

The Embroidery as a Symbol of Cultural Diversity in Bukovina

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The potential “dilution” of national cultural characteristics in the face of globalization urges contemplation on the necessity of preserving cultural traditions and national mentality, which can be seen as a key aspect of consolidating society and maintaining its national-cultural identity. In this case, it is crucial to develop necessary measures to preserve Ukrainian national identity and prevent the unique nation’s eradication with its own value system, language, mythology, consciousness, and symbolism, which have evolved over millennia and have withstood the most adverse conditions of its development. Nowadays, in terms of Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, where the aggressor attempts to destroy Ukrainian identity by appropriating Ukraine’s history and culture, our nation is once again compelled to fight for its unity and independence. Hostile propaganda vigorously fuels the “east-west” dichotomy in Ukraine, seeking to divide Ukrainian society by inciting displaced persons from occupied territories or conflict zones against the population of the western regions, where they predominantly find themselves. In response, however, Ukraine displays agreement, upholding the values and traditions that have been established in various ethnographic regions throughout the formation of Ukrainian statehood. For many centuries, Bukovina has been a significant instance of not only peaceful coexistence but also the unification of many cultures. This is especially true of the exceptional city of Chernivtsi, where, in previous centuries, national and confessional tolerance and acceptance became the principle. This was facilitated by the region’s settled way of lifetime, traditions, customs, historical past, and present. The national identity’s preservation of Bukovina’s ethnic groups is represented not only by tongue, rituals, and habits but also by traditional clothing, food, etc. Historically, the region’s inhabitants, primarily Ukrainians and Romanians, were mostly engaged in agriculture. Achievement in farming and livestock breeding depended notably on nature’s whims, leading peasants to try to “appease” it and protect themselves. This likely explains the numerous symbols with which they decorated their traditional outfit, particularly the major detail – the embroidery (the vyshyvanka). These signs, with their domestic varieties, have made their way into the contemporary living of Bukovinians in diverse interpretations. Moreover, the work of Austrian engineer Eric Kolbenhier, “Specimen Embroideries of the Peasant Home Industry in the Bukovina” (in Ruthenian, German, and Romanian), published in 1912 in Chernivtsi, has a strong interest for researchers today. On 74 sheets, it contains about 1500 examples of shirt, towel, and handkerchief ornaments belonging to the two largest ethnic groups in Bukovina – Ukrainians and Romanians. This work was republished in Canada in 1974 by the Ukrainian Women’s Association of Canada (Eastern Branch) and twice in independent Ukraine (2017, 2019), and it has still remained highly relevant. The colourful patterns on Bukovinian embroidery, which are inherent in different communities in various regions of the area, brightly demonstrate the cultural diversity of traditional Bukovinian embroidered art. This cultural multiplicity, marked by the tolerance of Bukovina’s inhabitants, is carefully passed down from generation to generation and serves as a source of strength and inspiration for the unity of the entire Ukrainian nation.

Keywords: Ukraine, cultural diversity, Bukovina.