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## The Oriental influence on decoration techniques of Karaite women's costumes of the Crimean Khanate period

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### Abstract

**Objective.** The article aims to observe the peculiar features of the national Crimean Karaite costumes in the days of the Crimean Khanate and the Turkic influence reflected in clothes of that period.

**Methods.** The authors apply the following methods: comparative analysis, structural analysis, synthesis, structural-functional analysis.

**Results.** The Crimean Karaites are the indigenous community of the Crimean Peninsula, inhabiting there for a long time. They represent an ethnocultural relic and consider themselves descendants of the earliest Crimean inhabitants and the heirs of the Khazar culture. The article reveals the Oriental influence on the composite elements of women's garments and different clothes decoration techniques of the period of the Crimean Khanate. The authors analyze common features of the embroidery patterns on Karaite costumes and Turkic clothes at large, defines the peculiarities of their decoration, compositions and special colour. The article also presents a comparative analysis of embroidery techniques, colouring and types of threads.

**Conclusion.** The authors point out that the internal content and a form of external decoration of the Crimean Karaite women's costumes enable to trace the Oriental influence: Persia, Turkey, the Middle East, etc. in the period of the Crimean Khanate. The research is based on the materials from the archives of the Bakhchisarai conservation area and Yevpatoriya ethnographic museum.

**For citation**

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**Keywords**

Crimean Khanate, Karaite women's national costumes, decoration, Oriental influence, Turkic peoples.

**Introduction**

The history of any national costume is, to a certain extent, a reflection of the whole ethnos forming process. Alongside with the other sources, it helps to view genetic, historical and cultural ties of the people, sometimes confirming already developed theories, and sometimes filling the missing links in a chain of this ties data.

The national costume is a historical source for the ethnogenesis studying and the national culture forming. Ethnographic research of the national dress is connected with studying of the traditional cut, used fabrics, tailoring technologies and décor features determination.

The research on the costume from different points of view (cut, sewing techniques, ornamental furnishing, matching of colour scale, material, a silhouette, a dressing manner, and also the terminology specific features) provides additional sources for the national forming recovery.

**The influence of Oriental cultures on the decoration patterns of Karaite women's costumes**

The problem in research on Crimean Karaites' national costume, of the Crimean Khanate period, is connected with a few number of reliable printed sources. There is a lack of systematic descriptions of the Crimean Karaites' national costume with the corresponding illustrative materials represented in literature.

Ancient Karaites' artifacts are present in the ethnographic museums of Yevpatoriya, Feodosiya, Yalta and Bakhchisaray: costumes, embroidery samples, household items reflecting their culture. Museum collections give the opportunity of the detailed studying of the Karaite costume, but as for the costume of the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, its research possibilities are limited as the most of exhibits have not been preserved. Therefore, it is necessary to rely only on graphic sources and documentary records.

Very important information on the history of the Karaites, their material culture in the field of costumes, jewelry, furniture, family and public life, trade intercourses during the Crimean Khanate

period, can be found in the article of B.S. Yelyashevich "Shetars, karaite prenuptual agreements", written in collaboration with P.Y. Chepurina, the head of Yevpatoria museum.

In 1935 P.Y. Chepurina presented an overview of the materials on the Karaites' embroidery in the columns of "Iskusstvo" magazine. Main types of the Crimean domestic art were fabrics and embroideries, as the mostly preserved types of the national creativity.

P.Y. Chepurina generalized substantial material in the field of the Crimean Karaite ornamental sewing research in the separate monograph (1938), where she pointed out a strong impact of the East on the Karaite embroideries and costumes [Chepurina, 1938, 64].

The 1<sup>st</sup> volume of the Karaite National Encyclopedia, published in Moscow in 1995, is especially interesting because it contains a very curious description of the Karaite weddings of the Khanate period, held in the famous Karaite fortress of Chufut-Kale, with all the ceremonies strict observation and the Karaite wedding costume description.

