

Male Dress in the Caucasus
(with special reference to Abkhazia and Georgia)

The Greater Caucasus mountain range runs for some 500 miles and in this relatively narrow neck of land that separates the Black from the Caspian Sea one finds: (a) the indigenous Caucasian peoples, who collectively speak some 40 languages, divided into certainly three and possibly four language-families (Daghestanian/North East Caucasian, its clear but more distant relative North Central Caucasian, and North West Caucasian, all three of which families possibly derive from a single, very remote ancestor, whilst it is impossible to prove that the final family, South Caucasian or Kartvelian, has any genetic links with any of the northern groups or indeed with any other language/language-family within or beyond the Caucasus); (b) peoples who speak a number of Indo-European languages (e.g. the Ossetians, Tats, Talysh and Kurds, all four of whom speak languages related to Persian, the Armenians, Greeks, Gypsies, and, of course, the Russians and other Slavs, who first appeared in the Caucasus area only in the second half of the 16th century); (c) a variety of Turkic-speaking peoples such as the Turks themselves and the Azerbaydzhanis, plus the Karachays and Balkars in the NW Caucasus, and the Nogais and the Kumyks in the NE; to the north of Daghestan are the Mongol Kalmyks; (d) the Semitic peoples (a small Assyrian group in Georgia, and Jews, among whom the Mountain Jews of Daghestan evidently speak Iranian Tat). This paper is concerned with one aspect of the common heritage of the autochthonous denizens, namely male dress and concentrates on variations in Abkhazian and Georgian cultures for the simple reason that these are the ones with which the author is most familiar¹. For details on the specific dress of Daghestanian tribes (both male and female) see Gadzhieva (1981). Whilst this paper is not primarily addressed to linguists, I have included (a selection of) native terms for the various articles of clothing described so that readers may gain a flavour of the differences in, for example, vocabulary found across the native language-families. The most numerous of the Caucasian peoples today are the Georgians; along with the Mingrelians, Laz (who predominantly reside in Turkey) and the Svans, they make up the Kartvelian peoples. The North West Caucasians are the Abkhazian-Abazinians, Circassians and Ubykhs -- this last group left the Caucasus when the Russians took control in 1864, preferring a life in the Ottoman Empire, where their language immediately went into the decline that makes it today all but extinct. The Chechens are the most numerous Caucasians today after the Georgians, and their language-group has the three members: Chechen, Ingush and the endangered Bats. All remaining languages referred to below belong in the final, Daghestanian/North East Caucasian family.

Though today it is sadly not in use, being reserved for folk song- and dance-ensembles, traditional dress for men is a feature which in its essentials was found throughout the Caucasus -- today nothing distinguishes the typical Caucasian male from his counterpart anywhere else in Europe. The most distinctive component of the traditional attire is the striking tunic, which Cossacks adopted when they were settled in the North Caucasus as the frontiersmen for Imperial Russia's drive southwards. Chechenia, Ingushetia in the North Central Caucasus and Daghestan in the North East were finally subdued with the defeat of Shamil in 1859, and in the North West the Circassian tribes (together with their kin the Ubykhs around Sochi and the Abkhazians further to

¹For a discussion of the history of Georgian costume in the VIth-XIVth centuries see Chopik'ashvili (1964).

