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See table of contents

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Article abstract

The paper deals with the traditional Ukrainian home of Central Ukraine at the beginning of the twentieth century. The domestication of the home is considered to consist of two different stages: physical detachment of the site from the outer world and its further differentiation. The formation of the inner space-cooking area, sleeping area, holy corner, household work area, and guest area-depended on the belief that the inner space of the peasant home was inhabited by humans as well as supernatural entities: pagan spirits, homeguards and deceased ancestors, and Christian saints.

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THE UKRAINIAN PEASANT HOME: SPACE DOMESTICATION

Natalia SHOSTOK

This paper deals with the traditional Ukrainian home in rural communities of Central Ukraine and the way Ukrainians constructed and domesticated their houses at the beginning of the twentieth century. Domestication is to be understood here as the phenomenon of meaning-giving to the outer world. The meaning-giving processes were those of identifying, naming, and investing with value and meaning, as well as those of signification and symbolization.[1] These processes were affected by the general norms in that society, by specific family needs and traditions, and by personal influences.

Domestication was not finished at the moment the last log was put in its place. Instead, it was continued from the outer space to the inner space, subjected to further differentiation, and possessed by different beings. The outer space refers to the world outside of the domesticated space; the inner space refers to the physical and mental environment in which the people lived. Thus, we can differentiate two stages of domestication in the construction of the house. I will attempt to show how the village home space was perceived and understood, how the people perceived the alien outer space, and how they shared it with non-Christian spirits and Christian saints. In order to do this, I will analyze the various roles of people, as well as these supernatural beings, from the moment the idea of a new house was conceived to the time of the family's first celebrated event (such as a wedding or childbirth) in the newly constructed home.[2]

The very existence of different groups of beings and the fact that they played specific roles in house space differentiation and control illustrates the principal distinction between the two stages of domestication in the construction of the house. At both stages, different groups, whether spirits or living beings, were responsible for different areas of the domesticated space. The first stage involved those human beings actively engaged in the process of domestication: future owners choose a site for the house and perform rituals to identify and secure it for domestication. The second stage involved not only people but also other groups of beings taking control of the domesticated space. From the moment the

1. Ogden C.K. and Richards I. A. 1923. *The Meaning of Meaning*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

2. Three major sources provided the body of this research: 1) information from elderly informants and observations made on numerous field trips to rural Central Ukraine in the period 1990-1993 (information about the way people built these early houses was provided by the elder members of village families–their recollections, along with photo documentation, constitute the main source of my interpretation of how people, built their houses and domesticated the outer space); 2) archival materials from the region; and 3) folklore collections published by other researchers.

house construction was completed, space differentiation was believed to be controlled also by homeguards, or the ancestors' spirits, and Christian saints. The homeguards possessed the loft and oven area of the house; the saints controlled the opposite corner of the house from where icons were placed. Thus, apart from human beings who were responsible for the domestication of the house construction from its inception, there were also groups of non-human beings involved in this process in the imagination and beliefs of the people. These groups of beings were considered to be responsible for different areas of the acquired space during the second major stage of inner space differentiation.

Despite the fact that both people and supernatural beings controlled the space, people were, of course, the only visible participants in domestication, and the only visible inhabitants of the domesticated space. At the same time, other spirits dwelled in the symbolic space and were considered to participate equally in further space organization inside the house. People believed in these other spirits, and although they did not consider themselves to be solely responsible for certain parts of the inner space, they believed in their strength and ability to control the situation.[3] Stories about the homeguards and their whims, and about the saints and their presence in the house, circulated around the community. In many cases, storytellers would cite homeguards and saints directly, which seemed to confirm their existence.

Before analyzing the different stages of the domestication process, I would like to introduce the reader to the peasant home built at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries in the Kiev region, Central Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Folk House in Central Ukraine

The Ukrainian vernacular house *(khata)* in rural Central Ukraine at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries may be described as a rectangular, mud-plastered log house with a thatched roof.[4] The walls were plastered with a thick mud coating on the outside and inside of the structure. A wide, lower protective base *(prys'ba)* was colored with natural beige mud.

3. An elderly informant spoke of what people were not allowed to do on *Pokut'* (the place that "belongs" to the Christian saints) and why: because God would not approve, or the homeguards would be angry, etc.

4. Although thatch was the most commonly used roofing material during this period, it is rarely used now. In the modern central Ukrainian village, the most common roofing materials are metal sheets *(bliakha)* and slate *(shyfer)*. One can still see houses with thatched roofs in the village, but these houses were built at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. In most cases, these houses belong to elderly women. Thus, in 1993 in the village of Dudarkiv I saw only one thatched roof (June 1993 field trip to Dudarkiv village, Boryspil' region, Kiev oblast, house of O. M. Bozhko, built in 1902).

