

# The Metamorphosis Of Uzbek Folk Attire: From Historical Evidence To A Symbol Of National Identity

Toshtemirova Mohichehra G'olibjon qizi

Samarkand State Pedagogical University

Master's Student in the Field of Engineering Graphics and Design Theory

[mokhitash@gmail.com](mailto:mokhitash@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0009-0001-9834-659X

**Abstract.** This article examines the historical metamorphosis of Uzbek folk attire, tracing its evolution from ancient origins to its establishment as a potent symbol of national identity. The study positions traditional clothing as an integral element of material and spiritual culture, reflecting a people's ethnic history, social relations, aesthetic norms, and intercultural exchanges. The analysis begins with the earliest evidence of clothing from the Mesolithic period, as seen in the Zarautsoy rock paintings, and progresses through significant historical epochs, including the Achaemenid period. The research pays particular attention to the pivotal transformations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, highlighting influences from Russian-European culture and their impact on garment cuts and fabrics. The article concludes that Uzbek folk costume is not merely a utilitarian object but a dynamic, evolving system whose form, ornamentation, and function are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, socio-economic, and human factors, ultimately crystallizing into a marker of cultural heritage and national consciousness.

**Keywords:** *national Costume, Metamorphosis of Clothing, historical Evidence, national identity, Achaemenid Period, traditional ornamentation, socio-cultural history, textile evolution*

**Аннотация.** Данная статья исследует историческую метаморфозу узбекской народной одежды, прослеживая её эволюцию от древнейших истоков до становления в качестве мощного символа национальной идентичности. Исследование позиционирует традиционный костюм как неотъемлемый элемент материальной и духовной культуры, отражающий этническую историю народа, его социальные отношения, эстетические нормы и межкультурные взаимодействия. Анализ начинается с древнейших свидетельств об одежде эпохи мезолита, обнаруженных в Заравсусских наскальных рисунках, и проходит через значительные исторические эпохи, включая период Ахеменидов. Особое внимание в исследовании уделено ключевым трансформациям конца XIX – начала XX веков, выделяя влияние русско-европейской культуры и его воздействие на крой одежды и используемые ткани. Статья приходит к выводу, что узбекский народный костюм является не просто утилитарным объектом, но динамичной, развивающейся системой, чья форма, орнаментация и функция формируются под сложным воздействием исторических, социально-экономических и человеческих факторов, в конечном счёте кристаллизуясь в маркер культурного наследия и национального самосознания.

**Ключевые слова:** *национальный костюм, метаморфоза одежды, исторические свидетельства, национальная идентичность, период Ахеменидов, традиционный орнамент, социокультурная история, эволюция текстиля*

**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqola o'zbek xalq kiyimlarining tarixiy metamorfozasini, uning qadimiy ildizlaridan boshlab milliy o'zlik ramziga aylanishigacha bo'lgan evolyutsiyasini o'rganadi. Tadqiqot an'anaviy kiyimni moddiy va ma'naviy madaniyatning ajralmas elementi sifatida ko'rib, xalqning etnik tarixi, ijtimoiy munosabatlari, estetik qarashlari va madaniyaro o'zaro aloqalarini aks ettiradi. Tahlil kiyimlarning eng qadimgi dalillari bo'lgan Zarautsoy qoyatosh rasmlaridan boshlanib, Axamoniylar davrini o'z ichiga olgan muhim tarixiy davrlar davomida olib borilgan. Tadqiqot, shuningdek, XIX asr oxiri va XX asr boshlaridagi o'zgarishlarga alohida e'tibor qaratib, rus-yevropa madaniyatining ta'sirini va uning kiyimlar bichimi va gazlamalariga ta'sirini yoritadi. Maqola shu xulosaga keladiki, o'zbek xalq kostyumi nafaqat amaliy burchni bajaradigan narsa, balki uning shakli, bezaklari va funktsiyalari tarixiy, ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy va insoniy omillarning murakkab o'zaro ta'siri shakllangan, madaniy meros va milliy ongning yorqin ko'rsatkchisiga aylangan dinamik, rivojlanuvchi tizimdir.

**Kalit so'zlar:** milliy libos, kiyimlarning metamorfozasi, tarixiy dalillar, milliy o'zlik, Axomaniylar davri, an'anaviy bezak, ijtimoiy-madaniy tarix, matoning evolyutsiyasi

**Introduction.** The study of national costumes, like other spheres of folk life, is inextricably linked to the examination of a people's ethnic history and culture, as well as their interactions with other nations. Among material and spiritual monuments, it serves as a criterion that reflects the national identity of peoples and reveals their ethnic characteristics. In this sense, the study of costume history provides extensive information about the rich cultural heritage of peoples who have inhabited the earth for millennia, as well as their traditions and way of life. Costumes not only satisfy the natural and aesthetic needs of individuals but also embody the customs, social relations, certain elements of ideology, religious beliefs, ethics, and aesthetic norms of each nation. Furthermore, clothing manifests the time and place in which a person lives, their vitality, and joyous or sorrowful events.

