

Y. A. Lekomtseva, O. N. Nikitina

**ETHNIC STYLE IN CONTEMPORARY FASHION
IN UDMURTIA**



The article is devoted to the analysis of the modern fashion trends in Udmurtia. It points out that modern designers actively use elements of ethnic culture in fashionable outfits and garments. It rises the problem of preservation and delivery of traditional culture through the production of mass demand. Modern variants of some Udmurt women's clothing are described in the article. Collections of such designers like Tatiana Moskvina, Zoya Lebedeva, Polina Kubista and Darali Lelie are taken into consideration. Particular attention is paid to the designers' specific approach to use elements of the Udmurt culture in their fashion collections. The activity of the model agency Mademoiselle Oudmourte is characterized. The agency does not only hold fashion shows of new collections, but also arranges various festivals, such as Udmurt fashion festival "El'nyl". This agency has different collections which demonstrate the combination of modern and traditional elements of the Udmurt women's clothing. This article examines one of such collections "Walking through the Woods".

Keywords: fashion, Udmurt designers, national costume, the National Festival of Udmurt Folk Clothes, ethnic style.

Fashion has always been an expression of the sociocultural processes of a certain historic period. The twenty-first century is also characterized by globalization and unification, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, it is featured by the search for the ethnic identity.

Keeping up the traditional culture has become the major tendency nowadays. The development of different types of traditional crafts, folk festivals, the use of ethnic elements in products of mass consumption are considered to be the ways to attract attention and popularize folk culture. Modern fashion can be one of such examples. On the one hand, it represents the interests of customers, on the other hand, it renders those social and cultural codes which are incorporated in the traditional culture. This issue seems to be urgent as modern Udmurt fashion is an expression of the aforementioned trends. The purpose of this article is to analyze the use of traditional Udmurt culture in contemporary fashion. The objectives are to characterize the ethnic trends



in contemporary fashion of Udmurtia and to analyse the use of elements of the national culture by giving the activity of Udmurt fashion designers and the model agency Madoimelle Oudmourte in Izhevsk as an example.

The issue has been studied by many researchers. So, B. V. Anfinogenov focusing on ethnofuturism examines the work of the leading designers in Udmurtia such as T. N. Moskvina, Darali Lelie, Polina Kubista and others [Anfinogenov 2015]. Another researcher I. A. Sazykina analyzes the main symbolic motifs which are present in the modern ethnic stage costumes as a new source of semantic information in the Udmurt ethnos [Sazykina 2013].

The article by L. A. Molchanova and M. A. Ryabkova is dedicated to the meaning of embroidered patterns on the ritual belts, bibs, head covers of Udmurt women and to the interpretation of universal images of the ornamental art [Molchanova, Ryabkova 2016]. E. I. Kovycheva raises problems of a modern festal dress from the viewpoint of ethnographical accuracy and aesthetic perfection [Kovycheva 2012].

Today fashion designers from Udmurtia actively use all sorts of ethnic elements in their collections. And they are surely inspired by the traditional costume.

And nowadays, according to S. N. Zykov and I. A. Sazykina, a youth costume (especially female one) performs several functions: it is both a utilitarian thing and a beautiful fashionable dress. Besides, it has a hidden deep semantic content in symbols and signs [Zykov, Sazykina 2015, 195].

The process of making an Udmurt costume is in the focus of different organizations. One of them is the National Centre of Arts and Crafts in Izhevsk. A lot of various activities were held by the Centre to study the Udmurt costume. In 2007 it organized the exhibition «Udmurt costume in the twenty-first century», the year of 2010 was marked with the exhibition «National costume of the Udmurts: keeping and updating traditions». In 2012 the Republican seminar on the national costume took place for craftsmen from the Centres of arts and crafts. The workshop on the outerwear of Udmurts was organized in 2016, and in 2017 the exhibition «The world of a woman. Outerwear. Udmurt lace» was opened [Bajkova, Buyanova, Pislegova 2012, 80–81].