The Ukrainian word *khata* refers either to the whole building or, specifically, to the actual room in which people lived. In most cases, houses built at the beginning of the twentieth century were one-room houses.[5]

Practically all the early-twentieth-century houses in the northern Kiev region had earthen floors composed of hard-stamped mud and swept clean of loose dirt. Every week the floor was coated with a mixture of cow dung and water, which, upon drying, gave a polished effect not unlike that of modern flooring.

To the left of the entrance into the living room was the oven *(pich).*[6] It was a large, solid mud construction, occupying almost one-quarter of the room. Its large, flat upper surfaces were used as sleeping places by the elderly and children, as this was an area of constant heat during the night. Smoke was evacuated through a chimney formed from willow laths and heavily plastered with mud.

Next to the oven was the sleeping shelf *(pil).* This structure was one of the immovable parts of the household furniture and consisted of five to ten pine planks *(doshky)* laid onto two wooden crosspieces *(polytsi,* or *poliky).* The width of the *pil* varied from house to house and could be made wider or narrower by moving the planks that lay closer to its rim.[7] This was a rest area for other members of the family: the husband, wife, and other children. A storage area under the *pil* stored a variety of items (depending on the season) ranging from young chickens in winter to potatoes in spring.

Just across the room, opposite to the pich, was the so-called "clean" part of the house *(chysta polovyna).* Between the *pil* and the southern wall, along the eastern wall, was the dining table. Sometimes there was a trunk *(skrynia)* nearby, which actually stood between the table and the *pil.* This area was rarely used. The table was not for everyday meals, but only for holidays and Sundays. Benches along the south and southeast walls were laid with special covers *(riadentse)* for important holidays like Christmas and Easter or for big family events such as weddings and funerals.

The southeast corner was a holy area, the most sacred place of the house *(pokut).* Icons placed there were usually from a wedding ceremony and were placed in pairs (for example, the Savior and Mother of God). A number of home icons may also have been placed along the eastern wall, from the *pokut* to the sleeping shelves.[8] On the western wall, there were shelves for storing utensils.

5. "Opysova Knyha obliku budivel' sela Dudarkiv (A Descriptive Book of the Buildings in Dudarkiv Village)", *The Regional Registration Book* v. 1-12, 1960-1991. This manuscript contains short pieces of information on all private houses in the village such as the date of construction, material used, ownership of the building, and the number of inhabitants.

6. The *pich* is still in working condition in practically every old house.

7. This was confirmed by many informants in Dudarkiv and other villages close to Dudarkiv (for example, Hanna Kolodiazhna, born in 1909, Kuchaky village, April, 1992).

8. It becomes evident why there were plenty of icons in the house. The Ukrainian family was an extended family: two or three generations could live in one house for many years. In many cases, elder sons, once married, shared a living space with other members of the family for a long period of time before they would build their own home.

Building the Home: Main Stages of Home Space Domestication

At this point, it is important to further develop the concept of domestication applied to the construction of the house and creation of the household. As mentioned earlier, there is a distinction between the two major stages of space domestication during house construction: the first stage is a physical space differentiation; the second stage is a further organization of the inner home space. The inner space continued to be differentiated after the house construction was completed.

The rituals associated with house construction and use provide information about the symbolic meaning of the domesticated space and the different stages of its acquisition.[9] Rituals themselves played a very important role in the processes of space differentiation and space acquisition. From the viewpoint of those building the house, they were a practical tool that transformed the status of a place from "alien" to "domestic" by securing its safety and, thereby, its new meaning. In his analysis of house-constructing rituals, A. K. Baiburin states[10] that the act of choosing a site for the house can be considered also to be an examination or testing of the "alien" for its positive or negative characteristics. According to Baiburin, people believed that the world was initially divided into "good" and "bad" places; they simply used ritual actions as a means of finding the appropriate place.

All rituals involving the search for and choice of the dwelling place were forms of man's communication with the outer unknown world and its spirits.[11] In this way, he attached different meanings to particular parts of that world. This was a dialogue that consisted of questions in the form of rituals and "yes" and "no" answers in the form of signs known to people as good or bad. In some instances, the result of the ritual indicated that the site in question was not suitable for building a house.

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9. Information pertaining to these rituals was found in archival collections in the Kiev Folklore Institute of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences. Elderly informants also provided their recollections about several rituals still popular among peasants at the beginning of the twentieth century.

10. Baiburin, A. K. 1983. *Zhilishche v obriadakh i predstavleniiakh vostochnykh slavian (Folk Dwelling in East Slavic Rituals and Beliefs)*, pp. 37-49. Leningrad: Nauka; and ——. 1976. *Russkie narodnye obriady, sviaznannye so stroitel'stvom zhilishcha: K probleme osvoeniia prostranstva (Russian Folk House-Constructing Rites: The Problem of Domestication)*, p. 14. Leningrad: Nauka.

