

## I. RESEARCH ARTICLES

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## THE LINGUACULTURAL VIEW OF THE POLISH PSZENICA 'WHEAT' (*TRITICUM*)\*

**Abstract.** The reconstruction of the Polish linguacultural view of wheat proposed here rests on the tenets of the cognitive definition, which goes beyond structural linguistics, takes into account all the connotations evoked by a given expression, as well as the relationship between the name of the object being defined and the object itself. It is non-encyclopedic in nature. The data analysed here are of the linguistic type (lexis, phraseology, and stereotypical texts of various genres, such as riddles, proverbs, auguries, songs, tales, legends, written poetry), as well as of the co-linguistic type (ethnographic records of beliefs and practices), and come from the archives of the *Dictionary of Folk Stereotypes and Symbols*. The dictionary's volume on plants is now under preparation.

KEY WORDS: linguacultural worldview; cognitive definition; Polish folk culture

1. The reconstruction of the linguacultural view of wheat in Polish presented in this study is based on the tenets of cognitive ethnolinguistics as it is practised at UMCS in Lublin, Poland, and in related circles. The most fundamental notions of the approach include:

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(1) the linguistic worldview as an interpretation of reality on the basis of linguistic data (lexis, collocations, stereotyped texts, recorded by dialectologists and folklore researchers), as well as the so-called co-linguistic data, i.e. cultural beliefs and practices recorded by ethnographers);

(2) the use of the cognitive definition,<sup>1</sup> a “text of culture” that functions as a “narrative about an object”;

(3) a specifically ordered combination of the semasiological approach (from the linguistic expression to its denotation) with the onomasiological approach (from the object to its name and to linguistic meaning).

The study is based on the assumption that a linguistic description of word meaning which aims to capture all aspects of that meaning actually corroborated in linguistic data is not the same as an encyclopedic description of the real thing. Rather, it extends beyond the set of distinctive features (necessary and sufficient features in the minimal definition), it aims to capture all the relevant features, the complete list of which is impossible to compile without residue: the cognitive definition is an open-ended, radial collection of features, characterised by a semantic core, peripheries, and potential connotations.

2. The data used for the reconstruction of the linguacultural view of wheat are of the linguistic and co-linguistic type. The former include the patterns of lexis and collocations or phrases found entrenched in the language system, in addition to stereotyped texts (texts of folklore, according to Permyakov 1970) in a variety of genres: riddles, proverbs, auguries and other divination, instructions for good farming, nursery rhymes, and wordplay, New-Year wishes, songs of various categories (annual ritual songs, family songs, carols, pastorals and bucolic songs or poems, harvest and harvest festival songs, courting, wedding and love songs, facetious or satirical songs and ballads), folk prose (tales and legends), and myths. Questionnaires conducted according to a premeditated format have also been incorporated into the research findings. We go beyond texts of traditional folklore and use peasant poetry, which despite their written form is deeply entrenched in the oral tradition and contain a reliable record of rural culture, helpful in reconstructing hidden symbolic meanings. In contrast to structural semanticists, we make use of ethnographic records of beliefs and practices, which provide access to the cultural and communicative foundations of linguistic material. These are the so-called co-linguistic (*not* extra-linguistic!) data.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the cognitive definition, see Bartmiński (2009/2012, chapters 6 and 11; 2014).

<sup>2</sup> More on co-linguistic data in Bartmiński (2009/2012: 11, 34–35, where they are called *ad-linguistic data*); for exemplification cf. e.g. Bielak 2013, Prorok and Głaz 2013. [editor’s note]

3. Let us systematically consider the differences between an encyclopedic and a linguistic description.<sup>3</sup> In the English version of Wikipedia, common wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) is defined as follows:<sup>4</sup>

**Common wheat** (*Triticum aestivum*), also known as **bread wheat**, is a cultivated wheat species. About 95% of the wheat produced is common wheat, which is the most widely grown of all crops and the cereal with the highest monetary yield.

**Nomenclature and taxonomy of wheat and its cultivars.** Numerous forms of wheat have evolved under human selection. This diversity has led to confusion in the naming of wheats, with names based on both genetic and morphological characteristics. [...] List of the common cultivars: Albimonte; Manital.

**Evolution.** Bread wheat is an allohexaploid (an allopolyploid with six sets of chromosomes: two sets from each of three different species). Of the six sets of chromosomes, two come from *Triticum urartu* (einkorn wheat) and two from *Aegilops speltoides*. This hybridisation created the species *Triticum turgidum* (durum wheat) 580,000–820,000 years ago. The last two sets of chromosomes came from wild goat-grass *Aegilops tauschii* 230,000–430,000 years ago.

Free-threshing wheat is closely related to spelt. As with spelt, genes contributed from *Aegilops tauschii* give bread wheat greater cold hardiness than most wheats, and it is cultivated throughout the world’s temperate regions.

**History.** Common wheat was first domesticated in Western Asia during the early Holocene, and spread from there to North Africa, Europe and East Asia in the prehistoric period.

Wheat first reached North America with Spanish missions in the 16th century, but North America’s role as a major exporter of grain dates from the colonization of the prairies in the 1870s. As grain exports from Russia ceased in the First World War, grain production in Kansas doubled.

Worldwide, bread wheat has proved well adapted to modern industrial baking, and has displaced many of the other wheat, barley, and rye species that were once commonly used for bread making, particularly in Europe.

**Plant breeding.** Modern wheat varieties have short stems, the result of Rht dwarfing genes that reduce the plant’s sensitivity to gibberellic acid, a plant hormone that lengthens cells. Rht genes were introduced to modern wheat varieties in the 1960s by Norman Borlaug from Norin 10 cultivars of wheat grown in Japan. Short stems are important because the application of high levels of chemical fertilizers would otherwise cause the stems to grow too high, resulting in lodging (collapse of the stems). Stem heights are also even, which is important for modern harvesting techniques.

**Other forms of common wheat.** Compact wheats (e.g., club wheat *Triticum compactum*, but in India *T. sphaerococcum*) are closely related to common wheat, but have a much more compact ear. Their shorter rachis segments lead to spikelets packed closer together. Compact wheats are often regarded as subspecies rather than species in their own right (thus *T. aestivum* subsp. *compactum*).

This encyclopedic description refers to the real object and the current scientific knowledge about that object. It contains specialist terminology and

<sup>3</sup> Convincing arguments for this crucial distinction have been made for several decades by Anna Wierzbicka (cf. e.g. Wierzbicka 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Accessed Dec 20, 2017. The citation here comes from the English version of the Wikipedia entry. [translator’s note, A.G.]

is written from a certain perspective, at a certain level of generality, and with reference to a certain cultural domain: interestingly, the Polish version of the entry contains information on the role of wheat in Israel. The subjective nature of any encyclopedic entry, including the one quoted here, consists, to a large extent, in an idiosyncratic selection of information, dependent on the state of the art of current research and the general approach of the entry's author.<sup>5</sup> As an illustration, two or three encyclopedic descriptions of the same object will suffice: the discrepancies are striking.<sup>6</sup>

The article on *pszenica* 'wheat' in *Encyklopedia Gazety Wyborczej* (EGW 2005) runs for 58 lines and begins thus:

**Pszienica**, *Triticum*, a grass (the Poaceae family), a cereal; ca. twenty wild and cultivated species, originating in South-Western and Central Asia. Apart from barley, **p** is the oldest bread cereal; it is cultivated worldwide for its grain (flour, cereals as food) as the most common type of cereal. Among the species and subspecies of **p**, the most important industrially is *pszenica zwyczajna* (*T. aestivum*; *T. vulgare*), with 80–130 cm-tall stems; it is basically self-pollinated. . .

In the remainder of the article there is reference to wheat's morphology, varieties, conditions of cultivation, sowing time, crop yield in Poland and elsewhere.

The entry in the *Wielka Encyklopedia PWN* (2001–2005) begins in a similar fashion, but runs for as many as 117 lines, and has a different structure and content:

**Pszienica**, *Triticum*, a grass (the Poaceae family), a cereal; ca. twenty wild and cultivated species, originating in South-Western and Central Asia. Apart from barley, it is the oldest bread cereal, cultivated from the very beginnings of agriculture; it is cultivated worldwide, except in the tropics, for its grain (flour, cereals as food) as the no. 1 in world cereal production; also used are high-value bran, chaff and straw. Depending on the number of chromosomes, there are diploid ( $2n = 14$ ), tetraploid ( $2n = 28$ ) and hexaploid ( $2n = 42$ ) species of **p**. Among the cultivated species and subspecies of **p**, the most important industrially-speaking is *pszenica zwyczajna* (*T. aestivum*; *T. vulgare*), originating in the Middle East. In Europe **p** was known in the Neolithic; there is winter and spring **p**; its stems are 80–130 cm tall. . .

In the remainder of the entry, there is information about the varieties of wheat and the differences between them (with regard to their morphology,

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of subjectivity vs. objectivity in linguistic definitions, cf. Wierzbicka 1993.

