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## **Regional features of traditional embroidery in the Russian North of Russia (Olonets sewing – Karelia)**

*Abstract:* In the traditional applied art of the Olonets province, Republic of Karelia, artistic embroidery is not only one of the most popular types of folk art, the formation and development of which was influenced by ethnic Karelian and Russian culture, but also a significant material and spiritual base, a natural form of transmitting historical and cultural experience to subsequent generations. The article is devoted to regional features of traditional embroidery in the North of Russia. The author analyses various techniques, ornaments, and colours of Karelian embroidery. Describing a kind of embroidery skill, the author believes that the artistic merits of embroidery in the North of Russia is the brightest page in the world history of art. The author concludes that with the advent of new materials, the art of embroidery itself develops and improves, new techniques appear and the possibilities of performing various drawings and ornamental motifs that are inextricably linked with national culture and local traditions expand.

*Keywords:* traditional applied art, technological techniques, colour scheme, national features, folk customs and rituals, ornament.



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## **Региональные особенности традиционной вышивки Русского Севера России (олонецкое шитье – Карелия)**

*Аннотация:* В традиционном прикладном искусстве Олонецкого воеводства Республики Карелия художественная вышивка является не только одним из самых популярных видов народного искусства, на формирование и развитие которого оказали влияние этническая карельская и русская культура, но и значительный материал и духовная основа, естественная форма передачи исторического и культурного опыта последующим поколениям. Статья посвящена региональным особенностям традиционной вышивке

Севера России. Автор анализирует различные приёмы, орнамент, цветовые решения вышивки Карелии. Описывая своеобразную разновидность вышивального мастерства, автор считает, что по своим художественным достоинствам вышивка Севера России является ярчайшей страницей в мировой истории искусств. Автор делает заключение, что с появлением новых материалов развивается и совершенствуется само искусство вышивки, появляются новые техники и расширяются возможности выполнения различных рисунков и орнаментальных мотивов, неразрывно связанных с национальной культурой и местными традициями.

*Ключевые слова:* традиционное прикладное искусство, технологические приёмы, цветовая гамма, национальные особенности, народные обычаи и обряды, орнамент.



### Introduction

In the traditional applied art of the Olonets province, Republic of Karelia (*Figure 1*), artistic embroidery is not only one of the most popular types of folk art, the formation and development of which was influenced by ethnic Karelian and Russian culture, but also a significant material and spiritual base, a natural form of transmitting historical and cultural experience to subsequent generations. Religious performances, rituals, holidays, and the most significant events in a person's life were associated with objects brightly decorated with embroidery, which were given a magical meaning in the family and everyday life. Traditional embroidery is dedicated to research scientists, art historians and experts in traditional applied art: A.V. Bakushinskii, I.J. boguslawska, N.P. Boyevoy, N.P. Burmistrova, L.A. Dintses, A.P. Zhuravlev, N.M. Kalashnikova, S.V. Lebedev, E.E. Knatz, N.T. Klimova, A.P. Kosenko, G.S. Maslova, N.A. Rodionova, M.A. Sorokina, V.A. Faleeva, etc.

The study of traditional applied art of the Republic of Karelia, its types in regional, historical, artistic and pedagogical aspects allows a comprehensive approach to solving the problem to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of the region. Today, the local craftswomen conduct active research work with the bearers of folk-art traditions, their research and educational activities on the study of Museum collections, ethnographic collections representing traditional women's crafts – weaving, spinning, folk embroidery.

In this regard, the professional training of embroidery artists, associated with regional cultural and historical traditions, becomes truly unique.

Practical application is necessary – natural transfer of knowledge, skills and related cultural priorities, in the process of which there is mutual enrichment – young people are introduced to the experience, and traditions acquire new forms and meanings.

Historically, embroidery evolved in rural regions, often with restriction of activity due to the lack of fabrics, threads, tools. M.A. Nekrasova notes three basic conditions for the existence and development of traditional applied art in the field of embroidery: first, the “preservation of traditions” based on technology performance, the second – “collective work” as a necessary historical experience of previous generations and the third, “the transmission of artistic traditions and centuries of accumulated experience to the next generation” (*Kosmenko, 1977*). So, in 1913, N.P. Sheremetiev wrote that “... the consistent history of Russian art crafts has not yet been the

subject of study. It is necessary to combine data, starting with burial mounds, with data from chronicles, it is necessary to study everything preserved in palaces, monasteries, private collections, museums, compare with later historical evidence, both printed and archival, collecting grains from everywhere, such work would bring “abundant fruits.” (Rabotnova, 1954).

Artistic embroidery is a common, independent type of decoration of clothing, household items, in which the pattern is made manually (with a needle or a hook), by means of an embroidery machine on various materials (linen, silk, wool, etc.). Since ancient times, silk, wool, cotton, linen threads were used for embroidery, which were coloured with vegetable dyes, as well as gold and silver threads. Other materials – hair, beads, pearls, sequins sometimes combined with precious stones – could also be used for the work. The origin of the art of fabric decoration dates back to ancient times and is associated with the appearance of a stitch-seam on clothes made of animal skins. The improvement of technology is due to the transition to the steel needle, as well as the development of spinning and weaving production. Craftswomen selected all the best, creating unique patterns of embroidery with characteristic national features.

Embroidery techniques, patterns, and their colour embodiment were improved from generation to generation. The embroidered patterns and drawings reflect a person’s ideas about the world around them, which are inextricably linked with national culture and local traditions.

*Thus*, with the advent of new materials, the art of embroidery itself develops and improves, new techniques appear and the possibilities of performing various drawings and ornamental motifs that are inextricably linked with national culture and local traditions, expand.

Folk applied art of Russia is a valuable and original phenomenon not only in Russian, but also in world culture. It is an artistic laboratory, in which the entire human culture was formed. Folk art, which Russia is famous, preserves and carries into the future the foundations of national mentality, ethical and aesthetic ideals, traditions of Russian art culture, principles of ethno-pedagogy, supports the centers of the local economy, the general cultural level of the population of the Russian Federation’s cities and villages.

Artistic embroidery is one of the most widespread areas of traditional applied art, the emergence and historical existence of which began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in more than thirty regions of Russia. At the same time, there may be several centers of artistic embroidery in one region, which differ in technology, composition and colour solutions.

### **Stylistic features of Karelian embroidery**

One of the brightest phenomena of the traditional peasant culture of Karelia was the art of embroidery. The Museum’s storerooms contain the richest collections of the artistic heritage of the past, the best examples of artistic embroidery, reflecting the traditions of the Russian, Karelian, and Vepsian populations.

Traditional embroidery contains various information, ethnographic material, and local artistic features. The remains of ancient clothing, ornamented with geometric patterns, were discovered by archaeologists in the North-Western Ladoga region, on the territory that belonged to the ancestors of modern Karelians, already in the burial grounds from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Kosmenko, 1989).

It should note that geometric patterns remain a favorite type of decoration of women’s clothing, especially Karelian and Vepsian in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and provide not only factual data

on the centuries-old tradition of fabric ornamentation by the local population, but also an example of a high degree of continuity of clothing decoration with the same type of ornament-geometric.

Traditionally, embroidery decorated women's and girls' hats, shirts, towels, the edges of sheets or valances to the beds, sometimes a kind of napkin. Embroidery on the listed products had a well-defined location. Being usually on the edges, ends of products or on their structural parts, they gave completeness, a kind of isolation to objects, as if separating them from the environment. In the women's costume of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, only the bottom of the linen shirt was decorated with patterned sewing. The 'ensemble' of the festive women's costume was given by elegant headdresses decorated with sewing on the structural parts (front, top, side or only on the top).

Towels were ornamented only on two opposite ends of festive, ceremonial items, which differ from everyday items not only in size, but also in the presence of rich ornaments. The decorations on the edges of the valances resembled the embroidery of the hemlines of women's shirts. It is assumed that on ancient clothing geometric patterns had a religious and symbolic meaning, but later this symbolism was lost, and the ornament served an aesthetic purpose.

