

Traditional Clothes Symbolize Uzbekistan's Rich Cultural Heritage

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The Republic of Uzbekistan is located in the heart of Central Asia on the historic Great Silk Road, the crossroads of trade and cultural exchange between East and West. As a result, Uzbekistan has accumulated a very rich heritage and unique cultural continuity that dates back through many thousands of years of history. The culture of Uzbekistan is characterized by its inimitable national music, dance and painting, and unique national cuisine and clothes.

The peculiarity of clothes and their design is determined by various factors, such as age, social position, and gender. Clothes are further classified by their use: casual (everyday wear), ceremonial, religious, and work clothes. Traditional Uzbek clothing has also developed according to climatic characteristics, as well as historical and ethnic-regional features. That is why the dress attributes in all regions of Uzbekistan are quite different from each other.

Women's Traditional Clothing

Traditionally, women wore a tunic-like dress, the *kuilak* (dress), and baggy trousers called *lozim*. The necklines of dresses made for unmarried girls were tailored differently than those for married women, and married women without children usually wore a stand-up collar that was edged with pleating. In the Bukhara and Samarkand

oases, women's collars were edged with *keshkurt*, a tape made with gold embroidery.

For festivals or parties, women often wore three different dresses at one time. The sleeves of each dress were of different lengths, so that the hems of the bottom sleeves, each beautifully embroidered, peeked out beneath the overlying sleeves. The women strove to outdo one another with the luxuriousness of their clothes, often taking up to seven dresses with them and changing their attire throughout the course of an event.

Outer clothing for women included quilted tunic robes. The quilted robes of Khorezm women were particularly interesting, featuring a horizontal slit on the sleeves at the elbows. Women of Bukhara and Samarkand wore long, light robes called *rumcha*, which were tapered at the waist. *Rumchas* had short sleeves and embroidered necks. *Munisak* robes (also known as *kaltacha*) were lined and, if for winter usage, had a thin insulating layer. They were a regular part of a woman's attire on festival days.

Later, another type of clothing appeared: the *kamzul* or *pehmat* (camisole). This robe also tapered slightly at the waist, had short narrow sleeves, a turned-down collar, and side or breast pockets. Usually *pehmat*s were sewn from brightly striped *bekasam* or colored velvet. At about the same time, short sleeveless jackets, or *nimcha*, became popular.

Headdresses were also a major component of women's clothing. The tradi-



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Men's Chapon

tional headdress for women was a square kerchief called the *rumol*, which was tied around the head. Wealthy women wore kerchiefs interwoven with

gold or silver spangles.

When a woman was working, she covered her head with a white muslin kerchief, the *doka* (gauze), which was rarely embroidered. Girls and young women wore skullcaps called *doppi*. Young women also decorated their heads with jewelry. The *tillakosh* (well-known in Bukhara, Tashkent and Ferghana) was a delicate, gilded diadem. It usually had a bead in front surrounded by tiny turquoise stones as an amulet against the evil eye.

Men's Traditional Clothing

The male national costume was always the same style regardless of the age of the owner. The traditional shirt (*milliy kuilak*) covered the knees, although it was later shortened to the middle of the hips. The *yakhtak* shirt was popular among Uzbek men from the Ferghana and Tashkent regions. It was made from printed cotton fabric and reached the knees.

Men's trousers (*ishton*) were wide,



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narrowing at the ankle. They were sewn from cotton, but in winter the trousers were with lined with wool. Over their shirts, men wore robes called *chapon*. There were two styles of robes: the first was cut from a folded piece of cloth and had no seams, while the second was made from two pieces of cloth, which were then sewn together. Vertical cuts were made in the laps of the robes to allow the wearer to move easily. The collar, laps, and sleeves were edged with narrow tape. Some robes were made without lining, while others were lined or insulated for winter wear.

In previous ages emirs wore gold-embroidered robes (*zarchapon*). The best *zarchapon* masters worked in the royal workshops. They made embroidery patterns from leather or cardboard, over which they would embroider with gold and silver threads. It is the underlying patterns that give the *gulduzi* and *zaminduzi* embroidery an embossed appearance.

In winter, rich men wore a *chakmon* or *kebanak* (fur coat). These robes were girded with a square piece of embroidered fabric; the wealthiest men used a wide velvet or braid girdle for this purpose. Skullcaps (*doppi*), which went by many different names, were one of the most popular male headdresses. Most men wore turbans over the skullcap or wrapped it with a belt-kerchief.

Tyubeteika (Doppi)

The soft or hard linen skullcap, tyubeteika, has always been popular and,

subsequently, making tyubeteikas has, over the centuries, become a widely practiced handicraft. This headgear has become part and parcel of the Uzbek national costume, rooted among Uzbeks as a traditional part of their lives. This is a national hat, which was made a long time ago in Ferghana, and now is worn throughout the countries of Central Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Southern Asia. It is a small hat made of silk, cotton, or velvet and is worn on the crown of the head for some secular and religious functions. It has also become part of the national dress of many Muslim nations and understandably so: in summer, it protects the head from the sun, while in winter, when a warmer hat is needed, the tyubeteika can be easily folded and carried in one's pocket.

The word "tyubeteika" comes from the Turkic word "tyube," meaning "top"



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Woman's
Tyubeteikas

or "peak." This is a traditional embroidered scullcap worn not only in Uzbekistan but also in other Central Asian nations. Originally, tyubeteikas were conical and had broad sides worn under the turban. Another *arakchin*, made of pure cotton cloth without embroidery, was worn under it. Since the 20th century, the shapes of tyubeteikas have changed, becoming more diverse, including pointed, conical, half-spherical, round and tetrahedral shapes. They can feature high or short sides trimmed with monochromatic selvedge of silk, velvet or other fabrics.

Tyubeteikas may fall under several categories depending on age or gender; there are special kinds of tyubeteikas for men, women, girls, boys, babies, and elderly people. Older women do not wear tyubeteikas. Tyubeteikas for children (boys, girls and babies) are distinctive, made from a variety of colorful fabrics and embellished with many charms



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Gold-embroidered
women's and men's robes

and decorations such as tinsel, pom-poms, intricate patterns, and sequins. Brightly embroidered tyubeteikas bear decorative depictions of plants that, in addition to being decorative, possess some curative powers and were used to treat various diseases. There are four flowers on the upper part of tyubeteika, which are intended to symbolically guard a man's health on all four sides; sixteen flowers signify wishes for a large family (i.e. at least 16 children). A wavy stem of bindweed stands for wealth and vitality. Plant patterns are often livened up by depictions of motley birds, which symbolize happiness; cock and pheasant feathers were used against the evil eye, as these birds were considered sacred. According to ancient Turkic beliefs, birds symbolize the human soul, and were seen as intermediary creatures between the real and mythic worlds. The almond-shaped motif, "*bodom*", is related to the symbolic realm of life and fertility. Its slender and elongated shapes are called *kalampir* (capsicum). In Uzbekistan, children (especially newborns and infants) and women in childbirth are protected from the evil eye with the use of amulets containing almond or capsicum.

The Tyubeteika is worn on holidays, at funerals, and while praying in mosques; according to an old tradition, they were given to honored guests. Colorful and richly ornamented clothes and skullcaps have always been and will always be highly popular, both for traditional Uzbek outfits and for contemporary clothing. [📄](#)

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