

## Aesthetic Features of the Russian National Costume

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**Abstract:** The article discusses the aesthetic features of Russian costume and proves that the costume contributes to the formation of the aesthetic taste of the person. Russian costume has always emphasized the beauty and personality of a woman. It had not only a practical function, but was also a symbol of beauty and harmony. The author examines four women's outfits and their prevalence in the territory of Russia. The author refers to the history of the national women's costume in Russia. The article describes in detail all components of these outfits, as well as fabrics, which were used to make women's costumes. Outerwear in Russia was the same for men and women, but within this standard there were significant variations of the costume, which were due to a large extent of our country and the differences in climatic conditions. These differences were present both in the manner of costume wearing and in the number of items that were part of it, as well as in the costume cut, range of colors, form and number of decorations. A particularly large number of local variants can be seen in the South Russian costume including poneva (homespun woolen skirt). The author concentrates not only on the cloths, but also on decorations and shoes of Russian people. Youth costumes were particularly characterized by the abundance of decorations. Costumes for holidays (festive wear) differed from everyday clothing. They were made from expensive fabric and usually decorated with ornament. Casual wear was simpler. Russians had special clothing as well (e.g. charcoal burners, hunters, etc.). The article notes that, along with the working, casual and festive clothes Russian peasants had ritual clothes: for weddings, funerals and praying. By the character of the costume everyone could get an idea of the social status of its owner. The author notes that since the mid of XVIII century Russian costume significantly changed both under the influence of internal factors and European fashion. Life continues to make changes in the modern Russian women's costume. Its designing is accompanied with the process of creative rethinking of traditions of folk costumes and the "people's motifs."

**Key words:** Aesthetics • Aesthetic function • Taste • National costume • Casual wear • Festive wear • Special wear (gowns) • Ceremonial clothes • Poneva (homespun woolen skirt) • Sarafan (sundress) • Kubelek • Caftan • Homespun coat • Undergarment • Armiak • Ornament • The local version • Bast shoes (sandals) with onucha (puttee) • Koty (low shoes) • Shugai • Kokoshnik • Luzan • "brocade (damask) pair" • golovodets • Pochelok • The crown • The people's motifs

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### INTRODUCTION

First ideas of beauty and the need for it is a natural part of homo sapience, a person drew from the outside world. Gradually from the imitation of nature, we moved on to the figurative and artistic design of clothing and its aesthetic function, by which we determine the costume as a form of art.

Costume as a work of art has always reflected a certain stage in the development of peoples' culture, was

closely connected with architecture, painting, music and theater. Unlike clothes, it carried a figurative description both of individual and the nation and the ethnic group. The meaning of the costume was associated with the customs and habits that determine the character of the era; however, it included the manner of clothes wearing as well [1-5].

The costume is most closely connected with the person. More than other things it can influence the aesthetic education of the people, the formation of their

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taste and notions of beauty. The expressive and artistically designed costume helps to reveal the inner wealth and the dignity of the individual.

Russian woman was a mother, a wife and a performer of the age-old role of guardian of the family hearth. She firmly professed Christianity and recognized a man as the head of the family, but she has never been a slave but contributed to the development of the family and society.

Russia entwines together softness, melodiousness, unique natural environment and evenness, wisdom and beauty of a woman.

This nature gave women the talent to make themselves more attractive. The national costume was in harmony with the female character as well. The woman wearing it was the ideal of beauty.

The national costume of Russian women to the utmost reflected a sense of ensemble - the ability to see both every individual detail and their relationship, interference and finally, the costume as a whole. Every woman had her own character, which was reflected in her costume. The costume emphasized the beauty of proportions and shape of the figure - the most important sign of femininity.

The traditional Russian costume embodies the basic ideas of the spiritual life of the people and the notion of ethical ideals that shaped the ethical taste of Russian peasant woman - mother, wife and housekeeper.

The traditional Russian folk woman's costume is the etalon of beauty, a sample of folk art, a standard of the national costume for the current generation that affects the formation of the ethical taste in our society.

