

# CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARMENIAN NATIONAL COSTUME

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## Introduction

The national costume is a set of clothing that has the meaning of apparel, form and manner. Its equivalents are the dress, garb, and the form of a clothing or decoration, accepted in a definite time and spatial dimension. The Armenian word *zgest* (dress) derives from the verb *zgenul*, used in singular form. It has presented the collective sense of the clothes of commoners, women, kings and queens, and priests. Synonyms for the Armenian word *zgest* are clothing, dress, garment, and attire. The word *handerdz* (garment) has been used both in singular and plural with the equal meaning of dress, referring to the set of clothes of kings and rich noblemen as well as the poor and commoners, priests and soldiers, men and women, and wedding and mourning attire<sup>1</sup>.

The dress is a national, local and specific clothing with gender and age features, characteristic of a given people, an ethnic community. The Armenian national costume, like the Armenian multidialectal language, is manifold. It resembles a multicolored palette with separate but at the same time proportionate and harmonious colors. There is no "all Armenian" general costume. It is a historically developed system with separate groups that are common in structure. In all groups the costume consists of underwear, outerwear, headdress, decoration, footwear (socks, shoes; for men also foot wrappers, gaiters). The differences are

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<sup>1</sup> Հացնի 1923, 6.

in stylization, demonstrated in pattern, main forms, manner of wearing, color combination, and ornamentation styles<sup>2</sup>.

According to its type, the Armenian costume is loose and open; the dress has cuts in the front and on sides. According to the style characteristics, the contour is not tight; red, blue, green, violet and yellow dominate in the color spectrum. This found its reflection also in medieval Armenian poetry: "In green and red you are like a pomegranate seed"; "Handsome man in red, dismount your horse, let me tie a belt"; "Who has white bosom, let wear blue undershirt"<sup>3</sup>. In the national cultural system, color is a characteristic feature of both natural and artificial environment. Color preference and solutions, as manifestation of ethnic peculiarity, are a result of definite color mentality. The Armenian dress is characterized by a long skirt, side cuts and necessarily by a belt. Dresses were decorated with edge strings and different types of embroidery. Women wore head scarves, shoulders upward, without covering the face and mouth. With the introduction of Christianity, case-shaped, closed gowns that covered natural forms and proportions of the body became widespread among Armenian national costumes. The system of the Armenian national costume comprises Western Armenian (Vaspurakan, Aghdznik, Turuberan, Bardzr Hayk /Karin, Shirak, Akhalkalak, Akhaltskha/, Trabzon, Pokr Hayk, Cilicia), Eastern Armenian (AyraratTiflis-Parskahayk / Persian Armenia/, Syunik-Artsakh, Gugark, Vayots Dzor) and other sets<sup>4</sup>. The Armenian costumes are an inexhaustible source not only for study and comprehensive cognition of the Armenian culture, ornamentation art and national identity, but in terms of discovering new forms of clothing as well. The Armenian traditional costume is a system of meaningful signs, which manifests the gender and age, family, social, and class-property hierarchy of the dress wearer. On one hand the dress set is individualized and reflects the wearer's aesthetic taste and preference, in accordance with the person's given life stage and psychological state, while on the other hand it is related to folk mentality, perception of beauty in the context of aesthetic criteria, and also to features and uniqueness of interethnic and ethnographic groups. The folk dress is one of the most important elements of the traditional material culture, which may be the best ethnic indicator. The Armenian traditional costume with all its groups, like the Armenian multidialectal language, has undergone a long way of development, being closely linked to Armenian history, culture, unique national temperament, aesthetic preferences and perceptions. Incomparable and rich color and design forms, typical of the Armenian costume, create a complete harmony. Evolving through centuries, this cultural element be-

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<sup>2</sup> Պողոսյան 2002, 13-18:

<sup>3</sup> Պողոսյան 2008, 477-482:

<sup>4</sup> Պողոսյան 2002, 18:

came a uniquely shaped form in the 18-19th centuries and stood out by diverse forms and high level of artistic performance. The traditional costume, being multifarious (pattern solutions, color combinations, ornamentation and style features) has structural generalities. The clothing had different functions: applied, aesthetic, social, gender and age, festive and ritual, and territorial, as well as protecting the costume wearer against an evil eye, and also fostering fertility and prosperity. The role of clothing and its social and estimable functions are manifested in the following folk proverbs: "Give dress, take grace; give bread, take color"; "Clothing brings a man step, a woman wit"; "Clothing makes man manlike"; "Clothing is for elegance"; "Man's wealth is evaluated by his clothes"; "I have a reliable son, I shall bring a dressed daughter-in-law"; "Who works hard, gets woolen underwear, who works not hard, gets silk, linen, red, multicolored, blue underwear"; "The dress says, – keep me in a bundle and I shall keep you among people"<sup>5</sup>. The Armenian costume system comprised the folk dresses of Bardzr Hayk, Vaspurakan, Pokr Hayk, Cilicia, Ayarat (Yerevan-Tiflis-Parskahayk / Persian Armenia/), Syunik-Artsakh and Lori-Gugark, each of which had their versions<sup>6</sup>.

### **Ayarat costume group**

Inhabitants of the Ararat valley and Yerevan city wore a similar dress set: a monochrome, sometimes flowered silk dress. The clothing of women from Yerevan was a variety of the Ayarat costume group, with everyday and festive sets. This costume group also contains the dress set of Armenians living in Tiflis<sup>7</sup>. The dress was gorgeous, often with ornamented and wavy pleats. The festive dress set was often monochrome. Over the dress a silk belt was wrapped, to the ends of which long embroidered ribbons were attached. Festive garments were worn with silver or gold belts. In winter an unbuttoned overcoat hemmed with fur was worn over the dress. The overcoat was sewn of dark blue, red or green velvet, the borders and sleeves of which were entirely embroidered with gold thread ribbons and hemmed with fox fur. Wrist covering sleeves were typical of this set. The costume of women from Yerevan was featured by long sleeves of the dress, embroidered belt-apron, tied over the dress, and floral patterned bodice. The headdress consisted of finely embroidered, ethereal tulle veil, velvet forehead band (in the center of which a pin was fastened) and a golden strand forehead piece, and in villages also of handkerchiefs, covering the nose and mouth. The costume of women from Yerevan, though not distinguished with lavish ornaments, still was highly decorative in terms of fabrics and tailoring. The costume of women from

<sup>5</sup> Ղանալանյան 1960, 188:

<sup>6</sup> Poghosyan 2001, 178-194.

