed a cross, making four fields.

Much more frequent is the division consisting of two bands running lengthwise, crossing at right angles to each other at either end, with another crossing these horizontally. The egg is thus divided into eight sections with the same design repeated in each. Sometimes, there are only two bands running lengthwise, none horizontally, forming only four longitudinal fields.

A separate group is formed by those eggs decorated in the form of a barrel. Here we find two basic lines of division which run around the egg horizontally. Thus the egg is divided into three parts, with a wheel at either end and a cylinder in the middle. Or, there may be lengthwise divisions as well as horizontal. In some cases the divisions are imaginary, that is, they are not formed by actual lines. Nevertheless, the egg is divided into six fields, i.e., the cylinder containing the design four times, with the same design repeated at either end.

Other forms appear spasmodically. One fascinating design divides the egg into 32 to 40 trapezoids or

triangles, while the design is repeated in each or alternate fields.

MEANINGS
OF THE
SYMBOLS

Passing to the nature of the designs themselves, they may be classified into three categories: GEOMETRIC, PLANT, and ANIMAL.

These groups rarely occur separately and are usually employed together in one and the same pattern.

Though it may be dangerous to generalize, there are a few definite characteristics which aid in recognizing patterns from different sections of Ukraine. The Hutzuls of the Carpathian Mountains exhibit a great love of detail and use delicate, intricate geometric patterns. Traces of ancient Greek symbols, mute evidence of the centuries-long seclusion of these mountaineers, also are found.

To the northwest, centuries ago, political and religious objectors were banished to the Polissya area. They settled in this isolated country, separated from the world by swamps and waters, and developed a life and art unique from their neighbors. Theirs also is a variant of the geometric art with traces of floral ornamentation brought from the East.

The decorative motifs of the middle and eastern parts of the country bear marks of Oriental origin. Sensitive, conventionalized floral patterns suggest the trade routes along which they originated.

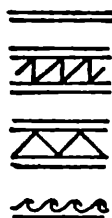
GEOMETRIC MOTIFS

Geometric motifs are the oldest and most general form of ornamentation. Alone, they have no characteristic fea-

tures, for these simple forms are found among all peoples. Among Ukrainians, however, individual motifs bear specific names. Very often these names vary from village to village. In many cases, these geometric representations have been modified, and so have lost their original names and meanings, and have been renamed according to the new interpretation.



DOTS—most primitive of motifs are used in conjunctions with lines—usually to form a division. Dots may be small points or large ovals. Sometimes they are scattered over the field of a design suggesting stars.



RIBBON, BELT—another primitive and universal motif. May be a combination of individual lines or of wider stripes. The motif may be made lengthwise and horizontally (leaving the fields between them blank or with a design added). Since the “belt” encircles the egg, having no beginning or end, it is called the “endless line,” symbolizing eternity.



SIEVE, LITTLE SIEVE, NET—has been found on pre-historic stone, clay and bronze articles and also on Rhodian vases showing traces of Asiatic motifs. It consists of a series of lines, longitudinally crossed by bars, which may be either straight or oblique resulting in the so-called plait. This plait is found frequently on *pysanka* motifs, especially those of the *Hutzuls*.



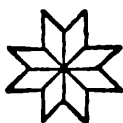
LITTLE BASKETS—take the shape of a triangle or rhomb, shaded with cross lines. They may be used independently or in combination, i.e., placed around the center of the egg with the sharp ends pointing out, thus forming a six- or eight-pointed star. As a triangle, they symbolize any trio, i.e., Holy Trinity; fire, air, water; three stages of man, etc.



LADDERS—never occur independently. They are always used in combination with other motifs, such as along the line of division, or as the main motif where there is space between two parallel lines to be filled in, especially in crosses.



COMB, RAKE, LITTLE RAKE, FINGERS—consists of a long line on which there is a series of short straight lines, like a comb or rake. The name “rake” applies particularly to a form which also has a straight line, like the handle of a rake.



STAR—a difficult motif to distinguish from that called the “rose.” Both have the appearance of a star with colored rays. “Roses” have one distinguishing characteristic in that they are always placed in the center of the broad side of the egg, while stars are dispersed over the entire field. “Roses” usually have some other floral motif as part of the pattern, while stars do not. The use of stars on *pysanky* very widespread. The 8-pointed form was believed to have been the symbol of the pagan sun god, Atar.