In the past, the working life of the peasants with their heavy agricultural everyday life alternated with numerous calendars, family holidays and rituals, which together made up the annual and life cycle of the population. Naturally, festive costumes, hats, elegant decoration with bright embroidery, as well as the interiors of huts, decorated with numerous embroidered products at this time, gave these events a special solemnity and significance. No village festival was complete without such decorations. Especially important role was played by embroidered products in wedding ceremonies. There they were not only elements of the decor of the marriage ceremony, but also material evidence of the skills and hard work of the bride. The more such items the girl made, and their artistic merits played an important role, the more "glorious" she was considered. Their significance in ancient times was also associated with religious ideas, which were lost by the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but according to tradition, these products continued to function in rituals. Therefore, in the ornamental motifs of ancient embroidery there are fantastic images filled with fairy-tale and mythological content. They adopted obscure patterns from their mother's and grandmother's products, on the one hand, steadily adhering to the ornamental traditions adopted in this area, on the other hand, making each embroidery unique individual handwriting from generation to generation. However, each locality developed its own artistic features of their solution.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the art of embroidery in Karelia, as in other regions of the Russian North, was a mass female occupation. In the conditions of semi-natural economy, patriarchal life with its commitment to antiquity, every woman was able to weave, sew and embroider necessary items of clothing and household items for herself and her family. In accordance with the accepted customs and stable ideological canons, which were strictly observed in the villages, the peasant woman certainly decorated these products with "women's painting", i.e., patterned sewing. Deprived of money, the peasant woman could earn small incomes by needlework. In the villages around fairs, monasteries, or parishes, where was the raw material for art products (e.g., pearls), two branches embroidery classes had emerged on the basis of the home "women's industry": crafts and trades. Peasant products embroidered with ordinary

threads, as well as expensive pearl and gold-embroidered headdresses and other items that the needlewomen of the Olonets, Zaonezhye, Pomorye neighborhoods specialized in, either were either sold by order of local residents, or exported through buyers to domestic fairs, as well as outside of Karelia, even Russia. The history of the development of decorative and applied art in Karelia was significantly influenced by Russian decorative art. This was determined by the fact that Karelia was part of the Novgorod lands since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The history of the peoples inhabiting it, the Karelians and Veps, is closely linked to the historical destinies of the Russian people. Russian culture is reflected in the similarity of Northern Russian and Karelian costumes, ornamental motifs in carvings and embroidery, techniques of their execution, and the nature of the artistic products themselves.

In the traditional art of Karelia, there is a national-traditional component, which is crucial for each type of artistic folk crafts, and therefore for professional education in this area. The most convincing proof of this is the embroidery of the Karelian, Vepsian, Finnish and Russian people living in the territory of the Russian North, Karelia.

Embroidery with paper threads was widespread mainly in the southern and middle Karelian regions. One of the reasons for the lack of widespread artistic embroidery in North Karelia was that flax cultivation was poorly developed here. The Karelians used embroidery to decorate the same items as neighboring peoples, using similar techniques and compositions.

The most common techniques of Northern embroidery, performed by counting threads of fabric (cross, painting, set, white stitch, embroidery on a grid, colour perevit, white and colour counting surface) are common to Karelian embroidery. Counting seams caused strict symmetry and mathematically accurate relationship of ornamental, geometric and plant images on objects of folk decorative and applied art.

The most famous historical centers of embroidery in Karelia Republic are the cities of Olonets (embroidery, woven mesh, mesh, white stitching, painting), Zaonezhye (embroidery vestibule at the “fillet”, a vestibule on the grid), Sheltozero (two-stitch “painting”, a technique of unilateral and bilateral cross on account of the threads of the canvas), Kargopol, and Pudozh (embroidery on canvas and paper, wool, coloured threads, gold embroidery and pearl sewing).

Embroidery of each center has its own stylistic and artistic-figurative features, technical methods and techniques of execution, colour scheme. White stitching, one of the characteristic types of ancient Karelian embroidery, is particularly widespread. Embroidery was performed on canvas or Kumach with ordinary paper threads, the “predecessors” of which were linen threads. Obviously, the harsh conditions of the North, the modesty of the colour spectra of the local nature left an imprint on the colour solutions of embroidery in peasant products. The tradition of embroidery with classic white or red threads was mainly observed there. Sometimes, however, they were added a soft yellow or blue colour. These colours are known to have the greatest emotional impact.

The most common were seams: half-cross painting and white stitching. The ancient, double-sided seam-painting created a subtle graphic pattern on the canvas. The contour of the motif, made by counting the warp and weft threads horizontally, vertically and diagonally, was filled with various decorative cuts: straight, diagonal, curly stripes, zigzags, square cells, etc. They could be supplemented with asterisks, strokes, or a pigtail. Cuttings-squares and stripes inside large

figures of a bird – a peacock bird, a leopard or a tree – were embroidered with blue, yellow, green and dark red wool.

Very popular throughout Karelia was sewing with a white stitch on a linen grid (stitch on a grid), which refers to through counting seams on a discharged fabric. The beauty of line embroidery was achieved by clearly highlighting the snow-white pattern on a light transparent background. The most common method of sewing with a stitch on a grid, which in different areas was called differently (“by pulling out”, “by twisting”), consisted in pulling out the threads of the warp and weft by hand over the entire fabric where the ornament would be applied. On the formed entwined grid, a pattern was made with a flooring made of thick paper threads.

The next type of sewing-a line on the grid “cut out”, “seam on the letter”, ‘vestibule on the grid’, the most typical for Zaonezhye, Olonets province, but also found in other regions of Karelia, consisted in pulling out the warp threads and weft only from the background part of the product. The fabric of the pattern remained not pulled out, the contours of the pattern were decoratively covered with a vestibule.

The ancient types of embroidery, if we judge by the ornamental motives, included embroidery with a set. This technique is very similar to bran weaving. Stitches in sewing a set go from the front, then from the wrong side of the fabric, so a negative image of the pattern is formed on the reverse side. The technique of the set was combined with other decorative seams – oblique counting stitch, double-sided seam, etc. If the embroidery set was made with coloured threads, then cross-stitch on the count of canvas threads, as well as double-sided seam, was made only with red threads. This technique was usually used when embroidering the hem of shirts.

From the free techniques of embroidery, tambour sewing became widespread, which appeared here not earlier than the end of the century before last. The needlewoman took an old sample of such embroidery, put a cloth on it and wiped it with an aluminum spoon. According to the resulting contour of the drawing, a special hook “tambour” or a short needle, she deduced chains of loops.

Most tambour embroidery is restrained in colour: they were made with red threads on canvas or white threads on Kumach. There were still types of sewing using metal threads, pearls, but these types of techniques were not associated with the widespread peasant embroidery.

The central (or main) patterns were framed on one or two sides by narrow border; small birds, trees, human figures, etc. were embroidered in continuous repetition. They often consisted of geometric patterns. At the bottom of the towel, the composition ended with a narrow earring, a strip of lace, a figuratively cut edge of the product (festoon edge), imitating lace festoons.

On towels, valances, shirts, in addition to these additional decorative details, calico strips were often used, which framed the embroidered composition from the bottom or from opposite sides, from the bottom and top of the ornament. For Karelian and Vepsian products, such inserts are almost not typical.

Embroidery, performed by counting techniques of sewing, is interpreted in a very conventional geometrized manner. This feature is a sign of ancient art. Countless, free types of embroidery – tambour, allowed to perform patterns in smooth, rounded contours.

The embroidered ornamental motifs of Karelia are of particular interest. In the embroidery of pre-revolutionary Karelia (Olonets province), two large groups of motifs can be distinguished: geometric and pictorial. Embroidery patterns often consisted of complex geometric shapes

based on a rhombus or square. In addition to geometric motifs, Northern embroidery includes images of flowers, bushes, and trees. Plant motifs were combined in a pattern with the image of birds or animals. Fairy-tale birds – peacocks with magnificent tails, modest little ducks, stately, graceful swans, proud horses, elegant deer with branching horns – were depicted among flowering bushes and trees. The image of stately female figures with birds or flowers in their hands and riders on fairy-tale playful horses are also often found in folk embroidery of the Russian North. Motifs of flowers, trees, birds, animals, horsemen, and female figures in folk art have always been endowed with a capacious and multi-valued symbolism (*Figure 2*).

Swans from rural residents were the personification of a young beautiful girl and a bride, and were considered a symbol of true love. Ducks were perceived as a sign of a hardworking housewife and were a symbol of fertility. Pigeons were considered a sign of marital fidelity and a guarantee of a happy family. In Russian folk embroidery of the 19<sup>th</sup> century almost ubiquitous image of the dance girls, riders, with branches of greenery in his hands, entertainers, wedding young in the church, train wedding with the bride and groom in the festively decorated carriage or sleigh, accompanied by numerous guests.

