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Evolution of ethnic and urban women's clothing of Slobozhanshchyna during the 20th century

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Abstract. The relevance of the current study is conditioned by the need for in-depth analysis and preservation of the cultural heritage of the region, since the interaction of traditional forms and influences of the urban environment on women's clothing of Slobozhanshchyna during the twentieth century remains insufficiently investigated. The purpose was to comprehensively investigate the specifics of the evolution of ethnic and urban women's clothing, its spatial characteristics and features of decoration on the territory of Slobozhanshchyna in the 20th century. The study used the following methods of scientific cognition: historical, cultural, and comparative historical analysis. The study provided a thorough description of the complex of traditional women's clothing of Slobozhanshchyna, highlighting its typical elements, silhouette solutions, colouristics, and symbolism. Shirts, aprons, belts, hats, chest and upper elements of clothing, and typical embroidery ornaments and their compositional arrangement were analysed. The study also focused on the analysis of transformational processes in ethnic and urban women's clothing of Slobozhanshchyna residents during the 20th century. Factors that contributed to the changes were analysed, in particular, the availability of factory fabrics, lifestyle modifications, the spread of urban fashion trends, and public policies regarding folk culture. A design project of the contemporary ethnocollection of women's costume has been developed. The collection was based on a deep understanding of the architectonics, colouristics, and ornaments of traditional clothing of Slobozhanshchyna, adapting these elements to the requirements of contemporary fashion. The practical value of the study lies in the possibility of applying its results to integrate ethnic motifs into everyday and festive clothing. The results obtained serve as a basis for creating innovative design solutions that contribute to the popularisation and rethinking of the national cultural heritage

Keywords: ethnography of Slobozhanshchyna; traditional costume; transformation of clothing; collection; amateur fashion; embroidery

INTRODUCTION

The investigation of the evolution of clothing is extremely relevant, because it is an integral part of the material and spiritual culture of society. The outfit not only reflects the historical events and climatic conditions of the region, but also carries deep national features of the life of the people. It is a hallmark of the era, which allows understanding the dynamics of social change, aesthetic preferences, and worldview of past generations, making it a valuable source for learning about cultural heritage. The study of the evolution of regional women's clothing in the 20th century is multifaceted and attracts the

attention of researchers both in Ukraine and abroad. Contemporary studies actively consider the transformation of the costume, its social functions, and the influence of historical events on fashion trends.

In particular, the Ukrainian researcher V. Sushko (2024) in the publication focused on the study of folk clothing of the Ukrainian Slobozhanshchyna as a component of cultural heritage, focusing on regional features of cut, symbolism of ornaments, and the role of clothing in the development of local identity. O. Korniienko (2021) focused on investigation of the role of Ukrainian fashion

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houses as centres of representation of Soviet fashion. In the paper, the researcher analysed how state fashion institutions in Ukraine functioned not only as clothing manufacturers, but also as tools of ideological influence, forming standards of appearance, taste, and behaviour in accordance with the official Soviet cultural policy. N.V. Chuprina & O. Tereshchenko (2023) discussed how traditional Ukrainian ornaments are transformed and integrated into contemporary clothing and accessories. The researchers analysed the role of ornamental motifs as a cultural code that not only preserved national identity, but also served as a source of inspiration for contemporary designers. Special attention was paid to the interpretation of patterns in the context of fashion, their symbolism, and adaptation to contemporary aesthetic trends.

K. Pletsan (2022) considered historical and cultural heritage, and the preservation of traditions during ethno-festivals in the space of creative industries, focusing on their role as a tool for development and opportunities for cultural self-realisation, and on the regional features of the authenticity of the Ukrainian people, manifested through these events. L. Ovakimian (2022) focused on studying the impact of social and political events, in particular, revolutions and wars, on the popularisation of Ukrainian national motifs in contemporary fashion design. The researcher investigated how traditional elements of folk costume – embroidery, ornaments, symbols – were integrated into contemporary fashion, becoming not only an aesthetic trend, but also a means of expressing national identity and social position. She emphasised the role of these events as catalysts for the revival of ethnic culture through clothing.

Foreign researchers have also made a significant contribution to understanding the processes of fashion transformation. A.C. Simpson (2021) analysed the “post-Soviet aesthetic” in fashion, which has turned from an underground movement into a global trend. The researcher proved that this trend, which became popular due to designers from the former USSR, was not just a variation of postmodernism. According to the researcher, its uniqueness lies in its special cultural

semantics, which comes from the experience of life in the Soviet Union. S.N. Minhus & L. Huie (2021) in their paper explored how wearing traditional clothing at festivals contributes to the revival of cultural heritage. Using the example of “Pohela Boishakh” festival in Bangladesh, they found that traditional costumes are a key element that emphasises unity, simplicity, aesthetics, and tolerance, which, in turn, increases the significance of the festival itself. Such researchers as D. Sorea & M. Borcoman (2025) examined women’s folk costume from the city of Rupea, Romania. They analysed it as an important element of cultural heritage, demonstrating sustainability and adaptability in the contemporary world. The researchers looked at how the traditional costume is integrated into contemporary fashion trends, while maintaining its unique identity.