CROSS—took its place as a motif long before the dawn of Christianity. Even today it is found among pagan African and Australian tribes. Nevertheless, on *pysanky*, its significance is exclusively religious. Often, a corresponding Easter inscription is found on the *pysanka*. This type of *pysanka* is usually offered to a priest on Easter.



The form of the cross varies: the Greek cross with four equal arms, either straight with a small cross on each arm, or in the form of triangles turned with their points to the center and the base broken by a wedge. Sometimes the arms become a rhomb, thus forming the ancient Byzantine cross. Under the influence of Latinism, crosses with the prolonged lower arm appeared, as well as the oblique St. Andrews cross with the arms treated as triangles, and the three-barred cross set on a tiered base.

HORNS, BENDS, SPIRALS, MAIDENS—All these names more or less denote the same motif, i.e., various combinations of spiral lines. Up to this point, motifs were very primitive and undeveloped. Now, for the first time, we meet a curved motif which is far younger than the others. They appear on many *pysanky* from Volhyn in the form of a single (a) or double spiral (b). The latter is the sign of the ram. If the spiral is only slightly bent, it is called "horns." If strongly curled, "hooks." The form with lines obliquely lengthened into a spiral is called "maid-



d

ens" (c). By combining two spirals we get the form commonly called the "coal ax" (d).



A WAVE, A SAW—Two parallel lines broken like a saw. This motif is quite rare on pysanky, but was used in medieval embroideries. It denotes death and was most frequently employed on funeral palls.



EYES—A curved line motif, a single spiral. When used as a series on a straight line, it is identical with the motif usually called "apple," and is, therefore, considered a plant design.



SPOONS—This might be confused with a plant motif, rather than something resembling a spoon. It is, in fact, nothing but a leaf on a slender stalk, yet it is noted that "leaves" appear two or three in number, but "spoons" occur independently. (We interpret this as a plant motif, but use the name "spoon" because of its distant similarity to the material object.)



A CIRCLE, A POPPY, A SPIDERWEB—Finally, we come to a motif which is purely geometric, but which, by great variation, has assumed various names and falls into all three classes of ornamentation. It is the sign of the sun and the symbol of good fortune.

It appears most frequently in the forms (a) and (b). An ancient Oriental form (c) appears very frequently on old Gallic coins. In this symbolic meaning, as a sign of something bright and noble, it



passed into Christian times. The form (d) is found in Slavonic embroideries, especially Moravian and Hanatskian. Because of its resemblance to the crown of a "poppy" with the little spokes, it received that name. All these variations have been found in *pysanky* designs, along with the most common "sun" symbol, curved spokes protruding from a circle (e), popularly known as "spiderweb."

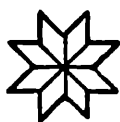
PLANT MOTIFS

There are a few geometric motifs with curved lines which are a transition to plant ornamentation. Stems develop from lines; leaves and floral wreaths from spirals, and especially from their combinations. These then lose their imagined forms, acquiring realistic features, i.e., take the shape of certain plant forms. On *pysanky*, plant ornamentation is closely allied with geometric form, supplementing it and forming an harmonious whole. Either a whole plant, or, more frequently, some part of it are depicted—flower, leaf or branch. Here, as in the case of geometric patterns, popular names exist for individual motifs:



ROSE—This is an excellent and beautiful example of primitive plant ornamentation. At a glance it would be impossible to regard this as a plant, for it seems to be a star. Indeed, this motif is placed in the centre of the broad side of the egg, where all lines of the grill meet; one petal in the form of a rhomb

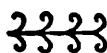
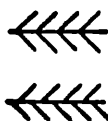
with markedly sharp corners, is placed between each two. The whole gives the appearance of a star and even a system of stars, one upon the other. There are, on the average, eight petals (more rarely six). Almost always, geometric ornaments such as rakes, baskets or other plant motifs are added. A variation of the "rose" motif is:



The empty rose—This varies from a six- or eight-pointed star in that it has only one row of rhomb petals. In the center, a small yellow triangle, representing the yellow stamen, appears.



