Uzbek fashion design and textile traditions: Wedding attire

Project: Modernity of Tradition. The sustainability of Uzbek textile heritage

Weddings and marriage still play a crucial role in the life of families and their kinship in Uzbekistan today. As a rule, a wedding is based on traditional rituals which make it not only an agreement between two individuals but which concerns the whole large kinship community. Kinship relations are helpful to have access to material, economic and political resources. Within these rituals, the dowry of the bride – called sarpo – captives great attention: it includes primarily dresses and textiles not only for the actual wedding, but also for the future life of the young wife. On the third day of the celebration, the bride has to welcome all the guests coming into her house – which, in most cases, is the home of the groom – dressed in a different attire of traditional style each time. During the whole wedding ritual and even 40 days after the celebration, the young wife wears traditional dresses and keeps an open house to the family, neighbors and friends who come to inspect her dowry.

The collection shown here reflects on this wedding ritual, but proposes a modernized version which respects the ritual by the use of traditional fabrics and motifs as well as modern needs and conceptions of fashion. It also gives an impression of contemporary Uzbek fashion design which tries to revitalize traditional textile culture in Central Asia, which has nowadays become the independent state of Uzbekistan.

It was devised by Taisiya Chursina together with members of the project.

The Project:

The project employs the term textile heritage in a broad sense, including modern and traditional textile artifacts as well as sartorial practices, old textile technology and modern textile industry knowledge. The term is not employed as a precautionary measure, but rather it implies development and practical usages and perspectives for the project. The term sustainability has a double meaning in this case: in a figurative sense, it represents the stabilization of the network of Uzbek and German partners and the obtained results;
in a practical sense, it signifies concrete measures to guarantee quality and stability of fashion items.

Today Uzbekistan considers itself the legitimate heir of the ancient Silk Road. A large part of the ancient famous places and cities of the old trading road crossing Central Asia towards Europe today are situated on Uzbek territory. Particularly *Ikat* textiles are counted among its most famous legacies and today these textiles have become Uzbekistan’s significant marker of national identity. Textile heritage overall belongs to what Benedict Anderson has called the imagined community which means a constructed landscape of collective aspirations. The project concentrates on three traditionally important textile areas of Uzbekistan: The Ferghana valley (cities Andijan, Margilan, Ferghana, Namangan, Qokand, Kosansay and villages of this region); the Bukhara region – not only one of the biggest centers of textile production in the past, but also the famous trade center of the great Silk Road and a modern center for cultural tourism, and Tashkent – the capital, with its population of almost three million, is now the center of numerous textile fairs, textile actions and industrial production, as well as a fashion hub. The Tashkent region has its own rich regional textile traditions. Moreover, all these three regions are located far away from each other and have quite different social roots and population histories and, as result, different textile consumer practices. However, the project argues that Uzbekistan forges its own way to modernity different from European historical processes. The dynamics of modernity and tradition are organized in a different way, having diverse cultural meanings and results. Textile culture is at the core of this process because it can be exploited variously for the construction of national identity: as a living memory of an ancient Central Asian past before Tsarist colonization and Soviet modernization, as a visualized history, and as an economic instrument and nation branding for the global market.