The analysis of scientific papers allowed forming a holistic view of the complexity and versatility of the topic under study. Based on it and considering the identified gaps, the purpose of this study was to investigate the evolution of women’s clothing of Slobozhanshchyna during the 20th century, identify key periods of its transformation, and analyse socio-cultural factors that influenced the development of fashion trends.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was based on a comprehensive approach that combined different methods of cognition to achieve the goal. The main ones were the historical method, which allowed tracing the chronology of changes and the context of events; cultural analysis, which allowed assessing the symbolic meaning and aesthetic aspects of clothing; and the comparative historical method, which allowed identifying common and distinctive features in the evolution of women’s costume Slobozhanshchyna in comparison with other regions and pan-European trends. Materials for the study were museum collections (Kharkiv historical museum named after M.F. Sumtsova, open-air ethnographic museum “Ukrainian Sloboda” in Pysarivka), photo archives (Lukianets, 2018), textile samples, and specialised scientific literature (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of specialised scientific literature used in the study

Branch of literature	Specialisation	Keywords
Ethnographic literature	Research of traditional folk clothing, its elements, materials, embroidery techniques, and symbols.	“Ethnography of Slobozhanshchyna”, “Folk clothing of Kharkiv region”, “Traditional costume of Slobozhanshchyna”.
Historical literature	Analysis of socio-economic and cultural processes of the 20 th century that influenced changes in clothing.	“History of Slobozhanshchyna of the 20 th century”, “Urbanisation in Ukraine”, “Everyday life of Ukrainians of the 20 th century”.
Art history literature	Study of clothing as a part of material culture, decorative and applied arts, and aesthetics.	“Ukrainian decorative and applied arts”, “Art of embroidery”, “Ukrainian costume”.
Literature on the history of fashion	Research of urban clothing, the influence of Soviet and world fashion on Ukrainian costume, transformation of styles.	“Fashion history of the 20 th century”, “Soviet fashion”, “Urban suit of the 20 th century”.

Source: compiled by the author of the study

The study stages included:

1. Collection and systematisation of materials: search and analysis of archival documents, photographs, periodicals (fashion magazines, newspapers), museum collections, memoirs of eyewitnesses.

2. Period analysis: a detailed study of each of the four selected periods (1900-1930, 1940-1950, 1960-1980, 1990-2000) in terms of prevailing styles, materials, decorative elements, and overall style.

3. Identifying causal relationships: establishing the relationship between historical, economic, social, and political events, and changes in women's clothing.

4. Creation of a visual collection: based on the collected materials, a digital collection of images was developed to clearly demonstrate the evolution of the outfit. Adobe Illustrator graphics editor and tools for organising and cataloguing visual content were used to create it.

The use of a comprehensive methodological approach helped to comprehensively cover the subject of research and provide an interdisciplinary analysis of changes in women's clothing in Slobozhanshchyna during the 20th century. The combination of historical, ethnographic, and art history aspects revealed not only the external transformations of the costume, but also the deeper socio-cultural processes that predetermined them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the main elements of the traditional women's costume of Slobozhanshchyna of the 20th century. Ukrainian ethnic women's costume is a complex of items of clothing that are harmoniously combined with each other and includes: undergarments, waist, chest, and outerwear. The costume was complemented by hats, shoes, belts and a variety of removable jewellery. Each of the elements of clothing could be combined into a complex with any elements of clothing, while each of which had a specific purpose. Slobozhanshchyna or Sloboda Ukraine is a historical and geographical region that covers most of the Kharkiv, eastern Sumy, northern Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine. Analysis of sources as

T.V. Kara-Vasyliieva (2008), L. Ponomar (2016), M.V. Oliinyk (2018) allowed identifying information about the components of ethnic Ukrainian women's costume, to determine that the transfer of regional belonging to the Ukrainian costume is possible with the help of the colour scheme of threads, certain symbols, cut, embroidery techniques, jewellery, and decor. Certain historical and socio-economic circumstances, a variety of natural and climate conditions, and the type of relations between people had a significant impact on the appearance of distinctive features of national embroidery in different regions of Ukraine. Considering the national clothing of Sloboda Ukraine, it was revealed that clothing has a great relationship with folk traditions and everyday life.

The main elements that include traditional Ukrainian women's costume are identified: shirt; kersetka; plakhta (derga); apron; yupka; coat; cap; wreath; shawl; morocco or leather boots; coral or coin beads (Odarchyk & Tsarynnyk, 1992). Among the main elements (Fig. 1) shirt – the basis of the Ukrainian costume, made of linen or hemp fabric, could be with long or short sleeves, richly decorated with embroidery on the collar, front, cuffs, and hem. Embroidery had not only decorative, but also amulet significance, and its ornaments and colours differed depending on the region. Plakhta (derga) – unstitched waist clothing consisting of two or more panels that were wrapped around the camp. Plakhta was a festive garment, made of woolen fabric, often in a cage or with geometric patterns. Derga was a simpler option, usually made of black or dark fabric. Kersetka (corsage, bodice) – sleeveless clothing that tightly fit the upper body, emphasising the waist. It was made of more expensive fabrics (brocade, silk, velvet), often decorated with embroidery, appliques, braid, buttons, worn over a shirt. Yupka – demi-season outerwear that looked like a long jacket or short caftan. Usually sewn from cloth, wool, sometimes lined. It could be fitted or loose, often decorated with embroidery, fur, braid. Morocco or leather boots are traditional shoes made of leather. Morocco boots were festive, made of thin, soft, often coloured leather (red, green, yellow). Leather boots were more casual. Morocco and leather boots are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1. Main elements of the Ukrainian traditional women's costume

Note: a – embroidered shirt from Slobozhanschina; b – plakhta (derga); c – kersetka; d – yupka ("kohta")

Source: H.V. Lukianets (2018)



Figure 2. Shoes for the Ukrainian traditional women's clothing

Note: a – morocco women's boots; b – leather boots with accordion-style tops

Source: H.V. Lukianets (2018)

Among the accessories shown in Figure 3 were multi-coloured wool belts – an important and expressive element of Ukrainian traditional costume, especially in women's clothing. They not only served a practical function (supported clothing), but also had a deep symbolic, aesthetic, and social significance. Apron – worn over a plakhta or yupka, was of two types: front (apron) and rear (zapaska). It was made of linen, wool or silk, often richly decorated with

embroidery, lace, appliques, which emphasised the status and skill of the owner. Cap – a headdress of married women that completely covered their hair, had a variety of shapes and sizes, depending on the region, and was often richly decorated with embroidery, lace, and beads. Beads made of coral or coins – was very common and was considered a talisman. Large metal coins (or imitations of them) were attached to a necklace, symbolising prosperity and status.



