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NATIONAL COSTUME AS AN IDEA AND CULTURAL ESSENCE

The study of national costume is a topical task in the context of preserving cultural traditions and adapting them to modern times. The article provides a research analysis of the history of national clothing, reveals the artistic and compositional principles of its organization and aesthetic solution. The ethno-traditional features of the evolution of national costume as an exceptional type of arts and crafts, as well as methods of integrating national motifs into modern fashion are considered.

The scientific concept of “national costume” is defined and the following terms are differentiated: “folk costume”, “ethnic costume”, “traditional costume”. The need for a comprehensive interdisciplinary study of ethnic costume, its role in the formation of ethnocultural identity, intercultural communication and ideological attribution of the nation is substantiated. The functional and semiotic polysemy of clothing, as well as its significance in the social structure of society, are analyzed. Key words: National costume, traditional costume, evolution of costume, ethnocultural identity, intercultural communication, arts and crafts, semiotics of clothing, ideological attribution.

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Ұлттық киім идея және мәдениеттанулық мән ретінде

Ұлттық костюмді зерттеу – мәдени дәстүрлерді сақтап, оларды қазіргі заманға бейімдеудің өзекті міндеттерінің бірі. Мақалада ұлттық киім тарихына зерттеу жүргізіліп, оның көркемдік-композициялық ұйымдастырылуы мен эстетикалық шешімдері ашып көрсетіледі. Ұлттық киімнің этнодәстүрлік ерекшеліктері, оны сәндік-қолданбалы өнердің ерекше түрі ретінде қалыптастырудағы эволюциясы қарастырылады. Сонымен қатар ұлттық нақыштарды заманауи сәнге енгізу тәсілдері талданады.

«Ұлттық костюм» ұғымына ғылыми анықтама беріліп, «ұлттық костюм», «этнокостюм», «дәстүрлі костюм» сияқты терминдердің айырмашылықтары сараланады. Этнокостюмді кешенді пәнаралық зерттеудің қажеттілігі негізделіп, оның этномәдени бірегейлікті қалыптастырудағы, мәдениетаралық коммуникациядағы және ұлттың идеологиялық атрибуциясындағы рөлі айқындалады. Сондай-ақ киімнің функционалдық және семиотикалық көпмағыналылығы, оның қоғамдағы әлеуметтік құрылымдағы маңызы зерттеледі.

Түйін сөздер: ұлттық костюм, дәстүрлі костюм, костюм эволюциясы, этномәдени бірегейлік, мәдениетаралық коммуникация, сәндік-қолданбалы өнер, киімнің семиотикасы, идеологиялық атрибуция.

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Национальный костюм как идея и культурологическая сущность

Изучение национального костюма представляет собой актуальную задачу в контексте сохранения культурных традиций и их адаптации к современности. В статье проводится исследовательский анализ истории национальной одежды, раскрываются художественно-композиционные принципы ее организации и эстетического решения. Рассматриваются этнотрадиционные особенности эволюции народного костюма как исключительного вида декоративно-прикладного искусства, а также приемы интеграции национальных мотивов в современную моду.

Определяется научное понятие «национальный костюм» и проводится дифференциация терминов: «народный костюм», «этнокостюм», «традиционный костюм». Обосновывается необходимость комплексного междисциплинарного исследования этнокостюма, его роль в формировании этнокультурной идентичности, межкультурной коммуникации и идеологической атрибуции нации. Анализируется функциональная и семиотическая многозначность одежды, а также ее значение в социальном устройстве общества.

Ключевые слова: национальный костюм, традиционный костюм, эволюция костюма, этнокультурная идентичность, межкультурная коммуникация, декоративно-прикладное искусство, семиотика одежды, идеологическая атрибуция.

Introduction

The national costume is a fundamental component of the cultural heritage of nations worldwide. It is not merely a collection of clothing, footwear, and accessories but a reflection of complex historical processes, ethnic traditions, artistic preferences, and the level of craftsmanship of a particular era. The study of national costume allows for a deeper understanding not only of the cultural codes of a specific people but also of the mechanisms of ethnic identity formation and the connections between traditions and contemporary fashion trends.

