

KOKOSHNIK: A FEMALE HEADDRESS IN THE TRIANGLE OF TRADITION, TALISMAN, AND GENDER ROLES



KOKOŞNİK: GELENEK, TILSIM VE TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET ROLLERİ ÜÇGENİNDE BİR KADIN BAŞLIĞI

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ABSTRACT: Folk costumes, which are among the elements of material culture and concrete indicators of the lifestyle of individuals, carry the reflections of the life shaping beliefs from generation to generation. Because of these aspects, they are the target of Westernization movements while being embraced by a certain group as a symbol of national values. Kokoshnik, a traditional headdress worn by women, goes through a similar transformation process from the time it is first used to the date when it is pushed out of daily life due to ideological concerns. The headdress is named after the Old East Slavic word *kokosh* meaning “chicken”, because of its form similar to that of poultry’s comb. The tailors with specialized training in sewing this flamboyant headdress adorned with precious stones and embroidery, are called *kokoshnitsa*, which also comes from the same root. In this review article, it is aimed to contribute to the international literature, which has been determined to be quite limited in terms of content and quantity. Studies that deal with kokoshnik both as a traditional headdress and an indicator of women’s marital status and social position, are evaluated through comparative method. This study, which compares the etymological studies of Russian ethnographers, folklorists, art critics, and linguists such as G. S. Maslova, N. I. Gagen-Torn, D. K. Zelenin, V. V. Stasov, V. I. Dal’ and S. I. Ozhegov on kokoshnik, also includes current research. In all these studies, it is revealed that two basic tendencies gain importance: In early studies, the emergence of the headdress due to the religious superstition about uncovered hair brings bad luck is discussed and its function as a talisman is emphasized. The values symbolized by kokoshnik in the social status of women and in distribution of responsibilities within the family are also examined in the light of ethnographic data. However, in current studies, a critical perspective draws attention that the kokoshnik is reflected as an accessory that symbolizes traditional costumes in a stereotypical way, and thus, the Russian clothing culture, which has a very rich history indeed, is reduced to a monotonic image.

Keywords: Kokoshnik, women’s headdress, material culture, gender roles, Russian ethnographers.

ÖZ: Maddi kültür unsurları arasında yer alan ve halkların yaşam tarzının somut göstergelerinden olan geleneksel kıyafetler, aynı zamanda bu yaşamı şekillendiren inanışların yansımalarını kuşaktan kuşağa taşırlar. Bu özellikleri dolayısıyla, belirli bir kesim tarafından ulusal değerlerin sembolü hâline getirilip sahiplenilirken Batılılaşma hareketlerinin hedefinde yer alırlar. Geleneksel bir kadın başlığı olan kokoşnik, ilk kullanıldığı tarihten, ideolojik

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kaygılarla gündelik yaşamın dışına itildiği döneme dek benzer bir dönüşüm sürecinden geçer. İsmi Eski Slavcada "tavuk" anlamına gelen kokoş sözcüğünden alan başlık, formunun kümes hayvanlarının ibiğine benzerliği dolayısıyla bu şekilde adlandırılır. Üzeri değerli taşlarla ve işlemelerle süslenen bu görkemli başlığın dikiminde uzmanlaşmış kadın zanaatkârlara ise yine aynı kökten gelen kokoşnitsa adı verilir. Muhteva ve nicelik bakımından hayli kısıtlı olduğu tespit edilen uluslararası literatüre bir katkı sunmayı amaçlayan bu derleme makalesinde, kokoşnikleri gerek geleneksel bir başlık gerekse kadınların medenî hâllerine ve toplumsal konumlarına ilişkin bir gösterge olarak çeşitli boyutlarıyla ele alan çalışmalar karşılaştırmalı yöntemle değerlendirilir. G. S. Maslova, N. I. Gagen-Torn, D. K. Zelenin, V. V. Stasov, V. İ. Dal' ve S. İ. Ojegov gibi Rus etnograf, halk bilimci, sanat eleştirmeni ve dilbilimcilerin kokoşnikler üzerine etimolojik araştırmalarını karşılaştıran bu makalede, güncel incelemelere de yer verilir. Tüm bu çalışmalarda iki temel eğilimin ağırlık kazandığı ortaya konulur: Erken dönem çalışmalarda söz konusu başlığın, saçları açık bırakmanın uğursuzluk getireceğine ilişkin inanışlar dolayısıyla ortaya çıkışı ve tılsım işlevi üzerinde durulduğu, ayrıca kadınların sosyal statüsünde ve aile içi görev dağılımında sembolize ettiği değerlerin etnografik veriler ışığında işlendiği görülür. Güncel çalışmalarda ise kokoşniklerin, Rus geleneksel kıyafetlerini klişe biçimde sembolize eden bir aksesuar olarak yansıtıldığı ve bu yolla, özünde oldukça zengin bir geçmişe sahip olan Rus giyim kuşam kültürünün, tek tip bir imgeye indirildiği yönünde eleştirel bir bakış açısı dikkat çeker.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kokoşnik, kadın başlığı, maddi kültür, toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri, Rus etnografılar.

