Published: December 15, 1992
Last Updated: May 4, 2017

CLOTHING XIII. CLOTHING IN AFGHANISTAN

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xiii. Clothing in Afghanistan

The medley of tribal and ethnic populations in the diverse landscape of Afghanistan live mainly in rural towns and villages and nomadic camps. Hardly 5 percent lead urban lives. Traditional clothing reflects these geographic and residential variations and also serves to express individual and group identity, social and economic status, stages of the life-cycle, and changing sociopolitical trends, which ultimately lead to new styles, as well as to exchanges of clothing types (L. Dupree, pp. 238-47). Although terminology for all items of Afghan clothing varies widely, the central role of dress in Afghan culture is clear from the fact that new garments are essential for family, religious, and seasonal celebrations.

Headgear. The most diagnostic item of clothing is headgear; and even the ubiquitous turban (Pers. *langōtā*, *dastār*, Pashto *paṭkay*, *pagṛi*), which can vary in length from 3 to 6 m, takes on distinguishing characteristics, depending on the arrangement of folds (L. Dupree, pp. 71, 162). White cotton is the most common turban cloth, though certain Pashtun groups prefer black and prestigious silk turbans tend to be woven in muted grays, browns, and pinks (plates cxxviii, cxxix). Whatever the material, the longer the turban, the more

fashionable the man. A young boy signals the coming of manhood by ceremoniously donning a turban. The easily recognizable shapes and decorative designs of the caps (Pers. *kolāh*, Pashto *ḵōlay*) worn under turbans are also distinctive indicators. Cylindrical silk-embroidered caps distinguish the Uzbek and Tajik (see xv, below), fitted skullcaps of quilted chintz and felt (*barrak*) the Hazāra (see xiv, below), and the famous cylindrical caps embroidered with gold and silver thread (*golābatūnī*) the Pashtun of Qandahār; foldable caps encrusted with shiny colored-glass beads (*marīdārā*) are also made in Qandahār (N. H. Dupree, 1977, p. 286). The Baluch set round mirror fragments (*šīša*) into their designs (see xviii, xix, below). Conical caps of wheat straw (*druzaw ḵōlay*) are unique among the Šīnwārī eastern Pashtun, as are the small, round felt caps found in the high mountains of the northeast. Other male headgear includes busby-like shapes (*tīlpak*) made from sheepskin, worn by the Turkmen (L. Dupree, p. 182; see xxvi, below), round fur-trimmed hats and quilted hats with earflaps worn by the Kirghiz (Dot and Naumann), and flat-topped woolen caps with rolled rims worn in Nūrestān (*pakōl* generally; *śukokuṛ* in Kāmvīrī; Michaud, 1980, ill. 91). The modified cylindrical hat made from Persian lamb (*qarakolī*), which had distinguished all educated urban men since the beginning of the 20th century (Charpentier, 1977), is currently out of fashion.

Head coverings for all women are prescribed in Islam. Most women in traditional Afghan communities, therefore, wear variations of large or small rectangular headscarves, commonly called *čādar* (see čādor), with or without small hats similar to the men's *kolāh*. The *čādar* is made of soft cotton, often but by no means always in a solid color. Among certain Pashtun tribeswomen the *čādar* is an ankle-length mantle resembling a cape, bordered with heavy gold embroidery (Michaud, 1980, ill. 67). In contrast to the *čādar*, the *čādarī* is composed of a close-fitting cap from which finely pleated colored silk or rayon falls, completely enveloping the figure, with only an openwork embroidered or crocheted grid over the eyes (Nicod, ills. 57, 59). Another style, with a separate see-through face veil, is called *bōqrā* (< Ar. *borqoʿ*; Herat) and *paranjī* (Kondūz). All *čādarī*s are primarily urban garments (N. H. Dupree, 1978). The most spectacular headgear is worn by Turkmen women. Although the shapes of these tall (up to 45 cm) headdresses (Turkic *bojmāq*, Pers. *qaṣabā*) differ from group to group, as do the silk wrappings, silver studs, and festooned ornaments that decorate them, all mark major stages in the lives of their owners. The exuberant creations worn by brides are replaced by more modest versions once they become mothers, and after menopause the silver

ornaments are set aside entirely (Stucki, 1978). Uzbek bridal headdresses, though similar, are not as elaborate (P. Centlivres). Individual creativity is also expressed in the decoration of baby bonnets with a profusion of pompoms, feathers, baubles, and beads.

