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Article



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RESEARCH ON THE ELEMENTS OF IDENTITY OF ETHNIC MINORITIES LIVING IN GEORGIA USING THE EXAMPLE OF THE TRADITIONAL CLOTHING OF ALBANIAN UDINS

Abstract: The results of the study presented in this article concern the research of the traditional clothing, accessories, decorative elements, terminology, and planning characteristics of minority groups living in Georgia, as well as the materialization of the collected information.

Despite the small territorial size of Georgia, its population is distinguished by ethnic and religious diversity. For centuries, representatives of various ethnic groups have settled in our country and have succeeded in living peacefully together with the local population.

The issues of identity of ethnic, national, and religious minorities residing in the territory of modern Georgia are discussed through the example of one of the descendant groups of Albanian civilization – the Udins – the causes and processes of their migration to Georgia, their lifestyle, traditional clothing, and adornment.

The relevance of the research arises from the issues related to the protection of the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities and their integration into the common Georgian cultural space within the framework of the modern Georgian state. The cultural heritage of ethnically and religiously diverse groups living in Georgia is recognized as part of the overall Georgian cultural achievement.

Key words: ethnic minority, Albanian descendants-Udins, cultural heritage, traditional clothing.

Language: English

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Introduction

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Georgia, both from a historical and contemporary perspective, represents a multiethnic country [2;3]. Throughout the territory of our homeland, which possesses a rich historical past, peoples of various nationalities and religions have lived side by side since ancient times. Although our

country has steadfastly defended its territorial integrity and independence with the sword, there have also been instances when foreigners facing greater hardship found refuge here and continued their lives as ethnic minorities. Such was the case with the Udins, inhabitants of the ancient Albanian state [Fig. 1] [4].



Fig. 1. Ancient Greek illustration of the Alban state

It has been established through research that the state of Albania was mainly located in the lower basins of the Mtkvari (Kura) and Araxes rivers and, in addition to the present-day territory of Azerbaijan, also included the adjacent southern part of Dagestan. Its southern border ran along the Araxes River, to the east it was bounded by the Caspian Sea, and to the west its neighbor was the kingdom of Kartli (Iberia). As with other countries, the state of Caucasian Albania was never confined permanently within fixed borders. Its territory sometimes decreased and sometimes expanded, which was significantly determined by external factors and by relations with neighboring states [5].

It is noteworthy that Udins were among the creators of the Albanian state and culture and are their descendants. The Udins adopted Christianity in the 4th century, but in the 7th century, as a result of the Arab conquest of the territory of Azerbaijan, Christian Udins, like the majority of the local population, converted to Islam. It is also noteworthy that some of them still preserved their old faith, and for this reason, in the 7th century, by order of the Arab caliph, they were subordinated to the Armenian Apostolic Church, which had already been attempting since the 6th century to incorporate the autocephalous Albanian Church. The final transition of the western groups of Udins to Orthodoxy probably began in the 11th–13th centuries, due to the increased activity of the Georgian Church in the region.

Udins in Georgia, in the village of Zinobiani of

the Kvareli district, resettled from Vartashen between 1920 and 1922. This occurred because of the mutual confrontation between Azerbaijanis and Armenians, of which innocent Udins often became victims. The headman of the village, Zinobi Silikashvili, found a peaceful refuge in Georgia and settled his fellow villagers in the Kvareli district bordering Azerbaijan. Here they cleared an oak forest and founded a new village, which was given his name in his honor. Against the background of intensifying assimilation processes, over time the Udins engaged in the traditional branches of agriculture characteristic of Kakheti.

Changes in living conditions have gradually affected the traditional way of life of the Udins, including their clothing [6;7;8]. From the end of the 19th century, the traditional clothing of the Udins gradually began to disappear from everyday life. From 18th-century photographs it becomes clear that the traditional costume of the Udins is identical to the clothing of the Karabakh Armenians, a fact that can be explained by their co-residence and common origin [9].

The traditional costume of Udi man, similar to that of the Karabakh Armenians and the Azerbaijanis living in this region, consisted of trousers, a chokha trimmed with a leather or wolf-skin belt, and an akhalukhi (arkhalukhi, arkhalig); footwear included high boots or leather shoes, and the headdress was a sheepskin hat *papaqi* or a “dinga” similar to the Qabala type (Fig. 1) [10].