Introduction

Headdress, which is a part of clothing culture, does not only meet people's need for covering and adornment or the necessity for protection from dangers and harsh climate. It also conveys the messages that women using them want to send symbolically to the society for centuries. These messages might be shaped according to the social stratum, religious belief, and marital status of the person using it. Additionally, headdresses gain the identity of accessories and become a flamboyant indicator of one's strength and well-being in society.

It's an obvious fact that headdresses are like mirrors in which traditional folk life and authentic handicraft styles are lustrously reflected. Hence, some of the them, especially women's headdresses remain the most commonly used and worldwide known pieces of folk costumes. They become the subject of numerous ethnographic studies and are eagerly perpetuated by folklorists through drawings or photographs carving their names into the cultural memory. According to folk beliefs, they are magical, worn to protect people from the evil, and thus gradually become talismanic symbols. As Russian ethnographer and researcher of folk traditions Galina Sergeyevna Maslova (1984: 3) points out: "*Folk costumes are associated with various areas of the spiritual life of the people, including aesthetic and religious-magical ideas*". It is worth mentioning that these costumes, glamorously depicted in fairy tale illustrations, which are the obvious indicators of peasant life and beliefs, capture the reader's attention and profoundly attract them.

Since a headdress is not only used for protection or as an accessory, it also demonstrates political meanings in certain periods of the history. Therefore, the use of headdresses is either encouraged or prohibited by leaders, whose aim is to radically change the cultural habits of the folk. These severe changes occur especially when the modernization movements gain momentum or after the great revolutionary events that occurred in the preceding decades. The clothing style, which conveys political meanings on a large scale, also turns into a symbol of conservative circles and protesters, who want to keep the cultural heritage perpetually alive against the dominant ideology that forces them to adapt to the pro-Western policy. Despite the prohibition of some headdresses, they are used provocatively by peasants and members of the intelligentsia. The power of everyday practices destabilizes hierarchical structure and this passive resistance uniting the different classes of society causes some conflicts between the people and the leaders demanding and imposing a “revolution from above”. As stated in the historical sources, such tensions also prevail among Russians when different perspectives come to the fore on the usage of traditional costumes after the modernization movements.

The main objective of the present study is to examine kokoshnik, an essential part of the folk costumes mentioned above and a Russian headdress laden with pragmatic, traditional, mystical, religious, cultural, and political codes, through a gender-sensitive approach. In the first part of the study, the etymology of the word kokoshnik, which has an interesting and uncommon resonance in languages other than Russian, is given to the reader in general terms. In the second part of the study, a folkloric description of kokoshnik is made, different types of this headdress are introduced and their metaphorical structure that reflects gender roles in women’s world is examined. In the remaining part of the paper, as a consequence, the processes of prohibition and revival of kokoshnik as an accessory symbolizing social belonging in Russian culture are discussed within the framework of the political history of the country.

On the Etymology of the Word “Kokoshnik”

The term kokoshnik is usually used in two different fields and refers to both a traditional women’s headdress and an architectural decorative element in Russian. Primarily, it represents an old headdress in the shape of a comb resembling a fan, crescent, or rounded shield, surrounding the head and the essential symbol of Russian traditional costume. Besides, while functioning as one of the key terms of Russian traditional architecture, kokoshnik refers to a semicircular or keel-shaped outdoor decorative element. An architectural kokoshnik is applied to the walls, vaults, and also around the drums of the churches and it is often arranged in tiers. According to the research done before, there are various and effective ways to translate this Russian architectural element into English. It can be translated as header, careen-shaped ogee gable or corbel arch. However, the usage of the

original term *kokoshnik* allows the researcher or the reader to preserve the cultural and historical color untouched. Hence, the most effective way of translation would be a combination of the transliteration method and descriptive technique. For instance, the term *kokoshnik* can be translated as follows: “*Kokoshnik, arched gable in Russian architecture*” (Telegina & Dolgova, 2021: 123-125). However, it should be also borne in mind that this definition will only be useful for its use in the field of architecture.