Figure 3. Accessories for Ukrainian traditional women's clothing

Note: a – multi-coloured wool belts; b – apron; c – coral necklace (7 strands) with silver coins; d – festive cap; e – everyday cap

Source: H.V. Lukianets (2018)

Features of folk clothing in Slobozhanschina are: the use of light fabrics in outerwear; lace floors of shirts and skirts; the use of embroidery techniques or applications; embroidery was carried out in white on white, or red, red with blue, red with black threads; characteristic round neck or stand-up collar in the shirt; in the decoration of clothing most often used plant or geometric ornaments, there is a large number of patterns; with the help of embroidery, headdress, fabric colours emphasised the age of the woman or her status, as evidenced by T.V. Kara-Vasylieva (2008) and L. Ponomar (2016).

In the course of the study, four main periods in the evolution of ethnic women's costume of Slobozhanshchyna during the 20th century were identified and analysed: 1900-1930 – preservation and adaptation: ethnic motifs; 1940-1950 – transformation and influence of time: changes in ethnic fashion; 1960-1980 – revival and stylisation: development; 1990-2000 – identity and modernity: rethinking ethnic fashion in the conditions of independence. It was revealed that the traditional Ukrainian costume was used in private-household, socio-political, cultural-artistic, and artistic-industrial areas.

The results obtained regarding the complexity and regional features of the folk costume of Slobozhanshchyna are consistent with the main provisions of other researchers. According to P. Odarchyk & H. Tsarynnyk (1992), it was established that the Ukrainian folk costume is a multicomponent ensemble that included undergarments, waist, chest, and outerwear, supplemented with accessories. This can also be traced in the the current study, which described in detail each of these elements – from the shirt to the cap – confirming the fundamental structure of folk clothing. This relationship demonstrated that, although the study by P. Odarchyk & H. Tsarynnyk is basic and general, and it serves as a solid foundation for more detailed regional research.

An important aspect identified in this paper is the role of embroidery as a means of transmitting information about a woman's age and status. This correlates with the results of the study by T.V. Kara-Vasyliieva (2008), who claimed that embroidery was not only a decorative element, but also the language of symbols, which determined regional affiliation, social status, and also had an amulet value. This aspect, highlighted in the text, is a direct confirmation of the key conclusions of the monograph by T.V. Kara-Vasyliieva. Thus, the conclusions were confirmed by the study devoted to the history of the craft itself, and help to better understand the reason for the characteristic of ornaments for Slobozhanshchyna.

In addition, the analysis of the use of costume in various fields (private, socio-political, cultural and artistic) and its evolution during the 20th century is consistent with research on urban culture. According to M.V. Oliinyk (2018), it was found that the traditional clothing of Ukrainians in everyday urban life has undergone significant changes, but continues to play an important role in shaping identity. This can also be traced in this study, which highlights the stages from preserving traditions to rethinking them in the conditions of independence, and the use of clothing in the socio-political, cultural, and artistic spheres. Thus, the results confirm that the transformation of clothing was not only a consequence of historical events, but also a reflection of the adaptation of traditions to new social and cultural conditions, which is a key aspect of research on costume of the 20th century.

Preservation and adaptation: Ethnic motifs in women's costume of Slobozhanshchyna (1900-1930). It was determined that the years 1900-1930 were difficult for the population due to large-scale political and economic events: the First World War (1914-1918) and the Ukrainian Revolution/Civil War (1917-1921), which caused destruction, chaos, and human losses. The Famine of 1921-1923, caused by war, drought, and Soviet politics. Forced collectivisation and industrialisation in the late 1920s and

early 1930s led to repression, resource withdrawal, and further deterioration of the lives of villagers. All these events directly affected the standard of living of the population.

Urban fashion was significantly different from rural fashion, because women who lived in the city had more access to fabrics, the ability to order individual tailoring, which combined contemporary urban clothing with some elements of folk costume, while people in the village made clothes themselves. In the urban environment, women wore corsets, high heels, and for evening outings chose outfits made of lace and silk. Daytime clothing gradually became more practical, remaining within the limits of current fashion trends. Among the wealthy classes, loose-fitting dresses became popular, allowing women to loosen their corsets without noticeably violating etiquette. This was an important stage in the process of emancipation of women, which was considered by M.V. Oliinyk (2018). A new type of clothing appeared – a narrow blouse with a flared skirt to the floor or ankle, in addition, women borrowed something from the men's wardrobe – for example, pea coats, under the influence of the war period, women's clothing in the city became simpler. The deliberate ostentatious splendour gradually receded: the trains were preserved only for the most solemn events, and the length of the skirts was gradually reduced. Restraint in clothing began to be associated with intelligence and education. Blouses and skirts, typical for students, formed a kind of uniform of an educated woman.

