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TRADITIONAL CLOTHES OF THE AZERBAIJANI ETHNIC GROUP LIVING IN GEORGIA

Purpose of the Study - This article aims to examine the distinctive characteristics of the traditional clothing of the Azerbaijani ethnic group residing in Georgia, to present these garments as integral aspects of cultural heritage.

Keywords: Ethnic minority, cultural heritage, traditional clothing.

Object of Research. The research focuses on the traditional clothing of the Azerbaijani ethnic group, the largest ethnic, national, and religious minority in Georgia, with a particular emphasis on male attire.

Methodology. To achieve the research objectives, historical-ethnographic, comparative, visual-analytical, organoleptic, and evaluative methods were employed.

Research Findings After Orthodox Christians, Muslims constitute the second-largest religious community in Georgia, comprising approximately 11% of the population. Azerbaijanis represent the largest segment of this group [1]. The term "Azerbaijani" as an ethnonym was formalized following the 1939 census, referring to descendants of the Turkmen tribes—such as the Borchalo, Oghuzur, and Kizilbash—living in the regions of Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, and Tbilisi.

The culture and traditions of the Azerbaijani ethnic group in Georgia have evolved over centuries in a Georgian environment while preserving their unique cultural identity. These national characteristics are best exemplified by their traditional clothing. During the 17th century, Azerbaijan emerged as one of the largest silk-producing regions in the Middle East, which significantly contributed to the creation of intricately designed and aesthetically pleasing garments. Azerbaijani traditional attire, with its pronounced silhouettes, accentuates the beauty and elegance of Azerbaijani women, while the men's clothing emphasizes masculinity and strength (Fig. 1).

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the traditional clothing of Azerbaijani men consisted of several key pieces: a tunic (ust koinek or chafkan), trousers (ishtan or shalvar), a narrow-sleeved coat (arkhalig), a gabis, a chukha, and a sheepskin coat known as "kiurk" for the winter months [2].

The men's upper tunic came in two variations: one fastened along the centerline and another featuring a double-breasted, asymmetrical closure. Both styles of the "ust koinek" featured a wide, low-standing collar and were typically fastened with hooks or silk ties attached to small buttons. These tunics were often made from satin or silk fabrics [3].



Fig. 1. Illustration of traditional-national clothes of Azerbaijanis

The "akhalukh" or "arkhalig," was a narrow, long-sleeved coat with one or two knee-length skirts, tightly fitted around the waist. The upper part of the garment was tailored to fit the body closely, while the lower part was looser, often gathered into pleats. The skirts of the akhalukh were fastened from the waist to the neckline with hooks or buttons. Younger men wore leather belts ("gaish") or silver-adorned belts ("kiyamar") over the akhalukh, while older men favoured the "gurshag," a 4-5 meter-long rectangular fabric belt wrapped around the waist. Akhalukh coats were typically made from silk, cashmere, satin, and other high-quality fabrics (Fig. 2-a).

Men's trousers (shalvari) were typically made from woollen fabrics. They featured two straight, tapered legs, with triangular gussets in the crotch area. The trousers were fastened at the waist with a silk sash called "Tuman Bagi," which was often finished with gold or silver tassels.

One of the most striking elements of Azerbaijani men's traditional attire is the "chokha" (chukha), a coat made from black, blue, grey, or brown fine wool fabric. Worn over the "ust koinek," the chokha extended slightly below the knee. The waistline of the garment was cut to accentuate the figure, while the chest area remained open to reveal the tunic beneath. The lower portion of the chokha was pleated or gathered, giving it a distinctive silhouette. The garment was fastened with buttons or hooks at the waist. There were two main types of chokha worn in Azerbaijan: "viaznyal" and "chiakhiaz" (Fig. 2-b, c).



Fig. 2. Traditional clothes of Azerbaijani men: a- Arkhalig; b-Viaznial Chokha; c-Chiarchias Chokha

The "Vyaznial" chokha, with its characteristic ammunition pockets, has retained only a decorative function in modern times (Fig. 3-a). This type of chokha was traditionally sewn with long, straight sleeves, which were either folded up or finished with a decorative cuff. A narrow leather belt, adorned with metal or silver details, along with a dagger hanging from it, was a customary accessory (Fig. 3-b). For Azerbaijanis and, more broadly, for Caucasians, carrying a weapon on the waist symbolized freedom and honour.