Northern embroidery is very decorative. Craftswomen achieved the originality of visual forms due to clear, characteristic lines and beautiful patterned filling of the ornamental plane. Artistic sewing in Karelia is characterized by a restrained colour scheme, decided in red and white or only white. The ornamentation of Karelian embroidery is distinguished by geometric and floral motifs, although there are other types of ornamental motifs-images of birds and animals.

It is necessary to characterize separately the traditional embroidery of Karelians (especially in the middle and southern regions), Northern (Sheltozersk) Veps, as well as the Russian population of Pudozhye, Zaonezhye, Pomorye. This is justified by the fact that the Karelians and Veps preserved a more ancient shape than the Zaonezhye or Pomeranian, which, especially in the beginning of the century, were extensively adopted outside new, city sewing techniques, adhering to Western fashion, until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Thus*, in the era of globalization of social and cultural processes, it is especially important to preserve, develop and perceive the spiritual essence of the unique cultures of the ethnographic groups of the Russian people: Zaonezhans, Pudozhians and Pomors living in Karelia. Mastering the art of embroidery was not only an aesthetic expression, passed down from generation to generation, it was a means of labor education, a school of skill that determined the prestige of the female population in the rural community.

### **History and theory of traditional Olonets embroidery**

Karelian embroidery has many features that distinguish it from embroidery of other local places of compact residence of ethnic groups and peoples of the North.

The most famous historical center of embroidery in Karelia is the city of Olonets (embroidery on a woven net, on a grid, white stitch, half-cross painting). Olonets craftswomen of the rypushkal region of the Olonets district in the past perfectly mastered the original embroidery technique “poimettu” (textile), i.e., embroidery on a woven net, not marked in other areas of the North (*Figure 3*). Among the Olonets Karelians, it was developed from ancient times and had the character of craft production. The ornament was created on a decorated background of linen canvas, resembling canvas, which was previously woven on a loom. A thick metal needle



with a broken end was used to move the canvas threads symmetrically horizontally and vertically, and to sweep the net. Then white (less often coloured) cotton threads were laid with various patterns: zoomorphic, plant, geometric, etc. This type of embroidery was widespread not only in Olonets, but also in Pudozhye (Podporozhye village, Nevzima village, Kuganavolok village, Pomorye), where valances, towels, decorative bedspreads, and napkins were made. They found a common market in the markets of the North: in St. Petersburg, Lodeynoye Pole and Finland (*Figure 4; Figure 5; Figure 6*).

This family craft was passed down from generation to generation, from mother to daughter. The craftswomen fearing competition from other embroiderers always tried to keep secret the technology of this type of embroidery. It turned out that very few women in the villages of Sedoksa, Rypushkalitsa, and Baikaly knew embroidery on a woven net, and some of them achieved very high skill in their art. So, for her embroidery, the peasant Tatyana Ivanovna Rikkieva was awarded a silver medal at the world exhibition in Paris in 1900. In the 1930s and 1940s, the art of embroidery on woven mesh gradually disappeared. Embroidery in Olonets, as in each of the centuries-old centers of southern, Central Karelia, Prionezhye, Zaonezhye, Pomorye, and Pudozhye, has its own characteristics and language, which determines the relationship between skill and various technological techniques that are characteristic only for a particular area. The “tambour” seam (sometimes called the “pigtail” seam in the Russian Museum’s inventory) is a cross between sewing and knitting. To perform this type of embroidery, professionals use a special needle with a hook at the end of the “tambour”, which is pulled through the canvas thread, forming on the front surface of the canvas a number of small, adjacent to each other loops; a strip of loops is single or, more often, double. The outline of the drawing is outlined with a pencil on the canvas and sheathed with a ‘vestibule’ strip, grid marking, trimming, and pulling out threads are performed near the drawing. The remaining threads of the background that are not pulled out, are intertwined with a linen thread and form a grid or “fillet”, on which a solid mass of white pattern stands out very clearly. In large patterns, holes, embroidery “set”, “satins” (triangles, squares, stripes, etc.) or Christmas trees are made; sometimes they are circled some figures in which the threads are pulled out again, with a “tambour”. The remaining threads are fastened in the form of fillets, but not in a simple cell, but in various patterns (*Figure 7*).

Later, the embroidery of the Olonets province began to depict the Sirin bird, giving it features of increased fabulousness and linking it with the idea of fertility. In folk art of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is known from popular prints as a bird of Paradise singing songs (*Figure 8*). Stitch sewing is very diverse. On the towel, the figure of the Sirin bird is made on fabric, artfully filled with all sorts of decorative seams – satins in the form of triangles, squares, sleepers, rhombuses. The left grid is staggered and filled with an air loop. Northern embroidery is very decorative, every embroidered motif, even complex, is easy to read. Craftswomen achieved the originality of visual forms due to clear, characteristic lines and beautiful patterned filling of the ornamental plane.

In the folk art of Karelia, the most ancient was gold embroidery and pearl sewing. It particularly flourished in Pomerania, Pudozh, and Olonets, where very festive women’s hats were embroidered and strung by pearls. Women created complex intricate ornaments consisting of rosettes, stylized waterfowl and plants, and then gold and silver threads completely covered



the entire surface of the headdress, emphasizing its significance and solemnity, leaving almost no free plane of the background. Pearls for these ornaments, as well as mother-of-pearl for inlay, were extracted in the rivers that flow into the White Sea and Lake Onega. Stringing pearls required skill, hard work, and great skill. The embroiderer drilled a hole in each pearl, strung it on a cord, hair, or metallic thread, and laid out the pearl threads according to the prepared pattern.

As headdresses, women of the Northern provinces wore kokoshniks, which had a deep meaning, symbolized happiness and unity in marriage, and the warmth of the home. Kokoshniks-soborniks are a headdress on a solid basis.

Soborniks were made of brocade, braid, silk, velvet, embroidered silver, and gold thread. It was on a frame of cardboard or taped canvas, with a calico or canvas lining. A characteristic feature of such a sobornik was a wide ochelie (semi-circular frontal shield of the kokoshnik), laid in front with vertical dense bolsters, and a cone-shaped elevation on the crown. Behind the sobornik was long and decorated with a wide bow with long ends hanging down at the back. The ochelie of the sobornik were ornamentals pearls, coloured glass in a metal frame, imitating precious stones. Sometimes the sobornik were attached to the bead or pearl mesh-podnis (thread or several intertwined threads with strung pearls, beads, used by women as a decoration for the head) covering part of your forehead. Kokoshniks-soborniks were festive headdresses of young married women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*Figure 9; Figure 10*).

Regional peculiarities were determined mainly by the differences in natural and climatic conditions, the specifics of natural materials used in embroidery, as well as the ethno-cultural interactions of ethnic groups living in this region, which is typical for traditional applied art of the entire Russian North (*Figure 11; Figure 12*).

Artistic embroidery, like all works of traditional applied art, is characterized by an organic connection of ornamentation with the form, material and purpose of the product. Embroidery could be performed without drawing, according to the count of fabric threads.

The most ancient of the counting types of sewing was “bilateral” seam – “painting”. It was called “two-sided”, i.e., old. In this type of sewing, the contours of the pattern are applied to the canvas according to the count of its threads with stitches of the same size vertically, horizontally and diagonally, and so that on the front and back sides they are the same, from which the seam got its name “double-sided”. Double-sided embroidery was performed with red threads on the canvas or on the canvas. They were especially liked to be used to decorate towels, valances, and sometimes ceremonial wedding shirts. Ornaments embroidered with a double-sided seam are usually of an archaic pattern. Also, a favorite seam in Karelia was a painting or half-cross-an old double-sided seam of linear stitches in red on a white background (*Figure 13; Figure 14; Figure 15*).

*Thus*, the traditional Olonets embroidery is distinguished by quite peculiar techniques with a rich old pattern, techniques of stitching on a grid, sewing with gold, pearls, red and white threads (paper) on canvas-painting, sets, vestibule on a grid, embroidery “poimettu”, i.e., embroidery on a woven grid, not marked in other areas of the north. It was lost by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1900, the works of talented folk masters Evdokia Pavlova and Tatyana Ivanovna Rikkieva were awarded silver medals at the Paris world exhibition.

## **History and theory of traditional Zaonezhian embroidery**

A special place in the applied art of Karelia is occupied by Zaonezhian embroidery, the main folk-art craft of the Republic of Karelia. The factory of *Zaonezhian Embroidery* was established in the village of Shunga, Zaonezhsky district in 1929. It is one of the oldest enterprises of art crafts with rich folk traditions.

