

Armenian and Turkish Traditional Fashion in Media

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### **Abstract**

This capstone project explores the traditional fashion in Armenia and Turkey presented in contemporary trends. Though having completely different cultural backgrounds these two countries preserve their cultural heritage in the 21st century. The Armenian nation mostly focuses on prominent shops and brands, trying to appeal to the Armenian nation via Social Media and Internet advertisements. However, Turkish media emphasizes its traditional garments through movies and series. This project also relies on the interviews taken from famous Armenian designers and on the interviews given by Turkish designers (researched from the Internet). The main purpose of capstone project is to show the readers that Armenian fashion (compared to the Westernized world) still preserves its ancient cultural values.

## Introduction

Fashion plays a vital role in the preservation of cultural identities shaping the ethos of the country in a unique way. It is not only the representation of each individual separately but also it is one of the big sources for some countries to showcase their cultural heritage. Armenia and Turkey are one of the most outstanding countries with their traditional fashion and its integration into media in the 21st century. Parajanov illustrated the importance of the traditional garments in his movies during the 1960s and till today Armenian people reflect the traditional media represented there in the modern designs. The main focus of Armenia is the social media and the representation of Armenian traditional garments in prominent fashion brands/shops. Armenian prominent brands such as Pregomesh, Verinsasage Gold, etc, are famous for their traditional accessories mixed with some elements of modern fashion, which are vividly present in their social media accounts (mostly Instagram, Facebook and TikTok).

On the other hand, Turkey's primary source of showing the nation the importance of traditional garments is the other side of the media - movies and TV series. Turkish series (such as Magnificent Century, Wounded love, etc) always represent their cultural heritage in their fashion (especially when celebrating something prominent and crucial) making the viewers understand the crucial role of cultural identity through this. In this way they gain international viewers to recognize their traditions and understand the uniqueness of their traditional garments. Social Media in Turkey in terms of fashion, uses their traditional clothing style Tesettur in order to reach the global market. While being influenced by the Western industry, Turkish fashion is still famous for their integration of modest fashion in this way. It takes much effort for these countries to preserve their cultural heritage and make it "walk accordingly" with the modern fashion trends. It is crucial to study and research the background stories of how these styles of

clothing appeared and in what ways the fashion industry continues to maintain its role in the 21st century. **Thus, Armenia and Turkey integrate traditional fashion into contemporary styles, with Turkey emphasizing historical narratives through television series and Armenia revitalizing heritage through modern brands and social media, illustrating how both nations use fashion as a means of cultural continuity and identity.**

### Research Question

How do Armenian and Turkish series, movies, and social media platforms shape the narrative of traditional fashion and its evolution into contemporary trends, while reflecting cultural identity and societal values? This research is conducted to answer several questions related to the contemporary fashion trends in Armenian and Turkish fashion and specifically reflecting the cultural dynamics presented in media. The main questions the research will answer are: **How are traditional garments and accessories presented in Armenian and Turkish series/movies and in social media? In what ways do Armenian and Turkish media platforms reinterpret traditional fashion to align with modern trends and how they are represented nowadays? What similarities and differences can be observed in how Armenian and Turkish societies integrate traditional fashion into their media? Which of these two countries keeps the meaning of the traditional fashion prior and which one is going towards Western fashion?**

## Literature Review

Throughout centuries, fashion occupies a significant place as a cultural identity and artifact. Attires and garments are the mirror of social, cultural, economic and political characteristics of societies. They have shaped their traditional clothing considering the meanings of the attires that align with societal norms and rules. In the context of Armenia and Turkey, fashion serves as a powerful tool for determining societal values, diverse cultural backgrounds and historical influence. These two neighboring countries have a rich heritage of attires and garments that symbolize their cultural distinctions, traditional styles and identity. By examining the evolution of fashion and bridges connecting the past and modern era, we can demonstrate that fashion is more than clothing: it is a voice of historical shifts, heritage and identity. The fashion of these countries adapts to diverse external influences, starting from historical conquests to artistic changes in movies and recently the global market and media. In examining the evolution of Armenian and Turkish fashion we observe how these countries were always influenced and shaped by new cultural forces, while retaining their traditional values. This comparative research of Armenian and Turkish fashion illustrates how cultural narratives, artistic expressions, and the influence of media shape the evolution of clothing styles, revealing fashion as a dynamic medium that reflects societal values, preserves tradition, and fosters intercultural dialogue in contemporary contexts. Through the journey of past and present, fashion serves a significant part of the cultural heritage in Armenia and Turkey, illustrating how these societies adapt to the changes of fashion by being influenced from different sources throughout time, while maintaining the essence of their identity.

### *The traditional clothing culture of Turkey*

According to Artac and Koca (2018) In the Ottoman Empire the clothes of people who belonged to different ethnic and religious groups were the key aspect to make them distinguishable in society. It was also regulated by law, highlighting the differences of social class and wearers' position. "In the research, the shape, fabric, color, embellishments, usage and accessories in the everyday clothing worn by female figures in the engravings and paintings of the period were examined, and the interpretation of similarities and differences in clothes in terms of cultural interaction was attempted" (Artac & Koca, 2018, p. 133). Clothing was a theme that was extensively discussed in terms of communication and cultural identity and was regulated by the state. The clothing patterns were a core part of the culture of Ottoman society and cultural heritage. The documentation and explanation of symbolism in this field Koca and Artac found necessary. As the clothing was considered a moral value in Turkey a huge attention was paid to the design, the type of fabric and the embellishments (Artac & Koca, 2018,p. 133).

*The Clothing Culture of the Turks, and the Entari (Part 1: History)* Another important research done by Fatma Koç & Emine Koca (2013) illustrates that traditionally Turkish clothing reflected the richness of Turkish culture in the 18th and 19th centuries. (Koç & Koca, 2013, p.11) The main elements of Turkish clothing are şalvar [shalvar] and the entari [entari]. Starting from the earlier times of the history of Central Asia the şalvar (baggy trousers) were the central focus of Turkish clothing. "These are full, 'baggy' trousers which are gathered in at the waist and with the legs being finished at the ankle with either cuffs or pleats" (p. 11) This was usually styled with a gömlek [gyolmek] and long sleeved entari (dress) The Turkish clothing was usually three layered. The richness of the layers was one of the most important characteristics of Turkish fashion. Though it was a necessity at first, later it became a significant part of the style.

### *Characteristics of Armenian National Costume*

Armenian national attires and costumes serve a significant role for cultural representation and identity highlighting the country's history and traditions. Poghosyan and Pahlevanyan (2023) in their study *Characteristics of Armenian National Costume* mention that a national attire embodies specific meanings connected with its structure, usage and style. The Armenian word *զգեստ* [zgest] (dress) comes from the verb *զգեստիկ* [zgenul], which is used in singular form. The attire is worn by women, commoners and aristocrats. The word *հանդերձ* [handerdz] (garment) is used both in singular and plural forms, which signifies a complete outfit that were worn by kings, nobles, soldiers, as well as garment for ceremonies, such as weddings and mournings. As the authors highlight there are no single "all Armenian" dressings but it is a historically developed system as each costume and style belongs to certain regions. National dressing includes undergarments, headwear, accessories, jewelry and footwear that can be ornamented with traditional elements, patterns and color combinations. The attires served various purposes and were made for practical, social, aesthetic and other functions appropriate for each gender and age groups. Different clothings and garments were worn for different festivals, ceremonies or regional events (p. 308-310). Another article written by George Casparian on *Armenian National Dress - Taraz* (2018) dives deeper into more specific national costume: taraz and illustrates the history of the national costume, symbolism, color palettes and other crucial aspects of the attire. The author mentions that taraz had a significant value throughout the centuries. Armenian philosopher Grigor Tatevatsi in the 14th century brought up the dominant elements of the national dressing. Colors signifying different meanings, including purple shades

in the dressing serving a symbol of wisdom, red for bravery, white for prudence. Taraz could also highlight the social belonging and status in society. In the same manner, women's garments had decorative embroidery and gold or silver threads demonstrating the wealth of the person. The apron with a symbol of tree life on it or daily life elements as decorations could show women's modesty. Moreover, silver necklaces and bracelets could be an integral part of the clothing. Married women wore headdresses with ribbons and geometrical patterns on the "towerlike" tiara. Besides, caftans on the top of the taraz were used in cold seasons. Men's clothing was also called taraz, which was made from cotton, wool or silk. The long-sleeved shirt covered with caftans and collars added features to the national clothing. Furthermore, belts played a symbolic role in the clothing. Specifically, silver belts were associated with maturity, while golden belts emphasized the wearer's wealth. Nowadays, taraz is not holding the same functionality as it was in the previous centuries. However, the traditional dressing is used for folk dances in public concerts where the costumes present Armenian heritage and elements of historical artifacts. According to another research *Garments with Hanging Sleeves: General Review with Taxonomy of Style and Cut* by Vuleta, the author explains cross-cultural impact on Armenian fashion during the medieval era and stylistic features that were adopted and influenced from different regions. A caftan draped garment emerged in the 13th century in Cilicia that was an adaptation of modern fashion trending from Persia and not a part of a traditional *candys* design in certain regions. This attire was a piece of clothing that was sleeved and attached to the shoulders (Vuleta, 2020, p. 425). The author mentions that during the 6th century after the conquest of the Caucasus, Scythians and Persians had their significant impact on the customs of dressing that was reflected in Armenian and Georgian rulers' dressing. Compared to the Armenians, Georgian rulers and aristocrats accustomed *candys* fashion that symbolized social

status for both genders (Vuleta, 2020, pp. 415-416). Throughout the centuries, interacting with neighboring countries and exchanging cultural elements, Armenia has adopted and preserved a balance between aesthetic expression and functionality of fashion.

