

## THE COSTUME<sup>1</sup>

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Changes in traditional folk costume of the Podhale region, attitude towards it, both of highlanders and the intelligentsia, influenced to increase its rank, and led to the fact that it became a kind of phenomenon. At a time when regional costumes were being abandoned widely, those from Podhale developed, enriched, with time, became a representative national dress. The pride connected with wearing it results from the need to show and emphasise one's ethnic roots. Traditional folk attire is currently experiencing a period of revival and its earlier, simpler forms are being copied and incorporated into many elements of dress. It seems that the folk costume of Podhale may survive as a ceremonial attire indicating regional affinity and material status.

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Zmiany zachodzące w tradycyjnym stroju ludowym Podhala, stosunek do niego zarówno samych górali, jak i przedstawicieli inteligencji, wpłynął na podniesienie jego rangi i doprowadził do tego, że stał się on pewnego rodzaju fenomenem. W czasie, gdy stroje regionalne masowo były zarzucane, podhalański rozwijał się, wzbogacał, aby z czasem stać się reprezentacyjnym strojem narodowym. Duma z jego posiadania związana jest z potrzebą nawiązywania do własnej przeszłości. Współcześnie można mówić o okresie renesansu stroju oraz nawiązywaniu do jego form tradycyjnych (uproszczonych, mniej zdobionych). Wydaje się, że ma on szansę przetrwania w formie stroju okazjonalnego, świątecznego wyznacznika bogactwa oraz przynależności regionalnej.

**Key words:** folk dress, costume, changes, vitality, the Podhale phenomenon, Podhale.

At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Władysław Matlakowski (1901, 153) noted that “the folk dress in Podhale is less colourful than that of the Hutsuls or the Cracovians, yet it is very distinctive and full of character”, whereas Józef Kantor (1907, 32) wrote that “no folk seems to love its native attire as much as the highlanders from Podhale do”.

The fact that the folk costume of Podhale survived and has recently experienced a period of revival and a return to more traditional forms, may be considered unusual. This process is known as “the Podhale phenomenon” (Reinfuss 1988). It is believed to have resulted from the highlanders' need to express their origins, honour festive occasions and demonstrate their wealth. The costume is worn for mercantile purposes (e.g. by carriage drivers, coachmen taking tourists to see Morskie Oko Lake, street vendors selling sweaters, etc.) and constitutes a *de rigueur* attire for senior and

<sup>1</sup> This article is written based on the work entitled *Strój ludowy* (Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 245–303).

junior shepherds (*baca* and *juhas*) during herding sheep to graze in alpine valleys in the Tatra National Park.

Folk costume constitutes a form of regional dress or ceremonial attire. In the present article, these terms shall be used interchangeably for stylistic purposes; their meaning specified by the context. Everyday dress was composed of the same elements as the costumes worn for special occasions, and differed from it only with regard to the fabric and the decoration of the garments. Damaged pieces of clothing were worn at home or for work. Expensive elements such as bodices, necklaces or pins were traditionally handed down from generation to generation.

#### TRADITIONAL FORMS OF ATTIRE

Folk dress and especially its ceremonial form – the full costume – communicated much information about the person wearing it. It could non-verbally disclose the place of origin down to the name of the village, marital status, material situation and even the profession of the individual. Some elements, even those very small and unassuming, could indicate the roles particular people were to play at a given ceremony (e.g. during a wedding it was easy to distinguish the *pytace*, the white groomsmen, the master of ceremonies and, naturally, the bridal couple). Changes in folk dress also reflected changes in fashion. Trends used to last for much longer periods, becoming briefer and briefer with time. Until ca. 1850s the elements of folk attire were made almost exclusively from local fabrics – homespun flaxen cloth and woollen broadcloth. In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century homespun fabrics started to give way to textiles produced in factories (Błaszczuk-Żurowska 2000, 85).

Children's clothes were usually simple and modest, with very little decoration. The attire was not regarded as particularly important, yet for every child it constituted an object of desire. Children's garments were often made out of old pieces of clothing for adults; younger children wore the clothes their older siblings had grown out of. Boys started to wear trousers only after they began their school education. A proper costume for children was bought when they were more than ten years of age. It was the time of buying clothes and adding missing elements to the costume. More valuable objects such as bodices or necklaces were handed down for generations. Many girls decided to become servants and maids in order to earn money for such items and add to their own dowry. The wages, both for farm-hands and servant girls, often included pieces of clothing. Great pains were taken to ensure that before their wedding day the bridal couple would be in possession of least the most important elements of the folk costume, which would be used for many years afterwards. The number and quality of goods making up the dowry – including clothing (especially ceremonial dress and jewellery) – reflected material status. Consequently, it helped people find a suitable match.

The most important elements of male attire, namely trousers (*portki*) and white or black coats, known as *cuchy*, were made of woollen broadcloth. Leather was needed for warm vests (*serdaki*), moccasins (*kierpce*) and belts (*opaski*). Shirts were made of homespun flaxen cloth, usually produced on the spot for household purposes (ill. 86 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 252). Hats, vests and blouses (*bluzki*) sewn from fabrics bought on the market completed the picture. As noted by Klein, highlanders wore identical clothing in summer and in winter (Eljasz-Radzikowski 1897, 228).

Male clothing consisted primarily of white trousers (*portki*), a flaxen shirt with a yoke (*koszula ze stonkiem*) embroidered with white thread, and a black felt hat decorated with shells of the money cowry or an imitation thereof, strung on a red string (ill. 87 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 254). To appear presentable one had to put on moccasins and a broad belt (*opaska*), throw a *cucha* over one's shoulders or don a warm vest.