It should also be mentioned that Professor Morelowski, while studying the Karaite national ornament on the house fabrics and on the Karaite women's embroideries, made a conclusion about their Turkish origin in the article "Tkaniny ludowe karaimskie a sprawa pochodzenia Karaimow Krymskich i Polskich" [Morelowski, 1934]. There are interesting records of the travelers who visited the peninsula in the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. A. Demidov provides a brief description of the female costume in his work "Trips to Southern Russia and the Crimea" [Demidov, 2011].

In 1854 the Polish writer A. Novoselsky published two small volumes narrating his travel to the South of Russia and to the Crimea in 1853, under the title "Steppes, Sea and Mountains", where he provides the characteristics of the Karaite appearance type, clothes, life, behavior.

So what are the Karaites – the smallest-numbered nation around the world, included in the UN Red Book, and what are their ties with the Orient?

The Crimean Karaites-Turks, indigenous people of the Crimea, the small nation having occupied the peninsula down the ages, are an ethno-cultural relict, descendants of the most ancient population of the Crimea and heirs of the Khazar culture [Polkanov, 1995, 245].

The resettlement of Karaites from Bulgaria and Cirkassia to the Crimea in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, together with the Tatar khans, took place in 1239. In the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (1342-1357), due to the Golden Horde expansion to the southwest Crimea, the largest Karaite community on the peninsula was created in Chufut-Kale [Gertsen, Mogarichev, 1993, 128]. The Karaite community had self-administration, privileges and the protection, stipulated by the khans' yarlyks. Crafts and trade were the main occupations. The Karaites led the way of life typical of the Turkic peoples. Turkic features reflected also in clothes. The Crimean Karaites' costumes of the Khanate period were designed in the Oriental style.

The Crimean Karaites' national costume had been affected by many factors: the features of the geographical habitat and climatic conditions, economic set-up, historical and social processes, cultural and religious processes, and also the influence of the neighbour peoples' cultures. During a long period of time several nations lived in the territory of the Crimean Peninsula at the same time,

and that led to the interpenetration of cultures. For the various historical periods, depending on any nation's prevalence number, a considerable influence of the prevailing ethnos can be observed.

From all nationalities living in the Crimea during a long period of time, the Crimean Tatars were the most numerous. As representatives of the dominating ethnos, they tried to extend the Tatar customs, changing features of the indigenous peoples' material culture that also obviously reflected in the costume, which became an externally uniting factor for many peoples. A very strong influence of the Crimean Tatar culture was experienced also by the Karaites, whose national costume is almost completely similar to the Tatar one in many details and even in the terms determining them. Even the ethnography researchers often mention in their description of the Karaite costumes that "they are dressed like the Tatars". It is caused by the fact that these nationalities lived on the same territory for a long time and had close ties and frequent contacts.

The Karaites appeared in the Crimea earlier than the Crimean Tatars, but the numeral dominance of the Crimean Tatars had a massive impact on their few-numbered neighbours. While comparing costumes of the Crimean Tatars and the Karaites of the Crimean Khanate period according to the assortment, cut, used fabrics and materials, accessories (headdresses, belts, footwear, jewelry), we can make a conclusion that costumes of the Crimean Tatars and the Karaites are very similar and designed in the Oriental style [Karaimskaya narodnaya entsiklopediya, 2007, vol. 6, part II, 178-181].

The basic composite elements of the Karaite women's costume of the Crimean Khanate period are:

- multiple layers of clothes;
- underwear and outwear and next-to-skin trousers;
- costume partitioning on the waistline and waistline being underlined by a belt;
- dense ornament on used fabrics;
- numerous ornamental furnishing, embroidery, overlays, such as, for example, superimposed cuffs;
- obligatory wearing of a headdress.

The Karaite women's costume consisted of a long and wide undershirt, under-dress, a long loose upper dress, wide trousers reaching down to the heels. The Karaite women were dressed in the monochrome, most often white, wide "shalvary" trousers with a wide blousing called "tokme-balakly shalvar" [Polkanov, 1994]. Karaite women sewed their undershirts from the thinnest cotton and linen fabrics with frills and laces, and from the twisted silk. Gold embroidery was applied as furnishing. Woven shirts were decorated with geometrical ornaments.