National garments not only present artistic characteristics and aesthetic pleasure but also mark deep and enriched historical and cultural exchange. According to another research done by Khatcherian, during the medieval era, Armenian garments were mainly influenced by neighboring countries. Specifically, during the Arshakuni dynasty, Armenian rulers wore garments adopted from the Parthian Persian court, while compared to the upcoming Bagratuni dynasty, turbans started appearing and becoming popular as a royal dress, which were not specifically associated with Armenian origin but were adopted throughout the decades. As it is mentioned in the research, fashion was highly impacted by governmental regulations and clothing trends, which influenced Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. Specifically, silk scarves using the *mushabak* method, which in Turkish textiles is associated with lattice-like embroidery technique used in robes, *kaftans* and other pieces of clothing. These and other textiles were common throughout the empire and appeared in the 19th century images of Armenians living in Smyrna (Izmir). Clothing features and styles in Western Armenia (under the Ottoman Empire) and Eastern Armenian (under Russian rule) were quite different from each other. However, it was obvious that in both areas, it was common for women to cover their mouth with a kerchief as an accessory to their clothing. Some attires and textiles were specific to certain regions. For instance, in the Ottoman Empire Armenian women wore traditional *apron*, or as it is known *gognots*, which indicated that the woman is married. Another notable difference between the regions is that Eastern Armenian women wore headdresses made from stiff velvet fabric with simpler features compared to the ones in Western Armenian fashion clothing styles.

In men's fashion there were also noticeable distinctions, considering men in Eastern Armenia wearing long jackets or so called *chukha* and fur caps, while in Western Armenia men used to wear shorter jackets with felt caps. Despite the notable differences in accessories, textiles, clothing styles, symbolic meaning and representation of cultural heritage, fashion remains a prominent way and expression of cultural significance. These variations in regions demonstrate the uniqueness of each clothing and the impact of the ruling empires that preserved Armenian cultural elements and identical features in fashion and tradition. Besides the garments and jewelries that are part of the cultural heritage and identity, various rugs are another part of symbolic representation of Armenian identity. National rugs in our culture are considered more than just functional objects, they can be a way of representing fashion or maintaining identity. The terms "carpet" and "rug" refer to different forms of textile in art and fashion. Carpets are made from braiding and weaving colorful threads and creating a fabric similar to tapestry. On the other hand, rugs are created through the technique of knotting a colored thread where each knot is made individually. Armenian rugs made by using the double-knot method are still practiced in different factories, such as the Megerian Carpet Factory in Yerevan and other places. Art in the Ottoman Empire was heavily drawn from Armenian rug-making methods and tradition. The "Pazyryk" carpet, which is known to be one of the oldest carpets, dates back to 4-5th century BCE. Even though the origins of the carpet is debatable, some historians and scholars suggest that it was produced by artisans from Urartu, which is known to be the first Armenian kingdom as the griffins and patterns were similar to the Urartian symbolism (Khatcherian, 2015, pp. 28-32). Rugs are highly presented as profound cultural and historical elements to the visual language of Sergei Parajanov's film *The Color of Pomegranates*. Throughout the movie, rugs are portrayed not only as background decorations but reflection of national identity and historical

memory. Throughout the movie, rugs are demonstrated in various scenes, especially during sacred rituals, prayings, intellectual pursuits or artistic creations when characters often kneel, lie or stand on them. Namely, in different scenes there are portrayals of rugs with jewelries and other garments that reinforce the idea of intellectual and artistic representation grounded in Armenian heritage. Moreover, the symbolism of carpets in the movie reflects the history of textile art. As the research and findings mentioned below, Armenian rug-making dates back to ancient time and the intricate designs and motifs on the rugs are deeply connected with the preservation of traditions. Various crosses, vegetal motifs or forms on the rugs that are shown in the movie illustrate the spiritual and cultural expression of Armenians. Through the representation of rugs, Parajanov blends past and present memory and identity.



Figure 1-2: Rugs demonstrated in the movie *The Color of Pomegranates*

Throughout history, textiles, carpets, garments and accessories were more than just objects but an expression of artistry, storytelling and identity. Today, carpets continue being an

integral part of Armenian identity and culture, and evoking traditional elements in more dynamic ways. At Yerevan Fashion Week 2024 where different designers showcase their works with Armenian national motives. Among them, designer Manuk Aleksanyan integrated Armenian carpets as modern fashion pieces, which symbolizes the bridge connecting the past with the present fashion. In the same way, Sergei Parajanov in *The Color of Pomegranates* uses rugs to symbolize the heritage and spirituality, honoring the mastery of Armenian craftsmanship and timeless spirit of ancient traditions and culture.



Figure 3: A screenshot of the designer Manuk Aleksanyan's post on Instagram

***The perception of traditional clothes in Turkish cinema:*** Movies and series always had a great influence on Turkish society, their dressing and their social status. Do the clothing in the films during 1960-1970's in Turkish cinema reflect the society's social status and values? The answer to this question was given by Mahmut Güngör (2015) who analyzed the concept of social

status and its representation in Turkish cinema. Starting from 2000 BC clothes were made not only to protect the human body but also to represent people's social status during each process of societal development. Even in some places there was no social layering people always preferred to wear clothes matching with their age and gender. Güngör stated that people are defined according to their clothes and styles and that shaped the relationship among each other (Yüksel, et al, 2005, p.92, as cited in Güngör 2015). The author did research on Turkish Melodramas shot during 1960 until 1980. These melodramas gave spirit to Yeşilçam movies, which had dramatized narratives reflecting socio-economic and sociocultural changes in their plot (Güngör 2015). People were mainly influenced by the clothes of rich people, thus, they were the source of fashion at these times. Rich women wore extraordinary jewelry and clothes which made them different from other people. "In comparison with the traditional women who later become rich, both women wear fur coats or jackets with fur collars despite the simplicity and presentations differ" (Güngör 2015, p. 409). In contrast poor women were depicted without jewelry and lowly printed clothes, which visually spoke about them belonging to a lower class in societies. Back in those times in Turkish cinema mostly used clothing for the outstanding effect of social classes and how differently clothes could "talk" about people. The inspiration from the attires and garments is still present in today's Turkish media, so not only Turkish people got attracted but the preservation of the traditional garments was a source of inspiration for the people outside of Turkey too.

*The rise of Turkish clothing and its place in the global market (TV shows, films, series and books):* Scholars Nazli Alimen and Merve Kütük Kuriş (2020) in their research in the field of the fashion in Turkey mention that the rise of Ottoman-inspired fashion attires and other (mainly political) factors in Turkish fashion have had a big impact on the culture of dressing.

The rising popularity of political nostalgia (historical drama series for instance) influence the commodity culture and clothing styles, especially costumes that people wear in their everyday life. There was an interview conducted by Nilay Ulusoy with Tuna Yılmaz who was the founder of “Fashion Film Festival Istanbul” The main topic of the interview was the importance of fashion in Turkish films and series and the production of fashion movies. He explained the importance of the rise of Turkish series and movies in the sphere of fashion because those are the main sources people are inspired by. He also proposed the significance of Turkish fashion in the global arena. Though their style could be criticized because the contemporary approaches in the world of fashion are different from their country. They tend to overlook fashion as a crucial field for cultural production (Alimen & Kuriş, 2020). Alimen also reviewed Charlotte A. Jirousek’s book, “Ottoman Dress and Design in the West” explained that there must be a huge attention given to the Ottoman archival sources in order to have an effect on the rising fashion trends year by year. This approach challenged the Eurocentric views of modern Turkish society that often prioritizes the Western impacts of fashion. Finally, Lezley George’s book review of Elizabeth Bucar’s *Pious Fashion* and Şüheda Pehlivan review essay on modest fashion demonstrated that there was a huge demand on the rise of modest fashion globally. Although opinions on modest fashion are different from each other, Pehlivan’s essay suggested that Turkey had a huge potential to raise the modest fashion industry and had its special place in the global market.

Another *research done by Aljammazi and Asli (2017)* raises the question of how people are influenced by the Turkish drama series and how it affects the fashion industry. The rising popularity of Turkish dramas is sparking increased interest across various fields, including tourism, fashion, music, and other cultural products featured in these TV series. They mentioned a study done about the fashion part of the series and it was found that most of the people closely

follow the characters' dresses and start studying about the cultural background of them, “ This also led them to think about new fashion and trends based on what they saw in the Turkish TV drama. A certain majority also indicated that their interest in the clothes made in Turkey has also increased” (Asli & Aljammazi, 2017, p. 218) This is one of the main reasons that Turkish film industry targets fashion and traditions to attract and preserve their cultural identity. In the 21st century the dresses are designed in a way that they can attract both contemporary and traditional consumers. Moreover, another article by Elif Deniz (2013) claims that the traditional garments are mainly influenced by the Muslim World. She mentioned that “In the global marketplace, Islamic fashion or veiling fashion is getting more and more attention” (Deniz, 2013, p. 243) That is the reason why a lot of series/movies are shot in order to stand against the Western World and enforce the traditional clothing. Thus, there are two main reasons why Turkish traditional fashion is very famous in the series and movies; one is to preserve the cultural heritage and the other is enforcing the Muslim traditions.

