

III. BORDERS

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The Chromatic Specifics of Domestic Constructions Located in the Borderland Territories of Russia and Belarus**Abstract**

The article is devoted to an analysis of the chromatic features of the external decoration of modern residential architecture located in the borderland territories of Russia and Belarus. The authors proceed from the fact that the owners of properties (people of different sex, age, social status, health and character) are not constrained by any style norms and as a rule choose the colour of their constructions themselves, working out the projects without recourse to professionals. This is why the architecture of country properties does not come under the influence of official styles and modern trends and presents a special research interest in the context of the analysis of the diffusion process of ethnic-chromatic traditions. The article contains the results of the quantitative research of constructions located within the territories of the villages of Krasniy in the Smolensk Region (Russia) and Dubrovno in the Vitebsk Region (Belarus). The spectral structure and the dominating colours of property facades, the roof colour schemes and decorative elements are studied, with the most widespread colour combinations analyzed. The correlations between the geography of the building and its appearance (number of storeys, material, colour schemes) are researched.

Key words: colour, colour schemes, chromatic features, architecture, borderland territories of Russia and Belarus, domestic constructions

Introduction and the Results of the Latest Research

Numerous investigations point at an evident difference between the architectural colour schemes in various regions. Jean Philippe Lenclos (Lenclos 2003a) studied the colour environment of France and identified the so-called *regional* colours of its provinces and worked out a unique colour dictionary for the modern colour design of cities. Later J.-Ph. Lenclos together with D. Lenclos studied and described the national features of the colour decisions of architectural constructions of more than 20 countries of the world (Lenclos 2003b, 2003c). Similar research was conducted by Ph. and M. Cler for the new towns of the Eastern Lille, Vitrolles and some others (Cler 1976), B. Lange explored the colours of Copenhagen (Lange 1997), J. Serra studied the colours of the historical centre of Malaga (Serra 1999), N. Guz and S.K. Barokas – the colours of Mardin (in the south-east of Turkey) and Bursa (in the west of Turkey) (Göyünç 1991; Guz, Barokas 2007), J. Brino and Ph. Rosso – the cities of Italy (Brino 2010; Brino, Rosso 1987).

L. Abramov, Ya. Vinogradov, A. Efimov, G. Somov, O. Surina, B. Teplov, Z. Yargina proved in their works that there are special regional colour dominants in Russian architecture, which are formed under the influence of certain natural surroundings, climatic conditions and local colour culture. However, the detailed research on Russian architectural colour schemes was carried out mainly on the material of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Within the rich and varied literature on regional history we can still find only a few works devoted to the analysis of the ethnic-chromatic traditions of the Russian province.

In this respect the attempt of the authors to describe ethnocultural specifics in the borderland territories of Russia and Belarus is regarded as essential. The purpose of this research is the verification of the hypothesis about the existence of horizontal decomposition of colour language (by analogy with natural language), in other words: the determination of some kind of dialects of ethnocultural specifics of architecture which are more definitely realized in the decoration of folk houses.

The study material is presented by modern folk architecture of the villages Krasniy in the Smolensk Region (Russia) and Dubrovno in the Vitebsk Region (Belarus). In the process of urbanization in the 19th century the typology of the folk architecture formed two directions – urban and rural. These directions differed from each other by the degree of dependence on external cultural influence and the dynamics of autochthony. According to the fair remark of A.G. Lazarev and A.A. Lazarev, “the urban houses of the 15th–17th centuries had a more difficult typology and changed more quickly than the rural, as the people of Russian towns had information about the architectural image of housing constructions in neighbour towns and abroad. Constructions of that type reflected modern trends and foreign borrowings” (Лазарев 2003, p. 254–255). Rural houses preserved their originality and were almost unchanged by the influence of new styles.

The villagers of the border territories of Russia and Belarus have lived in wooden houses for many centuries. Thatched with straw, the wooden peasant houses were not decorated. Only at the turn of the 20th century did prosperous peasants begin to decorate their houses with carved and painted window trimmers and painted inner doors. Though F. Modestov supposes that all these elements in many cases were made by wandering masters and the decorations were not a characteristic feature of the regional architecture (Модестов 2004, p. 12).

Streets with estate constructions still preserve their special colouration. The owners of the properties (people of different sex, age, social status, health and character) are not constrained by any style norms when choosing colours for their houses. As a rule they do not consult with professionals about the design of the projects. That is why the architecture of country properties does not come under the influence of official styles and modern trends and presents a special research interest in the context of the analysis of the diffusion process of ethnic-chromatic traditions.

Methodological Part

The study of spectral structure and dominating colours of residential buildings within the border-zone was realized with the help of content-analysis (Грибер 2008, p. 130–138). The prepared form for content-analysis consisted of three sections: the first described the geography of the house, the second contained information about the appearance of the construction (number of storeys, material), the third fixed the colour scheme of the building. In course of the research not only the basic colours of the houses, but also the number of colours used in decorations (multicoloured designs) were studied. Great attention was paid to the following elements of the house – ornamental panels, window apertures and doorways, verandas, porches, balconies, fences and the roofs of the architectural constructions. They were used in particular as decoration, because traditionally in Russia, as A. Efimov explains, “the outside painting of housing constructions concentrated for the most part on the lower surfaces of overhangs and roofs and on the upper surfaces of walls, window trimmers, porch pillars, in other words on those parts of buildings, which were protected from the damage of rain and snow”.