the south on the Black Sea coast) were conquered in 1864, leading to a mass-exodus to Ottoman lands (principally Turkey) of all the Ubykhs, most of the Circassians and Abkhazians plus various other North Caucasians. The Turks call the Circassians *çerkesler*², and the pan-Caucasian tunic is generally known by its Russian name of *çerkeska*. Indigenous Caucasians, however, do not use this term. In Georgian it is commonly known as *ჭოჭხა* (cf. Turkish *çuha* 'cloth'), which root is also widespread, if not entirely universal, in Daghestan (e.g. Avar/Andi *čičitč*, as given by Kibrik & Kodzasov 1990:127) and the North Central Caucasus (e.g. Chechen *чуха*, Ingush *чухкхъ*). In the North West Caucasus, on the other hand, this root seems to be unattested as the name for the garment in question³, for in Circassian we have *на/нај* ⇐ *на* 'wool' (Šagirov 1977:124), whilst Abkhaz has *а-к'ауа-а* which would seem to contain a stem of uncertain meaning *-к'ауа-* as seen in the noun *а-к'ауа-а* 'material for cherkesska', where *а-а* is 'skin, pelt'. In Georgian's sister-language, Mingrelian, the term *ghart-i* applies to both the article of dress and to the woollen material from which it is made, just as in Georgian too this latter may be referred to by the word *ჭოჭხა* (as well as by the full term *ა-ჭოჭხა-ე მანდი-ლი* 'material/woollen cloth for cherkesska', which material might have been Georgian, Daghestanian or Ossetian in origin).

Of the native Caucasian languages only Georgian has more than a century's history of writing, and, according to the 11-volume Georgian Encyclopædia, *ჭოჭხა* is attested in Georgian literature from as early as 9th century texts. The most usual colour for the garment is black, though other colours (such as red, grey, brown and blue) are not unknown, and noblemen might have them in white. It is drawn in tightly at the waist, whilst the lower portion extends to below the knee and broadens out with a number of loose pleats (Abkh. *ა-ბუკ'არ-ა*, Geo. *ნაუჩ-ი*) at the rear, gathered at the waist. The sleeves are exceptionally long, dropping well below the hands, and are normally worn folded. Fastened at the centre with five fasteners, which are not buttons (Abkh. *ა-ბ'არ-ა*, Geo. *ghit-i*) as such but bobs of braid (Abkh. *ა-ტ'ბ'არ-ა*, Geo. *ტ'ბ'არ-ი*), which fit into cotton-loops serving as button-holes (Abkh. *ა-ბ'არ-ა-ბ-არ-ა*, Geo. *ჩ'ბ'ი*). Open from half-way up the chest, it has no collar of its own but reveals the collared undergarment beneath, and open from the abdomen down, it facilitates the mounting and riding of horses, the standard Caucasian mode of travel. Each breast is decorated with between 8 and 10 protruding rounded pockets for cartridges (Abkh. *ა-ბ'არ-ბა*, Geo. *ა-მარ-ა*), which today hold (usually) plastic imitations. These are half white, half black; the white end is normally visible, but the black is used on occasions of mourning, when even a nobleman would dress only in a black cherkesska. When real cartridges were in use, they might be capped with a silver top, each covering being attached to a silver chain, secured by the shoulder-blade. The garment is lined, apart from the hem at the base, with braid, including the tops and bottoms of the cartridge-pockets. There are usually two vents (Abkh. *ა-რ'ბ'არ-ა*, Geo. *ჭაკ-ი*) at the base and two side-slits (Abkh. *ა-ა'ბ'არ-ი-ა*, Geo. *ghit-i*) through which the undergarment could protrude for decoration. The cherkesska was the dress of all Caucasian males, regardless of station in life, a peasant's garment being merely of inferior quality and workmanship. If nobles wore theirs on all occasions, a peasant would don his only when going out somewhere.

There were, of course, regional variations to the basic theme. Inal-Ipa (1965:317) quotes 19th century descriptions of Abkhazian cherkesskas as being

²The debate continues as to whether this term is in any way related to the people on the Black Sea coast who were known to the ancient Greeks as 'Kerketai'.

³In Abkhaz we have *ა-ა'უა* used as in Turkish, i.e. with the meaning '(woollen) cloth'.