<sup>6</sup> This includes a comparison of various linguistic variants, e.g. English and Polish, of the same entry on Wikipedia. Without going into the actual content, only consider the section headings in the Polish version: Morphology, Use, Role in Culture. None of these occurs in the English version. [translator's note, A.G.]

history, geography, practical use, conditions of cultivation) and finally about the crop yield in Poland and worldwide.

4. What is the difference between a linguistic definition and a scientific encyclopedic description? Anna Wierzbicka argues:

Scientific definitions do not reflect the concepts that average speakers of a language have. The basic problem is this: science is – or aims to be – universal; it is supposed to reflect the totality of knowledge (especially the knowledge of experts in various disciplines, whereas language is not universal because it contains the experience of people joined by common culture and common life. It is not the experience of an expert in some narrow field but that of “the man in the street”. (Wierzbicka 1993: 252; transl. A.G.)

That “man-in-the-street” kind of experience is the cognitive basis of colloquial language (in the anthropological, not the stylistic understanding; cf. Bartmiński 1993) and corresponds to what Yuri Apresyan referred to as the “naive worldview”:

The naive worldview that has been emerging for centuries [...] reflects the material and spiritual experience of the nation that speaks a given language and can therefore be characteristic of that nation in two ways. First, the naive view of a certain portion of reality may drastically diverge from the purely logical, scientific view, the latter being shared by speakers of different languages. [...] Second, naive worldviews reconstructed through analysis of various languages may differ, whereas the scientific worldview is independent of the language in which it is expressed. [...] The task of the lexicographer, who wants to remain such rather than turning into an encyclopedist, is to reveal, with the aid of his or her defining system, the naive worldview hidden in the meanings of words. (Apresyan 1974, transl. A.G.)<sup>7</sup>

The Lublin ethnolinguistic team launched a program of linguistic worldview reconstruction with a focus on its “naive” aspect in folk and colloquial Polish in 1976. Its first tangible fruit was a preliminary instalment of the *Dictionary of Folk Linguistic Stereotypes* (SLSJ 1980) with an extensive introduction by Jerzy Bartmiński. However, it proposed a cultural understanding of the notion of connotation, rather than the solely linguistic understanding as advocated by Apresyan. Apresyan’s ideas were accepted in an extended format by Anna Wierzbicka in her *Lexicography and Conceptual Analysis* (1985).

In her study of animal names, Wierzbicka adds:

In their inquiries into everyday concepts encoded in natural language [...] researchers are not faced with a dilemma of what to choose: their task is to reveal the whole of the

<sup>7</sup> Translated from the Polish edition, *Semantyka leksykalna*, Wrocław 1980, transl. from the Russian by Zofia Kozłowska and Andrzej Markowski, pp. 80–83. The translator of the English edition (*Lexical Semantics*, Karoma Publishers, 1992) uses the expression “picture of the world”, which we here find problematic for various reasons. [translator’s note, A.G.]

concept as it is. That discovery proceeds through every bit of information available [...]. This kind of analysis can rather be compared to the work of a sculptor trying to uncover, with the help of a chisel, the outline of a statue hidden in a block of cement. [...] The goal of an encyclopedia [is different] and will not be reached if its entries are replaced with explications of everyday concepts [...]. This is because, paradoxically, it is the dictionary entry, rather than the encyclopedic entry, that can be regarded as “objective”, non-arbitrary, and representing “unquestionable facts”. These are, of course, psycho-socio-cultural facts, not biological ones. An encyclopedic entry for *mouse* may be temporary, biased, or subjective in its selectivity and emphases, but its goal is not to pin down psycho-socio-cultural facts; it does not aspire to reveal conceptual structures. Encyclopedic knowledge is cumulative and open-ended, whereas word meanings are discrete and finite: they embrace a peculiar kind of knowledge (or pseudo-knowledge, such as the belief that mice are particularly fond of cheese) and so function as important points of reference both for the process of communication and for human cognition. (Wierzbicka 1993: 264; transl. A.G.)

Lublin ethnolinguists generally follow Wierzbicka’s ideas, with one exception: their explications contain not only semantic primes (which together constitute the Natural Semantic Metalanguage) but also common colloquial words.<sup>8</sup>

5. The linguacultural view of *pszenica* ‘wheat’ in colloquial and folk Polish will include (in the 2nd volume of the Dictionary of Folk Stereotypes and Symbols [SSiSL] on plants) a general cultural introduction, the separate explications of *pszenica* as a cereal and as grain, plus their joint documentation with regard to text genres. The results of the analysis are synthetically presented here.

5.1. In Polish folk culture wheat has a dual sense: (i) practical, for it is considered a “bread” cereal, along with rye, barley, and partially oat – but it was mainly from white wheat flour that rolls and cakes were made for all kinds of holidays, foods better than everyday rye bread, barley pies or oat pies; (ii) cultural, for in proverbs and legends it was connected with the sacred and contrasted with weeds as the deeds of the devil (cf. the proverb *God sows wheat, the devil sows weeds*, NKPP *pszenica* 17<sup>9</sup>). In

<sup>8</sup> Let us note here that Wierzbicka herself has recently extended her list of 64 “atoms” of meaning (I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING, PEOPLE, BODY, PART, KIND, THIS, THE SAME, ONE, TWO, A FEW, MANY/MUCH, GOOD, BAD, SMALL, THINK, KNOW, FEEL, SEE, HEAR, SPEAK, WORD, TRUTH, DO, HAPPEN, MOVE, TOUCH, BE <SOMEWHERE>, BE/EXIST, HAVE, BE <SOMEONE/SOMETHING>, LIVE, DIE. WHEN/TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, LONG/FOR A LONG TIME, SHORT/FOR A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, AT THE SAME TIME, cf. Wierzbicka 2010) by adding to it the so-called “molecules” of meaning, of the kind EARTH, SKY, SUN, MOON, STARS, SHEPHERD, SHEEP, VOICE, GRASS, TOWN (cf. e.g. Wierzbicka 2017).

<sup>9</sup> *Pan Bóg pszenicę mnoży, a diabeł kłkol sporzy.*

legends (cf. *Where Jesus laid his foot, wheat would grow*, Pig Wyb 242<sup>10</sup>), baby Jesus turns into wheat when he is carried by his Mother running away from Herod (Zow Bib 271). It was believed that whoever looks carefully into wheat grain will see the face of Virgin Mary, or the outline of Jesus’s face or head. Wheat is a symbol of holiness because from it are made the Host and the communion wafer, the wedding cake called *korowaj* or *kołacz*, and the Christmas Eve dish called *kutia*. In peasant poetry it is usually described as “gold” or “golden”, gold being a sign of divinity and wealth. In proverbs and songs, wheat symbolises good (in opposition to the bad tares), wealth, and opulence.

### A. *Pszenica* ‘wheat’ as a plant

**Names.** The word *pszenica* has two basic meanings: ‘a species of cereal’ and ‘the grain of that cereal’. It has been recorded in Polish since the 14<sup>th</sup> c. and has counterparts in all Slavic languages. Etymologically, it is linked with *pszono*, regional for ‘millet’, and with *pszennik*, regional for ‘cake from millet flour’. It probably derives from the verb *pchać* ‘push’, Proto-Slavic \**pъchati* ‘beat, grate, thrash into grain’ (passive participle \**pъšenō* ‘trashed’), and relates to the way of processing wheat grain by grinding it to make flour (Sędz Prasł 12). *Pszono* originally meant ‘grain separated from chaff’ (Dub Ostr 107). It is worth noting that a similar development can be found in the Latin term *triticum*, from *terro*, *trivi*, *tritum* ‘grate, grind’.

Diminutives of *pszenica* (*pszeniczka*, *pszeniczeńka*) frequently occur in songs. Adjectives derived from the name are qualitative, relating to colour: *pszeniczny* ‘fawn-coloured, light yellow’, e.g. *pszeniczne włosy/wąsy* ‘wheat-coloured hair/moustache’, and evaluative: *człowiek pszenny* ‘a delicate and kindly person, sensitive to colds, choosy in eating’ (Sych SGKasz 4/211). A certain kind of mushroom is also called *pszenica* (Karł SJP 5/420), cf. *pszenicznia* ‘boletus or cep yellow underneath the cap’ (SGP PAN/K, MAGP 12/19); this is also true of certain plants with flowers in the shape of wheat ears: *pszeniczka Najświętszej Marii Panny* ‘wheat of the Virgin Mary’ is the folk name for cudweed (Lud 1931/51); *pszenica turecka*, ‘Turkish wheat’, is an old name for maize (Zdan SJP 1325); *indyjska pszenica*, ‘Indian wheat’, is a species of millet from India (SPXVI 34/404). *Pszennyto* ‘triticale’ is ‘an artificially bred species of cereal, when wheat is pollinated with the genetic material of rye’ (PSWP Zgól 35/15).

<sup>10</sup> *Gdzie Pan Jezus stąpnął nóżką, tam się pszenica rodziła.*

**Categorisation.** Wheat is included, along with rye, barley, oats, and buckwheat, in the category of bread cereals (Kuk Kasz 152). In dictionaries of standard Polish (Karł SJP, SWJP Dun, PSWP Zgól), wheat is defined as a grass, more specifically as a plant of the Poaceae (grasses) family, which contrasts with its folk understanding.

