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Summary of Doctoral Dissertation:
Linen in Polish traditional culture

Linen (*Linum*) is a plant utilized by humanity since the pre-ceramic Neolithic period (c. 8500 b.c.). It is one of the first plants adopted and used by human. The presence of linen and its processing in such distant times can be observed both in archeological studies and historical sources since ancient times. They clearly show that linen was cultivated, processed into cloth and used as a medicine.

Linen was also cultivated in Poland since earliest days. However no holistic monograph was not created covering the subject of linen in polish literature. The process of cultivation and processing of linen, linen cloth production, weaving as a home and professional craft was described in works concerning Polish traditional culture quite thoroughly. Despite of that the literature analysing its symbolic significance can be found lacking. The majority of information can be found mainly in the minds of the depositaries as common folk knowledge of Poland. As of now, no attempt to describe it in syncretic and systematic way was undertaken.

The dissertation consists of three main parts. The first one describes methodology and characterizes diversity of source material. Second part describes pragmatic aspect of cultivation and usage of linen. Final part attempts to reconstruct sign and symbolic functions connected with research object and also actions and items used during its cultivation and processing.

Main goal of the dissertation is to explicate cultural image of linen in Polish traditional culture. Main sources for the research consisted of materials collected from 19th century subject literature as well as earlier and later works, contemporary materials collected during field exploration conducted after second world war by a variety of scientific organizations or cultural institutions in Poland including dissertation's author conducted research taking place in Museum of Folk Culture in Kolbuszowa. Folklore texts has also been used for the purpose of the research because their analysis becomes an important element of cultural image of linen, especially in its symbolic aspect. Presented sources are nationwide.

The basis of the scientific workshop consists of analysing the source material in the context of reconstructing the cultural image of linen. This approach was based on the premise of multifaceted presentation of the subject: to exhibit pragmatic and symbolic aspect of cultural

image of linen. For this purpose, the research methodology taken from cultural anthropology was used. An important feature of anthropological thought is its 1 multithreading, reflecting the richness and complexity of cultural phenomena. It provides the necessary conceptual apparatus for the analysis of social reality and its manifestations in culture. In particular, the achievements of ethnolinguistic analysis have been adapted. Because ethnolinguistics, referring to knowledge preserved in language, and supported by dialectology and ethnography, makes it possible to fully reconstruct the image of the world in relation to specific objects. The analysis is complemented by taking into account the semiotic and functional postulates, which resulted in the possibility of compiling various functions related to in traditional culture.

Bearing in mind the above assumptions, the first part of the paper presents all the issues related to the cultivation of linen. These considerations are, however, a subjective analysis, and thus take into account the vision of the world of depositaries, which, for example, is clearly visible in harvesting, and also concerns field work, care, harvesting and processing. On the other hand, in the second part of the analysis, the basic functions of linen in traditional culture were distinguished. In line with the research assumption made in relation to this work, Chapter II was divided into two parts. The first part shows the functions of linen from the perspective of folk pragmatics, emphasizing its utilitarian and economic importance as a kind of medicine, food product. In the second part, however, the functions of linen are presented and discussed in a symbolic perspective. The analysis of source materials made from this point of view made it possible to distinguish the role of linen as: an emblem, and a set of functions distinguished for socio-cultural reasons.

For example, linen is presented here with the following functions: as a sign in indicating social status, including: property, professional, marital status and territorial identification, fulfilling the role of a woman's attribute (including defining women's obligations in connection with work on linen and a stereotype of a woman, role and obligations in traditional society), matrimonial function, as well as fertility and reception. For example, linen is presented here with the following functions: as a sign in indicating social status, including: property, professional, marital status and territorial identification, fulfilling the role of a woman's attribute (including defining women's obligations in connection with work on linen and a stereotype of a woman, role and obligations in traditional society), matrimonial function, as well as fertility and reception. Moreover, linen is endowed with a sign function in ritual and festive situations - it is an element that distinguishes a person with mediating power and performs ritual functions, it is also a sign of place and time (in ritual and 2 festive situations), performs agrarian,

apotropaic, healing, functions and the multifaceted function of linen as a gift and other multidimensional sacred functions.

The analysis was carried out on the basis of source materials and literature on the subject, presented in this work, allowed for a holistic reconstruction of the cultural image of linen - a plant endowed with many functions in tradition, including mediation. Thus, linen is an intermediary between supernatural forces - "that world" and man - "this world". This was manifested in source materials describing activities with linen and undertaken by linen, which - according to established beliefs and the traditional system of values - performed on "this world" had a significant impact on "the other world". Therefore, it should be said that this plant should be seen as one of the few, a gift of divine powers, that had an impact on human health and life. At the same time, it is a kind of apotropeicum for demonic forces from "the other world". So linen was a gift and a sin offering. It is also an emblem of homeliness, created through association with the Polish territory and landscape, and with Poland in general, which is manifested by many exponents, and the expression is most clearly defined by the usage of phrase *Polish linen*.

Moreover, the materials cited throughout the work also allow the conclusion to be drawn that weaving, bleaching and spinning are traditional women's activities, also associated with magical rituals. On the other hand, sowing, collecting and spinning resemble sacred activities, because especially spinning and weaving - it is the act of creation of divine work, creating the world, calling into existence. The activities of spinning / weaving are also ritual activities, in line with female activity of extraterrestrial origin. Thus, every woman involved in spinning and weaving hid a great female power, and the activities performed by her were an expression of harmony and order, they were both the act of creating and determining the structure of the entire cosmos.

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