<sup>7</sup> Պողոսյան 1986, 22-32, Պողոսյան 2006, 172-177, Պողոսյան 2018, 123-142, Погосян 2004, 229-230:

Tiflis was similar to that of Yerevan. This costume was taken to Tiflis by Armenians, which in its turn, had its impact on the local dress set. In due course, the costume acquired specific qualities typical of Tiflis urban culture.

### **Syunik Artsakh costume group**

This costume group was passed from one generation to another for centuries and reached the end of 20th century. Women wore red shirts, green or blue triple skirted outerwear and over it a velvet red fell with fur edges. The sleeves of the garment were decorated with bells, and the belt was made of leather with silver buttons. Ornaments were made of silver, which made the garment more luxurious. The headdress was magnificent: silver spherical strands hang from the temples. In Syunik-Artsakh, the belt was made of silk or cotton fabric, which was double wrapped around the waist and knotted in the front by placing the ends underneath<sup>8</sup>. The Artsakh costume was of peculiar style and was almost devoid of embroidery. Red satin underwear (halav) was worn, a green, blue or red dress and a fell over it. Rich women's fells were with 2cm wide gold thread embroidery with a narrow band. Fox fur and a narrow band of green fabric were sewn on the edges of the red velvet outerwear-fur coat. Sleeves were elbow length. Fur and a green band were sewn on the sleeve ends. In Artsakh, women's ornaments were made of silver, which made the dress more opulent. The headdress consisted of many elements and was luxurious with silver forehead decoration, with strands of silver spherical ornaments on the temples (hollow ornaments). The latter was used among elderly women of Artsakh until the end of 20th century. In Syunik-Artsakh, women wore green, red surface - embroidered slippers, and men, black shoes. The women's dress set of Artsakh is noticeable for its perfect pattern and color harmony. Inhabitants of Syunik and Artsakh wore the same costumes. It was also typical of the Basin of Sevan and the Armenian population of Gandzak and Shamkhor. The combination of red-green, red-blue or violet shades is often viewed in clothing. This choice of colors was not accidental. Firstly, the harmonious combination of red, green and blue are typical of Armenian traditional ornamentation and color art. This is certified by superb pieces of the Armenian artistic textiles (rug weaving, carpet weaving, embroidery and national costume) kept in museums. Besides, it is known that according to the folk color mentality, each color had a definite meaning and ritual significance. Magic power of purification and evil prevention was attributed to the red color; the combination of green and red was viewed as a symbol of life, vitality, and fertility. As is known, among Armenians, while marrying the son, parents often said: "We must tie your green and red". These colors were often praised in folk songs. Over red linen or satin

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<sup>8</sup> Պողոսյան 1992, 32-33, Պողոսյան 2006, 129-132, Պողոսյան 2019ա, 29, Պողոսյան 2019բ, 216-225:

underwear and reddish drawers women wore a divided dress: irekpushkani (three-skirted), khelegh (arkhalugh: short outerwear), and ghaba (the latter is the long outerwear, often encountered as kapa in medieval Armenian poetry). The dress, mentioned above, is the most typical clothing. Due to the cuts on sides, the dress was really three – skirted. The gown sleeves were ornamented with silver pendants. In Shushi outerwear with double sleeves was worn, the sleeve pattern of which resembled the women's dress. Over the outerwear young women mainly wore silver belts, and elderly women, mainly belts made of cloth. Winter clothing was completed by dark red velvet or woolen fur-fell outerwear, which repeated the gown's pattern, with the only difference of having shorter skirts and sleeves. It was trimmed with green silk and fur edging. Women's headdress was complex and elaborate, which differed from that of young girls' and reflected the family and social changes that took place in the woman's life. The headdress had a stiff base and resembled the versions of Ararat and Tavush. A forehead decoration of coin strands was in use, which unlike the forehead coin strand of Bardzr Hayk, was single-rowed. The kerchief and pearly temple pendants, elements of the women's headdress of Bardzr Hayk, here were replaced by silver spherical pendant strands which were fastened to a two-parted triangular ear strap. Instead of splendidly embroidered fabrics of the western provinces of Armenia (as was the triangular, red headscarf with square embroidery on the nape section, the symbol of women), in the Syunik-Artsakh type headdress double-threaded granulated silver cross-shaped hooked ornaments were fastened to the nape section of the headscarf, which, being manifestations of ancient totemic beliefs, protected the wearer from evil forces with the claws of a worshipped bird. Meghri, being included in Syunik-Artsakh historical-ethnographic province, has substantial cultural parallels with the culture of Goghtan province.

### **The wedding costume**

The ritual outfit of the traditional dress of Meghri had the following symbolic role and semantics: in the case of infant betrothal, the silver cross, hung on the newborn girl's chest, played the role of an engagement gift<sup>9</sup>. The boy, engaged on Palm Sunday, stood in front of the girl in church with two candles in his hands and his mother threw a veil on the girl's head as announcement of the engagement. It is noteworthy that in Meghri, people coming to one's home on joyful occasions say "Good morning" even in the evenings, with the aim of warding off harmful influence and unwanted attention of evil spirits. Engagement gifts included a gold ring, necklace, coin strand, etc. The gift, given at the engagement