An undershirt was often connected with "zavoy" – head covers. Married women twisted and tied "zavoy" round the head. The Karaites women wore under- or upper-dress, a long caftan called "antheri", looking like a dress, over the undershirt. A long under-dress was made of cotton and satiny fabric, and also from Damask "shamaladzhi" fabric, which is multi-coloured cotton striped material with blue colour prevailing. The overdress "capama" was especially luxurious, reaching down to the heels, made of the fabrics delivered from different countries: Turkish wool and

"grobarin", a tough silk fabric; thin bright red "karmazin" cloth; light woven woolen fabric called "stamed"; striped Damask satin embroidered with gold threads and striped Chinese decorative fabric embroidered with gold.

They also used expensive Venetian fabrics and Persian "khara" silk fabrics with chaining stripes. The colour scale is very various – bright red, cherry, green, blue, dark violet, white. The shirtfront, boards and hem of an overdress were decorated with embroidered plant patterns. An overdress is loose, often detachable and wrinkled on the waistline, with set-in sleeves or a one-piece garment.

The dress was pulled on the waistline together with a wide belt of silk, velvet, leather, with metal inserts and a metal buckle in the form of two convex hemispheres. The belt was an obligatory attribute of the Karaite women's costume. Sometimes there was an apron of white cotton and linen fabric or "pultenebek" made of undersized leather over the dress. Karaite women put on waist-long velvet jackets called "fermam", "kyrkh" over a dress, a loose dress with wide sleeves, reaching down slightly below elbows. Jackets were made of velvet, satin, silk, more rarely brocade, and the fronts, back and sleeves were embroidered with gold and silver threads of various shades using the traditional Karaite pattern. There is a constant scheme of the arrangement of a certain pattern on the jackets.

According to many researchers, woven and embroidered patterns located on the attributes of clothes, initially carried out averting functions as they were usually located on the parts of clothes covering the most vulnerable and significant parts of a body.

As for the warm outer clothing, Karaite women preferred fur coats made of cloth or satiny (often striped) fabric embroidered with gold on ermine, squirrel fur. The marten's fur was also used. The Karaite women's outer clothing also includes a "benysh" raincoat made of Persian silk material with the stripes, called "khara", decorated with laces [El'yashevich, Chepurina, 1927].

Karaite women paid special attention to head decoration. Having divided hair into two equal halves, they wove it into thin braids flipped across the back. The Karaite women's headdress is the tarboosh of a rounded shape, with a convex bottom covered with an openwork knitted slip, embroidered with pearls and beads. The tarbooshes often had tassels of golden colour. The tarboosh was covered with a "marhama" scarf, a kerchief, a silk veil with laces, embroidered with gold, a piece of magnificent tulle decorated with gold threads. A woman wore such festive veils covering her face as pieces of scarlet "alchetka" silk and silk tulle "dulle bent" embroidered with gold threads. The veil was embroidered with gold and silk threads using the Karaite plant ornament with bilateral units and the edges were decorated with a fringe, tassels or a knitted net. The pattern on scarves and belts usually consisted of several repeating motives placed in one horizontal row.

Karaite women wore a net decorated with pearls or beads. Even the poorest Karaite women had "gerdanlyk" necklaces made of coins. Karaite women also wore gold bracelets with jewels and almond-shaped "botekhe" earrings. The Karaite women's forehead decoration in the form of a diadem, consisting of a gilded silver plate with Hebrew letters or Arabian sayings, was also original.

Karaite women usually put on soft morocco boots decorated with tinsel "ishlemhe mest" and sturdy backless shoes.

There were various belts: either narrow or wide, with beautiful geometrical and plant patterns, braided with gold threads, silver and gilded, made of velvet, embroidered with gold, on a fabric and leather foundation. Metal plates on belts always were of a round shape, in the form of two hemispheres. Belts were decorated with metal inserts and – though less often – with jewels. The whole belt was embroidered with gold or silver using traditional ornaments.

Reading the oldest inventories of the Crimean Karaite dowry allows us to evaluate the quantity and quality of the subjects described in them. Silk, gold, the richest fabrics, jewelry – everything merges in one harmonious picture of the Oriental life, its mental and material aspects. And this is not by chance because the Middle East was the centre of trade and cultural influence for the Crimean Karaites. Here one can feel the great influence of Persia and Asia Minor through Damascus – Bursa – Tokat, where the best fabrics were brought from [El'yashevich, Chepurina, 1927].

