

## SLOVAK SAMPLERS IN A CENTRAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT

OLGA, DANGLOVÁ, BRATISLAVA

In 1980-1981 the Hatvan Lajos Museum initiated an exhibition of samplers under the title "Magyarországi szöveges falvédők a 19.-20. században" (Magyar Samplers in 19th-20th centuries). The exhibits were selected from a collection of about 1000 samplers gathered by the Museum in the 1970's. From Hatvan the exhibition travelled to other Hungarian cities: Budapest, Eger, Kecskemét, and evoked a great response with a host of contradictory opinions - some viewers found it positive, inventive, while some others considered its aesthetic level low and accused the organizers of the exhibition of promoting kitsch.<sup>1</sup>

This contradiction of opinions can be explained by the fact that this was the first exhibition of its kind. The exhibition departed from the traditional esoteric point of view, prevalent in the field of fine arts: judged by their form and style, the exhibits represented a lower aesthetic standard, they could hardly be considered fine art objects, and therefore they were not suitable to be the subject of fine arts research.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the samplers did not fit into the framework of usual ethnographic collections, designed to document traditional peasant culture<sup>3</sup>, and as artifacts of urban, petty bourgeois origins, were of no interest to ethnographers. No consideration was accorded to the fact that these objects formed a prominent part of many households not only in cities and small towns, but also in villages. In short, samplers were not considered authentic folklore objects.

It was high time to transcend such limited criteria. The exhibition in question accomplished this. It was necessary to move forward because there was a pressing need to turn attention to popular mass

culture in the 19th-20th centuries and its swiftly developing, changeable elements; and to recognize how the new artifacts of mass culture were absorbed into the everyday life of broad folk strata of the industrial era.

Which particular branch of science - ethnology, anthropology of art, aesthetic anthropology or sociology of popular taste - ought to initiate research on this new area of popular and mass culture is of little consequence.<sup>4</sup> The basic thing is that our attention should be turned to the material world created or accepted by a given community or group regardless to its aesthetic value, which, after all, varies according to the period or social strata. Ultimately, from the standpoint of a social culture-historical approach an object's aesthetic value is never generally accepted. We should concentrate on the explanation of standardized manifestations of aesthetic taste, emotional images, and mental stereotypes in their local, communal expressions and thus to comprehend the world views and desires of man living in a given historical time and social place. This is, of course, easier to presume than to carry out in reality.

But let us go back to the popular production of samplers. The Hungarian exhibition was not the first in Central Europe. It was preceded in 1979 by an exhibition in Frankfurt am Main under the title "Gestickte Sprüche für Haus und Küche" which introduced various embroidered objects: samplers, bed covers, curtains, towels, table cloths, napkins, decorated with inscriptions, pictures decorative motifs which used to be popular in urban or village households in German communities between 1870-1930.<sup>5</sup> The exhibits were acquired from private collections, antique shops or flea markets in Frankfurt, Munich, Vienna and Berlin. The assembled collection of 735 objects, with a published index of sampler inscriptions, provided a representative survey of the features of popular production of this kind in Germany. In many aspects, the Frankfurt exhibition helped Hungarian researchers to find parallels between the Hungarian and German material.

In 1963 A. Lewandowski published a study on Polish samplers in *Polska Sztuka Ludowa* (Polish Folk Art). The author showed tendencies of textual and pictorial thematic selection for samplers. He presented the results of a public survey on the popularity of samplers, the reason behind this and the motivation for their use. The value of the study lies in the description of the living relationship between the object and the user. For the purposes of comparative research, howe-

ver, the study's value is somewhat limited, since it presents only eighteen pictures and there is no index of samplers inscriptions.<sup>6</sup>

Hungarian, German and Polish studies and publications prompted the question of the role samplers played in Slovakia. They were known there under the name "kucharka" (cook). From our own research, from the fragmentary data of informants we gathered that they used to be a typical part of small town, city or village household decoration in the interwar and postwar periods. They can be found even today in the homes of people from the older generation. We also know that many girls and women loved to make them, they dedicated their free time in order to make their homes nicer and more decorative. Therefore we did not expect any problems in conducting the research. In 1985 before the folk festivals in Východná and Myjava, we asked the leaders of the participating ensembles to bring samplers to the festivals for photographic documentation. In this way pictures of more than 150 pieces were acquired. From the collections of the Slovak National Museums in Martin and Bratislava, the Western Slovak Museum in Trnava and Stará Ľubovňa Museum, we assembled data on another 253 objects - a far from negligible number. In comparison to the Hungarian and German collections, however, it was not large enough to provide a reliable sample for a complete picture of the art of Slovak samplers. Nevertheless, it served as a sufficient source for investigating possible correlations. This collection was augmented by material from the territory of Moravia - 83 pieces from the deposits of the Moravian Museum in Brno and the Open Air Museum in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm. The latter has in its possession an interesting and perhaps the most extensive collection of samplers in Czechoslovakia. The Ethnographic Museum in Prague has in its possession only a few pieces. But according to certain sources, there are some private collections of samplers in the city.<sup>7</sup>

The majority of the collection gathered from Slovakia and Moravia goes back to the interwar period, but some objects, especially those from villages, are much more recent, some from the second half of the 20th century. At the first glance the collection represents a complex of eclectic texts and pictorial themes based on models of different styles, whose iconography is not easily surveyed: it ranges from Renaissance, Baroque and Art-nouveau borrowings to imitations of prints, magazine illustrations, postcards; the inscriptions range from the first lines of opera arias to fragments of classical poetry, prayers, folk songs, pop song hits, memory book rhymes, proverbs and maxims. It is rather difficult to make heads or tails here, to find some internal

order for the motifs. Nevertheless, a strong factor of convention, stereotype, standardization of popular taste and aesthetic principles can be perceived. This may be seen in emotionally flavoured words and expressive pictures denoting sentimentality, idyll, together with pleasing tendencies. Some of them also try to set bounds of ethical standards - especially in samplers proclaiming certain ethical norms of behaviour.