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<sup>9</sup> Պողոսյան 2003, 12-16:

ceremony by the bridegroom and his parents to the bride was called yeresajur (surface water). The engagement gift, a silver or gold coin, was placed in an apple or a pomegranate. The apple and pomegranate were symbols of fecundity and fertility of the future married couple. At the end of the engagement ceremony the girl was brought in with a veil over her head and she kissed the hands of elderly people who gave her coins as a gift. On holidays, gifts were sent to the girl from the boy's home: trays with fruits and sweets with a burning candle in the middle. In the first month of the year (Navasard) a copper tray (lus) with a burning candle in the middle; a jug of wine or a bottle of rakhi (vodka); fruits: apples or pomegranates, and necessarily a veil as a bride symbol, was sent to the girl. Gifts, as a manifestation of close relationship and appeasement, were also sent during the Carnival (Barekendan), on the first day of Lent, and in the middle of the Lent (Mijink). On Easter, dyed eggs, buttered bread, sometimes a lamb with a dyed forehead and a handkerchief or a headscarf tied around its neck were sent to the future bride. At the Feast of Transfiguration of Christ (Vardavar) the boy and the girl went to a sanctuary. In spring the boy's relatives, girls and daughters-in-law, took the future bride to the orchards and fields for a walk. In their turn, the girl's side sent their return gifts: a beaded cork, socks, and handkerchiefs. The last two items were very important among the mutual gifts of the future relatives. Among gifts that were accepted at rituals and feasts, important were elements of clothing as general exchange in the form of material benefits. The exchange of gifts was commerce between the marrying sides. Gifts of clothing and food together with joint feasts were a form of marital interchange. Before the wedding it was accepted to clean and tidy the house. It was customary for the bride to enter the house in the most sacred place ("microcosm") and stand under the starry sky, expecting a harmonious, happy marriage and prosperous future. After cleaning and tidying the dwelling, heavenly bodies were drawn with flour: stars, the sun, the moon on the ceiling and columns. This ritual illustration was made by the Godmother, who also got a gift. Among the gifts intended for men, the following costume parts were essential: socks and gaiters, as well as handkerchiefs. The Godfather was presented with a bottle of rakhi (vodka), a hen, and also outerwear or footwear. The bridegroom and his symbolic equivalent steer were decorated with a ribbon, the latter also with apple strands. On the neck of the bride and groom (king and queen), sometimes also on the hands, entwined red, green, and white woolen threads (narot) were wrapped. Such a red thread was also tied around the baby cot slat, after notching a cross or a letter with a knife. This thread might be identified with the narot, which was also called "green-red". This meant to marry and the phrase "to make words green" meant to surely do what had been said. On the chest and shoulders of the bridegroom, the Godmother fastened a shoulder

strap, made of white, red and green handkerchiefs. The bride and the bridegroom wore red, green, and white threaded embroidered crown and hair clip-forehead band, from which multicolored fringes hang. Hence, they were called king and queen. The boy's outfit was also of ritual significance. Firstly, the wedding outfit was blessed and sent to the girl's home. Also sweets and sugar, placed on the tray; as well as the bride-groom's hat and the Godfather's sword were blessed. The blessing was followed by the shaving ceremony. The young man's head was shaved, imbruing his finger in the wine glass held by the Godfather in his right hand and a burning candle in his left hand. It was a transition dedication ritual, with which the boy stepped into a new, marital age group. The person who brought the wedding outfit was also presented with a gift – a handkerchief or a pair of socks. The girl's side presented a belt or a hat. The Godfather handed the wedding outfit to the woman who was to dress the bride, presenting her with a coin. The bride was dressed in an otakh (room). The belt was tied by the Godfather or the father-in-law, rotating it from right to left three times. The belt was taken from under the feet and tied around the waist, lightly tapping, with the aim of ensuring childbirth. The Godmother tied the crown, an ornamented, multicolored fringed band, over the headscarf. The narot and shoulder strap were taken off before the marriage bed. Changes in the headdress of the bride symbolized the advances that had taken place in her social-family status. The headdress features the magic and protective functions of clothing. Nakhjjevan, being in the center of transit trade routes from ancient times, was one of the public and cultural centers of Armenians.

### **Vaspurakan costume group**

Vaspurakan costume group was typical of the population of the Basin of Lake Van and some neighboring provinces: Moks, Shatakh, and Sassun. The red and blue colors were predominant in this costume. Women wore several dresses, each 5-6cm longer than the other. The chest was half open and was covered with an embroidered tucker. The multicolored embroidered apron was of two types: ordinary and overall. Men's outerwear and pants were sewn of specially woven striped woolen fabric. On the ends of the outerwear two embroidered straps were attached which, while working, were tied on the nape. The half-sleeve waist length jacket was made of goat hair. This garment was typical of Armenians from Sassun and Shatakh. Men wore cylindrical caps, and women, fez-shaped hats with many decorations. The necks, chests and arms of women were adorned with several rows of silver necklaces, chest decorations, and bracelets. In many places over their numerous plaits, women wore heavy hair threads that reached the waist and entirely covered the back. In his memoirs, V. Surenyants has especially mentioned

