



HUNGARIAN WOMEN WEARING THE RED
EMBROIDERED BLOUSE AND APRON



MAGYAR (HUNGARIAN)
CHILDREN IN THE
MARKET PLACE



MAGYAR GIRLS IN SUNDAY ATTIRE WEAR-
ING THE FLORAL CROWN AND
GAY RIBBON

HUNGARIAN COSTUMES



FIGURE I
MACEDONIAN WOMAN-WEAVER

NOTES ON THE NEEDLEWORK OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

BY LOVINA S. SMITH*

ALL of Eastern Europe has the same penchant for gay colors in native costume that is found in Southern Russia; but in many districts the contact with urban life has modified some of its original picturesqueness. In the mountainous districts of the interior, however, the dress of the peasants still retains the archaic cut of by-gone days, and the collector may still find typical examples, if he has the courage to venture into these remote districts.

In the large cities of Hungary and Roumania—Budapest and Bucharest—modern European costume prevails; the shops are filled with the latest Parisian modes, and peasant dress is the exception. Only on feast days when the country folk flock to the cities in gala attire, can one realize the great variety of costumes available in this part of the world, Hungary alone counting within her borders some fourteen different

*Ed. NOTE: This article is based on travel notes furnished by Miss Lovina S. Smith, who has recently returned to Budapest, where for many years she has made a special study of the peasant life of southeastern Europe. The illustrations accompanying these notes have been supplemented by material from the textile collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

nationalities; and Macedonia, twenty within her small territory, each one with its individual type of blouse, coat or jacket, and its own peculiar color scheme.

And the same prodigal use of color prevails in the dwellings of these people; the Roumanian paints the window sash and base-board of his house with a peculiar shade of blue; the Slovak, on the other hand, is partial to chrome yellow in his house-trim, while the Magyar marks his residence by tall gate-posts elaborately carved and painted—a land, teem-



FIGURE 2
MAGYAR PEASANT COATS
WHITE FELT WITH BLACK CLOTH APPLIQUÉ

ing with delightful possibilities, but still remote from creature comforts and modern tourists, especially in these latter years.

In all of Hungary there is no costume that surpasses that of the Magyars; these people, who are looked upon as the native Hungarians, are descended from a Finno-Ugrian tribe that invaded the country in the ninth century.

The male attire in this district is most gorgeous; the jacket sometimes of velvet with gold embroidery, and the richly embroidered vest reflecting the splendor of the orient. The most striking feature, however, is the coat, that is known as the Szúr or Magyar coat. (Figs. 2-3.) In the old days, this, like Joseph's coat, was wrought in many colors, the patterns cut out of different colored cloths and applied on heavy white felt; the



FIGURE 3
SZÚR COATS FROM VESZPREM
OLD STYLE IN BRIGHT COLORS

modern coat is less elaborate, usually having the large collar of black with trimming on the lapels, sleeves and at the hem.

Originally the finest of these coats were produced at Veszprem near Lake Balaton, a district noted for its elaborate tailor-work. These coats were very costly, but the heart's desire of every shepherd boy, who, by foul means or fair—usually horse or sheep stealing—made it a point to procure the coveted garment at any cost to complete his Sunday attire. As a natural outcome, this extravagance often led to disgrace, thieving became an epidemic and "sumptuary laws" were passed prohibiting the wearing of the Szúr coat among shepherds. The famous Veszprem tailors finally migrated to Croatia, where many died in poverty, but fortunately their old pattern books have been preserved in the local museums.

Another article of wearing apparel similar to the Szúr coat, but coming from another district, is the wedding coat or dress worn by the men. (Fig. 4). This is of the heaviest white homespun with a thick coarse lining. It has an elaborately embroidered border of solid black with touches of deep green and blue, and the same type of embroidery trims the neck and sleeves, resulting in a cumbersome garment, but one full of inspiration to the modern designer. The beautiful example shown in the illustration is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as is also a black and white coat similar to the Szúr coat.

The cowboy, with his skirt-like trousers, is another picturesque figure in Hungary, each leg requiring material a yard in width in order to give it the required fullness. This garment with a sleeveless vest worn over a shirt with long full sleeves and topped with a small felt hat, leaves nothing to be desired in the way of "individual style."