The study showed that in the 1920s, representatives of art circles – actresses, artists, wives of poets, etc. – played a leading role in shaping fashion trends. During the day, city women preferred restrained clothing: puritanical tweed suits, spacious raincoats, low-heeled shoes, flared hats. The evening image was marked by greater openness and expression. Flowing dresses, open shoulders, provocative slits, stockings, and elements made of transparent fabrics, feathers, pearls, and sequins have become fashionable. A characteristic feature of women's clothing in the USSR in the first quarter of the 20th century was simple-cut sundresses made of calico and wool, shirt dresses, midi-length skirts, pleats, blouses with gussets, and trousers that were loose at the hips and slightly tapered at the bottom. In the 1930s, fashion became simpler: long skirts and dresses of dark colours with white collars appeared in the women's wardrobe; the figure was emphasised by the oblique cut of dresses that fit the figure; the deep neckline and straps looked spectacular; the main emphasis was placed on the shoulders, lantern sleeves and wings were in fashion; the most popular fabric was chintz, the most desirable was crepe de chine, crepe georgette, faideshin, and silk; the most popular patterns were geometric and a wide variety of flowers from small to the largest (Kaminska & Nikulenko, 2004). Women's fashion of the 1930s is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Women's fashion of the 1930s
Source: UaModna (2017)

The use of Ukrainian clothing was a popular phenomenon among the rural population in everyday life and on holidays (Fig. 5). Ethnic Ukrainian costume was widely used among young people, especially at weddings, Christmas, Easter holidays, among intellectuals, well-known public figures, and in everyday life, the use of Ukrainian ethnic clothing at public and political events was a popular phenomenon (Oliinyk, 2017). Ukrainian embroidery served as a means of drawing attention to socially significant problems, in particular, during the "Day of the Ear of Wheat" campaign (1912), which aimed to raise charitable funds for starving peasants. Folk clothing was also used as a means of expressing national identity, in particular, during the "Ukrainian demonstration"

for the proclamation of a free Ukraine on April 1, 1917. Ukrainian women's costume was widely used in the activities of choral groups, theatres and art circles.

The 1900s-1930s were characterised by collections of models created by famous fashion designers and artists: Anatol Petrytskyi, Oleksandr Ekster, Yevheniya Prybylska (Fig. 6). Their activities were based on the use of folk motifs in their collections.



Figure 5. Ukrainian girls in national costumes, Luhansk, 1915
Source: A. Baitsar (2018)



Figure 6. Collections of clothing models

Note: a – Anatol Petrytskyi; b – Oleksandra Ekster; c – Yevheniya Prybylska

Source: M. Melnyk (2020), N. Paranko *et al.* (2021), T.V. Kara-Vasyliieva (2024), Cultural News of Ukraine (2025)

The identified trends in women's costume of Slobozhanshchyna in the period 1900s-1930s were confirmed and clarified in the works of other researchers. According to M.V. Oliinyk (2018), it was found that urban fashion was indeed radically different from rural fashion, as urban women had wider access to fabrics,

and their clothing was subject to faster changes. This was also evident in the present study, which noted the emergence of more practical clothing, such as dresses with a loose silhouette, blouses with skirts, and elements of men's wardrobe. Additionally, research by M.V. Oliinyk (2018) provided a deeper understanding of

how the ideas of women's emancipation and changing social roles influenced the choice of clothing, which is reflected in a more free and functional wardrobe, which has become a symbol of the new era.

Thus, the results of this study convincingly demonstrated that the period 1900s-1930s was a time of deep contradictions in the women's clothings of Slobozhanshchyna. On the one hand, there was a gradual simplification of clothing under the influence of global fashion trends and difficult socio-economic conditions, and on the other hand, the traditional costume acquired a new meaning as a symbol of identity and political resistance. This period is an important stage in the transition from the purely ethnographic use of clothing to its functioning as an element of contemporary urban culture, which prepared the ground for further transformation.

Transformation: Changes in the ethnic fashion of women's clothing in Slobozhanshchyna (1940-1950).

Analysing the years 1940s-1950s, it is important to note that the war years worsened the country's economy, industrial enterprises were re-formed into military bases, and there were long delays in the production of clothing, even the most urgent ones. It was revealed that since the beginning of the 1940s, the main style-forming detail of clothing has become padded shoulders, which have increased every year. N.M. Kaminska & S.I. Nikulenko (2004) found that elements of military and sports style appeared in clothing: patch pockets, yoke, deep pleats on the back, straps and shoulder straps, and a belted waist also became fashionable. Women's skirts have become shorter than in the 1930s, with a predominance of slightly flared and folded models. Evening and holiday dresses of the 1940s were distinguished by slightly flared skirts, cleavage, tight-fitting or draped

bodice and small lantern sleeves, they were often sewn from crepe-satin, faideshin, thick silk, crepe-georgette, crepe-marochen, velvet, panoxamite and panshiphon, decorated with lace, floral appliques, and beads. White lace collars were popular, completing the festive image of a georgette made of a black-brown fox, and among the decorations, beads and large brooches stood out especially. In the collections of Soviet houses of models, samples of clothing with a variety of decorative finishes were widely presented: dresses were supplemented with cord, applique, and embroidery. Blouses and dresses with machine-made lace of the "richelieu" type and decorative pleats have become particularly popular. In the middle of the decade, white semi-transparent blouses made of natural or artificial silk, and striped models, were distinguished by a variety of styles: with lantern sleeves, without sleeves, with a lowered arm-hole, with classic turn-down or small rounded collars, and bow collars. In the 1940s-1950s, brooches and necklaces dominated the most common women's jewellery. It was determined that during this period, knitted cardigans and jumpers, just below the belt, with a high elastic band, which tightly fit the waist, were decorated with embroidery or knitted patterns, thin jumpers with a large round neck or boat neck were in fashion, they were belted with a thin strap and worn with a narrow skirt. But, nevertheless, dresses remained the favourite clothes of Soviet women: summer – from colourful fabrics, striped fabrics, polka dots, checkered, and with newfangled geometric and abstract drawings; warm – mostly from monophonic wool, often with white lace or small round collars, with plastrons, trimmed with appliques, cords, embroidery, with miniature buttons fastened with air loops. Women's clothing of the 1940s is shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Women's clothing with shoulder pads, 1940

Source: C. Harvey (n.d.)

