



UDC 394 :331.103 (477)

## TRADITIONAL TOLOKA IN THE FOLK CALENDAR OF UKRAINIANS OF EASTERN BOIKOVSHCHINA: ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL ASPECT

**Boian-Hladka S.P.***c.h.s., prof. / к.і.н., доц.*

ORCID: 0000-0002-1834-9425

**Klishch O.L.***postgraduate / аспірант*

ORCID: 0009-0009-0790-5199

*Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University,  
Ivano-Frankivsk, Str. Shevchenko, 57, 76018*

**Abstract.** *The paper examines the traditional toloka as one of the key forms of collective labor in the folk calendar of Ukrainians of the Eastern Boykivshchyna. The article analyzes in detail the economic and agricultural functions of the toloka, its seasonality and role in ensuring the efficiency of the agricultural cycle. Based on field ethnographic materials and archival sources, the local features of the organization of the toloka, its ritual and ceremonial support, and mechanisms of social mutual assistance are highlighted. It is shown that the toloka performed not only a production function, but also an important integration and communicative function in the life of the rural community. The conclusion is made about the preservation of certain elements of the traditional toloka model in modern forms of public cooperation in the Boykivshchyna.*

**Keywords:** *toloka, Eastern Boykivshchyna, folk calendar, traditional agriculture, economic customs, agrarian culture, ethnography of Ukraine.*

### Introduction.

The Economic activity of Ukrainians has long been characterized by collective work, that is, mutual assistance between relatives and neighbors during planting, sowing and harvesting of garden and grain crops. This type of work in the ethnographic part of the Carpathian region – Boykivshchyna is usually called toloka. In the Ukrainian Carpathians, in particular in the territory of the Eastern Boykivshchyna, it was an important element of the Economic organization of the Community, associated with agriculture, construction and social mutual assistance.

The Relevance of the study is due to the need for a thorough study of local models of collective labor in Mountainous regions, where natural conditions, types of Economy and Cultural features formed specific forms of community. Toloka as a form of joint collective labor is one of the oldest institutions of the traditional Culture of Ukrainians. The Purpose of the article is to analyze toloka in the Traditional Calendar



of the Ukrainians of the Eastern Boykivshchyna in the Economic and Agricultural aspect, to find out its Structure, functions and seasonal features.

The study is based on Ethnographic materials collected in the Villages of Kalush district, Ivano-Frankivsk region. As a custom of mutual assistance, tolok was considered in Ukrainian Ethnographic science by Researchers G. Horyn [1], S. Makarchuk [2], M. Hrymych [3], R. Tarnavskiy [4]. Despite the fact that in Modern Ethnology tolok is considered mainly in the social-communicative or ritual-organizational aspects, for Eastern Boykivshchyna its agrarian dimension is especially important, which combined economic expediency, Calendar cycles and magical-symbolic ideas about Work.

### **Main text.**

The concept of toloka in the Boykiv ethnocultural tradition is unambiguous, as it is associated with agricultural work. In Boykiv terminology, the names toloka, pomoch, pomochi are recorded. In the Eastern Boykiv region, toloka meant the Joint work of the Community, performed for the benefit of one Family, voluntary assistance that formed mutual obligations, economic cooperation necessary for Work that Exceeded the Capabilities of a small Family.

Among rural communities, the practice of combining their resources for mutual assistance in economic work was widespread, in particular, in the spring to plant potatoes, dig them up and hill them, in the summer – to mow haystacks and dry hay, in the fall – to harvest grain crops and potatoes. Researchers derive the etymology of the word “toloka” from the Proto-Slavic root, associated with the meaning of “tolokty”, “to beat” (thresh) grain [5, p. 597].

Toloka was based on the principle of reciprocity and had elements of the moral economy of the community: the Family that received assistance was obliged to “work it off” in the future or at least treat the participants. That is, having worked together – the Community rested together, in some places even musicians were hired to summarize the results of the toloka.

It is worth Emphasizing the social prerequisites for the Emergence of the toloka. In the Mountain Communities of Eastern Boykivshchyna, an important role was played



by the Dispersion of farms, small family groups, significant labor-intensive work (mowing, harvesting), and a short period of favorable weather conditions. These Factors made it impossible to physically implement some types of activity without Collective assistance.

There were three types of tolokas: women's – that is, when women gathered to pluck hemp, feathers, bleach canvas, etc.; men's – construction work related to the construction and “masshchynym” (covering the walls of the house with clay) of the hut; mixed – men and women participated in garden and field work.

The purpose of such joint efforts, in our opinion, is twofold:

- moral and ethical: this is a type of neighborly, public mutual assistance, which testifies to solidarity;
- practical: a person, going to the toloka, “earned help” for himself.

In the Structure of the Folk agrarian Calendar of Eastern Boykivshchyna, the toloka was divided into Spring, Summer and Autumn. Directly in the spring, tolokas were organized less often, but had important calendar significance. Most often they concerned the Clearing of public pastures (“toloka vyvodna”), the Preparation of meadows for Summer grazing, the sowing of grain and planting potatoes.

Spring tolokas also had a Ritual and Protective aspect. According to folk beliefs, “the first joint work opened the year in good order”. Sprinkling the plot with holy water on St. George was common.

Summer toloki were the most numerous and concerned the mowing of the harvest. In the Mountains, haymaking often exceeded the Capabilities of the Family. Therefore, such types of work were organized for mowing large areas, turning and Drying hay and Transporting it to the Barn.

Testimonies from the villages of Veldyzh and Lolyn indicate that up to 20–30 people participated in the mowing [6, p. 2].

