

KINDS OF UPPER BODY CLOTHING OF AZERBAIJANI WOMEN IN 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

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For a long period of historical development, from ancient civilizations to the most recent period, traditional costume, as an indicator of marital status, age and place in a hierarchy, was also the main carrier of information about ethnicity. Therefore, in modern ethnography, samples of traditional attire are studied as a source for researching the ethnic history of the region.

With the development of a sovereign state, the interest of the Azerbaijani people in their rich historical and cultural heritage increased. The study of the traditional clothes of Azerbaijanis in the 19th and early 20th centu-

Chepken with chapig cuts. NMHA

ries through the prism of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the world gives awareness of the importance of universal values, where original Azerbaijani culture, embodied in clothes, stands out with its recognizable style.

The source for the study of the characteristics and diversity of Azerbaijani clothes is the museum collection of the ethnographic fund of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan of the ANAS.

Having gone through a long and complex cultural-historical process, Azerbaijani women's costume with strong ethnic characteristics gets its complete appearance by the 18th century. But because of the diversity of climatic conditions and the economic activity of the population, Azerbaijani national clothes acquired their own characteristics in different regions. But these minor regional changes in forms of garments existed within traditional structures of the embroidery, structure and decoration of clothes. Along with various forms, local names existed too.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the upper body clothing of Azerbaijani women stood out for its particular colorfulness, rich design and diversity of the style. By the style they can be divided into nine varieties.

Arkhalig (arxalıq). The most common upper body clothing of Azerbaijani women was the **arkhalig**. The name is derived from the Turkic word "Arkha", which means "back". This kind of outer clothing with the same name spread throughout the Caucasus. [1, 80] The particularity of its cut was that it was detachable at the waist and the fabric of the hem was gathered along the entire line of the cut. The stylistic differences of female **arkhaligs** were particularly clearly expressed in the form and length of sleeves, and the width of the Basque could also be different.

The earliest type of the **arkhalig** was long-skirted and had a deep rectangular rib neckline and long narrow folding sleeves. Such a cut became popular in the Shirvan region of Azerbaijan and among Azerbaijani women of Derbent under the name of don. [2.138] Nowadays, "don" means "dress" or "clothes" in the Azerbaijani language. It should be noted that the verb "tonat" derived from the word "ton" is also used to mean "to dress" in the Turkic epic "The Book of My Grandfather Gorgut". [3, 54] This name also functions in modern Turkic languages: Turkish - "clothes", Turkmen - "robe", Yakut - "coat" and Kyrgyz - "sheepskin coat". [4, 29]

On the basis of many museum specimens of this type



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of clothing, one can assume that, in the analyzed period, arkhaligs with a shorter hem were the most common.

Arkhaligs that were made as one piece in the front



Arkhalig with a short skirt. NMHA

and with a detachable waist in the back stood out for the diversity of their cut.

Chepken (çəpkən). It is a variety of whole-cut upper body women's clothing with a length of just below the waist. The bodice of the **chepken** tightly hugged the body and at the bottom on the sides of the hem, there were bulges with slits "çapıq" typical of Azerbaijani attire. The word chepken, shepken also has Turkic etymology and has analogues in related Turkic languages such as Tatar and Bashkir, for example, "chikman" in Turkmen - chekmen, which means cloth (fabric) and indicates the material from which this kind of clothing was traditionally made. [5, 43-44]

Labada (ləbbadə, lavada). It is a variety of the women's whole-cut upper body dress, short, a little below the waist, tight-fitting and with side slits "çapıq". The cut has shoulder seams and short sleeves sewn straight into the armhole. This dress was designed for the cold season, so it was sewn on a quilted lining, but with short sleeves to the elbow, and there was a large cut under the arm. The **labada**, which was worn by young women from well-off families, was widespread in Sheki and Shirvan.

Nimtene (nimtənə, mintənə). It is whole-cut shoulder clothes with long straight and narrow sleeves with side slits "çapıq". The **nimtene** was common in the western region of Azerbaijan.

Bahari (baharı). It is a detachable variety of swing clothing, had a narrow bodice with short sleeves to

*Charkazi arkhalig. NMHA**Nimtana. NMHA*

the elbow and a short-hemmed (to the knee) magnificent Basque gathered at the waist line. In the women's clothing complex, the Bahari was used as elegant upper clothing. The term "Bahari" is in tune with the word "Bahar" (bahar) - spring, perhaps because of its decoration, but the name may correspond to the spring and autumn purpose of this attire. The museum's collection contains individual samples of the bahari, which stand out for the special saturation of composite design in the form of finish with openwork beads or gold embroidery on the neck, sides, hem and bottom of the sleeve. The Bahari was widespread in Baku, Lankaran and Karabakh.