11. For example, Anca Stahl and Paul-Henri Stahl indirectly indicated in their work that the outer world was already divided into propitious or unpropitious places for people and their future houses. This idea is not a new one for many scholars. See Stahl, Anca and Paul-Henry Stahl. 1976. Peasant House Building and Its Relation to Church Building: the Rumanian Case. In *The Mutual Interaction of People and Their Built Environment: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, ed. Amos Rapoport, pp. 246-254. Chicago: Mouton Publishers.

Once the home site was chosen, the area was claimed by marking it with a small tree branch at its center. Its corners were marked with a handful of sheep wool, coins, or wheat. These marks signalled to others that this spot was the site of a future home for a specific family. Taming the territory required new signs of identification.

The First Stage of Space Domestication

The first stage of space domestication constisted of choosing the site and detaching this chosen place from the outer world. Several phases within this stage must be considered. The first phase, the psychological preparation, began when the family members started to think about building a new house and ended with the moment the family began searching for the site. The second phase involved testing of the chosen site by the performance of specific rituals. The third phase was physical detachment from the outer space. Within this phase it is possible to distinguish three consecutive steps in the progress of the construction: 1) surface separation, which began with marking the corners of the future house and ended at the moment the first circle of logs was laid on the ground; 2) spatial separation, which took place as the walls were being constructed and ended with the placement of the last circle of logs; and 3) locking the marked inner space, which involved beam-laying and roof construction.

1. The first phase: psychological preparation for the building of a new house

When an individual began planning his future home, first he thought about an appropriate place on which to build.

> During Nikolaj's time [pre-1917 - N.S.] our *khata* was very tiny–it stood close to the river, just over there. I remember, Mother said that Grandfather thought for a long time before he decided to build the new house. There wasn't any space close to the river and there were already other families on the fields. Then my two uncles, *Dido's* younger sons, died and he began construction. First he needed lots of wood for the frame of the house. He then placed the lumber close to the *khata* until he had all the building materials he needed. He wanted to build the new *khata* next to the old one, but there was no space. After much thought, he decided to change the location to another because it was a good place [my emphasis - N.S.].[12]

For this family, the preparation had started before the actual construction. A new house was needed for economic reasons, but they were unable to decide promptly on the best place. The main reason for this indecision was that not every location met the requirements for the safety of the future house. The hosts needed

12. Tetiana Stril'nyk, interview 01.04.1991, the village of Velyka Starytsia, Boryspil' district.

to resolve the dilemma of whether or not the chosen site was safe and protected by the spirits and God.

Although there were undoubtedly a large number of locations that could physically accommodate the planned *khata*, rituals were used to eliminate the locations that were unsuitable for other reasons. The future owners had at their disposal a whole set of methods for identifying unpropitious locations, particularly in previously untested sites. "Our folks used to live close to the cemetery," explains one village woman from Bezradychi, "but they moved out of there. My *baba* used to say that it was a bad idea to live near the cemetery because the deceased would be disturbed and would quarrel with humans all the time."[13]

Any place where an unfavorable event, such as a murder or suicide, had previously occurred was to be avoided. Such events were bad omens; an unfortunate precedent meant that trouble might recur, this time with the souls of the deceased. Houses were not erected on former graveyards or near intersections because these places were haunted by evil spirits. It was customary for peasants to organize a defensive system by erecting numerous crosses at the beginning of roads or along the road shoulders in order to mark the entrances to the villages and thoroughfares. Village limits were also avoided because they were believed to be haunted by evil spirits or even by the devil himself.

There were other "bad" places located especially on the roads. Once I asked a group of elderly women who were gathered near a food store in a village in Tetiiv district why the road is considered to be a bad place for a future house. One woman replied: "Because so many feet cross the road–it is not a calm place."[14] As well, people avoided building their houses on former roads.

Generally, one avoided constructing a house on top of the ruins of an older house. However, if the former dwellers had enjoyed good luck at that location and the memory of this was still alive in the village, a new family might build there. Also, an exception to this was if a family decided to demolish its old house, which was still in use, and build a new one in its place. Although the place had already been probed for its acceptability before the first house had been built, the ritual ceremonies were nevertheless repeated.[15]

2. Second phase: examination of the chosen site

Communication with the outer world became explicit at this moment. Rituals as forms of dialogue between the outer world and the humans had taken place at this point. One of them involved cattle, while others, sacred plants or water. Very often these rituals suggest pagan origin. After one ritual was

13. Maria Ototiuk, interview 21.05.1991, the village of Bezradychi, Obukhiv district.
14. 23.10.1990, the village of Odaipole, Tetiiv district.
15. *Manuscript* (no place, no year), Institute of Art, Folklore, and Ethnography of the Ukrainian Academy of Science Archives, Kiev, Ukraine (further IMFE col.), Fond 1-2 / 333. p.7.

performed to verify appropriateness of the site, it was common to test the site further, even if the first probe gave a positive result. Rituals could not be performed simultaneously because they would lose their strength. Therefore, there was a certain hierarchy of the rituals of place-testing; their sequence was as important as the ritual itself.