PINE TREE—An ancient symbol which, in most cases, occurs with solar symbols. Pines are found in all possible combinations. One of these is a long line with short strokes on each side, representing pine needles. The needles are in an even line, schematically arranged or alternately, in pairs, and are believed to symbolize eternal youth and health.



APPLES—This motif is a series of spirals arranged on both sides of a straight line.

GRAPEVINE—A faithful reproduction of a grape cluster or some flowers with leaves.



TREE—A trunk with rough bark is drawn, from which slender lines protrude in the many directions representing branches.



BARVINOK (periwinkle)—Three long leaves joined on one stem. The stems usually form a cross (a union of four).

All other forms of plant ornamentation are usually called "leaves" or "flowers," depending upon the subject of the drawing.

The fact that artists cannot name the greater number of plants reproduced indicates that we are not dealing with naturalistic ornamentation. As a matter of fact, in many cases, it is impossible to identify the plants botanically. Individual features of several plants are depicted together and other geometric elements added. Ornamentation of *pysanky* and embroidery never aims at presenting natural plant details.

ANIMAL MOTIFS

Animal motifs offer technical difficulties. The area on which these motifs are to be drawn favors geometric or plant ornamentation. In representations of animals, the work must be in miniature and requires great skill. For these reasons, *pysanky* of this type are rare.

In animal motifs we must distinguish between two kinds which are completely different in origin. They are those showing individual parts of the animal body, such as horns, feet, etc., and those where the entire body is sketched. Let us begin with the first group.



RAM'S HORNS—A long elliptical figure bent at both ends toward the center, forming a crescent. This is nothing more than a double spiral, basically a geometric motif. Only through its approach to nature did the present name and form arise. This design is always connected with some geometric motif, i.e., a cross, star, triangle.



HEN'S FEET—This motif acquired its name through its resemblance to a hen's foot. It is the old geometric trident motif.



The trident was used in distant antiquity, entered the Phoenician and Greek alphabets, and also became a runic sign. Today there is an attempt to adapt this to a hen's foot. The central line is prolonged and red dots are placed at the ends representing the roundness of a hen's toes around the claws.



GOOSE OR DUCK FEET—This represents a foot with three webbed toes. The webbing is usually painted in red. On occasion half is painted in black and half in yellow. Yet, this is primarily a plant motif of a broad-leaved form. Both forms, the feet of the goose and the duck, are identical, distinguishable only by size.

The other class of animal motif, that which represents the entire body, has quite a different origin. Here, observation of nature and imitation play a predominant role.

Passing to drawings of various animals, abstract versions of small animals, insects, birds, and, more rarely, larger animals are used. Only those animals native to a locale are represented.



BUTTERFLIES—There are two varieties: symbolic and naturalistic. The first is more like four long leaves bound in a cluster rather than any living creature. The second represents an insect skillfully drawn

from nature. The insect does not necessarily have to be a butterfly. The term is generic, representing any insect.



SPIDERS—Depicted without any attempt at naturalism. Transferred from the geometric motifs by a very distant comparison to a spider with outstretched legs.



STORKS, HENS, ROOSTERS, SPARROWS—These birds are rendered naturalistically. At first glance it is not possible to distinguish one from the other. Hens are often placed on branches. Unlike butterflies, which are always shown in flight with outstretched wings, birds are always depicted at rest. The hen, as the actual fruition of the egg, symbolizes fertility and the fulfillment of wishes.



FISH—On some *pysanky* we find whole fish incorporated into the design. This is an ancient symbol of Christianity.



REINDEER, HORSE—The Hutzuls' mountains are a constant source of inspiration to them. Among their egg motifs the reindeer, prevalent in that part of the country, or sometimes a horse, can be found. These are placed in quadrangles or open spaces in the patterns and symbolize wealth and prosperity.

MODERN METHODS OF EGG DECORATING

MATERIALS NEEDED

Just as the preparation and process of egg decorating varies in Ukraine, so it does in this country. Basically, the principle is exactly the same. Wax is applied to the egg to protect the different areas from the dyes. But a charcoal-filled earthenware vessel is not used to heat the wax. Instead, some use a midget double boiler over a Bunsen burner or an alcohol stove. Most often, however, the *kistka*, or writing instrument, is held directly over the flame of a candle or an alcohol burner. When the *kistka*'s brass head is hot, it is sunk into a block of beeswax, thus melting the wax. A small amount of wax is drawn into the hollow core of the *kistka*, the heated metal keeping the wax fluid.