The history of Zaonezhye is connected with the history of Veliky Novgorod. First, settlers from the Novgorod lands founded several settlements on the shores and islands of lake Onega. There is a special way of life, special customs and a special nature of embroidery there. The tradition to embroider festive clothes appeared because of necessity, there was no place to buy it and nothing to spend on. Women tried to make it with their own hands, showing patience and invention.

Zaonezhian art embroidery is generally closer to Karelian than to Pudozhian embroidery. The similarity with Karelian embroidery is shown in the restraint of colouristic solutions and general techniques of execution, the similarity of many motifs and compositional solutions. However, in Zaonezhian embroidery, along with the preservation of some traditional subjects, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is a deviation from the generally, especially ancient peasant embroidery (*Figure 16*).

On the Zaonezhian embroidery of the beginning of the last century, genre subjects that are almost not typical for Karelia, as well as motifs related to the surrounding life (e.g., images of cockerels, birds on plant branches, patterns of climbing plant stems), are seen. The significant transformation of Zaonezhsky peasant embroidery is also indicated by numerous plant patterns made in the technique of tambour sewing, which are very diverse and rich in drawing, although some traditional subjects are preserved. Brides, setting aside old mother's samples for dowry, preferred to embroider various earrings, cross, imitating urban patterns (*Figure 17*). Old double-sided embroidery gradually went out of fashion, as a result of which many traditional subjects and motifs characteristic of this type of sewing in the past began to be forgotten. Back in the 1920s, the scientists, who studied Zaonezhian embroidery, wrote that a rare girl uses a double-sided seam to decorate a dowry and only the older generation uses it. At the same time, tambour sewing became widespread in Zaonezhye, especially "cut-out", which was considered to be "very fine, masterful work" (*Figure 18*).

Such processes took place in Zaonezhian peasant embroidery due to the proximity of shopping centers, in particular the Shunga fair, where the products of Zaonezhian embroiderers were in demand. This led to the destruction of "conservative" forms of products' ornamentation and the development of new ones that met the needs of different categories of consumers.

The reason for the loss of the centuries-old tradition of embroidery was also the organization of the point of "manual labor assistance Society", which provided factory fabrics and then purchased various embroidered products from local peasant women for urban and foreign consumers, in the village of Shunga in 1907. The organization of home-made crafts, which covered about 300 people in the district, led to the fact that the old patterns and embroidery techniques were gradually forgotten, and new types of sewing techniques, which were used to embroider not only traditional, but also urban products (napkins, tea sets, dress finishes, etc.), came in their place. However, in more remote localities from Shunga, the old traditions of decorative sewing of products, for example, with a tambour on calico or canvas, continued to exist. After the October revolution, the Zaonezhian fisheries received organized

development. In the design of utilitarian and decorative items, craftswomen always turn to the origins of folk embroidery.

Thus, a special place in the development of traditional embroidery in Karelia is occupied by the artel of *Khashezerskaya Embroidery*, the main focus of the work which has always been the study of numerous collections of ancient folk embroidery from the collections of the *Museum of Fine Arts of Karelia*, created in the village of Khashezero in 1929. Zaonezhian embroidery impresses with modesty of colours. Towels, tablecloths, men's shirts, aprons, napkins are mainly embroidered with red threads of the pattern on a severe canvas, and white threads on red calico, or white on white linen. A major role in the development of embroidery art was played by the joint work of the company with the *People's Research Institute of Arts and Crafts* of the RSFSR. The best works of the masters were exhibited at all-Russian exhibitions, at the world Paris exhibition in 1900, and exported to Canada, the USA, Great Britain, and France.

### **History and theory of traditional Pudozhian embroidery**

Embroidery was a very common type of needlework in the past and among the Russian population of Pudozhye. Pudozhsky peasant sewing was especially developed by decorative forms. The variety of techniques, richness of colour solutions, specific ornamental motifs and plots, the originality of the style of patterns allows to distinguish peasant embroidery in this area in a special area of ornamental art of Karelia.

Local craftswomen knew the many techniques of embroidery and ornamental drawings. However, the common feature of most embroidery was that they were usually related to the technique of so-called counting sewing: when applying a stitch, the embroiderer counted a certain number of threads on the canvas each time. This type of execution technique included double-sided seam, grid stitch, drawing, cross-stitch technique on the count of canvas threads.

Among the countless, free types of sewing that spread in Karelia later, tambour embroidery, embroidery with one-sided and two-sided smoothness, was very popular (*Figure 19*).

Pudozhian traditional embroidery is very diverse. The embroidery, the drawings of which consist of various visual motifs and subjects, is predominant. A significant place was occupied by geometric ornamentation, which was mainly used in the decoration of clothing. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, geometric patterns decorated the hem of women's shirts. In an earlier period, they also ornamented the upper part of the shirt (shoulder).

On traditional Pudozhian shirts, embroidery from plant patterns can be found. Judging by the Museum collections, there are not as many of them as those decorated with geometric ornaments. The patterns in Pudozhian embroidery were made with more diverse techniques than in Karelian and Vepsian regions. When embroidering clothes, preference was given to a cross and a double-sided seam. In the Pudozhsky district, this kind of embroidery was also performed by a set, a line on the grid in addition to the technique of double-sided seam and cross-stitch on the count of canvas threads.

Compositional solutions of geometric motifs, consisting of various combinations of rhombuses, rosettes, and other shapes, are also more diverse.

On some shirts, the patterns are made with wide horizontal borders, with the repetition of two different figures, on others, the ornamental compositions are more complex. They consist

of geometric patterns made in the form of a grid, so that the embroidery looks especially elegant on the shirts.

Regardless of whether the compositions had mesh or border solutions, the main decorative stripe of the pattern on the shirts was framed on both sides by narrow strips of embroidered ornament, the motifs of which did not repeat the patterns of the main wide stripe. Moreover, they could consist of elements of pictorial origin rather than geometric, such as small birds following each other, or plants. A specific feature of the embroidered compositions on Pudozhian shirts was that they were decorated with additional decorative details on both sides or only on the bottom: narrow stripes of calico or white lace. One can also note the peculiarity of the stylistic embodiment of geometric patterns on Pudozhian products.

With the exception of some embroideries that approach the traditions of Karelian ornament on clothing (this is expressed in enlarged designs of geometric figures, with a significant clean background “field” between the main motifs), the main part of the geometric patterns of Pudozhye is stylistically solved differently. They are characterised by a high density of patterns that resemble carpet. One of the most striking examples of such an artistic solution of patterns in compositions is a sample of a shirt embroidered with a set technique. The density of patterns characteristic of Pudozhian embroidery can only be explained by the peculiarity of the set technique, which resembles bran weaving.

However, in embroidery made by other sewing techniques – cross stitch, double-sided seam, there is a similar stylistic interpretation of geometric motifs, which gives the Pudozhian ornamentation local expressiveness. Pudozhian embroidery close to the embroidery severoceska shirts by this stylistic manner of interpretation of the geometric patterns.

In Kargopol and Pudozhian towels, embroidered with a counting surface, set, oblique stitch and painting, large decorative patterns prevail: multi-coloured leopards with a raised front paw, majestic eagles with outstretched wings, fairy sirens with maiden faces and the body of a bird. For these regions, as a local feature, large motifs of smooth outlines, made in the technique of a set with a double-sided seam outline or a vestibule along the contour, can be distinguished. Similar ornamental compositions are also found in Veps-Karelian sewing on traditional embroideries of Karelia and the Leningrad region.

Very popular in Karelia was sewing with a stitch on a linen grid (stitch on a grid). In most areas, it was performed with white thread on a white line. In Pudozhye, multi-coloured threads were used for this type of sewing. The line on the grid is most often found on everyday products, especially on towels, but in the Pudozhsky district, such embroidery was also decorated with the hem of shirts. Only in the Pudozhsky district, along with monochrome, multi-coloured tambour embroidery was common (*Figure 20; Figure 21*).

In these embroideries, red is combined with bright yellow, scarlet, purple, azure, crimson and green. Eight-pointed flower rosettes complement and restrain the multi-coloured stripes. Karelian towels are unparalleled in Russian folk embroidery of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in terms of their monumental forms of pictorial motifs and geometric motifs, as well as in terms of their multi-colour and colourful colour. Russian Pudozhian embroidery, along with the use of red and white colours, is characterised by pronounced polychrome due to the use of dyed silk and wool threads. Pudozhian embroidery on traditional household items such as towels and valances are very interesting. The range of motifs on them is wider and more complex than on clothing.