Thus far these general characteristics can be found in Slovak, Czech, German, Hungarian or Polish samplers. But, of course, there are differences in their ethical and aesthetical values, conventions and stereotypes. The samplers are the product of cultural, ethnic and religious differences, shaped by the faster or slower acceptance of the influences of modern civilization. We shall try to indicate these particularities further on. Our disadvantage, however, is that of an archaeologist who has a collection of artifacts but lacks any information regarding the circumstances of the finds. In our case, we have some information as to localities and dates, but little or no indication about the domestic interior where the samplers hung, about their authors, makers, or their connection to the owner.

First a few words about the history of samplers. In cultural history there have certainly been examples of picture-text combination on decorative textiles of utility value. Medieval samplers and covers (where the inscription explained the picture or vice versa, since at that time people could not read) are a good example of this combination. Baroque sacral textiles, especially antependia, marked a further phase of development. The combination can also be found on the embroidery of the Biedermayer period.<sup>8</sup> Neither were picture-text combinations unknown in folk art where decorative and identifying inscriptions (including the date and maker's or owner's initials) were often part of an ornamental composition. As early as the 18th century one can find examples of this on carvings or textiles. Among the finest examples are "kütnice" (corner sheets).<sup>9</sup>

The first impetus for introduction of samplers goes back to the second half of the 19th century when a new interest on a part of noble and bourgeois circles in needlework enhanced the appeal of embroidery by raising it to the level of an art form.<sup>10</sup> The confirmation of this tendency was manifested in the following exhibitions: the 1873 World Exhibition in Vienna, the 1895 Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague, the 1896 Millennial Celebration in Budapest. In 1887 there was the Exhibition of Embroidery in the Slovak town of Turčiansky Sv. Martin which

generated a lot of publicity and evoked a great response. The most important event for the further development of samplers, however, was the Munich Exhibition of Art and Industry of 1876 where among textile exhibits featuring the old German style one could find embroidered covers, towels with inscriptions combined with figural motifs, especially those of angels or birds in Neo-Renaissance style, or combinations of lines of text with stripes of geometric ornaments.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, the merging of image and text was also characteristic for Art-Nouveau designs which incorporated letters into the picture as a natural compositional element. Flowing letters were intertwined with sinuous floral patterns or figural motifs.

At the turn of the century, samplers were popularized in women's fashion magazines, needlework manuals, and home education classes in schools.<sup>12</sup>

But it was the store that played the leading role in promoting samplers and spreading their patterns. At the end of the 19th century, a special profession of sampler designers became established in Germany. Their task was to design and reproduce patterns for embroidered samplers or tapestries. They worked right in the stores where patterns were sold or in small workshops which distributed patterns to city store network. In 1897 there were as many as 67 stores of this kind in Berlin.<sup>13</sup> From Germany the patterns spread to other European countries: England, the Netherlands, Sweden, to neighbouring Poland and Austro-Hungary, reaching as far as the Ukraine.<sup>14</sup>

At the turn of the century, Hungarian ladies shopped for embroidery patterns with German inscriptions at Sándor D. Bérczi's store in Budapest<sup>15</sup> while ladies from Pressburg (today's Bratislava) purchased sampler patterns in Vienna or possibly in their own city. The network of stores selling sampler patterns in Slovakia, however, needs to be investigated in archival sources.

In bourgeois households embroidery was an object the lady of the house was proud of. Embroidered textiles were placed in the drawing room, living room, bedroom and children's room. The most varied and numerous could be found in German households, where, for instance, samplers were designed exclusively for certain rooms or certain holidays like Christmas or Easter.<sup>16</sup> Later the fashion for samplers also reached houses in smaller towns. In Hungary, Slovakia as well as some other Central European countries samplers had become a household fixture by the end of the 19th century going hand-in-hand with changes in kitchen decor. At this time larger windows were installed to make the

kitchen brighter, walls were painted in lighter colours, white and washable furniture was introduced. Greater attention was paid to kitchen aesthetics and hygiene. Cleanliness and order was also emphasized by starched and ironed textile decorations on the furniture and near the stove.<sup>17</sup> According to contemporary opinion, the kitchen was the place to demonstrate that the lady of the house fulfilled her duties, that she was spotlessly tidy. Judging from the normative sayings on samplers, the household and the kitchen were considered the criterion of the lady of the house, her mirror, the sum total of her life work.

The fashion of samplers reached the village milieu somewhat later. Gradually they became more and more popular there, too. Samplers helped to spread the more desirable urban life styles. They were an index of the urbanization of village culture occurring at varying speed in different cultural and ethnic environments.<sup>18</sup> While samplers in Germany had reached the artisan, proletarian and peasant strata (especially those in the vicinity of cities) by the end of the 19th century, they reached Poland only at the beginning of the 20th century<sup>19</sup>, Hungary after World War I<sup>20</sup>, and Slovakia even later.

Generally speaking, during the interwar period, folk culture remained alive in the villages not only in Slovakia, but also in Moravia, Hungary and Poland, in each case possessing its own particular style, features and norms. The village milieu was closed to almost any influence from the outside. As one example, I would like to mention here that in some parts of Slovakia (esp. in the North-West) in poorer houses, the so called "black kitchen" was still in existence in the 1920s and 1930s. In the room with an open chimney where smoke spread unhindered - blackening the walls and ceiling - throughout the confined space where people cooked, ate, and slept, there certainly was no place for samplers with petit bourgeois ideals and maxims like: "Má největší radost je má tichá domácnost" (A quiet home is my greatest joy), or "Přijde-li mužiček před desátou domů, dostane večeru a hubičku k tomu" (If my hubby comes home before ten, he'll get his supper with a kiss). Village people did not yet feel an urgent need to succumb to influences of urban culture and bourgeois mentality promoted by its commodities.

