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“MOLDOVENESTI” EARRINGS AND CONTEMPORARY REITERPTATIONS IN EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWELRY

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“Moldovenesti” earrings are important elements of the clothing heritage of the Republic of Moldova, reflecting the cultural identity of the historical Bessarabian space. This study analyzes the typology, ornamental and symbolic characteristics of these jewelry pieces, highlighting the historical and artistic influences that shaped their evolution. The main typological categories are identified – circular earrings, earrings with movable pendants, filigree earrings, and earrings with explicit symbolism - in which motifs such as crescent moons inspired by lunnitsa amulets, spirals, rosettes, and vegetal patterns frequently appear. In the context of the 21st century, the research explores possibilities for contemporary reinterpretation through digital technologies and jewelry design, contributing to the valorization of cultural heritage and its integration into current artistic practice.

Keywords: Moldovan earrings, lunnitsa, traditional jewelry, symbolism, contemporary adornment.

INTRODUCTION

In the study of traditional jewelry in Eastern Europe, “Moldovenesti” earrings occupy a special place. At first glance, they may seem like simple decorative accessories, but upon closer inspection, they become genuine cultural documents – objects where aesthetics, symbolism, and technical craftsmanship converge in a relatively small yet surprisingly complex form.

In the historical Bessarabian space, largely corresponding to the present-day Republic of Moldova, earrings were an important component of women's attire. Their shapes, the materials used, and the ornamentation reflect not only local aesthetic preferences but also broader cultural influences - Byzantine, Southeastern European, and Slavic - that shaped the artistic traditions of the region [1].

A particularly interesting symbolic element is the connection with lunar amulets of the “lunnitsa” type. These decorative crescents, common in medieval Eastern European artifacts, were associated with fertility, female protection, and cosmic cycles [2, p.130]. Interestingly, many traditional earring forms adopt this geometry or subtly suggest it, integrating lunar symbolism into the structure of the jewelry.

Today, interest in cultural heritage has increased considerably. Festivals dedicated to traditional attire, ethnographic exhibitions, and cultural projects



contribute to the revitalization of traditions. However, critical observation shows that attention is often focused on textiles – shirts, “ii,” or folk costumes – while metal adornments, including earrings, remain relatively under-researched.

In this context, the study of “Moldovenesti” earrings becomes relevant not only for the history of decorative arts but also for contemporary jewelry design.

PURPOSE

The study aims to analyze “Moldovenesti” earrings from the perspectives of typology, ornamentation, and symbolism, highlighting the historical and artistic influences that shaped their identity. At the same time, the research seeks to identify directions for the contemporary reinterpretation of these pieces, through their integration into modern design and the use of digital modeling and production technologies. In this way, traditional heritage can be valorized in a manner relevant to the 21st century.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of “Moldovenesti” earrings reveals a rich typological diversity, reflecting both the evolution of craftsmanship and the aesthetic sensibilities of local communities. Within the historical Bessarabian region, largely corresponding to today’s Republic of Moldova, these earrings were an integral part of women’s attire, carefully adapted to diverse social and ritual contexts [3].

Four primary typologies emerge based on formal and ornamental characteristics. Circular or simple earrings feature a clear structural design with relatively restrained decoration. Delicate engravings or small embellishments emphasize the circular form, which traditionally symbolizes cyclicity and balance (fig. 1 a, b).

Earrings with movable pendants introduce a dynamic dimension to jewelry design. The suspended elements catch the light during movement, creating subtle visual effects that enhance the overall decorative appeal.

Filigree and granulated earrings form a third category, demonstrating the exceptional technical skill of local artisans. Complex ornamental structures achieved through meticulous filigree and granulation connect these pieces to Byzantine and Southeastern European jewelry traditions (fig. 2).



Fig.1. a, b. Simple earrings.



Fig. 2. Filigree earrings.



Fig. 3. 3D – modeled earrings.

The fourth category comprises earrings with explicit symbolic motifs. Spirals, rosettes, and stylized vegetal patterns convey cosmological and ritual meanings, reflecting the symbolic worldview of traditional communities [4].