Specific manifestation of the value attitude of the man to the world, to himself and to others has changed throughout history. Activation of interest in the national costume and its capabilities in the development of attitude led to a comparison of different forms of artistic expression. All this contributed to the development of taste, which can be regarded as a specific intellectual and psychic mechanism capable to perceive and evaluate the beauty of the world and the elements of life and clothing.

From this point of view, Russian costume can be viewed in two ways: as a thing created from purely practical reasons - for protection against heat and cold, rain and wind and as a symbol giving an idea of man and society.

The traditional costume, common in the vast territory of Russian settlements, was quite diverse. This particularly applies to the female costume. Ethnographers distinguish four women's outfits in the territory of Russia:

- With poneva (homespun woolen skirt);
- With sarafan;
- With andarak skirt;
- With kubelek.

The first two outfits were basic and existed in the most areas of European and Asian Russia. Outfits with andarak skirt and kubelek had limited distribution.

The outfit with homespun woolen skirt included a shirt, often with collar with side fastening, poneva, belt, apron, barb, a cap with "ears" of "horns" (of kichka and soroka type).

Decorations from bird feathers and beads, shoes, woven from bast or leather shoes. This costume prevailed in the southern provinces of European Russia: Voronezh, Kaluga, Kursk, Ryazan, Tambov, Tula, Orel and partially Smolensk. It is considered to be the most ancient of the Eastern Slavs' clothes. Scientists suggest that its main parts, a shirt, a homespun woolen skirt and kichka-cap, were a part of the female costume during the formation of Old Russian people, that is, in the VI-VII centuries.

The outfit with sarafan (sundress) consisted of a shirt with straight fastening or without fastening, sundress, sleeveless jackets, headdress on a firm base like kokoshnik and mostly leather shoes [6]. This costume was the most widespread in the territory of Russian settlements. It existed in the north of European Russia, in the provinces of the Volga region, the Ural, Siberia and the Altai [6]. In the XIX century it penetrated in South Russia, where it noticeably displaced the outfit with homespun woolen skirt. The characteristic features of this costume were most clearly manifested in clothing of the Russian North: in Arkhangelsk, Vologda and Novgorod provinces, in the northern districts of Kostroma, Nizhny Novgorod [6], Yaroslavl and some other provinces [7]. Costume with a sundress might have been finally formed in the XV-XVII centuries, i.e. during centralization of the Russian state. This outfit became widespread among the nobility, the boyars, the townspeople and peasants, though in southern districts, the peasant continued to wear the age-old costumes with homespun woolen skirts [6].

Outfits with andarak skirt consisted of a woolen striped skirt, corset, shirt with a turn-down collar and straight stripes, wide belt, headdress of kokoshnik type. This costume was worn by women in the villages of smallholders, i.e. descendants of service class people, sent to protect the southern borders of the Russian state in the XVI-XVII centuries. These settlements were in

Ryazan, Orel, Kursk and Tambov provinces. The same type of costume was spread in some villages of the Smolensk region. Probably, it appeared in Southern Russia in the XVI-XVII centuries and was brought here from the Lithuanian border, where the service people were recruited.

The outfit with kublek was typical for the Don Cossack girls and partly for the Cossacks of the North Caucasus. It was a dress close-fitted in the waist and worn over a shirt with wide sleeves. The dress was worn with long pants and a knitted cap or hat. Such costume was common in the XVII - the first half of the XIX century. It is believed that the Cossack girls borrowed it from the peoples of the North Caucasus during the formation of the Don Cossacks, i.e. in the XVI-XVII centuries.

Both male and female clothing was made of hemp, linen, wool or half-woolen fabrics produced at home, as well as factory fabrics: silk, wool, cotton fabrics and brocades. Such fabrics were used in the North, in the provinces of Central European Russia and from the end of the XVIII century – in some areas of Siberia as well.