**Species and varieties.** The commonly cultivated species of wheat is common wheat (*pszenica zwyczajna*, *Triticum aestivum* L.; Kul Wiel 2/403), also called *pszenica pospolita* (Lin SJP 4/714). The species and varieties of wheat are distinguished with regard to:

(a) the sowing time; wheat sown in spring and harvested in summer is called *pszenica jara* ‘spring wheat’ (from *jar*, folk for ‘spring’), *jarka* (MAGP 4/120), *jarzyna* (Recz Śląsk 574); in a harvest song it is called *jareczka* (Głog Pieś 33), also *pszenica wiosenna* ‘spring wheat’ (Udz Biec 395), *wiosnowa* (Dub Ostr 107), *wieśniana* (Święt Nadr 119) ‘spring wheat’, *wieśnianka* ‘the spring one’ (MAGP 4/118), or *pszenica letnia* ‘summer wheat’ (Górń Malb 2/1/140). The name *jarka* is also used in a more general sense in reference to any corn sown in spring. The wheat sown in autumn and harvested the following year is called *pszenica ozima* (Dej Kiel 27/220), *ozimka*, *pszenica zimowa*, *zimówka*, ‘winter wheat’, (from *zima* ‘winter’), and in older dictionaries of general Polish also *lodówka* (from *lód* ‘ice’) (Karł SJP 5/420);

(b) the appearance of the ear; the wheat whose ears have spikes is called *pszenica wąsata* or *wąsatka* (Lin SJP 4/714) ‘moustache wheat’, *kosmatka* (Zdan SJP 1325; from *kosmaty* ‘hairy’), *ostka* (MAAE 1900/110, from *ość* ‘spike’ or ‘fishbone’), *jeżatka* (Mosz Kul 1/218, from *jeż* ‘hedgehog’); the wheat whose ears have no spikes is called *gołka* (MAAE 1900/110), *gółka* (Wisła 1897/744), *golica* (SGŚ Wyd 10/155), or *gałka* (ZWAK 1889/153), from *goły* ‘naked’, also *pszenica gładka* ‘smooth wheat’ (MAAE 1914/21);

(c) the colour of the grain and/or the ear: *pszenica biała* (SGP PAN 2/125) or *białka* (SGP PAN 2/116) ‘white wheat’, *pszenica żółta* or *żółtawa* ‘yellow/yellowish wheat’ (Nieb Przes 188); *pszenica złocista* ‘golden wheat’ (TN Dębe Wielkie 1991), *czerwonoplewa*, *czerwona*, *czerwonka* ‘red-chaffed/red wheat’ (SGP PAN 5/105, 107, 112);

(d) the properties of the grain: *pszenica twarda* ‘hard wheat’ (SJP Dor 7/700), *pszenica makaronowa* ‘pasta wheat’, *pszenica miękka* ‘soft wheat’ (PSWP Zgól 35/14); the shape of the grain: *pszenica drobnoziarnista* ‘fine-grained wheat’ (Kul Wiel 2/403);

(e) the shape of the ear: *plaskurka* ‘the flat one’ (Kul Wiel 2/403), *pszenica zbita/zbitokłosa* ‘compact-ear wheat’ or *pszenica karłowata* ‘dwarf wheat’ (*Triticum compactum*) (PSWP Zgól 34/14), *pszenica wielokłosowa* ‘multi-eared wheat’ (Karł SJP 5/420);



(f) its origin: dictionaries of standard Polish mention *pszenica polska* 'Polish wheat' (Karł SJP 5/420), *pszenica amerykańska* 'American wheat' (Zdan SJP 433), *pszenica angielska/egipska/marokańska* 'English/Egyptian/Moroccan wheat' (Zdan SJP 1325), *pszenica perska* 'Persian wheat' (PSWP Zgól 35/14);

(g) the place of cultivation: *pszenica sandomierska* 'Sandomierz wheat' (Karł SJP 5/420), a fine-grained, yellow wheat (Wisła 1902/178), cf. *Sandomierz wheat is famous worldwide* (NKPP Sandomierz 5).<sup>11</sup>

There is also *sanopsa*, with quadrate ears without spikes, very hard and fertile, cultivated for cereal (Wiet SPog 159); an old variety of *pszenica orkisz* (Kul Wiel 2/403) or *szpelc* (Lin SJP 3/191) 'spelt'; *maryjanka* (perhaps from Virgin Mary) and *wanotka* (MAAE 1900/110); *pszenica perz, perzowatka* 'couch-grass wheat' (Karł SJP 5/420).

**Complexes and collections.** Wheat functions in a complex with weeds, to which it is opposed, cf. the proverb *Where there's wheat, there must be weeds* (NKPP *pszenica* 25),<sup>12</sup> and with sparrows, which are very fond of wheat grain, cf. *Where there was wheat, there were lots of sparrows* (Rog Wag 305).<sup>13</sup> Wheat functions in collections with rye as the two most important cereals; a wreath of rye and wheat was woven at the end of harvest and presented to the landlord. Harvesting rye and wheat was called "the great harvest" (K 3 Kuj 231) and wheat, the longest of all cereals, was harvested with the sickle rather than with the scythe (Pelc SGLub 1/115), because it was treated as God's special gift (Wit Baj 46). In folk poetry, rye and wheat talk to the sun (Niew Prow 129). In love songs wheat co-occurs with oats: *Where is my Johnny? He is sowing wheat and laughs whenever he looks back. He is sowing wheat and fine-grained oats; you want to marry an aristocrat, go and hang yourself* (Bart PANLub 4/258).<sup>14</sup> It also occurs with wormwood: *Behind the barn there was wormwood, behind the wheat Kathy, was looking out for Johnny* (Chęć Kurp 108).<sup>15</sup> In the poetry of Jan Pócek, golden wheat is mentioned along with white birch and green cherry orchards (Poc Poez 454, 480) as symbols of the beauty of the world.

Wheat is usually mentioned in the series of four basic cereals: rye, wheat, barley, and oats, e.g. in the riddle: *Which cereal is the oldest? Is it barley, rye,*

<sup>11</sup> *Pszeniczka sandomierska słynie na świat cały.*

<sup>12</sup> *Przy pszenicy musi być kąkol.* (The weeds here are the biblical tares.)

<sup>13</sup> *A pszenica gdzie była, to wroble chmaramy.*

<sup>14</sup> *Gdzie jest mój Janek? Pszeniczkę sieje, co sie obejrzy, to sie roześmieje. Sieje pszeniczkę i drobny owies, masz wziąć szlachciankę, lepiej sie powieś.*

<sup>15</sup> *Za stodołą bylica, za bylicą pszenica, za psenicą Kasieńka wyglądata Jasińka.*

wheat, or oats? – *It is barley, for it has a moustache* (Folf Zag nr 674);<sup>16</sup> or in a carol: *Jesus walks all over your field, he stacks rye for you in four rows; / Jesus walks all over your yard, he stacks wheat for you in four rows; / Jesus walks all over your yard, he stacks barley for you in four rows; Jesus walks all over your field, he stands oat for you in four rows* (Bart PANLub 1/226).<sup>17</sup>

In New-Year wishes and carols, wheat occurs along with other corns, vegetables and cultivated plants:

*To happiness and health for the New Year, may wheat and peas grow abundantly: wheat like a glove, rye like a manger, oats like a dog.* (Udz Biec 166)<sup>18</sup>

*To happiness and health, on St. Stephen's Day. May rye grow like a manger, broad beans like a trough, wheat like a glove.* (Bart PANLub 1/121)<sup>19</sup>

*Listen, landlord, to what we say: there's a gold plough on your land. On the plough Jesus himself is sitting, St. John is urging the beasts, St. Peter is driving the plough.*

*What are we going to sow on this holy land: rye and wheat, oats, maize. Millet and buckwheat, and a measure of peas.* (Kaz Nuty 1994/33)<sup>20</sup>

Wheat ears, together with herbs, other cereals, vegetables and fruit, are blessed in a church on the feast of the Assumption on Mary, called the Feast of Virgin Mary of the Herbs (15 August).