Traditional attire has always been a powerful tool for conveying cultural values and social information. Patterns, colors, and silhouettes encode details about status, age, marital status, and affiliation with a particular social or ethnic group. For example, in traditional Kazakh costumes, red symbolized vitality, green represented youth and freshness, and gold embroidery indicated the owner's high social standing. Such symbolic elements allow the national costume to be viewed not only as a utilitarian object but also as a unique text that can be deciphered through the lens of semiotics.

The development of national dress has been shaped by numerous factors, including climate conditions, natural resources, economic structures, religious beliefs, and interactions with other cultures. In an era of globalization and mass clothing production, preserving unique ethnic traditions is becoming increasingly challenging, making the study of

national costume particularly significant. Contemporary designers frequently draw inspiration from ethnic motifs, striving to adapt them to current trends and, in doing so, extend the life of traditional clothing forms.

This study examines the national costume as a crucial element of cultural heritage, a means of self-expression, and a tool for preserving ethno-cultural identity. Special attention is given to its evolution, transformation in response to changing social realities, and integration into modern fashion. The research also explores the role of national costume in intercultural communication, its influence on ethnic identification processes, and the mechanisms by which traditions are passed down to future generations.

Relevance of the topic of articles, goals and objectives

The national costume is an important cultural and ideological attribute of an ethnic group, serving as a means of expressing identity and preserving the continuity of traditions. The relevance of this study is driven by the growing interest in cultural heritage amid globalization and political processes, particularly among the younger generation. The primary objective of the research is to analyze the evolution of the national costume, its role in shaping ethno-cultural identity, and its influence on contemporary fashion as a means of expressing national identity. The study's key tasks include:

- Differentiating the fundamental concepts of traditional costume,
- Examining its historical transformations,
- Exploring its socio-cultural significance.

Methods and methodology

- The study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates elements of cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, and art history. The research methodology includes:

- Historical analysis – to trace the development of the national costume; Comparative analysis – to identify differences and similarities between ethnic costumes; Semiotic analysis – to interpret the symbolic meanings of costume elements; Case studies – to examine the integration of traditional motifs into contemporary fashion.

Literature review

The analysis of academic and popular literature on costume studies reveals a wide range of approaches to examining clothing as a cultural phenomenon. Ortega y Gasset (2000) and Baiburin (2007) explore traditional costume from a semiotic perspective, highlighting its connection to cultural heritage. The works of Hollander (1994) and Racinet (2018) provide a historical and aesthetic analysis, tracing the evolution of costume in Western fashion. In the context of Kazakh culture, the research of Asanova (2024) and Shaigozova & Naurzbaeva (2023) is particularly significant, as they examine national dress and its symbolic meanings. The practical aspect of contemporary fashion is reflected in Vogue archives and specialized platforms such as Spottedfashion, which showcase the influence of traditional motifs on modern collections.

Results and discussion

Definition and Differentiation of Concepts

The national costume is a complex socio-cultural phenomenon that requires clear terminological differentiation. Researchers distinguish several categories:

- Folk costume – traditional clothing that reflects the material culture of a particular ethnic group.
- National costume – a symbolic element of national identity used in official and festive contexts.
- Ethnocostume – a synthetic concept that combines traditional, historical, and modern elements of national dress, used in various cultural and social contexts.

Historical Evolution and Semiotics of National Costume

The formation of national dress was influenced by natural, social, economic, and ethno-cultural factors. For example, in traditional Kazakh culture, costume played not only a utilitarian but also a status-defining role. Women's clothing featured intricate embroidery, silver jewelry, and rich fabrics. Outerwear such as the *shapan* and *kamzol* emphasized social standing. Costumes transmit cultural values, mythological representations, and social norms that have developed over centuries.

Each element of a traditional costume carries symbolic meaning. Patterns, ornaments, and colors in clothing reflect the worldview of a people. In Kazakh tradition, red symbolizes vitality and wealth, while embroidery on wedding robes conveys family values and traditions.