the costume of migrants from Van, noting: "In women's dresses the extraordinary tactfulness of color choice astonished me. In the whole dress set I found no single evidence of tastelessness, even in the risky combination of red and blue, which are incongruous. Moderate shades were chosen in such a way that instead of interfering with each other, they mutually benefited from being next to each other. The combination of colors on separate parts of the clothing of a village woman named Maro amazed me. For her violet outerwear she had chosen a dress of a very tasteful blue color with a yellowish-brown wide belt. When I showed that sketch to my painter friends, they were stunned and could not take their glances off it, thinking that I had embellished the sketch. Even the belt patches of the poorest women were chosen with great taste, which seemed to be a result of their innate elegant coquetry, not from need"<sup>10</sup>. Their costumes were sewn of home-made linen, trimmed with embroidery. Presenting an immigrant Armenian woman, he mentioned the color combination of her red dress, shining from under the jacket and bright yellow headscarf, pointing out that the instinct of color was dictated by the nature, which "lavishly displays magic moods during the whole day". This is an exceptional example of the unique harmony between man, the bearer of culture and nature. The underwear of women from Vaspurakan reached the ankles. The hem was fringed with 15cm - long embroidery. Leg wrappers, sewn of red shila fabric, had wide ends. The woman's costume was sewn of striped woolen fabric, and also of a manusa fabric with almond-shaped patterns. A woolen belt, with colored thread tassels on the ends, was tied over the patterned apron, and fastened to the outerwear. Women wore more than one, and on holidays up to five, outer garments of different colors with side cuts, which were 6 cm longer than the other. The chest cut was covered with an embroidered tucker-heart cloth. Over the outerwear (zbun) they wore a waist length kotjik or kolotik (an outer garment or jacket) with a wide cut on the chest and long sleeves, made of manusa (colored chintz). Instead of kotjik, newlywed brides and rich women wore dalima (an overcoat, sewn of red woolen thick fabric), which was long like a gown with embroidered chest. A woolen belt (waist wrap) was wrapped around the edge of the kotjik, over which was an embroidered apron. The belt of women from Vaspurakan was sewn of a woolen fabric or woven of woolen threads and wrapped around the waist three times. Beside the woolen narrow belt, wrapped over the apron, silver belts in niello were in use. The apron, a symbol of womanhood and fertility, was sewn of a woolen homemade fabric, trimmed with embroidered floral patterns, highly stylized images of birds, and animals. Among colors, red was dominant. The second type of apron covered the upper body in the front, also playing the role of a tucker. It was sewn of floral chintz with a lining. It was a little

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<sup>10</sup> Ղազարյան 1998, 21-25:

shorter than the hem of the zbun, so that the dress was seen<sup>11</sup>. Parts of the head-dress were the fez, with a tassel, forehead strand, temple pendant-face kerchiefs, hair ribbon, hair clip and different headscarves: stamped, lachak (of white cloth), red triangular, embroidered, etc. The women's costume was embellished with jewelry, and made with taste and mastery. Jewelry, as an inseparable part of the outfit of women from Vaspurakan, was made of precious and semi-precious stones: turquoise, coral, ruby, and emerald as well as red and blue beads. Women wore colored socks and red high heel shoes (sol)<sup>12</sup>. Embroidered pants, sewn of a homemade fabric with geometrical patterns and a warm short outer garment, the aba (outerwear sewn of thick woven woolen cloth), which were characteristic elements of the men's costume from Vaspurakan. Men wore a long sleeve white undershirt, sewn of linen, which was extended to the knees, and very wide pants, over which trousers were not worn, while working on hot summer days. The collar of the men's linen undershirt was embroidered with geometrical patterns; the sleeves were wide with embroidered edges, on which blue beads were drawn to ward off evil forces. The undershirt edging was trimmed with red ribbon, as if enclosing the costume wearer in a protective circle. In Turuberan, geometrical patterns were embroidered with black and red woolen threads around the chest cut and on sleeve ends of the undershirt. The underpants had khonjankap (a strap of woolen colored threads) with tassels. The pants also had this strap. The right and left sides of the pants were embroidered with colored beads and woolen threads. A similar example of such pants may be seen in the Aghtamar Monastery relief of King Gagik Artsruni (10th century). The pants were sewn of a woolen fabric with the similar wide leg pattern sample of the underpants. The men's outer garment was the antari (a long sleeve, loose-fringed garment with a heart-shaped cut on the neck), sewn of manusa fabric, and woven of cotton and silk threads. Ishlik (a long sleeve, waist length undershirt), sewn of the same material, was worn under the antari. Over the ishlik, they wore yelek-yelak (a vest, sewn of manusa). In earlier times, instead of the antari, they wore a short outerwear, kezakhik, which was woven of goat hair. The latter was with elbow length sleeves and a pair of tassels under the armpits. Over the pants and undershirt a belt was wrapped, which was a 2-3m long and colored or white woolen waist cloth. On the head, men wore an embroidered cap (arakhchi), which was woven of woolen threads or sewn of a fabric and decorated. The cap was cylindrical and 5-10cm high. Men also wore semi-conical hats, made of white felt, around which a pushi (a shiny silk headscarf) or stamped headscarf was wrapped. Men's footwear consisted of monochrome or ornamented socks (butj); gaiters (sakh) and trekh/ cha-

<sup>11</sup> Ավագյան 1983, 26-32, 58-59:

<sup>12</sup> Պողոսյան 2013, 243-255:

ruk (leather footwear without heels). Men wore ornamented mittens – socks, woven of colored threads. The charukh was sewn by villagers themselves, whereas the sol (pointed high heel footwear) was sewn in town by shoemakers.

### **Bardzr Hayk Costume Group**

The center of Bardzr Hayk (Upper Armenia) was the city of Karin. Its territory coincided with the territory of the region of Erzerum at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. In 1829-1831, due to the great emigration of the Armenians of Karin, the costume of Karin was widely spread in the regions of Shirak, Akhalkalak and Akhaltskha as well. Variations of the costume of Bardzr Hayk were also popular among the inhabitants of Basen, Vanand and Hamshen. Four types of garments, used in the woman's set of costume, had the same shape<sup>13</sup>. The costume was made of broadcloth, velvet, silk and woolen striped fabrics. Dark red, purple, brown and blue colors were preferable and were emphasized with golden and silver cords and embroideries round the bottom edge of the long dress, sleeves, low neck (garment chest aperture) and waist. Stylized patterns of the tree-of-life were embroidered on garments. Long dresses, the edges of the sleeves, low necks and the edge of the hems were decorated with the embroideries of stylized plant ornaments, performed with golden threads and cords. The main patterns were plant ornaments and bird-patterns, as well as geometrical ornaments. Embroideries were performed in convex flat-stitch with twisted golden thick threads. The woman's ceremonial costume was made of one piece of velvet cloth and had a low neck adorned with gorgeously embroidered krtskal (fine cloth covering the low-cut opening at the chest of the garment). The apron, made of red broadcloth, was adorned with almond-shaped ornaments embroidered in golden threads. Narrow and long silk belts, typical to this costume, were often sewn to the aprons. Parts of head adornments were: Tasseled hat, temple-hangings of pearl, forehead adornment and chikila (lace veil covering the head and rear). The fez hat was also widely used. The luxurious look and gorgeous and stylish embroideries were characteristic to the costume of the region of Bardzr Hayk. An important part of the woman's costume was the apron, which was embroidered in the same way as the costume. An ornamented woven belt was attached to the apron. Dedicatory inscriptions, such as "Wear it in good health" or "To the enjoyment of the wearer" were usually embroidered on the belt, which was the oldest component of the costume and had the function of a charm and protection<sup>14</sup>. It is obvious that the wish of the people and community was to make the wearer invulnerable by making the belt powerful with the help of the good wish, performed in