*A glance into Armenian traditions and culture through Sergei Parajanov's lens:* The Soviet-Armenian legendary filmmaker Sergei Parajanov creates a poetic cinematography with rich symbolism, rituals with the representation of traditional costumes, textiles and jewelries that rely on Armenian traditional and cultural memory. Analyzing his masterpieces, raises the central question: *How does Sergei Parajanov capture Armenian identity and nationality through use of symbols in traditional clothing and visual representations?* The answer lies deep in the portrayal of arts with cultural and national heritage. The legendary filmmaker Sergei Parajanov was born in Sergei Parajanov (1924-1990) was born in Tbilisi, Georgia. He originally studied music then in the film industry, specifically in VGIK (Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography) Moscow. Parajanov's earliest masterpieces were touching the principles of Soviet Socialist Realism, but

his another movie called *Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors* (1964) broke Soviet cinematic norms. Parajanov's movie *The Color of Pomegranates* (1969) is a symbolic and visually poetic representation of Armenian poet Sayat-Nova. Even though nowadays the film is one of the most influential and highly-praised movies, back then it faced criticism and censorship, and Soviet authorities silenced and imprisoned him at the Dnepropetrovsk camp for five years on homosexuality and political charges. His comeback was through the famous films *The Legend of Suram Fortress* (1985) and his last movie *Ashik Kerib* (1988). In Tbilisi, 1989 June 4, Parajanov started shooting the first scenes of his autobiographical film *Confession*, however three days later because of respiratory problems he was taken to a hospital. In Moscow Parajanov had an operation for lung cancer and radiation treatments in Paris. Sergei Parajanov died in Yerevan on July 20, 1990 at the age of 66. Till this day, his incomparable legacy and influential masterpieces continue leaving its unique place in the world of cinema (Holloway, 1996, pp. 8-9). In the research paper *Kinetic Iconography: Wes Anderson, Sergei Parajanov, and Illusion of Motion*, the author Peter Sloane mentions that the movie *The Color of Pomegranates* is one of the vivid examples of illustration of fascination with Armenian culture, traditional costumes, rug production, rituals intertwined with symbolism and metaphors. This movie was only officially released in western cinemas in 1982 and gained a much wider and international success and attention after American filmmaker Martin Scorsese introduced the restored version of the movie in 2014 at the Toronto film festival, mentioning that the audience will witness scenes that are not similar to anything in the history of cinema (Sloane, 2018, pp. 251-252). In the paper analysis *Pictorial Elements of Composition: Mosaic of Perspectives Towards Frontality in Sergei Parajanov's "The Colour of Pomegranates"* Ter-Gabrielyan highlights specific elements that Parajanov used in the movie *The Colors of Pomegranates*. As the author mentions in the

interview to the Soviet Screen Parajanov noted “We are recounting the epoch, the people, their passions and thoughts through the conventional, but unusually precise language of things. Handicrafts, clothing, rugs, ornaments, fabrics, the furniture in their living quarters - these are the elements. From these the material look of the epoch arises” (Ter-Gabrielyan, 2021, p. 653). One movie can leave a longing impression not only on the Armenian audience but also on an international level that even though artistic representation and cultural symbolism may be strange to other cultures, still, connection with the movie can be empowering and inspiring. As American filmmaker Martin Scorsese quotes “On a very basic level, it’s a biography of the Armenian poet Sayat-Nova, but before all else it’s a cinematic experience, and you come away remembering images, repairing expressive movements, costumes, objects, compositions, colours” (Ter-Gabrielyan, 2021, p. 647).

In the research *Discourse of Memory and Perception of Identity in Parajanov’s Cinema* Cosma explains how Parajanov in his movies brought a unique approach to colors in the scenes together intertwined with cultural and national elements. Symbolism in the clothing of the characters or representation of objects in the scenes in his movies penetrates parts of cultural roots and identity. According to the author in Parajanov’s films, including *The Color of Pomegranates* (1969), *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1964) and other movies, clothing is not part of decoration but contains hidden messages regarding historical narratives. Armenian *taraz*, other garments and accessories in the movies convey the heritage of Armenian nationality and culture. Symbolic elements, including the scene of three pomegranates on a white cloth in the beginning of the movie *The Color of Pomegranates* leaves an impression on the audience. More specifically, the fruit mainly grown in the Middle East and Caucasus is associated with death, attraction and fertility, as well as with cultural significance and Christianity.

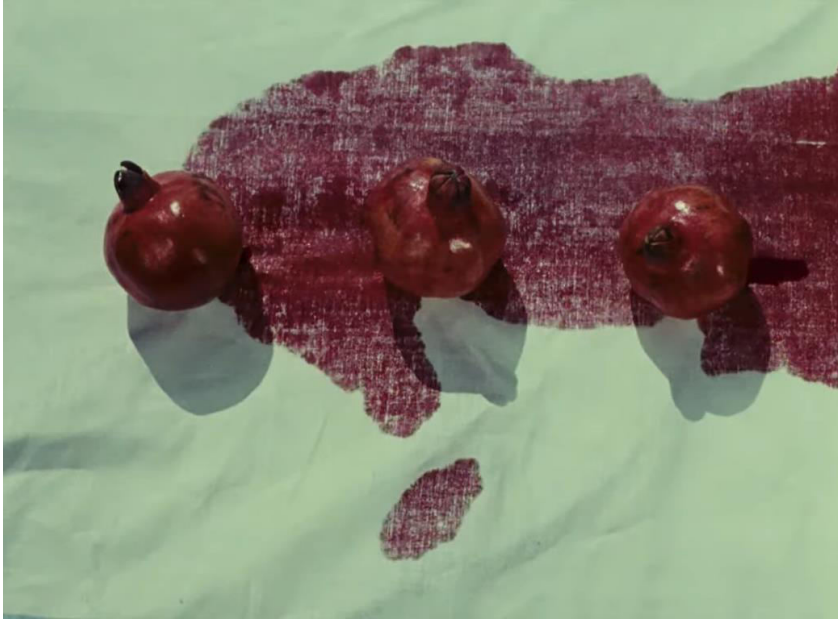


Figure 4: A scene from *The Color of the Pomegranates*

Another scene of the man's foot crushing grapes in the movie symbolizes Armenian old tradition. The symbolism of grapes holds a significant place in Armenian texts as it was said that after the flood Noah planted a vineyard on Mount Ararat. The idea of using traditional fruits and implementing their hidden symbolism add more insight into the movie. Moreover, across Parajanov's different movies, there are national musical instruments, including tar, kamancha and other instruments that can be specific to certain regions in the same way as national garments belong to various regions of Armenia (Cosma, 2021, pp. 96-97).

In another research *Colour of Pomegranates: Mythical Sorrows of Armenian People in Central Caucasia* by Eryilmaz, the writer brings up another detail of the scenes of the movie that contains a hidden message and interpretation of cultural aspects. In the scene when the enemy who points an arrow inside a church to Mary's iconography, Sayat Nova's character is portrayed

in white inside the church, while the enemies are wearing warrior clothes. The author mentions that according to another study done by James Steffen in 1996 on *Parajanov's Playful Poetics: On the Director's Cut' of The Color of Pomegranates* the warriors are depicted in the style of Iranian suit of armour. The clothing emphasizes attacks from neighboring countries and threats for cultural and historical identity. Violating the rights and destroying holy icons of Christianity illustrates Armenians' faith of being surrounded by enemies and constantly confronting the attacks (Eryilmaz, 2018, p. 22). This notion highlights the importance of clothing in the movies and the meaning behind it that demonstrates how fashion can be interpreted and intertwined with historical and cultural insight.

*The Effortless Fashionista: A Study of Lead Consumers' Production of Subjectivities Through the Adaptation of Fast Fashion on Instagram* : When we come to nowadays the big source of influence on fashion and style is social media. Hallgren and Johansson did their research in this field and examined how societies are affected by social media in terms of fashion. 50 years ago the rich people wore big jewelry and clearly outstanding clothes to seem different and richer from others, nowadays people prefer to change their outfit every day and show it in Instagram to seem richer and different from others. This creates other rulers for the 21st century in terms of young people's clothing and style. This concept is mentioned by Gee (1999, as cited in Hallgren & Johansson, 2021, p. 55) who explained the concept of activity and how it shapes who we become. Thus, wearing different outfits the influencers suggest to their viewers the "right way" of style and inspire them to get the same garments to achieve the same identity (Gee, 1999, as cited in Hallgren & Johansson, 2021). This speaks about the fact that in today's society people do not have to wear luxury brands to seem stylish and become rulers of the fashion industry. Rather, simple clothes can be presented in a way that people who wear them

can become rulers and big influencers in this matter. *Tesettur Fashion in Turkey: The Contribution of Facebook as a Social Media Marketing Tool*. In Turkey this trick of social media and its influence was also used in terms of Tesettur fashion. Article by Emre Yildirim (2014) explained that Tesettur is a distinctive form of veiling that started developing in the 1980s with a headscarf with a tailored suit. The author mentions that individuals tend to send various signals with their style and fashion to the outside world. For the modest fashion the Tesettur is the most preferable version. Here again, social media was used to have an effect on the Turkish audience. The term Social Media Marketing was used in Facebook to influence people to get Tesettur dresses. 32 million Turkish people use Facebook with a penetration rate of 42%. Different companies of Tesettur fashion started their marketing on Facebook to make consumers consider those dresses fashionable and buy them. Going back to the theory of Gee (1999) this study of the Tesettur fashion showed that the only way to gain followers and influence them to buy the product was the activity and the number of the posts they shared in Facebook. “An increase or decrease in the number of posts also increases or decreases the Facebook scores” (Yildirim 2014, p. 424). While being influenced from Western and European cultures Turkey in this way tries to maintain their cultural clothing by following Gee’s method of activity. Thus, this marketing study emphasizes the fact that nowadays the main influence comes from social media and how actively both consumers and producers will share their “fashionista” clothing.