In Germany, however, the bourgeois sentimental and moralizing tradition soon took root in the lower social strata of small town peasant and worker families. This tradition is well depicted for example in the German Illustrated Household Lexicon published in 1884.<sup>21</sup> The contents of the maxims are marked by the strict morality and sentiment-

tal religiosity of Protestant pietism that influenced every day life, especially family life. According to E. Hankiss, pietism did not develop in those areas of Greater Hungary where the Catholic Latin tradition of ceremonies and holidays was still alive or where Calvinist puritanism prevailed. Both these traditions were removed from the ideals of a cosy home, family ties, and domestic life. Consequently, the Hungarian and Slovak samplers contained less statements praising the virtue of a cosy home, domesticity, happy family life. They did not display as much literary sophistication as the German samplers - which used quotations from Schiller, Goethe, and arias from the opera "Lohengrin".<sup>22</sup> In this respect the German samplers can be compared to Czech ones which also favoured ornamental and sentimental statements using quotations from the poet Karel Hynek Mácha or arias from "The Bartered Bride". Perhaps the geographical closeness of both countries played some role here. Moreover, pietism had its roots in Bohemia - and the Moravian Brethren followed this tradition. But all of this is just conjecture. Only a relatively small sample of Czech material gathered from the territory of Moravia was investigated in our study.

Picture-text comparisons attest to the fact that Germany was the centre from which samplers spread. In Slovakia, Bohemia, Moravia, Poland and Hungary many derivatives of German prototypes can be found. A good example of this is the picture of a jug and basin with the text "Eine Hand Wascht die andere" (One hand washes the other), and a slightly different version of the same image with an identical text in Hungarian: "Kéz kezét mos"<sup>23</sup>, while another one with a Slovak text reads: "Čistota pol života" (Cleanliness is godliness). Other samplers depicted angels holding blessings for the home:

"Wo Glaube da Liebe." (Where there is faith, there is love).

"Wo Liebe da Friede." (Where there is love, there is peace).

"Wo Friede da Segen." (Where there is peace, there is grace).

"Wo Segen da Gott." (Where there is grace, there is God).

"Wo Gott da ist keine Not." (Where there is God, there is no want).<sup>24</sup>

A copy of this text with a nearly identical picture was found in the Spiš (Zips) region in the village of Lomnička which was originally German.<sup>25</sup> The same sampler type was quite frequent in Hungary.<sup>26</sup>

The spread of samplers from the Germany did not reach Slovak villages directly, but through Austria, Bohemia, Moravia or Hungary in a modified form. Some Hungarian and Czech conventions of pictorial and textual motifs were also assimilated. Many Czech inscriptions or their

translations can be found on Slovak samplers on which fragments from arias from Smetana's "The Bartered Bride" can be identified, along with figures dressed in costumes from the Haná river region in Morava or the Domažlice area of South-West Bohemia. Peddlers and hawkers at fairs also contributed to the spread of samplers. There is still a store in the Moravian town of Strážnice whose ninety-year-old owner used to sell sampler patterns in Slovakia before the First World War and after the Second. This is an argument that the urbanization of Slovak village culture in the interwar period came from Moravia and Bohemia. Undoubtedly, the process of urbanization was also influenced by the large number of Czech intelligentsia working in Slovakia during that period.

Another obvious influence on Slovak samplers came from Hungarian and Austrian models. We found several samplers with a Hungarian text in Slovak villages located in a Hungarian neighbourhood - e.g. in the Hont region. They were mostly colour prints imported from Hungary in the 1950s. Their function was to serve as a wall picture or to protect the wall rather than to provide a moralizing motto, therefore the text in the foreign language did not matter.

The burgher patterns adapted by the urbanized villagers frequently acquired a homely character. They were also a reflection of a particular tendency in the interwar period which was manifested in a rich selection of figures in folk costumes, quasi-folk ornaments, and folk song texts.

In some places the development led to a specific semifolk way of expression, especially if conventional sampler themes merged with traditional local designs and colours. This symbiosis of the two originally different modes of creativity can be seen, for instance, on samplers from the village of Liptovská Teplica produced in the second half of the 20th century.

What is the difference of content between Slovak, Moravian, and Hungarian samplers? What kind of stereotypes, norms of behaviour and preconceptions can be deduced from their texts? What was their function in villages and small towns during the interwar period? At what time was the occurrence of samplers highest?

The samplers were placed almost exclusively in the kitchen. They hung on the wall over the stove, table and water bucket stand. Their practical function was to protect the wall and at the same time to serve as a decoration. They were perceived more as a wall picture, a part of the decorative furnishings of the interior, than an artifact

with statements emphasizing codified life norms. In Slovakia the visual function of samplers outbalanced the verbal one. This is attested to by the relatively high frequency of samplers without any inscriptions (almost one fifth of the material) and also by the occurrence of samplers with Hungarian texts in Slovak localities (e.g. the Hont region). Nevertheless, sampler inscriptions helped to form certain life ideals and valid norms, even if not on the same scale as the German samplers.

Above all, sampler pictures and texts addressed a woman's emotional world and imagination. About a quarter of them referred to the household, and especially to the kitchen and its maintenance. As distinct from the German samplers, the texts of Slovak, as well as Hungarian and Moravian samplers did not prescribe what had to be done in a perfect household. They did not carry advice, e.g., not to splash around the sink when washing dishes, or some other directive for heating, light and household maintenance. They usually just provided a general statement comparable to such German inscriptions as: "Das Schönste auf dem Erdenrund ist trautes Heim auf festem Grund" (The most beautiful thing in the world is a cosy home on solid ground). Its counterpart in Slovak read: "Útulný domov je jediné šťastie" (A cosy home is the only happiness) which underlined in a rather general way the wife's preoccupation with the household. Of all the characteristics of a proper household, or a proper housekeeper, it was cleanliness that was most frequently emphasized. While Slovak text were limited to such laconic proverbs as: "Čistota pol života", or "Čistota pol zdravia" (Cleanliness is godliness), German, Hungarian and Czech texts referred to cleanliness specifically in connection with the kitchen and cooking: "Příprav v kuchyni vše čisté/ bude jídlo chutnati jisté" (Prepare everything cleanly for a tasty meal). "Tiszta konyha jó ebéd/ az hozza a vig kedélyt" (A clean kitchen and a good dinner brings a good mood). The images accompanying the texts also evoked the kitchen and meals. They usually depicted a cook or a kitchen helper carrying a dish, or a cook beside the stove together with a chimney sweep - the symbol of cleanliness.