somewhat shorter than those of the Circassians, though he notes too that in earlier times the Abkhazian cherkesska was longer, citing the measurements of an example from a St. Petersburg museum as being 43 cm. from waist to top, but 66 cm. from waist to base. Malija and Akaba (1982:110-111) present representations of Abkhazian cherkesskas with a collar. If the Abkhazians were generally reluctant to indulge in ornamentation, such was not the case with their Mingrelian and Georgian neighbours. Volume 3 part I of the Georgian series which translates as **Materials for the History of Georgia's Domestic Industry and Craftsmanship** (ed. Iv. Dzhevakhishvili, 1983) is devoted to dress in the various regions of Georgia, and on p. 189 is described for the capital, Tbilisi, a variety of cherkesska which had no fasteners, as it was meant to be worn open so as to shew off the undergarment in its full glory. Instead of loose plaits it had between 8 and 16 vents. Instead of cartridge-pockets it was decorated with upto 30 smaller compartments, into which only half a woman's little finger could be poked, which originally will have been designed to contain flint-steel (Geo. *ჩვესი*) and tinder (Geo. *აბაქა*) and are thus known as 'flint-steel containers' (Geo. *ა-ჩვეს-აბა*). Below them ran two strips of braid-decoration (Geo. *აბაქა*) with a decorative button-hole (Geo. *მუხრანის ჩვესი*) beneath the final flint-pocket. The Georgian Encyclopædia also mentions a specific type of cherkesska, known as the Khevsurian cherkesska after the remote mountainous region, now virtually deserted, of Khevsureti in north-central Georgia (bordering Chechen-Ingushetia), which was devoid of fasteners but, like all cloth-work in the region, richly ornamented with applied symbolic designs (such as the cross); if the cherkesska itself has a military air about it, Khevsurs as late as the 19th century still used to dress in armour (Geo. *აბაქანი*) with chain-mail shirt (Geo. *აბაქანი*) to do battle (see Mak'alatia 1984:146-7), a fact which led to the suggestion that the Khevsurs were descendants of the Crusaders (Geo. *აბაქანი*). Elaborate embroidery is, of course, characteristic of female Khevsurian attire, such as depicted by Mak'alatia (pp.145-6) for the *აბაქა*, a sort of female cherkesska, though his few coloured plates (N.B. the book was first published in the mid-thirties) illustrate the intricate workmanship so typical of this district on other articles of male and female clothing also. An illustration by Gogebashvili from the 1912 edition of his **Nature's Door** depicts (p.478) a rather ornate cherkesska from the western province of Imereti, with a short and flounced lower portion, whilst for the province of Guria, whence hails Eduard Shevardnadze, to the south-west Gogebashvili both notes and illustrates (p.495) a local alternative to the cherkesska, found especially in the southern part of the region towards Turkey, which is called *აბაქა*. It comes down only to the waist and resembles a smoking-jacket; according to the illustration, it would seem that it is worn with a sort of heavy cumabund around the lower waste.

The stylised cherkesska described above will have represented the pinnacle of a long development. An Italian missionary, Don Christoforo De Castelli, spent the years 1628-1654 in Georgia and left an album of drawings shewing scenes from Abkhazia, Mingrelia and Georgia proper. These were published in full for the first time in Tbilisi only in 1977 (along with the Georgian translation of the original descriptions of the illustrations in a work edited by Giorgadze), and one can detect, as in drawing 224 of 'An armed Abkhazian nobleman', a plainer precursor, with nothing on the chest-area, of the dress-like garment that was to become the handsome cherkesska of later days.

The cherkesska is worn together with a special shirt called in Georgian *აბაქანი* and in Abkhaz *ა-ჩვესი*, such that both languages refer to the traditional male outfit by employing the combinations *აბაქანი-აბაქანი* and *ა-ჩვესი-ა-ჩვესი*.

k'aba-/respectively -- the Russian term is *besmet*, the Chechen *g'uvta*. The materials from which this shirt might be made include silk, satin, staple, brocade, demi-cotton; as to colour, it is usually white, but black is also possible. Today it extends to below the crotch, but earlier it seems to have been longer. In Georgian the word for 'a/the dress' is *k'aba* and in Mingrelian, which language for centuries has been a buffer between the Abkhaz-speaking and the Georgian-speaking areas, *k'aba* is used (in addition to the Georgian borrowing *axalku-*) to refer to this shirt, which would be natural if at some stage in its development the shirt more resembled a woman's dress; from Mingrelian the word seems to have entered Abkhaz, where the Georgian root is not found.

