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**The vanishing images and ornaments
of the unknown Northern folk painting:
findings of field studies in the Vashka, Vym and Vychegda
rivers in 2016—2019**

The article deals with unique samples of wood folk painting found in uninhabited rural houses in Udorsky, Ust-Kulomsky and Knyazhpogostsky districts of the Komi Republic. Nature opens up an abandoned cultural space and reveals previously hidden examples of painted woodcraft, allegedly dated from the second half of the XIX century. Under the influence of cold/humidity/heat, layers of oil paint gradually disappear from the surfaces of wooden goods which were repeatedly monochrome-painted during the XX century. Animal faces, plant and geometric compositions of previously unknown Zyrian paintings are easily visible on wooden tabletops, cupboards, sofas, and doors

Keywords: *field research, house painting on wood, traditional Komi-Zyryan dwelling, Komi Republic, Kerchomya village, Koni village, Vazhgort village.*

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**Неизвестные «зырянские» росписи:
о результатах полевых исследований в бассейнах
рр. Вашка, Вымь и Вычегда
в 2016—2018 гг.**

В полевых этнографических отчетах второй половины XX в. подчеркивается, что в декоре внутреннего убранства традиционного жилища у коми

преобладают монохромно окрашенные поверхности и редкие, скупые геометризированные орнаментальные композиции (например, волнистые и зигзагообразные линии на входных и голбечных дверях), выполненные небрежными линиями контрастного цвета. Мнение о том, что для коми-зырян исторически нехарактерна художественная традиция домовой росписи по дереву, нередко воспроизводится и в современных академических и периодических искусствоведческих изданиях.

В настоящей статье приводятся описания уникальных образцов домовой росписи по дереву, которые были обнаружены в коми селениях на реках Выль, Вашка и Вычегда преподавателями и аспирантами Сыктывкарского государственного университета совместно с сотрудниками сектора этнографии ИЯЛИ КНЦ УрО РАН в ходе осуществления международного проекта «Living in the Komi Landscape (LiLa)» (2017—2018 гг.), ориентированного на междисциплинарное изучение процесса освоения природой культурного пространства.

Природа осваивает заброшенные 10—15 лет назад жилые постройки и открывает ранее скрытые/закрашенные образцы домовой росписи, предположительно датируемые второй половиной XIX в. Под воздействием холода/сырости/жары с поверхностями деревянных изделий и конструкций, неоднократно монохромно покрашенных в течение XX века, постепенно сходят слои масляной краски. На деревянных столешницах, шкафах, диванах, печах и голбечных дверях порой отчетливо проявляются звериные лики, растительные и геометрические орнаментальные композиции ранее неизвестных «зырянских» росписей.

Стиль геометрических росписей, зафиксированных в ныне заброшенных и разрушаемых домах на территории Республики Коми, за редким исключением, существенно отличается от росписей Русского Севера и Урала — образцы «зырянской» росписи во многом уникальны по технике исполнения, орнаментальному канону и художественно-стилистическим особенностям.

Ключевые слова: полевые исследования, домовой роспись по дереву, традиционное жилище коми-зырян, Республика Коми, село Керчомья, деревня Кони, село Важгорт.

According to the field studies findings on the territory of the Komi Region in the 40—70s, it is confirmed by ethnographers and art experts that artistic tradition of decorating houses with painting on wood is historically distinct for the Komi-Zyryans. The field report of the mid-twentieth century underlines that in the decoration of interior of a traditional

Komi home a monochrome painted surface and sparse ornamental compositions (e.g., waves and zigzag lines on front and shingle doors) made in contrasting color, prevail [1; 2, p. 6]. This assessment is often reproduced in modern academic publications [3, p. 140; 4, p. 152].

Moreover, it is a known fact that the existence of an artistic house decorated in the painting tradition was recorded in the Komi Region as early as the end of the 19th century. There is reason to believe that there is a correlation between the discovery of the Komi wood painting and the name of V.V. Kandinsky who traveled along the Vychegda river in 1889 [5, p. 102—110; 6, pp. 10—26; 7, pp. 44—94]. During the expedition, a student of Moscow University kept a travel diary in which he recorded some samples of house painting in Vychegda. Here it should be emphasized that in the pages of the Vologda Diary by V.V. Kandinsky, there are drawings of murals found exclusively in the Komi-Zyrian villages. In particular, a decorated tabletop from the Ust-Kul village on the Vychegda River. The researcher supplements the drawing with a detailed description of the color range of the ornamental composition, observing, “There developed a certain and intense affection for tables painted with bright colors” [8, p. 373—393].