As a matter of fact, the term does not originally refer to an architectural element. Therefore, prominent Russian lexicographer Sergey Ivanovich Ozhegov (2007: 277) describes a *kokoshnik* as “*an old, typically Northern Russian female headdress in the form of a decorated shield over the forehead*”. According to another description, the *kokoshnik* is a headdress of a married woman and is used as a part of the traditional Russian costume. It is an elegant headdress designed in various shapes and usually constructed on a solid base, completely hiding the hair. It is assumed that the *kokoshnik* is a relatively late type of headdress that replaced the *kika* (Zhilina & Smirnitskaya, 2009: 449). Although *kika* is a women’s headdress widely used as a *Russian tiara*, it is less known around the world when compared to the latter.

According to Russian lexicographer and polyglot Vladimir Ivanovich Dal’s (1903: 339-340) *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language* [Tolkovyy slovar’ zhivogo velikoruskogo yazyka], a *kokoshnik* can be worn both by maidens and married women. Russian linguist and ethnographer Dmitry Konstantinovich Zelenin, on the other hand, claims that this description is inaccurate in reflecting true ethnographic data. He argues that only married women wear a *kokoshnik*, which is removed for the first time shortly after the marriage (Zelenin, 1927: 541). Obviously, there is no consensus among researchers regarding the marital status of women using it. It seems to be a common belief that married women are entitled to use more ostentatious headdresses.

Although there is controversy regarding its usage, numerous researchers from various disciplines seem to agree fundamentally on the origin of the *kokoshnik*. According to a primary etymology, it comes from Old East Slavic word *kokosh*, which means “chicken” (Avanesov, 1991: 236; Tseytlin, 1994: 287). It can be inferred that the shape of these headdresses also emphasizes the relationship between a crest and a chicken comb. The name of the master of these splendid headdresses also comes from the same Old East Slavic root *kokosh*. Traditionally, an artisan designing *kokoshnik* professionally is called *kokoshnitsa* in Russian. As Maslova (1956: 680-682) states, unlike the *soroka*, which is made mainly of homespun and embroidered fabric by peasant women themselves, *kokoshnik* is usually made of expensive fabric such as brocade and velvet, adorned with braids and natural or imitation pearls. It is made by professional craftswomen, having been raised in cities, large villages, and sometimes at monasteries.

Derived from the Slavic concept of *kokosh*, kokoshnik is clearly used in the meaning of “dressed with a chicken comb”. Obviously, kokoshnik has no other resemblance with chickens or roosters other than combs (Zelenin, 1927: 535). However, the eye-catching combs of poultry are considered sufficient for this analogy and it is indisputable that the origin of the Russian word kokoshnik indicates some linguistic concepts that are closely linked to birds. Researchers depict women’s headdresses used among Russians with a special emphasis on their similarity with the birds like chickens or magpies. As Russian critic of art Vladimir Vasilyevich Stasov stresses, it is noteworthy that denotations of Russian women’s headdresses are closely intertwined with common bird species. For instance, just as kokoshnik comes from *kokosh-chicken* [kokosh’-kuritsa], so does *magpie* [soroka] comes from the *magpie bird* [soroka] (Stasov, 1872: xi). It should be noted that, located at the lowest part of the *soroka*, the knot has a movable structure resembling a magpie tail or a pair of wings.

In appearance, a kokoshnik really resembles a comb or feathers on the head of a bird. In this regard, the kokoshnik is given such a name redolent of birds. In various provinces in Russia, the forms of kokoshnik and the styles of its decorations are very diverse, consequently, in each province, a certain type of kokoshnik with a local name such as *kokoshka*, *kokuy*, *zlatoglav*, *sbornik*, *borchatka*, or *kabluchok* prevail (Ioileva, 2020: 303-304). Not only a kokoshnik, but also other Russian folk costumes resemble animals, birds, and sometimes even horns. Given this situation, it is not surprising to see how clear is their connection with the idea of female fertility. As a notable example, while young girls put on a horned *kichka* after marriage, an old woman replaces it with a hornless one (Maslova, 1984: 57-58). This symbolic change clearly has mythological origins representing the holiness of giving birth and the loss of the elder woman’s fertility.

The information given so far indicates that female folk costumes are symbols that show women’s variable roles that society expects from them to act out and their social status, built in accordance with a nation’s gender perception. In this respect, kokoshnik is one of the most prominent accessories that reflect the turning points of a woman’s life and the gender roles upon which the patriarchal culture is constructed such as chastity and motherhood.