Other good qualities of the cook proclaimed on the samplers were her ability to cook and bake. The most numerous variants of this theme carried the text: "Kde slovenská kuchárka dobre vari/ tam sa dobre da-ri" (Where a Slovak housewife cooks well, there is success). Samplers with the same text, except for the ethnic identity, were also common in Moravia: "Kde česká hospodyňka vaří/ tam sa jistě dobře daří".

(Where a Czech housewife cooks/ there is certain success). This way patriotism was proclaimed unobtrusively in the kitchen. Connubial bliss was also depicted by the image of serving a meal. There were maxims emphasizing that the health of the whole family, the husband's success at work or his love depend on his wife's ability to cook well. A rather trivial rhyme like "Variečka je moja zbraň/ pekných chlapcov rada mám" (The wooden spoon is my weapon/ to win the hearts of handsome lads) is one illustration of this.

The most recognized female qualities were assiduousness and punctuality. According to the petty bourgeois norms, the housekeeper was supposed to be as hardworking as a bee, get up early in the morning and have the dinner on the table at 12 o'clock sharp as exemplified on the sampler text: "Kucharinka poriadna/ o dvanástej obed má" (A proper cook has the dinner ready at 12 o'clock). A picture of a clock with its hands pointing to noon reinforced the maxim.

Almost one quarter of the samplers from Slovakia depict the wife in "her most proper realm" - the kitchen: cooking, baking or serving meals. She is depicted in an idealized way: elegantly dressed in bourgeois fin-de-siecle or later urban fashion. Only rarely does she appear in other tasks such as cleaning, washing, taking care of her children, house or tending the garden. The large number of samplers emphasizing the cult of domestic home life, a peaceful household, and a well organized kitchen imply that these are the keys to happiness, particularly family happiness: "Útulný domov jediné šťastie" (A cosy home is the only happiness), or "Suche das Glück nicht weit/ es liegt in der Hauslichkeit" (You don't have to look far for good luck/ it lies in domesticity). Some of the German samplers deliberately propagated the good management of the family life. Sometimes they made recourse to highly specific imperatives: "Ich bitte um Ruhe; Halts' Mündchen/ Papa schläft ein Viertelstündchen" (Give me peace; Shut your mouth/ Papa is taking his forty winks). Similar texts could not be found in Slovak, Moravian, Hungarian or Polish materials. In village homes they would be quite out of the question. From this fact, E. Han-kiss comes to the conclusion that the norms of bourgeois daily life and family centredness were not so deeply rooted in Hungary as in Germany where civilization and urbanization were more advanced. Therefore the pictorial and verbal expression of this theme on Hungarian samplers were also less explicit, less vivid.<sup>27</sup> The same observation can also be extended to Slovak and Moravian materials.

One of the social functions of the sampler was to bolster the image of the family and reify the importance of keeping the family hearth warm. While this was consistently represented in German samplers, it appeared less often on Hungarian samplers and their Slovak derivatives, particularly if the recent colour print patterns of the 1950s are taken into consideration. The most frequent motif represented on these was that of a prayer for the protection of the family with the Slovak text: "Na kolenách sa modlím k Pánu Bohu/ aby mi zachránil moju milú rodinu" (On my knees I pray to God/ to protect my dear family), or Hungarian text: "Az én Jó Istenem könyörögve kérem/ Hogy a kedves családomat/ Minden rossztól őrizze még nekem" (I implore the good Lord/ to protect my family/ from all evil), accompanied by a picture of a woman kneeling before a cross against the background of a setting sun and village silhouette. At the turn of the century this type of iconography was spread on postcards printed in the Kálman Könyves Publishing House (Könyves Kálman Műkiadó) from the original design of I. Kasparides.<sup>28</sup> The picture was also printed on samplers. Originally the prayer was not for the family's protection, but for a husband's or boyfriend's return from World War I.

We have not come across illustrations of a whole family aside from the religious motif of the Holy Family. The only exception is a sampler from the town of Kozárovce depicting a burgher family with a pram without an accompanying text. While on German samplers children often appeared in their mothers' arms, on Slovak, Moravian and Hungarian samplers they seem to be only figural accessories to the kitchen theme - they appear very rarely with their mother who is rather busy cooking or baking. The motifs of maternal love, and emotional ties of children to their mother, however, appear in such texts as: "Srdce matičky/ Nejdražší klenot/ kdo skvostu toho na světe postráda/ ach je tak chudičky!" (A mother's heart/ is a priceless jewel/ who lacks this treasure/ is so poor!) "Mamička naša radi Ťa máme/ srdiečko plné láskou ti dáme" (Dear Mother, we love you and give you our hearts full of love). This Czech and Slovak sentimental cliché is accompanied by a picture of two children with a bunch of flowers in a heart-shaped frame. Both picture and text resemble a Mother's Day commemoration.

Since samplers address a woman's emotional world and her desires, this is the reason why such a large number of them (almost half of the Hungarian material<sup>29</sup>, nearly a quarter of Slovak or Moravian samplers) are dedicated to love or marriage. In this respect they differ from

the German samplers where love motifs are demonstratively much less frequent than those focused on home, household, kitchen and family.

It is interesting that there is a strong Czech and Moravian influence on texts and pictures of Slovak samplers with love motifs. It is manifested in often repeated excerpts from the arias of Smetana's "The Bartered Bride", of K.H. Mácha's poem "May". Figures from samplers of this kind are typically dressed in folk costumes of Domažlice (Frequently employed for the main heroes of "The Bartered Bride", Jeník and Mařenka, in the staging of the opera) or costumes from the Haná region (depicted in the illustrations of Josef Mánes and Joža Úprka which received broad popularization in magazines of the interwar period).