The trousers (*portki*) of the highlanders are the most characteristic and popular element of folk attire. Władysław Orkan (1936, 34) agreed with Włodzimierz Tetmajer that the scope of the highlander culture may be judged on the basis of the distribution of this element of dress. The trousers were sewn of white homemade broadcloth. The cut, known also from Hungarian dress, was very tight. Initially, the white woollen trousers had no decoration – the fashion for adorning trouser-legs with black or dark blue embroidered ornaments (called *oblamki*) started in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In time the decoration became more elaborate – the *oblamki* started to be accompanied by *przyponsy* and *krzesiwka* – diamond-shaped ornaments in black and red. By the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the decoration acquired an even more complex and colourful form, known as *parzenica* or *cyfra* (Starek 1967, 50–51; ill. 88 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 255). Characteristic embroideries from this period include three colours: black, red and green. Such decoration was referred to as *sabatówki*.

To keep their feet warm, highlanders fixed foot wraps on top of the ankle-length trousers, and tied them in place with strings called *nawłoki*. This process was referred to as *obuwanie się po wirchu* (shoeing oneself on the outside) (Zborowski 1972, 345). It protected the lower edges of the trousers from fraying and kept the feet dry. Later it became fashionable to wear foot wraps under the trousers, which made the trouser-legs look decidedly wider. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the trouser-legs became longer and tighter at the ankle (Zborowski 1972, 345). Woollen socks came into popular use during the German occupation. Both men and women wore the same type of shoes – *kierpce* – made of a single piece of pig or cow leather. In time the shoes decorated with metal studs and leather straps were replaced by buckle fastening.

The upper garment consisted of a shirt made of homespun linen, cut in the Wallach style. It resembled a waist-long rectangular poncho with wide cuff-less sleeves and no collar (Starek 1967, 49–50). At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century shirts began to be sewn together from geometrically-shaped pieces of cloth (*krój przyramkowy*), the

sleeves became more narrow and acquired cuffs (*oszewki*). Sometime later highlander shirts started to have collars. The shirt was tucked into the trousers; only shepherds sometimes wore it outside. The literature of the subject mentions *bacowie* who rubbed sheep's butter into their shirts and hair to repel insects. The shirt was clasped at the neckline with a metal pin, most often diamond-shaped and decorated with latticework ornaments (ill. 89 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 257). At first the pins were cast of an alloy of brass and copper (the so-called *lanka*), whereas later they were cut and decorated with stamped ornaments. Men also wore metal chains with brass spheres or colourful glass beads, with a decorative utensil for cleaning a pipe (*przekolec*) hanging in the middle. Pins started to disappear from male attire at the end of the previous century, but continued to be worn by junior and senior shepherds.

Men covered their heads with a characteristic black hat. Until mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the most popular model had a wide brim and a low crown (Starek 1967, 49). For a time it gave way to hats with a narrow brim, but the fashion for wide brims returned after the Great War. Initially the hats were decorated with metal chains and later with mussels on a red string. An inhabitant of Brzegi (1943) recalled that "in Lent and in Advent father used to make sure his hat has no ornament". Bachelors followed the custom of tucking a black feather behind the string. It could belong to a pheasant, a black grouse or an eagle. Bazińska (1967, 163) also mentioned that yew twigs in the hat were a sign of bravery.

Elderly householders in the 1930s still wore shoulder-length hair and often smeared them with butter when going to church. The custom of braiding the hair did not survive, and is mentioned only by early literature. Seweryn Goszczyński (1853, 107) wrote that highlanders wore long hair falling loose on the back and shoulders, or sometimes braided in several plaits; their faces were clean-shaven. Younger men wore their hair short. Only the older, married ones grew moustache, "which also disappeared later" (village: Ząb 1923).

The outer garment in men's costume was called *cucha* (ill. 90 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 260). It was a kind of a broadcloth coat in dark brown (*czarna cucha*) or white. The length of *cucha* varied from region to region – the closer the mountains the shorter the coats, so the scantiest *cuchy* were seen in Bukowina, Zakopane and Kościelisko. According to Matlakowski (1901, 156) dark brown coats were worn by the wealthier youth "with an eye for lavishness". The dark *cuchy* were longer, reaching almost to the knees, and lined with red woollen strings, which were sewn to the lapels of the garment, from the left side upwards. On the collar and at the edges the string was folded into a semicircle. The collar was decorated with a double stripe, whereas only a single one, composed of twelve strings, was sewn to the sleeve. *Cucha* was clasped at the neck with a metal chain or a leather thong. Wearing a dark coat one would put one's arms into the sleeves – "they put them into the sleeves" (village: Małe Ciche 1927), "they pull the sleeves onto the arms" (village: Brzegi 1927) (in other words,



Outer garments: *cucha* (black Tatra highlander garment) and *serdak* (sleeveless jacket),  
Małe Ciche village circa 1920; author unknown; the owner of the photography:  
J. Zapotoczna (Archives of the Ethnology Section, Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków).

the dark *cucha* was not worn like a cloak, but like a jacket), and tie the garment with a red ribbon (e.g. master of ceremony at a wedding wore it thus) or with a shepherds' belt (*pytace* at a wedding were easily distinguishable by this element of attire). During funerals "the ones carrying the casket and the cross go in dark coats". The dark variety was used only for special occasions. "In the olden days people wore the black coats only for holidays, and on workdays donned the white ones; later, however, they started to wear the white ones to church as well" (village: Ząb 1923). Short *cuchy* were made of the same broadcloth that provided material for the trousers.

The broadcloth garments were made from homespun woollen broadcloth by local specialised tailors. Their cut could be very diverse,<sup>2</sup> but has not changed for many centuries (Bazińska 1967, 51). The only aspect susceptible to fashion was the length of the coat. As in the case of many other elements of the folk costume, the development of ornaments that took place at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in much more decorative and colourful coats. White *cuchy* were only worn over the shoulders (*nahajtas*). The sleeves could be tied at the end and used as pockets for storing useful items, such as tobacco or a gusle. *Cucha* was also an element of a bridegroom's costume – for the occasion it was tied with a white ribbon. A godfather at a wedding wore his coat tied with a red ribbon. The groomsmen that escorted the bride were called 'white' due to the colour of their coats and trousers (ill. 92 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 262). Floral embroideries were introduced into folk costume in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bazińska 1967, 52). Black vests resembling those worn with suits appeared as an addition to male folk attire in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Błaszczuk-Żurowska s.a., 4). They were worn over the shirt or under *serdaki* and *gunie*. Staszal (1954) noted that the fashion for wearing such vests has recently been coming back.