<sup>13</sup> Պողոսյան 1991, 132-133, Պողոսյան 1993, 122-133, Պողոսյան 1994, 26, Պողոսյան 2019գ, 328-333:

<sup>14</sup> Poghosyan 2007, 252-253.

the form of an inscription. Inscriptions were done on different parts of the costume, especially on a number of components of the woman's costume such as the *krtskal*, apron, belt etc<sup>15</sup>. This tradition was preserved in the set of the national costume of Bardzr Hayk. The *krtskal*, which covered the large oval-shaped opening at the chest of the garment, was made of silk or velvet material and had a crescent or triangle-shaped narrow color. It was tied to the nape and waist with the help of the bands attached in the corners. The *krtskal*, which was tied to the waist together with the apron, was used in two ways: over the garment, or from under it. It was embroidered with golden threads, in convex flat-stitch, and was adorned like the dress and the apron. The use of the *krtskal* had both practical usages as well as was related with the people's perception of elegance and beauty standards. The breast should not be emphasized and should be covered as much as possible, and the rich embroidery on it, together with the ornament patterns, had protective meaning for the wearer, especially for the bride, to protect from "evil". The cap (*gdak*), made of red velvet material, was part of the head decoration. Four-five strings of temple-hangings of wavy pearls with gold coins at the ends had 25cm length and 4cm width. An embroidered forehead adornment was attached to the cap and a needlelace *Tantana-rose*, which was an inseparable and important part of the head decoration. The costume of Khotordjur, among the types of the costume of Bardzr Hayk, was particularly very special. Women wore long and narrow sleeved velvet outerwear bordered with golden-thread embroidery and big silver buttons. The lower two sides of the outerwear were embroidered. The women of Khotordjur wore either a chest-apron or short jacket (*salta*). The chest-apron was adorned with the pictures of two embracing bird-patterns. The *krtskal* was decorated with the embroidery of the tree-of-life with the hope of providing fertility. The *salta* (short jacket) was decorated with golden and silver threads. The apron was red and was tied with a belt. The edges of the apron were bordered with golden-thread embroidery and twisted cords. Head adornments, temple-hangings, forehead adornments and pendants were made of pearls and golden coins. An important part of the costume was the two-piece footwear: yellow-red or yellow-yellow *mas-paputch* (shoes and overshoes) and colored socks (*butch*). In 1890 Madame Shantre, a daughter of the motherland of fashion of the new costume, France, seeing the garments of Armenian women, said that nothing was more admirable for her than the costume of the woman of Akhaltskha. The beauty of the fabrics, used for the garments, the simplicity of dresses, and the richness of jewelry of great taste, create a favorable and harmonic unity giving more radiance to the appearance of those distinguished women. And that was

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<sup>15</sup> Poghosyan 2007, 253.

true, the costume of the Armenian woman of Karin, from head adornments to footwear, was created of harmonious and elegant elements with unique ways of perceiving beauty. The man's costume of Bardzr Hayk, at the beginning of the 19th century, still preserved its traditional style. The costume consisted of the following parts: long braies and undershirt, and outerwear: yelak (short jacket), belt, trousers, hat and footwear. Men wore a white cotton undershirt and long braies, woolen trousers, yelak (short jacket) and broadcloth outerwear. The legs of the long braies were long and were tied with the help of laces, which were put into the colored ornamented socks. The yelak (short jacket) was worn over the undershirt, the front parts of which were made of broadcloth and the back part of cotton fabric. Sometimes you could come across silk examples as well, which were without sleeves and pockets. The yelak (short jacket) was buttoned with the help of buttons and button loops made of golden or silver wires. The trousers and arkhalugh (man's and woman's short outerwear reaching to the knees) were usually made of fine woolen blue fabric. Men wore simple leather belts. The chukha (long coat) was worn over the yelak and was tied at the waist, while the lower part was let free to the knees. The chukha (long coat) had long widening sleeves. On their heads, men wore hats made of sheep fur and very seldom the fez hat. When on their feet, they wore footwear called trekh (leather pointed footwear with woolen or leather ties). After immigrating to the Caucasus they adopted the style of the costume typical to the man of Eastern Armenia. The set of costumes of Bardzr Hayk are luxurious and beautiful, rich with golden-thread embroidery. Warm clothing and short outerwear, apron and belt, head adornment with magnificent jewelry made of gold, silver and pearls, together with their archaic ideology, all together form a unique wholeness. It is worth mentioning the highly artistic decoration of the ceremonial silk and velvet outerwear bordered with fine needlework of plant-ornament patterns. The sleeves of the ceremonial and wedding costumes ended with handkerchief-like silk tags that gave a special festive look and brilliance to the garment. The low neck was covered with silk krtskal adorned in convex flat stitch embroidery performed with golden-threads. The velvet or broadcloth apron was an inseparable part of the woman's costume in the bottom two corners of which almond-shaped ornaments and other stylized patterns of tree-of-life were embroidered. They wore silk woven belts with dedicating goodwish inscriptions. Silver, gilded and golden belts were widely used as well. Parts of the head decorations, such as: the tassel cap, pearl hangings coming down the temples, and the 'forehead-rose', adorned with fine needlelace flowers, gorgeous silk veil, forehead golden-strand and forehead golden adornment, complete the set of the costume. This type of costume certifies the high taste and delicate aesthetic perceptions of Armenian women. The woman's costume was exquisite and magni-

