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# A LADYBIRD (COLEOPTERA: COCCINELLIDAE) MOTIF IN CROCHETED TOWEL END LACE: THE FIRST EXAMPLE OF CULTURAL ENTOMOLOGY IN LATVIA

Zeltīte Barševska, Arvīds Barševskis

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In this article the authors showed example of cultural entomology in Latvian traditional art for the first time. The article provides information about entomomorphic (beetle) element – a stylized ladybird motif – in the crocheted towel lace in Latgale (Krāslava district, Kombuļi civil parish, Skadiņi). The ladybird has a pronounced elytral suture, two large and two small spots on each elytron, six legs and a head with two antennae.

Key words: cultural entomology, ornament, entomomorphic element, ladybird motif, towel, crocheted lace, Latgale, Coleoptera, Coccinellidae.

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## INTRODUCTION

Entomology is the scientific study of insects, a branch of zoology. Both human and insect relationships are as long as the whole human history. Insects play a major role in human life. They have been intensively studied for many centuries. The entomology, as the scientific study of insects, has been concerned with survival and scientific study of insects, while the cultural entomology as is the branch of investigation of the influence of insects in literature, languages, music, arts, mythology, religion. . The cultural entomology theory has been discussed in several papers of Ch. L. Hogue = (Hogue 1980, 1987).

For organizational purposes of the cultural entomology Hogue (1980) recognized the following specific subdivisions of human endeavor as cultural, in which insects may play roles: 1) literature (fictional, not scientific, or informative); 2) music;

3) performing arts (including drama and dance); 4) art (including decoration and architecture); 5) history (interpretive); 6) philosophy (including ethics, metaphysics); 7) religion; 8) folklore (including mythology, customs); 9) language; 10) symbolism (including emblemology, heraldry, advertising etc.); 11) sociology (including law, politics, government, warfare); 12) recreation (including toys, games, amusements, novelties, jokes, oddities, curiosities).

In the present article the authors showed example of cultural entomology in Latvian traditional art for the first time. This is important because hitherto the motive of the using of insect in Latvian traditional art was not known. It was evidenced by the first author on the human-made towel lace crochet edge, in Latgale region (SE part of Latvia). During the research 266 adorned towels from 118 inhabited localities of Latgale region have been studied, between which only

one towel lace crochet edge with entomomorphic element was found. Results of this study were summarized in Barševska (2014) .

This article provide the first information on the cultural entomology elements of the Latvian folk traditional arts. The aim of this article is to identify the popularity of entomomorphic elements in the traditional Latgalian towel design, in particular, in tower lace crochet edge pattern used at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research material has been found by the first author and students of the Daugavpils University (1997 – 2010) in 117 different places of Latgale region. The collected material characterized visually by 326 traditional towels (photographies, ornament report technical drawings, ornament samples) and provides additional information about authors of these materials (names, place of their residence, purposes for which the towels were made, etc.). Photos of all towel lace crochet

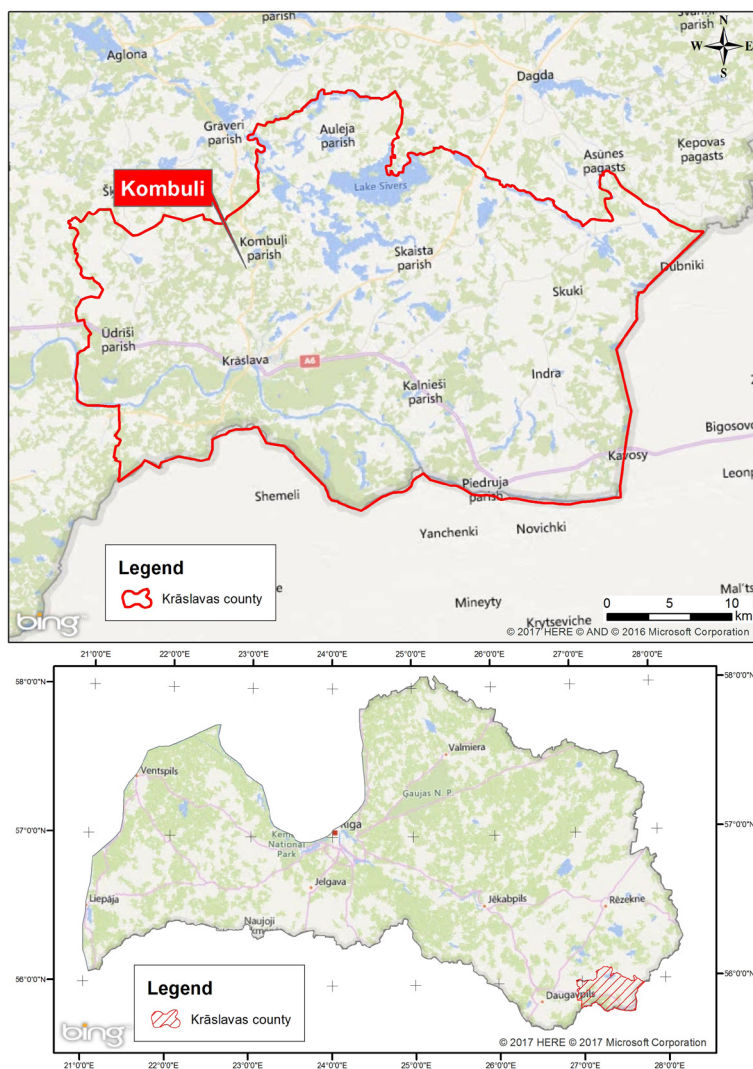


Fig. 1. Kombuli civil parish location map.