Another method is to use a wide (approximately 3" diameter) candle made of pure unbleached beeswax, with a thin wick. This can easily be made by melting the wax and pouring it into an opened tin can, smooth at one end. The wick—a piece of string—is first taped in place to the inside center bottom of the can. When the wax has been poured, the wick is tied to a pencil and laid across the top of the can. To remove when hardened, cut open the bottom of the can and push the candle through. Heat the bottom of the candle and fasten to a small flat plate.

Soon after the wick is lighted a puddle of melted wax forms around the flame. The *kistka* is then heated in the flame

and dipped into the melted candle wax. When the writing instrument has been tested on the thumbnail to make sure the wax is flowing smoothly, you can proceed to "write" the primary lines on the egg.

The position of the *kistka* in the hand depends upon the individual artist, but the same position in which we are accustomed to holding a pencil will probably prove most comfortable. For a smooth, even flow of wax, the brass tip of the writing instrument must be held at right angles to the egg so that the entire circumference of the *kistka*'s tip is held against the egg.

KISTKA—A writing instrument, also known as a *pysaltse*, with which the melted beeswax is applied to the egg, is a small metal cone attached to a stick. Shapes and sizes vary, but the main requirement is a pin-point opening at the end of a metal cone (or tube), through which the wax may flow. Fine chimbrass proves a good heat-retaining material to make a *kistka*, and is very thin and flexible. A small triangular-shaped piece is rolled lengthwise around a needle forming a cone with both ends open and a stick (preferably of willow, at least 5" long) is slit at one end, and the metal cone inserted at right angles. To secure the cone to the stick, it is wrapped with fine steel wire. Sometimes the point of the *kistka* needs to be filed or sanded smooth so that the entire circumference of the opening will touch the egg, thus assuring an even flow of wax. It is a good idea to keep several *kistkas* on hand with different-sized openings for fine lines or for filling-in areas.

DYES—Strong chemical dyes in powder form are best when many brilliant colors are needed, as in most *pysanky* designs. Dyes must be effective when cool, since hot solutions would

melt the wax. To dissolve the dye, however, a little hot water is added and the powder mixed until a smooth paste results. Then enough warm water to cover the egg is added to the paste. A dash of vinegar will help the color "take" better.

The dye found in crepe paper is also good, but the method for extracting this dye is messy. It must be extracted by pouring boiling water over the crepe paper which is then squeezed and stirred until all the dye has been removed. Vinegar is also added.

EGGS—Clean, white, unblemished eggs are carefully selected. Size and shape are also important factors. If it is necessary to wash an egg, soap is not used as this tends to remove natural oils which aid the dye in adhering evenly. Boiling also removes these oils and causes faded spots to appear on the finished *pysanka*. Therefore, raw eggs are used. Contents may be blown out of the egg when the design has been completed, but this is not really necessary since the egg will dry out in time.

Other requirements include a small rubber band, clean wiping cloths, spoons or egg dippers, thinned shellac and a lintless cloth.

The beginner may need some steadying assistance in applying his initial guide lines. For this, a small rubber band stretched around the egg vertically from "head" to "tail" is helpful. Pencil lines may be drawn along the rubber band, or the wax applied directly as next described.

The candle is lit and the "ritual" about to start.

The hands must be very clean and free from oil. Use a thin glove on the left hand if necessary. Hold the egg with

the thumb, second, third and fourth fingers. Take up the *kistka* with the other hand and hold its tip in the darkest part of the flame. When the tip is hot enough, dip into the melted beeswax puddle formed by the candle (or into a cold cake of beeswax if you are using a paraffin candle). Test the tip of the "*kistka*" on the thumbnail to make sure the wax will not blot, then draw a line next to the right side of the rubber band. As soon as the wax in the *kistka* stops flowing, reheat, dip in wax and heat again. It is possible to make a line around the entire egg before reheating.

Rotate the egg as you work, but always be sure to keep the *kistka* at right angles against it in almost stationary position, while the egg is constantly being turned in the other hand.

For a glaze, shellac thinned with alcohol is applied with a lintless cloth. Rub the entire egg with it very quickly and gently. Then set the egg on a clean surface and do not touch until dry. Repeat this process until the desired gloss is achieved.