In the 1940s-1950s, Ukraine experienced a deep crisis due to the consequences of the Second World War, which led to massive destruction, huge human losses, and the devastation of agriculture. The post-war

Soviet policy of prioritising heavy industry caused an acute shortage of consumer goods, including clothing. In addition, the Famine of 1946-1947, provoked by drought and forced grain procurements, worsened

the already difficult situation of the population. Under these conditions, the traditional women's costume played an important role in the life of Slobozhans and was used at weddings and Ukrainian events (Fig. 8) and in the everyday life of people. Due to the difficult economic situation in the country, amateur fashion became

a popular phenomenon, that is, women themselves began to make clothes for the whole family. Among political figures, Nikita Khrushchev paid great attention to Ukrainian embroidery, considering it an important symbol of Ukrainian culture. Choral and folk groups also continued to use traditional clothing in their activities.



Figure 8. Ukrainian traditional women's clothes at festive events

Note: a – Donetsk, mid-20th century, May Day demonstration; b – Stalino (Donetsk), 1949, celebration of Miner's Day; c – Slovyansk, first half of the 20th century, women's choir

Source: D. Tymoshenko (2018), Ukrainian People Ukrainian-American Magazine (2019), I. Dobrovolenko (2024)

During this period, the first Kyiv House of clothing models in Ukraine appeared, headed by an artistic director from Kharkiv N.A. Lozovskyi. When creating collections, model houses used a combination of Ukrainian folk traditions along with fashionable and contemporary forms of clothing (Fig. 9).



Figure 9. Clothing of artists of model houses, 1950s

Source: Ukrainian Institute of Fashion History (2017)

The analysis of the transformation of women's costume in Slobozhanshchyna in 1940s-1950s, conducted in this study, was consistent and supplemented with the conclusions of the latest research. The conclusions of the study on the preservation of ethnic elements were confirmed by E.H. Butenko (2021). The researcher considered embroidery not only as a decorative element, but as a powerful tool for preserving national identity in the conditions of Soviet unification. This phenomenon can be traced through the spread of "amateur fashion", when women personally decorated their clothes with embroidery, appliques, and lace. This was not only a way to overcome deficits, but also a conscious act of preserving cultural codes. In this context, the study by

O. Shkolna (2025), which analysed the adaptation of Scythian ornamental motifs in European art, is also indicative. Similar to the preservation of embroidery as a carrier of identity in Soviet clothing, the transformation of zoomorphic and geometric forms in Christian medieval decor confirmed the ability of traditional symbols to change shape, preserving cultural significance in new historical and stylistic contexts.

Thus, the period 1940s-1950s was a time of deep transformation of the women's costume of Slobozhanshchyna. It reflected not only global fashion trends caused by the war and its consequences, but also adaptation to the conditions of post-war scarcity through "amateur fashion". During this period, the folk costume, although it continued to be used in everyday life and on holidays, acquired an ideological colouring, becoming a symbol that was used by both political figures and art groups to emphasise Ukrainian identity within the framework of Soviet culture.

Revival and stylisation: Development of ethnic fashion in women's costume of Slobozhanshchyna (1960s-1980s). 1960s-1980s were one of the most difficult periods in the history of Ukraine, in which there were many contradictions about the life of the country's population, because there were both positive and negative events that directly affected the state of life of Ukrainians. Positive aspects were relative stability, a gradual increase in the standard of living (compared to previous periods), improved access to housing, education, and medicine. Negative aspects were economic stagnation, a constant shortage of consumer goods (due to the priority of heavy industry), strong ideological pressure, and the growth of environmental problems. This led to a "grey" market and dissatisfaction of the population.

In the 1970s, geometric prints were used, and hippies began to use soft patterns. In 1972, Kenzo Takada presented a collection in which he combined prints that were previously considered incongruous: a soft floral pattern with a stripe, a cage with a stripe. In the 1980s, bright finishes – rhinestones, and sequins – were used with prints. Leopard print, checkered and floral patterns were particularly popular in the aggressive and seductive fashion trend, while polka dot, checkered, and floral motifs were used as prints in the romantic line. The main emphasis when creating prints was on colour, on the one hand, pastel colours were used, and on the other – bright and provocative. The romantic style was characterised by: colourful bright sweaters; shirts with turn-down collars with rounded ends; a full skirt below the knees, a-line silhouette, with a geometric print; flared trousers of bright colour, with a high waist, which is emphasised by a dark belt; high-heeled shoes in pastel colours. The aggressive and seductive style was characterised by: leopard print on the fabric; mini-length skirts; transparent black tights; tops and blouses with open shoulders (Fig. 10).