While samplers with love motifs show Czech and Moravian influence, it should be stressed that there is a preponderance of Slovak inscriptions. Very often they are taken from folk songs: "Takú som si frajeročku zamiloval/ akoby ju málereček namaloval" (I have fallen in love with a wench as beautiful as a painting). In general their motifs revolve around usual love themes.

A confession of love: "Bez teba na svete žiadnej radosti niet". (There is no joy in the world without you).

A love dream: "Šťastný je ten/ kto prežil lásky sen". (Happy is the one/ whose love dream has come true).

A time for love: "Byl první máj/ byl lásky čas", (It was May first/ the time for love). "Jen jednou v roce kvete máj/ jen jednou v žití láska". (May blossoms only once a year/ once in a life time love blossoms).

Love vows: "Lásku jsme si přísahali/ slovo Jsme si navždy dali". (We exchanged love vows/ we gave our promises for ever).

Faithful love: "Věrná láska blaží". (Faithful love is true bliss).

Unfaithful love: "Netráp sa dievča pre neho/ najdi si chlapca iného" (Girl, don't worry about him/ find another lad).

Misunderstanding in love: "Hnevaj sa na mňa lebo nehnevaj/ keď sa so mnou stretneš pozdravenie daj". (Whether you're cross with me or not/ greet me when you meet me).

Love prayer: "Daj mne Bože ten dar/ za ktorý ťa prosím/ len toho šuhajka/ čo ho v srdci nosím". (Oh Lord give me the gift I ask for/ the very lad whom I keep in my heart).

Marriage: "Vydajte mňa mamička/ dokiaľ som ja mladá/ vydajte ma za toho/ koho ja mám rada". (Mother dear, let me marry/ while I'm young/ let me marry the lad I love).

Love and marriage: "Bola láska bola/ pokým svadba bola/ svadba sa minula/ láska sa minula". (There was love/ until the wedding/ now the wedding is over/ and so is love).

Perceptions of men: "Taký mužský sa mi páči/ ktorý sa do krčmy nevláči". (I like only a man/ who does not go to tavern); "Keď môj muž bude piť vodu/ nebudem oplakávať svoju dievčenskú slobodu". (If my husband drinks only water/ I shall not cry for my maidenhood).

Inscriptions in which the wife praises her husband for not going to the tavern are frequent also in the Hungarian material. They are not to be found among German samplers which obviously indicates a different social reality.

The examples cited above show that the inscriptions have roots in folk poetry. On the other hand they are open to sentimental conventions which seemed topical, fashionable and emotionally satisfying to people of the day. These two currents are also confirmed by the imagery of samplers from Slovakia and Moravia. The majority of samplers with love motifs show images of couples in folk costumes. They hold hands, look into each other's eyes or pretend to be in a lovers' quarrel. The background settings employ visual symbols of rustic romance with such typical props as a bench, fence and a sea of flowers. Scenes of courtship by the girl's window proved to be very popular (they can be found also in J. Mánes' "Milostni" from his "Muzika" series).

Other couples are depicted in historic costumes, especially rococo dress. More gallant than folk or burgher couples of the interwar period, their behaviour is bolder, they often rest in each other's arms. The happy couple is often substituted by kissing angels or children - a boy and a girl on a bench holding hands.

One of the most popular images in the Slovak village milieu - perhaps because it corresponds with the emotional and aesthetic feelings of the owners - is a picture of a shepherdess and her sheep against the silhouette of a hilly landscape with the sun setting in the background. The scene is accompanied with the text of the song: "Zahučali hory/ zahučali lesy/ kde ste sa podeli/ moje mladé časy". (The woods resounded/ the forest roared/ where have my young days gone). A bucolic countryside with a mill forms the background of another popular theme - two children sitting on the bank of a creek with the inscription taken from the folk song: "Pod našimi okny teče

vodička" (There is water running under our windows). Samplers in this category are characteristic for a Slovak milieu, depicting the countryside with pastoral motifs accompanied by the first lines of folk songs.

The religious theme is present more often in Slovak and Moravian samplers than in Hungarian ones. Especially in Catholic homes, religious samplers were probably a substitute for religious picture (e.g. glass paintings or prints) which had become part of the household. The most frequent image in Slovakia was the picture of the Sacred Heart, the Holy Virgin and Jesus. The reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" appears equally often on Hungarian, German and Slovak samplers.<sup>30</sup> It belongs to the group of those paintings which acquired great folk popularity, repeated in numerous variants, in various mediums and realizations. On samplers it was reproduced in a simplified form. In comparison to the original, the colours, light, space and the drama of the scene were all greatly diminished.

Out of the production of popular prints, the most favourite was the picture of the Holy Family. (Its frequent representation in a form of china statuettes in folk milieu is evidence of the subject's popularity). And above all, the picture of a Guardian Angel protecting a child crossing a stream. On religious samplers of this type, the picture was of primary importance. There were even samplers containing no text at all. More often, however, the picture was accompanied by a short prayer like: "Sedembolestná Panna Mária/ oroduj za nás!" (Holy Virgin/ pray for us!) "Pane, odpusť nám!" (Lord forgive us!) "Srdce Ježíšovo/ zmiluj sa nad nami!" (Sacred Heart of Jesus/ have mercy on us). "Anjelu dobrý strážca môj/ dušu moju vždy opatruj". (Angel, my faithful guardian/ protect my soul at all times).

From the standpoint of picture-text relationship, "home blessing" samplers represented a different type. Their basic element was an inscription with the wish of happiness and peace to the house: "Bože chráň mŕj domov" (May Good protect my home); or "Bez Božieho požehnania/ márne naše namáhania" (Without God's blessing/ nothing will come from our endeavour); or "Keď je núdza najväčšia/ pomoc Božia najbližšia" (In gravest need/ God's help is neigh). The text was usually placed in the centre of a symmetrical composition, set in a floral frame, or embroidered on a ribbon held by flying angels, or surrounded by angels' heads. The compositional scheme was influenced by German lithographs<sup>31</sup>, or embroidery produced in cloisters. Quota-

tions from the Bible or religious precepts were placed on altar cloths, as well as on samplers.