Like the cherkesska, the shirt is fastened with bobs of braid from the chest up to the top of the straight collar, which itself has two such bobs, as well as around the wrists. Unlike the cherkesska, the shirt has pockets over each breast. The shirt is worn outside the trousers.

A full, dress-length and double-breasted (Geo. *stavkghian-*) shirt is shewn on p.188 of the Dzhavakhishvili volume mentioned above; again reference is to clothing worn in Tbilisi. Such an elaborate shirt fastened at the side with upto 200(!) bobs of braid, though the winter-variant had shiny black buttons instead, had a border of blue braid, its own loose plaits and vents, and was typically used in association with the open-fronted cherkesska described earlier. The equivalent single-breasted (Geo. *stavghian-*) shirt (not illustrated) fastened in the centre by means of 20 metal fasteners (Geo. *avma*, Abkh. *avma*) with what are known as 'male' (Abkh. *sa-javta*, Geo. *mama-*) and 'female' (Abkh. *sa-javna*, Geo. *avta-*) parts, had a border of gold thread with no loose plaits but did have 8 vents.

Beneath the shirt a vest may be worn, called in Georgian *pa'rang-* 'shirt' (cf. *mavur-* 'vest'), in Abkhaz *avaz*, in Chechen *ku*, in Dido *gad*, in Lak *huga*, and in Russian *rubashka*.

Over the cherkesska was worn (and still is by shepherds out on the mountain-pastures) a voluminous, full-length black cloak of heavy felt (Abkh. *avap²ca*, Geo. *kacha/teka*), with shaggy hair on the outside and extremely broad, straight shoulders. It is called in Abkhaz *avapca* in Georgian *rubash-t* in Chechen *varta* in Circassian-Ubykh *ch'akca* in Lak *vax* in Rutul *it* and in Russian *burka*. It fastens only at the top, being held around one, in the manner of a cloak, against inclement weather. As with Caucasian dress in general, it was extremely convenient for use on horseback; Inal-Ipa (1965:319) describes how an Abkhazian would always have his cloak with him, rolled up and attached to his saddle in good weather, and actually wear it while riding with his right shoulder tucked well into the right side, so that the cloak's centre would be by the rider's left shoulder, leaving the left side of the cloak free to be swung (via the saddle) over the bearer's right shoulder, providing excellent protection, especially for the chest-area. At night-time it served as a warm layer for a traveller forced to sleep beneath the open skies.

Inal-Ipa (loc. cit.) also refers to a long obsolete garment, made of felt like the cloak but in shape somewhat similar to a cherkesska, which he calls *avabana-k*. Malija (1985) illustrates it in her 3rd illustration; it is a plain brown jacket, fastened from the midriff to the collarless neck, but otherwise open and extending to just below the buttocks -- the wearer is depicted wearing a simple, conical hat of the same material. Georgian has the term *avabana-k²* but interestingly Ubykh had *avabana-kca* which Yögt (1963) translated as 'manteau', noting that Dumézil (1931) had defined it as 'la longue chemise caucasienne fermée jusqu' au menton', but adding that two Turkish equivalents had been offered at different times, namely *yabak* 'waistcoat' and *burka* 'short cloak'.

Circassian has *ḡ'šibamāč' / šibamāč'*. The source of these forms is Turkish *kapanak* 'coarse felt cape' (Shagiroy 1977.111). Fur coats are also found (Abkh. *ə-xamə* Geo. *kurk-i* -- cf. Turkish *kürk* -- or *tökma* -- in Georgian a woman's fur-lined coat is called *kətib-i*