In another remote village, Nozo Koved, the particular pride of the Beau Brummels is a long, black, cotton apron, usually embroidered with a border of conventionalized flowers in white, gathered into a band embroidered in bright yellow, green and red tulips, the pomegranate and tulip being the favorite motifs in Hungarian art.

The more familiar type of Hungarian apron, if so it might be called, as it is worn at the back instead of in front, is a large square woven in a striped or figured pattern of bright colors with tinsel, edged with a long fringe. (Fig. 5, ill. e).

At this little town of Nozo Koved the seri-culture was developed by the Government, the state furnishing mulberry trees and maintaining

a central factory. The raw silk produced is of a beautiful golden color before it is dyed the brilliant hues so loved by the peasants. This district is noted for the skill of its needlewomen who work without patterns, and while the most startling contrasts are employed in the embroidery, it nevertheless has remarkable charm.

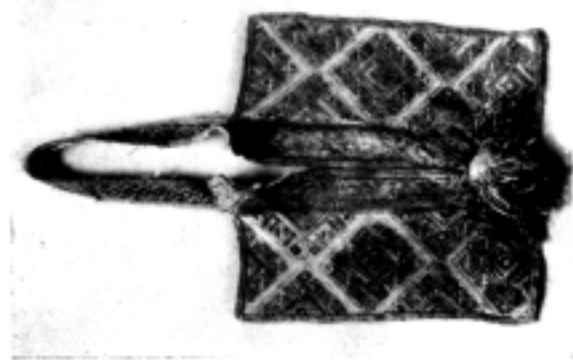
At Banfy Hunyad the interest of the peasant women centers in the



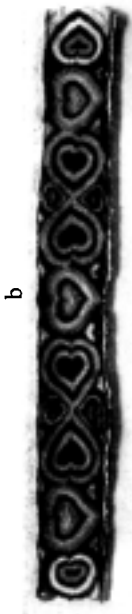
FIGURE 4
WEDDING COAT
WORN IN SOME OF THE SOUTHERN PROVINCES
BORDERING GREECE. TURKISH INFLUENCE.

apron, which is elaborately embroidered with gaily colored yarns. In recent years machine-woven bands have appeared upon the market and these are rapidly supplanting the more elaborate hand-work. The women of this district also do elaborate drawnwork in a geometric star pattern combined with the usual tulip motif, the surface being embroidered in a flat satin stitch.

Just as the Hungarians are of the plains, so the Roumanians are people of the mountains. Here they herd their flocks, card their wool and weave their cloth. Here the peasants still retain the tree loom; children work



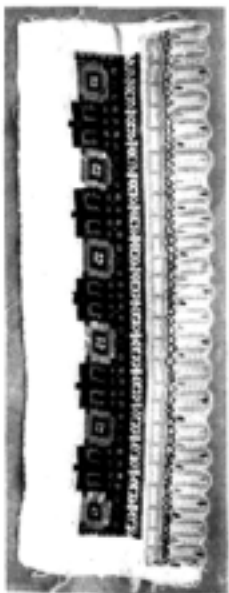
a
EMBROIDERED DALMATIAN COLLAR.
XIX CENTURY



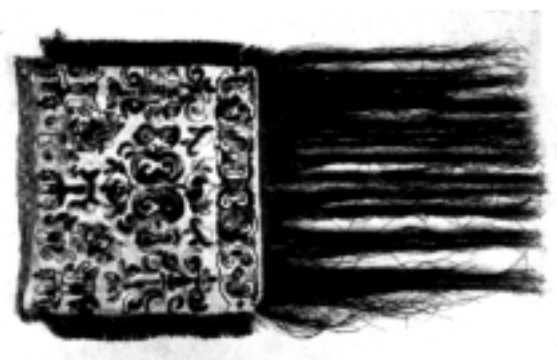
b



c



d



e
NORTH HUNGARIAN, XIX CENTURY.
APRON OF WOVEN WOOL AND TINSEL

B. EMBROIDERED SLOVAKIAN BAND: PROBABLY COLLAR OR SLEEVE BAND. XIX CENTURY
C. PART OF A CAP-CROWN. CROATIAN, XIX CENTURY. POLYCHROME EMBROIDERY IN SILK, ON WHITE LINEN
D. CROATIAN, PROBABLY XIX CENTURY. A CAP-BAND OF BRIGHT COLORED SILK ON WHITE COTTON EDGED WITH BOBBIN LACE