Clothing is an integral component of a society's material and spiritual culture. On one hand, as a product of human labor, it possesses a certain material value and satisfies specific needs; on the other hand, it is also an example of applied and decorative art. Like architectural structures, tools, and household implements, clothing conveys information about a specific historical period, a country's natural and climatic conditions, the national identity of its people, and their conception of beauty.

**Literature Review.** Archaeological excavations indicate that clothing emerged during the earliest periods of human development (40,000 to 25,000 years ago). Footwear appeared somewhat later and was considerably less widespread than other elements of attire. Clothing is not merely a means of fulfilling a basic human need; it is also a specimen of applied art. Like all examples of applied art, it is distinguished by its beauty and its purposeful design. While performing the practical function of protecting the body from various external influences, particularly heat and cold, it also possesses aesthetic functions, such as decoration and adornment (Figure 1.1). It is for this very reason that as society progressed and human aesthetic taste became more refined, increasing attention was paid to the ornamentation of clothing and, most importantly, to its uniqueness[1].

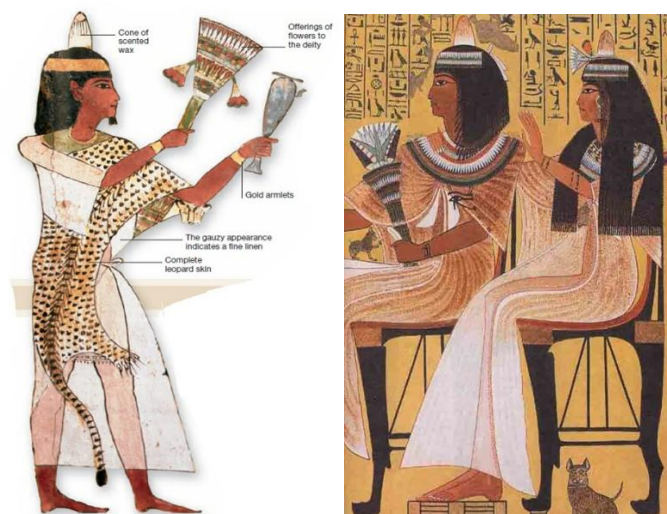


Figure 1.1. The Development of Early Clothing in Ancient Egypt

It is known that in the earliest periods, humans covered their bodies with earth, clay, and grease to protect themselves from various natural elements, as well as from animal and insect bites. Later, plant-based dyes were added to these coatings, and it became customary to adorn the human body with various shapes and colors. The practice of applying tattoos (the introduction of various pigments under the skin) also became habitual, serving to prolong the durability of this protective layer. Various bird feathers, the teeth and bones of slain animals, and hair served to protect the body while also performing various symbolic functions.

Over time, as larger portions of the body began to be covered by specific garments, humans devised artificial means of piercing parts such as the ears, nose, lips, and mouth. These were initially used as fasteners with the abstract purpose of representing various symbols, and subsequently began to be utilized as ornaments.

Over time, humanity devised the method of spinning thread and weaving it into fabric. The tattoos once applied directly to the skin transitioned onto these textiles, which then assumed the role of bodily adornment. In historical costumes, decorations not only signified the wearer's social origin, or class, but also expressed people's aesthetic taste, concurrently acquiring metaphorical significance. These decorations became increasingly sophisticated over time, with their varieties multiplying and their forms growing more complex. Specifically, there emerged types that were removable and fastened to the body (bracelets, rings, earrings), as well as those applied or attached to the fabric (embroidery, printed patterns, raised ornaments).

The form of wearable ornaments was also influenced by the shape of the human body. It is precisely for this reason that ornaments for fingers and necks assumed a circular form (Figure 1.2).

Thus, the emergence and perfection of forms in clothing are influenced by:

Historical factors—external environment, climate, seasons, etc.;

Socio-economic factors—historical development, ethnic origin, religion, lifestyle, scientific and technological progress, etc.;

Human factors—gender, age, physique, psychology, etc.

In this sense, every stage of a people's development leaves its mark on their garments. This phenomenon also demonstrates how clothing continuously evolves, mirroring its era and stylistic trends [2].



Figure 1.2. Ancient Jewelry

The earliest depictions of traditional Uzbek clothing can be found in the Zarautsoy rock paintings, dating back to the Mesolithic period. The images indicate that ancient people utilized garments in the form of cloaks made from natural animal skins, which were draped over the shoulders. However, the rapid progression of life led to woven fabrics replacing natural skins.

According to historical sources, the initial types of clothing appeared in the 3rd–2nd millennia BC and primarily consisted of a short, collarless shirt and trousers with a gusset. It is also evident that women's clothing exhibited a variety of styles, including long dresses and long, tunic-like dresses with stand-up collars. Among such garments is the kandis, a tunic-shaped overcoat with sleeves that tightly fit the forearms. The kandis, lined with fur and featuring false sleeves, is considered a type of fur coat. This garment functioned similarly to a cloak but was used specifically by being thrown over the shoulders. This type of clothing was decorated with embroidery using various beads. The application of ornamentation to clothing was employed not only for artistic embellishment but also with the purpose of protecting the wearer from various calamities and misfortunes. The clothing was, without a doubt, adapted to living conditions; for instance, while inhabitants of mountainous regions used woven footwear, others wore shoes made of leather.