Black trousers (Geo. *sharvat-i*; Abkh. *š-šəy'k'ə* or *ə-dəy'k'ə* from Mingrelian *džikvə*) were a simple design of light-weight wool, one variety (as worn by the small-traders or artisans of Old Tbilisi, known as *š'šərach'ughef- /š'šərach'ukhef-i* literally 'the one with black-cherkesska' from Turkish *kara* 'black' even though their open cherkesska was blue in hue, or *k'it'ə* for the more uncouth types) was especially capacious down to the knee; below the knee, however, they cling to the calf, fitting inside tight-fitting, black, knee-length boots (Abkh. *ə-məy'ə*; Geo. *chekma/ts'əghə*) and are secured at the bottom with a single strip of material. When such long boots were not being worn, the trousers would be tucked into leggings (?greaves) (Abkh. *š-šəy'mə* Geo. *sə-cvat- /p'əch'ich'² /p'əich'²*) that covered the shin and were kept in place by a loop under the instep and strapped at the top. Malija and Akaba (1982.56) note that in Abkhazia these leggings could be ornamented with gold or silver thread, and they were of cloth for use in the home but of morocco for outside.

These authors also describe a variety of other footwear (Abkh. *ə-š'šəc'ə(r'ə)* or *š-šəy'mə* Geo. *pəx-sə-c'm-əf-i*), such as: *ə-c'əb'ə:əy'mə* 'leather shoes', *ə-z'c'əy'mə* 'small raw-leather shoes' (Geo. *kəlamən-i*) worn without socks, though in winter socks of rough material or morocco (*ə-məy'⁵*) were worn (woven and often nicely patterned woollen socks are called *ə-kəpəč* Geo. *c'it'ə* -- in parts of the Caucasus, such as amongst the Bats who today live in a single east Georgian village though they are related to the Chechens and Ingush, patterned 'socks' with thick woollen soles double as slippers (Geo. *pəst'⁴*)); small shoes for both men and women were called *ə-c'ə:əy'mə* (Geo. *chut'²*) when made of morocco and worn for going out. In addition to leggings covering the shin, one also found 'knee-protectors' (Abkh. *ə-š'šəməx'tə/ər'pə* Geo. *sə-mux't- ə*). The word for 'cobbler' is in Abkhaz *š-šəy'mə:dzəx'y'ə* in Georgian *xəvəz-i* (cf. Arabic *xəvvāš*) or *mə-ts'əgh-ə*

Perhaps the most widespread headgear worn by men as part of their traditional outfit and made by the furrier (Abkh. *ə-xəlpə:dzəx'y'ə* Geo. *ch'it'ə*) is what the Russians call *папаха*. It is quite deep, round and, at a distance, trapezoid in shape, narrow at the base and widening at the top; made of sheepskin, it has tight curls of black wool (after the fashion of an astrakhan coat) on the outside. Some local designations are: Abkhaz *ə-xəlpə:č'* Georgian *ḡəxəx-i* Andi *rəG'əx*, T'indi *š'šəpə*, Hunzib *L'it'ə*. Narrow and tall, cone-shaped variants exist, possibly with a soft interior raised above the curly woollen base.

Other types of headgear occur, some being characteristic of a particular locale. A common type is what the Russians call *башлык*, but in Abkhaz it is *ə-x'tə/ər'pə* and in Georgian *š'šəbəx-i*. It is made of fine white wool, sitting on the head in a cone-shape (not unlike a stunted Klu-Klux-Klan hat) with a tassel (Abkh. *ə-c'əx'ə*; Geo. *pəč'²*) on the end of a double 6-inch thread and braid-bobble with a 3-inch vent, held by two looped twisted cords, at the bottom of the head-covering at the back, and with two long side-pieces extending down beyond the knee and provided with an applied half-inch hem (Abkh. *ə-c'əx'ər'pə* Geo. *kəb'ə*). Laid flat with the side-flaps upwards, it makes an L-shape. The flaps

⁴For a short boot the word is *ts'əghə*

⁵In Georgian *məy'²* is defined as 'small-collared, soleless footwear of poor-quality sheep-skin or poor-quality sheepskin collarless footwear with sole'.

might be left dangling over the back, folded one over the other but still at the back, or tied in an intricate fashion so that the head then has a rather bulbous covering. Alternatively, the whole head-piece might be girt around one's waist, allowed to rest on the shoulders with the head-part over the small of the back, or draped over the right shoulder, as illustrated by Malia and Akaba (1982:116-7). This particular head-covering could even be worn over the *ḡḡḡḡḡ* to lend an even more impressive and weighty appearance to the wearer.