The winter, spring and fall outerwear was similar for men and women and differed only by the number of decorations. In all Russia men and women in winter wore fur coats and winter coats with fur inside, covered with textile or sheepskin and in the spring or autumn - cloth coats, zipuns (homespun coats) and undergarments. In the long trips in winter people everywhere wore a sheepskin coat over the fur coat and in spring and autumn chill - armyak.

The considered men and women outfits were some kind of standard that was adopted by Russians living in a particular region. However, within this standard there were significant variations of the costume, which is inherent in traditional culture in general. In Russia, the variability was due to the huge territories where Russian people lived, the diversity of natural conditions, specificity of historical destinies of the population of one or another area.

In costumes there were distinct differences that characterize a particular district or province. These differences were specific both for the manner of costume wearing and the number of items that were part of it, as well as in the costume cut, colors, type and number of decorations. For example, a costume with a sundress in Arkhangelsk, Vologda and Olonets provinces significantly differed from the costume with sundress in Vyatka and Perm provinces [7]. The costume of Russian Old Believers in the Altai also consisted of a shirt, sundress, belt, etc. and had a number of features that

made it quite distinctive. The diversity was peculiar to the costume as a whole and to individual subjects: shirts, kokoshniks, aprons, short-sleeved jackets, etc. For example, kokoshnik being part of the costume with sundress in different areas was different: in Toropetskiy county of Pskov region it is a headdress with a conical top - the "horn", decorated with cones around the head, in the Tver province - high hat with a flat top, small ear-flaps and peak falling to the forehead, in the Kostroma - a hat with a high triangular "kerchief", decorated with golden embroidery, beads, pearls, etc.

A particularly large number of local variants can be seen in the southern Russian outfit with homespun woolen skirt, where they diversified even at the village level. Ethnographers of the XIX century noted that the place of residence of a peasant woman who came to the city fair, was determined at a glance on her costume: shirt ornament, color and style of wearing homespun woolen skirt, color of belt, peculiarity in tying bast shoes and other parts of clothing.

Men's costume, as noted above, a more unified than women's one, also had its own local versions. For example, in the villages of the White Sea, men wore shirts knitted of wool and tucked into trousers, little known in other parts of the Russian North. In some villages of the south Russia men included embroidered vests in their costumes. In the Altai men loved decorating hats with artificial flowers and ribbons and in the central provinces of European Russia the same hats were decorated with buckles or small tassels of colored worsted [8].

Outer clothing, especially clothing for spring-summer season, had differences in the cut, the material, color and decor. As it was already noted in the entire Russia, fur coats both sheepskin and covered with cloth were widespread. However, in different parts of the country, they were not the same. In Nizhny Novgorod, Penza, Simbirsk and Smolensk provinces sheepskin coats were made of white rawhide sheepskins and in Yaroslavl, Vladimir, Moscow and several other provinces - of red and black tanned sheepskins. Covered women's fur coats of Arkhangelsk province differed by their cut from the coats that were popular in the Don Cossack villages. Arkhangelsk fur coats were made single-breasted with gathered backs trimmed in the area of shoulder-blades, sleeves to the wrist, decorated with small rivals on the shoulders. Fur coat was buttoned at a buckle, to which a magnificent long bow was attached. Don fur coats were made one piece with a deep wrap over; their sleeves were long and covered the entire hand [9].

Wool/felt coats that existed throughout Russia, were different colors (blue, brown, gray, black and white), had different cut (with one-piece back, cut-off, with the inlays in the hem, pleated, gathered, etc.), different fasteners (buckles, buttons, hooks, leather straps), various decorations (color cord, embroidery, appliqué, etc.). It was the combination of certain traits in one caftan that gave it a distinct local color.

