

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Woven and Embroidered Household Textiles - Part I

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

In our Museum and Library's folk art holding, we have a large collection of various types of woven textiles and embroideries. Of special interest are woven and embroidered pillowcases and cushion covers.

In the past, woven and embroidered textiles were the most widespread and the most important part of the folk home industry and folk art creativity. They served utilitarian and decorative purpose; they were used in folk dress, household and church décor, and for specific holidays and traditional rituals. As part of the folk home industry of the Ukrainian people, these items reflected the historical and social development of the people; the availability of resources for such production; climatic conditions; and the skills, esthetics, needs, and artistic talents of the populace.

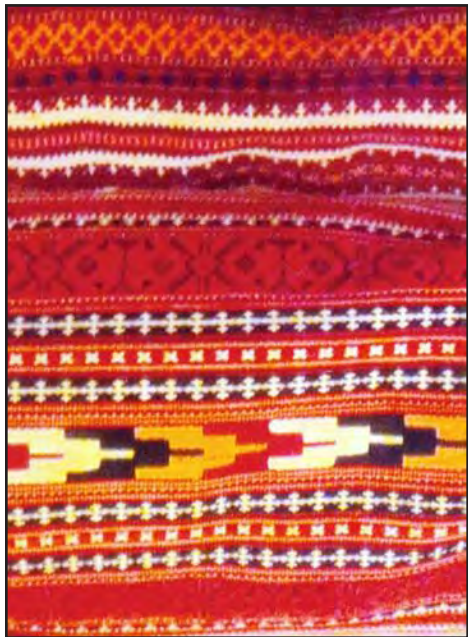
Textile ornamentation developed within the framework of the traditions to which people adhered from generation to generation, thereby preserving many of the ancient symbolic motifs and elements that make up the ornamental designs. Contemporary textile development often relies upon these inherited

designs. The latter serve as the foundation from which modern-day textile designers seek ideas and inspiration, often adapting and interpreting traditional folk art motifs into novel designs.

Inhabitants of traditional Ukrainian villages attached great importance to the orderliness of the outer and especially to the neatness of the inner appearance of their humble homes. They wanted their homes to be attractive, charming, cozy, and esthetically pleasing, all of which would indicate the persevering work, prosperity, and thriftiness of the owners. This was partially achieved through the use of a variety of textiles in the furnishing of the home interior which served both a practical and a decorative function. The dominant decorative features of the home were the following: the icon corner adorned with ritual cloths; and the sleeping area with a regular or bench-like bed covered with an intricately-woven bed covering, upon which were piled pillows enclosed in specially woven or embroidered pillowcases. The ornamentation on the pillowcases was placed on the sewn narrow edge and the



Decorative Features of a Traditional Ukrainian Home, Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford



Pillowcases Patterns (Pokuttia), Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford



Pillowcases Patterns (Borschiv), Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

pillows were stacked on the bed, one on top of the other, with the design facing the room for family or visitors to admire or to criticize. The number of pillows and their decorative aspects certainly testified to the prosperity, diligence, and esthetic preference and talent of the homemaker. In a home with young maidens of marriageable age, the number of pillows was the greatest—sometimes stacked all the way up to the ceiling.

In our Museum's textile collection, we have a substantial number of traditional woven pillowcases from regions in Western Ukraine. Pillowcases from the Borschiv region are characterized by simple two-toned (burgundy red and black) striped patterns. Pillowcases from Pokuttia are distinguished by fiery bright orange and red tones and geometric motifs. Hutsul pillowcases, on the other hand, are polychrome and embellished with rich and highly sophisticated ornamental motifs. The woven design on most of the pillowcases consisted of three parts. The central part was the widest and had more com-

plex ornamental motifs. The narrow designs on each side of the central part consisted of simpler elements or just plain linear stripes.

Slowly but inevitably, social changes, economic conditions, and city influences at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as post World War I years brought about changes, alterations, modifications, and a partial decline of the traditional pastoral way of life of the village populace. Production of the traditional homemade folk items was either limited, or else abandoned completely. It could not compete with inexpensive factory products. Fortunately, among the educated city populace, there was a group of concerned individuals and members of social organizations, especially women's societies. Distressed over the decline and loss of folk art, this group undertook to take measures to counteract this situation; it revived interest in making efforts to preserve this art and to adapt some aspects of it to contemporary, specifically urban needs. □

Book Review by Museum Director

Msgr. John Terlecky

INSANE UKRAINE: YOUR GUIDE TO HASSLE-FREE TRAVEL by Lena Tarasyuk. Travel Monkey, 2018, \$14.99 (\$4.29 - Kindle edition), (ISBN 978-1-9858887268).



In the last ten years there has been a number of English language travel guidebooks about Ukraine. Some I consider to fall into an objective assess-

ment (e.g. Brandt, Lonely Planet); others are subjective in character describing the experiences of one of two people who claim to personally know Ukraine and have, I admit, catching titles (e.g. *Awesome Ukraine*, *Ukraine's Best-kept Secrets*). *Insane Ukraine* is a resource that falls into the later category.

Lena Tarasyuk identifies herself as a Ukrainian adventurer and writer. She is a travel blog writer whose online pieces include her "personal and close-up" adventures to Crete, Copenhagen, California, Macedonia and now Ukraine, her native homeland. I purchased this paperback book because it contains new and recent items about Ukraine, having been published just this past May. I could not identify the present location home for this blog series – the only blog note I found mentioned on its website was that it was based in South Africa.

The author's introduction states that *Insane Ukraine* is a fun guide in traveling Ukraine – "be ready for some unexpected adventures, funny misunderstandings and warm receptions from locals". I guess that the author remained faithful to her intention. I found information to be helpful, but I did not find the book to be that funny. Having lived in Ukraine from 1991-1994 and having travelled on church business a few times since, I found a lot of what I consider to be highlights of Ukraine to be missing. Take for example her mention of the #one tourist attraction in the Kyiv region – a visit to the Chernobyl "twilight zone". She mentions it in four brief sentences, assessing it as a guaranteed experience of horror... She, however, does not mention where and how tickets to this area can be purchased and that the present price for a one-day tour of these facilities ranges anywhere from one hundred to five hundred US dollars. I think

that is something that I would like to know as a first-time visitor.

The book runs eighty-nine pages and one-third of it is filled with colored photographs of various sites and a question/answer approach to recommendations. After a short chapter on "things you need to know before you go", the rest of the book is divided into six main areas of assessment: Kyiv, Lviv, Chernivtsi, Odesa, and the Ukrainian Carpathians (I give her credit for using the Ukrainian orthography for these cities rather than the Russian versions). The cities are followed by a brief chapter entitled "cool spots around the country" and a very brief listing of agencies and transportation services in Ukraine.

The city chapters are broken down into such concerns as where can one stay, what can one see and how can one enjoy a brief visit to each city. While there are recommendations for places to dine, there is hardly

any information on where one can shop (e.g. the Podil district of Kyiv or the many bazaars in Lviv or the Kosiv marketplace in the Carpathians). Some of the information is exciting and adventurous – I learned that there is a zipline experience between the two banks of the Dnipro River! I didn't agree with her on some of her recommendations for historic and cultural highlights within the cities – but that might be because I am reading the book as a seasoned Ukrainian-American and not just a first-time tourist from anywhere in the world.

The book is entertaining and recently published, but there are other books written from a personal point of view that have a lot more information. I would suggest purchasing *Ukraine's Best-kept Secrets*, which was published in 2016.

One last note!!! The fourth edition of *Lonely Planet's Guide to Ukraine* goes on sale in paperback form this coming July 27. □