In the Eastern Boykivshchyna, agriculture was less intensive than in the Plain regions, but the harvesting of oats, rye and barley required speed to avoid damage to the crop by thunderstorms. Harvest toloki began after Peter and Paul.

Autumn forms of collective labor mainly concerned the Construction or repair of



farm buildings, the Preparation of pastures for the Winter season, and assistance to large Families.

In some villages (Lop'yanka, Hrabiv) potato toloki were recorded – help during digging potatoes in large areas [7, p. 7].

The Structure of the toloki Organization was Patriarchal. The initiator was usually the owner. Often, they were invited to the toloki through acquaintances or neighbors or on Sunday after the Church service by the owners: “We ask for help.” The invited came to Work in festive clothes, and then Changed at the Owners’. This is explained by the fact that after the toloki, as a rule, a generous dinner was served with Singing and Music, and sometimes Dancing. There were also toloki where there was no need to change clothes, because the risk of getting dirty was minimal (“to tear off the pire”, etc.).

The toloki often included the family circle – the closest relatives; the neighbor circle – the residents of the street (corner); the Public Circle – members of the Village community, close Friends.

Treating the participants of the toloka was an important part of it. Most often, traditional dishes were prepared – kulesha, “nelupka” (potatoes boiled in their husks), Cheese and feta Cheese, Bread, Roasted lamb (for large tolokas), Vodka or Tinctures.

The feast had a symbolic meaning as a confirmation of gratitude and a guarantee of reciprocity.

The end of the toloka was traditionally accompanied by singing, sometimes dancing. This created an atmosphere of community, maintained social ties.

Free Help, which did not require work, was widely practiced – to widows and orphans. According to folk morality, it is a shame for neighbors to see a widow whose house collapses, or whose harvest is lost in the field because she does not have the strength to collect it [4].

Toloka performed Production and Economic functions, namely, it made it possible to perform work that could not be done independently, to complete the work in a short time, to combine the qualifications of different participants (mowers, carpenters, apprentices).



In the difficult natural conditions of the Carpathians, collective labor was an adaptive survival mechanism. It reduced the risks caused by weather conditions and limited resources. Toloka served as a means of strengthening internal solidarity, resolving possible conflicts, and maintaining mutual dependence between families. This type of work functioned as the “social capital” of the community, was entrenched in agrarian cycles. It was not only work, but also a symbolic transition between economic phases.

Protective and magical practices were characteristic, in particular, participants often sprinkled tools with holy water, read short prayers in front of the mowing machine, and avoided quarrels “so as not to interrupt the effect of toloka” [7, p. 8].

The main ethical norms were voluntariness, reciprocity, and prohibition of refusal without a good reason. Violation of these norms was punished by public condemnation. In Soviet times, this type of work was called “subbotnik”, and in some places this name has survived to this day [8].

In the 20th century, under the Influence of urbanization and the Collective farm system, traditional toloki partially declined. However, in the Eastern Boykivshchyna region, the traditional type of toloki on construction sites (especially in mountain villages), mowing (depending on the terrain), and youth toloki (harvesting firewood, helping the elderly) have survived.

In modern Communities, ecological toloki are popular – seasonal cleaning of Common public areas (forest belts, parks and squares, cemeteries, etc.). Toloki are being reinterpreted as a form of public activism – cleaning the territory, repairing churches, and neighborhood initiatives.

### **Conclusions.**

Toloka in the Eastern Boykivshchyna is a complex socio-economic phenomenon that Combined economic necessity, Calendar cyclist and magical-symbolic coloring. It was one of the key forms of labor organization in the Conditions of the Mountainous landscape and had an adaptive nature. Analysis of field Materials and Ethnographic research shows that toloka was an important factor in uniting the community, ensuring economic stability and maintaining social balance.



At the Present stage, toloka has transformed, but has not disappeared. It has become an expression of local identity, continues to perform social functions and demonstrates the Viability of traditional practices in new Cultural Conditions.

### References:

1. Horyn G. Y. Public life of the Rural Population of the Ukrainian Carpathians (19th – 30s of the 20th century). Kyiv, 1993. 200 p.
2. Makarchuk S. Community and Public life // Ethnography of Ukraine: Textbook. Ed. 2nd, revised and supplemented. Lviv, 2004. P. 337–338.
3. Hrymych M. V. Community and Public life // Ukrainian ethnology: Textbook / Ed. V. Borysenko. Kyiv, 2007. P. 231–232.
4. Tarnavsky R. The Custom of toloka in the Context of the National Economic Calendar of Ukrainian Peasants (Based on Materials from the Territories of the South-Western historical and Ethnographic Region of Ukraine) // Scientific Notebooks of the Faculty of History of Lviv University. Collection of scientific papers. 2010. Issue 11. P. 129–140.
5. Horyn G. Y. Toloka // Small Encyclopedia of Ukrainian Ethnography / Edited by S. Pavlyuk. Lviv, 2007. P. 597–598.
6. Scientific Ethnographic Archive of the Faculty of History, Political Science and International Relations of the Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University. F. 1. Op. 6. Sp. 29. 2 Ark.
7. Scientific Ethnographic Archive of the Faculty of History, Political Science and International Relations of the Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University. F. 1. Op. 6. Sp.1.10 Ark.
8. Boykivshchyna: Historical and Ethnographic Study / edited by Yu. G. Hoshko. K.: Naukova Dumka, 1983. 303 p.

Статтю надіслано: 19.11.2025 р.

© Боян-Гладка С.П.