The cut of the blouse (*bluzka*) was inspired by Austrian military uniform. The garment became popular at the turn of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The blouses were mostly made of black or dark blue factory-made broadcloth or gabardine, and worn on top of white linen shirts, sometimes under a *cucha* or *serdak*. This element of folk attire is still in use, also as an outer garment for formal occasions.

Regardless of the season, highlander men and women wore *serdak*, i.e. a sleeveless sheepskin jacket, its edges trimmed with black sheepskin with wool turned outward (*opryma*), reaching a little below the hip (ill. 93 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 263). The jacket was an indispensable element of highlander attire – having one was a question of honour for every householder of considerable means. According to Kantor (1907, 35–36) a highlander never parted with his sheepskin jacket, wearing when it was frosty and when it was hot, and using it as a pillow at night. On rainy days and in the summer heat he put on his *serdak* inside out, so that the wool would show. At the turn of the century there began a fashion for Slovakian sheepskin jackets, called 'Hungarian'. They were dyed brown and decorated with elaborate appliqués of saffi on

<sup>2</sup> “*Cuchy* have a peculiar cut and only an acclaimed tailor can make a fashionable and well-fitting one; there are three types of cut. The first one is very extraordinary and almost seamless. The entire back, the sleeves and the upper part of the front is cut from a single piece of broadcloth. The sleeves only have one seam on the side of the sleeve closer to the body. The lower part of the front is composed of two symmetrical pieces of cloth; there are also two wedges at the sides, so that the entire *cucha* is sewn of five pieces of broadcloth. The second type of cut includes a horizontal seam across the back, whereas in the third type the seam on the back is vertical. The edge of the *cucha* may be finished in buttonhole stitch to prevent fraying” (Matlakowski 1901, 156). Brzega (1969, 37) mentioned the famous highlander Sabała, who sew his white *cuchy* himself, using a cut so simple that – as he used to say – “I can sew my *cucha* in less time than my missus needs to make breakfast”.





Bridal couple with “white” bridesmaids and groomsmen, Ząb village 1934; author unknown; the owner of the photography: A. Słodyczka  
(Archives of the Ethnology Section, Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków).

leather. Dyed jackets became common around the year 1860. Both Matlakowski and Kantor note that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century winter attire included white sheepskin jackets of untrimmed wool. These were known as *białczańskie* (Kantor 1907, 33) from the name of the town they were made in (before the Great War there were seventeen furrier workshops in Białka). By the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such garments were already a rare sight, having given way to brown sheepskin jackets decorated with an *opryma* of black sheep’s wool and colourful embroideries and appliqués. The wealth of the owner could easily be assessed on the basis of the type, width and quality of the trimmings (e.g. astrakhan fur was a sign of status) – other elements were of secondary importance. The fashion for colours also changed.<sup>3</sup>

Male attire could be complemented by three types of belts: regular leather ones running through a fold in the trousers (*zagibek*), broader belts (three fingers wide)

<sup>3</sup> The colour scheme of sheepskin coats has undergone some changes, from light brown to deep brown, which was the most popular colour in the vicinity of Nowy Targ. Between the years 1934–39 in the foothills of the Tatra Mountains (around Zakopane and Czarny Dunajec) there was a fashion for wearing orange or olive-coloured coats. Muted khaki hues (the so-called willow green) were popular in the region of Witów, Chochołów and Czarny Dunajec (Wijas-Grocholska 1987, 52).

decorated with metal buttons and very broad (three to four buckles) belts called *opaski*, *pasy zbójnickie* or *pasy bacowskie*.

Accessories included leather bags used for storing various objects (money, pipes, tools for sewing and mending shoes, etc.), bags of homespun striped wool used for carrying sheep's cheese down from the mountains, characteristically shaped brass or clay pipes and shepherd's axes, both utilitarian (*rqbanice*) and ceremonial.

The character of the male attire has much in common with the dress of highlanders from other regions in the Arc of the Carpathians. The form of formal costumes remained basically unchanged, both with regard to the cut and to the materials used. Goszczyński (1853, 108) noted that "in some regions the dress is slightly different, but never differently cut".

The female dress has always been more susceptible to changes in fashion. Goszczyński (1853, 120–121) described the elements of female attire in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (ill. 94 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 266), listing the following items: 1) a percale shirt with a low-cut neckline both at the front and at the back, tied with a string. The sleeves were wide, pleated and gathered into a cuff tied with a red ribbon; 2) a close-fitting bodice made of fabric,<sup>4</sup> most often green in colour, trimmed with galloon, with hooks and eyes; 3) a wide plated skirt, often of percale with a floral motif; 4) a muslin apron worn on top of the skirt. The attire was complemented with yellow boots with high soles, colourful trinkets around the neck and a muslin scarf worn on the head or over the shoulders, reaching down to the ground (for the oldest elements of female attire see: Błaszcyk-Żurowska 1987). However, already at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Matlakowski (1901, 158) wrote: "the apparel of ladies lacks character; it is hideous and modern". Kantor (1907, 38) added that "the dying, the headscarves (*rańtuchy* and *prześcieradła*), the white muslin coifs that distinguished highlander costume from other folk attire are all gone, replaced by factory-made fabrics, percale, new textiles for skirts and blouses (*wizytki*)" (ill. 95 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 268).

Contacts with city-dwellers, which have intensified in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had a degree of influence over the culture of the highlanders, especially those living in Zakopane and the surrounding villages. Hand-made embroidery, both white and colourful, experienced a period of development; factory-made fabrics became more accessible. Highlander attire began to adapt more and more elements of contemporary fashion advocated by journals and of the folk dress of the Cracovians (Błaszcyk-Żurowska s.a., 4). All those changes originated in Zakopane, spreading

<sup>4</sup> The bodice has always reflected the material and social status of the wearer. The three silk bodices dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century that are part of the collection of the Tatra Museum in Zakopane. Podhale was a region with a high degree of social contrasts and much contact with other cultures (Błaszcyk-Żurowska 1997, 231). Bodices of costly factory-made fabrics were worn in various regions of Poland until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Czasznicka 1953, 161).