Decorative techniques are more diverse. Patterns on utilitarian and decorative products were made with various seams: double-sided sewing, set, grid stitching, tambour. All the embroidery techniques were used as in other regions of Karelia. However, Pudozhians had their own favorite embroidery techniques, among which the most popular was sewing everyday items using the set and tambour technique (*Figure 22*). The originality was also shown in the colour solutions of Pudozhian embroidery. Along with monochrome (red or white) patterns, local craftswomen liked to embroider with multi-coloured threads – wool and silk. The use of multi-coloured threads made Pudozhian embroidery diverse, decorative, and elegant. As in neighboring areas, the utilitarian and decorative items of Pudozh region were mainly decorated by fine motives. Sometimes among the traditional subjects there are classic compositions of a female figure and riders on the sides. Such subjects, embroidered with a set technique, are more similar to Kargopol products, and not to Karelian ones, which were made only with a double-sided seam and, in comparison with Pudozhsky subjects, differ in graphic drawing and pronounced geometrized forms. According to the most common scientific point of view, these scenes of Russian embroidery depicted a pagan goddess – the life-giving mother earth with pribogami on the sides.

Such embroidery has undergone a significant evolution in the direction of decorativeness, as evidenced by the sample of the towel, where the tambour seam is filled with a human figure with very schematic birds and riders on the sides. Pudozhian embroidery on a towel with the image of a stylized male figure is unique for Karelia. A significant place on everyday products of Pudozhye is also occupied by the motifs of fairy-tale birds, most of which are represented by the repetition of their characteristic figures.

Made in the technique of a set and tambour, they are distinguished by rounded contours of the drawing, dense decorative cutting inside the ornamental figures, which gives them some weight.

Such embroidery was performed in the same artistic manner as the previous products, but along with a purely local stylistic interpretation of plant images, there are motifs that are very similar to Karelian and Vepsian drawings. They have strictly geometric outlines and are embroidered with a different technique—a line on the grid.

In the folk art of Pudozhye, gold and pearl embroidery were developed. Their special festive and wedding women's headdresses were embroidered and decorated with pearls (*Figure 23*; *Figure 24a*; *Figure 24b*). Regional peculiarities were mainly determined by the difference in natural and climatic conditions, the specifics of natural materials used in embroidery, as well as the ethno-cultural interactions of ethnic groups living in this region, which is typical for traditional applied art of the entire Russian North.

Colour perevit, a type of stitch sewing performed on a grid formed by threads of warp and weft pulled out of the fabric in a certain order, was found in Pudozhye in the village of Kuganavolok. It was used for finishing blouses, towels, tablecloths and napkins.

The grid, depending on the type of work, is always marked on the fabric in centimeters, and not by the number of fabrics, because due to the unequal thickness of the threads, the cells may turn out to be non-square. To perform a stitch grid, a fabric with a straight (linen) interweaving of threads (severe linen, linen with Dacron, matting) is needed.



For this work, the grid is formed in the same way as for white stitch embroidery. It is also performed on the stretched fabric. However, the grid is made denser than in the white line. To do this, less threads are usually pulled out, and the mesh is smaller. The colour pattern of intertwined previt is performed on the grid. The motifs of the coloured perevit ornament can be made with coloured threads: green, blue, yellow, pink, etc. The netting can be carried out diagonally, or in straight rows. In order not to see through the threads of the fabric when moving from one column to another, the threads are strongly pulled on the crosshairs diagonally closing all the gaps of the columns. The edge of the mesh is reinforced with a smooth roller or a loop seam.

The colour contour of the pattern is induced in two steps: at the beginning, from cell to cell diagonally, vertically or horizontally, then from the face, then from the inside out, the working thread runs around the pattern ahead of the needle. In reverse, the working thread covers the missing places, making a rope. Festoon edges are made in the same way as in complex stitch sewing, only with coloured threads (*Figure 25; Figure 26*).

At the intersection of the vertical and horizontal columns of the grid, the wrapping thread runs along the wrong side 2 times. If the size of the cell is greater than 0,5 on 0,5 cm, wrapping is also performed diagonally 2-3 times.

Stitch embroidery often ends not with a straight line, but with festoons that form prongs in the embroidery of towels and napkins. When performing festoons, the grid in the form of a rectangle is pulled and the contour of the festoons along this grid is drawn according to the selected pattern, slightly wrapping the grid cells with a thread.

Such types of artistic embroidery as smooth, banners, earrings, cross-stitch on canvas are among the most recent types that were used in the embroidery art of Karelia. They appeared under the influence of urban fashion.

*Thus*, because of its remoteness of Pudozhye from St Petersburg, the old patriarchal peasant life was stronger felt. The folk culture of this region was more archaic and less subject to urban influences, as it is inextricably linked with the image of pristine unspoiled nature. The most ancient embroidery techniques and the most archaic types of ornaments have been preserved in Pudozhye. Proximity to the largest center of gold embroidery – Kargopol – determined the existence of this ancient technique on the territory of the Pudozhsky region. A distinctive feature of Pudozhian embroidery is the richness of colour solutions, specific ornamental motifs and plots, additional decoration with decorated details-narrow strips of calico or white lace. Pudozhian embroidery with the image of a stylized male figure on a towel is unique for Karelia.

### **History and theory of traditional Sholtozero embroidery**

Embroidery of the Vepsian population living on the territory of Karelia significantly differed from embroidery of the middle and southern Vepsians living in the Vologda and Leningrad regions.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Northern Vepsian women decorated mainly women's shirts and towels with embroidery. The main motif of Vepsian embroidery is the theme of a tree, the remnants of which are still revered by the people. The embroidery technique, also used "vepsyanok lines", made with white thread by "pulling out", "simple cross", "stalk seam" and "goat" (*Figure 27*).

Traditional embroidery of Northern Veps is characterized by the same decorative techniques and colour solutions (red-white, white) as for southern and middle Karelians, as well as most Russians. However, here the most popular embroidery was tambour, cross and stitch on the grid. Double-sided embroidery “in many cases expressively conveys a pagan cult scene that has long been incomprehensible, but also traditionally retained in the iconography of folk art. In contrast to the widespread interpretation of these scenes throughout the North, the center of which, in most cases, is either a female image, or the merging of a woman and a tree” with two symmetrically arranged figures and paired birds with crests (‘rooks’), on Vepsian embroidery, the tree is designed “in geometric forms with a rhombic figure in the center and peculiarly curved branches...” (*Dintses & Bolsheva, 1939*). As for products decorated with a double-sided seam, they were significantly inferior to other decorative items. The Northern Veps do not have any products made with the old technique of typing that was common among the Karelians and is very characteristic of the Russians of the Pudozhsky district (*Figure 28*).

Ornamental motifs in decorative products are also specific for Northern Veps. Patterns of birds, animals, and clearly defined anthropomorphic figures as the main motifs of compositions in Northern Vepsian embroidery are quite rare. The predominant part of the items was embroidered with various kinds of geometric and floral ornaments. Geometric embroidery here is equally characteristic of the ornamentation of shirts, the decoration of the ends of towels and bedside valances with images of a stylised bird and tree, made in calico with a double-sided seam with elements of the set (*Figure 29*). At the same time, plant and wood patterns were mainly applied on towels and only occasionally they were found on shirts. Narrow strips of embroidery accentuated certain areas of clothing: the collar, the cut of the collar, the edge of the sleeves, the hem.

Feature of Northern Vepsian embroidery on clothing was the techniques of ornamentation. In addition to purely geometric motifs (eight-pointed stars, hexagons, bracket-shaped figures, stick-like figures, etc.), there are numerous compositions based on geometrized patterns (a double-headed skate, a horse’s underbelly, stylized anthropomorphic figures). Vepsian embroidery was mainly done with red thread on a white background.

As for the stylistic interpretation of compositions on Vepsian clothing, in contrast to the sewing of other groups of the Karelian population, they are characterized by fine patterns of the main motifs of the ornament. Also, these embroideries differ in the density of the arrangement of motifs in the compositions, between the main patterns the embroiderers left only a small part of the background of the canvas.

Compositions with geometric embroidery on Northern Vepsian towels did not differ in principle from southern and middle Karelians, these were very large rhombuses with triangles at the corners, patterns of complex squares with small figures on the outer edges and corners, figures of eight-pointed stars combined with squares or small trees. Vepsian embroiderers were also known for tambour embroidery, which was characterized by curved, smooth lines combined with rosette forms. In general, the Veps have the same artistic tradition in ornamenting the ends of towels with geometric patterns as the Karelians: geometric figures vaguely resemble plant patterns.