**Oppositions.** Wheat functions in opposition to: (1) weeds, especially tares: *God sows wheat, the devil sows tares* (NKPP pszenica 17);<sup>21</sup> with equal frequency with bent grass: *I sowed wheat but bent grass grew* (Dyg Kat 344);<sup>22</sup> also with thistles: *He has sown wheat but harvests thistles* (Sych SGKasz 3/342);<sup>23</sup> (2) other cereals: (a) rye, in wedding songs: *Yesterday she was with wheat, today with rye; yesterday a girl, today a woman* (Oles Lub 64);<sup>24</sup> (b) with oats, being the more valuable cereal: *Before good oats, even*

<sup>16</sup> *Które zboże najstarsze: czy jęczmień? czy żyto? czy pszenica? czy owies? – Jęczmień, bo ma wąsy.*

<sup>17</sup> *Chodzi Pan Jezus pó waszym pólaniu, stawia wam żyteżko czterema rządami. / Chodzi Pan Jezus po waszym gumieniu, stawia wam pszeniczkę czterema rządami. / Chodzi Pan Jezus po waszym gumieniu, stawia wam jinczmionek czterema rządami. / Chodzi Pan Jezus po waszym polaniu, stawia wam owies czterema rządami.*

<sup>18</sup> *Na szczęście, na zdrowie, na ten Nowy Rok, aby się urodziła pszenica i groch: pszenica jak rękawica, żyto jak koryto, owiesek jak piesek.*

<sup>19</sup> *Na szczęście, na zdrowie, ze świętym Szczepanem. By wam się rodziło żyto jak koryto, bób jak żółb, pszenica jak rękawica.*

<sup>20</sup> *Słuchaj gospodarzu, co my ci powiemy, że na twojej roli złoty płużek stoi. A na tym płużeczku sam Pan Jezus siedzi, święty Jan poganina, Piotr za pługiem chodzi. Co będziemy siali na tej świętej roli: żyto i pszenice, owies, kukurydza. Proso i tatarke, no ję grochu miarke.*

<sup>21</sup> *Pan Bóg pszenicę mnoży, a diabeł kękol sporzy.*

<sup>22</sup> *Zasiotech se pszenica, a wyrosła mietlica.*

<sup>23</sup> *Zasiał pszenicę, a zbiera ost.*

<sup>24</sup> *Wczoraj była u pszeniczki, a dzisiaj u żyta, wczoraj była panienczka, a dzisiaj kobieta.*

wheat will bow (NKPP owies 7);<sup>25</sup> (c) with millet: *he disappeared like millet in wheat* (NKPP ginąć 19);<sup>26</sup> (3) with chaff: *Better to thresh someone else's wheat than one's own chaff* (NKPP młócić 6).<sup>27</sup>

**Appearance. Size.** In the so-called "twig songs",<sup>28</sup> the carollers sing to the landlord: *A splendid white house in front of this poor one, green wheat in the field. . . The wheat grew like a pine and it bends for the landlord like reeds on water* (Kaz Nuty 1995/11).<sup>29</sup> The carollers wish the landlords that wheat may grow like a glove (*urodziła pszenica jak rękawica*, Goł Lud 311), tall as a wagon stake (Nieb Przes 227).

**Colour.** Wheat sprouts green but it is golden when ripe, cf. *hair like a field of ripe wheat* (S SFr 2/586);<sup>30</sup> in songs: *Wheat ears in the field look like golden flames* (K 44 Gór 96),<sup>31</sup> *Our landlord has wheat like gold* (Glog Pieś 35);<sup>32</sup> cf. the references to wreaths of golden wheat (Or L 1929/70) or the use of the adjective *pszeniczny* 'fawn-coloured, light yellow' (USJP Dub 3/840).

Why are wheat ears small? According to a legend, God/Jesus punishes people in this way for disrespecting bread. Upon request from Virgin Mary, he leaves an ear on her palm for the dog and the cat (Krz PBL nr 2635).

**Sowing. Sowing time.** It was advisable to sow winter wheat before the feast of the Nativity of Mary (called the Virgin Mary of Sowing, 8 September) so that it may grow beautiful (Udz Biec 145), exactly on that day (MAAE 1910/87), or after that day (*Before Mother of God sow rye first, then wheat, after Mother of God hold on to wheat*, NKPP Matka Boska Siewna 7);<sup>33</sup> also on a Saturday (K 24 Maz 64) or Wednesday (NKPP pszenica 23), i.e. on the days of the week devoted to Virgin Mary (Dwor Maz 129). It was also recommended to sow wheat on the day of the decapitation of St. John (29 August) (K 28 Maz 52), or no later than the feast of St. Michael (29 September) (Nieb Przes 184). It was considered good to sow spring wheat on Holy Saturday so that it may grow without brome-grass (MAAE 1914/234), after Easter (Lud 1952/294), on the feast of St. Adalbert (23 April), or

<sup>25</sup> *Przed dobrym owsem to i pszenica czota uchyli.*

<sup>26</sup> *Zginął jak proso w pszenicy.*

<sup>27</sup> *Lepszy młócić cudzóm pszynice niż swoji plewy.*

<sup>28</sup> *Pieśni gaikowe*; *gaik* was a small, usually pine ribbon-decorated twig that Easter singers carried around the village as they performed. [transl. note]

<sup>29</sup> *Przed tym domem biała kamienica, a na polu zielona pszenica. . . . Pszynicka sie zrosła, jak na polu sosna, a tak mu sie zgina, jak na wodzie trzcina.*

<sup>30</sup> *Włosy jak łan dojrzałej pszenicy.*

<sup>31</sup> *Pszeniczka na zagonie złocistemi kłosy płonie.*

<sup>32</sup> *U naszego jegomości pszeniczka w złocie.*

<sup>33</sup> *Przed Bogarodzą [siej] żyto przed pszenicą, po Bogarodzicy chwyć się pszenicy.*

directly afterwards (Kutrz Kurp 2/81), but no later than on the feast of St. Mark (25 April): *On St. Mark's Day, the last spring wheat is sown* (Stel Pom 156).<sup>34</sup>

Wheat was sown before sunrise, so that it would not be affected by bunt (Wit Baj 45),<sup>35</sup> after sunset on a Friday or before sunrise on a Saturday, when sparrows are still asleep (Dwor Maz 132), after sunset, when birds sit in their nests (Lud 1899/80), at dusk, so that it does not grow thinly (ZWAK 1890/214); at night by moonlight, so that it may grow well (K 3 Kuj 93), when the moon is waxing, so that it may have big ears, full of grain (Or L 1935/158), by the full moon, so that the grain is full and firm like the moon (Gaj Rozw 97), three days before or after the new moon, so that it grows without weeds (ZWAK 1895/61). When sown on a Wednesday, it would not be eaten up by the sparrows (Wisła 1892/772).

It was believed that wheat should not be sown (a) when there are two lights in the sky (the sun and the moon) because it will be affected by bunt; (b) by the full moon: *Never sow wheat by the full moon, so that it will not be affected by bunt* (NKPP pszenica 15); (c) by the new moon, for it will then have many small straws (Or L 1935/158).

In Dobczyce, a town in southern Poland, it was found that if blessed ears, the grain from them, or sowing seeds are touched by a woman (Dob Niem 34) or by a pregnant woman (Lud 1931/69), the wheat would be affected by bunt.

**Growth.** Like other corns, wheat sprouts (*wschodzi, piórkuje*), grows (*rośnie*), *kwitnie*, *rosuje* (blooms), *kłosuje* (produces ears), *dostoji się* (matures). A peasant poet Cerella Oleszczuk says: *Wheat sprouts in fresh, black soil, / changing into grass, growing slowly / ... and slowly changing from grass into ears* (Ad Złote 192).<sup>36</sup> In love songs: *Wheat for my wedding doesn't bloom yet; you Johnny fell in love with me, I didn't fall in love with you very much* (Glog Pieś 79);<sup>37</sup> when wheat blooms (*rosuje*), it means that a girl bewails her lost virginity (Krzyż WiM 3/196).

In a carol, when the Holy Family are fleeing to Egypt, wheat miraculously grows overnight. This misleads those in pursuit, who on seeing ripe wheat

<sup>34</sup> *Na św. Marka sieje się ostatnia jarka.*

<sup>35</sup> In plant pathology, *bunt* is "a smut disease of wheat in which the kernels are replaced by the black, foul-smelling spores of fungi of the genus *Tilletia*" (dictionary.com) [transl. note]

<sup>36</sup> *Kielkuje pszeniczka w świeżej, czarnej roli, / zmieniając się w trawkę, wzrastając powoli / ... i powoli z trawki przemienia się w kłosy.*

<sup>37</sup> *Jeszcze, jeszcze pszenica nie kwitnie na moje wesele, zakochałeś się we mnie Jasieńku, ja w tobie niewiele.*

and learning that the refugees passed by in sowing time, turn back convinced it must have been long ago (Bart PANLub 1/177, cf. Krz PBL nr 2442).

**Weeding.** Weeding involves removing the tares: *When one uproots tares, wheat can suffer too*;<sup>38</sup> *He who doesn't weed tares in time, will trample on wheat or stifle it* (NKPP *pszenica* 12, 14);<sup>39</sup> *The boys came back from the war, asked for a beautiful girl. Haven't you seen the one in the field picking the wheat from the tares?* (K 36 Woł 407).<sup>40</sup>

**Harvest.** Wheat was harvested after rye. For a long time it was only harvested with the sickle: being a bread cereal and a gift from God, it was believed to be "hurt" when harvested with the scythe (Wit Baj 46).

**Blessing.** Wheat ears, along with herbs, other cereals (rye, oat, barley), vegetables and fruit, are blessed in a church on the feast of the Assumption of Mary (the Feast of Virgin Mary of the Herbs, 15 August).

**Threshing.** Wheat was once threshed with flails, now machines are used (Nitsch Pół 31).

**Amount.** After cutting, wheat was bound into sheaves and arranged into larger structures, variously called *kopy*, *kopki* 'stacks', *dziesiątki* 'tens', *lalki* 'dolls', *piętnastki z nakryciem* 'covered fifteens', *półkopki* 'half-stacks', *mendelki* 'fifteens',<sup>41</sup> *kozły*, lit. 'goats'.