Highlander women, Zakopane 1910; author unknown  
(Archives of The Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków).

further to other villages. Folk attire has always been governed by fashion – it may be slower to catch on, but lasts longer.

One element of the changing fashion were the so-called *wizytki* – loose blouses of a simple cut worn together with ample floor-length skirts sewn from various types of fabrics (ill. 90 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 260) and often decorated with colourful bands at the hem. The skirt was worn over a flaxen *fortuch* – a type of a broad under-skirt with notches at the bottom, decorated with white openwork embroidery up to one third of the length (ill. 96 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 269).

Before the World War I skirts of *tybet* – a fabric woven of the wool of Tibetan goats or sheep – became very popular. Aprons, on the other hand, fell out of fashion. Woollen skirts with floral designs were worn to white blouses with large collars, sleeves gathered into a cuff and decorated with *broderie anglaise*. The white elements of attire always had to be spotlessly clean (ill. 97 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 270). Another fashionable addition to folk attire were velvet bodices with a decoration of narrow tape in various colours. The decorative patterns included lines, zigzags or loops modelled on art nouveau ornaments, sewn along the seams on the back and front of the bodice. The motifs that rose to popularity in those times were floral – martagon lily, edelweiss, chrysanthemum and carline thistle.



Girls in traditional regional costumes, decorated with strings of beads, Małe Ciche village circa 1920; author unknown; the owner of photography: J. Zapotoczna (Archives of the Ethnology Section, Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków).

Outer garments included *serdaki* and slightly longer white sheepskin coats with long sleeves. The latter type of coats was only made in Białka. Neither the cut nor the decorations of these coats differed significantly from that of male attire, and the wealth and status of the wearer was reflected in the number and quality of the trimmings (Wijas-Grocholska 1987, 50).

The costume was complemented by headscarves, worn both by maidens and married women. In early 20<sup>th</sup> century the most popular types of scarves included short ones made of light *tybet* and decorated with a combination of shiny and dull ornaments

(such scarves were called *jedwabki*) and thick woollen *kazimierkule* – long chequered scarves wrapped over the shoulders or the entire body, to protect it from the rain or winter cold. Such scarves were of considerable value. The number of various scarves (*szmatki, szole*, shoulder shawls, etc.) was a visible sign of status for highlander women. The colour of the scarf was chosen to match the rest of the attire and the occasion. Women of all ages often wore jewellery. The most beautiful and desired items were coral necklaces (ill. 98 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 271). Their weight (even up to 0.4 kilograms) and the number of *wojki* (strings – usually from three to five) was dependent on the material status of the *gąździna* (mistress of the household). After the war women also started to wear rings and earrings.

The coral necklaces were usually handed down for generations. Supplying girls with necklaces of genuine coral was a matter of pride as well as an indicator of wealth. Equally popular were beads of glass or moulded mass.

The hairstyles of ladies were much less susceptible to change. “They have no tresses falling down from temples but comb all hair towards the back of their heads and thus



Older type of the female costume in Podhale region (a sitting woman and a woman standing in the middle), and dathing worn in the Cracovian countryside called „Cracovian style”, Małe Ciche village circa 1920; author unknown; the owner of photography: J. Zapotoczna (Archives of the Ethnology Section, Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków).

smoothed braid them [...] Young girls dress their hair likewise, having first moistened it with pomade” (Kamiński 1992, 12).

*Kierpce* for men and women were practically the same. Women fixed their shoes with a string on top of flaxen foot wraps. At the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a fashion for laced boots and high-heeled brogues initially worn only for special occasions (Kantor 1907, 35). Women also put on *strympfle* – stockings reaching above the knee and fixed in place by a rubber band (village: Brzegi 1927).

Around the half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century female folk attire underwent much development – many new fabrics and trimmings were introduced. The influence of the neighbouring region of Kraków became more and more pronounced, as the dress of the Cracovians was considered more beautiful due to its opulence and colourfulness (ill. 99 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 273).

#### PERMANENCE AND CHANGE

The increased accessibility of factory-made materials and ready-made clothes, combined with the high prices of the elements of folk attire prompted the inhabitants of Podhale to abandon their regional dress. It began to be used mostly as a costume for ceremonial occasions. The folk attire of Podhale became more ornamental, losing the features of everyday folk wear (Kantor 1991, 625). These changes were influenced by many factors.

The establishing of a border between Poland and Czechoslovakia, which was a result of the First World War, had consequences for the appearance of folk apparel. The southern trade subsided and high-quality textiles (e.g. silk or broadcloth from Bystrica), accessories (silver buttons, shoes for formal dress, broad belts) and sheepskin for coats no longer reached Podhale (Kantor 1991, 625). Equally significant was the closing of artisan workshops producing various elements of traditional costume. Female dress was heavily influenced by Cracovian folk attire and city fashions, whereas many elements of traditional male apparel were replaced with clothing worn by city-dwellers.

In the periods of Romanticism and then Positivism, the turn towards the common people and their culture manifested itself e.g. in the fashion for wearing stylised folk costumes to dances, balls and masques. This was treated as a patriotic display. Many of those who visited Zakopane at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century chose to wear some elements of folk attire. In 1880 Wojciech Kossak wrote that doctor Tytus Chałubiński “was often seen in a *serdak* and a hat, surrounded by highlanders and discussing their matters” (Piotrowski 1970, 173). Holidaymakers even introduced a fashion for dressing in highlander style. “Very many ladies dress like peasant girls [...]. Zakopane is filled with groups of ladies wearing red underskirts, white shirts with puffed sleeves, strings of coral necklaces and headscarves – would that they all were young and really pretty...” (Witkiewicz 1963, 74).