Ethnic clothing was widely used in theatres (choral groups “Homin”, “Derevo”), fairs (Sorochinska Yarmarka) and exhibitions, and in everyday life it was practically absent (Fig. 11). Folk women’s costume was also used at parties – holidays, when girls were engaged in making traditional Ukrainian clothing, preparing shirts, plakhts, which they embroidered, knitted and spun, singing folk songs (Kaminska & Nikulenko, 2004). Some elements of ethnic women’s costume were worn for weddings,

themed Ukrainian holidays, and calendar and ritual holidays were also not complete without traditional clothing. In 1960s-1980s, representatives of the national movement – dissidents – were well-known in Ukraine, who wore embroidered Ukrainian shirts to express themselves and defend the rights of the Ukrainian people, their traditions, language, and culture. Their activities pushed the country to the idea of creating its own independent state. All collections of models from these times were made by fashion houses, according to information from the publication by M.V. Oliinyk (2017).



Figure 10. Fashion of the 1970s-1980s
Source: N. Fenchyshyn (2024)



Figure 11. Ethnic clothing in the 1970s

Note: a – folk choir “Homin”; b – Christmas nativity scene of dissidents; c – clothing of Ukrainian houses of models
Source: H. Tereshchuk (2012), Homin (2017), H.V. Kokorina (2017)

The analysis of women’s costume of Slobozhanshchyna in the period 1960s-1980s is confirmed in the works of other researchers who studied this period. According to N.M. Kaminska & S.I. Nikulenko (2004), despite

ideological control, Ukrainian fashion was not completely isolated from world trends, which led to an eclectic combination of Western ideas with Soviet reality. Attempts to emulate the Western patterns and silhouettes mentioned

in the study (for example, leopard print, mini-skirts) were a manifestation of the desire for individuality and contemporary beauty ideals that penetrated the USSR through the "Iron Curtain". These trends co-existed with more restrained and romantic styles that were officially approved by the state, creating a mosaic of fashion trends.

Of particular importance during this period was the role of traditional clothing as a means of political self-identification. This correlates with the results of the study by M.V. Oliinyk (2017), who established that in 1960s-1980s Vyshyvanka became a powerful symbol of Ukrainian identity and resistance to Russification, actively used by dissidents. This was also evident in the the current research, which indicates that clothing has ceased to be just a household item, becoming an instrument of political struggle and a marker of dissent. In the 1960s-1980s, when any manifestation of nationalism was severely persecuted, wearing embroidery was a quiet but decisive act of protest, demonstrating loyalty to own culture and the desire for freedom.

Thus, the period 1960s-1980s was a time of deep duality in Ukrainian fashion. On the one hand, there was a complete departure from the traditional costume in everyday life and its replacement with clothing that imitated both Western and Soviet fashion standards. On the other hand, folk clothing itself, being forced out of everyday life, has acquired new, much deeper roles – from a symbol of national culture on the stage to a powerful means of political protest. This transformation paved the way for a further rethinking of ethnic fashion during Ukraine's independence.

Identity and modernity: Transformation of the female ethnomode of Slobozhanshchyna (1990-2000) and the contemporary ethnocollection. In the 1990s-2000s, during the establishment of independent Ukraine, traditional Ukrainian clothing became particularly important. It not only contributed to the education and stimulation of patriotic feelings of citizens, but also became an important symbol of national identity. The main characteristic features of the fashion of the 1990s in Ukraine were: the widespread use of denim clothing, combining them with denim shirts, bags, and shoes; the hourglass silhouette in the suit became relevant; a variety of corsets quickly became fashionable: from short models that emphasised the waist from the chest, to ordinary ones that covered the area from the chest to the lower abdomen, and elongated options that reached the hips (Fig. 12). Simultaneously, unisex fashion was actively spreading, which was characterised by jeans with t-shirts or loose trousers in combination with sweaters, supplemented with comfortable shoes; bright leggings became popular, which were more like tight trousers in shape and had a variety of colours and textures – bright green, purple, orange, leopard, as the "top" to the leggings, some kind of jacket of contrasting acid colours or sports trowels from a tracksuit were often chosen; sequins,

feathers, leopard fabrics, and nylon tights, lace pattern, boots, mini-dresses were widely used in clothing; sneakers and flat shoes in a sporty style were also popular.



Figure 12. Fashion of the 1990s

Source: N. Yartsenko (2024)

Folk clothing has almost completely ceased to be used in the everyday life of slobozhans. The most complete Ukrainian women's costume could be seen during theatrical performances (the folk dance theatre "Zapovit", the Kharkiv State Academic Ukrainian Drama Theatre named after T.H. Shevchenko, performances of "Stolen Happiness" by I. Franko; V. Merezhko's "The Mill of Happiness", E. Ionesco's "Macbeth"), at ethnic festivals and fairs (Ponomar, 2016). Some elements of ethnic clothing can be observed during public and political events (the organisation "Kalmius Palanka" participated in the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Zaporizhzhia Cossacks). Religious calendar holidays such as Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Trinity, Ivana Kupala prompted slobozhans to wear elements of Ukrainian costume. Considering the wedding (Fig. 13), then it should be determined that the use of Ukrainian clothing could simply be traditional, or combined with contemporary clothing, fashionable contemporary clothing made in the Ukrainian style was also used.



Figure 13. Wedding in Slobozhanshchyna at the end of the 20th century

Source: O. Shcherban (2015)

In 1900s-2000s, many famous designers worked in Ukraine, who, when creating their collections, relied on ethnic clothing, using elements of traditional Ukrainian women's costume (embroidered shirt,

skirt with machine and hand embroidery, various types of ethnic headwear, neck ornaments made of beads, coins), which was confirmed by O. Mosendz *et al.* (2025) (Fig. 14).



