

The art of slavic embroidery

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The art of embroidery has existed in Russia from time immemorial. Embroidery was used everywhere. Clothes, household objects (sheets, tablecloths, towels) and even horse harnesses were decorated with it. From the very beginning embroidery performed not only a decorative function, it acted as a talisman. The Slavs believed that the cross helped ward off evil spirits and could protect them from evil. For this reason clothes and household objects were often decorated with an embroidered ornament. Skilled worker created incredible masterpieces with only simple threads and needles.

The art of embroidery is closely connected with the tradition that existed in Russia: to provide a dowry for a bride, which included embroidered sheets, tablecloths and towels [1]. A dowry was gathered from the birth of a girl, as her future marriage was directly dependent on it. So girls from an early age were taught the skill of embroidery. Day by day they improved their skills preparing a dowry.

The opinion of the groom's parents about the bride depended on the accuracy of the work. The fact that before the wedding the bride's dowry was brought to the people's court shouldn't be left out. Very often people's opinion was a crucial one. It influenced the girl's reputation either admitting her to be a master or disgracing her name throughout the whole countryside. It is worth noting that not only the front side of the work was estimated, but also its underside. It was especially shameful if the underside resembled a labyrinth of knots and stitches of different directions. Ideal recognized underside should repeat the front side. After getting married the whole family used only tablecloths and towels embroidered by the young wife's

hands. From that moment the young wife became the keeper of the family hearth.

The fact is that most of the embroideries in the dowry were amulets. Knots were considered to cut off the energy connection of the embroidery with its carrier, making it difficult to smooth the flow of energies. Tangled stitches prevented a steady flow of energy, so the vertical stitches regarded as the best, since they let the energy to move freely. For that reason the accuracy of the embroidery was so important.

Ornament rigorously chosen in the embroidery Slavic amulets had its own canons and strict rules. It is recommended to select natural threads, cotton, woolen, linen for embroidering Slavic amulets. One of the most common symbols in Slavic embroidery is the symbol of the sun a square, a diamond, round rosettes, crosses or a rotating star. Of great importance for the Slavs and other tribes were the land, water, rain. So a straight horizontal line denoted the earth, wavy horizontal - water, inclined lines - rain.

In addition to geometric figures, there are compositions of a female figure in the center and a deer on the sides of it. This is how Clan's mother is reproduced. Clan's mother in embroidery is depicted either with a deer or with horsemen on the sides. In the first case, it symbolized family protection and was designed to guard them against diseases and infertility. This composition was often embroidered on ritual towels and sheets. This is one of the powerful wards of the genus. Also this composition one can see on wedding handbags and in baby cradles.

Slavic embroidery also has a variety of vegetable and flower motifs. One of them is the World Tree, symbolizing the connection of the lower, “underfoot” world, the earth and all nine heavens. The World Tree was depicted lush, high, with a great variety of fantastic flowers and birds on its branches. Deciphering the symbolism of the Slavic embroideries we involuntarily marvel at the depth of thought and the breadth of imagination inherent in our ancestors. Deep symbolism and allegory are signs of highly cultured society, especially if we consider that these embroideries were massively created everywhere the Slavs lived: from large cities to small settlements.