From the earliest attempts at creating a Polish fashion and a national costume, it was folk arts and crafts that provided inspiration. Already in the 1890s there was a movement to popularise the fabrics, embroideries and lace made by local artisans or inspired by folk design. The Society for Promoting Folk Industry (Towarzystwo Popierania Przemysłu Ludowego) opened shops with folk arts and crafts (Sieradzka 1991, 69–71).

As the idea of the Zakopane style became widely known (early 20<sup>th</sup> century), systematic attempts at creating a nation-wide fashion based on the art of Podhale started to be made. The elites tried to combine fashionable cuts with folk attire by using traditional fabrics, but while they attempted to introduce some elements of folk costume into everyday dress, the apparel worn in the countryside started to change, slowly losing its originality. “Holidaymakers made the old householder into a fellow with lordly manners, who would gladly get rid of all his old clothing if it made his guests adore him even more and let him earn some money” (Kantor 1912, 391).

Another phenomenon that ought to be mentioned is the fact that traditional highlander dress is worn by members of the Polish diaspora, especially in the USA, as a large group of emigrants from Podhale settled there. Late 1870s and early 1880s marked the beginning of a period of intensive emigration from Podhale – many highlanders left their homeland in search for job opportunities, heading mostly to the United States. They were primarily poor people, emigrating out of sheer necessity and planning to come home having earned enough *dutki* (money). Many of them decided to stay abroad and provided financial support from their families in Poland; others caused their kin and friends to re-join them and helped them find employment; others still came back to houses of their fathers, often bringing novel ideas, also with regard to clothing. In many cases, however, highlanders returned to their traditional attire.

The large group of highlanders residing in the USA did not renounce their cultural identity. “Those born in the States are not ashamed of their fathers’ culture. Though they hardly know any Polish, young people often like to wear highlander attire for festive occasions, in order to emphasise their heritage”. (Krzeptowska-Jasinek and Krzeptowski-Jasinek 1990, 38)

The baptising ceremonies, funerals and weddings are organised according to the Podhale traditions. Highlander costume and music from Podhale are indispensable elements of social gatherings of this kind. Many households in villages under consideration include a member of the family who is living in *Hameryka* (America). Such relatives receive traditional Podhale clothing as gifts sent by post or brought by visiting family members. Many sources, including the press, indicate that the Polish diaspora in America has played a particularly significant role in preserving the traditional highlander costume.

The fact that highlanders living across the ocean continued to dress in folk attire affected traditional dress in Podhale. On the one hand it inspired pride, on the other – helped preserve the costume, often creating new fashions, e.g. for wearing *szmatki*



with traditional floral ornaments or Turkish patterns the weave of which included metallised golden or silver threads, *ubrania* (bodices and skirts) of delicate velvet fabrics and decorative appliqués or other types of ornaments added to female attire.

In the 1930s Zborowski, an expert on Podhale culture (1972, 339) noted with regret, that “day by day we see less and less of the highlander. In the vicinity of Zakopane most locals wear sweaters, vests or leather jackets to white *portki* or a highlander hat”. “Highlander women abandon their old clothes for Cracovian attire, but highlander men only know the way from traditional dress to clothes worn in the city” (Zborowski 1972, 338). Although written so long ago, these remarks still hold true.

The attitude towards children’s clothing has changed significantly. Many parents are nowadays willing to buy their children very costly garments of fashionable cut and quality fabrics. Such clothing is considered a sign of wealth of the family, therefore parents often compete in this respect, striving to impress others with novel ideas. Older villagers often condemn this practice.

The full costume – trousers, a shirt, a *serdak* or a *cucha* and a hat – is bought in stages, so that every boy might have it for his Confirmation, i.e. when he is fifteen or sixteen. Interviews with schoolchildren indicate that girls get full sets of traditional clothes earlier than boys – parents usually wait until their sons stop growing very fast, most often due to the high price of broadcloth. “For the time being I do not own it [traditional costume], because I am young, but when I grow up I will buy it for my wedding” (Janusz).<sup>5</sup>

Boys usually get at least a pair of *kierpce*, a shirt and a hat for their First Communion. Most girls aged eight and nine own leastwise skirts made of *tybet* with floral ornaments, velvet bodices and white blouses. The accessories include necklaces, *kierpce* and *fortuchy*. A skirt of *tybet*, a white shirt and a coral necklace is enough to regard someone as dressed in folk apparel. “I like to wear folk costume, because I respect it” (Danuta).

The attitude towards folk attire and folk culture displayed by the young generation seems crucial for the future of these phenomena and their preservation. “I wear folk clothing willingly, because it is very beautiful and visitors coming to Podhale admire it” (Dariusz). “I would like to have a folk costume, because it is the pride of the entire household” (Dariusz). Folk attire is generally regarded as beautiful, elegant and festive.

The views of young (and older) inhabitants of Podhale on folk costumes have to a considerable extent been shaped by teachers and the clergy. Such individuals propagate folk culture and encourage highlanders to wear traditional clothing (e.g. for ceremonies such as baptising of children, the First Communion, church fairs, weddings, etc.), thus contributing to the preservation and continuation of Podhale traditions.

<sup>5</sup> This and the following quotations are from the questionnaire on the folk dress – answers of the children from 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades of the primary schools in Brzegi, Małe Ciche and Ząb – the Archives of the Ethnology Section in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków; sign. no. 1807–1809.

One of the most cherished elements of male attire are still the *portki*, despite the fact that they are sometimes made of factory-made broadcloth.

Traditionally, the process of making the trousers started with a tailor taking approximate measurements and cutting the cloth. Highlander trousers have two flies (*przypony*) in the front and are slit at the outer side of the hem of the trouser legs. The seam running through the back and the sides of the trouser legs is both strengthened and decorated with a stripe of twelve to fourteen strings of black woollen yarn (for some time there was a fashion for dark blue stripes).