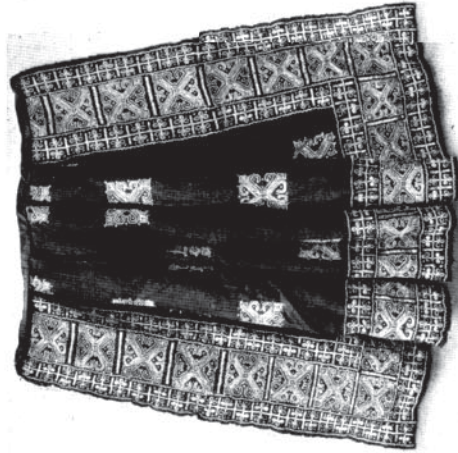
FIGURE 5



a'
DETAIL OF EMBROIDERED SKIRT



b
ROUMANIAN GIRDLER AND APRON
RED HOMESPUN WITH WOOLEN EMBROIDERY LIKE SKIRT
FIGURE 6

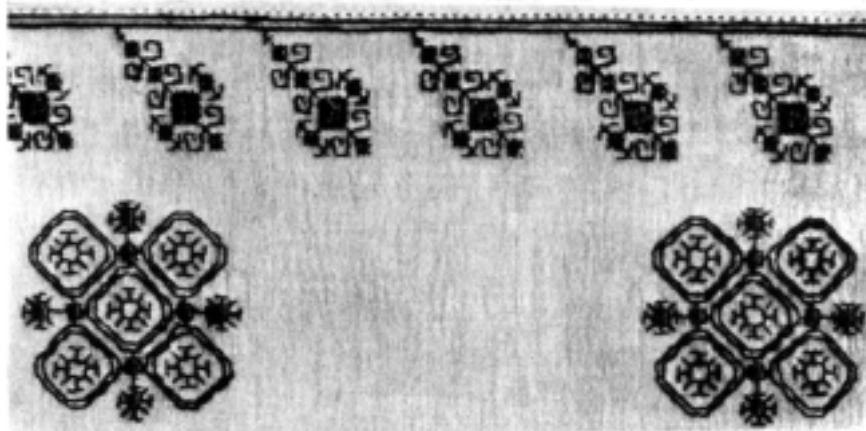


a
ROUMANIAN SKIRT
HEAVY HOMESPUN, EMBROIDERED IN WHITE,
RED, GREEN, ORANGE, AND BLUE WOOL, A
COARSE METALLIC THREAD

on these outdoor looms, often weaving cloth for an entire family. The patterns are simple, usually stripes, the occasional "lightning" motif recalling the Navajo weaves of the North American Indians.

The embroidery of Roumania, however, is especially charming and is said to have had its source among the aristocracy. The blouse is much more simply cut than that of the Slovak; the sleeves are straight and hang in simple folds from the shoulder with none of the awkward fullness at the back of the neck such as is found in the blouse of the Czechs and Slovaks. Cotton crepe is the material most frequently used with delicate embroidery in black. The heavy black or indigo cloth skirt usually has a broad border of bright colors, while the apron is of scarlet covered with a geometric pattern with touches of tinsel, characteristic of Roumanian work. (Fig. 6.)

Southern Croatia and Bosnia are still unbeaten tracks. Fear of the stranger is still apparent among the natives of the interior, especially if he is armed with a "kodak," and it requires much bartering to obtain a coveted specimen. Here the embroidery, of which little has come into the market, is in beautiful shades of rose color and deeper reds, the native cap being a square of homespun embroidered in a solid square. One of the nationalities in this section is a type resembling the North American Indian; they have long straight hair which they braid with shells and beads. These people also do weaving and embroidery, but of a simpler type than that of their neighbors.



DETAILS OF EMBROIDERY FROM A ROUMANIAN BLOUSE
WHITE COTTON CRÊPE EMBROIDERED IN BLACK