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THE CARPATHIAN TRADITIONAL FOLK  
COSTUME – A VISUAL LANGUAGE OF  
ETHNIC AND SYMBOLIC IDENTITY:  
ROMANIA VS UKRAINE

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# The Carpathian Folk Costume

A Visual Language that represents cultural heritage, ethnic identity, and social symbolism.

Costumes are far more than clothing: they are a profound visual archive of history, culture, and social structure, that delineate distinct identities within a shared geography.

# Shared Roots, Separate Paths: The Carpathian Context

The Carpathian Mountains connect Northern Romania (Maramureş, Bukovina, Transylvania) and Western Ukraine (Transcarpathia, Hutsul region)

**Visual Language:** Every pattern, color, and cut communicates the wearer's age, social status, and marital condition.

# Romanian Port Popular: Vibrant Colors & Floral Narratives

**Ia** (embroidered blouse) and **Catrință/Fotă** (woven aprons/skirt).

**Floral Motifs** (Roses, Vines): Predominant theme, symbolizing fertility, life, and the beauty of nature.

**Maramureș**: Distinctive white-on-white embroidery with sharp red/black accents;

**Transylvania**: Rich beadwork and metallic threads, heavier wool.



# Ukrainian Vyshyvanka: Geometric Code & Archaic Protection

**Vyshyvanka** (embroidered shirt) and **Kersetka** (vest), secured by the heavy **Krayka** (wool belt).

**Geometric Motifs (Rhombuses, Octagons):**

Less decorative, highly symbolic, representing ancient cosmological beliefs.

**Intense, dense colors:** Red (Sun, protection), Black (Earth, sorrow), and Orange/Yellow (Fire, energy).





# The Stitch Tells the Story: Embroidery Comparison

## Romanian Technique

**Dominant Stitches:** Punctul înaintea acului (Running stitch), Punctul de la fir (decorative filling).

**Aesthetic Goal:** To create soft, flowing, often multi-colored surfaces.

## Ukrainian Technique

**Dominant Stitches:** Cross-stitch (Cruciulița).

**Aesthetic Goal:** To achieve tight, precise geometric blocks; emphasis on symmetry and structure.



## Side-by-Side: The Visual Contrast

The costumes, while distinct, underscore the resilience of textile tradition in the Carpathian region.



**Romanian costume** emphasizes beauty and connection to the natural world.



**Ukrainian costume** emphasizes ancient symbolism and protective geometry.





Thank You