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ANALOGY OF EXHIBITS OF KĒDAINIAI REGIONAL MUSEUM WITH OBJECTS IN LATVIA AND BELARUS: COMPARISON OF WOODEN PLATES



Plates in household of wealthy Europeans appeared only in the Early Modern Era, and among mostly people plates became a necessary tool only from the second half of the 19th century. New culture of eating using personal dishes was taken even earlier by manors and cities, meanwhile peasants considered it as unnecessary costs, that cannot supplant a personal dipper and slice of bread by a common table. In some European regions peasants used wooden dishes, that later were substituted by ceramic ones.

Keywords: wooden plates, decorated plates, bread plates.

LATVIJAS UN BALTĶRIEVIJAS EKSPONĀTU ANALOGI ĶĒDAIŅU REĢIONĀLAJĀ MUZEJĀ: KOKA ŠĶĪVJU SALĪDZINĀJUMS

Šis raksts ir tapis projekta „Vituālā pagātne – muzeju nākotne” (LLB-2-269) īstenošanas rezultātā. Koka šķīvji, ko dažādu tautu pārstāvji izmantoja mājsaimniecībā, līdz šim vēl nebija pamatīgāk pētīti. Iemesls tam droši vien bija nepietiekama pētījuma materiālā bāze, salīdzinot ar keramiku, un šo priekšmetu neilgais mūžs – saglabājušies eksponāti ir reti sastopami. Astoņiem koka šķīvjiem, kas glabājas Ķēdainu Reģionālā muzeja kolekcijā, ir ļoti līdzīgs rotājums, simboli un izgatavošanas tehnika. Pēc nopietnas dažādu valstu analoģu pārbaudes kļūst skaidrs, ka līdzīgi eksponāti ir atrodami ne tikai Latvijā un Baltkrievijā, bet arī citās kaimiņvalstīs: Polijā, Ukrainā, Krievijā un citur Rietumeiropā. Šķīvjiem, kas ir dekorēti ar tekstiem krievu, poļu, vācu u. c. valodās, ir līdzīga izgatavošanas tehnika, bieži vien to motīvs ir Tēvreize, lauksaimniecības simboli, kā arī sakāmvārdi par viesmīlību. Paraugi, kas tika atrasti Polijā, ir līdzīgi tiem, kas atrodas Ķēdainu Reģionālajā muzejā, – ar dažādām teksta versijām par maizi, sāli un viesmīlību. Tā paša perioda maizes šķīvji, kuri bija dekorēti ar tādiem pašiem simboliem un uzrakstiem vācu valodā, bija populāri Vācijā, bet maizes šķīvji ar lūgšanu tekstu, bet bieži vien bez kokgriezumiem to centrālajā daļā, – Francijā.

Maizes šķīvju mode izveidojās Vācijā un izplatījās austrumu virzienā. Atsevišķos reģionos tai bija īpašas iezīmes. Tomēr joprojām nav pietiekami daudz informācijas par to, kā ir radušās un veidojušās šīs līdzīgās iezīmes pavisam dažādās vietās, kā izgatavošanas tehnoloģijas izplatījās un kas bija jauno formu autori. Nākotnē, kad

dažādu Eiropas muzeju kolekcijas būs pieejamas pētījumiem virtuālajā telpā, būs iespēja veikt sīkāku pašreizējo eksponātu analīzi, būs iespējams izsekot maizes šķīvju modei, kas piesaistīja daudzu cilvēku uzmanību 19.–20. gs. mijā.

Atslēgas vārdi: koka šķīvji, dekorēti šķīvji, maizes šķīvji.

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Ceramic dishes produced already in ancient times, were used not for eating, but as an element of decor. For some thousands years it has been an element of luxurious interior in houses of wealthy people. However, during the industrial revolution, when processes of production were optimized, some luxury goods became accessible also for landlords and residents of towns. In the middle of the 19th century elaborated turning lathes, and milling machines stopped disappearance of wooden dishes from household. Plates were being produced in companies of wooden wares. Though they were produced in a way of serial production, plates were quite expensive and usually were common in houses of rich people, mostly in manors' houses. Plates were used both in daily life, usually for bread and as an element of decor in sideboards or on walls.