For more intricate designs where more colors are desired, great care must be taken about the succession of colors. If small areas of blue are needed (as green in the egg design just described), apply it with a brush before it has been dipped into any color, then cover with wax.

When using two colors of the same intensity, it is necessary to bleach out the first color before applying the second. For example, when a large area of green is needed in a design, and the egg has just been dipped in bright red, Ukrainian women use "sauerkraut juice" to bleach out the red so that the green dye "takes" well. This can be done to achieve any number of effects, even to bleaching the egg after the

last color for a very light background. Other bleaches such as a solution of water and baking soda, or a chemical bleach which will not damage the wax lines may be used.

Repairing the wax lines is a difficult process, but there are cases when a blot of wax or a very crooked line necessitates removal. Cleaning fluid or turpentine used very carefully, away from flame, will remove the wax to some degree. When this has been done, wash the egg in cool water to remove any traces of grease.

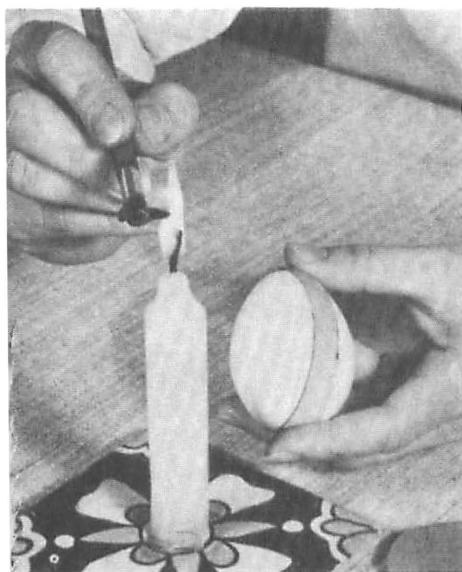
These modifications of the traditional technique for coloring pysanky go hand in hand with improved methods in maintaining proper temperature, and convenient use of tools and materials.

The beauty of Ukrainian Easter eggs has long been recognized. Yet it is only recently, with increased study of folk arts and a realization of their importance, that artists and scholars have sought to study and analyze their designs. What once seemed to be only an ancient tradition is now recognized as a distinct and well-developed branch of folk art, a definite contribution to world culture. Perhaps nothing better illustrates the Ukrainian feeling for beauty and form.

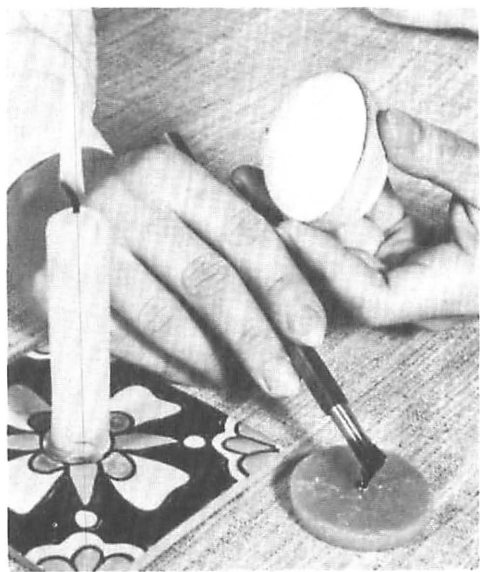
The simple elements and motifs of Easter egg designs offer almost unlimited combinations which reveal the skill and good taste of the designer. We can only hope that Ukrainians here and in their homeland will continue this art and that it will be realized as a superb expression of the Ukrainian spirit.



A *Pysanka*, or Ukrainian Easter Egg, and the materials used in making it. Powdered dyes dissolved in water with setting solution added, egg holder, pure beeswax, candle, guide band and *kistka* (stylus). The egg must be white, smooth, raw and farm fresh. If necessary, wash in warm sudsy water. Don't use eggs that have been commercially cleaned or preserved as they show scratches when dyed.