lace deposited in the collection of the senior author. The towels photos were obtained with a digital camera Canon EOS 6D. The map of Latvia has been drawn using the software *ArcGis 10*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The characteristic feature of the Latvian folk art is a geometrical ornament, nevertheless plant (floral) and animals (faunal or zoomorphic) elements are rare. Stylized and geometrized animal motifs are seldom used in crocheted towel end lace design. In the collected materials, the laces of seven towels (2.14% of all the collection) have zoomorphic ornaments: birds and hares. These towels were mainly made in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s. Animal motifs may appear in the syntheses with the elements of plants.

As our studied materials show the entomomorphic beetle motifs in crocheted lace composition are used in the lace of only one towel (0.3 % of all collection). The author of this towel is Albīna Plinta (Krāslava district, Kombuļi civil parish, Skadiņi) who has made it in the 1970s (Fig. 1).

The beetle ornament in the crocheted towel lace is a stylized ladybird. The ladybird has two large and two small spots on each elytron,

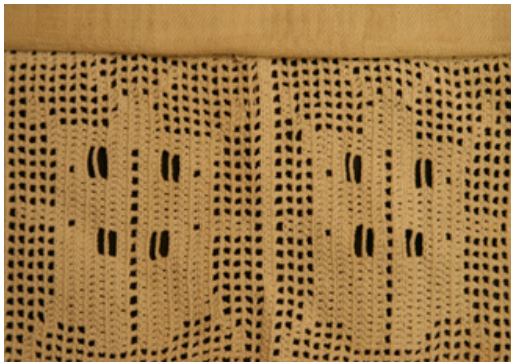


Fig. 2. The entomomorphic ladybird-like element on the edge of towel lace. Krāslava district, Kombuļi civil parish, Skadiņi. Author: Albīna Plinta (70ies of the 20th century) (Photo by Arvīds Barševskis).

with a pronounced elytral suture, six legs and a head with two antennas (Fig. 2). This is the first registered case in Latvia, when the ladybird motif depicted on towel end lace.

In semiotics, a ladybird is a symbol of luck. Janīne Kursīte draws attention to the fact that a ladybird has been given many names in the Latvian folklore: *dievgosniņa*, *Margrietiņa*, *bizmaniņa*, *Laimas kumeliņš*<sup>1</sup> (Barševska, 2012). It is mentioned seldom and is used mainly in one meaning: as a symbol of future. In the Latvian mythology a ladybird is associated with foretelling people's fates and the weird sisters. J. Kursīte concludes that in our folklore a beetle often functions as a form of an expression for deity of the earth and kind genius (Laima, Māra and others). In the cosmic tree of the world or in the three zones of the world, a beetle represents the lower level.

For Latgale craftswomen ladybirds were known as positive insects and therefore they were symbolically depicted also in towel design. Ladybird *Adalia bipunctata* (Coleoptera: Coccinellidae) (Fig. 3) is a Latvian national



Fig. 3. *Adalia bipunctata* (Linneus, 1758) – The Latvian national insect.

insect. It is depicted in the emblem of the Entomological Society of Latvia (Fig. 4).

Ladybirds are widely distributed in Latvia, where 61 species has been found (Barševskis, Lazdāns 2010). A lot of species are common in gardens, parks, so they are very familiar to people. The most common species in Latvia are *Adalia bipunctata* (Linnaeus, 1758) and *Coccinella septempunctata* (Linnaeus, 1758). The most common species are usually also familiar to people.

The faunistic study of ladybirds (Coleoptera: Coccinellidae) has a long history in Latvia. Barševskis & Lazdāns (2010) wrote, that the first data about ladybird species collected in the territory of Latvia have been published already in the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Fischer. In later period till nowadays faunistic data on ladybirds collected in the territory of Latvia can be found in more than 45 works. The research history of ladybirds of Latvia has been summarized by Spuris (1990) and Barševskis & Lazdāns (2010).

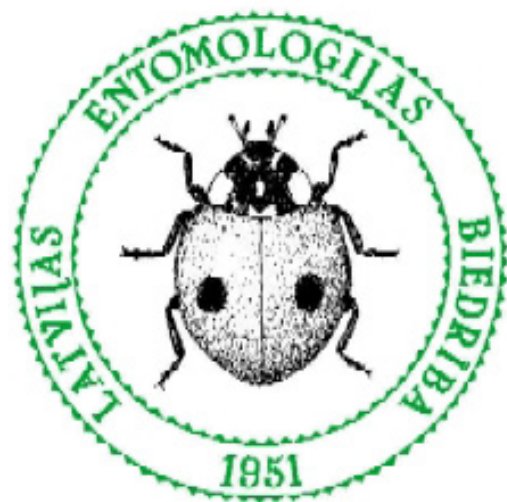


Fig. 4. The emblem of the Entomological Society of Latvia with figure of *Adalia bipunctata* (Linnaeus, 1758) (<http://leb.daba.lv/>).

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