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A STUDY OF DOUKHOBOR ETHNIC GROUP LIFESTYLE AND TRADITIONAL CLOTHING IN GEORGIA

***Purpose.** Examining ethno-demographic processes in the South Caucasus region through a historical lens presents a formidable challenge. This challenge arises from the persistent fluctuations in the region's national composition brought about by shifting political, economic, and social circumstances. Moreover, the scarcity of available sources compounds the complexity of this endeavour, rendering it particularly intricate.*

***Keywords:** ethnic minority, historical references, cultural heritage, traditional clothing.*

***Introduction.** The geographical expanse of Georgia has historically served as a focal point for significant migratory movements. Alongside the local Caucasian populations, individuals hailing from distant regions have traversed into the country, ultimately establishing residence. Among these migrants, a subset assimilated with locals or with other ethnic groups, while others fully retained their distinct national characteristics.*

***Methods of research.** Review of scientific sources on the general state of the topic under investigation.*

***Research results.** The findings are chiefly concerned with the examination of lifestyle factors of minorities groups residing in Georgia, with particular emphasis on the Slavic-origin "Dukhabors" as a case study.*

Notwithstanding Georgia's relatively modest geographical expanse, its demographic composition is distinguished by a noteworthy degree of ethnic, religious and national diversity. Various ethnic cohorts have resided within the country for centuries, harmoniously coexisting with the local population. The cultural legacy of these ethnically and religiously varied communities inhabiting

Georgia enjoys recognition as an integral component of the overarching Georgian cultural heritage.

The migration of so-called “heretical groups” from the internal provinces of Russia to Georgia commenced during the 1820s and 1830s. In this context, the foremost among these were the Doukhobor and Malakan groups, referred to as Russian “Raskolniks.” These communities, in opposition to the Orthodox Church, chose to relocate to the southeastern region of Georgia, either voluntarily or under compulsion.

The coexistence of various ethnic groups in Georgia exerted a discernible impact on both the economic activities and spiritual traditions of the Georgian populace and the ethnic groups. These groups, having taken up residence in Georgia, assimilated certain Georgian customs and, reciprocally, imparted their influences upon the locals. This interplay is manifest in numerous aspects of life, including architectural styles of residential and agricultural structures, agricultural practices, marriage and mourning customs, burial rituals, folklore, and more. This dynamic cultural exchange emerged as a result of historical, economic, and cultural interactions between the Georgians inhabiting the Bari and Mountain regions, as well as the influence exerted by incoming ethnic groups and the cultures of neighbouring major states. To illustrate this point, we can examine several facets of traditional culture.

By the year 1886, the Doukhobor group had grown to approximately 6,600 individuals. Their religious convictions led them to decline participation in state and military service, a stance that led to some punitive measures from the government. Presently, Georgia is home to an estimated 400 Doukhobors, with the majority residing in village Gorelovka, and a smaller portion in Spasovka and Orlovka. The Malakan group in the region consists of several dozen members. Notably, in Gorelovka, there exists a historical museum dedicated to the Doukhobors, known as the “сиротский дом” / “Orphanage House.”

The Doukhobors do not identify with any particular organized religion, yet they express devotion to a higher spiritual entity. Their religious practices differ, and while they endeavour to safeguard their cultural and religious heritage, the dwindling population poses a significant risk to the continuity of these traditions. In a bid to preserve their cultural identity, Doukhobors congregate every Sunday,

donned in traditional attire, within a designated sacred space, where they engage in communal prayer and rituals.

Women attire themselves in vibrant, culturally significant dresses. These garments, characterized by their vivid hues, hold profound connections to the Doukhobor traditions and communal bonds. The crafting of women's petticoats, for instance, necessitates the use of approximately 3 meters of fabric. A relatively lesser amount is employed in fashioning other articles of clothing. It is noteworthy that in past, they routinely incorporated traditional clothing into their everyday wear. However, contemporary usage restricts these garments to sacred spaces such as the chapel or during ceremonial rituals.