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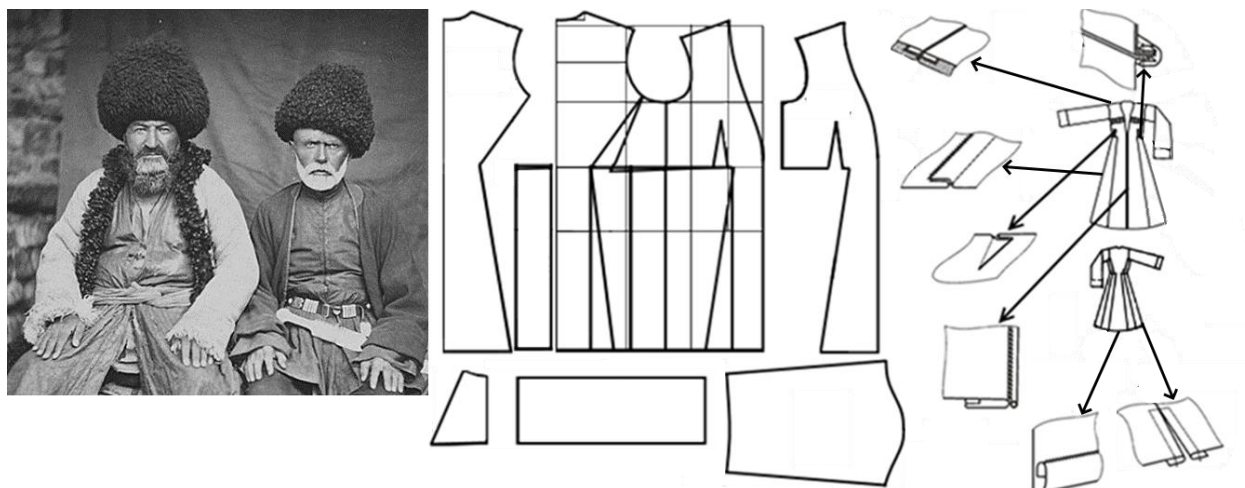


Fig. 1. Udi men in traditional clothing. Chokhi construction and technological processing scheme.

Below the knee line, the chokha, which reaches in length to this level and has an inserted side panel in the side cut, is fastened with buttons and button loops (or hooks) along the front line up to the waistline (Fig. 1). The skirt and back, divided at the waistline, consist of a whole front part of the skirt and side inserts passing over to the back, below the waistline. At the level of the skirt's center front, pockets are attached on both sides. The cuff is one-piece, long, straight, extending along the entire length, or with a small slit at the wrist line. The upper cut of the cuff is straight. The chokha is lined with interlining up to the waistline (Fig. 1).

The arkhalukhi of Udi man, fitted to the waistline and flaring at the bottom, is made of plain black satin fabric, knee-length, with the skirt divided at the waistline and a fully cut back (Fig. 2). The

arkhalukhi is fully lined with black satin and multicolored printed cotton fabrics. For the lining of the back piece, a full-length black fabric is used, which, with the addition of wedge-shaped elements expanding at the bottom, extends to the knee line. In the waist area on both sides, the arkhalukhi has planned slits, which, for decorative purposes and also for reinforcing the cut, are finished with piping made of braided cord.

The underarm cut of the arkhalukhi is finished with a one-piece, straight-shaped cuff. The lower cut of the cuff is finished with a facing of the same fabric and a slit, the upper and lower cuts of which are fastened with button loops made of cord. The button stand is separately attached. The arkhalukhi is fastened along the front central line up to the waistline with five buttons made of cord (Fig. 4).



Fig. 2. Arkhalukh of the male udi, its construction and technological processing scheme. Luba Bezhanishvili, Zinobiani, 1951

The traditional costume of the Udi woman is similar to that of the Karabakh Armenian woman. It consisted of a long dress, red trousers, and an arkhalukhi.

The trousers are straight and ankle-length. The lower edges of the trousers are edged with fabric of a

different color.

Udi woman's dress is of a straight silhouette, ankle-length, and made mainly of red silk fabric. It has side slits, which are edged with fabric of a different, yet tonally matching, color to that of the trousers. The sleeve is long, one-piece, and straight, set in at the

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armhole. The skirt of the dress consists of a single piece, and in the neckline area there is a sufficiently long slit (sometimes finished with embroidery), which is fastened with buttons and button loops. The collar is made as a stand-up type.