Note that in the course of the «Ethnographic zoning of traditional arts and crafts in the Komi Republic» project in 2016—2017 it was possible to confirm the existence of similar tabletops that displayed poorly preserved contours of painted geometric ornaments [9, pp. 23—27; 11, pp. 84—102]. Those were found in the Komi villages on the rivers Vychegda (Kerchemya), Vashka (Vazhort) and Vym (Koni). A unique example of decorated worktops from the late 19th century from Koni is currently stored in the Knyazhpogost local history museum (Main Fund, No. 3632). Unfortunately, only a few of these examples with only slightly distinguishable fragments of painted geometric compositions have survived.

The unique findings of home painting on wood in the Vym, Vashka and Vychegda Rivers were made by teachers and graduate students from Syktyvkar State University together with employees of the ethnography department of the Institute of Language, Literature and History of Komi Scientific Center, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (2017, 2018). Their chief focus was on the interdisciplinary study of the process of mastering the nature of cultural space [12].

In the village of Vazhgort on the river Vashka, in a disassembled house built in the beginning of the 20th century, a decaying wooden sofa was discovered with silhouettes or shadows of whitetoothed lions rendered in blue oil paint on its back. A wooden bed with a well-preserved painted composition “Two Lions” was discovered in a deserted house in the village of Glotovo on the Mezen River. Cabinets, table tops and doors decorated with floral and geometric multicolored painted compositions were found in the abandoned village of Verhozerie (Tyeв) on the river Vashka and in abandoned houses in the village of Onezhie and Koni on the River Vym.

A unique find was made in the village of Oты on the River Vym: a painted door with an image of a lion on the background of a complex ornamental composition (presumably dating back to the second half of the 19th century). Upon detailed examination which followed the removal of paint layers, particles of a different paint were found on the outer surface of some of the fragments of the painting. This suggests that the originally painted composition on the door was completely painted over with brown paint. Long-term unfavorable conditions contributed to peeling and gradual detachment of the «secondary» paint layer from the surface. Initially, the door was decorated with free brush painting. The figure of the lion was made in a graphic manner. The composition of the painting consists of a floral motif — a «tree» growing from the lower edge of the door symmetrically, with arranged branches entwining into a floral circle in the form of a wreath, which in turn is enclosed in a series of colored circles. In the upper part of the door above the central circle, the figure of a lion jumps with an open mouth and a protruding blue tongue. The image is made in a graphic manner, with a black contour line, with the inside painted white. Detailing brush work renders the tail and mane in short, curved strokes. The whole composition is carried out against a red-burgundy background and framed by a blue line with semicircles at the corners. The plant branches are complemented by sweeping strokes of yellow and turquoise flowers. Additional details of all of the motifs in the composition are shaded in black. The technical and artistic technique by which the composition is carried out speaks of the professionalism of the craftsman who, with a confident hand, applied the paint to the surface of the wood.

The question of the origins of home paintings samples in the Komi villages is still open, since it is known that in the Ust-Sysolsk and Yrensky districts of the Vologda province the craftsmen were migrant workers, who wandered throughout the country, right up until the 20th century. At the same time, there is no doubt about the historical evidence of the existence of original art «centers» for crafts in the second half of the 19th century, as painting-on-wood utensils (but mainly tools for weaving and spinning) in the Komi villages on the rivers Vashka, Vym and Vychehga [13, pp. 58—59; 14, pp. 104—116; 15, pp. 152—159; 16, pp. 162—163; 17, pp. 88—94; 18, pp. 119—125]. The style of geometric paintings recorded in the present abandoned and destroyed houses in the territory of Kazakhstan, with rare exceptions, differs significantly from the paintings of the Russian North and the Urals — the samples of «Zyryanskaya» painting are largely unique in their technique and artistic and stylistic features.

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