One of the most famous designers of a contemporary Udmurt costume is T. N. Moskvina. In 2012 she held her anniversary exhibition «Verame pote» (I'd like to tell you...). Besides national costumes she's renovated, she also offers women's dresses, aprons and outdoor clothes of traditional style. As E. I. Kovycheva points out, «they all differ in taste, color and texture and handmade decoration» [Kovycheva 2012, 92]. T. N. Moskvina notes that each element of folk costumes has been thoroughly designed and has its own purpose. In her opinion the peculiarity of the Udmurt ethnic clothes depends on the mentality of the Udmurts. The Udmurts are calm people living in harmony with the surrounding nature. All this is reflected in their clothing which is characterized by practical use, simplicity and lack of details. T. Moskvina doesn't use handmade fabric, but manufactured one to make her items of clothing cheaper as the garments she makes are widely used in everyday life. B. V. Anfinogenov mentions that «using modern fabrics produced in Indonesia and China, she creates dresses of traditional Udmurt style. And a *duhkes* (an item of Udmurt clothing, a long caftan made of woolen cloth) also has ethnographic accuracy in the form and details due

to its interesting color solutions and has become an important item in a young girl's wardrobe like a coat» [Anfinogenov 2015].

In July 2016 the National Festival of Udmurt folk clothes «Uchke mynes'tym deremme!» («Appreciate My Dress!») was held in village Malaya Purga. T. Moskvina was a participant in the event. The Festival became a logical extension of the work on the national costume for specialists in Malaya Purga. The idea to develop this direction also belongs to the artist Tatiana Moskvina. She founded a studio called «Udmurt derem» which has become a real folk clothing laboratory. It has greatly contributed to the consistent work which includes festivals of the national costume in Malaya Purga and in Izhevsk, participation in national and international exhibitions, activities for the youth, work on projects, National and Republican grants, seminars and master classes.

When referring to the Festival «Uchke mynes'tym deremme!», it is worth noting that it presented both festal and everyday national clothes of the Udmurts which usually have modern practical use. The aim of the Festival is to preserve and to develop traditions in the cultural heritage of the Udmurts. It is also aimed to shape public opinion of ethics which ensures a proper approach and respect for folk clothes, a new view of the representative folk clothing and its practical use in everyday life.

The Festival program included a lot of various events like a big Gala-concert on the stage of the district House of Culture where craftsmen and artists showed their creative works – models of different styles and genres. Famous Udmurt singers and musicians such as Gennady Bekmanov, Anna Plotnikova, Bogdan Anfinogenov, Nadezhda Utkina participated in the festival to promote the idea of Udmurt folk clothes on the stage. The most sensational event was a traditional wedding collection «Ulon kutske sjuanysjen» («Life begins with a wedding»).



Fig. 1. Dress from the collection by Z. Lebedeva

Different workshops, master classes, practical conferences and presentations were available for individuals, artists, designers, masters of decorative and applied arts during the Festival. For example, T. N. Moskvina held a master class called «Magic and mystic of folk clothing». E. V. Popova and E. V. Petrova (Darali Lelie) guided the work of the section «National costume modelling. Modern trends. Ethnostyle».

Worth attention and interest topics were discussed at the section «Multi-layer folk clothes. Peculiarities of age-specific use», the leaders of which were T. A. Mashtakova, a methodist of the Children's Creative Arts Centre in Malaya Purga, and Z. M. Lebedeva, an artist-ethnofuturist.

Although Z. M. Lebedeva denies her being a fashion designer, she is also actively engaged in the design of clothing. She creates dresses in the same way as Udmurt women did centuries ago, when they didn't have any time to create a new model though they felt the need of it. Then the fabric was cut out by eye, sewed by hand with some parts from worn-out garments to be added. The result was a unique dress with original inserts and fasteners. Each item of clothing occurred to express inner freedom (fig. 1).



Not only people from Udmurtia but also people from Moscow admire dresses made by Z. M. Lebedeva. For example, a huge and really important exhibition «Actual Udmurtiya» was organized in Moscow in 2015. Works by Z. Lebedeva, which demonstrate the connection of traditional and contemporary art in the collection of casual wear, were exhibited there.

Another trend in the Udmurt fashion is presented by such designers like Polina Stepanova, better known as Polina Kubista, and Alyona Petrova, or Darali Lelie. Their creative work has a slightly different vector – youth fashion.