The traditional costume of the Udi woman (Fig. 3) consisted of a long dress ("gurat") and wide, red trousers reaching to the ankles, which were called

"kholokh". Over the "gurat" they wore a garment similar to an arkhalukhi, called "kavai", which was fastened at the waist with a woollen sash or a wolf-skin belt. An apron was worn underneath it. The color of the "kavai" varied according to age: for young women it was of a light color, while for older women it was dark. On their feet they wore shoes called "lalakani" (Fig. 4) [11].

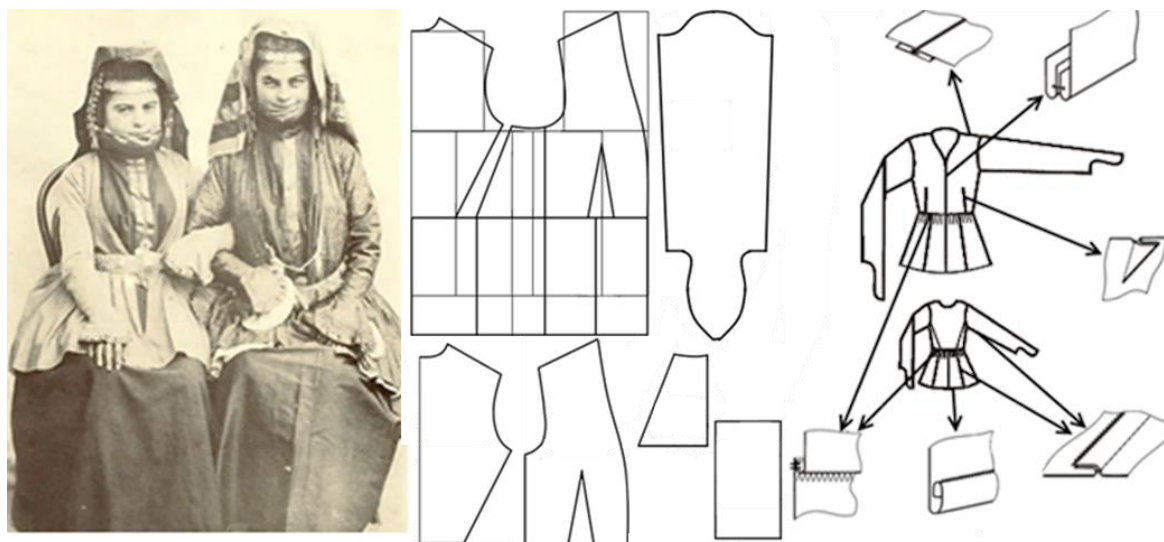


Fig. 4. Udi women in traditional clothing, Akhalukhi - "Kavai", its construction and technological processing scheme.

The traditional headdress of the Udi woman consisted of several elements. From above the black head covering ("matsn charagat") down to the hem of the dress, a red, airy fabric was draped, and from beneath the head covering, on both sides of the head from above the ears to the chest, there hung fabric adorned with silver coins, pearls, and stones.

An important element of the traditional costume of the Udi woman is a fairly large apron of a different color, which completely covers the skirt, straight in shape, and extending in length from the underarm line

to the hem of the dress (Fig. 4). The apron is edged with the same trimming as the dress and the lower edge of the trousers.

During weddings, the Udi woman covered half of her face with a "yeshmag", under which only the nose and eyes were visible [12]. The woman was supposed to wear the "yeshmag" throughout her life, but over time her style of dress changed, and the tradition of covering the headdress and the lower part of the face completely disappeared (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Udi women with traditional headdress.

The study of the contemporary life of the

Albanian Udins in Georgia has shown that they still

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strive to preserve centuries-old, ancient customs and traditions. Although traditional clothing plays a significant role in maintaining traditional identity, in the context of 21st-century globalization it has retained only a ceremonial function.

It should be noted that the traditional clothing of the Udins in the 19th–20th centuries is of a generally Caucasian character and is almost identical to the clothing of the Karabakh Armenians. This fact can be explained by their co-residence and common origin. In the conditions of contemporary globalization, the protection and popularization of traditional clothing acquire special importance. Its preservation promotes respect for cultural diversity, mutual understanding between ethnic groups, and the inclusive development of society.

Therefore, it is important that traditional clothing be perceived not as a remnant of the past, but as a living cultural heritage that has its place and value in today's reality. Information about the customs and clothing of the Udins as an ethnic minority will significantly contribute to the formation and popularization of public understanding regarding the cultural niche of this people.

The study is concluded within the scope of the research project - Study of the factors of formation and planning of traditional clothes of ethnic, religious and national minorities in Georgia with the financial support of Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (Grant number - FR-22-2598).

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