ficient. The outerwear was made of broadcloth or velvet, and the edges of the low-neck, sleeves and flap were adorned with fine embroideries performed in golden and silver threads. The apron, typical to Bardzr Hayk with its straight and wavy edges, was very interesting and delicate. It was sewn of red, blue or brown velvet or broadcloth. It had a belt to tie the apron round the waist. The *krtskal* had an important role in a woman's costume, with the help of which the opening in the garment at the chest was covered. They wore silver belts, made by local jewelers, adorned with precious stones. From under *djuppa* (long Asian coat) they wore the *antari* (long dress), which was also common in many other regions of Western Armenia. In difference to other regions, in Bardzr Hayk *antari* was made not only of manus fabric but also of silk. In winter they wore *faradja* (wide and long coat) made of black or brown woolen fabric of factory production. When going out or to church, they wore a wrapper over their outerwear made of white, woolen fine fabric. Parts of the woman's head decoration were: the tassel fez hat, hangings coming down along the cheeks to the chest, a forehead adornment with two strands of coins, *ktuts* (adornment made of pearls and gold), and a forehead adornment, needlelace rose and the veil bordered with fine needlelace. When on their feet

### **Turuberan and Aghdznik Costume Group**

The costumes of Armenians living in these regions were very original. Costumes in Sassoon were homemade<sup>16</sup>. The undershirt and *otac-vartik* (pantaloon) were elements of woman's underwear of Sassoon and were made of fine and delicate fabric. The outerwear, known by the name of *takhin*, was made of silk and was embroidered with colored threads. The belt (*Khas* or *khask*) was followed by an apron (*chadrik*) reaching to the shins. *Kofi* (headwear) was worn on the head and consisted of the fez (cap) and *pushi* (silk kerchief), wrapped over it, and a band-shaped ribbon that came down the right and left sides of the *Kofi* (round, cap-shaped woman's head-wear, around which colored kerchiefs were wrapped) to the ear and to the middle of cheek and ended at the neck. The *bandik* (ribbon) was adorned with coins, silver and golden jewelry. The apron in Sassoon was made of blue woolen fabric embroidered with colored woolen threads and geometrical ornament-patterns. The engaged girls or married women in Sassoon wore woven belts made of colored silk threads. The short outerwear of men living in Sassoon was the *aba*, which was woven with goat hair. It was short sleeved, and both front sides were bordered with golden threads. A woolen belt with multiple folds was worn round the waist. Trousers were of two kinds: everyday trousers

<sup>16</sup> Ավագյան 1983, 33-34, 60-61:

were made of black wool, and the ceremonial ones were made of striped fabric. Footwear was colored socks and soler (high-heeled pointed footwear). Headwear was the qoloz (round hat made of thick-felt or wool) with pushi (silk kerchief) tied round it. On holidays they wore a colored embroidered hat. The gdak (cylindrical cap) in Aghdznik was made of woolen or cotton fabric with large knits and was adorned with the embroidery of geometrical patterns performed with woolen or silk with red, green, yellow and black threads. The men and women of Sassoon wore the same costume both in summer and winter. The costumes of Shatakh and Moks, to some extent, resemble the costumes of Sassoon. People of Moush made their clothes of shila (red linen) or ghutni (cotton fabric) manufactured in Baghesh (Bitlis). The men of Moush wore an undershirt, long braies, short or long antari (long outerwear), short aba (woven with goat hair), linen belt, woolen trousers, patterned socks (butch) and trekh (leather pointed footwear with woolen or leather ties). Young people wore on their heads an arakhtchi (thin, light hat) and old men wore qoloz (round hat made of thick felt or wool) with a silk pushi (silk kerchief) wrapped round it. Many elements typical to the costumes of Bardzr Hayk and Vaspurakan were displayed in the costume of Cilicia.

### **Cilicia Costume Group**

Armenian women of Cilicia wore woman's head decorations of Vaspurakan without the cylindrical element. Some parts of woman's head decorations of Marash, the golden strand and headscarf, remind us the version of the head decoration of Bardzr Hayk, while the outerwear reminds of the outerwear of the Vaspurakan zebun (woman's outerwear made of manus)<sup>17</sup>. They used the same type of apron with the difference that the latter was not decorated. Elements typical to the costume of Bardzr Hayk dominated the man's costume there, but meanwhile the influence of the Vaspurakan costume was evident too: the short sleeved ceremonial jacket, embroidered trousers etc. The costume of Cilicia that has some similarities with the costume of Caesarea is of special interest. Men in Cilicia wore a shirt with short sleeves, decorated with folds below the shoulders and cut below the belt, and trousers made of dark fabric and short sleeved salta. Armenian women of Cilicia also wore the salta (short jacket). The two parts of it were fastened at the chest with two silver buckles. The chest and the sleeves of the salta were beautifully embroidered. In Cilicia, the apron was rectangular and mainly without any decorations. The belt was made of three meters long linen with tasseled ribbon-ornament. Trousers were made of blue broadcloth and had a belt (khonjan) and pockets.

