

positive aspects of the change: creativity has in some ways increased, and recently the images have become connected with a movement toward Chicano self-identity and civil rights. Many of the abandoned elements, such as painting, have been resuscitated.

Briggs makes generalizations on the basis of a long and thorough consideration of the data, gathered by observation, interview and questionnaire. He has immersed himself in Cordovan culture and in the images themselves: their form, symbolism and history. He includes a chapter on carving techniques and another on marketing. I recommend the book to anyone interested in folk art, Mexican-American culture or the American Southwest.

Lithuanian National Costume. By Antanas and Anastasia Tamošaitis. Pp. 256, glossary, bibliography, index, illustrations, black and white and color photographs, maps. Toronto: Lithuanian Folk Arts Institute (243 South Kingsway, Toronto, Ontario M6S 3V1), 1979. No price, cloth.

Reviewed by Egle Victoria Žygas

As weavers, teachers, designers, and researchers, Antanas and Anastasia Tamošaitis have between them over 100 years of experience in the study of Lithuanian folk clothing. Oddly enough, it is precisely the high degree of specialization which makes their book on **Lithuanian National Costume** as good an example of **how to** write a book on folk art as of **how not to**.

During the mid-1920s, less than a decade after Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union, Antanas Tamošaitis (an artist by training) was already in the field obtaining examples of folk art, especially folk costume, for museum collections. Beyond the mere acquisition of material objects, Tamošaitis' fieldwork involved the interview of elderly weavers for information about the clothes they themselves had woven, sewn, and worn, as well as about the clothing worn by their families, parents, and grandparents. Because of his extensive

research in all parts of Lithuania he was able to formulate distinct regional types of traditional apparel, and, as a pioneer in the study of folk clothing, to define the traits which would constitute the national costume. He describes his philosophical stance thus:

When attempts were made to introduce the authentic Lithuanian national costume, it was decided to eliminate all foreign influences in the peasant's holiday or festive dress. A costume had to be designed and woven by the peasants in their own tradition in order for it to be considered genuine (p. 64).

Of course, as preeminent researcher in the field, he was empowered to determine just what it was that constituted "their own tradition." Out of all this research came a number of books, written in Lithuanian, on folk art, folk clothing, and folk textiles.

The focus of Anastasia Tamošaitis' work echoes that of her husband. Starting in 1932, she taught weaving to advanced students. She collected sample of old textiles in order to use the traditional motifs as well as to reconstruct and record the various methods of weaving which had been employed by the folk. The Tamošaitises share technical expertise in weaving, but Mrs. Tamošaitis' background extends even further. She has written several books on knitting, crochet, embroidery, and other traditional women's handicrafts.

In addition to scholarly research, Mr. and Mrs. Tamošaitis were involved in the popularization of folk textiles and national costumes. Mr. Tamošaitis was sent by the Lithuanian government to Latvia, Estonia, and Finland to learn to adapt traditional weaves to modern looms. Upon his return he instructed Lithuania's best weavers in the use of the new equipment; these weavers in turn went into the countryside to teach. In time there were hundreds of newly trained weavers using modern techniques and materials to produce bedspreads, tablecloths, hand towels, rugs, and bolts of fabric with traditional patterns. Tamošaitis was instrumental in establishing a cooperative to bring country-based textiles to the urban areas. Meanwhile, Anastasia Tamošaitis turned her own technical skill in weaving toward the production of national costumes. The handwoven costumes

which she submitted to the Berlin Exhibition in 1938 won first place. Even today, a costume made from cloth woven by Mrs. Tamosaitis is considered a status symbol by Lithuanian women.

After World War II Antanas and Anastasia Tamosaitis emigrated to Canada, bringing with them a collection of field photographs and textiles. For the next thirty years they continued their research and interviewed Lithuanian emigrés in North America. The Tamosaitises amassed a large private archives at their home in Canada. The archival information, in addition to their work in pre-war Lithuania, is the basis for **Lithuanian National Costume**, their first English-language book. Its publication was supported in part by a grant from the Canadian government.

As one would expect, the scholarly research and technical information contained in the book are superb. In the introductory section, archeological findings and historical drawings from the travellers' reports provide a visual history of Lithuanian national garb from the first to the fourteenth centuries. The remainder of the book scrupulously describes types of yarn and thread, gives names of patterns and weaves, and provides information on techniques of construction. Close-up photographs provide a visual interpretation of the sometimes specialized terminology.