A popular method of testing a site involved cattle. People watched their cattle as they wandered freely; areas in which the cattle lay down were considered lucky for a future home. "When the snow melted in the spring, and the dark patches of earth appeared, the cows chose these spots on which to lie. These spots were good for building."[16] Cattle were believed to instinctively know the propitious places for human settlement.

The second ritual had a number of forms. The best preserved variant of the period involved testing the area with plants, coins, and handfuls of wool. Sacred plants, such as basil or wheat, and coins were placed at the center and the corners of the acquired place. At this moment the physical detachment of the living space from the outer world began.

> I pointed out the place to the builders, and they said: "Let's mark it now!" They took some rye from me, counted out from three to nine seeds, put them onto the future corners of the house and said, "Let them be here for three full days. If the place is lucky these piles will lie untouched–even if cattle wander around, they will be OK. Sometimes, these heaps even grow in number. On the other hand, if the place is not lucky the piles will get smaller, they will get thrown around during the night, or they will even disappear."[17]

Another variant involved placing four glasses of water at the corners. If the water remained untouched, the place was considered to be safe for dwelling.[18] These are but a few recollections of testing methods; many other methods were used in this period. The last ritual confirmed or denied whether the chosen place was good or bad.

After the site was tested and marked by positive signs, it required protection from all possible intrusions by the outer world and would thus have to be consecrated. The hosts invited a priest to bless the beginning of construction. He read prayers and sprinkled the site with holy water. The priest's consecration was not really a testing of the desirability of the space, but was rather simply a public and formal affirmation of the choice. Inviting the priest to bless the site was very popular at the beginning of the twentieth century. [19]

16. Iaryna Korotenko, interview 02.04.1992, the village of Sulymivka, Boryspil' district.
17. M. G., *Z zhyttia selian na Chyhyrynshchyni (From the peasant life in Chyhyryn region)*, no place, no year. p. 32. I came across similar recollections about the place-testing ritual many times when I visited the villages. It was performed until the 1950s, after which less evidence of its occurrence can be found. Nonetheless, it was still remembered by every one of my informants.
18. I heard of this ritual on the bus on my way to the Dudarkiv village.
19. Ustyna Lisova, interview 30.06.1991, the village of Bezradychi, Obukhiv district.

3. Third phase: physical detachment of the outer space

As mentioned earlier, I distinguish three consecutive steps in the process of physical detachment: 1) horizontal definition; 2) spatial separation; and 3) locking of the inner space.[20]

3.1. Horizontal definition

The first step of separation from the outer world, surface separation, was to mark the corners of the future house by making holes in the ground. To ensure that the place had been properly chosen, permission to dwell exactly on this spot would be sought from the spirits of nature. People believed that they were satisfying the spirits by leaving coins and rye seeds overnight inside the chosen space.

3.2. Spatial separation

The construction itself was less ritualized but highly social. It was very common to announce the construction of the house to neighbors or relatives, so that they could help with the most time- and energy-consuming part of the construction–the walls. The walls were constructed first. The primary event in wall construction was the laying of the first four logs so that they composed a rectangle on the ground surface. The family then organized a celebration, inviting the master-builders of the house and other helpers to join them. These people constituted the *toloka*, the group of people from the village who assisted with the construction on a reciprocal basis.

> For *zakladyny* (the beginning of construction), I remember we called all the neighbors and relatives: whoever could come. There were festivities from morning till night when we were building our *khata*; we had twenty or more people over. First we kneaded some clay, then Mother slapped on the first clod and maybe a couple of others. After that, we dined. [21]

No rituals were associated specifically with wall construction, with the exception of those pertaining to the door and windows. These elements were considered to be connections to the outer world. They were perceived as being unstable and uncertain because there was always the possibility of intrusions from the alien outer space. The making of the door and window holes was marked by ritualistic activity. In addressing the door and windows, the host appealed to the spirits, hoping for protection from unexpected encroachments from outside:

20 . The terms "horizontal" and "vertical" separation were proposed by A.K . Baiburin in 1983.

21 . Nekhvodij Movchan, interview 05.04.1991, the village of Hryhorovka, Boryspil' district.

"Door, my door, let you be closed to enemies and bad spirits. Our saintly windows, do not allow enemies and bad spirits to go through you. Allow only angels, our guards, to enter, those who travel always through you."[22] Sometimes the host would mark the holes on the wall with chalk and draw the sign of the cross above a window or the door; this would be left there until the whole structure was finished.

