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SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF LITHUANIAN AND WESTERN UKRAINIAN FOLK TOWELS

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ABSTRACT

Cognition of unique historical-cultural heritage is very important for each country. It not only enables to identify itself as unique unit, but also to separate itself in the context of the world. One of the values of tangible heritage is folk textile, the geographic, folk and historical-political aspects of which decide its uniqueness and distinctiveness.

KEYWORDS

Folk towels, weaving technique, pattern, decor, similarities and differences.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Western Ukrainian and Lithuanian woven towels are valuable asset of material and spiritual culture. They are the most expressive in their décor items by interior, ceremonial and household functions. Study of towels is conducted on two complementary levels – international (Ukrainian and Lithuanian context) and interdisciplinary (technological and artistic features).

Different authors have analyzed technological, ethnological and artistic peculiarities of folk textile in Western Ukraine and Lithuania: weaving technique, weave, raw material, yarn structure, colour, pattern, decor and ornamentation, way of use in interior, etc. [1–4] However, these technological and artistic features of both countries were not compared one to each other. Thus, the aim of the article is to analyze weaving techniques, artistic and stylistic parameters of Ukrainian and Lithuanian woven towels and to set up general and unique features of their decor.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The most typical for Western Ukraine woven towels from Lviv, Radyvyliv, Kolomyia, Kosiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Krylos and Lutsk museums and Lithuanian towels from Rumšiškės, Klaipėda, Kretinga, Vilnius and Kaunas museums were investigated. 384 exhibits from 6 Lithuanian museums and 256 exhibits from 9 Western Ukrainian museums were analysed seeking to investigate ornamentation of folk towels of Lithuania and Western Ukraine (Table 1).



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Table 1. Lithuanian and Western Ukrainian museums.

No.	Museum	Abbreviation	Museum	Abbreviation
1.	Open Air Museum of Lithuania (Rumšiškės)	OAML	Museum of Ethnography and Crafts of Ethnology Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Lviv)	MEC
2.	Kretinga Museum	KM	Klementii Sheptytskyi Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life (Lviv)	MFARL
3.	History Museum of Lithuania Minor (Klaipėda)	HMLM	Andrey Sheptytskyi National Museum in Lviv	NML
4.	Šilutė Hugo Sheu Museum	SM	National Museum of Hutsulshchyna & Pokuttia Folk Art (Kolomya)	NMHP
5.	National Museum of Lithuania (Vilnius)	NML	Zakarpattia Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life (Kosiv)	ZMFARL
6.	Lithuanian Museum of Art (Vilnius)	LAM	Ivano-Frankivsk Regional History Museum	IFRHM
7.	National M. K. Čiurlionis Museum of Art (Kaunas)	NCMA	Private Collections from Kosmach village, Kosiv district, Ivano-Frankivsk region	KPC
8.	-		Ternopil Regional History Museum	TRHM
9.	-		Volyn Regional History Museum (Lutsk)	VRHM

Analysis of folk towels was performed in museum funds. Exhibits were photographed and fabric structure parameters, which can be established only by organoleptic method, were determined: warp and weft raw material, decoration or finishing techniques, and so on. Metric ruler, needle, and textile lens were used for other parameters of fabrics: warp and weft settings, weave and colour repeats etc. Other fabric parameters (weave, weaving technique) were determined from the photos.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparing towels from different ethnographic regions of Lithuania and Western Ukraine, more differences than similarities were found. At first, magnitude and weaving technique of the main part of towel differ. Broken twill weave, which influences on broken “herringbone” line in the woven fabric, is noticed the most often in the main Ukrainian towel part. The “herringbones” are distributed in longitudinal direction, rarer – in transversal direction of the towel.

However, the main part of Lithuanian towels usually is woven with more compound weaves and weaving techniques. Towels woven with damask weaving technique are the most common, where weaves with predominant warp floats alternate with weft weaves (Figure 1). Also, overshot of four-harness, rarer those of eight-harness towels are also quite popular.



Figure 1. Damask towel NČDM E5106, Aukshtaitija.

It is necessary to mention that among the exhibits of the Volyn region of Ukraine, several examples close to Lithuanian towels were found.

Comparing the length of the main part of Lithuanian and Ukrainian towels, it is emphasized that only the ends of the towels were decorated in Lithuanian towels, while in Ukrainian towels the main part of the towel is sometimes completely short.

The largest part of such towels consists of multicolored interweavings, in which red, black, yellow or orange colours dominated. Weaving techniques other than the main part of the towel are also used in these towels.

If plain weaves predominate in the main part of the towels, the most common of the so-called "beaten-up" techniques and / or small pick-up patterns arranged in the horizontal direction are the most common. The "beaten-up" technique is special in that the wefts are beaten-up so badly that they completely obscure the warp of the fabric. The weft rib, rarer plain weave were used the most often for this weaving technique.

Lithuanian, as well as Ukrainian, towels are also characterized by interweavings of other colors, but their variety of colors and weaving patterns is much smaller. In Lithuania in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century towels are decorated with purchased, high-quality cotton yarn called "zhichkai".

Red, much less often blue, and even less often combinations of these colors or other colors "zhichkai" were chosen (Figure 2). The strips of "zhichkai" interweavings are narrower and reach from a few to several centimeters compared to the interweavings of Ukrainian towels. Wider interweavings are met very rare. The width of the embossing and the layout of the strips depend largely on the region in which the towel is woven. The widest interweavings are characteristic for Zhemaitija towels and the narrowest interweavings – for Dzukija towels.