Clothing also served communicative functions, conveying information about status, age, and social position. [Ortega y Gasset, 2000] Kazakh women's headwear, such as the *saukele* and *kimeshek*, indicated marital status and tribal affiliation. In other cultures, headwear also played an important ritual role. For example, in Russian traditional dress, the *kokoshnik* symbolized a married woman, while in Japanese culture, an individual's social position was expressed through the form and decoration of the kimono. [A.K. Baiburin, P.G. Bogatyrev, 2007] [M. Sichel, 1990]

When examining the socio-philosophical aspect of national costume, it is crucial to study its influence on an individual's social self-identification within a group. A. Hollander identifies two approaches: in some cultures, clothing emphasizes individuality, while in others, it erases personal traits, creating a unifying effect. According to her, the first approach is characteristic of the peoples of Africa, Australia, and South America, whereas the second is found among Central European and Middle Eastern ethnic groups, where clothing is overloaded with details, leading to visual depersonalization. Although this thesis is not a strict rule, Hollander's approach provides a valuable tool for analyzing the relationship between individuality and collectivity in traditional costumes across different cultures. [A. Hollander, 1994]

Ornamentation plays a significant role in the symbolism of national costume. Embroidery and patterns often served a protective function, shielding the wearer from evil spirits and attracting prosperity. For example, among the Slavs, symbols of the sun, earth, and water were widespread, while in

Central Asian traditions, ornaments conveyed ideas about the cosmos, fertility, and eternal life. In Kazakh culture, zoomorphic and floral motifs held particular significance, reflecting the people's connection to nature and their nomadic way of life.

In Kazakhstan, clothing was made from silk and wool fabrics, fur, and leather, giving the national costume enduring aesthetic and functional characteristics. The design prioritized comfort for a nomadic lifestyle while preserving decorative elements. Various regions of Kazakhstan contributed to the distinctive features of the national costume. In the southern areas, where the climate was milder, lightweight fabrics were used, whereas in the northern regions, warmer materials such as felt and fur were more prevalent.

Traditional headwear held special significance. Women's *kimeshek* and *saukele* were adorned with gold and silver threads, beads, and embroidery, demonstrating the wearer's status and marital position. Men's headwear, such as the *tymaq* and *borik*, not only protected against the cold but also symbolized social status.

A. Racinet perceived costume as a key element that united people from different social classes, reflecting their tastes, habits, and status. He explored not only the history of secular and religious clothing but also the accessories that complemented and completed the overall look. Particular attention was given to jewelry, belts, headwear, and footwear, which served both decorative and symbolic functions. The author also examined the role of precious metals and gemstones in clothing decoration, the use of embroidery and engraving, and the impact of accessories on the perception of social status across cultures. [Racinet A., 1994] This meticulous attention to detail is also evident in the traditional Kazakh costume, where accessories not only enhanced the appearance but also carried deep symbolic meaning, reflecting social status, tribal affiliation, and spiritual beliefs.

The socio-philosophical aspect of national costume plays a crucial role in studying the influence of clothing on an individual's social self-identification within a group. A. Hollander identifies two approaches: in some cultures, clothing emphasizes individuality, while in others, it erases personal traits, creating a unifying effect. According to her, the first approach is characteristic of the peoples of Africa, Australia, and South America, whereas the second is typical of Central European and Middle Eastern ethnic groups, where clothing is heavily adorned with details, leading to visual depersonalization.

Although this thesis is not a strict rule, Hollander's approach offers a valuable tool for analyzing the relationship between the individual and the collective in traditional attire across different cultures. [A. Hollander, 1994]

Ornamentation plays a significant role in the symbolism of national costume. Embroidery and patterns often served an apotropaic function, protecting the wearer from evil spirits and attracting prosperity. For example, among the Slavs, symbols of the sun, earth, and water were widespread, whereas in Central Asian traditions, ornaments conveyed concepts of the cosmos, fertility, and eternal life. In Kazakh culture, zoomorphic and vegetal motifs held special importance, reflecting the people's connection with nature and their nomadic lifestyle.

In Kazakhstan, clothing was traditionally made from silk and wool fabrics, fur, and leather, which provided the national costume with stable aesthetic and functional characteristics. The design of garments considered the comfort necessary for a nomadic lifestyle while maintaining decorative elements. Various regions of Kazakhstan contributed to shaping distinctive features of national attire. In the southern regions, where the climate was milder, lightweight fabrics were used, whereas in the northern areas, warmer materials such as felt and fur predominated.

Traditional headwear held special significance. Women's headpieces like the "kimeshek" and "saukele" were adorned with gold and silver threads, beads, and embroidery, demonstrating the wearer's status and marital position. Men's headwear, such as the "tymak" and "borik," not only provided protection from the cold but also served as symbols of social status.