Kokoshnik as an Indicator of Gender Roles in Traditional Society

The Russian folk costume is a quite remarkable element of Russian culture that represents the country’s unique traditions and the colorful past of its people. The female headdress as an important component of the national costume, is produced in a variety of shapes to be used in different periods of life such as before and after marriage, as well as for several occasions such as parties and ceremonies. Headdresses have various names, including *kokoshnik*, *venets*, *perednik*, and *povoynik*, and have been in use since the 16th century. Those names change depending on the shape,

function, and according to conditions in which they are used. Headdresses are frequently worn with a *fata* which means veil and covers hair (Tonini, 2019: 265). In this regard, the emergence and development of the forms of East Slavic women's headdresses existing to this day are explained by multifold factors including the tradition of covering hair.

According to Zelenin, the evolution of headdresses is determined by three factors. First of all, biological factors arising from a woman's need to tie her long hair with a rope must be taken into account. Secondly, factors about magical purposes nourished by the necessity for a headdress that functions as a talisman might be debated. In the present, it serves as a guardian of mother and child while protecting them from unclean spirits and the evil eye. And finally, when it comes to the third factor that based on the interaction between regions, it can be said that headdresses begin to be used under the influence of neighboring towns (Zelenin, 1927: 556). It is also obvious that the art of sewing women's headdresses inspired by other tribes has created cross-cultural interactions in clothing customs.

Due to the fact that headdresses, which are closely related to hairstyles, are the main pieces of a young girl's outfit that most obviously represent her age and changes in the social position of her, they are classified into two groups: Those worn by maidens and those worn by married women. Maidens' *venets* or crown (Figure 1) and *prilobnik* (scarfs folded in a strip and fastened like a ribbon, which is originally and commonly used among Ukrainians) are decorated with wreaths of artificial and fresh flowers. When it comes to the headdresses of married women, on the contrary, the general trend is shaped by an acknowledged desire to cover and hide hair as tightly as possible (Berduta & Berezhnaya, 2003: 111). At the basis of this habit lies the fact that malicious features are attributed to different parts of the female body and they are interpreted as magical, enigmatic, and harmful beings in different cultures around the world.

A married woman's evident tendency towards covering the hair is particularly associated and becomes stronger, especially with the idea of dependence, servitude, and obedience to her husband. From this point of view, it is understood that women are to serve men all throughout their life. The custom of covering the hair is also rooted in the belief that female hair spreads a magical power that could cause damage to her own family. According to this belief, married women have to completely cover their hair with a *kichka*, *soroka*, or *povoynik*. The more affluent women wear a ceremonial *kokoshnik*, which is produced more elaborately and decorated richly, during a celebration or on a wedding day. Girls in the North, as well as in the South, do not cover their hair with a ribbon, a bandage, or a folded scarf, nor do they wear any other headdress. Instead, gems, pearls, amber, and various glass beads are worn around the neck (Maslova, 1984: 56; 1956: 551). This interpretation of Maslova also supports the hypothesis of some

Russian ethnographers that accessories covering the hair, such as kokoshnik, are preferred only by married women.

It is worth mentioning that the custom connected with hair covering for women is very ancient. Zelenin stresses that uncovered hair of a married woman is believed to bring misfortune, harvest failure, or loss of livestock. These beliefs are seen among the East Slavic peoples and some of their neighbors. Although under the influence of the fast city life it begins to disappear, this custom is preserved in some regions at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries (Zelenin, 1926: 315-317). As Soviet historian and ethnographer Nina Ivanovna Gagen-Torn stresses, the traditional belief regarding the mysterious power contained in the hair goes a long way back in history not only among Slavs, but also among numerous different peoples of the world. For instance, it is commonly believed that a bride marrying to someone from another tribe, could harm them with the mysterious power contained in her hair (Gagen-Torn, 1933: 88). In this context, the idea that women's hair carries a mysterious and damaging power in traditional beliefs seems to be a common finding that researchers do not contradict.

As stated above, the most important role in the Russian folk costume is played by headdresses. The kokoshnik, however, stands for by far the most well-known and primary piece among them. It can be defined as a rounded shield around the head, the front part of which is made on a solid base and decorated with brocade, braid, ribbons, gems, beads, and river pearls. Besides, it is enriched with precious stones and gold embroidery, especially among the upper classes of society (Ioileva, 2020: 302). Although similar headdresses are used among different layers of the society, the most prominent feature that distinguishes them from each other is the precious stones sewn on them. At that time, it is not economically possible for the lower classes to reach the beads produced from rare natural materials.