<sup>17</sup> Ավագյան 1983, 41-42, 64-65:



1. Ayrarat costume group Yerevan, early 20th century \*



2. Syunik Artsakh costume group  
Stepanakert, 1950-60ss



3. Syunik Artsakh costume group Goris, 1960s



4. Wedding costume of Meghri



5. Vaspurakan costume group

\* Հղվածում ներկայացված բոլոր լուսանկարները (նկ. 1-10) պահպանվում են Հայոց ազգագրության թանգարանի հավաքածուներում:



7. Turuberan and Aghdznik Costume Group



9. Cilicia Costume Group



10. Hamshen and Trapizon Costume Group

6. Vaspurakan costume group



8. Bardzr Hayk Costume Group



The costume of the men of Western Armenia was specific with its short outerwear and embroidered decorations. In a man's costume, the habit of protecting the wearer with the help of the color of the clothes, ornaments, blue beads, tassels and fringes, and ties and loops was more viable. Until the beginning of the 20th century, embroidered clothing was present in the traditional costume of Armenia Minor. The clothes were adorned with geometrical ornaments embroidered with dense running-stitch and slanting flat-stitch. The fabric was ornamented from the reverse side so that they can have the needed pattern on the upright side. Women's garments were made of dark, expensive fabric and were long; the flaps and borders were adorned with golden-thread lace. A special part of the costume was the jacket reaching to the waist, adorned with embroidery of luxurious ornament-patterns, with the sleeves up to the elbows. From under the jacket, women wore a gorgeous shirt, the long sleeves of which were edged with wide embroidery. The image of the tree-of-life was embroidered on the dress and apron. On the dress of a young woman, on both sides of the branched tree-of-life, birds were embroidered. On the dress of a middle aged woman, the pattern of the tree-of-life was simpler and with neat lines. The dress of an old woman was free of ornaments and embroidery, related to the changes in her reproductive functions. In Armenia Minor, women doubly folded the belt, made of woolen or cotton woven fabric, in triangular shape, twisted it and wrapped round their waist, letting the angle edge hang at the back. The other one was a narrow belt adorned with beads, shells, mother-of-pearl and a big silver buckle with several bow-shaped strings hanging from under it. A man's short piece of outerwear was made of fine woolen fabric. It was long sleeved and was buttoned with woven button-loops. The variants made of broadcloth and velvet fabrics were adorned with golden-thread embroidery. One of the examples was decorated with lengthwise curved-lines crossing one another, performed in small running-stitches. Over the shirt they wore a vest, both flaps of which were decorated with plant ornaments. The vest was buttoned with sphere-shaped buttons and loops both made of silk threads. The hems of the trousers were decorated with thick, twisted black silk threads. The warm, short waistcoat was made of long-piled woolen fabric, the sleeves of which reached to the elbows, as it was in the Urartian costume. A tassel hung from each sleeve. On the chest, lengthwise bands were attached, adorned with green and golden woven cords.

### **Hamshen and Trapizon Costume Group**

Costume of Hamshen Linen or satin undershirts and panties were worn by women in Hamshen. Among their outfit, wide panties made of red floral chintz were distinguished, and according to the rule, they should be seen from under

the robe. Women wore short outerwear (ishlik), which had long sleeves and reached to the waist. Under it they wore a yelak (short jacket)<sup>18</sup>.

The woman's costume of Trapizon was very original. It consisted of a long silk or velvet outerwear cracked on the sides, a belt, made of fringed checkered silk fabric and embracing the whole waist, and a short jacket. Men wrapped the fez hat with a kerchief. The thin veil was folded and wrapped up round the cap without wholly covering it<sup>19</sup>. The Armenians of Hamshen, who had moved to the shores of the Black Sea earlier, borrowed the local headwear, using a fur hat instead of a fez hat and headstall (headpeice). They made their underwear of homemade linen. Trousers were made of woolen fabric, which, unlike the wide legs of men's trousers of Erzerum and Vaspurakan, had narrow and tight legs. A multi-folded leather belt was tied over the trousers, in the folds of which men kept tobacco, flint and other usable items. A revolver, knife or a dagger in its ornamented case was hung from the belt. A shirt was worn over the undershirt and then a woolen yelak. The kapa was an overcoat made of chukha fabric, the flaps of which came one over the other and 10cm down the waist. As footwear, instead of trekh, they wore chust (shoes covering the foot) or boots<sup>20</sup>.

### Conclusion

The national costume with its local groups is multifunctional and, being an important cultural element, plays the role of an indicator of social groups, gender and age, and also the spiritual demands of an ethnic community. The national costume is an original sign system that bears definite information about its wearer, disclosed by type, color, pattern, and ornamentation of the set. The national costume, in particular the men's costume set, being comparatively an open system, is rather flexible towards changes in the historical and cultural, social-economic processes of a given community. In the national costume all elements are of symbolic significance. However, the pattern, contour, and measurements are less symbolized, whereas the decoration and color system are directly connected with the spiritual sphere, obviously demonstrating the costume wearer's role and status. In the ritual outfit, symbolism of the clothing is especially evident. The clothing acquired ritual meaning by the required application of some elements; for men's wear such attributes were the belt, chukha (long warm outerwear)<sup>21</sup>, hat, shoulder strap and narot (colored woolen threads entwined into a single thick

<sup>18</sup> Кузнецов 1995, 207-208.

<sup>19</sup> Ավագյան 1983, 42-43:

<sup>20</sup> Кузнецов 1995, 207-217.

<sup>21</sup> Погосян 2003, 227-231, Ստեփանյան 2007:

thread), and for women's wear, the belt, apron, crown, some elements of the headdress, and adornments.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially after the Armenian Genocide, Armenian national costume began to lose its features. However, in some places, for example, in Syunik-Artsakh, some elements of the local costume have been preserved in purity.

The role of the traditional costume has completely changed today. It has gone out of everyday life, lost its former practical significance and has become an ethnosymbolic feature of national culture, playing the role of an ethnic indicator<sup>22</sup>.