A. Racinet perceived costume as an essential element that unites people from different social strata, reflecting their tastes, habits, and status. He thoroughly examines not only the history of secular and spiritual clothing but also accessories that complemented and completed the image. Particular attention is paid to jewelry, belts, headwear, and footwear, which played both decorative and symbolic roles. The author also describes the significance of precious metals and gemstones in clothing decoration, the use of embroidery and engraving, and the impact of accessories on the perception of an individual's status in different cultures. [Racinet A., 1994] This attention to detail can also be observed in traditional Kazakh attire, where accessories not only complemented the outfit but also carried deep symbolic meaning, reflecting social status, tribal affiliation, and spiritual beliefs.

Jewelry played a crucial role in Kazakh national costume, reflecting both aesthetic preferences and spiritual and social values. An interesting element was the use of amber, which is not found in Kazakhstan but was frequently used in jewelry. This indicates the development of trade along the Silk Road and active cultural exchange. In some communities, wealth and power were demonstrated through the quantity and quality of jewelry encrusted with precious stones and mother-of-pearl. Turquoise held special significance, symbolizing protection, good fortune, and a connection to the sky. Agate, carnelian, and jade were also widely used. Jade was considered a stone of health and longevity, while lapis lazuli was associated with spirituality and wisdom. These stones were incorporated into earrings, bracelets, rings, necklaces, and chest ornaments. [Asanova S.Zh., 2024]

Silver was the most popular metal in Kazakh jewelry craftsmanship. It was regarded as a purifying and protective material, making silver jewelry not only decorative but also amuletic. Kazakh artisans, known as “zergers,” enhanced silver’s “magic” through the shape of the piece, the sacred meaning of the ornamentation, and the applied techniques. [Shaigozova Zh.N., Naurzbaeva A.B., 2023] Women wore massive silver belts adorned with carvings and semi-precious stones, while men had silver-adorned scabbards and horse harness details. The melodic sound of silver jewelry served not only as an aesthetic feature but also as a form of social interaction. One of the traditional women’s ornaments, “sholpy” (braid pendants), was even used as a means of communication between Abai and Togzhan during their first encounter, as described in M. Auezov’s novel “The Path of Abai.” In this passage, the author depicts the jewelry not just as a beautiful traditional accessory but as a way for a shy young girl to express her affection: “She had already entered and exited her father’s yurt several times, glancing at Abai now and then. She lived somewhere in the neighboring yurt. The gentle silver chimes of her sholpy announced Togzhan’s arrival, like the magical voices of invisible beings flying ahead of her with joyful news. Everything associated with her, everything that adorned her, seemed otherworldly to Abai—unlike anything else around.” [Auezov M., 2012]

An interesting symbolic ornament was the use of owl, eagle, and falcon feathers and claws. These elements were incorporated into headwear and amulets, emphasizing a connection with higher forces, the sky, and wisdom. The owl, for instance, was

considered a protector against evil spirits, while the claws of birds of prey symbolized strength, fearlessness, and lineage patronage. Such feather bundles could be displayed externally on clothing or hidden underneath, serving as talismans.

Thus, Kazakh jewelry carried not only decorative but also profound symbolic significance, embodying beliefs, traditions, and interactions with the surrounding world.

Kazakh ornaments played an essential role in the decoration of traditional clothing and jewelry, serving not only as decorative elements but also as carriers of deep symbolic meaning. Patterns were used to denote social status, protect against evil spirits, and transmit cultural values across generations.

In Kazakh clothing, ornaments adorned vests, coats, headwear, and belts. Women’s attire featured delicate embroidery with flowing vegetal and geometric motifs symbolizing fertility, prosperity, and harmony. Men’s clothing typically had stricter, angular patterns emphasizing strength, masculinity, and a warrior spirit. Embroidery was applied to sleeves, collars, hems, and belts, serving both decorative and protective functions.

In jewelry, Kazakh ornaments appeared in silver engravings, gemstone inlays, and carvings. Jewelry pieces were adorned with symbols reflecting the worldview of the people. Popular motifs included spirals representing the infinity of life, zoomorphic patterns symbolizing strength and protection, and solar symbols associated with the veneration of the sun and cosmic energy.