Moving on with the comparison part of the capstone project with the Western World some scholarly articles are used. *The Specifics of Preserving Cultural Identity in the Context of Globalization Processes* (Mazurkevych, et.al, 2024) The article discusses that under the influence of the globalization process many western countries are facing with the problem of preserving their cultural identity. “The main goal of the research is to analyze the distinctiveness

of the culture as an indicator of national identity in the context of globalization”(Mazurkevych, et.al, 2024, p.1) Though the article uses Ukrainian culture as an example it is relatable to our capstone project as the main idea of preserving the cultural identity refers to Armenia and Turkey too. It is used as a tool for comparing and contrasting the different aspect of fashion and the globalization effect on Western culture and Armenian/Turkish culture. *THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN CULTURE ON FASHION DESIGNERS IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES OF KPIRI MPOSHI DISTRICT OF CENTRAL PROVINCE, ZAMBIA* (Kasebusha & Banda, 2023)

This article discusses different viewpoints presented by designers on the main idea of the importance of the preserving the cultural identity specifically in clothing. Eicher (et.al, 2009, cited in Kesabusha & Banda, 2023, p.2) says “everywhere in the world, people make daily decisions about what to wear or how to dress”. Dress patterns operate as an identity and a pointer of a particular culture. When dealing with culture and its customs, it can be varied on the basis of both society and religious background” The article mentions the impact of the Western world on the other as well, emphasizing the fact that in this part of the world there are a few countries that preserve the culture particularly in fashion.

## Methodology

In order to closely investigate how Armenian and Turkish fashion reflects their cultural background and affects contemporary clothing, this study will include a few methods to strengthen the thesis. The goal is to analyze both historical and modern influences on fashion in these countries, demonstrating how cultural identity is preserved and shown through clothing and accessories. The methodology will contain content analysis, interviews with professionals, social media analysis, and visual documentation.

### 1. Content Analysis

Content analysis will provide a robust framework for examining how cultural heritage is integrated into fashion through media and film. By selecting significant works from both countries, this approach will help contextualize traditional fashion in both historical and modern settings, aligning with the thesis that fashion reflects societal values and fosters intercultural dialogue.

Content Analysis will provide us with a strong skeleton for researching how cultural inheritance is involved in fashion through media and films/series. Choosing famous and notable works from Armenia and Turkey and focusing on the cultural fashion in them, will illustrate the significance of traditional fashion in those countries.

**Armenian Films and Media:** The researchers will explore and study specific TV shows, movies and social media accounts showing how Armenia and Turkey preserve their cultural heritage and elements in their garments and attires. Armenian old films, notably *The Color of Pomegranates* (1969), *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1964), *Hakob Hovnatanian* (1967) by Sergei

Parajanov and other movies illustrate some traditional clothing, traditions and heritage intertwined with contemporary elements. Turkish Series and TV Shows: Turkish series, particularly *Magnificent Century* (2011) and other TV shows portray characters wearing national attires that offer a perspective into Ottoman historical heritage. Analyzing some TV series from both countries can help to form better understanding about how fashion was represented in different nationalities. Those examples, are still famous in both countries, which is reflected by recreation of the accessories and garments in contemporary fashion (Pregomesh, Sultan Dress, etc)

**Social Media Analysis:** Moreover, analyzing social media accounts of fashion influencers and designers who focus on national garments and modernize traditional and historical elements in designs can be helpful for exploring more about cultural expression of both countries.

This method supports the thesis by illustrating how visual media and social media influence contribute to the dialogue between traditional and modern fashion in these countries. It demonstrates how historical representations and contemporary trends collide to make a vital cultural expression.

## **2. Content analysis of Interviews with Fashion Professionals**

Conducting interviews with designers from Armenian media and researching the fashion designers' interviews in Turkish media will provide us with insights into the process behind the creation/integration of traditional garments and accessories into modern designs. These methods will help us understand the professionals' views on the importance of preserving cultural heritage in their works.

## Costumer designers

Analysing interviews with costume designers will help to understand the bridge connecting traditional fashion with contemporary one. Interview materials from designers who still maintain the elements of national garments and pieces of accessories in their designs provide a meaningful source for our project. Nowadays, some famous Armenian designers give more attention to incorporating Armenian national details and elements in creating designs and keeping the soul of Armenian traditional motifs in their styled garments and jewelries. Here are the names of potential interviewees: Arevik Simonyan ([Kivera brand](#)). She is a founder of Kivera brand that includes traditional Armenian artistic features with modern trends. Another designer, Kevork Shadoyan ([shadoyan fashion](#)) brings a mix of Armenian heritage and modern norms. [Vahan Khachatryan](#) is another couture designer who is famous with his collection depicting Armenian national motifs. There is another and new very famous Armenian brand which is called [Gaya Clothing Brand](#), famous for its traditional-modern garments. These interviews are a great source of information that can highlight how some designers still preserve cultural identity through fashion trends.

Arevik Simonyan - We are planning to analyze interviews with Arevik Simonyan because she is one of the few designers in Armenia who tries to keep the traditional meaning of each garment she makes. We aim to incorporate diverse perspectives that highlight the cultural influences on the fashion industry in Armenia and Arevik's view would be one of the layers of it.

There are also some parts of analysis researched with Turkish professional designers such as Neslisah Yilmaz, who is prominent globally with her brand Barrus. Analyzing the interview of

a designer like Neslisah will provide us with a vision of how designers in Turkey refer to traditional fashion and how they try to combine it with the modern world.

Dilek Hanif - The next interview that the capstone project involves is the interview with designer Hanif who lives and works in Paris, again combining Turkish traditional fashion with contemporary styles. Hanif is a famous fashion designer worldwide and she believes that presenting the uniqueness of Turkish traditional fashion in the global market would provide them with a prominence of their culture and core values.

### **3. Social Media Analysis**

Analyzing social media's influence on fashion trends allows us to explore the ways in which modern platforms facilitate the integration of traditional elements in contemporary fashion. This will give us a space to expand and research the topic outside the other spheres. For social media analysis, we are planning to follow Pregomesh's activity, which is a handmade shop of silver jewelry inspired by Armenian national patterns and designs. Their posts on social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook and other websites promote Armenian brand even in international audiences. Analyzing their campaigns and posts will give another opportunity to explore modern accessories that are intertwined with traditional details. Moreover, analyzing social media accounts of different Turkish stylists, influencers and costume designers provides another insight into Turkish fashion and its representation today. This methodology will showcase how media stands as a platform for the preservation of culture in modern "language" This supports the thesis that fashion can bridge the gap between traditional and modern, illustrating the evolution of cultural experiences.

Gaia Gevorgyan - Analyzing the brand of Gaia Gevorgyan would provide valuable insight into the evolving landscape of Armenian fashion. As a designer known for blending contemporary aesthetics with cultural heritage, her perspective will help us understand how Armenian fashion adapts to modern trends while maintaining a strong connection to its roots. Her experience in the industry, along with her ability to merge traditional elements with innovative design, will offer a deeper understanding of how Armenian fashion is perceived both locally and internationally.

#### **4. Visual Analysis**

Visual analysis is crucial for providing visible evidence of the integration of traditional trends in modern media. Analyzing pictures or videos will give us space for a more vivid understanding of how cultural roots are shown and preserved in fashion.

##### **- Lusik Aguletsi's museum**

Lusik Aguletsi was an Armenian painter known for her preservation of Armenian garments, textiles and jewelries that illustrate Armenian culture. Integrating images from Aguletsi's museum can be beneficial for showing designs and artifacts from traditional fashion and elements that are adapted in today's fashion styles. The visuals from the museum can offer rich context for understanding the theoretical part of the research and applying it in a form of visual documentation can illustrate what garments people were wearing during that time and how it actually changed or what elements or details from fashion are still used in our society today.



Figure 5-6: Images from Lusik Aguletsi's museum

#### - Vernissage

Vernissage is a market in Yerevan, which blends traditional and modern fashion. Handmade jewelries, attires or textiles that attract locals and tourists play a huge role in understanding how cultural identity is preserved through fashion styles. Nowadays, people still purchase accessories that contain traditional elements and designs, also considering the brand Pregomesh. Hence, showing more content from Vernissage can be another source of practical research that will be beneficial for the creative project.



Figures 7-

8(Vernissage)

## **Series and Movie Analysis of Turkish TV series - Examples of Bindalli dress in the past and in present.**

In Turkish TV series the viewers can easily find many episodes where the importance of cultural heritage and rituals is mentioned. In terms of fashion nearly every TV series has the emphasized contrast between Westernized style and traditional style. One of the common examples of representing their traditional garments in more contemporary form is the dress bindalli. This dress was worn by Turkish women during the 19th century (the core idea of wearing this dress comes from the times of the Ottoman Empire, which is 14th century) Though, nowadays Turkish nation also adopted white European style of wedding dresses, bandalli is still present in every Turkish series, designed in more modern ways. According to Micklewright (1989) during the last two decades of the 19th century the European style of wedding dresses started getting more popular among women, however, they always tried to keep their traditional bindalli elements in some parts of the dress. In the 21st century brides still wear bindalli and it is shown in the TV series as mentioned above. Ozgen (et.al, 2020) mentioned “Rituals both reflect changing social relations and are intertwined with consumption objects and popular culture elements of the cultural production system. Television series and movies especially have a great effect on the recall of traditional rituals (Ozgen, et.al. 2020, p.4) He also claimed that one of the most important factors for the preservation of the traditional garments is fashion shown in the TV series. The bindalli dress that women wear during the henna night (the night before marriage) is the most effective way to promote traditional clothing.(Ozgen, et.al. 2020) Nowadays these dresses are designed in trendy ways, in order to grab viewers attention. Below are some examples of TV series shot in 2011, 2023 and 2024. Although the TV series were filmed more

than a decade apart, they still uphold the fundamental idea of emphasizing the significance of traditional garments.