Therefore these designers' collections of clothes are a stylized Udmurt national costume rather than the aim to authenticity, which is a characteristic for T. M. Moskvina, who sews for different age groups while maintaining all the traditional elements of folk costumes.

However, the products of almost all Udmurt fashion designers are popular not only in Udmurtia but also in other regions.

In July 2016 a festival «Gerber» took place in Moscow for the second time. Leading fashion designers from Udmurtia Polina Kubista, Darali Lelie and Tatyana Moskvina along with the creative teams and masters of decorative arts attended this event. They organized a fashion show of collections with national colouring.

Femininity and versatility, ethnic, multidimensional, unique style decisions, internationality, a play of colors and materials are just some of the words that can describe Polina Kubista's work. What does her nickname mean? «Kubista» means «a cabbage» in the Udmurt language. At school Polina's friends used to say to her: «Oh, you're dressed like a cabbage again». Polina has always loved to put on several layers of clothing. Today creating many-layered clothing is still a feature of her style. Polina acknowledges that she's not keen on making an exact ethnographically national dress or costume. The basis of her creativity is a modern cut with the use of some elements of the Udmurt folk clothes. These qualities make her clothes practical, modern and relevant for many people. For example, one of the orders to make a flax dress of loose cut came from Saudi Arabia.

When creating a fashion collection, she only uses some elements of the national Udmurt clothes, such as natural materials (cotton, flax), three-part ribbons on the hem of a skirt, straight fit without any tucks, ornament and color combination. A distinctive feature of Polina Kubista's style is a collar, embroidered with buttons which is a modern interpretation of the Udmurt necklace – *monista*. In old times the Udmurts made beads of remaining pieces of fabric after they had tailored, turning patches into small balls and fastening them with threads. Polina uses this technique in her work as well. In her collection there are also hats and outdoor clothes such as coats which are based on the cut of *duhkes*.

In 2008 Polina showed her first collection in Udmurtia. The basis of this collection was a traditional range of colours. In 2012 Polina presented some items of this collection in St. Petersburg on the International Fashion Week («Russian fashion week») which is the third largest fashion week event in Eastern Europe. Other works where her style is traced is a collection of dresses (spring-summer, 2015) and a collection of coats (spring of 2015). In the presented items we can also see only some elements of traditional Udmurt clothing. It is either a vegetative ornament in embroidery or a collar-imitation necklace, or the use of solar symbols on accessories, or three-part ribbons on the hem. In each item of clothing she uses only one ethnic element which

looks very impressive. Due to this the dresses and coats Polina makes can be used in everyday life, not only in the Udmurt Republic, but also in other regions.

The designer in her collection offers the version of a modern *duhkes* which can replace a coat in everyday life (fig. 2). The *duhkes* combines traditional elements (cut, embroidery) and modern ones (fabric, accessories). Embroidery has always played an important role in the Udmurt costume. For example, L. Molchanova and M. Ryabkova say in their article that in ancient time embroidered ornaments represented the image of the world and every detail was a reflection of the cosmic laws [Molchanova, Ryabkova 2016, 61].

A range of colours was significant as well. In the *duhkes* of this collection the red colour prevails in embroidery. The red colour has always symbolized the good and the joy. The Udmurt people associated the fire and the Sun with red. They believed the Sun to be life and its color to be an amulet. So they created embroidery to feel happy and be protected from the evil. That is why embroidery with traditional ornaments was found along the edges of clothing (on the neck, sleeves, hems). This concept can be seen in the modern version of a *duhkes*. The ornaments have always encoded people's desire to be sent into the Universe. As I. A. Sazykina points out, it could be ornamental signs symbolizing the fertility and could be often seen in women's clothing [Sazykina 2013]. In the collection presented we can also see floral ornaments, stylized images of red berries and mountain ash leaves on the *duhkes*. The Udmurts used to worship trees. A certain group of the Udmurts worshipped their own tree: it could be a pine, a spruce, a birch or a mountain ash. According to E. N. Vasilieva's opinion, the image of the global tree is popular in the decorative-applied arts of the Udmurts [Vasileva 2012].