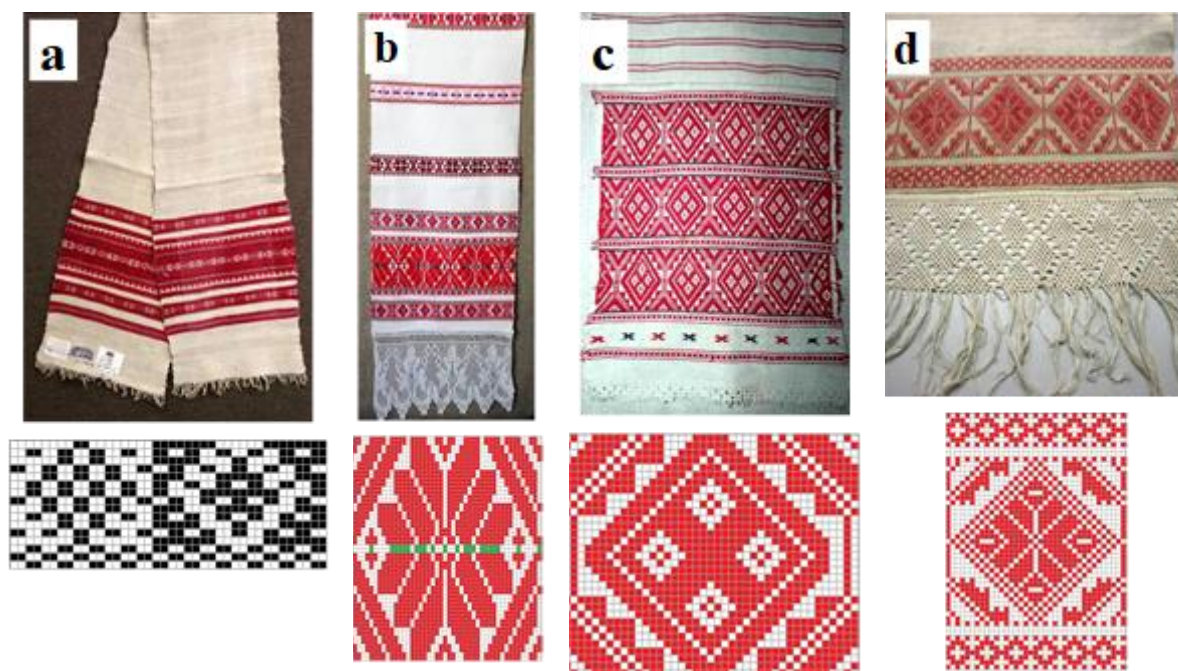


Figure 2. Towels called “*perebyrani*”: a – Polissia, NML T-1611; b – Polissia, VRHM D-304 KB-27330; c – Polissia, MEC EP76057; d – Zhemaitija, NČDM E3003.

The Lithuanian folk towels were decorated in quite different ways: with lace of cotton yarns of different widths and styles, usually crocheted by hand (Figure 3). Instead of lace, the ends of the towels are sometimes finished with tassels made of warp ends or additionally tied, which are decorated with pins made from them.

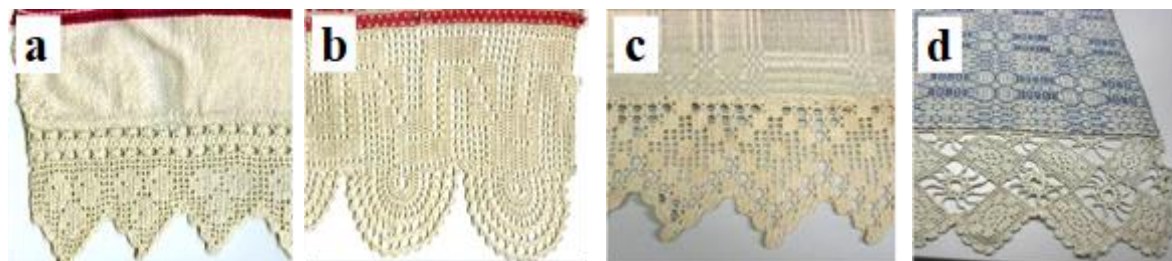


Figure 3. Crocheting: a – MEC ST-1373, KV-18413, EP-75319; b – MEC ST-1023, KV-15444, EP-23012; c – NČDM E969; d – NČDM E5283.

Folk towels from the regions of Western Ukraine are also decorated with tassels of various lengths. Pins or lace can also be found much rarer. Nevertheless, the main decoration of Ukrainian towels is based on the already mentioned ornate, rich and colorful interweavings.

Meanwhile, Lithuanians also decorated towels with various embroidery techniques, mostly with motifs of plant patterns or monograms. It should be noted that the researchers in the reviewed collections of the Lviv Museum were not obtained in the embroidered Ukrainian towel.

CONCLUSION

It can be stated that Western Ukrainian and Lithuanian folk towels has some unique and universal parameters comparing their weaving techniques, weaves, colours, decor and ornamentation. The

comparison of these parameters is sensitive, because both countries have similar history and geopolitical situation in Europe.

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