**Location.** Wheat was usually sown on the best land, since it requires fertile soil, as in the proverb *Anything can grow in stupid heads, even better than on wheat soil* (NKPP *ziemia* 21).<sup>42</sup> In songs, wheat grows behind the barn and wormwood: *There's wormwood behind the barn and wheat behind the wormwood; Kathy looked out for Johnny behind the wheat* (Chęć Kurp 108);<sup>43</sup> it grows green over the hill, behind the forest: *Over the hill, behind the forest, something green grows; it's my wheat, I'll make a few pennies* (Pol Rud 133).<sup>44</sup> The field where wheat used to grow is called *pszeniczysko*, also *ściernisko* 'stubble field' (MAGP mapa 538).

**Localiser.** Along with wheat, there grow weeds, especially tares: *Where there's wheat, there must be weeds/tares* (NKPP *pszenica* 25);<sup>45</sup> hence the wedding wish: *May the newly-weds have wheat without tares* (K 16 Lub

<sup>38</sup> *Kiedy się wrywa kąkol, to się i pszenicy poderwie.*

<sup>39</sup> *Kto kąkolu nie plewi i w czas go nie ruszy, potem depce pszenicę albo ją zagłuszy.*

<sup>40</sup> *Przyjechali kawaliry z wojny, pytali sie dziewczyny nadobny. Cyście wy jej nie widzieli w polu, jak wybiera pszenicę z kąkolu?*

<sup>41</sup> Probably composed of fifteen sheaves, although the Polish *mendel* had sixteen. [transl. note]

<sup>42</sup> *Na pszennej ziemi tak się nie urodzi, jak w głupich głowach.*

<sup>43</sup> *Za stodołą bylica, za bylica pszenica, za pszenicą Kasieńka wyglądająca Jasieńka.*

<sup>44</sup> *Za górą, za lasem, tam się coś zieleni; to moja pszenicka, będzie grosz w jesieni.*

<sup>45</sup> *Przy pszenicy musi być kąkol.*

177).<sup>46</sup> Another proverb says: *If there's fescue [narrow-leaved grasses] in rye/wheat, there'll be lots of bread; and if there's bent grass, the bread will only last until St. Peter's Day* (NKPP kostrzewa).<sup>47</sup> In folk poetry, wheat co-occurs with poppies: *On a wheat field / poppies glow. / The wind combs them with its light hand* (Maria Zientara-Malewska, Szcz Ant 851).<sup>48</sup> Wheat is also found where there are birds, esp. sparrows, as is observed in the proverb: *He cares for someone else's wheat, while his own is being eaten up by sparrows* (NKPP pszenica 2);<sup>49</sup> in a song: *nightingales sings in spring wheat* (K 46 Ka-S 38);<sup>50</sup> a girl's cows run away *from an oat field to a wheat field* (Pieś Śl 2/422); oxen moo under the spring wheat (Bart Waż 71).<sup>51</sup> According to belief, Lady Midday (*Poludnistsa*, Pol. *przypołudnica*) comes out of wheat or rye (Peł Dem 100). In love songs, a wheat field is a place of courtship: *Three soldiers came from the war, asked where they could spend the night. Found a quiet place and asked for Mary, well-dressed and stylish. She's over there, in the field by the woods, picking wheat from the tares. She picked it with one hand and waved at a soldier with the other* (Krzyż Kuj 1/226);<sup>52</sup> a boy will go *through the spring wheat* to visit his girlfriend (K 40 MazP 222); a girl wants to become a golden quail and run away from her boyfriend across a spring wheat field (Pau Gal 133).

**Practices to ensure a good crop.** Sowing seed was usually enriched by adding seed from what was blessed on the Assumption of Mary (the Feast of Virgin Mary of the Herbs, 15 August), from the harvest wreath, or from the Christmas Eve sheaf. A good harvest was also predicted if stolen seed was used for sowing (ZWAK 1885/36).

In order to ensure a good crop, farmers (1) would dance to oats and wheat in a barn during Shrovetide (Bieg Koleb 487) or on Ash Wednesday. It was believed that jumping would aid cereal growth (Fran Kal 35). (2) On Easter Sunday, they (a) would compete in running when returning home from the morning Easter mass; the winner was believed to enjoy the best wheat crop (LL 1960/2-3/46); (b) would not light up the house (Pośp Śląsk 196), so that wheat would not be afflicted by smut (Or L 1933/44); it was

<sup>46</sup> *Żeby [młodzi] mieli pszeniczkę bez kąkol.*

<sup>47</sup> *Kiedy w życie (pszenicy) kostrzewa, będzie chleba, ile trzeba, a jak mietła, [to starczy chleba] tylko do świętego Pietra.*

<sup>48</sup> *W pszenicznym łanie / palą się maki. / Wiatr czesze je lekką dłonią.*

<sup>49</sup> *Cudzą pszenicę ogania, a jego wróble jedzą.*

<sup>50</sup> *W jarej pszenicy śpiewają słowicy.*

<sup>51</sup> *Wołki ryco pod jaro psenico.*

<sup>52</sup> *Przyjechało trzech żołnierzy z wojny, pytali się "o noclyg spokojny. I znaleźli kwatere spokojną, pytają się "o Marysie strojną. Jest "ona tam, p"od borem na polu, wybiyra tam pszyniczke z kąkol. Jednóm rączkom kąkól wybiyrała, drugóm rączkom żołnierza witała.*

also believed that *to him who uses lights, wheat will be affected by bunt* (Kot San 66);<sup>53</sup> (c) after the ceremonial breakfast, the landlord would bury the yolks from the blessed eggs in the field, so that the wheat would grow yellow like the yolks (Kot Urok 139); (d) he would eat a few bits of the blessed food in the field, and the rest, together with the eggshells, he would throw behind for the wheat to grow and for the flour to be white (MAAE 1914/238). (3) On Easter Monday, boys would splash water on girls so that wheat would grow in abundance in the fields (MAAE 1914/238). (4) On Whitsunday (a) boys would build bonfires (Lud 1898/321) and run all over the cornfield with a burning torch, shouting *Hey, hey! Whitsunday bonfires!* (Wit Baj 147); (b) they would jump over the fire and shout: *Eat! Eat the rye for the new summer! And the wheat goes to the landlord, and the oats go to the horse!* (Or L 1934/142);<sup>54</sup> (c) people would skirt field boundaries with a princess and sing: *Where the princess goes, wheat grows* (Fisch Lud 139).<sup>55</sup>

So as to prevent wheat grain from being eaten up by birds, (a) during the Christmas Eve supper, blessed wheat grains were added to the food (ZWAK 1881/178); (b) while sowing, a handful of seeds was thrown far away over the sower's shoulder (Wisła 1892/773); (c) the water used to wash a deceased person was poured around the field sown with wheat (Kul Wiel 3/186), and the straw on which the deceased had been lying was strewn over the field (Święt Nadr 132).

**Use in folk medicine.** In the area of Jurków on Dunajec, wheat or rye flowers were eaten for fever (Wisła 1890/872). In the town of Wieliczka, to remove the so-called "sweet scab" on the head, the bark of the apple tree was fried in butter with young wheat sprouts and the concoction was then applied on the skin (Lud 1931/69); to remove warts, fire was set to joints of wheat straw, which were then applied to the warts (Pal Zer 110).

**Ritualistic use.** Wheat or rye ears (and sometimes those from other cereals) were used to make a wreath that would once be presented to the landlord's successor and is now customarily brought to the church. A sheaf of wheat and other cereals corns was placed inside the house on Christmas Eve.

**Augury and fortune-telling concerning crop yield.** A good wheat yield was prophesied by observing: (1) plants – a good crop was predicted if in early spring there was an abundance of daisies (ZWAK 1886/106), if rowan trees produced many fruits (Wisła 1889/758), if chanterelles turned red in time (TN Ruda Solska 1990), if fescue grew with the wheat (NKPP

<sup>53</sup> *Kto świci, temu się pszenica śnici.*

<sup>54</sup> *Żrej! Żytka na Nowe Latko żrej! A pszeniczka dla gospodarzyczka, a owiesku dla koniczka!*

<sup>55</sup> *Gdzie królowa chodzi, tam pszeniczka rodzi.*

kostrzewa); (2) the weather on Whitsunday and the following Monday: *Rye will be like the weather on the first day, wheat will be like the weather on the second day* (Udz Biec 174).<sup>56</sup> An augury says: *That wheat is usually good which covers the partridge on St. Adalbert's Day* (NKPP Wojciech św. 17c).<sup>57</sup> On the last day of April, farmers would look for the Star of Wheat Ear in the sky, dreaming of their wheat being as ripe as the star would suggest (SSiSL I/1/233–234).

After the Christmas Eve supper, next year's wheat crop was divined: (a) a handful of straw from the Christmas Eve sheaf was thrown up, which was accompanied by the formula *May the Lord give us a good wheat crop* – the quality of the crop was foretold from the number of straws that stuck to the ceiling (Udz Biec 155); (b) the Christmas Eve dish of *kutia* (made of wheat grain) was thrown up to the ceiling (Szym Podl 1/355).