At one time Abkhazian men used to shave their heads apart from strands left to grow from the crown into a long clump resembling a raised pony-tail. In order to accommodate this growth appropriate headgear had to be devised -- see the illustrations in Inal-Ipa (1965:321).

Two distinctive types of headgear that immediately betray their provenance from a particular region of Georgia are those from Svanetia in the mountainous north west and K'akhetia in the east. The Svan hat (Geo. *სვანური კუდი*) is usually grey (though white and brown are also found); it is made of strong, felt-like wool (so strong that it may be used as a cup to drink from mountain-streams) and grips the head like a large skull-cap, being half-spherical in shape. A black lining of twisted cord runs around the base with perhaps a couple of rows of black stitching above it, and a second rim of twisted cord is stitched around the hat some 2 inches higher; one strip of such cord runs from this over the top from front to back and a second from side to side -- at the meeting-point on top there is a small bobble. Though not essential, a further foot or so of cord may run down from the interior of the hat at the back, and to this a tassel may be attached. This hat has become very popular even outside Svanetia, and tourists find it especially attractive.

The K'akhetian hat is made of the same material as a cherkesska and is thus usually black in colour (though one also finds it in white). Again it is essentially a skull-cap but with the material turned up and tucked in to provide a 2-3 inch border. Two strips of twisted cord again run over the centre-piece from front to back and from side to side, but this time, instead of meeting at the top in a bobble, there is a raised, button-like top-point encircled by the braiding -- this cord-ornamentation remains black even if the main hat is white.

Though not itself an item of clothing (Abkh. *ა-მატა* Geo. *ტან-სა-ც-მ-ელ-იტან-ის-სა-მოს-ი*), no description of male Caucasian dress (Abkh. *ა-ჩ-ც-ატა* Geo. *ც-ც-მ-ელ-ობა*) would be complete without noting that no Caucasian would have considered himself fully dressed without his belt (Abkh. *ა-მატა* Geo. *კამარ-ი*) and dagger (Abkh. *ა-ჭანა* Geo. *ხანძია-ის-ტევ-არ-ი*). A top-quality belt, like the scabbard, would be decorated with silver -- the silversmiths of the small Daghestanian village of K'ubachi were particularly famous for all types of silver-ware (see, for example, Chirkov 1971). The scabbard (Abkh. *ა-ჭანატრა* Geo. *კარკაში-ი*) itself was either of leather-bound wood with top and base of silver (Abkh. *ა-რაზა* Geo. *ვერცხ-ი*) typically ornamented with beautiful black inlay, known as niello (Abkh. *ა-პ-ჭარ-კ'ინა* Geo. *სავად-ი* ← Arabic *ṣawād* 'blackness'), or wholly of silver. The base of the bone-grip would also be decorated with matching silver, incorporating one of the two silver studs over the pins securing the dagger. The belt itself would also be ornamented with a silver buckle (Abkh. *ა-პაუტი* Geo. *აბჯინ-ი*) and silver studs and silver tips to one or more of the decorative straps hanging from the belt -- these ornamentations are known in Abkhaz as *ა-ჭანა* and such an ornamented belt is called in Georgian a *გაბაკ-იანი-ი კამარ-ი*. Various accoutrements could be suspended from the belt, but especially common was a small metal pouch to hold fat (for greasing one's weapons) or coins; its name in Abkhaz is *ა-ჭაპატრა* from *ა-ჭაპა* 'sheep's fatty tail'. Weapons in addition to the ubiquitous dagger would have included a full-

length sword (Abkh. *Ბ-ᲗᲗ*Ბ; Geo. *კმაჩ*) and pistol (Abkh. *Ბ-ᲕᲗᲗᲗ*; Geo. *კამბაჩი*).