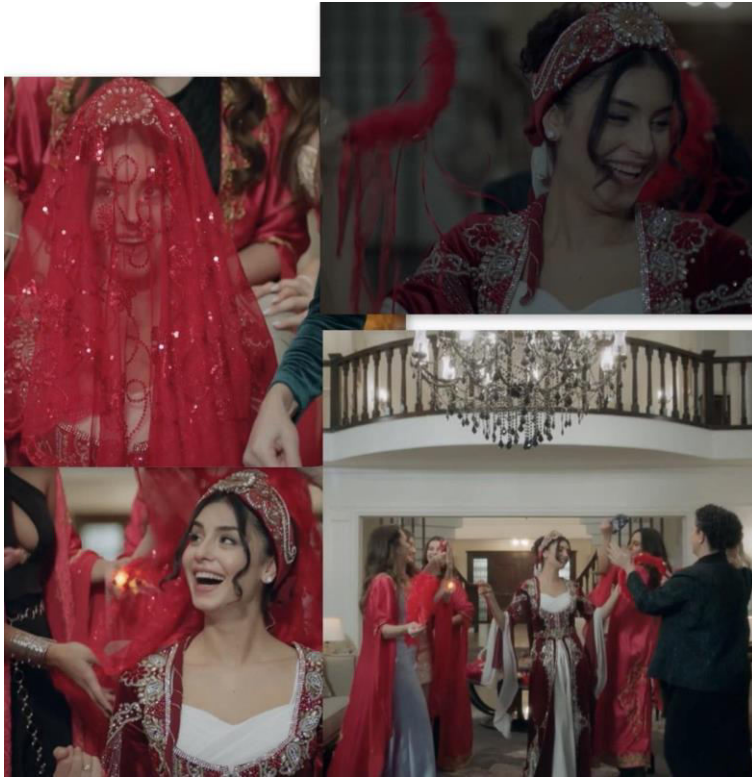
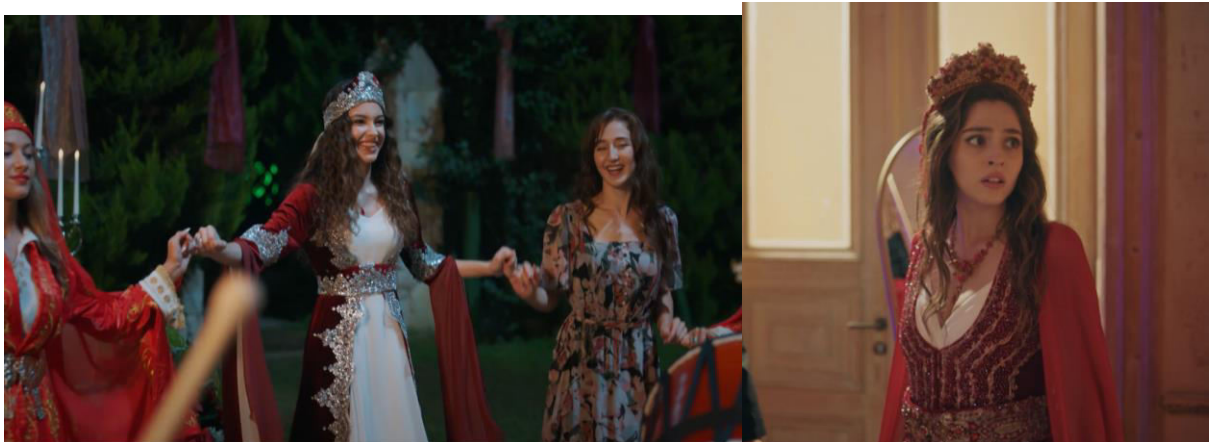


Figure 9: Yabani (2024)

Figure 10: Bir Gece Masalı (2024)

Figure 11: Sakla Beni (2023)



The first screenshot is taken by one of the most famous and loved series in Turkish Film industry. It is the series “Wild Heart” (shot in 2023-2024) There is vivid representation of the

traditional Bindalli dress combined with the crown which is the part of the whole henna night dress code. The series was based on the Westernization motives and the cultural aspect of Turkey was presented in a very few moments during the series. However, in the clothing there was a huge emphasis that was put on the cultural aspect and the tradition of the country. Thus, the clothing was a powerful tool in the series that was used for preserving the uniqueness of Turkish culture.

The second screenshot is taken from the series “A night’s tale” which started in 2024. The other screenshot is taken from another series “Hide me” which was shot in 2023. In both cases the dresses are designed in a way that can be compared to modern time clothing. When one takes a look at bindalli dresses in the 19th century, it is completely different from the ones from our time. However, the core idea of preserving the cultural heritage in clothing is maintained in every series.



Figure 12: Bindalli dress (mid-19th–early 20th century)

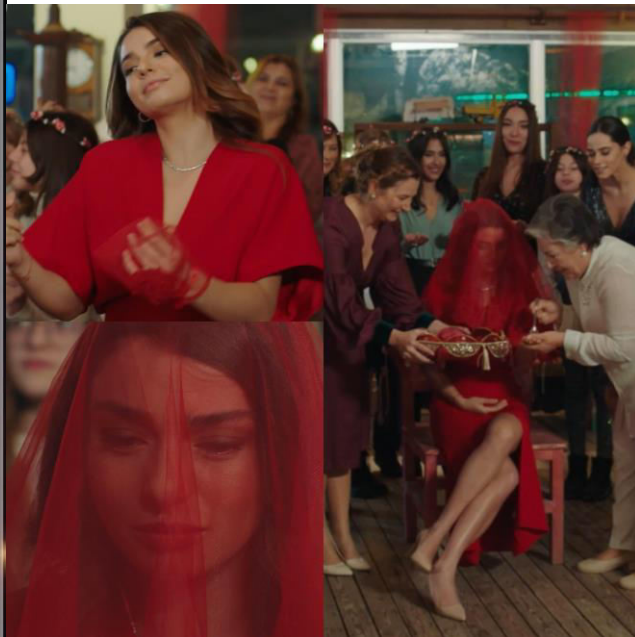
Research done by Scholars Nazli Alimen and Merve Kütük Kuriş (2020) shows that Turkish traditional clothing in the 21st century is also highly influenced by political nostalgia. They mention that the reflection of this political nostalgia in popular culture (e.g. historical-drama television series) have a “direct influence on the clothing and commodity culture,

particularly costumes worn at life cycle events” Similar to the recent popularity of Ottoman-themed henna nights, where most brides, irrespective of their social classes, wear Ottoman kaftan dresses. This is again shown in some of the Turkish series such as Magnificent century (Muhtesem Yuzyil) and Be My Sunshine (Ada Masalı). As the series of Magnificent Century is depicting the 14-15th centuries in the Ottoman Empire the kaftan dress is designed in a specific way, which cannot be said about the kaftan dress in the series of Be My Sunshine shot in 2021. In Magnificent Century the pink and golden kaftan dress was first worn by Nur Fettahoğlu as Mahidevran Sultan in the thirty-fourth episode (2nd season) It was reused in the fourth season twice. In the other series it was used once before the wedding of the main character Ayça Ayşin. In the second series the kaftan dress is designed in a more minimalistic and modern way, however, the importance of keeping the traditional meaning of it was preserved.

Figure 13: Muhtesem Yuzyil (2012)



Figure 14: Ada Masali (2021)



While television and TV shows have their big impact on the preservation of traditional attires and textile, social media has also amplified its influence shaping the narratives of traditional fashion in Armenia and Turkey. In the analysis of the “Effortless Fashionista” (2021) Gee mentioned that nowadays one of the most significant sources of fashion is considered to be social media (especially Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok) Many people use social media in order to influence people by hiring models who post the garments/attires in their daily live stories in their daily lives. Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have further democratized this representation, allowing designers and everyday users to showcase and modernize traditional attire. Influencers and fashion enthusiasts now blend heritage elements with contemporary styles, making traditional clothing more accessible and relevant to younger generations.

**How do Armenian-Soviet movies preserve and demonstrate Armenian traditional fashion through visual representations, clothing, jewelry and how is cultural and historical identity perceived in today's social media platforms and Armenian contemporary brands?**

In Armenian-Soviet cinema, national fashion, clothing and jewelry are powerful tools that embody cultural and historical heritage. Various Armenian old movies and directors represent national identity through implementing accessories, textiles and symbols in cinematic portrayals, showing how traditional elements are preserved and adapted on screen. According to Ovtchinnikova, Soviet film directors used costume designs as an essential tool for establishing cinematic style with their present influential beauty on screen. They are visible not only through certain stylistic choices but also through their involvement in the film's mise-en-scene (stage design and arrangement of layers in the movie, including lighting, costumes, direction and so on), which impacts the visual and emotional aspects of the movie. Costumes are fundamental

ways of communicating with the viewer in Soviet-Armenian films where largely non-verbal or fragmented narratives take place. A costume researcher Annie Holt mentions that the attires in the movies “speak” with the audience by evoking significance and meaning, and capture attention through forms, colors, textures and other appeals (Ovtchinnikova, 2024, p. 13).