By the slits at the hem the trousers have a decoration called *kistka* (a pompom of woollen yarn, usually black with a red centre). The symmetrical trimmings on the hips are called *pieski* or *kobuty*. The main decoration of the *portki* are the large ornaments in the front, called *parzenice*.<sup>6</sup> To make it, the artisan first drew the outlines and then filled them in chain stitch embroidery, creating various ornamental patterns: *kule*, *kotwice*, *listki*, *krokiewki*, *szpic*. The round element in the centre of the *parzenica* is called *świat*.

The colours used for embroidered decoration included red, pink, light pink, green, willow green, deep blue, light blue, dark red and even white or orange. If paid extra, the artist could also fill the spaces in between ornaments with parnassia flower patterns. *Parzenice* then became very large. A beautiful and lavish embroidery was sure to catch the eye of the Sunday crowd in front of the church – “he’s done some fine broidery” (ill. 101 in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 283). According to Roman Reinfuss (1951, 78), “*parzenice* in Podhale evolve in two directions – on the one hand becoming brighter in colours and overloaded with plant ornaments, so that the outline of the decoration merges with the surrounding motifs of thistles or roses; on the other hand it becomes more and more simple, reverting to its old forms of diamond-shaped *krzesiwko*”. *Parzenice* of the older type made in three basic colours (red, green and black) have been fashionable for the last few years.

There are several ways of wearing trousers with *kierpce*. According to various interlocutors, the traditional method was to sew the hems of the trouser legs below the heel and put them inside the shoes, later tying the leather laces around the calf. Thus, trousers looked tighter at the ankle and the slits at the hems were more exposed and better-fitting. Later, however, it became popular to leave the hems of the trouser legs outside. It allowed men to dress more quickly and prevented the hems from damage. Both of these methods are still in use.

Shirts are sewn according to contemporary patterns. They have a collar, sleeves gathered into cuffs and buttons in the front. “The old fashions are now coming back, linen shirts are now cream-coloured or sometimes dark; maybe [the custom] was started

<sup>6</sup> The subject of *parzenice* has been discussed in detail in a monograph by T. Seweryn (1930). Mulkiwicz has also written about them in her work *Parzenice gorczańskie* (1955). In time, this type of decoration has become a visible sign and of regional identity and a symbol thereof.

by folk groups” (village: Małe Ciche). The latest trend is to wear waist-length shirts with wide sleeves with no cuffs. Such shirts are modelled after traditional Wallachian ones. Most highlander men today own metal pins for clasping the shirt at the neck. They are now a purely decorative element that has long lost its original function. The sizes and materials differ – some pins are even made of silver and gold. Sometimes the centrepiece of the pin includes a miniature of a state medal.

Recently there has been a return of the fashion for an older type of hat, with a wide brim to shade the face. It is decorated with a feather of a black grouse, an eagle or a condor (these may be bought on street fairs in Nowy Targ) tucked behind the string of mussels. To this one can also add *kistka*, i.e. the down of *pulka* (a turkey).

Depending on the occasion and the role a person is to play, highlanders don black *cuchy* or the shorter white type. The former garment is worn by *pytace* at a wedding and the coffin-bearers during a funeral. White *cuchy* “are made more ornamental for the young [than for the old], with flowers and winding lines on green broadcloth”, edged around the neckline (village Ząb 1924) (ill. XVII in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 288–289). They are decorated at the back with an embroidered ornament shaped like a parnassia flower or the more old-fashioned edelweiss or rose. The embroidery starts at the neckline. At the front of the garment there are decorative patterns – three roses or a peacock feather; the mock pocket on the chest is also decorated. Embroideries are chiefly done in green, red and pink. The hems of the sleeves are also embellished. In times when more modest attire is required, such as in Advent or Lent, highlanders wear *bluzki* (a type of an outer garment modelled after Austrian military jackets. In winter they put on hip-length sheepskin coats with long sleeves.

*Serdaki* also came back into fashion. “The pattern on them was always the same – lilies” embroidered with woollen thread in various colours (village: Ząb 1924). The wealthier the householder, the broader the fur trimmings on his *serdak*. The garment has two pockets in the front, decorated with an appliqué of red leather and with trimmings. *Serdaki* are worn for various types of formal occasions, both secular and religious. Together with white sheepskin coats from Białka, *serdaki* constitute a visible indicator of wealth. Many highlanders claim that such garments are worn only in good weather, so that they don’t get dirty or damaged. The high prices make it impossible to replace sheepskin coats or jackets very often and compel people to treat their garments with care, wearing them only seldom.

Broad belts traditionally worn by senior shepherds are now owned by very few householders, who lend them to other people for special occasions. According to one of the interviewed highlanders, “such is the fashion nowadays, since folk groups started to wear those”, that all those who can afford them buy a wide *opasek* for themselves (village Ząb 1923).

Female attire. Female dress may consist of the traditional set of clothes (a white shirt decorated with embroidery, a bodice, a skirt of *tybet* and *kierpce*) or a more recent

variation favoured by many village fashionistas – *ubranie*, i.e. a set of a velvet bodice and skirt decorated with colourful or sometimes golden pattern of beads, sequins and thread.

Wide-sleeved white blouses with large collars are decorated with more and more intricate *broderie anglaise*. In the last few years it has become fashionable to sew the broad ruff-like collars to a stand-up collar, to make them lie nicely over the bodice. Embroidered patterns change and become richer, especially on the sleeves. The most popular motifs include roses, lilies and above all *parzenice*. Embroidered decoration on the underskirt became larger and may now take up even three fourths of its total length. The underskirts – *fortuchy* – are worn under skirts of *tybet* or velvet, to help shape their outline. Initially the underskirts were very ample and made the hips look broad, which was then a desirable feature. When it became fashionable to be more slender, the cut of the underskirts changed – they were now narrower and close-fitting, emphasising the waist and hips.