The samplers whose basic element was textual had more resonance in Protestant families who ascribed greater importance to the word. In Catholic families, instead of a Biblical quotation there was a picture of Christ, Mary or other saints, embellished with religious symbols from sacral embroidery such as a wreath, chalice, cross, crown of thorns, Sacred Heart and lily.<sup>32</sup>

Some samplers reflected social phenomena. In Slovakia, for instance, there was a frequently reproduced sampler with the proverb: "Kto radosti doma nemá/ márne ju v cudzine hľadá". (Anyone who doesn't find joy at home/ will not find it abroad). Perhaps this was a reaction to the high rate of emigration in the interwar period. The text was invariably associated with a picture of birds perched on a branch, and never appeared in any other pictorial setting.

World War I also left its imprint on samplers. We have already referred to a 1914 picture of a woman kneeling before a cross praying for her husband's or boyfriend's return from the war. The 1914 date was also on a battle scene picture where Austro-Hungarian uniforms could be identified. The same date was embroidered on a sampler with a double portrait of the Emperors Franz Joseph and Wilhelm II, accompanied by the text: "Egyesült erővel" (Combined effort). Hungarian or German influences were evident on almost every one of the few samplers pertaining to World War I, found in Slovakia. They were embroidered mainly by Hungarian or German women in a moment of patriotic enthusiasm during World War I.<sup>33</sup> - In general, expressions of patriotism are quite rare on Slovak samplers. In this respect, there is a notable difference in comparison to samplers produced in Moravia. We found only one sampler with a quotation from the Slovak national anthem: "Nad Tatrou sa blýska" (Lightning strikes over the Tatras) with an allegorical picture of a highwayman carrying an axe (Jánošík, perhaps), against the background a mountain peak (possibly Kriváň) with a lightning bolt. A sampler from Rožňov, Moravia, presents the refrain from the Czech national anthem: "Země česká domov můj" (The Czech land, my home) accompanied by a picture of the river Vltava and the Hradčany Castle. Another good example of Czech patriotism expressing respect for the writer and politician Karel Havlíček Borovský (who became a symbol of the struggle for national consciousness) is a sampler depicting the writer's arrest with the title "Havlíčkovo loučení" (Havlíček's parting). Lofty, sentimental patriotism is also manifested by a sampler

carrying the lines: "Domove domove/ drahý a jediný/ si nejdražší si nejsladší/ nad světa končiny" (Homeland, homeland/ my dear and only one/ you are the dearest and sweetest/ the best in the whole world).

The motif of children is featured in some Slovak samplers. They bear a reminiscence to the child genre of the previous century which became popularized through the mass production of postcards and magazine advertisements.<sup>34</sup> The figures of children tending geese were especially popular due to their affinity to the still-living folk tradition; more so than scenes of playing children, children sitting on a bench or carrying a bunch of flowers in their hands. Like all amiable figures of children evoking tender feelings, pictures of girls with ribbons in their hair bending over a basket of briar roses were manifestations of a more sophisticated taste. The majority of samplers of the child genre were without any text.

Dutch motifs on samplers were also usually not accompanied by text. They depicted figures dressed in Dutch costumes and wooden clogs against the distinctive background of a Delft landscape, suggested by sea, sailboats and windmills. At the end of the 19th century German craftsmen took these motifs from Delft ceramic tiles.<sup>35</sup> The samplers usually preserved the characteristic blue colour of Delft ceramics being mostly embroidered with blue or black thread. Dutch motifs were quite popular in Slovakia and Moravia. They represented the category of samplers aspiring to a better, more cultivated taste. Only in two of fifteen cases were they accompanied by maxims and mottoes on human virtue. "Nikdo bez práce/ nejedá koláče" (Nobody can eat cake/ without work) and "Zvědavost/ nepěkná cnost" (Curiosity/ is no virtue).

One of the characteristic features of samplers is that their inscriptions and scenes are intertwined or framed with flowers, fruit, leaves and branches. The main function of the floral motifs was to emphasize the inscription and the picture. Sometimes, however, the floral decorations became so elaborate that they overwhelmed both the picture and inscription. On samplers with flower or fruit baskets placed in the centre of the composition, they even became the central motif. It was typical only very rarely were they accompanied by a text: "Kto nemiluje kvetiny/ nemiluje ľudí" (Anyone who doesn't like flowers/ doesn't like people).

The artistic aspect of samplers (even if they were derived from wall pictures) was above all determined by a decorative aesthetic which often modified the composition of the original painting. In this

respect samplers were close to folk art where vegetation motifs were frequently employed to supplement a figurative theme. Examples of this can be found in glass paintings or in engraved figurative motifs on wood sculptures.

The various possible picture-text relationships can be categorized as follows: 1. The pictorial image was less important than the verbal expression. 2. The inscription was subsidiary to the picture. 3. The picture and the text were in close harmony and balanced each other. 4. The relationship was proportionally balanced, but looser in association.

To the first category belonged samplers with inscription of greeting like: "Pekne vitam/ milý host!" (Welcome/ dear visitor!), "Dobré ráno!" (Good morning!), "Dobrá noc!" (Good night!), or "Dobrá chuť!" (Good appetite!). The text determined the form of the artistic composition. Most often it was placed symmetrically in the centre like Biblical quotations on sacral embroidered textiles. Samplers in this category represented an older phase of sampler development.

The second category - where the importance of picture outweighed the text - represents possibly a newer phase of development. Samplers in this category include those not modelled on any previous pattern, emanating from their maker's inventiveness. Such were, for instance, samplers on fairy tales themes which often lacked any text: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Little Red Riding Hood, or on sacral themes modelled on prints, where the depiction was of allegorical religious significance.

