

Symbolism of Traditional Eastern Slavic Costumes

Domnenkova Ludmila Vladimirovna

Associate Professor, Belarusian State University of Culture

The national costume represents the programs, fixed in cultural tradition, of human activity. It cannot be understood if not to consider as the definitely directed process of changes of the symbolical forms, as reflection of the national point of view on the world.

The costume has been brought to show the place in social hierarchy, to be separated from one and to join another. The costume, on the one hand, merged with the man, became his natural cover, which can help to recognize self consciousness, on the other hand resisted to an environment-protected. Thus, there was a certain system of symbols, which through components of a complex, ornament, color, character of their interrelation, was called to explain mutual relation of the man with the world.

The eastern Slavs folk costume is considered as visual (figurative-emotional) realization of the definite programs-symbols of human activity, as the reflection of the folk vision of the world. The symbols which appeared in archaic times present stable formations. The binary principal of the folk vision of the world: good-evil, local-stranger, male-female, rich-poor, etc., is explicitly traced in the eastern Slavs costume.

Red and black on the traditional costume are the symbol, code, wish of luck. The dominance of the red is connected with its protective and producing meaning. The most vitally important parts of human body: arms, shoulders, female's belly are protected by clothes which are decorated by ornamental patterns in these particular parts.

The traditional ornament of Eastern Slavs has a complex connection with different epoch, in which not completely superseded ancient style of ornaments, but inherit from before one. Element of ornaments is geometrical motives. Similarity of motives divided among themselves in hundreds and thousand of kilometers, the stability of its basic composite circuits, gives the basis to perceive geometrical ornament as system of abstract symbols. Each mark at the certain historical stage carried concrete semantic loading.

The decor placing rules and character are stable for all the eastern Slavs (along edges of the item, seams and sleeves). The folk costume reflects different understanding of male and female role. The female image was associated by the eastern Slavs with fertility of earth, birds, animals and people. A lot of elements of the female costume (head-dress, chemise, skirt, apron, belt) are connected with symbolism of the producing source. Life stages of the woman: little girl, girl, bride, "young", married, old - are also reflected in the costume.

The symbolism of hairstyle in the eastern Slavonic tradition required the compulsory change of hair-do to coiffure. Only completely covered hair contributed to productivity and prosperity of

household. The connection with totemic notions was symbolically reflected in the names, structural features, female hair-dresses of the Eastern Slavs. The symbolism of belt, both in male and female suit, determined the ways the belt was tied and also color, ornamental patterns and its important place in different ceremonies. The traditional costume of the eastern Slaves was not static phenomenon. Changes in the vision of the world led to transformation of the costume. The connotation of the symbols gradually blurred, their meanings became forgotten and only their outer form remained.

Child-birth ability is the most important period and it is marked by the most complicated complex, abundance of clothes ornamental patterns, dominance of the red. The white color is associated by Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians with completion of life cycle.

The traditional complex of clothes of Eastern Slavs represents the unique form of realization of the certain programs - symbols. Some of them differ by surprising stability and invariance and are characteristic for any costume, outside of its ethnic, social functions, etc. It is possible to relate symbolical understanding of a role of color in a costume, essence of interaction of the man with clothes.

Costume is appraised symbol of wealth, reproduction, beginning of production, and for group of the people, which can continued descendants. Males, but the especially female costume is assorted by introduction of such elements, which are characteristic for this producing period, abundance of ornaments, their certain composite circuits, motives, color scales.

In complex of Eastern Slavic costume, the clothes are assorted, which symbolical contents is shown only during established ceremonial actions. Hereby it is necessary to note the special ways of their manufacturing and method of wearing.

In this or another cultural historical period, the contents of a symbol during materially - spiritual life of the man changed. The especially appreciable changes are marked on the end of XIX the beginning of XX centuries. This phenomena in a national costume specifies process of gradual attenuation, and ancient pagan symbols are becoming of completely obliviousness .

It is possible to ascertain, that the traditional costume, when it disappeared from uses of the village population, became only ceremonial costume. Ceremonial costume has magical symbolism. Many symbols, probably, based on a magical meaning àpotropaic, catharsis and other types of magic.

Symbolism of traditional clothes of the Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian had common-Slavic feature and some parallels with other peoples, that is caused by direct contacts, cultural mutual-influence between Eastern Slav with the neighbors.