Turned plates are common almost in all European countries, and motives of their decor varied in various regions. However, in some regions of Eastern, Central and Western Europe a specific motif of decor is common, that is being created using special technology. Agglutinated workpiece of wood is being turned forming a plate of 260–350 mm in width and 25–35 mm in height. A rim was wide and profiled, with a text and motif of a decor set around or in semicircle. In a hollow there is a field with a profiled rim, where a motif of the decor without a text is made.

Technology of producing text and image is still completely uncertain. Ornamentation is lifted on a surface by recessing background, however, not by traditional shaping or cutting. Dealing with processed surface one can suppose, that a bigger part of the surface was milled finishing the parts, that were not so easily accessible with a carving knife.

In Kėdainiai Regional Museum there are eight plates of such type.¹ Three of them were brought to the Museum by A. Docius in 1947. Their original place was a manor of Taučiūnai. More than one hundred and fifty years they belonged to the noblemen Medėkšos. In six plates the main motif of decor in a recessed surface was a sheaf, and two agricultural tools intercrossed beneath it: in five cases there is a flail and scythe, in one case – a flail and a prong.

The text engraved on the edges of all plates is in the Polish language. All texts, except one, contain capital letters. In three cases it is *CZEM CHATA BOGATA TEM*

¹ Museum inventory numbers: Ke KM Gek 5379, Ke KM Gek 11776, Ke KM Gek 5375, Ke KM Gek 4318, Ke KM Gek 5377, Ke KM Gek 4731, Ke KM Gek 5378, Ke KM Gek 4730.

RADA ‘The more rich, the more blissful the house is’, in three more – *CHLEBA NASZEGO POWSZEDNIEGO DAJ NAM DZISIAJ* ‘And give us our daily bread’, and in one case – *GOSPODYNI WESOŁA GDY MA GOSCI DO KOŁA* ‘Many guests – delight for mistress’.² In three cases in the upper parts of the plates there is the Divine Eye (on two plates the Eye is composed together with a fragment of the Lord’s Prayer *Chleba naszego [...]* ‘And give us [...]').

Two plates distinguish from the common context. Their diameter is slightly smaller, they don’t have a motif of sheaf and tools. In a recessed surface of one plate there is a flower; the recessed surface of other plate is completely flat, but on the edge there is only one word written in lowercase in a stylized frame – *Maslo* ‘Butter’.³ The word is surrounded by a garland of stylized flowers and leaves. It is obvious that the plate had a concrete purpose – it was used for butter.

Exhibits of similar style are found in the whole territory of the former tsar Russia, including Latvia and Belarus. In the East of Lithuania and Poland the procedure of production (turning sometimes is substituted by cutting gouging) as well as stylistics of ornamentation varied. Under the influence of the Orthodox culture inscriptions were made in the Russian language (also using capital letters), incising common Slavonic or Russian proverbs. Plates with such inscriptions are found also in Latvia: *ХЛѢБЪ СОЛЬ* ‘Bread salt’ (Dekoratīvs šķīvis). Other versions of texts are: *ХЛѢБЪ СОЛЬ ЪШЬ А ПРАВДУ РЪЖЬ* ‘Eat bread, salt, but spit the truth out’,⁴ *БЕЗЪ СОЛИ И ХЛѢБА ХУДАЯ БЕСДА* ‘No salt, no bread – lean conversation’, *ЧѢМЪ ХАТА БОГАТА ТѢМЪ И РАДА* ‘The wealth the house has is enough for its dwellers’ (Тарелка: Россия; Декоративная тарелка), *ЧѢМЪ ДОМЪ БОГАТЪ ТѢМЪ ХОЗЯИИИЪ РАДЪ* ‘What the house is rich in, the host is happy for’ (Тарелка декоративная), *КАЛАЧУ ДѢДУШКА РЖАНОЙ ХЛѢБУШКА* (Имперская тарелка абрамцевская резьба), *ПРОСИМЪ ПРИНЯТЬ НА ДОБРУЮ ПАМЯТЬ* ‘Please receive it as at token present’ (Тарелка резная Абрамцево) etc.