The third category of samplers featuring a balanced proportion between the word and the picture was probably the most frequent one. For instance the text: "Netráp sa dievča pre neho/ najdi si chlapca iného" (Girl, do not worry about him, find another lad) was accompanied with a picture of a crying girl in a frame of briar roses; another text: "Gloria/ jak se to vínečko popíja" (Gee/ it's nice to drink wine) with a picture of smartly dressed gentlemen in top hats drinking wine. The picture and the text were combined into a concise unity of a symbolic picture and an inscription explaining its meaning.

In the fourth category of samplers, the picture-text connection is looser, there is no rigid structural unity between them. Various texts were attached to the same picture. For instance, some four different pictures appeared with the same text: "Keď môj muž bude piť vodu/ nebudem oplakávať svoju dievčenskú slobodu" (If my husband drinks only water/ I shall not cry for my maidenhood). This category

included a small group of samplers where the text was abstract or did not correspond to the allegorical meaning of the picture. They used for instance texts of well known popular songs representing the tastes of certain milieu without being associated with any pictorial cliché.

Samplers, widespread and popular in Central Europe for the last 80 years, are a phenomenon of everyday culture which in an idealized form shows the desires, feelings and strivings of a broad strata of people. In a standardized form they reflect popular taste. They show and emphasize urban life styles - particularly those of a small town. Their rise and popularity in various countries differ according to the level of development and the intensity of village urbanization. Our ethnography and cultural history is still lacking in knowledge, artifacts, and documentation of popular culture. Our contribution is an attempt to fill this void.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup>BODROGI, T.: A művészi befogadás határai. In: Feliratos falvédők. Budapest 1987, pp. 9-11.
- <sup>2</sup>Sociology of fine arts that would be interested in this kind of production is still lacking firm roots in Slovakia.
- <sup>3</sup>Ethnographic museums in Slovakia, as well as in Bohemia (with the notable exception of the Museum in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm), show indifference to collecting samplers. The attitude of Polish ethnographers is similar; they do not consider samplers authentic folk creations and see them only as an accessory to interior decoration. See FURDYNA, J.: Zdobnictwo wnetrz wiejskich na terenie wielk. Wisły i dolnego Sanu. In: Polska sztuka ludowa, vol. 27, 1973, No. 3. p. 144; LEWANDOWSKI, A.: Kuchenna makatka. In: Polska sztuka ludowa, vol. 37, 1983, No. 4, p. 251.
- <sup>4</sup>BODROGI, T.: A művészi befogadás... ibidem, pp. 9-11.
- <sup>5</sup>STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche für Haus und Küche. Frankfurt 1978.
- <sup>6</sup>LEWANDOWSKI, A.: Twórczość makatkowa. In: Literatura Ludowa, 1979, No. 1-3, pp. 71-77; LEWANDOWSKI, A.: Kuchenna makatka. In: Polska sztuka ludowa, vol. 37, 1983, No. 4, pp. 251-258.
- <sup>7</sup>The information on private sampler collections was provided by the curator of the Ethnographic Museum in Prague, Ms. Landhamerová.
- <sup>8</sup>STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche ... ibidem, p. 10.
- <sup>9</sup>VÁCLAVÍK, A.: Slovenské palice. Turč. Sv. Martin 1934; VÁCLAVÍK, A.: Tradičné ľudovej drevorezby. Bratislava 1936; STEHLÍKOVÁ, M. Ľudové zdobené plachty. Banská Bystrica 1966.
- <sup>10</sup>These tendencies were promoted in Germany by Josef August Lux. See STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche... ibidem, p. 45.
- <sup>11</sup>STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche... ibidem, p. 15; CSILLÉRY, K.: A himzett konyhai falvédők. multja. In: Feliratos falvédők. Budapest 1987, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>12</sup>See deposits of school work. In: Dívčí práce, vol. 4, 1919, No. 5 and 7.
- <sup>13</sup>STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche... ibidem, p. 45.

- <sup>14</sup>CSILLÉRY, K.: A himzett konyhai...ibidem, p.16; LEWANDOWSKI, A.: Kuchenna makatka... ibidem, p.251.
- <sup>15</sup>CSILLÉRY, K.: A himzett konyhai... ibidem, p.16.
- <sup>16</sup>STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche ... ibidem, pp.59-146.
- <sup>17</sup>STILLE, E.: A konyha a háziasszony büszkesége. In: Magyarországi szöveges falvédők a 19.-20. században. Budapest 1981, p.6; CSILLÉRY, K.: A himzett konyhai...ibidem, p.16.
- <sup>18</sup>Other authors are also of the opinion that the incorporation of samplers into the village world is a sign of the urbanization of their culture. See JACKOWSKI, A.: Malowanki, makaty, ekrany. Współczesne malarstwo ludowe i jego pogranicze. II. In: Polska sztuka ludowa, vol 31, 1977, No.3, p.150; OLENDZKI, J.: Kultura artystyczna ludności kurpowskiej. Wrocław 1971, p.129; KOVÁCS, A.: Előszó. In: Feliratos falvédők, Budapest 1987, pp.5-8.
- <sup>19</sup>LEWANDOWSKI, A.: Kuchenna makatka... ibidem, p.251.
- <sup>20</sup>CSILLÉRY, K.: A himzett konyhai... ibidem, p.18.
- <sup>21</sup>STILLE, E.: A konyha a háziasszony büszkesége. In: Hatvany Lajos Múzeum füzetek 7, p.21.
- <sup>22</sup>HANKISS, E.: A falvédő kultúra társadalmi funkciójáról. In: Feliratos falvédők. Budapest 1987, p. 65; STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche... ibidem, pp. 155-164.
- <sup>23</sup>See the pictures. In: Magyarországi szöveges falvédők a 19.-20. században. Hatvany Lajos Múzeum füzetek 7, picture No.3, p.11 and No.4, p.13.
- <sup>24</sup>STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche...ibidem, p. 169, picture No. 128.
- <sup>25</sup>Museum in Stará Ľubovňa, Inv. No. 1828.
- <sup>26</sup>KOVÁCS, A.: Magyarországi falvédők feliratai. In: Feliratos falvédők. Budapest 1987, p.74.
- <sup>27</sup>HANKISS, E.: A falvédő kultúra, ibidem, p. 66.
- <sup>28</sup>SINKÓ, K.: A falvédők képi világa. In: Feliratos falvédők. Budapest 1987, p.31.
- <sup>29</sup>HANKISS, E.: A falvédő kultúra, ibidem, p.69.
- <sup>30</sup>SINKÓ, K.: Az idea elenyészése. In: Magyarországi szöveges falvédők a 19.-20. században. Hatvany Lajos Múzeum füzetek 7, pp.53-54; STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche... ibidem, p.161.
- <sup>31</sup>STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche... ibidem, p.169.
- <sup>32</sup>SCHARFE, M.: Das Evangelische Andachtsbild. Stuttgart 1968, p.320; KOVÁCS, A.: Új gyűjteményükről. In: Magyarországi szöveges falvédők a 19.-20. században. Hatvany Lajos Múzeum füzetek 7, p.7.
- <sup>33</sup>STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche... ibidem, p.72.
- <sup>34</sup>See advertisements in the magazine Česká selka, vol.19, 1931, p.12.
- <sup>35</sup>STILLE, E.: Gestickte Sprüche... ibidem, pp. 155-158.