Armenian Soviet film-maker Sergei Parajanov stands out for his cinematic masterpieces that intertwine culture, history, visual symbolism and traditional Armenian fashion in his movies. Parajanov’s portrayal of traditional garments and accessories in his various movies, including *The Colour of Pomegranates* (1969), *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1964), *Hakob Hovnatanian* (1967) and other films provide an insight into current Armenian fashion trends in social media platforms. Through comparing the national elements in the movie, it offers an opportunity to identify similarities and differences of the eras and help to understand the changes that fashion undergo throughout the years and how the exact styles and elements are still preserved in contemporary fashion. The costumes for the movie *Color of Pomegranates* were created by Iosif Karalyan, also famous for the name Hovsep Karalian, Elena Akhlediani, Jasmine Sarabyan and Sergei Parajnov himself. The director was so involved in the production of the movie that during filming Parajanov chose and adjusted costumes for the actors. In the movie, garments are a blend of ethnographic and electric authenticity adding a dreamlike and surreal ambience. The costumes are inspired from Ottoman, Persian, Armenian and Georgian cultural traditions showing vibrant color contrasts, detailed accessories and fabrics. Furthermore, garments are presented in a minimalist style, which is reflected in the color palette, mainly including red, gold, black, white and occasionally blue colors in the designs. Moreover, duplication of familiar styling in attires and costumes strengthens the symbolic representation of the film (Ovtchinnikova, 2024, p. 183). Various fashion objects revealed in the movie *The Color*

*of Pomegranates*, including silver belts, caprets, fabrics and attires were borrowed from Georgian and Armenian villages during expeditions. Parajanov even secured arrangements with the Catholicos of the Armenian Church, Vazgen I to incorporate some religious artifacts from the treasury at Etchmiadzin and use it in the movie. Throughout the movie, accessories and attires are restyled, such as silver belts, fur pelts, red velvet garments and other parts of clothing that create richness and add uniqueness to the characters (Ovtchinnikova, 2024, p. 189). This research highlights the role of costume designs that is preserved in Armenian cinema showing cultural and historical representation reflecting the point that Soviet-Armenian films not only serve aesthetic purposes but are also means of cultural storytelling and preservation of national identity. The discussion of symbolism, color palettes, religious relics and other elements in the movie provides a ground for our examination of understating how Armenian traditional fashion is represented in cinema.

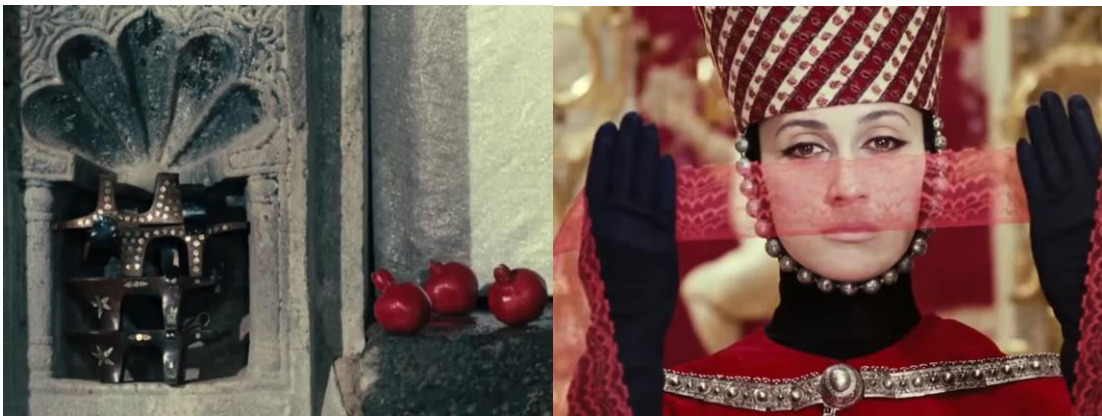


Figure 15-16: Scenes from the film *The Colour of Pomegranates* (1969)

In the paper analysis *Pictorial Elements of Composition: Mosaic of Perspectives Towards Frontality in Sergei Parajanov's "The Colour of Pomegranates"* Ter-Gabrielyan highlights specific elements that Parajanov used in the movie *The Colors of Pomegranates*. As the author

mentions in the interview to the Soviet Screen Parajanov noted “We are recounting the epoch, the people, their passions and thoughts through the conventional, but unusually precise language of things. Handicrafts, clothing, rugs, ornaments, fabrics, the furniture in their living quarters - these are the elements. From these the material look of the epoch arises” (Ter-Gabrielyan, 2021, p. 653). The director’s fascination and interest with traditions, customs and rituals expands far beyond ethnographic representations. Parajanov not only preserves cultural elements, but also includes folklore in his movies as a vivid expression of identity, spirituality and storytelling.

In the research *Discourse of Memory and Perception of Identity in Parajanov’s Cinema* Cosma explains how Parajanov in his movies brought a unique approach to colors in the scenes together intertwined with cultural and national elements. Symbolism in the clothing of the characters or representation of objects in the scenes in his movies penetrates parts of cultural roots and identity. Armenian *taraz*, other garments and accessories in the movies convey the heritage of Armenian nationality and culture. Symbolic elements, including the scene of three pomegranates on a white cloth in the beginning of the movie *The Color of Pomegranates* leaves an impression on the audience. More specifically, the fruit mainly grown in the Middle East and Caucasus is associated with death, attraction and fertility. Another scene of the man’s foot crushing grapes in the movie symbolizes Armenian old tradition. The symbolism of grapes holds a significant place in Armenian texts as it was said that after the flood Noah planted a vineyard on Mount Ararat. The idea of using traditional fruits and implementing their hidden symbolism add more insight into the movie (Cosma, 2021, pp. 96-97). Till this day, Armenian fashion designers incorporate the pomegranate and other symbols into their clothing and accessories, showing the presence of the cultural and traditional significance. Specifically, Armenian designers continue crafting earrings, rings, necklaces and other accessories with the fruit

showing the symbolism associated with continuity. Vivid examples of Armenian fashion brands are the following ones: Shabeeg Clothing brand, which presents a collection of clothing with the blend of traditional symbols and contemporary fashion. Mainly, this brand infuses the rich hue of pomegranates represented in Parrajanov’s movies in their t-shirt designs, in this way preserving the rich heritage of Parajanov’s masterpieces.

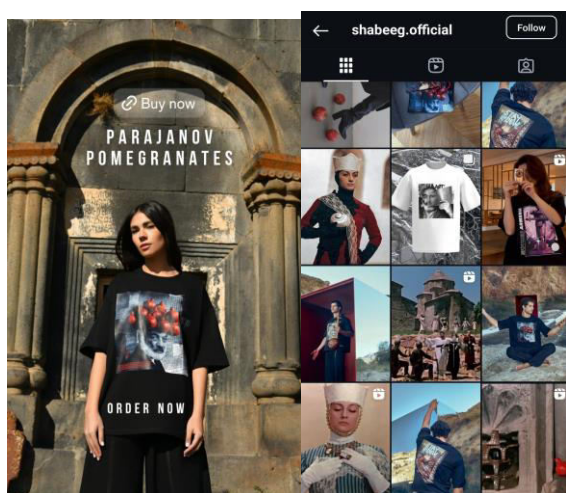


Figure 17-18: Screenshots of the social media of the brand Shabeeg

Moreover, in 2024 over 40 Armenian fashion brands and designers took part in an exhibition called *Parajanov and Fashion* organized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia and recognized by UNESCO, featuring Sergei Parajanov’s cultural legacy. The aim of the event was to illustrate exclusive pieces by the designers who give importance to Armenian national symbols, including pomegranates and other cultural elements in their designs. This project plays a significant role in showing Armenian fashion that mixes heritage with innovation and modern motifs, as well as proving that traditional clothing and accessories still remain an inseparable part of contemporary identity. The event and other brands who integrate Armenian ancient symbols into modern accessories and

clothing provide a powerful means for storytelling in one way or another. However, here comes the question, regarding the depth of cultural and historical preservation. Does the integration of traditional symbols, including pomegranates and other national symbols blended with modern trends challenge identity and traditions or vice versa casual clothing with elements of traditional symbols maintain the cultural significance? We can say that the integration of old Armenian traditional symbols into contemporary clothing and accessories does not necessarily distort or risk identity and traditions but keeps their continuity. As every other field fashion is also evolving and in modern times it would be impossible to preserve traditional clothing styles, including taraz or other ancient clothing in casual wear, however, modern adaptations, such as pomegranates, symbols or other elements in casual clothing pieces or jewelries create a bridge between the past and present. Instead of perceiving modernization as a risk to traditions, it can be accepted as a development, where Armenian traditional legacy is harmonized and embraced with contemporary expression of fashion. Here are some vivid examples of modern Armenian brands and designers who play a significant role in integrating traditional elements and details in their designs in this way honoring the cultural heritage and connecting the past with the present in the fashion world.

