

Differences and Similarities Between the Traditional Clothing of the Bukhara Turkmen and the Local Population

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Abstract: This article analyzes the distinct characteristics of the clothing worn by the Turkmen people living in Bukhara, as well as the similarities and differences between Turkmen clothing and that of the local population. The study also covers the methods of cutting and sewing these garments, along with details about the use of modern equipment to embroider floral collars on dresses. The analysis is based on scientific literature and field research materials.

Keywords: Central Asia, Turkmen, Republic of Turkmenistan, floral-collared dress, tahya, tun, yorinzhagul, scarf, chogirma, turban, natural geography, floral-collared, Karakul leather.

Introduction: Similar to the distinct elements found in the material culture of various ethnic groups in the Bukhara oasis, we can observe certain unique features in the clothing of the Turkmen people that are not present in the attire of other nations. Traditional folk clothing has played an important role in studying the material life, social status, and religious values of each ethnic group.

Main Content of the Article: In ethnology, clothing is categorized based on various factors: according to age, it is divided into children's, adults', and the elderly's attire; based on gender, there are men's and women's clothing; according to the purpose of dressing, there are festive, ceremonial, everyday, and work clothes; based on social status, clothing is classified into that worn by the rich and the poor; by regional and natural-climatic conditions, clothing varies for those living in mountainous areas, steppe regions, urban, and rural settings; and by season, clothing is categorized into spring, summer, autumn, and winter attire [4,49].

The main elements, designs, fabrics used, and names of the Turkmen national costumes show similarities with the traditional clothing of other peoples living in Central Asia, such as Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, and Tajiks. This indicates that they have lived in the same region from a natural geographical perspective and share common cultural developments and ethnogenesis.

The Turkmen have lived in the same region as the local population for centuries, and changes have occurred in all aspects of material culture, including the appearance, sewing, decoration, and other elements of their clothing. However, the tradition of Turkmen women wearing long dresses, donning floral-collared outfits of various styles and sizes, and selecting colors based on age has persisted to this day. Although many women in neighboring Turkmenistan have focused on wearing traditional tight floral-collared dresses to enhance their appearance, Turkmen women in Bukhara have prioritized wearing their outer garments loosely, with long sleeves. This is because the Bukhara population has historically adhered to Islamic laws and customs, leading to changes in their clothing as well.

Such distinctive floral-collared dresses that reflect their national identity are no longer worn by all Turkmen women in the region today. This is due to the fact that it has been a long time since Turkmen people migrated to the Bukhara area, and they have lived in a dispersed and mixed manner among the local population. Additionally, they have intermarried with the Uzbek and Tajik communities in the area, leading them to adopt clothing characteristic of the region.

However, a significant number of middle-aged and elderly Turkmen women living in close quarters in villages such as "Yangi Turmush," "Okchamamat" in the Kogon district, "Parakht," "Surkhiyon,"

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"Qoqishtuvon" in the Romiton district, and "Qirlishon" in the Olot district continue to wear Turkmen floral-collared dresses, traditional headwear (which men also wear), various styles of tunics, and scarves known as yorinzhagul in various colors for family gatherings, weddings, and celebrations. Furthermore, currently, women who come as brides from the sister Republic of Turkmenistan are also bringing Turkmen national clothing and jewelry with them[7].

The front of the Turkmen women's dress features a V-shaped cut that extends from the collar part to the chest. On both sides of the cut, large or small embroidered patterns of pomegranate, wildflowers, and pepper are sewn. The embroidered collars can be stitched onto the fabric using either hand labor or machines, and the floral collars on the dresses can have a wide or narrow appearance [11,89].

Some Turkmen women who are knowledgeable in sewing have hand-stitched floral collars due to the absence of specialized machines for sewing collars in the Bukhara region. However, during the 1970s and 1980s, the increase in machines that could sew floral collars directly onto the fabric in Turkmenistan led people to purchase ready-made floral-collared materials or floral-collared clothing from the markets.