Further information on when and where this headdress first appeared can be found in archaeological finds and historical documents. A female headdress reminiscent of the kokoshnik is found in a burial dating back to the 7th century BC on the territory of the Tambov region and another one is also found on an ancient clay figurine in the territory of the Kyiv region. These finds point to the origin of the kokoshnik in Eastern Europe. According to Maslova (1956: 676), although some researchers argue that kokoshnik emerged from Byzantine or Tatar roots, the results showing clearly Russian origins of the kokoshnik demonstrate the emergence of it from Slavic roots. Kokoshnik as a female headdress is first mentioned in print culture through documents written in the 16th and 17th centuries. There is meaningful information about the presence of kokoshnik among peasant women in the 17th century. It is mentioned in the property inventory of peasants as a festive headdress along with the *soroka*.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, kokoshnik is used as one of the most common types of headdresses in Russia. Since it is used predominantly by married women, maidens' open crown is traditionally replaced by a kokoshnik that completely covers the hair in the wedding ceremonies. It should be added that this elegant headdress has the same function with a crown in terms of glorifying womanhood or motherhood (Iolieva, 2020: 302). In this respect, kokoshnik is an accessory that demonstrates women's domestic roles. The data showing that only married women use a kokoshnik also confirm this perspective. In a traditional society, a woman is considered to have fulfilled the sacred duties attributed to her only when she marries and becomes a mother.

The clothing of a young woman in the first year of her marriage is distinguished by a glamorous elegance. In this context, a kokoshnik, richly decorated with brocade, *passementerie* (galloon), real or imitation pearls, and horns, is often worn by a recently married woman until her first child is born. Later a kokoshnik or other delicate headdresses are worn only on the most ceremonious occasions. In this way, a young woman's spiritual and hierarchical transition to motherhood is reflected through the features of the folk costume. This rite reflecting a significant change of status in society is practiced not only with the aid of kokoshnik, but also with various costumes accompanying it. For instance, during festivals, a woman uses a *sarafan*, which becomes a fashionable cloth in some places of the Southern Russian provinces at the end of the 19th century. However, it is worn until her first child is born and then she begins to wear a *poneva* instead of a *sarafan* (Maslova, 1984: 62). At this phase, the young married woman indicates her social position, and her spiritual development is clearly represented in the way she dresses.

Prohibition of Folk Costumes Symbolizing Traditional Lifestyle in Petrine Russia: The Case of Kokoshnik

Given that one of the influential elements of traditional women's clothing is a headdress, its key function as a social sign, as well as an accessory in Russian culture is quite understandable. For instance, a couple of centuries ago, the marital status of a young girl could be determined by her headdress. Therefore, it can be understood that kokoshnik and decorations on it reflect both the social status, the degree of wealth, and material comfort of a person or community. In this regard, a female headdress is insightful in many ways and it reveals the culture and traditions of the Slavs (Saksina, 2019: 13). Kokoshnik and other headdresses are used as symbols to show the marital status of women and provide social communication.

Female folk costumes, which show women's social status to a great extent, come in a wider range of styles and origins compared to men's clothing. For instance, a *sarafan*, which is accompanied by kokoshnik, *povoynik*, bandages, jewelry made of pearls, and amber, is used as the

national symbol of Russian folk costume. It is not only a court dress *a la russe*, but also a form of urban costume on its own (Lyubchenko, 2016: 93). However, it should be noted that these styles resonate with a symbolism that evokes the colors of Slavic and especially Russian lands.

A wide range of materials used in sewing headdresses such as silk, velvet, muslin, gold or silver thread, pearls, tinsel, beads, mother-of-pearl, and colored glass reflect the social status of those who wear them. However, after the reforms of Peter I, which include the necessity to wear Western-style clothing in cities, folk costumes and headdresses cross into different circles associated with older national customs, such as those of provincial merchants and peasants. Then, European costumes become common, especially for the higher classes (Tonini, 2019: 265). Peter the Great's dramatic reforms represent a watershed moment in the history of folk clothing, which is indicative of values such as social status, tradition, and national culture.

In pre-Petrine times, the clothes of queens and adult princesses differ from folk costumes in terms of materials as well as decorations with jewelry or fur (Zabelin, 2014: 630). Also, a *sarafan* harmoniously worn together with a kokoshnik is the dominant style of women's folk costume for the townswomen of pre-Petrine Russia. In pre-Petrine Russia, a *sarafan* is used as a Russian women's clothing, regardless of social class, but in the process of total Europeanization of culture and life, it is retained only among certain groups of the urban population and peasants (Lyubchenko, 2016: 93). The richness of this attire distinguishes it from peasant clothing of the same type used among the less prosperous strata of the urban population. The merchant class remains faithful to traditional clothes for a longer time, however, their clothes differ from the peasants' simple dress style.