## Pregomesh



Figures: 19-21

Pregomesh brand founded by singer and creative designer Sirusho in 2012 is famous for their extraordinary representation of modern Armenian jewelry inspired by ancient Armenian historical, cultural motifs and designs. In 2023, the brand started crafting jewelry and accessories for men as well. The integration of folk ornaments, symbols and cultural elements in their earrings, rings, necklaces and other accessories creates a strong bond between cultural identity and contemporary expression of fashion statement.

### Arevik Simonyan (Kivera Brand)



Figures: 22-23

Arevik Simoyana is the founder and creative director of the fashion brand Kivera that blends Armenian traditional stylistic features with contemporary elements and ornaments. The brand has showrooms in Yerevan and Moscow. Arevik Simonyan won fashion competitions and participated in fashion shows exhibited in Armenian and Russia. In 2023, the brand presented their collection called [“Roots” during Milan fashion week](#), demonstrating clothing with Armenian traditional patterns intertwined with global fashion trends.

## Kevork Shadoyan (Shadoyan Fashion)



Figures: 24-25

Syrian-Armenian designer Kevork Shadoyan founded the brand in 1999. The designer represented Armenian fashion collections on international platforms, winning Best Foreign Collection at “Estest Fashion Week” in 2015 in Moscow. Shadoyan Fashion is famous for their handcrafted gowns, wedding dresses, as well as casual shirts, bags and accessories. His collection attracted not only Armenian customers but also worldwide and high-profile clients interested in Armenian fashion designs.

## Vahan Khachatryan



Figures: 26-27

Vahan Khachatryan is the President of the Fashion and Garment Chamber of Armenia who founded the brand “Vahan Khachatryan Atelier Haute Couture” in the beginning of 2013. The designer studied in Florence, one of the best fashion schools in Italy after which in 2011 he joined Dolce & Gabbana and began his journey in fashion. Vahan incorporates Italian baroque and French rococo styles, with Armenian traditional motifs in his designs.

Following the next step of the project we examined some interviews that were conducted with Turkish and Armenian professional designers.

**Here are the questions for the interviews that we analyzed throughout the content analysis.**

1. What is the source of inspiration for you to create your own brand and how do you balance incorporating traditional motifs and fashion elements with modern trends?
2. What specific traditional symbols or textile techniques do you consider in your designs and how do you research traditional elements that are used for creating garments and jewelry for the brand?
3. How does your cultural and historical background impact your creative process and creation of collection themes?
4. Are there any specific textiles, elements or embroidery techniques that you often use in your designs and collections?
5. Are there any particular historical periods that serve as a source of inspiration for your collection?
6. Do you think contemporary fashion designers face challenges preserving identity and traditions in clothing?
7. How does the international fashion industry incorporate modern Armenian fashion and is there a demand in the global fashion market for designs?
8. What is your vision of the future of the fashion industry in the next 10-20 years?

We have chosen specifically these fashion designers as their designs contain elements of traditional fashion with modern aesthetics. These designers demonstrate how Armenian heritage is preserved alive in the modern world and how fashion can be more than just a piece of clothing but rather a strong bridge between old and new, as well as traditions and cultural expression.

## Interviews

Two short interviews conducted with fashion designer Vahan Khachatryan by CivilNet help us to understand his path into the Armenian fashion industry and his contribution to its evolution. Armenian well-known fashion designer Vahan Khachatryan, in his interview *Vahan Khachatryan's World of Fashion* with CivilNet in 2013, mentions about his early interest in fashion and career as a successful fashion designer. Vahan was already passionate enough about dress-making and design from a young age. Starting from 15, he began designing clothes with his friends for fun as a hobby, not considering it a future profession as his parents did not encourage him to study fashion and the limited sources in Armenia were another reason for not diving deep into this profession. However, life had other luminous plans and a promising future for him. Vahan started his first steps in Italy, working as an art director and designer and collaborating with different designers and celebrities. However, over time, he decided to study fashion and got accepted into a fashion school in Florence, Italy. Moreover, as Vahan mentions, his working experience with Dolce & Gabbana opened new doors and opportunities for his career boost and professional growth. After several years studying and working in Italy, Vahan returned to Armenia and established his own fashion brand, designing handmade garments and accessories with detailed patterns and symbolic elements (CivilNet, 2013). In another interview, *Armenia's designers gear up for country's first fashion week*, Vahan discusses the current state of Armenia's fashion industry, the importance of fashion weeks and designers' activism in developing the industry and making international connections. As Vahan notes, "The Fashion industry is a very complicated industry. It has so many links that make the chain and so many of those links are still missing in Armenia" (CivilNet, 2023, 1:31-42). The designer highlights the fact that in Armenia there are many fashion designers, brands and textile companies but there are

a number of limitations, including fashion magazines or fashion-skilled journalists who could contribute to the industry's future development. Furthermore, as he mentions, "Fashion is a reflection of our reality," emphasizing the connection between political activism and events with the expression of issues through fashion (CivilNet, 2023, 2:40-45). As the designer notes, Yerevan Fashion Week held in 2023, July 1-6, had a profound and significant impact on Armenia's fashion industry, particularly integrating talented Armenian local and international designers, runway shows, panel discussions, collaborations, global recognition and attention from world-famous magazines, such as Vogue, ELLE and other opportunities that could open many doors for the nation's fashion industry. As Vahan highlights, the event was quite successful considering the country's limited resources, it was a promising start for the industry's future development (CivilNet, 2023).

Exploring another interview with the fashion designer Kevork Shadoyan provides an insightful perspective on understanding not only the creative process of fashion but also the cultural and historical background of the designer's motives and creation. As Kevork Shadoyan mentions, he was born in Aleppo, Syria and continued his education as a fashion designer in Beirut, Lebanon. Kevork's interest and passion for fashion came from his father, who was a famous tailor. His mother's support and his father's talent encouraged and inspired him to learn more about the fashion industry and turn art into fashion pieces and clothes. As the designer mentions, during his studying years in one of the fashion festivals, he was the only Armenian at the college and he was assigned to represent Armenian taraz. This led him to become more curious about national garments and explore details about Armenian taraz and attire. In Armenia, he established the Shadoyan brand based on his aspiration from his capstone project on traditional Armenian wedding attire, which provided him a firm ground for preserving cultural

and traditional heritage. He also notes that in Syria, Armenian fashion is well-recognized and appreciated, which offers another motivation to learn more about traditional embroidery and symbols for representing Armenian identity to international platforms. In 2015, Shadoyan created a collection dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. During this project, he visited various cities and regions to discover Armenian national motifs and symbols for integrating into his collection of garments (Alpha News, 2023).

The interview with another fashion designer Areviki Simonyan provides a deep perspective and crucial tool for revealing cultural, traditional and symbolic heritage of the Armenian nation. Armenian fashion designer Arevik Simonyan the founder of Kivera brand explores her journey of becoming a fashion designer. She was truly inspired by one of her grandmother's fashion books, which was fascinating for her as from a young age she could imagine herself working in the fashion field. As Arevik notes people can associate the brand with femininity and symbolic elements with bright and dark shades. She mentions that at first she was working with different celebrities, designing clothes for various events, such as red carpet, concerts and so on. Arevik explains that over time she started changing her style and began integrating Armenian cultural motifs and elements that she explored recently. The designer mentions that everything associated with Armenia is considered to be her source of inspiration. She is willing and excited to expand her brand making it more versatile and available in global markets. As other designers mentioned in their interviews, the problem with the fashion industry in Armenia is the limited resources and unavailable tools, such as fashion schools or other institutions that train young students and provide them with comprehensive and professional knowledge on design and styling (Armenian Public TV, 2024). These interviews add more in depth layers to our research as they provide a multidimensional approach to understanding how

history, traditions, identity cultural are still preserved and vividly expressed in today's Armenian fashion industry.

There are some interviews conducted with Turkish famous designers too. Most of the interviews are based on preserving the Turkish identity in fashion and present it to the global world. The first interview we researched was conducted with famous Turkish designer Neslisah Yilmaz about the "Barrus" brand. She officially launched the brand in 2014 and mentioned that the name itself means elegance and it is the voice of traditional women who tried to reclaim their independence and individuality through fashion (Showcase, 2025, 1:30-1:54) The designer does everything in order to combine this with the modern world fashion so it can be represented in global market too. Scholars Nazli Alimen and Merve Kütük Kuriş (2020) also included some parts of the interview in their research. The interview was conducted with Nilay Ulusoy with Tuna Yılmaz who was the founder of "Fashion Film Festival Istanbul" They mentioned the importance of Turkish traditional fashion being emphasized in TV series and films because those are one of the most significant tools for Turkey to be presented in the global market. Alimen has reviewed a book called "Ottoman Dress and Design in the West" written by Charlotte A. Jirousek. This "indicates the significance of knowledge building using Ottoman archival sources, thereby moving away from a Eurocentric view which focuses primarily on the effects of western dress in Turkey as if the reverse effect is non-existent" (Kuriş & Alimen, 2020, p. 142) The other interview was conducted with famous Turkish fashion designer Dilek Hanif. Halif tries to mix Turkish traditional culture with modern details as already mentioned most of the Turkish designers are intended to do. To the question of what are the biggest challenges for her in the world of fashion Hanif answered that she is a designer working in Paris, mentioning that this was

a challenging part in her work. She mentioned “To present a couture collection in Paris as a Turkish designer was quite challenging, and it is still quite difficult, but over time the task has become easier. I am able to showcase the creative and artistic potential of Turkish people to the rest of the world, and the beautiful landscapes, scenic beauty, history and heritage of Turkey is so unique and inspiring that it has definitely helped with design creativity and distinction”

(Mansour, 2017) For the designer it is a crucial thing to preserve Turkish traditional heritage in clothing and accessories because it will not let the country to lose the culture in the world of Western fashion. In May, 2025 Dilek Hanif presented a new collection inspired by the Ottoman Heritage. Dilek connected traditional symbolism with modern world trends.

