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CLOTHING AS AN EXPRESSION OF NATIONAL CULTURE AND ITS TIME

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Abstract. The article considers clothing as a cultural text that reflects both the identity of a nation and the spirit of a historical period. Using examples from Uzbek costume history, it shows how garments changed together with social life, economy and aesthetics, while keeping a recognizable national character. Particular attention is paid to the symbolic meaning of color, ornament and silhouette, and to the role of clothing in shaping the image of modern Uzbekistan.

Keywords: clothing, national culture, costume history, symbol, ornament, color, identity, epoch, Uzbek costume, semiotics of dress.

Introduction

The French philosopher Roland Barthes described fashion as a system of signs, and the sociologist Georg Simmel saw in it a balance between the wish to belong to a group and the wish to stand out. Both ideas help us understand why clothing is often called a "mirror of its time." A garment tells us about the climate and resources of a country, its religion and customs, its craft skills and its contacts with other peoples. At the same time, it changes as society changes.

The purpose of this article is to show how Uzbek clothing expresses national culture and how it has reflected different historical periods.

Main part

1. Clothing as a cultural code. In traditional Uzbek society, a person's clothing revealed age, marital status, region and social position. A young girl wore bright colors and many braids; a married woman wore a headscarf of a certain type; an elderly woman preferred calm, dark tones. Men's do'ppi differed from region to region, and an experienced eye could tell whether a man came from Chust, Margilan, Bukhara or Surkhandarya. Ornaments were believed to protect the wearer, and embroidered items such as suzani and wedding garments were prepared by the family for years.

2. Clothing and historical periods. Uzbek dress clearly reflects the major stages of the country's history:

Period	Main features of clothing
Great Silk Road era	Silk and cotton weaving; exchange of fabrics, dyes and patterns with China, India, Iran

Period	Main features of clothing
19th – early 20th century	Flourishing of ikat (abrbandi) weaving, layered robes, rich embroidery, regional schools
Soviet period	Spread of European-style factory clothing; national dress kept mainly for holidays and weddings
Independence (since 1991)	Revival of national crafts, interest in heritage, emergence of Uzbek fashion designers
Present day	Combination of national motifs with global trends, eco-materials and digital design

Each period added something new, but the core elements — love for bright silk, ornament and layered silhouette — were preserved.

3. The language of color and ornament. Color in Uzbek costume is never accidental. Blue and turquoise are associated with the sky and purity, green with life and spring, red with joy and protection, and white with peace and sincerity. The ikat pattern, called *abr* ("cloud"), with its blurred edges, symbolizes movement and changeability — a striking parallel to fashion itself. Ornaments such as the ram's horn (qo'chqor shoxi), the almond and the pomegranate carry wishes for strength, health and prosperity.

4. Clothing and the image of modern Uzbekistan. Today, national dress is visible at state celebrations, cultural festivals and international events. Uzbek ikat and embroidery have appeared on global runways and in museum exhibitions abroad. For the country, clothing has become part of its cultural diplomacy: through fabrics and costumes, the world learns about Uzbek history and hospitality. For young people, wearing elements of national dress is a way of expressing pride in their roots while remaining modern.

Conclusion

Clothing is a living document of culture. It preserves the memory of a nation and, at the same time, records the changes of each epoch. Uzbek costume shows that national identity can survive major historical changes if it is supported by craft traditions and understood by new generations. Modern designers, by reading the "language" of traditional dress, can create clothing that speaks both about the nation and about our time.

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