Examples of garments worn during the Achaemenid period can be observed among the artifacts from the Amu Darya, or the Oxus Treasure. These items are primarily crafted from gold and are fashioned in the form of small figurines. The clothing of this era consisted of a tunic with a round neckline, long sleeves, a fitted silhouette fastened with a belt, wide trousers, and soft boots made from natural leather, which rose to the calf. It is known that during this period, significant emphasis was placed on opulence and luxury. Consequently, the attire of the nobility was distinguished by its multi-layered nature and richness in decoration[3].

Naturally, such information can be gleaned from ancient written sources that have been preserved. According to the writings of Herodotus, the Saka, the tribes inhabiting the region near the Amu Darya, wore pointed headdresses sewn from thick felt (Figure 1.3).



Figure 1.3. The Garment Silhouette of the Achaemenid Era

Until the 19th century, Uzbek traditional dress did not undergo significant changes (Figure 1.4). However, from the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, gradual transformations began to appear in both traditional clothing and jewelry. These changes were reflected in the cut of garments and the use of fabrics woven in factories with Russian-European patterns.

By the end of the 19th century, influenced by Russian culture, it became customary for men to wear a kamzul (a fitted coat). It was typically worn over a shirt and beneath a chapon (robe) during the cooler seasons. Furthermore, on frosty winter days, affluent men would also wear a chakmon (a formal overcoat) and woolen postins (fur coats) over their robes. Such attire often served as an indicator of an individual's social status [4].

An analysis of the functional aspects of men's clothing culture reveals that each era had its own garments suited to its demands and needs, and these were designed for specific purposes. Moreover, in the cutting and sewing of men's clothing, national characteristics were preserved as much as possible, regardless of external influences. Distinct differences existed between the clothing of urban and rural dwellers. The attire of our ancestors and other populations residing in the regions of Tashkent, Khorezm, Bukhara, Samarkand, Fergana, and Kashkadarya differed in the width and length of various components, their ornamentation, color, jewelry, manner of wearing, as well as the quantity, layering, and proportionality of garments worn simultaneously.



Figure 1.4. The Evolution of Uzbek Traditional Dress in the 19th and 20th Centuries

**Conclusion.** Each stage in the development of dress culture possesses its own unique historical progression and characteristics. The level of socio-economic and spiritual-cultural development of each period, along with specific religious teachings, has also left its mark on sartorial practices. In conclusion, every

people and nation has engaged in activities to enhance its dress culture: producing new fabrics and inventing forms, decorations, and styles that serve human aesthetics. This process has been dependent on the level of development of science, technology, art, and other socio-economic infrastructures within the historical progression of society. Dress culture has evolved under the influence of these very factors. For instance, from a contemporary perspective, the diverse interpretations of clothing in scholarly literature indicate the emergence of unique and complex systems within sartorial culture. As a result of socio-cultural progress, human thought deepened, leading to the creation of aesthetically perfected types of garments designed to further enhance natural beauty. These garments were given different names based on their seasonal character, length, and the part of the body they covered.

#### References

1. Rahmatullayeva, D., Xodjayeva, U., & Ataxanova, F. (2015). *Libos tarixi* [History of Costume]. Toshkent: "Sano-standart" nashriyoti.
2. Kamilova, H. H., Rahimova, Z. I., & Raxmatullayeva, U. S. (2018). *O'zbek milliy libosi va an'anaviy qadriyatlar* [Uzbek National Costume and Traditional Values]. Toshkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi nashriyot-matbaa ijodiy uyi.
3. Azizova, N. K. (1968). *Yuvelirnye izdeliya Uzbekistana* [Jewelry of Uzbekistan]. Tashkent.
4. Northrop, D. (2004). *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press.
5. Abdullayeva, M. (2019). *O'zbek tikuvchilik san'ati tarixidan* [From the History of Uzbek Sewing Art]. Toshkent: O'zbek milliy ensiklopediyasi nashriyoti.
6. Hasanboyeva, G. K., & Shomansurova, M. Sh. (2007). *Maxsus kompozitsiya* [Special Composition]. Toshkent.
7. Abdullayeva, M. Yu. (2019). *Dizayn i modelirovanie odevzhdya* [Design and Modeling of Clothing]. Tashkent: «Akademnashr».
8. Hakimova, D. A. (2020). *Materialovedenie v shveynoy promyshlennosti* [Materials Science in the Garment Industry]. Tashkent: «Fan va texnologiya».
9. Nazarova, G. Sh. (2021). *Tikuvchilik materiallari* [Sewing Materials]. Toshkent: O'zbekiston Milliy universiteti nashriyoti.
10. Mahmudova, Sh. A. (2021). *Liboslar kompozitsiyasi va bezagi* [Composition and Decoration of Clothing]. Toshkent: "Zarqaynar Press"