Fig. 3. Men's suit elements; a- pockets for storing cartridges (ammunition); b-leather belt with the dagger

In contrast, the "Chiakhiaz" chokha differs from the "Vyaznial" primarily in the shape and cut of the collar and does not feature ammunition pockets (Fig. 2-b). The Chiakhiaz chokha is notable for its false sleeve, which is significantly longer than the arm, often reaching a pointed or rounded end. This false sleeve was elaborately tailored from silk and featured an opening along its entire length. It was typically worn draped over the back or left to hang loosely.

The "gaba" was another essential piece of outerwear, made from tirim (a type of durable woolen cloth), while the "kurk" was a collared coat lined with sheepskin.

One of the most important elements of Azerbaijani traditional clothing is the "Araxçın" (Fig. 4-a), a fabric hat, or the "Papakhi" (Fig. 4-b), a hat made from Bukhara karakul (sheepskin).



Fig. 4. Men's traditional headdress: a - "Araxçin"; b-Papakhi

The hat was a symbol of courage, honour, and dignity for men, and its colour and shape often determined its specific name. Some examples include the "Yaffa Papakhi" (black hat), also referred to as the "Kara Papakhi"; the "Kizil Papakhi" (golden hat); and the "Gyumush Papakhi" (silver hat). Other variations include the "Motal Papakhi", also known as the "Choban Papakhi" (shepherd's hat), and the "Shish Papakhi", synonymous with the "Bey Papakhi", or "Bukhara Papakhi" (beg's hat).

The Vyazniali Chokha served as an everyday garment for men, suitable for all seasons. It was designed with a long, slender silhouette, extending below the knee and featuring side slits with pleats. The chokha was fastened at the waist with buttons or hooks. Below the waistline, the skirt and back were semi-cut, transitioning into a fully pleated section that spanned from the front to the back. The sleeve was typically long, sewn in one piece, and sometimes extended up to the elbow, with the end finished with a fabric strip measuring 5-8 cm in width.

The Chiarchani Chokha is similar in design to the Vyazniali chokha. However, its front section is tailored into a triangular shape that tapers toward the waistline. The length of this garment extends to the knee, with an A-line silhouette. It features a false collarless design, with a full-length opening finished rounded. This year, the chokha's upper part has been refined, with the sleeve details worked into a silk fabric collar. The front edges of the skirt, sleeve openings, and hems are adorned with golden khaitan (decorative braid).

The akhalukh planned on the suit is of a half-cut silhouette, cut at the waist with a length to the hip line, fastened at the waist with buttons and buttons or tricks with the right skirt on the left overlap line. The lower part of the skirt and the back, along the entire perimeter, is made of wrinkled 18-20 stitches. Sleeve - long sewn, single-stitched, at the end it is possible to open the figure. The place of connection in the location of the armpit of the sleeve is processed with a triangular-shaped hook (insert). Stand-up collar. The junction of the upper and lower parts, the fastening line and the ends of the sleeves are decorated with silk fabric and Arkhalukh colour-matching edges.

Trousers of different lengths widened at the waist, were used in the Azerbaijani national costume. For both men and women, the most common option was long, straight silhouette trousers; The front and back halves of the pants were one-piece; the Cross point was widened with a triangular insert; Trousers were made with a head and tied with a twisted silk belt (Khonjar in general Caucasian).

In Azerbaijan, hand-woven socks - "Jorab" - were widespread. City dwellers wore leather shoes. Boots were common among aristocrats. Villagers wore turbans.

The summary: Although only the ritual purpose of the traditional clothing has been preserved, it remains a significant element of the ethnic identity of the Azerbaijani ethnic group living in Georgia. Studies have shown that the traditional men's clothing spread in the Caucasus region, despite the changes, has the basis of the same constructive solution [4,5,6]. Information and data about the clothing of the Azerbaijani ethnic group will significantly contribute to the formation and popularization of public opinion about the cultural niche of this group.

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