Costumes of girls in the provinces with popular outfits with a sundress consisted of a shirt, sundress, sleeveless jackets and usually of leather shoes. Sleeveless jacket in some villages was replaced with apron, attached over the chest, or armlets. In the southern Russian provinces with prevailing outfit with homespun woolen skirt, girls of marriageable age put on over a shirt either a bib (shushun, shushpan, kostolan, etc.), or a sundress. Footwear both during holidays and on weekdays were bast shoes with onoocha or stockings and koty. A girl's costume differed from the women's costumes of other age groups by headdress. Girls had to wear headdresses opening the hair on top to see the braid flowing down over the back. The maiden hair was perceived by peasants as a symbol of beauty.

Costume, however, is not limited to those basic items that we have mentioned; it also includes a lot of decorations. The girls wore earrings, beads, necklaces, chains, strings, rings, bracelets, richly embroidered over-sleeves, various back adornments; boys wore chains, pendants, rings and scarves. Costume was complemented by fashionable dress items, such as gloves, umbrellas and mirrors; girls had charms and watches and boys had canes. The abundance of decorations was specific namely for the youth costumes.

Even greater variability of costume was provided by its functionality, i.e. the purpose. Festive clothes were different from casual clothes and included a full set of items determined by local tradition. Thus, in the Russian north - in Arkhangelsk and Vologda provinces [7], women's costume designed for large parties was to include a shirt (often with long sleeves), sundress with oblique inlays, sleeveless jacket or shugai, kokoshnik, shawl or headscarf fixed on the headdress, earrings, necklaces, rings, bracelets, gloves to the elbow, stockings, leather shoes, shirinka (a square scarf - like handkerchief). Festive clothes were made of good expensive fabric manufactured in the factory or at home: silk, brocade, taffeta, muslin, homemade linen, fine home or factory cloth, or fine cotton fabrics. All items of clothing, headdresses and shoes were usually richly ornamented.

Casual dress was characterized by simplicity. It consisted of only the most necessary articles of clothing. So, if the festive dress of young married woman from the province of Ryazan included about twenty subjects, the casual one - only seven items: shirt, woolen skirt, belt, povoinik with a scarf, onoocha (leggings) and bast shoes. The clothes were usually made of cheap factory fabrics, but more often from the homespun ones. Typically, shirts were sparsely decorated over the collar and cuffs; the homespun woolen skirt (poneva) was decorated only on the hem and a sundress - only at the top.

Work clothing in its main features repeated casual clothes. However, there was special clothing as well. For example, coal burners and tar extractors from Vyatka and, Perm provinces put to work verhnitsa, clothes of coarse canvas up to mid-shank with long sleeves and round collar. Hunters in the Russian north, in the Ural, going fishing dressed up in Luzan, short sleeveless jacket with lots of pockets and long soft boots - above-knee hunters' boots. Fishermen from the villages on the White Sea went fishing in olifantsy - clothes soaked in drying oil. Girls and women of Yaroslavl and some other provinces during haymaking worked wearing only belted tunics - senokosnitsy, pokosnitsy, etc.

Along with work, casual and festive clothes Russian peasants had the ceremonial clothes intended for ritual actions: wedding, funeral and pray. Ceremonial costume was different from the usual not so much by a set of included objects or any particular cut, but rather a method of manufacture, color, manner of wearing of one or another object (sometimes individual items of ceremonial clothes had more details). For example, women's funeral clothes, "smertyanaya", which consisted of a shirt, sundress, scarf and stockings, were as a rule produced of white canvas manually. And at its sewing, the seam stitches were directed outside, the threads were not secured and the nodes were not tied [10].

In the ordinary days and holidays women wore clothes with different color and tied scarves in a different way.

A wedding shirt for a girl or a guy, as a rule, did not differ from the normal in its cut, but was manufactured at a specific time (often on the eve of major holidays). It could differ from the holiday and everyday shirts by ornament and colors. In the costume of a groomsman at a wedding there was necessarily a towel, which was tied up around the waist or worn across the shoulder; in groom's costume, especially significant was shirinka (scarf) attached to the hat, etc.