In pre-Petrine Russia, a *sarafan* and a kokoshnik constitute the main part of the boyar clothing. In the 19th century, it is worn in merchant and petty-bourgeois circles. It is also used over a *sarafan* as a festive girl's clothing in Great Russia, mainly in Northern territory. Only the wealthiest women, belonging to the urban and rural bourgeoisie, sew it from silk brocade, velvet, and sometimes embroidered with gold. The sleeveless jacket called *dushegreyka* is inherited along with the kokoshnik and other most expensive accessories of women's wear (Maslova, 1956: 649-650).

Despite the rapid reforms that necessitate a change in clothing, Western influence is not immediately welcomed in all parts of Russia and is confronted with opposition. The speed of displacement of traditional clothing in the cities is not uniform everywhere. As contemporary reports show, "the old dress", which consists of a *sarafan*, skirts with a pattern woven with gold, padded jackets, and a kokoshnik with a veil, is completely abandoned to be worn in some places of Moscow. However, it is still used in a number of cities in Russia during the 1840s (Maslova, 1956: 560). Although

a kokoshnik is a noble costume in pre-Petrine Russia, after the reforms of Peter the Great, only peasants continue to wear it.

Following Peter the Great's death, considerable changes are observed in the character of the drastic reforms. It is undeniable merit of Catherine II, who ascended to the throne after Peter I, that she exhibits a more constructive attitude towards dress codes as a female monarch, despite continuing the revolutions of her predecessor. Furthermore, Catherine II allows the use of kokoshnik during costume events. In the first decades of the 19th century, there is a noticeable increase in the number of photographs that feature people dressed in popular fashion, with the headdresses serving as the ultimate symbolic accessories (Tonini, 2019: 265). In this period, as a result of the close cultural ties established with Western countries within the framework of Catherine II's enlightenment program, the reputation of kokoshnik begins to spread throughout the world.

The political symbolism of social values signified by kokoshnik and other traditional pieces is reflected not only in visual arts and design but also in literary texts. For instance, in his short story *Two Landowners* [Dva pomeshchika] Ivan Sergeyeovich Turgenyev mentions how one landowner forbids his serfs to wear old rags and orders kokoshnik to be replaced with them. Despite his efforts, the peasant women still wear the latter as an addition to their old *kichka* (Turgenyev, 1979: 164). Undoubtedly, this passage is nothing but a reflection of the tension between a leader in power and his subjects and is an allegory of the turbulent modernization adventure of Russia in fictional texts. In this sense, folk culture and clothing become a form of resistance. Whether wearing a kokoshnik or another folk costume element is outlawed or encouraged, traditional clothing has always tried to exist under the dominance of the ruling class and has been embraced by the lower classes.

The Revival of Kokoshnik in Modern Times

It is well known that at the end of the 18th century, romanticism, which grows rapidly in European culture, reawakens interest in nations' historical past and raises awareness of national sentiment. In painting and literature, this tendency is easily noticeable and extensively explored. By the end of the 18th century, a number of portraits show women, clearly not from peasant circles, dressed in Russian *sarafan* and kokoshnik. Given the fact that until the Napoleonic Wars, the kokoshnik is only used as an accessory for masquerade balls, it is difficult to say how widespread this interest is among aristocrats at the beginning of the 19th century. However, following Russia's victory over Napoleon in the Great Patriotic War, when folk theme becomes popular, nobles begin to wear traditional Russian costumes once again (Los' & Krochkina, 2021: 141). In these years, Russia both enters the romantic period in which nationalism has historically flourished in its roots,

and all the spiritual and traditional values that will bring the people together are brought to the fore including folk costumes.

In connection with the spread of Slavophilism, and then populism in the second half of the 19th century among the Russian intelligentsia, a passion arises for using not only female folk costumes, but also men's peasant costumes in Russian style. Furthermore, in the middle of the 19th century, Russian decorative art is influenced by historicist tendencies, especially in terms of the design of performances, in which authentic or recreated boyar costumes are displayed. In high society, the boyar style is preferred in the creation of costumes for balls, evenings, masquerades, carnivals, amateur performances, and other amusements. In 1903, in other words, on the 200th anniversary of the founding of St. Petersburg, these costumes are exhibited in costume balls, which are supposed to demonstrate the strength and glory of the boyar culture that Peter I destroyed (Lyubchenko, 2016: 93). Undoubtedly, the negative reaction of the boyars to the Westernization movements in the empire contributes to the preservation of local culture and national colors, and the conflict in question arises from the richness of the clothing culture.