**Personification of wheat.** In peasant poetry wheat is portrayed as a person: it weeps (Poc Poez 356, Niew Prow 51), *golden wheat* is asked to come to the window, *let it come and stand like a countrywoman . . . plaintively smiling / bare-footed* (Poc Poez 78);<sup>58</sup> *stand with me / wheat maid / in golden crown* (Władysław Koczot, Ad Złote 107).<sup>59</sup> The poet wants to *talk to the golden wheat and white birch before he is laid in the grave* (Jan Pocek, Poc Poez 454);<sup>60</sup> *rye and wheat / talk to the sun, raising their heads to the sky* (Barbara Krajewska, Niew Prow 129).<sup>61</sup>

In a song wheat is compared to a girl: *Wheat is like a pretty girl, it must be taken when the time is right. When the time passes, wheat will turn black, and non-one will fancy a girl when she grows old* (K 73 Krak 2/162);<sup>62</sup> cf. also *pszenica – obłudnica* 'wheat – a phony' (NKPP *pszenica* 19).

**Equivalences.** Wheat and rye were treated as the most basic and important cereals, staple foods. They were used interchangeably in ritualistic practices: after harvest, a chaplet from wheat or rye ears was woven and worn by the most diligent girl, who would take it to the landlord (Wisła 1902/300); a harvest bouquet was made of wheat or rye ears (Dwor Maz 175; K 16 Lub 125, Nieb Przes 491).

<sup>56</sup> *Jaka w piersy dzień pogoda, taka na żyto uroda; jaka w drugi dzień pogoda, taka na pszenice uroda.*

<sup>57</sup> *Taka pszenica zwykle urodzajna bywa, która na święty Wojciech przepiórkę pokrywa.*

<sup>58</sup> *złota pszenica / niech przyjdzie i stanie jak chłopka . . . rzewnie uśmiechnięta / bosa*

<sup>59</sup> *stań ze mną / panno pszeniczna / w złotej koronie*

<sup>60</sup> *porozmawiać ze złotą pszenicą i białą brzozą nim zejdzie do grobu*

<sup>61</sup> *żyto i pszenica / rozmawiają ze słońcem wznosząc głowy ku niebu*

<sup>62</sup> *Pszeniczka jakoby panienka urodna, wtedy ją brać trzeba, gdy pora dogodna. Bo skoro czas przejdzie, pszeniczka szernieje, panienki nie zechcą, gdy się zestarzeje.*



**Symbolism.** In proverbs, wheat symbolises good (in opposition to the bad or evil tares) and wealth, cf. *egipska pszenica* lit. 'Egyptian wheat', i.e. abundance, profit obtained in a foreign country (USJP Dub 1/790), *pszenica mu rosuje* 'his wheat blooms', i.e. 'he is doing good business' (NKPP *pszenica* 18); a rich person was said to have wheat falling from their (thatched) roof (Kul Wiel 3/440).<sup>63</sup> In songs, wheat is a symbol of a girl or fertility, cf. *Where there is beautiful wheat, there are also pretty girls/virgins* (NKPP *pszenica* 9),<sup>64</sup> *She has a wheat chaplet, she will have a baby girl* (K 2 San 122),<sup>65</sup> wheat in bloom, when harvested, threshed or bolted, symbolises love. Wheat fields symbolise Polishness in patriotic peasant poetry, and generally something good in the peasant dream-book (Nieb Pol 183, 238).

## B. *Pszenica* 'wheat' as grain

**Complexes and collections.** Wheat relates to sparrows, which eat wheat grain avidly (see above).

Wheat co-occurs (a) with rye, as a source of wealth: *They care for nothing, but only want to have wheat and rye* (NKPP *żyto* 11b).<sup>66</sup> In legends, the *kłobuk/skrzat* 'goblin' in the form of a black chicken brings wheat and rye to the landlords (Kon WiM 68, K 15 Poz 27). (b) With oats: newlyweds were sprinkled with wheat and oats, so that they would do well in their new household (Kul Kosz 198). In love songs, a girl orders oats, hay, and wheat to be given to the boy's horse (K 40 MazP 235); (c) with peas: newlyweds, upon leaving for the church, were sprinkled with wheat and peas (K 28 Maz 165).

**Oppositions.** Although it co-occurs with other corns, wheat also stands in opposition to them. (1) To rye, in a better–worse contrast (Wit Baj 227), also festive–everyday and secondarily more expensive–cheaper. Wheat grain was used to prepare dishes for religious holidays or weddings, whereas rye flour was used for everyday baking (Bar ŚrodP 143), hence in Kashubia *chlebowé ziarno* 'bread grain' (rye) was distinguished from *koł[a]czowé zârno* 'cake grain', i.e. wheat (Sych SGKasz 2/35). Cf. also in Kashubia, in reference to the days of the week: *Six days we eat rye, and wheat* [i.e., white bread] *on the seventh* (Sych SGKasz 4/372).<sup>67</sup> (2) To oats, being the more valuable kind: *Wheat and oats can be measured with the same strickle* (NKPP *strych* 1c).<sup>68</sup> In a wedding song, wheat is better than oats, and a bachelor is better

<sup>63</sup> *Pszenica mu się ze strzechy sypie.*

<sup>64</sup> *Gdzie są piękne pszenice, tam są śliczne dziewice.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ma wianeczek z psenice, będzie miała dziewicyce.*

<sup>66</sup> *Na nic nie dbają, za nic u nich wszystko, by tylko mieli pszeniczkę i żytko.*

<sup>67</sup> *Szesc dni je rzanëch w tidzeniu, a ten sódmi je pszëni.*

<sup>68</sup> *Jednym pszenicę z owsem równać strychem.*

than a widower (Stoin Żyw 317). (3) To barley in a magic ritual to remove sty: *Say three times: Hey you, prophet, there's wheat in the eye; You're lying, prophet, there's a? sty in your? eye* (Was Jag 229).<sup>69</sup>

**Appearance and properties.** *Shape.* As mentioned above, it was believed that whoever looks deep into wheat grain will see the face of Virgin Mary (Etnl 1995/174), the outline of the face of Jesus (Dud Pszcz 185), Jesus's head (MAAE 1912/42), or simply a human face (Sych SGKasz 4/211).

*Size.* In songs: *Fine are oats but wheat is finer, Johnny is pretty but Sophia is prettier* (Oles Lub 68);<sup>70</sup> carollers wish the landlords: *May your wheat be ripe like peas* (LL 1962/1–2/125).<sup>71</sup>

*Colour.* Several kinds of wheat are distinguished: *pszenica biała/białka* 'white wheat', *pszenica żółta* 'yellow wheat', *pszenica złocista* 'golden wheat', *pszenica czerwona/czerwonoplewa/czerwonka* 'red wheat', see Species and varieties above).

*Taste.* Wheat grain is sweet: *The Host must be made of wheat, it must be sweet* (TN Kąkolewnica 1990);<sup>72</sup> proverb: *When the mouse eats its full, even wheat seems bitter to it* (NKPP mysz 11b).<sup>73</sup>

**Measurement.** Similarly to other cereals, wheat was measured by: (a) tubs (*korce*), an old Polish dry measure; while carolling, people would wish others *a hundred tubs of wheat* (Kot Las 140); *szefle* (sing. *szefel*), from German *Scheffel* 'chest', now 'tub' (K 10 Poz 44); (b) quarters, quarts: *wiertel* (sing. *wiertel*), from German *Viertel* 'quarter'; (c) measures, in carols: the landlord *will give us a carol, a measure of wheat* (Bart PKL 210);<sup>74</sup> (d) pecks: a caroler asks for a peck of wheat for the dying *turoń* (an effigy of a black, hairy, horned animal) (1890/47). Over time, wheat began to be measured in (e) kilograms, (f) quintals, hundredweights, (g) centners.

**Processing.** After threshing, wheat grain was winnowed with the use of a special device (the process was called *młynkowanie*, lit. 'milling', or *wianie*, lit. 'blowing').

The grain was processed into flour or cereal; the flour was once made with the home quern. Wheat was also ground in mills, first into white, festive kind of flour, then over time, into flour for everyday use: *People would grind rye, wheat, they would make flour like the pupil of the eye. They would come*

<sup>69</sup> *Proroku, jęczmień na oku. Łzes, proroku, pszenica na oku.* (In Polish, *jęczmień* means both 'barley' and 'sty'. [transl. note])

<sup>70</sup> *Drobny owies, drobny, pszeniczka drobniejsza, ładny Jasio, ładny, a Zosia ładniejsza.*

<sup>71</sup> *Żeby wam się rodziła pszenica jak groch.*

<sup>72</sup> *Hostia to już musi być z pszenicy, bo to już musi być słodkie.*

<sup>73</sup> *Kiedy się myszka naje, to się jej pszenica gorzką być zdaje.*

<sup>74</sup> *Gospodarz da nam kolądeczkę, pszeniczki miareczkę.*

*back home happy, for they would also make cereal* (Ad? Złote 222).<sup>75</sup> In a love song, a girl asks the miller to grind fine wheat for her, by which she means sexual intercourse (Bart PANLub 4/316); in a jocular song a black and white ram grinds wheat in the mill (K 21 Rad 80, K 6 Krak 127).