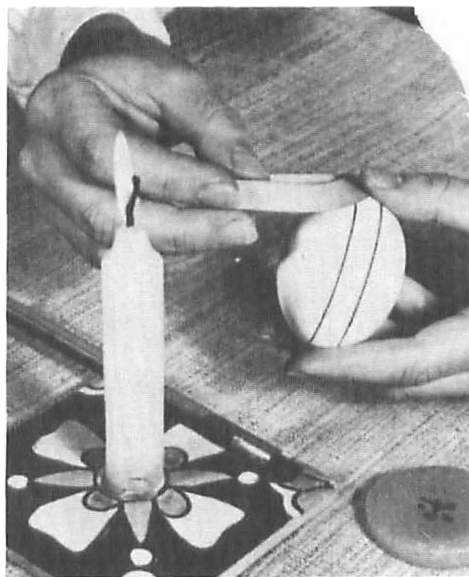
To begin, place the guide band lengthwise around the egg. Hold the *kistka* as you would a pencil. Place the point over the flame of the candle as shown until hot (about 15 seconds).



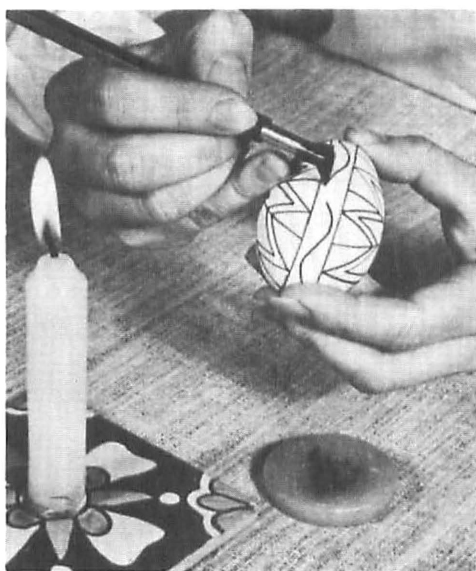
2 Gently dip the point of the *kistka* into the beeswax. A small puddle of wax should form easily. Repeat this a few times then test the flow of the wax by drawing on your fingernail.



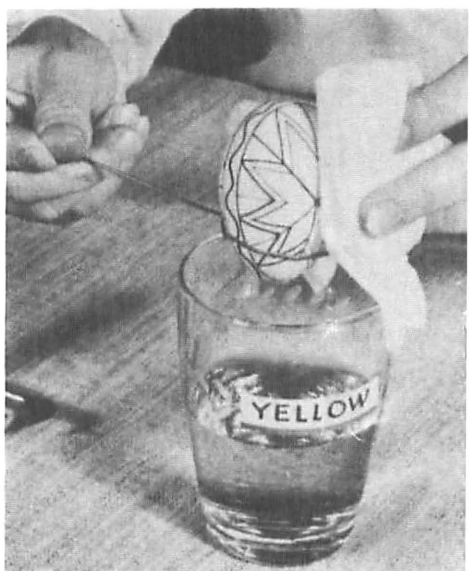
3 Draw a line in wax along both edges of the guide band. To steady your hand balance the little finger on the egg. Reheat *kistka* and dip into beeswax often to keep wax flowing freely.



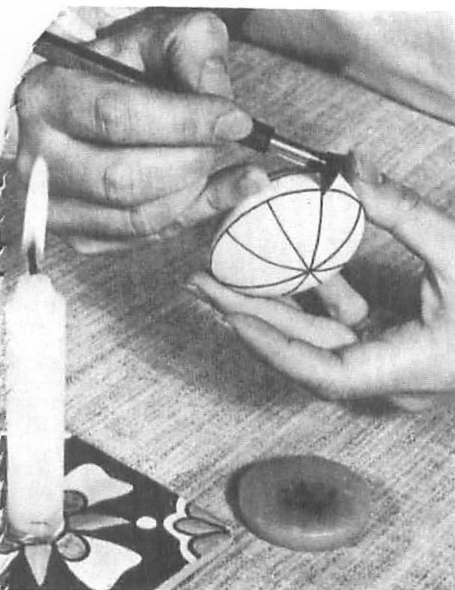
4 When both lines are drawn remove the guide band. Lift the band gently to avoid breaking the wax lines. However, once wax has been applied to the egg it cannot be taken off or erased.