As designers, who create a modern Udmurt costume, have appeared in Udmurtia there is a need to demonstrate the designers' collections. So, in 2012 the first Udmurt



Fig. 2. Dukes

national model agency «Mademoiselle Oudmourte» was opened in Izhevsk. The idea to create the agency belongs to Alyona Petrova, known as Darali Lelie. Many national fashion shows demonstrate Udmurt designers' collections today due to the work of the model agency. The girls who work in the agency participate in fashion shows and photo sessions, they are also given lessons on traditional Udmurt dance and lessons on history of the national Udmurt costume. Besides they are taught to create clothes in ethnic style.

This agency is an organizer of the Udmurt fashion festival «El' nyl» («The girl of the land»). This festival focuses on the evolution of the Udmurt national costume, helps the visitors understand its modern interpretation and gives the information how to use folk clothing nowadays according to fashion trends. Each year the number of designers who work in «ethno» style is steadily increasing and it proves the growing popularity of the traditional Udmurt costume in contemporary fashion.

Apart from the fashion show the contest for the title of «the Girl of the Land» is held during the Udmurt fashion festival. A model who shows to be a professional



on the catwalk and who knows traditions and the language of the Udmurt people is announced to be the best model.

Very often the model agency uses modern art forms, such as performance. The basis of the performances always comes from the traditions and rituals of the Udmurts. For example, the performance «Bubyli» («Butterfly») reflects the Udmurts' belief that the soul is reborn after death into a flying butterfly. The sound of the funeral tunes reveals deep human feelings. The dresses used in the show, are stripped off layer by layer, like the flapping of wings, and expose the soul.

The distinguishing feature of this agency is a range of collections created by Darali Lelie. One of them is an autumn collection «Njulesky no Vetlykum» («Walking Through the Woods»). This collection presents the items of clothing which combine traditional Udmurt clothes (based on antiques which have been found during an ethnographic expedition by the Creative Association «The Art Laboratory») and, as B. Anfinogenov writes, «the introduction of the latest trends of the world avant-garde culture into the Udmurt society, an attempt to synthesize glamour and the Udmurt national colouring» [Anfinogenov 2015]. This is the feature of Darali Lelie's creativity. In general, the concept of this photo session is to show the possible combination of modern clothing and ancient one.

The brightest example of the collection is a modern version of an everyday dress with a yoke. The dress is emphasized with a traditional Udmurt outerwear – *zybyn* made in the 18th century and a contemporary scarf – snood (fig. 3). The *zybyn*, which reminds of the Russian *zipun*, was made of the red woolen handmade fabric, stitched on the back and smocked on the waist.

Another item in this collection is a modern Udmurt vest – *saestem* (fig. 4). Traditionally *saestjem* is a caftan without sleeves, a long vest, smocked on the waist at the back and wrapped up. *Saestjem* goes with a sweater and a snood. This set is ideal for warm autumn, traditions and casual modern style are combined into harmonious unity.

One more piece of Udmurt clothing is presented in this collection as a festal *duhkes* combined with a modern dress and a scarf (fig. 5). The use of black cloth, stitched back and ample smocking prove that the *dukes* was made in the XIXth century.

Besides, there is a summer collection presented by designers Tatiana Moskvina and Polina Kubista. The summer collection mainly consists of dresses (fig. 6). The traditional



Fig. 3. Zybyn, everyday dress, snood



Fig. 4. Saestem



Fig. 5. Festive dukes

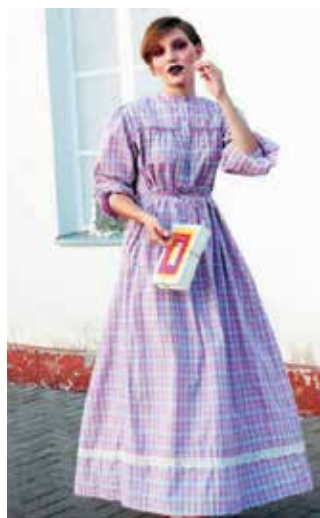


Fig. 6. Summer dresses

a) from the collection
T. Moskvina

b) from the collection
Polina Kubista

elements of an Udmurt summer dress include different types of collars: either a collar that looks like a necklace – *monista* or a buttoned collar. One more element is a frill with one or two part ribbons. A new element in women's dress is an elastic band on the sleeves instead of cuffs.