During the pandemic, because crossing into the territory of neighboring Turkmenistan became quite difficult, Turkmen women living in Bukhara were limited to wearing the floral-collared clothing they had previously purchased.

Turkmen women sew their dresses from atlas or half-atlas fabrics, as well as from various shades of red satin material. Generally, they tend to sew dresses using fabrics in colors such as white, brown, green, yellow, and other similar shades. The preferred colors for the clothing are red, white, yellow, and green, which symbolize the four elements: fire, earth, air, and water [3,87].

Indeed, today, before marriage, Turkmen girls often use brighter colors such as red and light blue fabrics for their dresses. However, after getting married, it has become customary to wear dresses in light red and yellow colors adorned with embroidery of floral patterns and gold thread. Older women tend to dress more simply, primarily sewing dresses from fabrics in white and blue colors [6].

Women's headwear stands out from that of other Turkic peoples due to its variety of colors, shapes, and the abundance of ornaments and decorations. Depending on their headwear and hairstyles, one can distinguish between young girls, brides, middle-aged women, and elderly women [5,79]. Such distinctive features are also more visible in the headwear of Turkmen women. Specifically, Turkmen girls wear a 'tahya' as their headwear before marriage.

While there are many similarities between women's and men's 'tahya', they differ primarily in the color of the decorative embroidery used to embellish them. Women's headwear often features designs of red flowers and eye beads, with white, red, and yellow colors prominently displayed. In men's 'tahya', white and yellow colors of the embroidery hold significant importance. Red is a symbol of life, goodness, and beauty among the Turkmen, which is why women tend to wear headwear in red shades.

After getting married, women adopt the custom of wearing a scarf. The color of the scarf and the method of tying it are chosen according to age. Up to middle age, women typically wear a single-layer scarf, while older women often tie a second scarf over the first. The larger scarf that is tied over or wrapped around is known as "yorinjakulli" among the Turkmen, while the local population refers to it as "chalma." Traditionally, the scarf is either square or rectangular and is tied around the neck along the upper part of the head. The square "yorinjakulli" scarf is commonly seen among Turkmen women [1, 41].

The way Turkmen women wrap their scarves differs from that of Uzbek women. Uzbek women drape the scarf over their heads, while Turkmen women combine their hair with the scarf and tie it. Nowadays, this method of tying a scarf is mostly observed among women who come to Bukhara as brides from the Republic of Turkmenistan.



The traditional headdress of Turkmen men is the high-collared ‘choqirma’, which was replaced by the ‘salla’ as a result of the local culture of Bukhara being assimilated in the late 19th century [9,295]. In the 1930s, due to the Soviet regime's ruthless campaign against Islam and religious values, the ‘salla’ headdress, adopted by the Turkmen from the local population, was replaced by the ‘telpak’ (made from light-colored or bright-brown sheepskin). During the cold, harsh winter days, they would wear a ‘tahya’ under the ‘telpak’. Today, while the ‘tahya’ remains the national headdress of the Turkmen, it has not become customary for Turkmen families in the Bukhara region to wear it daily. However, it is rarely worn during weddings, festivals, and mourning days.

One of the outer garments for men is the ‘tun’ (also known as ‘dun’), which is commonly worn by all local ethnic groups and is one of the most widespread garments. A common feature of these outer garments is their open front [2,100]. The Turkmen ‘tun’ differs from those of other peoples in its stitching, color, decorations, and type. Specifically, the stitching of the Turkmen men's ‘tun’ includes embroidery running from the neck area down to the hem. Another characteristic is the presence of ‘alaja’ (a belt woven from several white and black threads to ward off the evil eye) on both sides of the ‘tun’, which is tied to prevent it from opening while walking.

‘Tuns’ made of velvet are worn at celebrations, while those made of satin are worn indoors. The ‘tuns’ stitched from other materials are typically worn while preparing food around the stove.

Conclusion: In the village of Qorajari, even today, elderly Turkmen women sew upper ‘tuns’ for both men and women using handcraft techniques at home. These garments are predominantly worn at weddings and celebrations.

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