Wheat was also ground into cereal or into *kutia* in a device called a *stepa*, a wooden pestle and mortar (Kul Wiel 2/410) (Or L 1926/135).

**Blessing.** As mentioned above, wheat grain was blessed in church on the feast of the Nativity of Mary (of Virgin Mary of Sowing, 8 September) (TN Jawornik Polski 1991), on St. Stephen's Day (26 December) (Nieb Przes 226), along with oats, lupin, broad beans, peas, vetch, and rye. Then the grain would be thrown on one another to commemorate the stoning of St. Stephen (Jaw Dąbr 88).

**Wheat as food.** Wheat grain is good for people (Wisła 1902/269). It is used to make flour, various dishes and drinks. It used to be fed to chickens, geese, and pigeons.

**Other practical uses.** Along with other cereals, wheat was used as a currency, a loose type (next to pea and rye) (Łęga Malb 115), a method of payment to hired farm workers (Kul Wiel 3/218) and cowherds (ŁSE 1970/71). Wheat was offered to the future bride (K 27 Maz 205) when she went around asking for help in organizing her wedding.<sup>76</sup> Wheat was given to newlyweds during the so-called *dziewosłęby* (a custom of asking the girl's parents for her hand by a representative of the suitor, ŁSE 1970/88), upon engagement (Chmiel Książ 87), or before the wedding (K 27 Maz 205). It was given to carollers in payment for their services (Święt Nadr 70), to the priest on his pastoral visit (K 48 Ta-Rz 69), to the organist and the grave-digger for distributing the Christmas wafer, or to the village beggar (Wit Baj 139, 227).

Wheat was an important source of income, it was sold for good money: *Over the mountain, behind the fount, something green grows: it's my wheat, I'll have some cash in my pocket. I won't give the wheat away for nothing, but sell it in Kraków. They'll pay well, I'll have money to party with and enjoy myself* (Wisła 1902/284);<sup>77</sup> *to charge the price of wheat* 'charge a high price' (NKPP brać 7), *he sold his wheat for a lot*, 'he was haughtily stubborn or relied on fanciful imagination' (NKPP pszenica 7). Wheat was shipped on the Vistula to the city of Gdańsk: *The wheat of the nobles floats down*

<sup>75</sup> *Ludzie w nich mieli żyto, pszenicę, robili mąkę jakby żrenicę. Zadoleni do dom wracali, bo nawet kasze w nich obrabiali.*

<sup>76</sup> This was called *chodzenie po wilku*, lit. 'wolf-walking' (Wit Baj 158), or *po prosiętach* 'walking with request' (ŁSE 1974/20).

<sup>77</sup> *Za górą, krynicą, coś sie tam zieleni: to moja pszeniczka, będzie grosz w jesieni. Za darmo jej nie dam, w Krakowie ją sprzedam. Tam dobrze zaptają, będzie hulać za co.*

to Gdańsk, the peasants' wheat has all gone into the people's bellies (NKPP Gdańsk 21);<sup>78</sup> *My wheat gave me a good crop, I had it shipped down to Gdańsk; I parted all my money away, not a penny's left!* (Goł Lud 64).<sup>79</sup>

**Use in folk medicine.** For skin diseases, wheat grains would be chewed and mixed with milk, and the mush would be applied to the rash on the child's face (Pal Zer 110). For fatigue, the person was covered with ground wheat seeds (Lud 1931/69). It was believed that the child would not cry at night if nine seeds of wheat were added to boiling water, which is then poured out under the child's crib (Plesz Międz 99). For spots and skin discolourations, a spread of wheat mixed with incense was applied, while for buzzing in the ears and poor hearing, a spread of wheat with red rose and wormwood was used (ZWAK 1895/60).

For chicken pip, blessed wheat grain was given to the chickens (Lud 1931/69).

**Use in rituals and magic.** Wheat grain was spread over the Christmas Eve supper table (Or L 1935/49), along with the grain of oats, barley (Kul Rop 260) and rye: all these were then fed to the poultry (Wisła 1903/158).

On New Year's Day, people would shower one another with wheat grain, especially boys would do that to girls (Or L 1947/150). Likewise, farmhands would do this to passers-by in front of the church. This was to ensure a good wheat and pea crop (Stel Pom 68). Children of repatriates from the East of Poland? would go from door to door on New Year's Day, strewing wheat grain on the floor upon entering the house and say: *To health, to happiness, to the New Year; may you enjoy better fortune than last year* (Kul Kosz 218).<sup>80</sup>

Newlyweds were showered with wheat grain upon leaving the church so that they would enjoy a good harvest and an abundance of bread (PSL 1990/1/28). They could be showered with wheat and peas when leaving for the church (K 28 Maz 165), or with wheat and oats (Kul Kosz 198) to ensure prosperity and fertility. It was believed that a few grains of wheat protected the bride from misfortune (Sych SGKasz 4/211).

**Auguries.** Wheat grain was also used in matrimonial auguries. On the eve of St. Andrew's Day (November 29), girls would sit in a circle, and each would place a grain (Gier Szczodr 116) or a small heap of wheat (Goł Lud 321) in front of herself. A chicken was then let in to eat the grain, and the girl whose grain was picked by the chicken first or who was left with an even

<sup>78</sup> *Pszenica pańska płynie do Gdańska, a chłopska wszystka w brzuchu.*

<sup>79</sup> *Psenicka mi się zrodziła, sptawiłem do Gdańska, pieniądze sie psehulały, ni mom ni selązka!*

<sup>80</sup> *Na szczęście, na zdrowie, na ten Nowy Rok, żeby się wam lepiej powodziło jak zeszły rok.*

number of grains, was believed to be the one who would get married first (Goł Lud 321). This augury was also performed on Christmas Eve with both boys and girls (ZWAK 1878/21).

Wheat was also used to find stolen horses: wheat grains were thrown "on the number" (a cardboard circle with the cardinal directions marked on it) and it was said: *King Solomon, tell me where my horses are* (Nitsch Tek 142).<sup>81</sup>

**Equivalences.** Wheat and rye functioned interchangeably as the most important kinds of cereal: at the beginning of the harvest, the leading female worker would throw a handful of wheat or rye across the landlord's successor's legs and say: *We bind our lord here on the field, so that he doesn't forget us after the harvest* (Nieb Przes 195).<sup>82</sup> Wheat or rye was given to the couple on their engagement ceremony (Chmiel Księż 87). It was offered to the girls asking for help when organising the wedding (Wit Baj 158), to the couple on the occasion of *dziewostęby* (a custom of asking the girl's parents for their daughter's hand by a representative of the suitor, ŁSE 1970/88), to the bride on the wedding day (ŁSE 1978/40), or to the carollers (Święt Nadr 70). Girls would thresh a handful of wheat grain with a quern on the eve of St. Andrew's Day (November 29); special cakes called *andrzejki* (St. Andrew's cakes) were then baked from the flour and used in augury (Pęk Biłg 238).

**Symbolism.** Wheat is a symbol of abundance and wealth: *The bee, the duck and wheat pull the nobleman out of his poverty* (NKPP szlachcic 33);<sup>83</sup> *I'm not harvesting my wheat yet, I know what I'll get for it. I'll get a thousand and two, will pay all my debts* (K 11 Poz 184);<sup>84</sup> cf. *Wheat is a gift of life, wealth, good harvest; it's all given by God* (Etnl 2006/99).<sup>85</sup>

Wheat is a symbol of holiness because it is used to make the Host and the Christmas wafer, therefore *wheat grain is not given to horses and dogs; wheat grain or bread is not given to pigs* (K 48 Ta-Rz 55, 54), cf. *ziarno pszeniczne* lit. 'wheat grain', meaning 'the faithful, those of strong faith' (SPXVI 34/405). In the Apocrypha about Mary and Jesus's flight from Herod, Jesus is turned into wheat grain: *When Virgin Mary carried Baby Jesus in her arms, she was beset by soldiers: "What do you have here?", "Wheat". And it was a baby that they didn't recognise, so that the Holy Host is*

<sup>81</sup> *Królu Salomónie, powiędz mi, dzie moje kónie.*

<sup>82</sup> *Wiążemy jaśnie pana na niwie, zeby nie zapómniał "o nas po zniwie.*

<sup>83</sup> *Pszczółka, klaczka i pszenica wyprowadzą z nędzy szlachcica.*

<sup>84</sup> *Jeszcze-ć ja pszeniczki nie żnę, wiem-ci ja, co za nią wezně. Wezne ja tysiączek, drugi, zapłacę w gościńcu długi.*

<sup>85</sup> *Pszenica to dar życia, bogactwo, urodzaj na zboże, bo to przecież od Boga wszystko dane.*

now made of wheat (Zow Bib 271).<sup>86</sup> In peasant poetry, wheat is portrayed as sacred: *I pray with wheat grain (pszenicznym modłę się ziarnem)* (Stanisław Buczyński, Szcz Ant 208).