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Northern Veps had preserved the tradition of depicting plant motifs on the ends of towels. Branches of plants grow from the torso of the female figure (this



is determined by the dress in the form of a triangle); branches are also embroidered instead of hands. Another solution: a small tree is on the hem of the female figure, there are the branches of plants in the hands. The mythological essence of such images is beyond doubt. The Veps transferred similar plant motifs even to the later variety of embroidery – on towels-tambour sewing. In the main part of the composition of one of the towels on top of the plant there is a stylized image of a man with arms and legs spread out on the sides. In the ornamentation of the ends of Vepsian towels with geometric patterns, the same artistic traditions can be traced as Karelian: geometric figures vaguely resemble plant motifs.

*Thus*, traditional Sholtozero embroidery is characterized by unique techniques with rich ancient Vepsian ornaments, the genetic origins of which lie in ancient Russian art. Art historian L.A. Dintsess notes that phyto-anthropomorphic motifs were borrowed by Veps from Russian embroidery in view of their close contacts with ancient Russian cities.

### **History and theory of traditional Pomor embroidery**

Embroidery art of Russian Pomors has long been characterized by commercial development. The production of various embroidered products for sale among Pomor women, who were not engaged in agricultural labor, is known since the beginning of the 17th century. Items of Pomeranian needlewomen, embroidered with gold, pearls, and thread, were exchanged at that time through the Solovetsky monastery for overseas essential goods and bread. In them, as I.M. Durov wrote, “the Pomor people had a great need and penury” (*Kosmenko, 1989*). And in later times, the Pomor ship-owners, who went to the Northern countries, bought their crafts from local women for a song and made a solid income from them. In Pomorze, even at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, according to the same researcher, there was no “village and village where girls and women would not sit at the embroidery frame”.

Sumy Posad, where at the beginning of our century all women were engaged in this work, was especially famous for its embroiderers.

Of the various embroideries, as in the more southern regions, decorative sewing with red and white paper purchased on the side was the most widespread in Pomorze. The edges of sheets and towels were decorated. Pomor women were embroidered with a double-sided seam, a line on a grid, which was called by “twining” or “knitting”, and also a tambour (*Figure 30*).

In Museum collections, samples of traditional embroidery with ordinary threads are presented from this area in single copies, so it is quite difficult to judge the local specifics of such products. It is known that the most common embroidery motifs were ‘Kabatsky eagle’ (double-headed eagle), ‘peacock’, ‘lynx’, ‘lion’, ‘star’, ‘tree’, etc.

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, fashionable patterns appeared on Pomor products (published in the magazines of that time “Niva” and “Rodina”), which indicates the gradual “destruction” of the traditions of ancient embroidery. There ‘urban’ embroidery with a smooth surface, which Pomor women began to decorate calico shirts, napkins, pillowcases, handkerchiefs, even towels and sheets, spread. Gold embroidery and pearl business also began to gradually die out by the beginning of our century, although, as I. Durov wrote, “gold embroidery works, judging by the monuments of the gray antiquity of the Pomor experience, were the original works of Pomor needlewomen.” (*Kosmenko, 1989*) Ancient headdresses – women’s kokoshniks, girls’ headbands, masterfully executed by needlewomen in gold and pearls,

were decorated with stylized patterns of a plant nature. Later, the famous Pomor kokoshniks were reborn into ochipoks, the so-called “Pomor circles”, i.e., traditional headdresses of young women, whose purpose is to cover their hair. According to ancient beliefs, the hair had magical powers. This power was given to women by the earth. Upon marriage, a woman became a member of a foreign city, and in order not to bring misfortune to her husband and his relatives, she had to carefully hide her hair. Pomor ochipoks (from the old believers) sewed in the form of a soft cap that completely covered the hair, braided in two braids and laid on the head. Ochipok is simple in cut: an oval crown, perpendicular to which the “band” was sewn, which bifurcated from behind, forming “wings”, to which laces (braid) were sewn, with which it was tightly attached to the head. Ochipok that was worn in everyday life, made of cheap fabrics like canvas, cotton, satin and calico.

Holiday ochipok was made of crimson or blue velvet, silk, brocade, cashmere. It was often decorated with gold embroidery, beads, pearls, bugle beads, and braid on the top (*Figure 31; Figure 32; Figure 33*). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, real gold and silver threads were replaced by gilded and silvered copper. River pearls were gradually replaced by cheaper beads and artificial pearls.

Motifs of gold embroidery on ochipok are fantastic flowers and stylized double-headed eagles, the tree of life, which was embroidered with pearls. The soft depth of the velvet and the matte gloss of the ornament enhanced the decorative effect and revealed the features of the drawing. Especially interesting Pomor ochipoks “Latushki”, decorated with river pearls from the Northern rivers of Karelia. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, gold was sewed on the map (the basis of birch bark), later on cardboard, sheathing first with woolen threads, and then with gold, silver, pearls. The ochipok was always covered with a handkerchief, silk or cashmere during the holidays, canvas, calico, sateen weekdays. It was considered very indecent to go out in one’s uniform without a scarf, or to be at home without it in front of strangers, and sometimes even at home. The methods of tying the scarf were different and depended on local tradition. One of the ways is this: the handkerchief was folded diagonally or twice around the perimeter, put on the head in such a way that part of the ochelie was visible. They pinned it or tied it under the chin. At the beginning of our century, the traditional handicrafts of Pomorze were lost.

*Thus*, decorative embroidery with a double-sided seam with red and white threads (paper) on canvas was the most widespread in Pomorze. The edges of sheets and towels were decorated. Pomor women embroidered with a double-sided seam, a line on the grid, which was called by “twining” or “knitting”, a tambour. Common subjects were the double-headed eagle, the “peacock” with a magnificent tail, “lynx”, “lion”, “star”, and “tree”. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a gradual ‘destruction’ of the traditions of ancient embroidery, gold embroidery and pearl began to gradually die out, although it was the original work of Pomor needlewomen.

### **History and theory of traditional Kargopol embroidery**

One of the most protected cultural centers of the North is Kargopol. Researchers have repeatedly noted the variety of embroidery preserved in folk life, their connection with ancient Russian traditions. Among the ceremonial items that have preserved ancient motifs longer, there was most of the towels, whose ceremonial role in folk life was significant. They were hung on sacred trees, decorated with red corner in the hut, icons, embroidered dozens of towels for the

wedding, took a baby on a towel and lowered the coffin into the grave (*Boguslanskaya, 2009*). Wedding towels often featured peacock birds with lush tails on one and the other sides of the bush, which “symbolised love and the wish of good and happiness to the young” (*Boguslanskaya, 2009*). Most of the motifs in Kargopol folk embroidery are pictorial. These are figures of people, animals, birds, and plants. “In almost every district, embroidery had a local peculiarity in patterns, features of technique, colour, and the general nature of sewing.” (*Boguslanskaya, 2009*)

In Kargopol county of Olonets province needlewomen embroidered the image of the leopard when “the great beast raised a paw, snarling mouth filled with a whole end of the towel, where masters of folk embroidery were interested in the opportunity to decorate the surface of small geometric motifs embroidered with bright wool threads” (*Boguslanskaya, 2009*). The archaic embroidery plot of Kargopol goes back to the culture of Veliky Novgorod and has related roots with the local “animal style”. Kargopol needlewomen owned almost all known seams. Counting ‘blind’ seams are widely used: painting, set, cross, counting surface. The most ancient embroidery was bilateral seam-painting (*dosulny*). Later, they began to embroider a “set”, in which squares, rectangles, and triangles form ornamental chains. Stitch ones, i.e., “white on the pulled out”, white stitch and colour *perevit*, where embroidery is performed on a fabric with pre-threaded threads, were less common. Embroidery of a free contour – stalk and loop *tambour* seams – began to be used much later. Kargopol embroidery, unique in its beauty, appeared in the 16th and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the brightness of the colour of embroidery increased, they were completely performed with coloured wool. In the ornament of the Kargopol area reflected the actual events and contemporary issues: double-headed eagles, medieval leopards, and birds of the Syrians coexisted with embroidery, on which ladies and gentlemen are in suits (*Figure 34; Figure 35; Figure 36; Figure 37; Figure 38*).