Such clothes can be used in everyday life. But frills are still a distinctive part of any Udmurt dress. Their length can vary from 10 cm to 50 cm. Frills on the hem and a yoke played an important role. These items depict three parts the universe consists of. This is

how the Udmurt people see the world. Both Udmurt myths and culture prove that concept about the world. The three-part universe is also reflected in the basic colours of the Udmurt ornaments, the colours in the national flag of the Udmurt Republic reflect this idea as well. According to the myth, Inmar (a creator of the universe and space) divides the world into three main parts. He rules in the upper part, it is the sky and it is coloured in white; the middle part is red, it symbolizes the Earth, the Sun, the life, the blood and it is ruled by god Kyldysin, and the bottom is ruled by Shaitan, it is black and it is afterworld [Vasileva 2012].

Thus, coming to the conclusion the analysis has shown that traditional ornaments are widely used in Udmurt fashion collections. Fashion has a communicative function to exchange the information between the past and the present, and along with this it actualizes such sociocultural processes that appear with the development of culture. Combining globalization and ethnic processes is one of the directions of the modern culture that is quite clearly traced in different kinds of the creative art. Modern designers in Udmurtia, on the one hand, actively use ethnic elements in their work to preserve the authenticity of the national costume (T. Moskvina, Z. Lebedeva), and, on the other hand, they want the clothes created by their hands represent an example of international casual wear that can be traced in the youth fashion (Polina Kubista, Darali Lelie). Thus, one can say for sure that ethnic motifs will always inspire designers to create both traditional and youth innovative designers' collections.

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Lekomtseva Yulia Alekseevna,

Teacher-organizer,

Budget educational establishment of additional education of the Udmurt Republic «Republican center of additional education of children»

39, ul. Ordzhonikidze, Izhevsk, 426063, Russian Federation

e-mail: yulya-lekomceva@yandex.ru

Nikitina Olga Nikolaevna,

Candidate of Culturology, Associate Professor,

Udmurt State University

1, ul. Universitetskaya, Izhevsk, 426034, Russian Federation

e-mail: kon741@rambler.ru

Ю. А. Лекомцева, О. Н. Никитина

Этностиль в современной моде Удмуртии

Статья посвящена анализу современных тенденций в моде Удмуртии. Отмечено, что современные дизайнеры активно используют элементы этнической культуры в модных нарядах. Поднимается проблема сохранения и транслирования традиционной культуры через продукцию массового спроса. Охарактеризованы современные варианты некоторой удмуртской женской одежды. Рассмотрены коллекции таких дизайнеров, как Татьяна



Москвина, Зоя Лебедева, Полина Кубиста, Дарали Лели. Особое внимание уделено специфическому подходу каждого из дизайнеров к использованию элементов удмуртской культуры в создании коллекций. Характеризуется деятельность модельного агентства Mademoiselle oudmourte, которое не только демонстрирует новые коллекции, но и организует различные фестивали, как, например, фестиваль удмуртской моды «Эль ныл». В арсенале агентства есть различные коллекции, наглядно демонстрирующие сочетание современных и традиционных элементов удмуртской женской одежды. К примеру, рассмотрена одна из таких коллекций – «Прогулка по лесу».

Ключевые слова: мода, удмуртские дизайнеры, национальный костюм, фестиваль удмуртской народной одежды, этнический стиль.

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Lekomtseva Yulia Alekseevna,

Teacher-organizer,

Republican Center of Supplementary Education for Children

39, ul. Ordzhonikidze, Izhevsk, 426063, Russian Federation

e-mail: yulya-lekomceva@yandex.ru

Nikitina Olga Nikolaevna,

Candidate of Sciences (Culturology), Associate Professor,

Udmurt State University

1, ul. Universitetskaya, Izhevsk, 426034, Russian Federation

e-mail: kon741@rambler.ru