The fashion for skirts has mainly been changing with regard to the length, the width and the colours of *dno* (background) or the printed decoration. One inhabitant of the Ząb village commented that “in the past the skirts used to be longer, calf-length. Slightly shorter ones were worn only by brides on their wedding day. In the 1970s there came a fashion for shorter skirts that left the knees on show. Recently, however, there has been a comeback of the older customs, and the skirts grew longer again”. A set consisting of a white blouse and a bodice is always worn with a skirt of *tybet* with floral ornaments (roses, cherries etc.). The background is usually white, blue or green. Current trends include skirts with *korona*, i.e. a denser floral decoration at the hem, which originated from Bukowina. Skirts with a dense, evenly distributed pattern of small flowers are, in turn, characteristic for Ząb (ill. XIX in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 288–289).

The *tybet* fabrics for the skirts are bought at the market in Nowy Targ. They are usually imported from the United States and produced most probably in Japan. Such textiles are highly valued for their softness, lightness and the durability of the colours. Skirts and bodices are equally often sewn from fine velvet fabrics also imported from abroad. A set consisting of a velvet skirt and a bodice of exactly the same colour and decorated with a matching pattern is referred to as *ubranie*. Most popular colours include green, dark red, dark blue and black, yet brides usually prefer to wear white. As with the other type of bodices, the decoration (silver, golden or multi-coloured) is done by professional seamstresses (*szwoczki*). The embroidered pattern is composed of floral scrolls embellished with grain ears, flowers (martagon lilies, roses, tulips, elder), grapevines and leaves. One of the recently fashionable patterns is roses made of many sequins and beads, so that the entire ornament is visibly convex and very impressive (ill. XX in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 288–289).

The cut of the bodice has not undergone any changes. They are waist-length and close-fitting, with a U-shaped neckline and tabs (*kaletki*) at the hem. Bodices are

laced in the front – the ribbon (three to four fingers wide) is tied at the hem into a large bow. Velvet bodices are now decorated with sequins forming plant motifs – one rich and large ornament at the back and two smaller ones symmetrically at the front (ill. XVIII in: Hermanowicz-Nowak 2000, 288–289). A decoration of *parnassia* flowers is now enjoying the most popularity, having all but replaced *martagon* lilies, *edelweiss* and *chrysanthemum* twigs. According to Reinfuss (1954, 68) this trend results from a ‘contamination’ of traditional folk craft brought about by Stanisław Witkiewicz – an artist who admired and propagated highlander handicraft and “introduced the naturalistic form of *parnassia* into the patterns used in Podhale”.

Bodices are usually worn by unmarried girls and young married women. Older ladies generally prefer to don *wizytka* (a type of shirt) and a skirt, usually of the same fabric, decorated with flat embroidery.

Scarves of various types complement the costume and provide additional decoration. Very popular are headscarves of fine *tybet* fabric, fashionably embellished with tassels (*strzępki*) at the hem. These are usually worn by middle-aged and older ladies. Younger women prefer light-coloured scarves with floral or sometimes Turkish ornaments. One-coloured scarves (*szmatki*) called *jedwobki*, with a pattern of shiny leaves or flowers against a dull background, decorated with *szczyty* (a type of decorative plaited tassels), have fallen out of favour. Highlander women tie their headscarves under the chin and pull them to the back of their heads to show the forehead and the smoothened hair.

*Odziewacki* – thick chequered scarves that are folded over diagonally and wrapped over the entire body – are nowadays a rare sight, worn mostly by the elderly. In wintertime such scarves could also cover the head. On religious holidays and other festive occasions highlander ladies wear on their shoulders large diagonally folded shawls of *tybet*. Shawls of the same material folded lengthwise and decorated with tassels are referred to as *szole*.

*Kierpce* decorated with metal studs and typical footwear from the city – men’s dress shoes, women’s lacquer shoes and brogues – are nowadays worn equally often. Foot wraps have been replaced with white woollen socks. Before the war there was a custom of wearing thread stockings, but nowadays nylon ones are much more popular.

Female hairstyles have undergone significant changes. In the 1970s girls started to wear fringes and later to cut their hair. This was in most cases a result of women deciding to work in the city – highlanders wanted to follow city fashions and not to stand out. Wearing short hair was also a matter of convenience. “The fashion nowadays is unsightly, but highlander girls should not follow it; wearing a bodice to such tousled hair. Hardly any girl has hair to speak of, and these are the highlands, they should have long braids” (village: Małe Ciche 1927).



The tradition of wearing folk attire (and following other regional customs) may only be continued when two conditions are fulfilled. Firstly, folk costumes ought to be worn with pride, to impress others and display one's cultural identity. If folk clothing is deemed beautiful and is in demand, it will continue to be produced. Secondly, the people of the region must be affluent enough to afford the relatively costly ceremonial attire worn only several times a year, as a visible sign of status.

In his monograph on folk attire in Podhale, completed in the 1970s, Antoni Kroh writes:

“The contemporary dressing style of the inhabitants of Podhale includes the following trends and types of attire: 1. The Podhale costume, also referred to as ‘highlander attire’. It is ceremonial and worn for special occasions, e.g. family celebrations, folk group performances etc. In the popular view this type of attire is a direct continuation of the traditional Podhale dress; it is considered the most archaic; 2. A combination of traditional clothing and elements of contemporary attire [...]; 3. Items of clothing worn only in Podhale, but not belonging to the traditional folk costume, e.g. jackets modelled after Austrian military uniform from the period of the monarchy now worn by older men; trousers cut like skiing attire worn in the summer, etc.; 4. The everyday style of Podhale youth [...]; 6. Elements of traditional Podhale dress worn by non-local people due to contemporary fashions, e.g. the trend for wearing *kierpce* as summer shoes, pins and buckles with traditional ornaments from Podhale worn by men and women, etc.; 7. Adapting some decorative elements of the folk costume from Podhale, such as pins or *parzenice*, for purposes not related to clothing” (Kroh 1972, 3).

The distinction introduced by Kroh demonstrates the freedom with which traditional items of clothing are mixed with contemporary styles. Highlanders from Podhale developed a characteristic style of formal and casual dress, unique to the region.