Figure 14. Collections of Ukrainian designers 1900s-2000s

Note: a – collection of O. Polonets; b – embroidered shirts of O. Karavanska; c – collection of O. Telizhenko; d – collection of L. Pustovit; e – collection of I. Karavay; f – collection of Z. Likhachova

Source: Polonets (n.d.), Poustovit (n.d.), Karavay (n.d.), M. Melnyk (2012), A. Kanarska (2013), Your City (2014)

The evolution of women's clothing in Slobozhanshchyna in the 20th century is a reflection of complex socio-cultural transformations caused by historical events, economic conditions, and ideological changes. Over the course of a century, women's clothing has been subjected to both

the preservation of traditional elements and the influence of external fashion trends adapted to local realities. Table 2 showed a comparative analysis of the main stylistic features of women's clothing in different historical periods in relation to the corresponding socio-cultural context.

Table 2. Comparative analysis of the evolution of women's clothing of Slobozhanshchyna in the 20th century

Period	Key features	Socio-cultural context
1900s-1930s	Combination of traditional elements (embroidery, folk patterns) with the influence of European urban fashion (changes in silhouettes, the appearance of a European cut). Sustainability of folk forms, but gradual integration of new parts and materials.	The First World War, the Ukrainian Revolution, the Civil War, the Famine of 1921-1923, and the beginning of collectivisation. General instability and poverty of the population. On the one hand, the preservation of traditions as an element of stability, on the other – the gradual penetration of new trends through cities.
1940s-1950s	Practicality, functionality, and thrift in clothing. Changes in silhouettes (more direct, simplified shapes), use of available materials. The emergence of "amateur fashion" (self-tailoring, recycling of old clothes). Lack of high-quality fabrics and ready-made outfits.	The Second World War and post-war reconstruction: large-scale destruction, huge human losses, famine of 1946-1947, and the economic priority of heavy industry over light industry. The extremely difficult financial situation of the population, which forced to maximise savings and ingenuity.
1960s-1980s	Gradual introduction of new fashion trends (geometric prints, bright colours), but within the Soviet capabilities. Distribution of unisex elements (jeans, sweaters). Attempts to integrate folk motifs into mass production, but often in a stylised, simplified form.	Relative stability, but economic stagnation, scarcity of quality goods, and ideological control. Influence of Western fashion through film, radio, travel, and black marketeering. Desire for individuality against the background of limited choice.
1990s-2000s	Active reinterpretation and return to folk motifs as a symbol of national identity in independent Ukraine. A combination of traditional elements with contemporary silhouettes and global trends. Growing importance of clothing in the education of patriotic feelings.	Collapse of the USSR, the transition to a market economy, the economic crisis of the early 1990s. Opening borders and free access to world fashion. Search for national identity and its expression through culture, including clothing.

Source: developed by the author

Based on the conducted research, a design project of the contemporary ethnocollection of women's costume "Ukrainochka" was developed, which includes 5 models and is shown in Figure 15. The image of a Ukrainian woman as the personification of beauty, harmony, and spiritual strength was chosen as a source of

creative inspiration for the development of the collection. A significant part of cultural and spiritual achievements was formed under its influence – both through the ability to inspire men to outstanding achievements that later became public domain, and through their own independent creative activities.



Figure 15. Design project of the contemporary ethnocollection of women's costume "Ukrainochka"
Source: developed by the author based on V.M. Ilchuk (2020)

This collection included all the elements of the national women's system of Slobozhanshchyna, namely: a shirt that is present in all models, a kersetka that has been transformed into a contemporary vest (Model No. 1,2,5), an apron that is modernised in the form of a cape (Model No. 2,3,4,5), a skirt (No. 1,5), half-boots. Clothing models are decorated with embroidery with floral and geometric ornaments, and ornamental stripes, lace, and braid on the sleeves, on the bottom of the shirt and plakhta. It is important to note that the sleeves of the shirt of Model No. 5 are decorated with white-on-white embroidery, which is the most characteristic embroidery for the Slobozhanshchyna. The image is completed with hats in the form of a wreath (Model No. 2,4), a cap (Model No. 3,5) and a cap covered with a scarf (Model No. 1), beads made of amber, coins, and coral are used as jewellery.

The study allowed delving deeply into the evolution of women's clothing in Slobozhanshchyna during the 20th century, revealing the complex interaction between traditional ethnic forms and the influence of urbanisation, socio-cultural changes, and global fashion trends. Each period of the century showed unique characteristics that reflected the historical context and women's desire to express themselves through clothing.

The period of the 1990s-2000s, which was a time of revival of national identity in Ukraine, was reflected in the evolution of women's clothing in Slobozhanshchyna, and these trends were confirmed by other researchers. According to L. Ponomar (2016), after a period of Soviet ideological pressure, when folk clothing was largely pushed out of everyday life, it began to be actively used on theatre stages, festivals, and fairs. This was also evident in the current study, which provided specific examples of the use of full Ukrainian dress in performances

at the T.H. Shevchenko Theatre in Kharkiv and at ethnic festivals. This dynamic demonstrates the transition of folk costume from an everyday object to an element of cultural and historical representation, emphasising its symbolic weight.

Special attention in this study was paid to the creativity of contemporary Ukrainian designers who relied on ethnic clothing. These conclusions were confirmed by O. Mosendz *et al.* (2025), who wrote that Ukrainian designers, including those mentioned in the text, actively used elements of traditional costume, turning them into elements of contemporary ethno-fashion. This was also evident in the author's study, which indicates the use of embroidered shirts, skirts, hats, and beads in designer collections. This approach helped to return ethnic elements to fashion, make them popular and aesthetically attractive to the general public, asserting them as part of the contemporary Ukrainian identity.