Kazakh ornaments not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of clothing and jewelry but also served as a powerful cultural code, preserving and transmitting the traditions and beliefs of the people through generations.

Over the centuries, the national costume underwent numerous changes, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries when Kazakhstan became part of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. During this period, industrialization led to the widespread use of factory-made fabrics and European styles. From the mid-19th century, significant transformations occurred in traditional clothing, particularly in materials. Foreign factory fabrics increasingly replaced both Central Asian and locally produced textiles. Traditional tones and outer garments made of horse and goat hides, as well as wrap-around skirts once common among southern Kazakh women, gradually disappeared from everyday wear. In the second half of the 19th century, women’s attire saw the introduction of knee-length skirts, high-collared

shirts, and ruffled dresses. The age-specific distinctions in women's clothing also began to fade: wedding "saukele" headdresses and ceremonial robes, once worn throughout the first year of marriage, became exclusively ritual elements.

During this period, the cut and finish of traditional clothing began to be influenced by urban fashion. The silhouette changed: slanted shoulders, cut-out armholes, new sleeve shapes, front panels, and collars appeared. The shirt acquired a slit, button-holes with stitched loops, and factory-made buttons, which became an essential feature of the transformation of traditional costume. [Kalashnikova N.M., 2016]

However, traditional elements were preserved, especially in festive and ceremonial attire. Despite the influence of industrialization and the spread of European fashion, many traditions persisted, at least partially, in rural areas of Kazakhstan. Grandmothers continued to wear silver jewelry such as *bilezik* (bracelet), *kaptyrma* (clasp), and *sakina* (ring), which were passed down through generations and held not only decorative but also symbolic significance.

Furthermore, despite the transition from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle, ceremonies following traditional Kazakh customs continued in villages. One such preserved ritual was the wedding ceremony. Brides wore traditional outfits adorned with silver elements, embroidery, and national patterns. The bride's silhouette resembled a mountain, accompanied by a large number of exquisitely crafted ornaments in the region's traditional colors (most commonly red and white, less frequently green). Elder relatives played a crucial role in passing down these customs, teaching younger generations the symbolism of costumes and traditional jewelry, ensuring that each ritual was transmitted both orally and in written form.

Thus, even amid global changes, traditional elements of Kazakh clothing and the associated rituals remained a part of everyday life, particularly in rural communities where generational continuity was highly valued.

Today, the national costume continues to evolve, blending historical traditions with modern trends. Designers strive to preserve authentic forms and ornaments while adapting them to comfortable and practical everyday wear.

The Influence of National Costume on Contemporary Fashion

Modern designers increasingly turn to ethnic motifs, integrating traditional elements into con-

temporary fashion trends. This is driven by a growing interest in cultural heritage and a desire to preserve unique traditions in the face of globalization. [Lip-skaya V., 2014] National patterns are incorporated into modern clothing collections, while traditional embroidery techniques are utilized in accessory design. Additionally, contemporary fashion designers adapt the silhouettes of traditional garments, creating modern interpretations of camisoles and chapan coats. In the world's fashion capitals, there is a trend toward incorporating Central Asian ethnic elements—embroidery, ornaments, natural fabrics, and handmade craftsmanship—which have become the hallmark of many designer brands. The fashion industry not only shapes visual trends but also constructs social status, turning certain styles into prestige symbols. Fashionability becomes a key factor influencing clothing perception, as prestige is associated with status. Thus, the appeal of ethnic elements not only promotes cultural traditions but also elevates them to symbols of high status, making traditional costume not merely a part of heritage but a significant element of the fashion landscape. [Yatina L.I., 1998]