The oldest description of Caucasian dress with which I am familiar comes from the description of Mingrelia written by one of the early Italian missionaries, Don Archangelo Lamberti, who lived for about 20 years in the region in the second quarter of the 17th century. A Georgian translation of his work was published by A. Ch'q'onia in 1901, and this was reprinted in both 1938 and 1990. I close this article with an English rendering of the relevant chapter (VII) based on this Georgian translation; because of its historical interest the chapter is presented in full, even though reference is made to the contemporary dress of both men and women.

Since we have described the population, it is now necessary that we portray how the Mingrelians dress. Concerning the vulgar folk it cannot even be said that they wear any clothing, for their poverty has reached such a pitch that their clothing hardly covers half their body. It is true that male dress is comprised of some woollen strip, which scarcely reaches to the knee, and for a belt they have ordinary string. They have no thought for anything else: they can't be bothered with shirt, trousers, socks and shoes. There are even those who can't obtain even this strip of wool and go about entirely naked. Since the damp air of Odishi [= Mingrelia] does not facilitate the rearing of sheep, and since sheep are expensive, Mingrelians find it difficult to acquire even a modicum of clothing to cover their naked body. It is for just this reason that as soon as Turkish boats approach the shores of Mingrelia (they come every year), the Mingrelians will rush out of their homes and fall upon these boats to buy woollen cloth, but, since they have no money, they will bring out hemp, honey, wax, flax or flax-seed and barter such as these with the Turks for cloth. It is not only the poor who have string for belts. Every Mingrelian considers string not just useful but an essential necessity, especially on the road. Indeed, if a Mingrelian wants to steal a horse, he needs string; if he needs hay for the horse, he must bind it with string and fetch it; if he wants to lead the horse into water, without string he will be unable to; if he captures a prisoner in war, without string he won't be able to bring him home; if he catches a thief and wants to punish him, he must have string to tie his hands and bind him to a tree. In a word, string is so essential in this land that every Mingrelian has it about his waist and values and glorifies it greatly. Apart from string nobles and wealthy peasants have a leather belt girt around the waist which is decorated with silver studs [Geo. *კრᲗᲗ*]. On this belt they will usually suspend a variety of things, such as they may require on the road. On the belt they will hang first a sword with broad thongs, which has a length of 3, 4 or 5 spans, so that when they walk about, they drag the sword along the ground like a long tail. They will also hang on the belt a knife with its own sharpener; a small money-pouch, in which there is either nothing at all or just a few paltry items; in a second pouch they have flint, steel, matches and tinder: in a third pouch they have needles with different kinds of thread; they have hanging there also a comb, bodkin, a small cord, an implement for bleeding a horse, a really tiny pouch of leather full of pounded salt, yet another pouch with pepper or full of some other kind of condiment. And they have suspended a small wax candle in case they should spend the night on the road and perchance require it; a hundred other nugatory items they have hanging there, but to save space we won't list them. In a word, about their waist is suspended an entire shop. In Odishi they sew shoes in the main from undressed leather, like our mountain peasants; many sew these shoes so elegantly that even squires wear them when they go hunting for walking more nimbly. Women and the well-born wear Persian high-heeled shoes [Geo. *კრᲗ-Თ*]

with inch-heels. These shoes are sewn from different coloured leather. From such leather they sew those boots too which women don when riding. These boots are not high-necked ones -- the neck, which is decorated with gold and precious gems reaches only as far as the shins. As for poor women, for them dress and blouse are one and the same; the shirt's partner reaches down to their feet, and the feet they have ever naked.

Royalty and the aristocracy dress quite well. They sew shirts [Geo. *pàrang-*] from different coloured silk. They ornament the neck and hem of the shirt with gold-thread, precious stones and pearls. So that all should clearly notice this ornamentation, they have the shirt flapping outside the trousers. Over the shirt they wear the *axàux-í* which they have reaching down to the knees. This *axàux-í* is of woollen cloth or silk, and so that it does not conceal the embroidered shirt, it is shorter than the shirt. On it they have sewn from the throat to the waist buttons of wrought silver. About the waist they wear a belt, as we described above, and on the belt there is a Turkish sword suspended, and, apart from this, there hangs the renowned string. Above the *axàux-í* in cold weather they wear a second article of clothing, shorter still, like a Cossack. This second article is of purer wool or silk or velvet and for lining has sable-skin.