This classification highlights the diversity of “Moldovenesti” earrings, showing that they are not a homogeneous group but a collection of forms adapted to various cultural contexts. Ornamentation frequently combines cosmic, vegetal, and geometric motifs, each imbued with specific symbolic significance. The crescent shape, inspired by lunnitsa amulets, is particularly prominent. Common in medieval Eastern European artifacts, it was associated with fertility, female protection, and natural cycles.

Spirals recur as a symbolic element, representing continuity and transformation, while rosettes and stylized vegetal motifs evoke regeneration and cosmic harmony. These ornamental features can be interpreted as local adaptations of symbols widespread in Eastern European decorative arts, yet expressed within a distinct Bessarabian aesthetic language.

The development of Moldovan earrings illustrates the interaction between local traditions and external cultural influences. Filigree and granulation techniques point to Byzantine connections, whereas certain decorative structures reflect affinities with Slavic and Balkan jewelry. Compared to similar pieces from other Eastern European regions, “Moldovenesti” earrings stand out for their balance between geometric and vegetal ornamentation and the frequent incorporation of crescent motifs derived from lunnitsa amulets. This combination reveals a cultural synthesis in which external influences were transformed into a locally distinctive style.

In the contemporary context, reinterpreting traditional earrings has become a significant direction for modern jewelry design. Historical motifs and structural forms can be adapted and reimagined to create contemporary aesthetic concepts. Digital technologies play a crucial role in this process: three – dimensional modeling, laser engraving, and metal printing allow both faithful reproduction of traditional forms and experimentation with innovative designs (fig. 3). These methods support personalized creations and limited series production, while also contributing to the digital preservation of cultural heritage [5].

Nevertheless, fully reproducing the texture and delicate hand-crafted ornamentation remains a challenge. For this reason, contemporary reinterpretation often involves a combination of modern technologies and the designer's manual intervention.

Beyond their artistic dimension, reimagined earrings can also serve educational and cultural purposes. Incorporating them into exhibitions, festivals, or workshops dedicated to heritage helps transmit knowledge about traditional symbolism and techniques.

In this way, jewelry becomes not only a decorative object but also a means of cultural communication, capable of creating a bridge between tradition and contemporary artistic creation.

CONCLUSIONS

The research results highlight that “Moldovenesti” earrings represent a significant element of the artistic heritage of the Bessarabian region. Their typological diversity, the complexity of their ornamentation, and the associated symbolism reflect both local craftsmanship traditions and broader cultural influences



from Eastern Europe.

The connection with the symbolism of lunar amulets of the “lunnitsa” type highlights the cosmological and protective dimensions of the ornamentation. At the same time, contemporary reinterpretation of these forms through digital technologies and modern design opens new perspectives for the valorization of cultural heritage.

By integrating them into current artistic practice and cultural events, traditional earrings can continue to convey aesthetic and symbolic values relevant to contemporary society.

In this sense, traditional jewelry becomes a bridge between past and present, demonstrating that clothing heritage encompasses not only textiles but also metal adornments that complete the visual identity of traditional attire.

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МАЦКАН-ЛІСЕНКО І.

«МОЛДОВСЬКІ» СЕРЕЖКИ ТА СУЧАСНІ ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЇ У СХІДНОЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИХ ПРИКРАСАХ

«Молдовські» сережки є важливими елементами костюмної спадщини Республіки Молдова, відображаючи культурну ідентичність історичного басарабського простору. У цьому дослідженні аналізуються типологія, орнаментальні та символічні характеристики цих прикрас, висвітлюються історичні та мистецькі впливи, які сформували їхню еволюцію. Виділено основні типологічні категорії - круглі сережки, сережки з рухомими підвісками, філігранні сережки та сережки з явною символікою - у яких часто зустрічаються мотиви півмісяців, натхненні амулетами лунніца, спіралі, розетки та рослинні орнаменти.

У контексті XXI століття дослідження розглядає можливості сучасної інтерпретації за допомогою цифрових технологій та дизайну прикрас, сприяючи популяризації культурної спадщини та її інтеграції у сучасну мистецьку практику.

Ключові слова: молдовські сережки, лунніца, традиційні прикраси, символізм, сучасна прикраса.