It should be stated that researchers, who have written on kokoshnik, such as Bol'shakova, Tonini, and Gushina, point to the oeuvre of Russian painter Konstantin Yegorovich Makovsky. It is considered as a socio-artistic exploration, which serves to revive the popularity of traditional kokoshnik in the context of the oppositional nature of the boyar clothing culture. Bol'shakova stresses that the revival of the Russian folk costume manifests itself in national painting. Therefore, by the 1880s the "Russian theme" begins to acquire an increasingly "costume-oriented" character. From her point of view, this is exactly what made the talented painter Makovsky a well-known collector of antiquities. Above all, Russian authentic costume and kokoshnik depicted elaborately in his well-known portraits (Figure 2) are obviously fashionable and highly paid (Bol'shakova, 2005: 5).

According to another interpretation mentioning the description of kokoshnik in the works of Makovsky, the triumph of such a powerful historicist rediscovery is also reflected in various art studios of the era. As Tonini (2019: 270) states, Makovsky's *A Boyar Wedding Feast* [Boyarskiy svadebnyy pir] (1883), which celebrates Old Russia in a magnificent arrangement of colors, costumes, and artifacts, is awarded a gold medal and enjoys enormous popularity worldwide. The high price at which American jeweler Charles William Schumann purchases it paves the way for Russian art's success in the United States.

When it comes to "Russia abroad", it will not be enough to talk about some artistic journeys and immigration after the October Revolution to America alone. The activities of Russian immigrants in Europe, considered as an earlier port, contribute greatly to the recognition of Russian national identity in the Western art scene. Especially in the performances of *Ballet*

Russes, an itinerant company founded by the art patron Sergey Pavlovich Diaghilev, the atmosphere of “Russian spirit” spreads across Europe in a spectacular way. In these stage performances, kokoshnik is used both in costume design of actresses as a traditional head accessory (Figure 3) and in stage design as an architectural element.

In émigré communities, the search of nostalgia and the desire to find lost memories also contribute to the rebirth of kokoshnik. Numerous images of the nobles dressed in pre-Petrine Russian attire make a sensation throughout Europe and are later remembered by émigrés as vivacious images of a paradise lost. The kokoshnik, which is frequently created at émigré ateliers in Paris and London throughout the 1920s, enters into the mainstream of European fashion, particularly at weddings and other comparable events. In this way, “*the image of Old Russia is promoted its mysterious and exotic world*” (Tonini, 2019: 274-275).

Due to the fact that concepts such as mystery and exoticism associate Russian culture with Eastern values and images, it is possible to see that contradictions between different interpretations of this juxtaposition may exist. Some proudly evaluate the sudden popularity of the kokoshnik as a concrete reflection of the Russian spirit, while others argue that Russian culture is stereotyped in this way. For instance, Los’ and Krochkina (2021: 139) point out that the spontaneous popularity of the kokoshnik, which arises unexpectedly during the World Cup celebrations in Russia in the summer of 2018, is an unusual phenomenon. According to them, when Russian provinces are flooded with foreigners and the country is observed by millions of football fans, the kokoshnik becomes a symbol of a nation’s consolidation. At the tournament, kokoshnik turns everyone into “Russians”, filling the ceremony with a “Russian national spirit”. Through this event, kokoshnik, one of the main pieces of the Russian clothing tradition, becomes an element of popular culture and is recognized all around the world.

Contrary to scholars who are pleased with the revival of the kokoshnik and *sarafan*, Gushina expresses her dissatisfaction with stereotyping of Russian national costume. According to her, it cannot be said that this approach is a characteristic aspect only of modern times. This misconception is reflected in the Costumed Imperial Ball (1903) in the Russian style, which represents traditional costumes of the pre-Petrine time in a cliché (Figure 4). On the other hand, in colorful paintings of Makovsky, his leaning towards the standardization of folk costumes can be seen, regardless of the artist’s patriotic intentions. Gradually, stereotyping of the traditional costume penetrates mass consciousness. Russian women’s costume becomes necessarily a *sarafan* and a kokoshnik in the visual perception of both Russian citizens and foreigners. And unfortunately, the audience watches performers of folklore groups in more stylized or monotypic folk costumes on the stage (Gushina, 2020: 172). The observations and comments of the researcher mentioned above differ significantly from the previous ones.

