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CLOTHING, TRADITIONAL—AFGHANISTAN Traditionally, Afghan dress reflects ethnic diversity and the socio-cultural, historical, and geopolitical dynamics of the region. The country and its people are positioned at the crossroads between the Arab, Persian, Turkish, and Asian empires. Consequently, Afghan dress shows strong aesthetic connections to areas contiguous to its borders: the Arab and Islamic Middle East and Persia, the Turkish Ottoman Empire, and, to a lesser degree, Mughal India.

Since the 1920s, Afghanistan's leaders, in an effort to maintain control of both human and natural resources, have struggled with the definition of women's rights and independence as exemplified in the propriety of dress. Afghan dress also reflects other aspects of identity in a variety of inseparable yet interrelated ways: gendered and generational status; religious affiliation; rural and urban differences; stages of the life cycle; and everyday or special occasions.

Afghan dress first and foremost distinguishes gender. Women customarily wear four items of dress: the pants (*tombaani*), an overdress (*parabaan*), a head covering (*chaadar*), and footwear (*payzaar*). This ensemble is referred to as *kalaa Afghani*, or Afghan women's dress. Men wear *tombaani*, an overshirt (*payraan*), a hat or cap (*kullaa*), and footwear or boots. In addition to this basic ensemble, Afghan men wear a vest (*waaskaat*), another hat (*pokool*), and a shawl (*shaal*) during colder seasons.

Women's *tombaani* are made of approximately two yards of cotton or silk-like rayon or acetate fabric. They are usually solid white, gathered drawstring pants with full legs. Frequently the pant cuffs are decorated with white machine- or hand-embroidered patterns. The *parabaan* are typically made from five yards of cotton, silk (or silk-like acetate), and plain or satin woven fabrics in bright colors (for young women) and darker colors (for older women), usually in tone-on-tone or floral patterns. Necklines vary but usually are rounded; occasionally pointed collars are added, as are gathered set-in sleeves with fitted or buttoned cuffs. Dress skirts are full and gathered at the waist and worn mid-calf length. *Chaadars* are made of similar fabrics—usually rectangular pieces of lightweight cotton or silk-like crepe, woven with machine- or hand-embroidered edges. Men's *tombaani* and *payraan* feature fewer dec-

orative details and are typically in natural-colored cotton fabric. *Kullaa* exhibit the most variety in shapes, colors, and embroidered patterns.

Dress also differentiates the age and generational status of the wearer. For example, though all females wear pants, overdress, and head and foot coverings, aesthetic characteristics vary according to age throughout women's lives. More costly materials and surface design embellishments are added to women's dowries. The decorative focus is on pants cuffs, dress bodices, and head covering borders as females age and gain more status when they become engaged, marry, and become mothers. These differences are evident to a lesser degree in men's dress as well. Shirt-sleeves, bodice shirtfronts, and hats are embroidered in regional and ethnic patterns by either their betrothed or wife.

Two items of dress are worth mentioning since they are the most visible to non-Afghans and are the most politically recognizable dress that Afghans wear. The *pokool* hat worn by Afghan men is a symbol of the Afghan freedom fighters, or the *Mujabideen*. It is a naturally colored wool hat with the characteristic versatile rolled edge. The second distinctive item of dress worn by Afghans is the woman's full body covering known as the *chaadaree*. The *chaadaree*, constructed of nine to ten yards of fabric with an embroidered face piece, conceals the entire women's dress ensemble of pants, overdress, and head covering. The original *chaadaree* is of Persian origins but over time became associated with the urban dress of middle and upper class Afghan women. The *chaadaree* has been incorrectly attributed as Afghan women's traditional dress; it only became mandated women's wear after dress sanctions were imposed by the Taliban in 1996.

Afghan dress also suggests religious affiliation. The majority of Afghans are Muslim, and presumed Islamic prescriptions of propriety and observance govern the manner in which items of dress are worn. For example, Islamic prescriptions govern the fit, transparency, and drape of dress. In general, the everyday dress for both males and females fit loosely so that the contours of the body are less noticeable. Prescriptions also determine the patterns embroidered on men's shirts and hats and women's pants, over dresses, and head coverings. The majority of these embroidered designs are floral, geometric, and abstract shapes, presumably because of Islamic prohibitions on representational art and aesthetics.