## R e s u m é

Móda textilných násteniek, ktorú propagovali na prelome storočia módné časopisy pre ženy a utvrdzovala školská výuka, sa koncom 19. storočia rozšírila z Nemecka i do iných krajín Európy a zasiahla aj strednú Európu - Poľsko, Čechy, Maďarsko, Slovensko. Prenikla najskôr do meštianskeho, neskôr do malomestského interiéru. Dedinské prostredie ju prijalo s istým oneskorením, v závislosti od odlišnosti kultúrneho a etnického prostredia. Zatiaľ čo textilné nápisové nástenky sa v Nemecku dostali medzi široké ľudové vrstvy už koncom 19. storočia, v Poľsku si ich osvojili až začiatkom 20. storočia, v Maďarsku po 1. svetovej vojne, na Slovensku v niektorých regiónoch ešte neskôr.

Obsah myšlienok, ktoré nástenky prinášajú, je poznačený pietizmom - hnutím 17.-18. storočia, prameniacim v protestantskej tradícii

zdôrazňujúcej prisnu morálku a citovo sfarbenú zbožnosť. V Uhorsku a na Slovensku, kde však bola stále živá katolícka latinská tradícia s väzbou k obradovosti, ale predovšetkým v Maďarsku, s kalvinistickou tradíciou puritanizmu, bol pietizmus málo výrazný. Vzdialenejšia týmto tradíciám bola predstava prítulnej domácnosti, väzba a upätosť k rodinnému kruhu, civilizovaná každodennosť. Preto i námety, ktoré zobrazovali maďarské, ale i slovenské nástenky, boli menej naplnené výrokmi chváliacimi domácnosť, šťastný rodinný život, láskavými radami do života. Menej sa v nich dávali najavo útržky kultivovanosti prostredníctvom literárnych výpožičiek.

Príspevok v ďalšom prináša analýzu materiálu získaného kombináciou terénnych výskumov a štúdiom muzeálneho materiálu, ktorý skytá na prvý pohľad neprehľadnú spleť eklekticky ladených obrazových námetov a textov, v ktorej sa dá ťažko orientovať. Napriek tomu, je tu však prítomný moment konvencie, stereotypov, štandardizácie vkusu. Uplatňuje sa v emocionálnych vyjadreniach, v ktorých badať snahy o cituplnosť, ľúbivosť, príjemnosť, idylickosť, zrkadlí sa vo vytyčovaní hraníc etických dimenzií - najmä v nástenkách proklamujúcich zachovanie určitých noriem správania, etických postojov. Odráža i diferenciácie kultúrne, etnické, náboženské.

V ďalšom príspevok analyzuje obsahovú orientáciu slovenských násteniek v porovnaní s nástenkami moravskými, nemeckými a maďarskými. Vo všeobecnosti najväčšia skupina násteniek sa obrazovo i slovne prihovára predstavám a citovému svetu žien. Asi štvrtina z nich sa týka domácnosti, najmä kuchyne a jej údržby. Texty i obrazy vyzdvihujú vlastnosti dobrej gazdinej: čistotnosť, pracovitosť, dochvilnosť, schopnosť piecť a variť. Na Slovensku, Morave a v Maďarsku sa na rozdiel od nemeckého materiálu početná skupina násteniek zaoberá ľúbostným vzťahom, vydaním. V kontexte ľúbostných motívov badať na slovenských nástenkách český a moravský vplyv v textoch a zobrazeniach. Frekvencované v slovenskom, ale i v maďarskom materiáli, na rozdiel od materiálu nemeckého, sú nástenky s výrokmi chváliacimi muža za to, že nechodí do krčmy. Osobitú skupinu tvoria nástenky so sakrálnym námetom. V menšom počte sú zastúpené nástenky reflektujúce vážne sociálne udalosti - vystahovalectvo, 1. svetovú vojnu. V časti nástenkovej produkcie badať reminiscencie na detský žáner a holandské motívy rozšírené v obrazovom svete minulého storočia.

Textilné nápisové nástenky, rozšírené a obľúbené v strednej Európe v posledných 80-tych rokoch, boli fenoménom kultúry všedného dňa, ktorý predostieral v idealizovanej podobe túžby, city, snaženia širokých ľudových vrstiev. Zrkadlil v štandardizovanej podobe ich vkusové predstavy. Predostieral a podčiarkoval ich životné formy - nástenky boli odozvou malomestských, mestských ideálov. V odlišnom nástupe a obľube v rôznych krajinách sa premietala rôzna vývinová postupnosť a intenzita pomeštenia kultúry ľudových vrstiev.