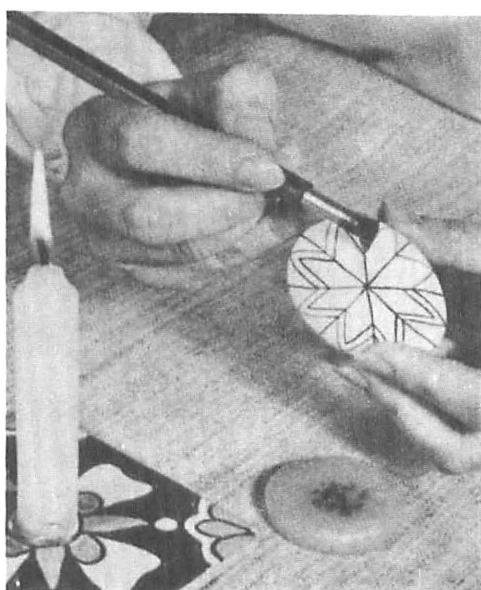
7 Repeat *rose* pattern on the other side of the egg. Then draw a wavy line around the egg in the area left by the guide band. All the lines so far will be white in the final design.



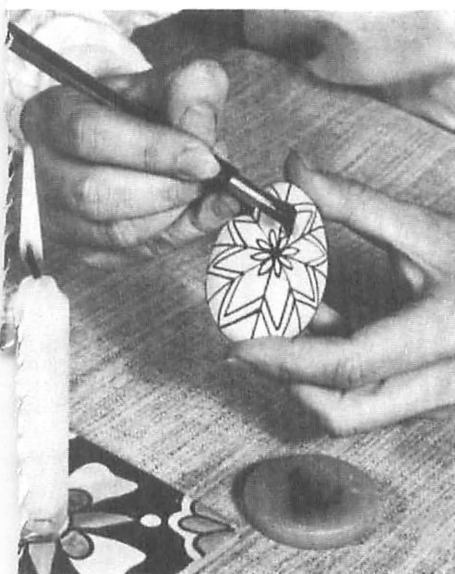
8 Dip the egg in the first and lightest color, yellow. Allow the egg to remain in the dye until desired shade is reached. Remove and pat dry with a lint-free cloth or paper tissues.



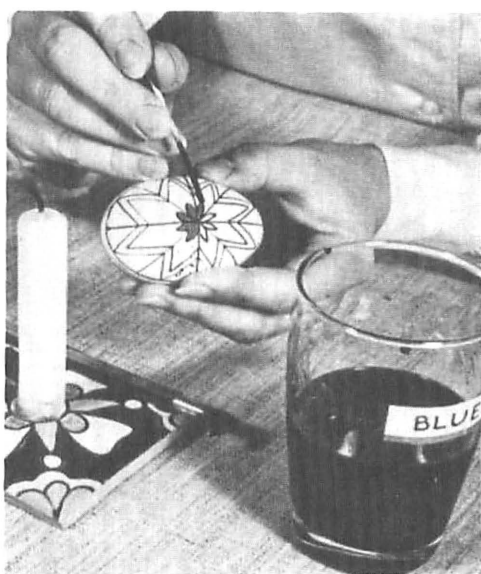
Draw basic wax lines on both sides of egg but not in area left by guide band. Draw a line lengthwise from top to bottom then one across and finally two diagonals. All cross in center.



6 The basic lines form eight wedge-shaped areas. Make outer rose by drawing a sharp angle pointing outward in each wedge. Then draw inner rose about $\frac{1}{8}$ " inside the outer one.



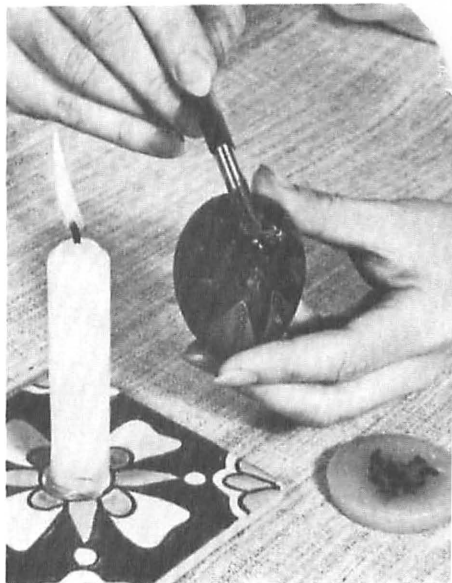
When the egg is completely dry, draw the lines that are to be yellow in your final design. In this case they are small petals which form a rosette in the center of the rose.