Afghan dress is also notable for its embroidery. Embroidery styles tend to be associated with geographic regions and ethnic groups. Whether from

Herat, Kandahar, or Kabul, regional associations are made. Styles generally are distinguishable by the fiber content of the fabric (plain weave cottons, pile woven velvets, or synthetic satin weaves) as well as the kind of thread (cotton, silk or gold metallic threads); a variety of embroidery techniques and the complexity of their execution; the floral and geometric motifs; and the design placement of the embroidery. Three such embroidery styles are the gold stitched embroidery or *chirma dozi*, known for the unique kind of metallic thread and braid used; *tashamaar dozi*, recognizable by the intricate counted stitch technique; and silk stitched flower embroidery or *gul dozi*, distinctive because of the rich use of colored threads.

Afghan dress observed in the context of daily life and during special occasions of secular and religious contexts distinguishes gender and generational, ethnic and regional, and religious identity. Dress serves to unify and maintain a sense of Afghan identity not only among Afghans living in Afghanistan, but also as Afghans differentiate themselves from other Middle Eastern and Central and South Asian populations in the Afghan diaspora.

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Further Reading

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CLOTHING, TRADITIONAL—BHUTAN

In 1989 the Tshogdu, or National Assembly, of Bhutan announced that all Bhutanese citizens must wear the appropriate national dress in all public areas. For men in Bhutan, the traditional dress is a robe known as the *go*; women's traditional costume is a wraparound garment called the *kira*. Accounts, both written and pictorial, suggest that until around the seventeenth century the prevalent male dress was different from the current dress. The popularization of the *go* is attributed to Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594–1651), the creator of a unified Bhutan.

History of the National Costume

In 1616 Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal fled to Bhutan to escape from conflicts in Tibet and by the time of his death in 1651 had not only set the stage for the creation of a unified Bhutan, but also made sweeping changes in the laws and customs. One such change attributed to him is the *go*, which in most respects resembles the Tibetan dress for males. In time the *go* achieved almost universal usage in Bhutan and even came to be recognized as an important element of Bhutan's distinct identity in the region. In contrast, it is believed that the women's dress, the *kira*, has been in use in Bhutan almost unchanged for centuries.

The national costumes of Bhutan have remained the principal choice of attire in Bhutan. By the end of the twentieth century, with the effects of modernization finally being felt, the national costumes gained even more prominence. For a small country surrounded by giant neighbors, the costumes were seen to be attributes that clearly set Bhutan apart from the rest of the region and gave the inhabitants a Bhutanese identity. Concern that such a symbol would inadvertently be discarded along Bhutan's path toward modernization led to considerable debate in the National Assembly of Bhutan as well as among private citizens in the 1980s and continues today. Thus, according to this pronouncement, the *go* and *kira* were formally declared the national costumes of Bhutan for men and women, respectively. This law ignored the existence of several ethnic minorities, each with a unique dress style, inside Bhutan's borders. Fortunately the seemingly radical move of ordering people to wear national costume was mitigated during its implementation and did not lead to the prosecution of ethnic minorities who wore their own dress in public. The affected minorities were mostly the Westernized Bhutanese youth, who preferred to follow the latest Western trends, and the ethnic Nepalese, who preferred to wear their own traditional costume. Western attire and Nepalese costumes were both considered foreign. The vast majority of Bhutanese were largely unaffected by this law since they already wore the national costumes. Strong calls for continuing the dress code have persisted unabated in the National Assembly.

Women's Dress

Traditional dress for women consists of the *kira*, *kera*, *koma*, *wonju*, *toego*, and petticoat. The *kira* is a large piece of woven cloth that is wrapped around the body in a series of folds. It is worn over a blouse, or *wonju*, and a cotton petticoat. Body-length petticoats are known as *gutsum*, and petticoats from the waist down to the ankle are called *meyo*. Wrapping the *kira*