A costume or clothing or a hat that went out of use could also become ritual. So, in the beginning of the XX century the ceremonial costume in the Russian north was "damask pair" - a festive costume for girls in the beginning - middle of the XIX century. A bride had to wear it for a lamentation at the hen party.

Many girls' hats, which were previously considered festive: golovodets, pochelok, crown, etc., became ritual. And at the end of the XIX century, they became only the headdresses of brides.

The difference in the social status of clothes' owners most notably impacted the costume. Festive costume of a rich merchant or peasant was different from its less prosperous neighbor or just a poor man in many things that were part of it: an abundance and value of decorations, inclusion of fashionable urban items in the costume and expensive fabrics.

Russian folk costume for over 150 years since the end of the XVIII century to the late 20-ies of the XX century has noticeably changed. This process was continuous: some elements disappeared and others appeared. Changes occurred as a result of internal development and under the influence of external factors, especially the European fashion. In the XVIII century, its influence on the folk costume was insignificant yet. It manifested itself mainly in some alleviation of the festive costume, for example, for special occasions people stopped wearing several fur coats at the same time; Chebak, worn over kokoshnik, was replaced with shawl; oriental silk and brocade fabrics gave way to the domestically produced fabrics with ornament of Western European type. The inclusion of the European clothing items in the national costume started only in 20-30s of the XIX century. At borrowing in most cases there was an organic combination of national Russian and European elements. Often it was not even possible to separate the traditional costume element from the European one. So, for example, nakolka, a women's headdress arranged from a scarf and pinned, as well as fist-gloves, etc. cannot be considered as entirely Russian or European tradition. However, the costume contains the items at once defined as borrowed: galoshes, hats, umbrellas, muffs, etc.

Change in the national costume was not only due to the influence of external factors, but occurred also under the influence of internal development. During the XIX - early XX century there was a gradual replacement of some items: soroka was replaced by kokoshnik, kokoshniks - by povoynik, povoynik - by shawls; skirts displaced sundresses, undergarments appeared instead of kaftans, etc. Most noticeable changes occurred in shape

and cut of the garments: sundresses with slanting inlays were replaced by round ones and vice versa: outwear with one-piece straight back – by clothing with inlays and later with tails; and it was time for a different cut: the costume was split at the waist with large pleats on the back. The costume fabric changed significantly as well: wool and homespun canvas gave way to the factory cotton fabrics, silk, cloth and other fabrics, which became new to the traditional costume [11].

Russian traditional costume, known by the monuments of the XVIII - the first quarter of the XX century, is a rather peculiar phenomenon of popular culture. Of course, in it the dominating are the features that emerged on the local Russian soil and dating back to the life of ancient Russia; but borrowing from the costumes of the neighboring nations and the Western outfit, took place over the centuries, has considerably changed it. In this case, the hallmark of Russian traditional costume is still a lot of clothing options for different age and social groups and the specificity of the local situation at relative stability of major outfits. But the general principles of Russian folk costume are refracted individually. And so each area has a special form of clothes and proper taste, which condition its unique opportunities to affect the human. Aesthetic taste is oriented to human perception and a unique spiritual world and needs spiritual co-creation of the perceiver.

Modern women's costume is not something stiff; life makes changes related to the enrichment of the social role of women. Increasingly, she acts as a business woman with certain social positions.

During the creation of a modern suit the creative traditions of folk costume are rethought considering current conditions. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to such properties of traditional Russian costume, as the form and cut, a silhouette line and design lines that are of interest not only in terms of rationality but also beauty and also to consider the decoration of folk costume in general, the color, the pattern technique, the feeling of the material, etc. These are the traits of the traditional costume that make up the concept of "people's motifs". Folk motifs are the refraction of folk traditions in the modern art of making things [12].

For national culture it is important not to lose, but on the contrary, within the trends of life changes to increase the age-old harmony of the image of women, embodied in traditional Russian costume. Until now, the national symbols of Russian costume can be seen in various areas of modern fashion where they form the aesthetic taste of the new generation.

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