The main characteristics of embroideries on light homespun fabrics during the period known as the heyday of embroidering art (the 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries) are the following: a great variety of stitches used for creation of one embroidered thing, the use of threads of soft colours with a set of graduating shades.

The patterns embroidered on fabrics that were meant for belts, scarves and handkerchiefs were much more difficult and varied than ones on jackets, dresses, headdresses, footwear, on which a variety of vegetative patterns were usually embroidered. Patterns included flowers, fruit, stylized images of animals, sometimes these patterns were accompanied by inscriptions. Each element of an ornament had its own certain semantic meaning and name. The oak leaf, for example, symbolized machismo, and the S-shaped element was a water sign. Such patterns as cotton bolls, pomegranate and carnation flowers, as well as plant stems can be found in ornaments.

The distinctive feature of the Karaite embroidery is the use of golden threads of several shades in an ornament. The ornamental luxury of patterns, high techniques of sewing and weaving, preservation of the art of tambour stitching, are typical of the embroidery. The Karaites, who had close household contact with Tatars, communicated with the Karaites living in Syria, Palestine and Egypt.

Karaite embroideries were directly influenced by the ornamental embroidery of Damascus, Baghdad and Jerusalem (Syria, Palestine) to the Crimea, which resulted in the special preciousness of their embroidery and the complexity of ornamental composition [Chepurina, 1935].

Some works according to the colouration, patterns and their arrangement, the quality of threads, the features of embroidering techniques are very similar to Turkish ones. A great variety of bright colours and their shades, especially concerning the red colour, were typical of Turkish embroideries. The Turkish samples are usually densely filled with patterns, located on the vertical axis, and the special principle of embroidering called "telli" was used [Chepurina, 1938, 64].

On Karaite embroideries we can also see the tambour technique with golden threads that was also used in Turkey.

## Conclusion

Exploring the elements of the ornament representing the whole system of symbols makes it possible to trace genetic and historical connections of the Crimean Karaites with other peoples, in whose applied art we can find the same elements. Both the internal content and the form of external decoration of the Crimean Karaite women's costumes enable us to trace the Oriental influence (Persia, Turkey, the Middle East, etc.) during the period of the Crimean Khanate.

The culture of Karaites later fell into decay, even the strongest traditions and customs catastrophically disappeared. The Crimean Karaites, whose history and roots date back centuries, should preserve their culture, including the national costume that is an important part not only of their material culture, but also of the mental one.

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## **Влияние Востока на декорирование караимских женских костюмов периода Крымского ханства**

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### **Аннотация**

В статье рассматриваются факторы, повлиявшие на формирование национального костюма крымских караимов во времена Крымского ханства, в том числе тюркские особенности, проявившиеся в одежде. Крымские караимы-тюрки – коренной народ Крыма, малочисленная народность, населяющая полуостров еще с давних времен, является этнокультурным реликтом, потомками древнейшего населения Крыма и наследниками хазарской культуры. Переселение караимов в Крым вместе с татарскими ханами произошло в XIII веке. В середине XIV века, в связи с экспансией Золотой Орды в юго-западный Крым, в Джуфт-Кале возникает самая крупная караимская община на полуострове. В это время формируется восточный стиль одежды крымских караимов. Особенно это видно на примере комплекса женского караимского костюма. В статье рассматривается влияние Востока в основных композиционных элементах женской караимской одежды и в особенностях декорирования костюма периода Крымского ханства. Дается анализ сходных элементов в орнаментах узорного шитья крымских караимов и других тюркских народов, а также построения орнаментальных композиций, рисунка вышивки и характерного колорита в одежде. Приводится сравнительная характеристика технических приемов выполнения вышивки в костюме, места ее расположения, используемых видов нитей и их цветовой гаммы. Статья является результатом исследований, проведенных в архивах и фондах Бахчисарайского историко-культурного заповедника и Евпаторийского этнографического музея.

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**Ключевые слова**

Период Крымского ханства, караимский женский национальный костюм, декор, влияние Востока, тюркские народы.

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