3.3. Locking of the inner space: beam-laying and roof construction

After having locked the topmost row of logs, the future owners often interrupted construction before the next step: laying the beam. Special rites accompanied the laying of the beam (*svolok*.). All would wait for the main master to lay the beam down on the top lock of logs. This was to be done in a calm manner, without any noise or knocking, for that indicated the impending death of someone in the house.[23] It is rare to find someone in the village who can still explain why one must be very careful when laying the beam:

> Why does one need to lay it without any sound? My grandmother used to say that one should not knock on the beam because of bad spirits that would fly on the noise, but to lay it down quietly. This was very important, it was a very good beginning for the home.[24]

Before laying the beam in place, the host would take a kerchief specially prepared by the hostess and tie it around the central part of the beam. After the master had properly done his job (i.e. not bothered the spirits with noise), he would get the kerchief as a gift, having not provoked any bad luck.[25] This was followed by a reception with lots of vodka *horilka* and a good meal.[26] The construction was, thus, twice interrupted: once before the laying of the beam, and once immediately afterwards.

The rites of the laying of the beam symbolized the first step of the final space locking, which continued in the roof construction. Apart from locking the inner space from the outside world, the laying of the beam also marked its physical separation from the outer space. Such a separation, however, was not total. Although the physical roof was associated with the idea of being covered (the idea of a limited space), it also integrated the outer space with this inner space, and thus served as a double-sided boundary (separation and integration). From that perspective, it functioned more as an integrating link.[27]

22. *Manuscript* (no place, no year). IMFE col., Fond 1-2 / 333, p.12.
23. Sofia Bahalii, interview 02.04.1992, the village of Hryhorovka, Boryspil' district.
24. Evdokiia Matiusha, interview 15.09.1990, the village of Revbyntsi, Chornobaiv district.
25. M. G., p. 34.
26. Hekhvodii Movchan.
27. This idea of the heaven-earth connection secured by the roof is embodied in church architecture, where the dome symbolizes the heavens. See, for example, Iurchenko, P.H., 1970.*Wood Architecture in Ukraine (XVIII - XIX)*, pp. 11-34. Kiev: Budivel'nyk.

Once the roof-covering was completed, the physical detachment and the first rough shaping of the inner space was completed but not yet secured. The walls had to be fortified with clods of clay, the house then had to be whitewashed, and the wooden parts had to be finished. This work would affect neither the inner/outer space differentiation, nor the processes of its further inner distribution; it was more social than ritualized, and again a time for *toloka*, or collective work by neighbors and relatives.

After the decorative work was completed, the construction was considered to be finished and the inner space formed. The physical stage of the domestication was completed. Nevertheless, the house was neither secured nor proved to be safe. In the period under study, the only known way of securing and safeguarding the house was through consecration. The fact that owners usually did not hasten to invite a priest to consecrate the newly constructed house seems quite interesting. This is explained by the fact that before Christianity came to the Ukrainian lands, there were other ways of securing the house, such as a significant family event (a childbirth or wedding). Only after performing relevant rituals was the house considered to be safe. Such beliefs were still common among the people in the early twentieth century, but as Christian rituals predominated, it became imperative to incorporate them for the purpose of achieving what had been achieved earlier by non-Christian ways. However, there was no guarantee that the act of ritualistic securing performed by a priest would succeed. Thus, only the insiders (human and spiritual beings), those who possessed the right to the place and who had received the power of self-securing from nature, would finish the domestication of the space. To consecrate the house, people first waited for the family celebrations, and only then invited the priest to perform the ritual of consecration. It could take up to two years before the house was considered completely tested and ready for protected living. The place was then domesticated by the owners.

The Second Stage of Domestication: Further Inner Space Differentiation

With the end of construction the dwelling space was physically separated from the outside world. The second stage of domestication of the space came to the fore at this point. Differentiation of the inner space on a conceptual level starts early in the process, affecting the decision to build the house, the size and the shape of the structure, etc. This second stage is primarily expressed in physical terms as the family furnished the dwelling and moved in. While the family was establishing order in the house, the delineation of the specialized areas took on great importance.[28]

28. Greverus, Ina-Maria. 1976. Human Territoriality as an Object of Research in Cultural Anthropology in Amos Rapoport, ed., *The Mutual Interaction of People and Their Built Environment: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, pp. 145-157. Chicago: Mouton Publishers.

Two main factors are crucial in the process of further inner space domestication. The differentiation of space was dependent on differing economic activites in the *khata*, and also on the roles played by various inhabitants. With regard to the former, I differentiate five socioeconomic areas in the homes built in the early twentieth century: 1) the cooking area; 2) the sleeping area; 3) the "holy area" and the holy corner, *pokut*; 4) the household work area; and 5) the guest area.[29]

The boundaries between the five areas varied according to circumstances. It is difficult to establish clear-cut boundaries between these areas, as there were few boundaries in the physical sense apart from the visual differences expressed in the interior design.[30] These areas were not entirely static, but, rather, reflected cyclical changes such as day and night, the seasons, and the life cycle.