Garments. The basic costume for men, women, and children is made from lightweight cotton and consists of loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts worn outside wide trousers (Pers. *tanbān*, *ezār*, Pashto *partōg*) gathered on a drawstring (*ezārband*). The length of the men's shirt (*perān*, *korta*), which is typically collarless and buttoned at one shoulder (N. H. Dupree, 1977, p. 388), varies from region to region, from knee to mid-calf or even lower. The finely embroidered Qandahāri shirt fronts (*gaṛa*, *ganḍa*) are renowned.

Waistcoats (*waskat*) are universally popular and may be made of black and red velvet decorated with gold braid or embroidery, as found in Qandahār (called *sadrī*) and among some Pashtun nomads, or fashioned from local materials, like *barrak* (see barak) in the Hazārajāt. Many men, however, prefer Western vests purchased, along with Western coats and jackets, from second-hand clothing *bāzār*s. Indigenous types of outer garment are also worn. They include dressed-sheepskin coats worn with the fleece inside, with sleeves (*pōstīn*) or without (*pōstīṇča*), and often embroidered, a specialty in the Pashtun area around Ḡaznī. Throughout the north full-length, quilted or single-weight collarless robes, striped in multiple colors and with long sleeves covering the hands (*jīlak* and *čapan* respectively); worn with a cloth sash (*kamarband*), are made of silk and handwoven cotton (*karbās*; N. H. Dupree, 1977, p. 341). A typical Uzbek type of padded coat, of brown or dark-red cotton, slips over the head and fastens at one side of the neck (*gopīča*). Elaborately embroidered short-sleeved felt coats (*kūsay*) are worn by the Pashtun in Paktīā. Woolen shawls (*čādar*, Pashtu *patū*) are also popular with men in winter.

Nūrestāni dress is the most distinctive in Afghanistan. Men wear white woolen trousers, reaching just below the knee (*viṭ* in Kāmvīrī, spoken in Kāmdeš), over long black leggings like puttees (*pātaw*), which, aside from the knitted wool stockings decorated with traditional designs of the Hazāra, are the only leg coverings made in Afghanistan. Prized silver-studded belts (*mālāa niśte*) for daggers (*kātra*) are also unique to Nūrestān (L. Dupree, p. 143). Nūrestāni women sometimes wear leggings under long, full skirts or robes (*bāźü*) gathered at the waist with woven belts (*niśte*) and embellished across the back of the shoulders and down the sleeves with a combination of red and black

embroidered appliqués found nowhere else in Afghanistan (L. Dupree, p. 234).

Elsewhere, although women's dress styles conform to an overall pattern similar to that of men, differences in the length of the dress; the cut, drape, and fullness (up to 20 m) of the voluminous trousers; the width of the sleeves at the wrists and the trousers at the ankles; and fabrics—prints, textures, and decoration—are matters of great consequence to all women (plates cxxx, cxxxi). In contrast to men's clothing, which is generally tailored in *bāzār*s, most women's clothing is hand- or machine-stitched at home. Especially among the eastern Pashtun the high-waisted bodices of the dresses, the flaring elbow-length cuffs, and deep borders on the hems of skirts containing as much as 12 m of flowered cotton or velvet are covered with exquisite embroidery. Red, green, and royal-purple velvet are favored by the wealthier nomads, the *māldār*.

In the cities, especially among the educated middle and upper classes, Western styles have predominated since they were introduced early in the 20th century as part of government efforts to modernize (N. H. Dupree, 1988). Fashions have closely followed European models through the years, and, for women, Western dress came to symbolize emancipation (Rahimi, 1977). After the leftist revolution of 1357 Š./1978 and during the subsequent years of Soviet occupation Western dress continued in vogue in Kabul. On the other hand, Afghan refugees in Pakistan, both men and women, wear traditional garments as symbols of their adherence to Afghan culture and Islam.

Footgear. Plastic shoes of every hue and style are popular throughout Afghanistan, but a variety of stout leather sandal (*čaplī*, Pashto *čaplay*), often soled with rubber cut from old tires, is also worn in many areas. Straw sandals (*mazarī čaplay*) are found in Paktīā. Also distinctive are the ankle-high moccasins of Nūrestān (*vācó*) and the knee-high leather boots, high-heeled (*čamūs*; Nicod, ill. 29) or soft-soled (*māsī*), worn by northern Turkic speakers. The stout rubber overshoes (*kalawš*) worn to cover the magi outside the home are also commonly worn alone (plate cxxviii).

Jewelry. Jewelry, mostly of silver, is an important item in every woman's wardrobe, and generous sprinklings of silver beads, disks, coins, fastenings, and amulets (*taʿwīḏ*) are sewn onto clothing. Among some nomads, the eastern Pashtun in particular, these silver ornaments are typically combined with mirror work, gold and silver filament and braid, and elaborate beading, in addition to the fine embroidery described above.

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