

Slovenian Female National Costume from Gorenškega.

Introduction

Dresses, featuring skirts with bodices, aprons and blouses were commonplace in Europe from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Similar elements are present in other folk costumes, for instance the tracht designs found in the Black Forest; they also occur in folk costumes in other parts of Europe, such as the Norwegian women's Bunad and the Gorenjska noša costume of Slovenia.

This paper will concentrate on the Gorenjska noša costume of Slovenia or in English, the Highlands costume.

Distinctive features (including the tight bodice, lower neckline and wide skirt), were developed from the women's fashions of the Royal Court in the 17th century; over time, the court fashions made their way into urban and rural clothing. Alpine traditional costume spread to regions in Bavaria, Austria, Bohemia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, large parts of Poland and Romania, and even some of Italy (the full expanse of the Habsburg / Austro-Hungarian Empire) and beyond the mountains through migration of people in search of work. As a result, the clothing developed over time into female servants' work clothes.

Women usually made their own clothing using whatever means they had on hand at the time. The composition of the clothing was always tied to available funds. It could be made from a variety of materials, the more refined and elaborate, the more costly. As with any ability, some women were quite gifted and prepared exceptional pieces with very little. These women may have even been engaged because of their talents to make a creation for another for payment.

This paper hopes to give you some insight on the composition of the dress and any additional explanation associated with it. Clothing and accessory items in the pictures are owned by ladies of Slovenian heritage who are also members of the Geelong Slovenian Club. Some of these items are quite old, up to 100 years old, as they have been passed down through the family. Also the comments making up the majority of the explanations come from these ladies.

Some additional pictures of individual items have been sourced and added so that they can be viewed as a single item.

Undergarments

As there were no brassieres or underwear in the early times the undergarments consisted only of a blouse (**rokavci**) and a petticoat (**spodnica**) or petticoats. Occasionally bloomers may also have been worn. Usually only one underskirt was used for work clothes, and for Sundays and other festive occasions they could also wear several underskirts.

These clothing items could be made from calico, white linen or cotton and could be plain or decorative as in the picture. The cuffs and collar of a blouse are often gathered and sometimes are decorated with lace, a small amount of embroidery, or cutwork. There can also be more petticoats added to give the dress a fuller look. In some regions, women wear long shirts as an undergarment

Whatever the case, the established Slovenian national costume must include the mentioned set.





Blouse / Rokavci

Dress

The dress is a combination of skirt and bodice (**krilo iz modrcen**). A range of materials and colours to personal taste and affordability would be used. Brocade, chiffon or silk materials were the choice as these all have a sheen and were mainly used because of this.



The skirt would be free flowing and usually gathered at the waist and sewn into the bodice.

One or more ribbons could also be sewn to the skirt close to the hem and also to the bodice for added decoration.

The bodice could be of a short or long form. Earlier versions were mainly short form but the longer form is now preferred with the cut style dependent on personal taste.



Unmarried



Married

For everyday wear, the dress may be made of calico or cotton.



Shawl / Wrap

For festive occasions a silk shawl or wrap is worn around the shoulders. This can be a variety of colours and designs, all again selected on personal preference. While silk was preferred, the material used often depended on available funds.



A brooch / clasp (nakit) is used to tie the shawl ends together and a posy is used to finish off the wrap.





Apron / Predpasnik

The apron used in festive occasions is usually of brocade, silk or damask material. If damask then it could be any one of silk, wool, linen, or cotton suitably patterned when woven according to taste. It can be a variety of colours but very often black.





Chain

One of the decorative pieces added to the festive costume is a metal belt (sklepanec). This came in the form of a chain with decorative links of various designs. A bow of a large ribbon, occasionally with the colours of the national flag, would be tied to the chain belt which would be worn at an angle on the hips. Posies of flowers with sprigs of rosemary were also included. These chain belts were also used to hang other items such as keys.

A small, triangular folded handkerchief would be tucked into the band of the apron whether it was for looks or functional is not known.



Socks / Shoes

Socks were knitted of thinner domestic wool and were mainly white. They reached to the knee, and in some places even to the middle of the thigh.

According to a later custom, knitted socks were made of knitted cotton with balls, and we can still see this today.

Low, enclosed toe shoes were worn by women only on Sundays, as appearance, not durability being the deciding factor. In addition to shoes, Gorenjka women also wore boots at the beginning of the century.



Hat

Elaborate female headwear developed to indicate distinctions in social status. The headwear also alternated depending on the woman's age and marital status. The Avba, as seen in the picture, would be worn by a married woman.



Basket (cekar)

The baskets have become an indispensable piece of women's Gorenjska national costumes. They are woven from white, red, green and blue coloured straw with stylized patterns (hearts) and monograms (IHS). A colourful, embroidered tablecloth is placed in the basket. A bouquet of carnations or other flowers can also be included.



The National Costume of a married Woman from Gorenseka.