The hat of vulgar folk is made of felt and looks more like a goblet than our kind of *chapeau* since it has no edges at all and hardly covers the head. They give different shapes to this hat. Royalty and aristocrats sew this hat from pure wool or silk; some have it embroidered or decorate it in the Tatar fashion with sable-skin, or have points sewn in the Persian way, like the headgear of the Cappucins and decorate it with silver-coloured sheepskin, which they import from Persia. When I went to that land and the Mingrelians noticed our *chapeau* and became convinced that this *chapeau* is very advantageous at times of rain and sunshine, they conceived a desire to introduce it there. First the priests, then the nobles and finally the peasants too did indeed introduce it. But, since they have no master who can make the material necessary for such a *chapeau*, they adopted its form at any rate, and some have it made from wool and place cardboard inside, some from the bark of trees and fasten over it a waxed canvas; and some have it made from tree-bark shaped on a turner's lathe. This *chapeau* they will never put directly on their head but on top of their own hat; neither do they always wear it, but only when it rains or in sunny weather.

The vulgar folk knit socks from local wool or silk.

Apart from this Mingrelians when feasting or at festival wear another type of dress, which is long down to the feet and whose open sleeves [Geo. *qurmadzh-*] reach to the ground. This article is especially elegant both in design and the rich material from which it is sewn. They sew this garment from damask or velvet or silk; as lining they give it sable-skin, and from top to bottom it is ornamented with buttons of gold or pearl. Each royal or aristocratic person has several such garments of different material so that according to the circumstance he might don one or another. This garment is common to both men and women.

Although the women are far from our country, they still do not fall short of our women in comeliness, especially in the combing of the hair and in covering the head, which plainly bears witness to the emptiness in their heads. They wish (against Nature) with the help of colouring and fard to shew themselves white to people. But, of course, like our womenfolk they have neither the artistry nor the equipment. They pound the fard and smear it on in such a way that their faces look more like they have been powdered with flour than dyed. As for colour, they do not import material from Spain or Asia Minor but use what comes to hand -- for example: lac, vermilion and other dyes. Then they will smear them on

their cheeks in such a way that it appears as if they had had them smeared all of a sudden and without any womanly know-how. And their eyebrows they paint with dye from the pyramid cypress in such a way that they lengthen them in both directions almost to the ears and in the middle join them above the nose. With the same dye they paint the eyelashes too. Imagine it -- they do not even spare their eyes and yellow even the eyeballs with some sort of ointment. You are lucky to recognise such a bedecked or, better to say, re-coloured woman only by her voice if at all, otherwise it is impossible to recognise her by any other sign. Mingrelians are so enamoured of such plastering and painting that, if a painter paints the portrait of any woman and fails to reproduce her plastered and painted in this way, he quite upsets the woman. It happened exactly so to one artist to whom had been entrusted the painting of the face of a dead queen. The artist was trained in Italy. He painted the queen as she really was, without colouring and fard, but as soon as the women of the court observed the painting, they were so annoyed and so perturbed the artist that he became forced to do the picture all over again according to their taste.

‘They plait the hair in different ways. Long hair they divide into four plaits: two they will wrap over the ears, and the two which are longer some will toss over the shoulders, and some over the bosom. These latter two plaits have at the ends tassels of black silk, decorated with gold, precious gems and pearls. The rest of the hair, adorned in this same fashion, they will knot over the throat and raise up from the chin to the top of the head, where they will bind it.

‘On their head they will place a very fine and white veil, cut into three flaps, so that one flap they wear let down on the back and the remaining two on the shoulders. The veil is fastened on the head by a special kind of hat of golden thread of silk, which resembles a crown. To this fancy crown they usually attach a feather or beautiful flower.’

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