The costumes worn by both men and women among the Doukhobors bear resemblance to the clothing styles of the British, Germans, Cossacks, and Volga Germans. Doukhobor apparel evolved not solely as a functional means of bodily protection and adornment, but also as a mode of self-expression that reflects the distinct characteristics and beliefs of the Doukhobor community.

A traditional festive costume for women encompassed several key components, including a petticoat, blouse, apron, bodice, headscarf, and a pocket square. These clothing elements were crafted from natural wool and were distinguished by a spectrum of colours, including plain and vivid hues, as well as striped and checkered patterns (see Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Women's festive costume

Shirts fashioned from natural fabrics boast a loose, unrestrictive silhouette, often adorned with embroidery on both the sleeves and collar. The lower section of the apron exhibits intricate floral-patterned embroidery, complemented by a vibrant, striped border that is skillfully interwoven with lace detailing. The aprons exhibit a wide-ranging colour palette, encompassing shades such as light green, beige, pink, and blue (refer to Fig. 2-a, b, and c).

Traditional vests, known as "tamas," are meticulously embroidered with floral motifs, enhanced by the addition of multi-coloured ribbons. Further embellishments can be observed along the underarm seams, the hemline, and the lower segment of the bodice, where colourful ribbons are thoughtfully integrated (see Fig. 2-d).

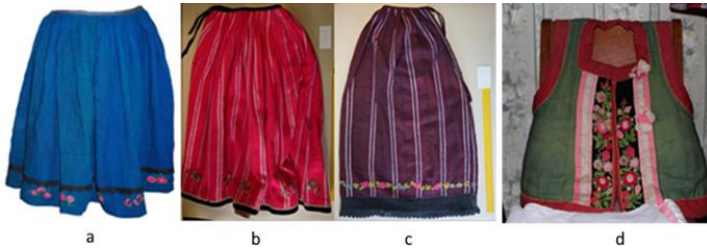


Fig. 2. Women's dukhabor: a, b, c – lower dress; d – vest

An indispensable component of women's festive costume includes a diminutive embroidered pouch or pocket, adorned with floral motifs, designed for the storage of essential items. In terms of footwear, women don specially knitted socks paired with appropriate shoes.

The customary grooming practice involves women coating their short, front-cut hair, referred to as a "chub," with oil. Subsequently, they encase it with a headscarf and secure it beneath the chin. Additionally, a white scarf, embellished with satin fabric flowers, is meticulously fastened atop this head covering. The Doukhobor hat is quite extraordinary, known as the "Kabardian" in the Caucasus. This natural fur headpiece is composed of two distinct halves. Its upper section is internally reinforced with wool padding along the seam. The hat's exterior is crafted from woollen fabric adorned with intricate silk thread embroidery, showcasing a palette of blue, green, and purple hues. A band of black velvet adorns the lower rim of the hat, above which a golden ribbon is meticulously affixed (refer to Fig. 3-a).

The traditional attire for men included a three-piece ensemble, comprising trousers, an upper shirt, and a vest. These men's vests were typically fashioned from satin or silk. Similar to women's attire, the vest length extends slightly below the waistline, featuring a tamasa adorned with embroidered ribbons and

culminating in pockets intricately trimmed with cut-out, embroidered ribbons (see Fig. 3-b).



Fig. 3. a – Doukhobor hat; b – Men’s top shirt and corset

Conclusion. In conclusion, it is imperative to underscore the pivotal role played by traditional attire in the preservation of Doukhobor’s identity. The Doukhobor costume was meticulously crafted in alignment with the socio-political convictions and religious perspectives that evolved within the community, rendering it an emblematic embodiment of their beliefs. A comprehensive examination of Doukhobor attire reveals that it serves not only practical functions but also serves as a conduit for faith and a medium for self-expression.

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