Today, national motifs of Turkic peoples are increasingly found in the collections of leading global fashion houses. For instance, at the Fall/Winter 2020/21 couture show held on a floating runway on the Seine, designs by Olivier Rousteing, creative director of Balmain, featured patterns referencing Eastern ornamentation. [Vogue Runway, 2020] In Spring 2022, Etro's collection reflected the influence of traditional Kazakh culture: silk capes with steppe motifs in summer hues and massive earrings resembled the national Kazakh costume worn by nomads for centuries. [Vogue Runway, 2022] The Spring 2021 collection by the Italian fashion brand Gucci, known for its luxurious style, high quality, and unique design, also featured Kazakh motifs in a more vivid and refined form. A velvet lilac suit, symbolizing opulence, was adorned with golden-yellow Kazakh ornaments alongside a snakeskin print. Notably, the placement of the ornamentation on the collar and cuffs of the jacket fully aligns with the Kazakh traditions of sacred decoration, where these zones have long been considered particularly significant in terms of symbolism and protection. [Vogue Runway, 2021][Leibovitz A., Wintour A., 2021] Fashion industry giants such as Hermès have also incorporated Central Asian motifs into their designs. In 2017, the "Appaloosa des Steppes" scarf line made of silk and cashmere prominently featured Kazakh and Kyrgyz ornamental elements, reminis-

cent of the Kazakh tekemet or Kyrgyz shyrdak—traditional felt carpets handcrafted with great skill. [Spottedfashion, 2017]

A significant trend is the popularization of national costume elements in everyday fashion, contributing not only to the preservation of traditions but also to their relevance for new generations. In this context, traditional elements have become part of streetwear culture, expressed through prints, fabric textures, and accessories. Collaborations between ethnic artisans and contemporary designers help preserve unique craft techniques while integrating them into mainstream fashion. In Kazakhstan, there is a growing resurgence of interest in national style, evident in the works of independent designers such as Aida Kaumenova, Tarbiya Aydynbayeva, Kairula Abishev, Baldyrgan Imanbayeva, Saltanat Bektabanova, Diana Amangeldiyeva, Anel Assanova, and Akerke Tamen, as well as in the creations of fashion collectives such as Global Nomads, Korkem Store, Alkum, Adili, and Zerleu, which produce modern collections incorporating elements of traditional Kazakh clothing. Their designs captivate not only Kazakhstanis but also foreign visitors.

Government and private initiatives play an essential role in this process, promoting ethnic fashion through events such as the annual “Ethno Fashion Show,” “Kazakhstan Fashion Show,” “Central Asia Fashion,” and projects dedicated to preserving national craft traditions. Various funds and competitions actively support young designers and artists both locally and internationally by providing financial assistance.

Additionally, traditional Kazakh elements are increasingly being incorporated into sports and youth fashion: t-shirts, hoodies, and sneakers now feature patterns reminiscent of Kazakh embroidery and weaving. The growing popularity of national themes is also reflected in the rising demand for accessories with ethnic motifs, including belts, bags, and jewelry crafted using traditional metal carving and leatherworking techniques. Thus, the national costume is not just a part of museum heritage but a living element of contemporary Kazakh fashion.

Conclusion

The national costume is an integral part of cultural heritage, reflecting a nation’s history, traditions, and worldview. Studying it provides deeper insight

into the processes of ethnic identity formation and the mechanisms of cultural code transmission across generations. In today’s era of globalization, where national characteristics are often influenced by mass culture, the preservation and adaptation of traditional attire play a crucial role in maintaining cultural diversity.

Today, the national costume is no longer confined to museum exhibits and festive occasions. It serves as a source of inspiration for designers, artisans, and representatives of the fashion industry, integrating elements of ethnic clothing into contemporary life. In Kazakhstan, this is reflected in the popularization of traditional patterns, ornaments, and silhouettes in everyday wear, as well as in the creation of new designs that combine ethnic motifs with modern materials.

Interest in national costume extends beyond local traditions, becoming part of international cultural exchange. Collections based on ethnic themes capture global attention on fashion runways, while traditional craftsmanship passed down through generations gains recognition and new life. It is essential not only to preserve these traditions but also to adapt them, making them accessible and appealing to younger generations.

Future research in this field may explore the impact of national costumes on sustainable fashion, their role in the digital era, and opportunities for integrating ethnic motifs into the global fashion industry. Thus, the national costume continues to evolve, remaining a symbol of cultural identity and a source of inspiration for future generations.

Studying national attire offers a deeper understanding of cultural processes related to ethnic identity formation and tradition preservation. Traditional clothing embodies not only a people’s historical memory but also serves as a means of self-identification in an ever-changing world influenced by globalization.

Modern fashion trends affirm the significance of national attire, showcasing its relevance and versatility. An interdisciplinary approach to studying ethnic costume opens new perspectives in cultural studies, anthropology, and art history, making this subject particularly valuable for academic research.

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