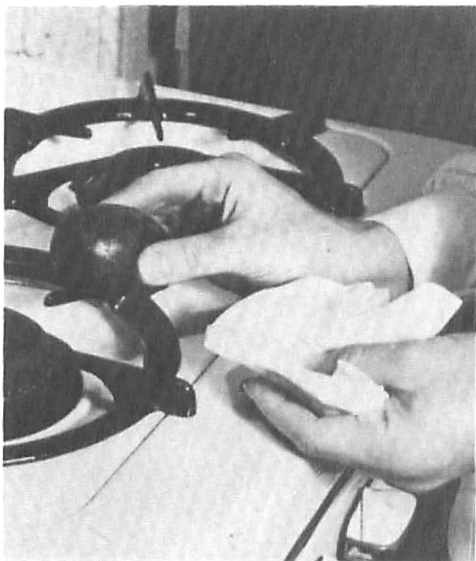
10 To make inside of rosette green, dip a toothpick in blue dye and put a drop of dye in each petal. When the blue is completely dry, cover petals with wax. Repeat on other side of egg.



11 Now dip the egg in orange. When dry, apply wax between inner and outer roses. Add *pinetree* with short strokes along basic lines outside of rose. Add *spirals* along wavy line.



12 Place the egg in red dye. When dry, cover the entire remaining area *rose* with wax. To do this quickly tilt *kistka* and apply wax with a edge. Dip in black or blue dye.



13 Remove and dry. To take off wax, hold egg over edge of gas flame. As small area begins to melt, wipe with clean tissues. Rotate and repeat until all wax is removed. Or, place egg on



14 a tissue in oven set at 250°. When wax begins to "shine" remove egg and wipe with tissues. Later, for gloss, brush thin clear varnish or use a plastic sp



About the materials included in the kit and how to use them.

* **DYES:** The dyes are the purest certified food colors available. They are intermixable, making a variety of colors and shades. For instance, yellow and blue powder in equal quantities will produce green. Using more blue than yellow makes aquamarine; more yellow than blue, chartreuse. Red and blue make purple, while different shades can be obtained by varying amounts used. To get vermillion, mix red and orange. Blue and orange make brown. Add red for chocolate brown. Since the time needed for eggs to take the dye varies, lift out the egg with egg dipper after 5 minutes to test color. For intense colors 20 minutes or more may be necessary.

Boil the water first to remove impurities. However, heat is not necessary to dissolve the powdered dyes nor when eggs are dipped. Hot water would melt the wax.

* **SETTING SOLUTION:** Add a little powder to each dissolved color. This “sets” the color so it will not rub off. A ½ tsp. vinegar may be used instead.

* **BEESWAX:** Only pure beeswax is used as it has a high melting point. This makes it possible to get even lines that will not smear easily. Beeswax also has better covering ability and greater resistance to dyes.

- * **KISTKA:** This is a type of pen used to apply beeswax to the egg. The tip is of blued steel for greatest wear. It is set in aluminum for heat retention and the handle, of quality phenolic resin, is heat resistant. Months of experimenting have produced this unique kistka in which the best qualities of the traditional Ukrainian kistkas have been combined with latest materials.

This kistka, based on an old design from Bukovina, is least likely to clog, has greater heating qualities and draws finer, more even lines. Should the point scratch, hone it on a very fine emery cloth or stone. The point can be regulated somewhat by carefully squeezing or enlarging it with tweezers. The tip should never be forced into the beeswax. Rough handling will loosen it. To remove accumulated carbon, clean the kistka with cleaning fluid in a well-ventilated room and away from an open flame.



- * **YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN:** You can make any design simply by analyzing a finished egg and copying it, adding your own variations as you go along. Choose an egg from the color plates which are included in this booklet. Note the main divisions on the egg which are formed by the basic lines. These are the first lines you draw. Any other areas or motifs which will be white in the finished egg are then added. Dip the egg in the lightest color (usually yellow). Now draw those lines which are to be this color in the final design and dip the egg in the next darker shade. Each succeeding color must be darker than the one beneath it. When your final color is dry, remove the wax and see how well you have done!

On the inside covers of this booklet you will find examples of basic lines which will be helpful as guides. Use these to try out your own color and pattern combinations. Happy Decorating!