Below are some of her works mentioned above that were out in May, 2025.



Figures: 27-29: These works she captioned as “Connecting heritage with modernity, Ottoman Inspired Haute Couture Collection transforms historical influences into contemporary couture masterpieces” ([Hanif, 2025](#))

### **Comparison with the Western World**

Looking at the project from the global perspective, we are aiming to claim that Armenian and Turkish cultures do preserve the cultural identity in fashion and clothing overall using the media as a tool. According to Mazurkevych (et.al, 2024) cultural globalization is a very complex area for the researchers. “Emphasis is placed on negative consequences such as the Americanization and homogenization of society, the active spread of mass culture, the fading and disappearance of various national cultures, their individuality and values” (Mazurkevych, et.al, 2024, p. 1). In the Western countries one can hardly find a country where the cultural traditions are preserved. Especially when the question is about clothing, nearly every country has the same style. The article mentions that the preservation of cultural heritage and identity is a significant part for each country because it holds distinct values, traditions and help a foreigner recognize the country and distinguish it among the others (Mazurkevych, et.al, 2024) Another researcher Joy (2010, as cited in Kasebusha & Banda, 2023, p.7) claims that “Western culture due to globalization resulted into the deviation of the traditional way of dressing. Most people have adopted the western styles of dressing” This revealed by Joy that globalization had slowly resulted into extinction of the local and traditional attires in society. When comparing the Western culture to the culture of Armenia and Turkey, it is obvious that these two countries have shaped their cultural heritage and identity through clothing. According to the article by Kasebusha & Banda (2023) clothing serves as a marker of cultural identity, social status, and group affiliation. Traditional clothing often incorporates motifs, patterns, and techniques passed down through generations, reflecting a cultural heritage that connects individuals to their ancestors and community (Kasebusha & Banda, 2023, p. 7)

A very famous designer and owner of the shop “Pregomesh” Sirusho mentioned in one of her commercial videos on social media that the brand is for the people who respect the cultural heritage and want to wear it. She says “Some people believe that we restore and copy the Armenian old jewelry, however, we create a fully new jewelry based on the old Armenian attires and cultural traditions”(Tik-Tok, Pregomesh, 2024) The main goal of the brand is to keep Armenian people close to the culture in contemporary manners, not to take them back to ancient times. She mentions “When you keep the main inspiration of the brand The Armenian heritage, the product automatically becomes noticeable with its distinctive features from the other cultures”

A very famous contemporary Armenian fashion designer Gaia Gevorgyan recently opened her shop called [gayaofficial](#). At the first sight one can assume that the clothing presented in their social media page are mainly westernized and “walk” with the fashion trends as Gaya is a designer who encourages people to take care of themselves while dressing comfortably and stylishly. However, if we look closely the stylish clothes carry some symbolic aspects of Armenian culture. In the bio of the Instagram page Gaya mentioned that in her brand the tradition meets modernity, which already communicates to the consumer that Armenian culture is preserved.



Figure 30: Gaya Clothing Brand

Besides the bio in the posts, both in the captions and dresses the Armenian heritage is communicated directly to the consumer.

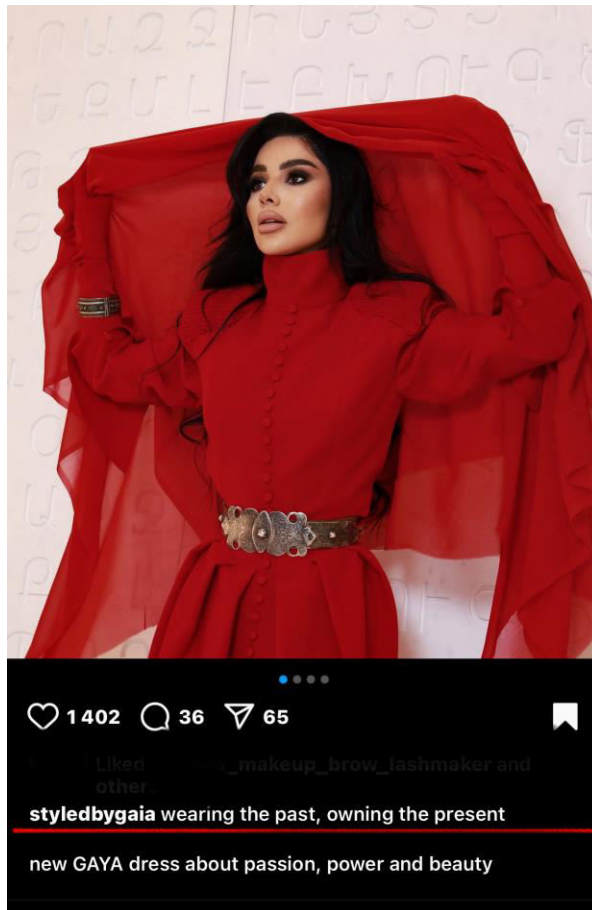


Figure 31: Styled By Gaia (Instagram)

In this post Gaya tried to communicate to the buyer that the dress is not only in fashion, but also she directly refers to the past which is visible in the belt styled with Armenian motives. In this way the consumer not only pays attention to the beauty of the dress but also concentrates on the symbolism in it. Moreover, the posts are made in English to attract not only Armenian people, but also people from different countries in the world. In this way, Gaya turns the shop into a key to show some part of the world the significance of the Armenian cultural heritage.

From the Turkish point of view a very famous designer Dilek Hanif mentioned in one of her interviews that her designs in clothing are great representations of Turkish culture and that is her focus when she works. She mentions “here the east meets the west” (Mansour, 2017) We

blend elements of the Orient and Occident by incorporating Ottoman-inspired embroidery into modern designs. For example, we reinterpret traditional Ottoman vests using our cultural beading techniques, adapting them for today's fashion world. Through our work, we aim to showcase the rich heritage of handmade craftsmanship that has adorned Turkey's palaces for centuries (Mansour, 2017)

Thus, relying on the scholarly articles and the fashion professionals' views on their own cultural heritage and fashion one can claim that the Western Fashion is going towards globalization and does not contain its specific symbiotic relationship in clothing and style. Turkish and Armenian cultures do preserve the heritage and are successfully presented in the media, using it as a powerful tool to present in fashion and textile what their culture represents.

## **Limitations**

The capstone project's purpose is to demonstrate Armenian and Turkish fashion represented in media, particularly movies, TV series and social media platforms that explore traditional and cultural motifs. Different designers and mediums put efforts to preserve national identity and cultural heritage, there are crucial limitations influencing the development of the fashion industry in Armenia. The dominant impact and presence from Western fashion trends on Turkey and Armenia is quite evident, which leads to both countries having modernized and mixed expression of fashion.

In Turkish modern soap operas and media platforms include fashion trends and represent luxury brands with adaptation of European fashion motifs and elements. Primarily, the combination of modern trends with less cultural heritage or motifs show that Turkish fashion is more inclined to Western visual appeals.

In the case of Armenia, even though there are less fashion brands and designers, the existing brands put more emphasis on preserving traditional and cultural patterns and elements in clothings and accessories. Even though, Armenia lacks fashion educational institutions, magazines, and tools for maintaining the fashion industry alive in our country, the limited archives and materials hinder the development of the fashion industry in Armenia, the existing brands and designers blend cultural heritage with modern trends in order to preserve authenticity and identity through garments, jewelries and other accessories.

Therefore, because of the limited resources, it was relatively difficult to do thorough research in both countries, concentrating on analyzing and exploring the history of Armenian and Turkish garments, accessories and jewelry, and understanding the similarities and differences between both countries. The restricted resources and research regarding the traditional

expression and reflection of heritage and culture intertwined with contemporary trends and fashion ideals.

## Conclusion

This capstone project has examined the representation and development of traditional Armenian and Turkish fashion through the lenses of media, social platforms, and contemporary fashion world. By analyzing the methods and ways that each country preserves and designs in a modern way their cultural attire, we see that fashion operates not only as a stylistic choice but as a deeply embedded form of cultural identity and historical memory. Armenia's fashion industry is largely motivated by social media and local designers who preserve and include traditional symbols, such as those seen in brands like Pregomesh and Kivera. These brands carefully blend ancient symbols and motifs with modern aesthetics, emphasizing a dynamic bond between heritage and development. In contrast, Turkey often presents its cultural fashion heritage through historical narratives in popular television series, such as *Magnificent Century*. These shows not only include simply traditional garments like the *bindalli*, but also influence modern Turkish fashion by designing renewed interest in modest, historically inspired clothing. The comparative analysis reveals both convergence and divergence. While both cultures resist complete assimilation into Western fashion, they do so using different tools: Armenia through digital platforms and grassroots brands, and Turkey through mass media and political nostalgia. The influence of globalization is evident in both countries, yet they actively reframe their heritage within modern trends rather than abandoning it. Designers from both nations act as cultural storytellers, merging the past with the present to keep traditional fashion relevant and respected.

Ultimately, fashion in Armenia and Turkey serves as a bridge between generations, between East and West, and between tradition and modernity. In a globalizing world, this project highlights how meaningful and necessary it is for nations to protect and evolve their cultural

narratives through what people wear. Fashion, therefore, becomes not just clothing, but a visible, wearable archive of identity, memory, and pride.

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