Wheat also symbolises blessing. On St. Stephen's Day (December 26) people would try to find a grain of wheat in the hay laid on the Christmas table. It was believed that the house where it was found was specially blessed (Kot San 43). In love and wedding songs, wheat symbolises a girl: *Wheat is better than oats, a bachelor is better than a widower* (Stoin Żyw 317);<sup>87</sup> grinding wheat is a symbol of corporeal love: *A girl took her wheat to the mill. . . Hey Marcin the miller, will you grind it now? If you want it ground just once, it'll be straight away; if you want it bolted, you'll have to spend the night. And the miller goes about his business, so that the girl is all wet with dew* (ZWAK 1891/166).<sup>88</sup>

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6. Background. The linguacultural picture of wheat in Polish folklore is not limited to just that context – on the contrary, many of its aspects have meaningful counterparts in other ethnic cultures, the Poles' neighbours, both close and distant. It is possible to recognise historical links (a common Proto-Slavic and Proto-Indo-European, ancient Greek and Roman and Judeo-Christian heritage; mutual borrowings), but also typological ones, where wheat is associated with abundance, wealth, and the realm of the sacred. Parallelisms can be found not only among close cultures but also geographically distant ones. The following examples illustrate this.

In ancient China, people would ask the Prince of Harvest, Heou-tsi, for wheat and barley (Chev Dic 2/363). Phrygians would refer to Attis, the god of vegetation and spring, as “fresh ears of wheat” (El His 1/209). In the Arab tradition, Adam took wheat from paradise as the pinnacle of food (Kop SSym 489). In ancient Egypt, sprouting wheat was considered a symbol of Osiris, the god of agriculture, who was thrown into the Nile and resurrected, as wheat grows upon the river's flooded banks (Herd Lek 129, Lur Słow 189).

In Ancient Greece, the name of the *goddess of wheat* was ascribed to Demeter, who created wheat after her daughter Persephone returned from

<sup>86</sup> *Matka Boska niosła na rękę Pana Jezusa, Dzieciątko, a ci żołnierze obskoczyli: „Co ty tutaj masz? – Mam pszenicę”, a tam było dziecko i oni nie poznali, dlatego z pszenicy wyrabia się Przenajświętszy Sakrament.*

<sup>87</sup> *Lepso pszenicka niżli “owies, lepszy kawaler niżli wdowiec.*

<sup>88</sup> *Poniesła dziewczyna pszenicke do młyna . . . Márcinie młynárzu, cyli mi ty zmielesz pszenicke “od razu? Jeżeli kcesz na ráz, to ci zmiele zaraz, jeżeli chcesz pytlować, musisz zanocować . . . I młynárz sie bierze zwykłe koto kosza, jaże na dziewczynie wystąpiła rosa.*

the underworld (El His 1/206). The Greeks believed that just as a seed of wheat that grows out of the dark earth to fulfil its destiny, so do humans emerge from the dark pre-earth (Lur Słow 189). So the ear of wheat played a key role in Eleusinian Mysteries as a symbol of birth and death or death and resurrection (Herd Lek 129).

In Roman mythology, wheat was attributed to? Saturn (De Vries Dic 497), an ancient Italic god of the underworld, the patron of agriculture and sowing (Kemp SInd 375).

For the Jews, wheat was a major foodstuff, next to wine and olive oil (Duf SNT 535). According to a Hebrew myth, wheat would originally grow ears the size of a tree (Unt Żyd 75). In the Old Testament, wheat was considered a gift from God (Deut 32:14), a symbol of affluent life (Ps 81:17). Bread offered to Yahweh was made from "the finest flour" (Ex 29:2; Lev 24:5–9). Wheat grain was used as a currency (Luke 16:7) and was worth three times as much as barley (Rev 6:6). In the New Testament, wheat is a symbol of rebirth, death and resurrection: *Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit* (John 12:24). John the Baptist says that Jesus will *gather his wheat into the granary and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire* (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17). In a parable, wheat symbolises the *sons of the kingdom*, and the one who sows the weeds is the devil (Matthew 13:24–30; 36–43).

Christianity has assigned to wheat and the vine the highest position among plants because they symbolise the Body of Christ (De Vries Dic 497, For Sym 201). Wheat ears are a frequent motif in altar decorations, liturgical vestments, and religious art (Lur Słow 189). In the Middle Ages, wheat grain symbolised Christ, who descended into limbo and rose from the dead. The wheat ear symbolized the Virgin Mary, for it contains the grain that is used to make the Host. In late Medieval paintings, the Madonna was portrayed dressed in corn ears, alluding to the image of the Bride from the Songs of Solomon: *Your waist is a mound of wheat encircled by lilies* (7:3; Herd Lek 129–130; Lur Słow 189–190).

In German-speaking countries (according to Wört Hoff 9/464–470), the culture of wheat (*Weizen*, *Triticum vulgare*) is older than that of rye and oats. In sagas wheat was described as golden-yellow. Wheat seeds were used to foretell the future and the quality of the crop. For good luck throughout the year, three seeds of wheat or rye were placed in a pouch by the waxing moon (Wört Hoff 9/465). Beliefs and practices connected with the sowing of wheat (as well as of other cereals) were numerous, e.g. the sower was supposed to have a gold ring for the wheat grains to grow yellow; wheat was supposed to be sown on a Wednesday or a Saturday, which was to

ensure that it was protected from birds (the German names of these days, *Mittwoch*, *Sonabend*, do not contain the word *Tag* ‘day, light’); it was not to be sown when both the Sun and the Moon were in the sky (Wört Hoff 9/467); the sower should be an adult male and was not to engage in sex with his wife the night before sowing; the sowing was preceded with the prayer: *Ich säe meinen Weizen aufs Land / Durch der Muttergottes ihre Hand* (I sow my wheat on the land / Through the Mother of God’s hand; Wört Hoff 9/468), etc. In centres of worship in Alsace there was a story of three wheat ears having been found with the Host among them; in Mecklenburg, Jesus’s face was recognised in wheat grain. Wheat seeds symbolised fertility and good crops, especially in wedding rituals, e.g. wheat grain was sprinkled on the bride. With time, the magic of good crops developed into the magic of protection, e.g. people afflicted with mange,<sup>89</sup> should wallow naked on a wheat field on Walpurgis Night (Wört Hoff 9/469).

The most common cereals cultivated by the Slavs were millet and wheat (SSSĭ 7/101). Wheat was a symbol of life, abundance, and happiness. It was used in public and family rituals as a means to ensure fertility and wealth; it was also used as a ritualistic food (Slav Tol 4/373–377). Wheat was linked to the sphere of the sacred and considered a gift from God, cf. the Byelorussian proverb *Thistle and nettle are the devil’s plants, rye and wheat are Divine food*. In a Serbian *pourquoi* story,<sup>90</sup> wheat received a special blessing from God, therefore it is now taken to the church and offered “for the souls”. The time of sowing was calculated according to Orthodox holidays (among Russians, Ukrainians, and Bulgarians) or Catholic holidays (among Slovaks) and the phases of the Moon: if sown by the waxing Moon, it was augured to give a good crop (in Bulgaria and Poland). When sowing, Serbs would dress in white, clean clothes, so that the grain grows clean; Bulgarians would add the shells of coloured Easter eggs to the seeds, so that the grain would grow firm, and so forth. In Serbia, the wheat field was blessed with holy water to protect it from birds and from the evil one. Wreaths made of wheat ears were blessed in the church. In the Eastern and Southern Slavic lands, on All Souls’ Day, wheat was ritually consumed and scattered over graves and under the foundations of a house being constructed in sacrifice to ancestors. On Christmas Eve, Orthodox Christians would make *kutia* from boiled

<sup>89</sup> An infectious disease usually found in animals that affects the skin causing chaffing and that makes the hair fall out. [transl. note]

<sup>90</sup> Also called *origin story*, *pourquoi tale* or an *etiological tale*. It is a “fictional narrative that explains why something is the way it is, for example why a snake has no legs, or why a tiger has stripes. Many legends and folk tales are *pourquoi* stories” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pourquoi\\_story](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pourquoi_story); accessed July 2, 2018).



wheat as a remembrance dish (*pominal'noe blyudo*) for the departed. Wheat bread was a precious wedding present (universally), and a harvest present (in Belarus), or a birthday present (in Serbia). Wheat was strewn over guests at Christmas and on New Year's Day (throughout the Slavic lands), or over the newlyweds to help fertility (for example in Slovakia and Serbia). In the Czech lands, the bride would put a few grains of wheat into her wedding shoes. Wheat was used for protection against vampires (in Croatia) or witches (in Ukraine and Slovakia), as well as for medicinal purposes. The motif of a miraculous growth of wheat during the Holy Family's flight into Egypt is present in Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian folklore. In Ukrainian songs, wheat is identified with a girl: *Wasn't I wheat in the field? Wasn't I green in the field? They took me and ate me, and bound into sheaves, that's my fate!* (Zhayv Ukr 490).<sup>91</sup> In Ukraine, wheat *korovay* (a sweet wedding bread) and wheat *kutia* symbolised a wedding, while barley *kutia* symbolised a funeral (Zhayv Ukr 491).

*Translated by Adam Głaz*

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<sup>91</sup> *Tchy ya v poli ne pshenitsya bula? Tczy ya v poli ne zelena bula? Vzyaly mene, tay pozharly, u snopky povyazaly, taka dohya moya!*

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