Privileged interpretations of their own values draw attention among Russian scholars, although they are not expressed from a romantic nationalist perspective as in the 19th century. However, preventing folk costumes from being standardized is an effective way to protect and maintain national values. In line with this assumption, non-Western nations should avoid being the target of orientalist views that reduce their material culture to stereotyped sameness.

Conclusion

In this study, the multidimensional role of the Russian traditional headdress called kokoshnik is questioned through the image of a triangle as an analytical tool. The importance of this headdress in traditional Russian culture, its use as a protective talisman influenced by Slavic mythology, and lastly the positions it stands for in the division of gender roles make up the three vertices of this triangle. Depending on these features, it can be argued that the kokoshnik plays a crucial role in the socialization process of Russian women.

In essence, kokoshnik refers to a symbolic portrayal of socially prescribed gender roles in marriage and the family. Since it reflects the user's social rank, it gains spiritual value for a maiden, who is preparing to marry. While very ostentatious headdresses can only be worn by married women, there are notable differences between the headdresses of newly married young women and that of women playing the role of mother in the family. Therefore, only the women who have children wear kokoshnik that carries the various symbols reconciling images of nature with female fertility such as horns or berries.

Kokoshnik also has a place in folk beliefs for the protection of women from evil or the protection of people from the "evil women". When a kokoshnik serves the role of a talisman, it guards mother and child and shields them from demonic spirits and the evil eye. On the other hand, the tradition of covering the hair with a kokoshnik has its origins in the notion that a woman's hair carries a mystical force that could harm her own family. Folklorists and ethnographers emphasize that a married woman's uncovered hair is thought to portend bad luck, failed crop, or the loss of property.

The fate of this traditional headdress undergoes a significant change during the Westernization reforms, whereas it is worn every day along with a *sarafan* until Peter the Great's reign. Wearing a kokoshnik is prohibited in urban life due to the belief that civilization demands a European dress code. However, this custom is still practiced, particularly in the countryside and Northern regions of the empire. The use of kokoshnik during this time becomes symbolic among intellectuals who advocate for a return to the nation's untouched roots. In line with the nationalist ethos of the romantic era, this traditional clothing style is also mirrored in contemporary artworks. While all these oppositions are growing stronger, kokoshnik is

used naturally by peasants and provocatively by boyar families or members of the intelligentsia.

Kokoshnik, which is initially made popular by political opposition, owes its second rebirth to Russian émigré art communities in Europe. In order to explain this reciprocal artistic contact between Russian artists and their Western followers, researchers use the idea of nostalgia and emphasize the desire to return to national values resulting from this intense homesickness. Throughout these years abroad after the October Revolution, the world of images including traditional kokoshnik exhibited in émigré circles gives the Western audience an authentic and slightly oriental taste.

The third revival of the kokoshnik is observed during the 2018 World Cup in Russia. Attracting the attention of foreign visitors during this period, the headdress becomes a part of popular culture. This universal recognition turns into a phenomenon that some researchers praise proudly and celebrate with great national enthusiasm, while others criticize on the grounds that Russian culture is stereotyped by this sudden popularity.

Regardless of which method is used in the research on kokoshnik, descriptive or critical, it would be wrong to consider that this headdress is just a decorative or additional item complementing a folk costume. Quite the contrary, it is laden with ritualistic, socio-political, or artistic significance in certain periods of Russian history. Therefore, kokoshnik and other traditional headdresses deserve to be appreciated more in international literature.



Figure 1.

Collector of Russian folk costumes Natalia Leonidovna Shabelskaya's (1841-1904) daughter in a traditional *venets* (crown).

Circa 1900.

A photograph from the collection of Shabelskaya. The Russian Museum of Ethnography.

Retrieved from: <https://ethnomuseum.ru/> [22.03.2022]



Figure 2.
Konstantin Yegorovich Makovsky (1839-1915). Study for “Sprinkling the Hops”.
1901.
Private collection.
Retrieved from: <http://www.art-catalog.ru/> [22.03.2022]



Figure 3.
Russian prima ballerina Anna Matveyevna Pavlova (1881-1931), artist of the the *Ballets Russes* of Diaghilev (1872-1929) is seen in a traditional kokoshnik.
Circa 1909.
A photograph from the Foulsham & Banfield Photo Studio in London.
Retrieved from: <https://www.rocaille.it/> [22.03.2022]



Figure 4.

Princess Olga Konstantinovna Orlova (1872-1923) wearing a kokoshnik for the 1903 Ball in the Winter Palace.

1903.

A photograph by professional photographer Yelena Lukinichna Mrozovskaya (1892-1941).

Retrieved from: <https://www.rocaille.it/> [22.03.2022]

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