Thus, the period of 1990s-2000s was a crucial stage in the life of Ukrainian costume. It was revived not as an outdated element, but as a powerful symbol of national identity, which was actively used on stage, in festive rituals, and as a means of political expression. This era opened the door for designers who began to style traditional motifs, integrating them into contemporary fashion. As a result, ethnic clothing has turned from a historical artefact into a dynamic and relevant element of contemporary Ukrainian culture. The comparative analysis carried out in the study, which revealed a complex interaction between traditional ethnic forms and urbanisation, is consistent with the conclusions of all the mentioned scientific papers. They confirmed that the evolution of women's clothing reflects not only historical events, but also a conscious desire to preserve and rethink cultural heritage.

The design project of the contemporary ethnocollection "Ukrainochka" created based on this analysis is a practical embodiment of the identified trends and demonstrates how the traditions of Slobozhanshchyna can become the basis for contemporary creativity. It is a living example of how cultural heritage is becoming a source of inspiration for the future.

CONCLUSIONS

The ethnospecific features of Ukrainian women's clothing of Slobozhanshchyna in the context of traditions and changes were clarified; the stages of the transformation process of the relationship between ethnic and urban fashion of Slobozhanshchyna in the context of its evolution in the 20th century were determined; the areas of using ethnic and urban Ukrainian women's costume of Slobozhanshchyna in the 20th century were determined and a comparative analysis of the evolution of women's clothing was compiled. In the period 1900s-1930s, the preservation of authentic features of the women's ethnic costume of Slobozhanshchyna, despite the influence of urban fashion, was recorded. Embroidery, cut, bright colours, and the use of natural fabrics remained dominant features. Ethnic elements gradually adapted to everyday use, retaining their symbolic meaning despite the decrease in ritual. In the 1940s and 1950s, the transformation of traditional clothing under the influence of military circumstances, material scarcity, and ideological pressure was revealed. The cut was simplified, decorativeness was minimised, and ethnic elements were reinterpreted in the form of stylised ornaments on functional clothing.

In the 1960s-1980s, there was a revival of interest in ethnic fashion, which was manifested in the stylisation of folk motifs in urban clothing. Elements of traditional costume were actively integrated into contemporary silhouettes and materials, which showed a reinterpretation of ethnic heritage as a source of design solutions. In 1990s-2000s, there was an active rethinking of ethnic fashion as a means of national identification. After

independence, there was an expansion of opportunities for free cultural expression. Traditional elements were combined with current fashion trends, which contributed to the development of unique design concepts, representing Ukrainian culture in a global context. The end result of the study, which summarised all the information, was the creation of a contemporary ethnocollection. The collection not only presented theoretical developments on the transformation and adaptation of ethnic motifs during the 20th century, but also confirmed their practical significance and relevance in the context of contemporary fashion design. The collection is an organic synthesis of the past and present, where traditional elements are reinterpreted, adapted to contemporary silhouettes, materials, and technologies, creating unique images that meet the needs of a modern woman. It emphasised the indissoluble connection with cultural heritage, while integrating it into the global fashion space, confirming the viability and inexhaustible potential of Ukrainian ethnic fashion.

Further research may focus on a more detailed analysis of the impact of social networks and digital technologies on the popularisation of ethnic fashion in Ukrainian society of the 21st century. It was relevant to investigate the process of commercialisation of ethnic clothing, its integration into the mass market, and its impact on authenticity. A promising area is the study of regional features of ethnic costume in other regions of Ukraine and their impact on contemporary fashion, and the study of the experience of using ethnic motifs in men's and children's clothing.

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Еволюція етнічного та міського жіночого одягу Слобожанщини протягом ХХ століття

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Викладач

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Анотація. Актуальність поточної роботи зумовлена необхідністю глибокого аналізу та збереження культурної спадщини регіону, оскільки взаємодія традиційних форм та впливів міського середовища на жіноче вбрання Слобожанщини протягом ХХ століття залишається недостатньо вивченою. Метою було комплексне дослідження специфіки еволюції етнічного та міського жіночого одягу, його просторової характеристики та особливостей декоративного оздоблення на території Слобожанщини у ХХ столітті. У дослідженні було використано такі методи наукового пізнання: історичний, культурологічний та порівняльно-історичний аналіз. У межах дослідження надано ґрунтовну характеристику комплексу традиційного жіночого вбрання Слобожанщини, виокремлюючи його типові елементи, силуетні рішення, колористику та символізм. Було проаналізовано характерні для регіону сорочки, плахти, пояси, головні убори, нагрудні та верхні елементи одягу, а також типові орнаменти вишивки та їх композиційне розташування. Дослідження також було зосереджене на аналізі трансформаційних процесів в етнічному та міському жіночому одязі мешканців Слобожанщини протягом ХХ століття. Було проаналізовано чинники, що сприяли змінам, зокрема доступність фабричних тканин, модифікації способу життя, поширення міських модних тенденцій та державна політика щодо народної культури. Розроблено дизайн-проект сучасної етноколекції жіночого костюму. Колекція ґрунтувалася на глибокому розумінні архітектоніки, колористики та орнаментики традиційного слобожанського вбрання, адаптуючи ці елементи до вимог сучасної моди. Практична цінність дослідження полягає в можливості застосування його результатів для інтеграції етнічних мотивів у повсякденний та святковий одяг. Отримані результати слугують підґрунтям для створення інноваційних дизайнерських рішень, що сприяють популяризації та переосмисленню національної культурної спадщини

Ключові слова: етнографія Слобожанщини; традиційний костюм; трансформація одягу; колекція; самодіяльна мода; вишивка