The origin of the gold embroidery industry in Kargopol is attributed to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the census of property of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, women’s outfits *kargopollag*, *zolytym* decorated with embroidery, mention not once. So, in one of them, in March 1755, among other things, it is listed and “female *kuney* three-ear-hat, with an outfit, with beaver down, gold top” worth 5 rubles and “gold *naboroshnik*” in 1 ruble (*Maslova, 1978*).

The first goldsmiths were from the families of the clergy, from them this amazing craft went to the villages and counties. “The trade was widely known in Russia, merchants came to buy girls’ headbands decorated with gold and pearls, women’s *kokoshniks* and *magpies*, and then sold them at Novgorod fairs.” (*Maslova, 1978*)

In the century before last, wealthy Kargopol women sported gold-embroidered sundresses, belted low belts, and covered their heads with silk “veils” that shimmered with golden flowers. At the same time, “Basque” is also sewn on white fabric – a beautiful pattern of “golden platts” (*Figure 39; Figure 40*). In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were in fashion, and the most remarkable examples have been preserved since then. They were mainly embroidered by village artisans who settled in six *volosts* located along the Arkhangelsk highway, on the road to Oshevsk and in the vicinity of this settlement. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, craftswomen worked exclusively on orders that came to them at the end of winter or in the spring. They worked on holidays and rainy days when it was impossible to go out in the field. The fabric was tucked into square corners, the motifs of the drawing were transferred to yellow paper (most often from an old handkerchief), these templates were laid out on top of the fabric and

embroidered. Everything necessary for such work was bought in Kargopol. The cheaper shawls had a small embroidered corner, while the rich ones had the entire corner densely sewn up as if with a “forged seam” stamped on metal. The decorations of the “golden platts” are similar to each other: on some there is a large “sun”, around which sparkling “sparks” and “leaves” are scattered. On others, the “sun” is drawn along the wondrous garden of Eden by horses in a team. Around curl flexible shoots “occur”, bloom with fabulous flowers. On the third, an unprecedented tree, spreading its branches to “all the free world”, grows from the “sun”. Golden Kargopol embroidery was brought to perfection, it always struck with its beauty and solemnity.

Some motifs of the pattern were made ‘in prikrep’’, others – with high relief. Some of the “golden boards” were embroidered with the year of creation, the names of the owners, and gift inscriptions: “This is the handkerchief of the maiden Marya Andreyevna to wear happily, 1863, June 21”, or: “This handkerchief I wish to wear all diligently and favorably in love and in joy, 1879” (*Nosan et al., 2011*).

One of the reasons for the decline of the gold embroidery industry at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the impoverishment of the peasants. people began to buy cheaper, silk handkerchiefs instead of “gold”. By 1902, this fishery had disappeared almost without a trace, with great difficulty, only one gold mine was found in Volosovskaya volost. Pearl sewing was living in the region for a long time. Kokoshnik’s craftswomen created women’s headdresses, neck ornaments – “naboroshniks”, “gribatkas”, as if touched by frosty frost, and embroidered towels with pearls – “nabozhniks” (*Figure 41; Figure 42*). Not every Kargopol woman could have a “soroka”, i.e., kokoshnik with pearls patterned planted and smooth on the forehead with a grid – a “podnitsa”. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were kokoshniks at the price of a thousand or more rubles, while a good horse cost only ten.

Festive hats of the women of the Russian North at the turn of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries from the Kargopol district, Olonets province, despite a single form, different execution style. In the central counties of the Kargopol area, in addition to mother-of-pearl dice, freshwater pearls and white beads was used, embroidery was made golden filament (*Figure 43; Figure 44; Figure 45*).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the kokoshnik was a necessary part of the costume of a Kargopol woman, who passed it on to the wife of the eldest son, or if there were only one daughter, then to the eldest when she married. The poor woman had to borrow a “pearl” kokoshnik from their neighbors for a certain fee during the celebration.

The name of “kokoshnik” comes from the old Russian word “kokosh”, i.e., a hen. And the kokoshnik itself looks like a fluffed-up chicken with lowered wings. All the festive headdresses of Kargopol bear symbols of the sky. The top of the kokoshnik is embroidered with gold stars, and on the forehead, there is a “sun”, on the sides in the form of a Trident, there are signs of heavenly fire or six-ray “thunder signs”. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, they began to embroider the initial letters of the names of the headdress owners in their places. “KA” on the right and “AS” on the left meant: Alexandra Savina’s kokoshnik. The forehead and ears were covered with small, matte shimmering pearls, among which large grains were whimsically scattered. There were kokoshniks and “beads”, i.e., beaded ones with large mother-of-pearl dies, and covered with one mother-of-pearl, sparkling and iridescent polychrome of delicate tones. With such headdresses on their heads, women behaved decorously, walked smoothly and

majestically. By the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, pearl soot was already in its last days (*Nosan et al., 2011*).

Folk arts and crafts of the Russian North are an integral part of Russian culture and have deep historical roots. Some types of folk art continue their historical life, others were born in our days claiming manual labor as a bright phenomenon of folk life. Not only original utilitarianism attracts in products of folk arts and crafts, but also an active impact on the aesthetic education of a person does this, too. This type of art is most understandable to the broad masses of the population and is particularly popular.

*Thus*, Kargopol county of Olonets province is the richest region of Russian folk traditional embroidery. *The State Russian Museum of Saint Petersburg* has a great collection of masterpieces of gold embroidery art, which has preserved the best traditions of craftsmanship for our time.

### Conclusion

*Thus*, with the advent of new materials, the art of embroidery itself develops and improves, new techniques appear and the possibilities of performing various drawings and ornamental motifs that are inextricably linked with national culture and local traditions expand.

In the era of globalization of social and cultural processes, it is especially important to preserve and develop historical, regional, artistic and technological traditions that have historically developed and are passed down from generation to generation to ethnographic groups of the Russian people from Zaonezhye, Pudozhye, Vepsa, Pomor, and craftswomen of Kargopol living in Karelia. Mastering the art of embroidery was not only an aesthetic expression, passed down from generation to generation, it was a means of labor education, a school of skill that determined the prestige of the female population in the rural community. Folk fantasy has created an infinite number of options for story embroidery, characterised by extraordinary beauty and poetry. Life experiences gave rise to new solutions that were organically intertwined with the usual stories and scenes for this area.

Traditional embroidery of all the peoples of Karelia is a complex phenomenon, which includes various traditional ornamental embroidery techniques that reflect both ancient ideas and images, and later high artistic values that were developed by centuries of collective creativity and turned traditional embroidery of Karelia into a monument of historical and cultural value.



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## Appendix

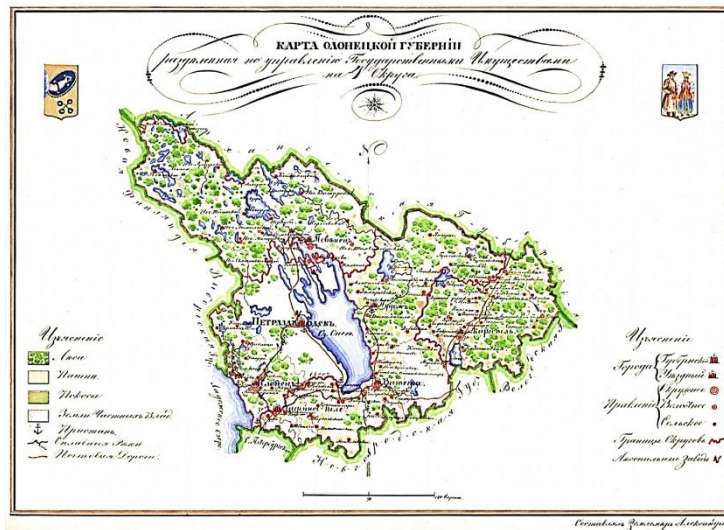


Figure 1. The map of Olonets Province



Figure 2. Valance. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Vershinino. Kenozero parish



Figure 3. Fragment of the valance.  
Embroidery on woven mesh 'poemetto'.  
Olonets



Figure 4. Fragment of the valance.  
Embroidery on woven mesh  
'poemetto'. Olonets





Figure 5. Fragment of the valance. Embroidery on woven mesh 'poemetto'. Olonets



Figure 6. Fragment of the valance. Embroidery on woven mesh "poemetto". Olonets. Embroidery on woven mesh "poemetto"