The meaning of the traditional peasant home was created by the collective psyche, expressed through the family psyche. The differentiation of the inner cosmos of the new home was further subjected to the individual family member's psyche. The familial microcosm had already been formed in the house in which the family formerly lived and was a core component of the new home structure into which it was transplanted. The cosmological, social, and spatial structures of the former house were largely transplanted into the new house. Those responsible for reestablishing the old order within the new house were elder members of the family. They were regarded as the "memory reservoirs," and thus the most competent in this role. They passed their knowledge on to youngsters, assuming a certain leadership role in the reorganization of the inner space.

Not only people, but other beings (homeguards, spirits of the saints, and spirits of ancestors) moved into the house. It was believed that they accompanied their hosts on the move. Moreover, it was also believed that homeguards would wait to be invited into the new home. Thus, there were special ritual invitations performed by the hostess to please these spirits and to invite them to follow the family. It was thought that, as a separate group, these beings required a special place to settle down within the *khata*, and they were believed to take a certain control over the respective areas.

Further analysis of the different zones will trace their relation to the different groups of inhabitants and their roles in the spiritual life of the family. The *pokut*, for example, was always treated differently from other places in the *khata*.[31] The boundaries between this place and others may be determined through various behavioral patterns.

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29. A valuable source of information about the five zones is the study of behavioral patterns within the zones. Also of value in this regard are the various stories about the life in the house reported by informants.

30. Olivier, Marc. 1977. *Psychology of the House*, p. 122. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

31. Even today the *pokut* is considered to be different from other areas of the house. Icons are still kept on the walls, even by non-believers who would never pray to them.

All the home icons were placed on the walls that met in the holy corner of the *pokut*. These icons (*obrazy*, or images) of the Christian saints are to this day considered, especially by the elders, to be homeguards and protectors of the house. The *pokut* was the place where the sacred dialogue between residents and their Christian patrons took place in the form of prayer. It is interesting to note that this was also the place where portraits of national and political figures (such as Taras Shevchenko, and, later, Lenin, Stalin, and Brezhnev) were placed.[32]

The table was located within this holy corner. It was treated according to the status it had aquired as a part of this zone: "... they never ate at the table during the day... lunch was eaten wherever else but not at the dining table. Kids ate on the benches, Grandmother (*baba*) sat on the *pil*...."[33] There was always bread on the table under a towel (*rushnyk*), but nothing else. We never ate at the table on a normal day, only on holidays." Children were not allowed to play around the table. On an ordinary day, the only exception to these restrictions would be made for special guests.[34]

The *pokut* became visibly distinguished from the rest of the house on festive occasions such as Christmas, Easter, and other major religious holidays, as well as for wedding ceremonies performed in the house. Almost all the rituals were concentrated in or close to that area. The family shared the area with groups of numerous other inhabitants. For example, at Christmas, Christian saints were present at the celebrations, as well as other guests who attended the holy dinner (*sviata vecheria*). People were seated carefully on the benches because the ancestors' spirits, having returned to the house for the holidays, could be sitting there.

> For the holy dinner, *Kutia* (a ritual food made of steamed wheat, nuts, poppy seeds, and honey) and small *koliadnychky* and *pampushechky* (small ritual caroling doughnuts) were placed on the table or in the holy corner on the bench near the *kutia*. When dead carolers would come they would have something for themselves."[35]

32. Mariia Snysar, interview 26.10.1990, the village of Khmelivka, Tetiiv district.
33. Even today there is a tendency among the elderly to eat just on the edge (*zkraechku*), or at the corner of the table, and not to place too much food on it.
34. Oleksandra Verhun, interview 26.06.1993, the village of Dudarkiv, Boryspil' district.
35. *Manuscript from the town Slovechno*, IMFE col., Fond 1-2 / 272, p. 11. I also remember how a woman during one of my field trips told a story from her childhood. She and her sisters were between six and ten years old (in 1935) when, one Easter Saturday, the very last day of the *Velykyj Pist* (the Great Lent), they could not stand fasting anymore: "Our mother started preparing food for Easter Sunday. She boiled and dyed eggs, put them on the table, and left the house to get water from the well. We were in the house alone and I remember we were so hungry that we each took an egg, we turned away from the *obrazy* (images of the saints) so they would not see us in this sin, and ate them quickly. When Mother learned of this she was angry." (Oksana Dvirnyk, interview 03.06.1990, the village of Vasiutyntsi, Chornobaiiv district).