Antanas Tamosaitis' regional types comprise the organizing principle of the book: a chapter is devoted to each geographic area of Lithuania, and special attention is paid within each chapter to women's and men's clothing. Happily, clothing is defined very loosely--jewelry, clasps, buttons and sashes; mittens, gloves, stockings, socks and footwear; headdresses, caps, hats and scarves; stoles, shawls, jackets and coats; shirts, skirts, dresses and aprons; vests, belts and trousers. The concluding chapter has children's costume, dolls, and contemporary national costume as its topic. The latter two sections of that chapter are particularly unusual and deserve some attention.

Dolls dressed in handwoven national costume are presented as educational tools for schools, as a means for cultural promotion by the media, and as an investment for collectors. Advice is given to dollmakers on the adaptation of large patterns to a miniature scale, and there is even

some discussion of the importance of modifying doll heads and bodies to reflect Lithuanian ethnic features.

In the section on "The Modern Version of the Lithuanian National Costume," the hidden agenda for the entire book becomes evident. The authors espouse the use of authentic textile patterns in the creation of contemporary national costume. Today's weaver is encouraged to take inspiration from traditional textiles in the production of individualized costumes whose components use appropriate patterns (the patterns for woven belts are to be used only on woven belts, for instance, and not adapted for embroidery and used to decorate a shirt collar) and correctly reflect the colors, weaves, patterns and cuts of clothing of a single geographic region.

Lithuanian National Costume has two seemingly contradictory flaws: it has too narrow a focus and too wide an audience. The technical vocabulary used throughout the book means nothing to a non-specialist, and at times the text reads like a word-for-word translation into English from a Lithuanian weaving dictionary. Weaving is discussed in detail, to the detriment of other, equally important techniques--knitting, crocheting, embroidery, plaiting and sewing. A detailed description of such methods would have been entirely within the scope of Mrs. Tamosaitis' wide background in the entire range of women's traditional crafts. Information on process is lacking. I missed learning how weavers who have put so much time and care into the production of a piece of cloth, when planning to sew an article of apparel, would engineer the cutting of the cloth to minimize the number of unusable scraps and decrease their size. A sketch, similar to the cutting diagrams enclosed in home-sewing kits, could have shown the placement of sleeves, cuff, collar, and front and back sides of a shirt on a piece of whole cloth, for example. Such blueprints have long been a standard feature of Soviet ethnographies and a booklet with nothing but layout plans used in the construction of traditional clothing was recently published in Canada.¹ In the section on head-dresses, there might have been more discussion of the significance of girl's and women's hairstyles, braids, and the symbolism of various head coverings.

By naming the book **Lithuanian National Costume**, the

authors are justified in choosing to deal only with the festive, holiday apparel of peasants. The absence of descriptions of work clothes and everyday wear, however, presents a one-sided view of traditional clothing. The title provides a rationalization for no mention being made of foreign influences on Lithuanian folk clothing, even for the border regions in which there must have been a great deal of cultural exchange.

The major problem for the authors in trying to be all things to all people is that they must serve the needs of some readers less adequately. The implied audience for the book is the educated English-speaker. When the authors wrote for a Lithuanian audience, they reached a public whose worldview and interests ran parallel to their own. Some tactics which were successful with a Lithuanian audience just don't come across effectively with an English-speaking readership. Lithuanians expect to find reminders of their nation's past greatness in Lithuanian books. A non-Lithuanian opening **Lithuanian National Costume** is confronted with a full-page map of the Grand-Duchy of Lithuania under the reign of Vytautas (1392-1430)! The country's area at that time was approximately five times its present size and included much of present-day Russia. The significance of such a map is entirely lost on the English-reader, especially since the book is devoted to eradicating any influence Slavic culture may have had on Lithuanian folk clothing.

The strength of the book lies in the identity of the authors and in the subject matter they treat. Antanas and Anastasia Tamosaitis were the image makers for Lithuanian national costume as it was created in the 1920s and '30s and are the image propagators for the popular conception of Lithuanian folk clothing today. Their book tells the story of the genesis of the concept of national costume as only the creators can tell it. Antanas and Anastasia Tamosaitis may not include all the data a reader might wish, but the information they do give is that which only they can provide.

Taking into consideration the tenor of the times during which they began their work, that Antanas Tamosaitis should have tried to create an idealized Lithuanian national costume, or that Anastasia Tamosaitis herself should have

woven prize-winning national costumes is not surprising. What is surprising is that half a century later the focus of their work has not changed. From the point of view of folk-clothing scholarship, that's too bad. From the point of view of ethnic folklore, that's what it's all about.

NOTES

1. Dorothy K. Burnham, **Cut My Cote** (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1973).