Kulaja (küləcə). It is a type of women's swing clothing similar in cut to the bahari and the Shirvan Don with a length of sleeves at 3/4. This kind of clothing was widespread in western regions of Azerbaijan. In Ganja, for example, they wore not the **arkhalig** but the **kulaja**, which was similar to the **arkhalig** in cut, but was more distinguished by its name. Young women in Sheki wore

*Charkazi arkhalig. NMHA*



Arkhalig with a detachable waist from behind. NMHA



the **labada** and older women – the **kulaja**. The **kulaja** was also worn by women of Karabakh and Nakhchivan. [6, 53, 62]

Katibi (katibi). It is traditional swing winter women's clothing. The difference between the katibi and the bahari and kulaja was that it was quilted or trimmed with fur. The name of this type of clothing was probably derived from the Arabic word "Katib" - scribe, secretary. [7, 847]

The above-described three types of swing clothes – bahari, katibi and kulaja - were worn by women over the shoulder **arkhalig** or **chepken**.

Eshmek (eşmək). It is winter quilted women's outerwear. The flaps on the chest did not converge, sleeves stretched to the elbow, and there was a large opening under the arm. This name may have been derived from the word "eshmek", which means a "journey" (yola çıkmak) in the Turkish dialect. [8]

Kurdu (kürdü). It is a quilted sleeveless shirt similar to the eshmek by its cut. The front flaps do not converge, and there are ridges with cuts on the sides. The collar, hem and sleeves of the eshmek and kurdu were trimmed and covered with ferret fur from inside.

The evolutionary processes of the 19th and early 20th centuries caused by socio-economic and political changes in the country also had a minor impact on this sector of society. And throughout the 19th century, the traditional upper body clothing of Azerbaijani women was gradually subjected to transformation – the proportions and partly the design changed, but within the framework of ethnic recognizability.

Thus, there appeared a new model of the arkhalig -

"**charkazi**". The innovations affected the appearance of numerous elements – a deep figured rounded breast cut, a tight-fitting bodice with vertical recesses and bones. The tight-fitting bodice was fastened from the front to the waist with the help of hooks and loops hidden with a special bar, and to the bottom it expanded with a shortened corrugated Basque with a length of up to 10 cm. The narrow bodice and narrow sleeves to the elbow gained elegance thanks to the style of the sleeves dubbed "nulfar" (**nülufər**), which means a lotus flower. This name corresponded to the style of the sleeves, which strongly expanded from the narrow top to the bottom, lengthened from behind and ended with a lush frill of ribbon or fabric. In the fashionable style, the neckline was also decorated like the sleeves. Fashionistas complemented such sleeves with bows at the elbow. This style of dress resembled the exquisite Rococo style - a narrow bodice and sleeves combined with lush frills, bows and laces. The new model of the charkazi was in perfect harmony with traditional clothes, so it began to define the style of aristocratic women's fashion. It was worn with a shirt of a traditional cut, which freely protruded from under bell-shaped sleeves and hem.

The changes also affected the use of fabrics. The color palette of the costume ensemble of Azerbaijani women was bright and colorful thanks to their numerous colors. In one garment complex, shirts, skirts and upper body clothes with different colors harmoniously combined. But in the period under review, the combination of bright colors was gradually replaced by the style where the top and the bottom of the costume

Labada. NMHA

were made from the same fabric.

All samples of the museum collection of abovementioned upper body female garments were sewn from velvet, cashmere wool and various brocade fabrics, and the edges – the collar, sleeves and hems were trimmed with golden tape “zarbafta” (**zərbafta**). On the basis of the collection, it is possible to judge the color preferences of women. Young women preferred bright shades of red, green, purple, blue and yellow. The older the woman, the darker the tone of her clothes.

In conclusion, we would like to point out that the wealth and artistic and design features of the cut and decoration of traditional Azerbaijani clothes had an impact on the whole of the Caucasus, where many nations borrowed forms of clothes with their names. [9, 55] For example, in the descriptions of classes and material culture of Armenians of the village of Sarov by the caretaker of the Sarov single-class school, Nikolay Grigorov, special attention is paid to the influence of the Tatars (Azerbaijanis) on the life and culture of the Armenians. “The influence of the Tatars is expressed in the imitation of Tatar women’s clothing. Leaving their national costume, local Armenian women began to dress like their close neighbors, Tatar women...”. [10, 129-130]

Thus, garment exhibits from the 19th and early 20th centuries collected in the museum suggest that, despite the influence of European culture, traditional Azerbaijani clothes in the general population retained their ethnic make-up until the 1920s, although the situation related to the domestic use of traditional clothing began to change in the 19th century – the national costume was replaced by new versions dictated by urban fashion and common types of pan-European costume. These processes are reflected in the illustrative material of the fund of documentary sources of the Museum and in individual samples of European clothing in the ethnographic collection. The rich museum material enables historical reconstruction of costumes and the arrangement in ensembles, allowing you to uncover the role, value and location of each item in the formation of folk culture. ✦

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