There are also plates with other motives, definitely created under influence of the text decor types mentioned above. In a museum of Carskoe Selo (Russia) there are four carved plates, one of which (with armorial motives) in 1914 was given as a present to Russia Tsar Nicholas II by a delegation of Grodno regions, that are in the present territory of Belarus (Верацейчык). A fact of such present for the Tsar shows, that the turned plates were considered as an quite expensive item of high artistically value.

A fragment of the Lord’s Prayer *And give us today our daily bread* was also made in other Slavonic language: in Serbian – *ХЛѢБЪ НАШЪ НАСУЩНЫЙ ДАЖДЪ НАМЪ ДНЕСЪ* (State Ethnographical Museum in Warsaw; Private collection) – and Ukrainian – *ХЛІБ НАШ НАСУШНИЙ ДАЙ НАМ ДНЕСЬ* (Яницка-Кшивда).

² Possibly a letter *o* is missed in a word *dookola*.

³ Without *l*.

⁴ The exhibits is kept in Russia, Novouralsk Museum of History and Regional Studies (Тарелка декоративная резная).

Plates of similar shape and analogous decor and text are also found in many places of Poland.⁵ Samples, found in this country, are similar to those, kept in Kėdainiai Regional Museum, with various versions of text concerning bread, salt and hospitality (*DO SOLI I CHLEBA GOŚCI NAM POTRZEBA* ‘For salt and bread we need a guests’ etc.).

Plates for bread of the same period and with same symbols and inscriptions in the German language were popular in Germany and regions, that were under influence of the German culture. It must be noted a fragment of the Lord’s Prayer (*UNSER TÄGLICH BROT GIB UNS HEUTE*), German proverbs concerning bread and salt (*SALT UND BROD MACHT WANGEN ROTH* ‘Cheeks blush for bread and salt’; Романов) etc.

More practical plates for bread, with a line of the prayer text, but often without carvings in the central part were popular in France during the Victorian period (*DONNEZ NOUS NOTRE PAIN QUOTIDIEN*; Plat rond ancien Donnez-nous notre pain quotidien) and in the Great Britain. They were not used only as an element of decor or hung on walls as the analogous ones with rich ornamentation and texts in the Russian languages. Such plates had an intended use – for bread.

Fashion of plates of such type started to flag after the World War I, however the influence of their style can be seen in later products of art. In plates created by Ēriks Rubenis and other Latvian artists of the interwar and postwar period, technology of tarsia, incrustation and emboss was used. However, in their works one can easily detect technological solutions and details of decor, taken from plates for bread (*Mākslas darbu izsole*; *Dekoratīvā koka kolekcija*). In a collection of Kėdainiai Regional Museum there also are some exhibits made in the second half of the 20th century with an analogous influence (*Decorative plate*).

In summary, on the base of available information one can suppose, that the fashion of bread plates arose in Germany and spread eastward. There, in separate regions, it took specific features. However, to state how such similar features established in completely different environments, where the technology spread from and who was authors of new shapes, there is still no sufficient data. In the future, when collections of various European museums will be available for researches in the interactive space, then there will be a possibility to make more detailed analysis of the existing exhibits. Then, it will be possible to trace the fashion of bread plates, that fascinated many people in the turn of the 19th–20th centuries.

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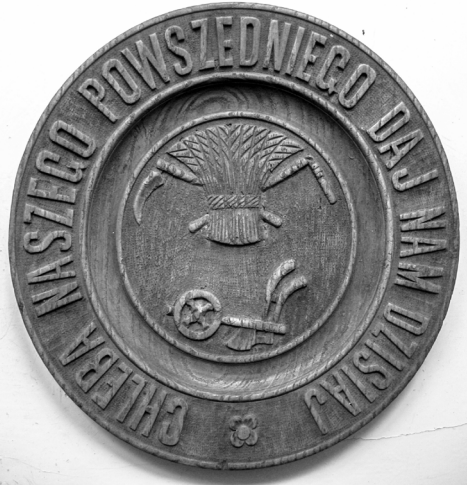
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Picture 2: *Plate. Wood, turning. Poland (?), the end of the 19th century – the beginning of the 20th century, Kėdainiai Regional Museum*
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