The oven *(pich)*, the main structural element of the cooking area, was located in the opposite corner of the *khata*. Since the oven was the main source of heat and meals, it acquired a very specific meaning in the house. There is evidence in folklore texts of the oven being granted such meaning as life-giver. Before Christianity came to Ukrainian lands and restructured the previous hierarchy of spiritual forces that controlled human life, the oven was believed to embody the strongest and most influential force of nature: fire. This place was thus highly ritualized, and reverberations of pre-Christian ritual can still be witnessed in rituals and folklore texts: "Thy, my oven, send from the Lord his grace, thus my enemies would become dumb, and spread only their favor on me."[36]

By the first decades of the twentieth century, however, the oven had less symbolic meaning in family life. It was believed that the corner of the *khata* in which the oven stood was controlled by spirits and homeguards; the oven was their living area. In some circumstances, however, only the space behind the oven was believed to be occupied by these spirits. In the evening they would come out of their hiding places and play with the dishes, hide people's clothes, tickle the animals kept inside in winter, and scare babies if they were not sleeping. All these were signs of bad luck :

> It was said in the very old days that homeguards lived in every house. One day a man was plowing the field when suddenly a voice said to him: "Go home and tell your homeguard that the fieldguard has died." The man did not see anybody around him but the voice continued to repeat the same words. He stopped work, went home, and began to tell his wife the whole story. At this moment something fell down, rolled to the door weeping and crying. In a second the noise had stopped. It was certainly a homeguard.[37]

It is interesting that the home spirits who lived behind the oven shared the common space with children and very old members of the family, who spent most of the winter on the oven. Children and, perhaps, infirm elderly people were excluded from active participation in some of the household work and, especially, in any decision-making. From this perspective, they thus constituted a marginal group within the social structure of human inhabitants of the house.

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36. *Fragment of Conjuring. V. Horodets'*, IMFE col., Fond 1-2 / 272, p. 115. See also, Afanasiev, A. N. *Poeticheskie vozzreniia slavian na prirodu (The Poetic View of Slavs on Nature)*, V. 2, pp. 31-42, Moscow; Chubynsky, P. *Trudy etnografo-statisticheskoj ekseditsii v Zapadno-russkij kraj (The Works of Ethnographic-Statistic Expeditions to the West Russian Lands)*, v. 1, Pp. 44-45, St. Petersburg; Potebnia, A. 1914. *O dole i srodnykh s neiu syshchestvakh (The Fortune and Her Close Spirits)*, p. 207, Kharkov; A.K.Baiburin devoted a whole chapter in his book *Zhylishche v obriadakh i predstavleniiakh vostochnykh slavian (The Dwelling in Rituals and Beliefs of Eastern Slavs)* to the role the stove played in home life.

37. *Manuscript from the village of Pokrovs'ke. Told by Natalka Zabutna, 1920*, IMFE col., Fond 1-2 / 333, p. 15.

The rest of the house space, the household work area, was controlled mainly by people; however, the intrusion of the other forces was also possible. The household work area had the least discrete and stable boundaries. Its size and space shape changed according to the season, work to be done, and needs of the family. One example of seasonal housework is weaving. The loom was taken into the house in the late fall. Some families would set two looms right in the middle of the room for the winter and spring. Almost all the available space in the area was taken up by the looms, and the whole family would be involved in the weaving.

> There were five boys in my father's family. Their three sisters did not go to school, but only spun for the boys all winter. In the spring, during Lent, they wove; in summer they bleached the linen; in fall they sewed pants. All the linen was gone by the next winter! In winter the boys would grow and wear out the pants. Time again for weaving.[38]

In winter, family life was concentrated mostly inside the house. Children played, and the family ate lunch; there the household work area was shared by everyone in the family. Sometimes intrusions from the homeguards' world would occur, but the place was first and foremost controlled by its human inhabitants.

The guest area was a less apparent but clearly distinct area that connected the outer world with the inner cosmos. It is very difficult to establish clear-cut boundaries between this zone and the others. Physically, it overlapped with the cooking area, simply because the oven and the door were situated near one another in the house. The guest area was a transitory zone, bonding the outer world with the inner life, though not integrated completely into the living space of the family. It was designated for those other than family members, the most intimate circle of aquaintances, those other than *svoi*, or "ours."

The status of a visitor could be observed in the way he or she entered the *khata* (into the living room). People who were not *svoi* would stay near the door entering the room until the hosts invited them in. This invitation, in most cases, allowed them to go a little bit further into the room and perhaps take a seat on the long bench somewhere close to the door. Sometimes there were more specific spatial restrictions: "not to go further than the beam; not to go to the table; not to sit on the sleeping shelf." As a rule, guests would sit on the bench against the south wall, the closest bench to the door. How far into the room one could get was determined by his or her status in relation to the family.[39]

38. Olena Hudim, interview 03.04.1992, the village of Rohoziv, Boryspil' district.

39. Having been a total stranger to almost all of the informants whom I visited, I did not follow prescribed behavioral canons and broke the unspoken rules of the guest area. This was somewhat uncomfortable. I talked many times with Oleksandra Verhun, a very old-fashioned and traditionally oriented elderly woman from the Dudarkiv village. During our conversations her neighbors and acquaintances often came to her house. One day one of *Baba* Sasha's neighbors, a woman in her early thirties, came to ask her for information about her son who now lives in