The selection of houses was regionalized according to the general number of properties and the population of the villages. There was also used the procedure of a two-step cluster investigation. As clusters certain streets were chosen. Every cluster was researched with the help of a serial (complete) investigation of all the constructions. Such a selection of houses guaranteed the representativity and validity of the research. The total amount of examined houses was 183 constructions in Krasniy and 225 constructions in Dubrovno.

Essential Contents

The main result of the quantitative research of residential constructions located within the territories of the villages Krasniy in the Smolensk Region (Russia) and Dubrovno in the Vitebsk Region (Belarus) is as follows: single-storied houses with total coverage of about 40 sq. m (83% in Krasniy and 84% in Dubrovno) prevail on the border-zone territories of Russia and Belarus. We find two-storied houses (16% in Krasniy and 15% in Dubrovno) among constructions which were built later and a few three-storied houses (1% in each of the villages). The majority of the houses have brick (42% in Krasniy and 40% in Dubrovno) or wooden facades (22% in Krasniy and 39% in Dubrovno). In the decoration of the rest of the constructions we observe combinations of different materials, the most frequent case is the combination of wood and brick (6% in Krasniy and 4% in Dubrovno), then wood and plaster (3% in Krasniy and 2% in Dubrovno), brick and siding (10% in Krasniy and 2% in Dubrovno), brick and plaster (1% in Krasniy and 2% in Dubrovno), wood and siding (4% in Krasniy and 2% in Dubrovno).

Most of the houses in the village Krasniy are white (55%), green (14%) and grey (10%). Constructions with red are less popular (5%). Orange, yellow and light-blue houses are not numerous (4% for each colour). Dark-blue (3%) and black buildings (1%) are the least frequent. Buildings with a primary purple colour were not found.

The decorative elements of wooden constructions differ in their spectral structure and dominating colours. In the majority of the cases they are painted in white (51% in Krasniy and 56% in Dubrovno). Light-blue is found in the decoration of 8% of houses in Krasniy and 21% in Dubrovno. Green is used in the design of elements of 7% of the wooden houses in both villages. Yellow is found in the decoration of 14% of the wooden constructions in Dubrovno, in contrast to Krasniy, where that colour is rare.

Conclusions

On the whole the coloristic research of residential architecture reveals the correspondence between individual and collective preferences. In the residential architecture located on the border-zone territories there was distinguished a tendency that characterized the architecture style of the region as well. Modern constructions lose their chromatic colouring and preserve the natural colour of the material.

The colour combination of domestic architecture in Krasniy is formed by the colours white, green and grey, while in Dubrovno we find the typical colours of Russian territories, namely white, green and red. A similar colour distribution was found by the colour analysis of the Smolensk properties. The research has determined that the most widespread colours of houses in Smolensk are white (37%), green and red (19% for each colour), light-blue (10%) and yellow houses (9%) are not so widespread. Constructions of grey and orange are equally not frequent (about 3% for each color). The rarest case is a dark-blue house (1%). Purple constructions are not found (Грибep 2008, p. 135).

In the wooden architecture of the border-zone territories there was registered a prevalence of green and red, which is uncharacteristic of Russia (Грибep 2008, p. 136), but at the same time there was established a typical for Belarus increasing number of yellow facades within the territories of Krasniy (17%).

Therefore, the widespread manner of colour symbols distribution in the borderland territories of Russia and Belarus is cultural diffusion (accidental distribution), when the elements of some cultures mutually transmit themselves and penetrate in one another at their contact. The diffusion process of ethnic-chromatic traditions is well noticed in the design of the decorative elements of domestic architecture on the border-zone territories. The inhabitants of Dubrovno follow the typical Russian tradition of using light-blue in the decoration of houses (the colour was found in the elements of 21% of constructions).

The diffuse character of colour transformations revealed in the course of the research is influenced by the high intensity of cultural contacts. The folk borderland architecture located on the national outskirts, where such contacts are constant, displays the existence of the original colour dialect, combining Russian and Belarusian colour traditions.

The directive interview and content-analysis of coloured photographs from private archives make it possible to determine that the appearance of wooden residential constructions changes slowly. The overwhelming majority of the individual wooden houses in the region in fact have not changed at all, which means that the

houses, fulfilled in the traditions of local folk architecture, have preserved Slavic-Krivich ideas, which began to develop in ancient times. In the course of the lives of several generations town properties have preserved their traditional colours. The analysis of this material may be used in the creation of a coloristic map of the border-zone territories and in the reorganization of architectural objects.

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Streszczenie

W artykule przeanalizowano specyfikę zewnętrznej dekoracji współczesnej architektury mieszkalnej na pograniczu rosyjsko-białoruskim. Punktem wyjścia stał się dla autorów fakt, że właściciele badanych nieruchomości (osoby zróżnicowane ze względu na płeć, wiek, status społeczny, stan zdrowia i charakter) nie są ograniczeni żadnymi normami stylu i z reguły wybierają kolor swojego domu samodzielnie, bez pomocy profesjonalistów. Stąd też miejscowa architektura nie podlega wpływom oficjalnych stylów i nowoczesnych trendów stanowiąc niezwykle interesujący obiekt analizy dyfuzji etnicznych tradycji chromatycznych.

W artykule przedstawione są wyniki badań ilościowych obejmujących domostwa wsi Krasniy (obwód Smoleński, Rosja) i Dubrovno (obwód Witebski, Białoruś). Opisano spektralną strukturę i dominujące kolory elewacji, kolorystykę dachów i elementy dekoracji oraz najbardziej rozpowszechnione kombinacje kolorów. Zbadana została także korelacja pomiędzy lokalizacją budynku i jego wyglądem (liczba kondygnacji, materiał, kolorystyka).