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### ՀԱՅ ԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ՏԱՐԱԶԻ ԲՆՈՒԹԱԳԻՐԸ

Սվետլանա Պողոսյան, Կարեն Փահլևանյան

#### Ամփոփում

Ազգային տարազը, իր տեղային խմբերով հանդերձ, բազմագործառնությամբ է և որպես մշակութային կարևոր տարր՝ ունի սոցիալական խմբերի, սեռատարիքային և էթնիկ ընդհանրության հոգևոր պահանջմունքների ցուցիչի դեր: Այն յուրատեսակ նշանային համակարգ է՝ կրողի վերաբերյալ որոշակի տեղեկությամբ, որը հաղորդվում և դրսևորվում է կրվող համալիրի, տիպի, գույնի, ձևվածքի, զարդարանքի միջոցով: Հագուստի նշանային գործառնությունում գեղագիտական հատկանիշները միահյուսված են կրոնաժխական ոլորտներին:

Հայկական տարազը, ինչպես նաև հայոց լեզուն, իր բազմաթիվ բարբառներով, հիշեցնում է բազմագույն երանգապնակ՝ իր առանձին, բայց միաժամանակ համամասն ու ներդաշնակ գույներով: Մեկ համահայկական, ընդհանուր տարազ չկա: Այն պատմական զարգացման ուղի անցած համակարգ է՝ առանձին խմբերով, որոնք ընդհանուր են կառուցվածքային առումով: Բոլոր տարազախմբերում այն կազմված է ներքնազգեստից, վերնազգեստից, գլխի հարդարանքից, զարդարանքից, ազանելիքից (գուլպա, ոտնաման, տղամարդկանցը՝ նաև ոտքի փաթաթան, սոնապան): Տարբերությունները ոճավորման մեջ են, իսկ հագուստի ոճը դրսևորվել է ձևվածքային լուծման, հիմնական ձևերի, հագնելու եղանակի, գունային համադրության և գեղազարդման եղանակների մեջ: Ըստ տիպի՝ հայկական տարազը արձակ է, բաց, զգեստն ունի կտրվածքներ առջևից, կողքերից: Հայոց տարազի համակարգը կազմում են արևմտահայկական՝ Վասպուրական, Աղձնիք, Տուրուբերան, Բարձր Հայք, Շիրակ-Ջավախք, Տրապիզոն, Փոքր Հայք, Կիլիկիա և արևելահայկական՝ Այրարատ-Թիֆլիս-Պարսկահայք, Այունիք-Արցախ, Գուգարք, Վայոց ձոր և այլ համալիրները:

Ավանդական տարազի դերն այսօր լրիվ փոխվել է: Այն դուրս է եկել կենցաղավարումից, կորցրել երբեմնի կիրառական նշանակությունը և դարձել ազգային մշակույթի էթնոսիմվոլիկ հատկանիշ, կատարելով էթնիկ ցուցիչի դեր:

**Բանալի բառեր՝** արևմտահայկական, արևելահայկական, տեղական խմբեր, մշակութային երևույթ, նշանային համակարգ, տղամարդու տարազի համալիր, կնոջ տարազ:

### ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА АРМЯНСКОГО НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО КОСТЮМА

Светлана Погосян, Карен Пахлеванян

#### Резюме

Национальный костюм, наряду с его местными разновидностями, многофункционален и, как важный культурный элемент, играет роль индикатора духовных потребностей социальных групп, половозрастной и этнической общно-

стей. Национальный костюм – это своего рода знаковая система с определенной информацией о его владельце, которая передается через его тип, цвет, крой и украшение. В знаковых функциях одежды эстетические особенности переплетаются с религиозной и ритуальной сферами.

Армянский национальный костюм, как и мультидиалектный армянский язык, напоминает многоцветную палитру в ее отдельных, но в то же время пропорциональных и гармоничных цветах. Не существует единого общеармянского национального костюма. Это система, прошедшая путь исторического развития с отдельными группами, имеющими общую структуру.

Все группы национального костюма состоят из нижнего белья, верхней одежды, головного убора, украшения, обуви (носки, туфли, у мужчин также онучи, ноговицы). Различия проявляются и в стилизации, а стиль одежды – в крое, в основных формах, в способе ношения, в цветовом сочетании и декорировании.

По своему типу армянский национальный костюм свободный, открытый, с вырезами по бокам и спереди. Система армянского национального костюма включает западноармянский-Васпуракан, Ахдзник, Туруберак, Высокая Армения, Ширак-Джавакх, Трапезунд, Малая Армения, Киликия и восточноармянский – Айрарат-Тифлис-Парскайк, Сюник-Арцах, Гугарк, Вайоц Дзор и другие комплексы.

Сегодня полностью изменилась роль традиционного костюма. Он вышел из повседневной жизни, утратил свое некогда практическое значение и, став этно-символической чертой национальной культуры, играет роль этнического индикатора.

**Ключевые слова** – западноармянский, восточноармянский, местные группы, культурное явление, знаковая система, комплекс мужского национального костюма, женский национальный костюм.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARMENIAN NATIONAL COSTUME

Svetlana Poghosyan, Karen Pahlevanyan

### Abstract

The national costume with its local groups is multifunctional and, being an important cultural element, plays the role of an indicator of social groups, gender and age, and also the spiritual demands of an ethnic community. The national costume is an original sign system that bears definite information about its wearer, disclosed by type, color, pattern, and ornamentation of the set. The national costume, in particular the men's costume set, being comparatively an open system, is rather flexible towards changes in the historical and cultural, social-economic processes of a given community. In the national costume all elements are of symbolic significance. The Armenian national costume, like the Armenian multidialectal language, is manifold. It resembles a multicolored palette with separate but at the same time proportionate and harmonious colors. There is no "all Armenian" general costume. It is a historically developed system with separate groups that are common in

structure. In all groups the costume consists of underwear, outerwear, headdress, decoration, footwear (socks, shoes; for men also foot wrappers, gaiters). The differences are in stylization, demonstrated in pattern, main forms, manner of wearing, color combination, and ornamentation styles. The Armenian costume system comprised the folk dresses of Bardzr Hayk, Vaspurakan, Pokr Hayk, Cilicia, Ayrarat (Yerevan-Tiflis-Parskahayk/Persian Armenia/), Syunik-Artsakh and Lori-Gugark, each of which had their versions.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially after the Armenian Genocide, Armenian national costume began to lose its features. However, in some places, for example, in Syunik-Artsakh, some elements of the local costume have been preserved in purity. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially after the Armenian Genocide, Armenian national costume began to lose its features. However, in some places, for example, in Syunik-Artsakh, some elements of the local costume have been preserved in purity.

**Key words** – Western Armenian, Eastern Armenian, local groups, cultural element, sign system, men's costume set, woman's costume.