As the guest area connected the outer and inner worlds, it related to the safety of the inner space. It served to prevent newcomers from rapid intrusion into the family space. Certain rituals related to the inner door and threshold reflect the transitional nature of the guest zone and its function concerning protection from the dangers of the outer world. It was dangerous to maintain open contact with the outer world because it was a risk to the inhabitants: "If they carry the dead alongside your house, you should close the door. If the door is left open, someone in the family will soon die."[40] In vulnerable situations, people performed certain actions to secure themselves from the disfavor of the spirits: "A mother should not allow her child to be bewitched by an evil eye when carrying the baby out of the house. She should lay it down on the threshold and step over it."[41] By this action, the mother locked the baby inside the domesticated space, even though she was actually taking it out of the home. In situations of uncertainty (sickness, pregnancy, childbirth), it was necessary to take spatial precautions against the harm that outer world could cause: "When a woman is pregnant, she should not take anything across the threshold, her baby could get rushes."[42] Alien spirits were believed to be just outside the door, and would attempt to enter through the door on special occasions such as Easter or Christmas.[43]

This area also included windows and a chimney. The windows and chimney may also be seen as being related to the guest zone because of their potential function as contact points between inside and outside. Admittedly, these portals might be used more by supernatural visitors than by humans, and these visits tended to be unwelcome. "If you attend a funeral, look in the chimney when you return home, otherwise, the deceased will follow you into the house."[44] The windows were considered to be the entranceway and exit for the spirits of

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the city. The woman noticed me and then stayed for approximately twenty minutes at the door chatting with *Baba* Sasha. Her three-year-old daughter ran around the house wherever she wanted, and she from time to time reprimanded her and told her not to run around the *chuzhyj* (not our) home. On another occasion, two women, a mother and a daughter, came to her house from a distant village. As it turned out, *Baba* Sasha was a well known *baba-sheptukha* (sorcerer), and people would come to her for treatment of frights, fears, etc. The daughter herself needed to get rid of her frights. *Baba* Sasha ended our conversation, turned off the radio, and started to "roll out" with an egg this dread from the body of the daughter. The young girl lay on the bench against the south wall while her mother remained sitting very close to the entrance on a chair given to her by *Baba* Sasha. It seemed strange not to have put the girl on the spacious sleeping shelf just to the right, but rather on this bench. This was undoubtedly a rule that every participant understood and adhered to silently.

40. *Manuscript from the village of Vyitovtsi, Baryshivka region*, IMFE col., Fond 1-6 / 583, p. 64.
41. *Liuba Hapon from baba Palazhka. (The village of Liubartsi, Boryspil' Region)*, IMFE col., Fond 1-6 / 596, p. 34.
42. *Manuscript from the village of Velyka Rudnia, Chornobyl' region*, IMFE col., Fond 1-2 / 270, p. 43.
43. *Manuscript from the village of Pirky*, IMFE, col., Kiev, Ukraine. Fond 1-2 / 272, p. 85.
44. *Manusript from the ethnographic society from the village of V iitovtsi*, IMFE col., Fond 1-6 / 583, p. 65.

ancestors as well.[45] The spirits of Nature could also be among them: "On Christmas eve, Father took some *kutia* on his spoon, turned to the window and called the Frost: 'Frost, you Frost, come in to eat our *kutia*. But if you will not come, also do not come over our wheat, our rye, or any of our grain.' "[46]

The sleeping shelves provide the structural base of the sleeping area, the last sociocultural area of the living room. This is the area where contact between the outside and inside worlds occurred least of all. According to field evidence, this area "belonged" to the human inhabitants of the house.

Summary

The building of the house in the Ukrainian village in the beginning of the twentieth century was a multi-staged process confined within a particular folk community. It was a manifestation of traditional outlook, customs, and people's understanding of what the house was to be.

The formation of the home as a phenomenon of domestication and space differentiation consisted of two different stages: physical detachment of the site from the outer world by means of construction, and its further differentiation. The first physical act of detaching the chosen place from the outer space involved corner and center marking, which established a boundary between two worlds: the inner and outer worlds. Further construction of the house was its vertical development. Constructing the walls symbolically marked the spatial form of the future living system by vertically separating it from the outer world. Beam-laying and roof construction symbolized the last stage in this separation.

Further differentiation of the inner space was dependent on the socioeconomic organization of the various areas–the cooking area, sleeping area, holy corner, household work area, and guest area. These areas were influenced by various other factors, as well, including the priorities of individual family members. It was believed that the inner space of the peasant home in this period was inhabited by humans as well as various supernatural entities: pagan spirits, homeguards and deceased ancestors, and Christian saints.

45 . Sofia Boiko, interview 03.04.1991, the village of Stare, Boryspil' district.

46 . Olena Iatsyk, interview 03.04.1991, the village of Holovuriv, Boryspil' district.