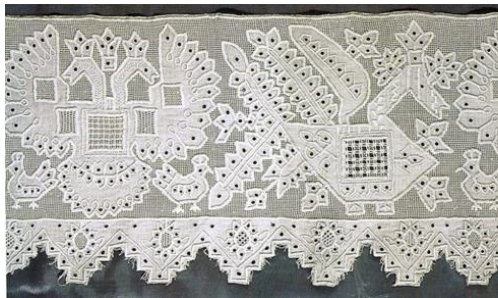


Figure 7. The valance. 1900-1920. Embroidery: "porch in fillet", "set", white perevit. Linen canvas, white cotton thread. Medvezhiegorsk region



Figure 8. Fragment of a towel with the image of a bird Sirin. Embroidery in the technique of "tambour on the grid", set, smooth surface. The 18<sup>th</sup> century. Olonets province



Figure 9. Kokoshnik. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gold thread, beads, pearls, glass beads. Olonets province



Figure 10. The povoinik. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gold thread, velvet, cotton fabric, cardboard, gold sewing. Olonets province. Kizhi Museum-reserve

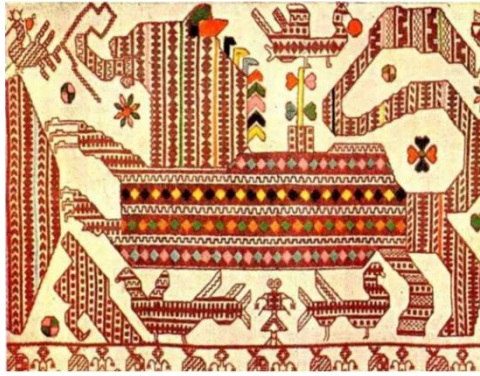


Figure 11. Fragment of a valance, embroidered with coloured threads. Motif of the leopard. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Olonets province

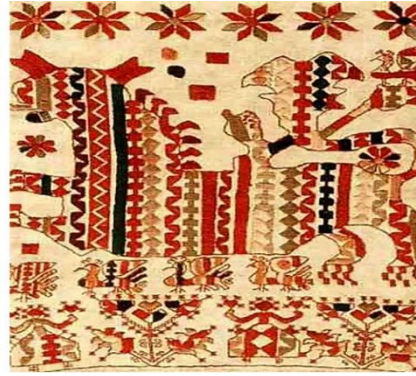


Figure 12. Fragment of a valance, embroidered with coloured threads. Motif of the leopard. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Olonets province



Figure 13. Fragment of the valance. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Homespun linen fabric, cotton thread, home weaving, hand embroidery: half-cross, painting. Karelia



Figure 14. Fragment of the valance. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Homespun linen fabric, cotton thread, home weaving, hand embroidery: half-cross, painting. Karelia





Figure 15. Towel. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Homespun linen fabric, cotton thread, home weaving, hand embroidery (flooring by pulling). 240\*34 cm. Karelia



Figure 16. An old towel with a rare embroidery story and a touching inscription. "I will never forget you; you are dearer to me than anyone else." The late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Homespun linen. Embroidery 'flooring on a grid', white cotton thread. Zaonezhye



Figure 17. End of the towel. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Linen canvas, white cotton thread. Embroidery "tambour for fillets", "previt", the accounting surface, hemstitch. Author: D.A. Kalinina. Vegoruksa. Medvezhiegorsk Region. Zaonezhye (Olonets)



Figure 18. End of the towel. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Linen canvas. White cotton thread. Embroidery "tambour for fillets", "previt", the accounting surface, hemstitch. Author: W.I. Ananyina. Virasoro. Medvezhiegorsk Region. Zaonezhye (Olonets)





Figure 19. Towel. Lokustrov. Pudozhsky District



Figure 20. End of the towel. The 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rodnikovskaya. Konevskaya parish. Olonets Province



Figure 21. Fragment of a towel. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Olonets province. Kargopolsky County



Figure 22. Towel. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century Linen canvas. Calico. Cotton coloured threads. Tambour embroidery. Yershovo. Kolodozero region. Pudozh District



Figure 23. Girls' holiday headdress. The 19<sup>th</sup> century. Crown-gold thread, beads, glass beads, cardboard; net-podniz-beads, horse hair, ribbon. Pudozh District



Figure 24a. Women's holiday shawl. The 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gold thread, cotton-paper fabric. Embroidery: gold embroidery. Pudozh Region



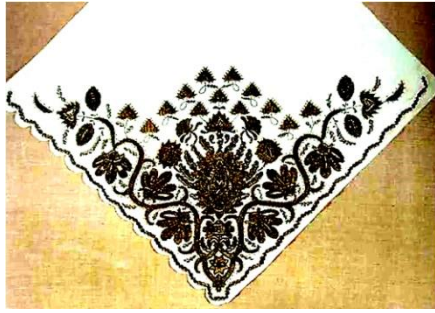


Figure 24b. Women's holiday shawl. The 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gold thread, cotton-paper fabric. Embroidery: gold embroidery. Pudozh Region



Figure 25. End of the towel. The early 13<sup>th</sup> century. A line on the grid. Kuganavolok, Pudozh Region. Embroidery: colour to previt. Pudozh Region, Olonets Province



Figure 26. Stanuchka. 1930 linen Canvas, cotton thread and fabric. Embroidery, coloured to previt. Kuganavolok. Pudozh District



Figure 27. The edge of the towel. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sheltozero. Linen fabric, colour and white "perovit", crochet 53\*31



Figure 28. Towel. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Sheltozero district. Linen fabric, embroidery "set", "tambour", "smooth surface"



Figure 29. Towel. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Petrovsky district. Linen fabric, embroidery "painting", "surface", "set"



Figure 30. Towel. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Canvas, cotton thread, embroidery stitch on the grid, crochet. 300\*46 cm. From Serezhnoe village. Kem County. Arkhangelsk Province



Figure 31. Pomorze. Vintage povoinik from Soroka (Belomorsk). The 18<sup>th</sup> century. A piece of gold embroidery from the Ethnographic Department of the Museum



Figure 32. Pomorze. The product is gold embroidery of the ethnographic Department of the Museum (Pomor ochipok, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Virma). Belomorsk



Figure 33. Pomorze. The product is gold embroidery of the Ethnographic Department of the Museum (Pomor ochipok, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century)

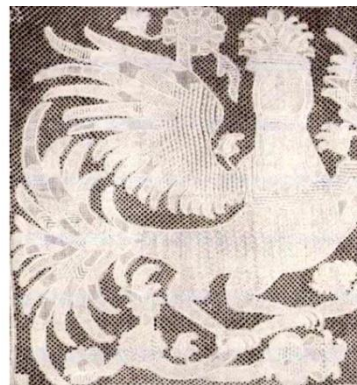


Figure 34. End of the towel (Sirin bird). The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Canvas, paper threads. Embroidery: set, smooth surface, painting. Olonets province, Kargopol district, Homanovska volost, Menshakovskaya





Figure 35. The camp of a festive women's shirt. Fragment. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Canvas, cotton and silk threads. Double-sided seam, set, smooth surface. 78\*190 cm



Figure 36. Festive women's shirt. Fragment. Second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Canvas, wool and cotton threads. Double-sided seam, set. Pogost



Figure 37. Outerlink wedding. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century Fragment. Canvas, wool and cotton threads. Double-sided seam, set. 230\*35 cm. Pogost



Figure 38. Dewlap. Fragment. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Canvas, wool fabric, cotton threads, wool threads. Double-sided seam, set, crochet. 53\*151 cm. Kalitinskaya





Figure 39. Golden board. Fragment. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mitcal, beat, gold and cotton threads. Sewing in the house, on the map and the tambour. Ivkino



Figure 40. Golden board. Fragment. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mitcal, beat, gold, and cotton threads. Sewing in the house, on the map and the tambour. 107x100



Figure 41. Soroka. Fragment. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Brocade, cotton fabric, artificial pearls, gold and silver threads. Gold embroidery, fathoms. Krivtsy



Figure 42. Dressing. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Braid, cotton fabric, mother-of-pearl, beads, gold threads. Gold embroidery and knitting. Sagene (Sobolevo)



Figure 43. Festive headdress of women of the Russian North. Turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Beads, fabric. Embroidery, sewing. 12\*18.5 cm. Kargopolsky County, Olonets Province (Arkhangelsk Region)



Figure 44. The headdress of the pearl. The 19<sup>th</sup> century. River and artificial pearls, mother-of-pearl, beads, gold threads. Gold embroidery and knitting. Sobolevo



Figure 45. The woman's headdress: kokoshnik. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Olonets Province