Many interlocutors claim that the 1960s and 1970s were a period of fascination with modernity – jeans and popular music. Increased communication with close and distant relatives living abroad, the steady inflow of presents and money, and the contacts with city life shook the foundations of traditional culture. “It was already visible that highlander dress is becoming a matter of the past” (village: Ząb 1950). However, the last fifteen years have brought a slow but steady return to tradition. This is related to the overall increase in the level of cultural awareness in the population, and in organised activity (schools, the Society of Podhale, fire brigades, folk bands). More inter-regional interest in Podhale culture and tradition contributes to a movement for the preservation of folk costumes and customs. Due to reawakened pride in their roots and as a result of the improvement of their financial situation, highlanders began to respect their regional attire and turned their attention to its older forms. There has been an apparent trend towards more traditional types of clothing. “Now everybody takes care to own a set of folk clothes. There are some whose honour prevents them from borrowing clothes, so they have to have their own” (village: Ząb 1924). More attention is devoted to the authenticity of all elements of attire – “now they take great care to wear *kierpce* on their feet, unlike in the 1960s, when they often matched

ornamental *portki* to dress shoes and non-iron shirts” (village: Ząb 1950). *Serdaki* are back in fashion, despite their considerable cost (having one has once more become a sign of status), as are linen shirts with an applied horizontal strip on the chest (*prowda*). Such shirts are given by brides-to-be to their fiancés before the wedding – unlike some time ago, when it was usual to buy a simple shirt in a shop.

Women are starting to introduce a fashion for an older type of attire, consisting of a longer, ample skirt matched with a buttoned shirt with long sleeves, worn with the tails out. These are modelled after the old-fashioned *wizytki* worn with skirts of the same fabric. “This is highlander costume for lesser occasions. Clothes in an old-fashioned style are now becoming popular” (Ząb 1950).

Many interlocutors are of the opinion that the various novelties and trends are started by folk bands, primarily those from Zakopane. Such groups had a profound influence on the return of the fashion for decorating *portki* with an old-fashioned type of *parzenice*, called *sabałówki*, embroidered in three colours. Recently there has been a tendency to return to an even older ornament called *petlica*. “It is the fashion now, since the folk groups started to wear these, the youngsters all want a belt that is three to four buckles wide” (Ząb 1923). Traditionally such belts were only worn by senior shepherds.

The fashion for older forms of attire is also promoted by the highlander elite, the youth from folk bands, the intelligentsia, regional activists and clothing manufacturers. The role of a cultural centre of the highlands where new trends originate has long been played by Zakopane.

The influence of folk bands on the current form of folk costume may be described thus: the primary form of traditional folk attire was slowly being abandoned; various items were worn in combination with modern clothing. However, groups of folk dancers consulted specialists and worked hard to reconstruct “a pure form of costume”. These bands performed for highlander audiences who, seeing that their costumes are beautiful and admired by locals and foreigners, started to ‘cleanse’ their own attire of cultural accretions. Today owning a full costume is a cause of pride.

Kroh (1972, 5) noted that:

“Perhaps the most important reason for the continuing popularity of folk attire in the villages of Podhale is the will to emphasise highlander roots, heritage and tradition. Wearing a folk costume is also a way of accentuating the importance of an occasion. For this reason highlanders put on traditional attire when going to church, weddings, baptising ceremonies and other social gatherings (e.g. to greet ecclesiastical dignitaries). Both these factors – ceremony and displaying highlander heritage are, naturally, interconnected”.

The current popularity of folk attire, its continuing evolution and the esteem it enjoys are indeed exceptional phenomena. An expert of Podhale culture, Reinfuss (1988, 16), wrote that:

“The ‘Podhale phenomenon’ has no counterpart in any other ethnic group. It was born of a myth created more than a hundred years ago by a group of enthusiasts, most of whom did not have highlander roots. This phenomenon was closely connected to the development of Zakopane and the improvement of the economic situation of Podhale [...]. Recognition of the value of folklore by external factors, regarded as ‘higher’ and respected by the local population, has much impact on the status of traditional culture in its native environment”.

Changes of form and style appearing in folk costume are impossible to hold back. Mechanisms similar to those that worked in the past are still in motion. Contemporary canons of fashion are less stable than they used to be. Trends appear very quickly and are soon forgotten. It seems that the folk attire of Podhale is currently experiencing a period of revival, connected with the need to emphasise cultural roots and heritage.

Summing up, it may be argued that the prolonged popularity of folk attire in Podhale was influenced by the following factors: 1) such clothing is well adapted to geographical and environmental conditions in the region; 2) folk costumes are made of local materials by specialist craftsmen; 3) at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century the intelligentsia propagated folk attire elevating its status; 4) highlander dress, along with Cracovian attire, was an acknowledged representative national costume; 5) folk bands and specialists in the field of folklore cooperated to popularise regional attire; 6) in some professions it was necessary to wear folk costume to work;<sup>7</sup> 7) highlanders wished to emphasise the importance of some occasions; 8) clergymen praised the congregation for appearing in folk attire in church; 9) many highlanders (emigrants, politicians) felt the need to show their cultural heritage; 10) such attire is ideal for representative and ceremonial purposes.

“For these fifteen years folk clothing has been coming back, people return to old-fashioned patterns. It is mostly the Highlanders Alliance and the bands that help uphold the customs, each person tries to assemble a full costume, although it is a bit bothersome to wear, so it is not put on every day” (village: Małe Ciche 1949). Moreover “they [folk bands] mind that all is in accordance with tradition, it is now ‘cool’ to do so – each person tries to find even more ancient cuts or decoration, all compete in this respect”.<sup>8</sup> Old decorative techniques and materials are being reintroduced to folk attire. “True highlander fabrics are sheep’s wool, leather, linen, all which is made locally and can be fashioned by hand, this is true folklore” (Małe Ciche 1932).

<sup>7</sup> Such professions include e.g. carriage drivers in Zakopane, vendors in Krupówki Street, coachmen taking tourists to Morskie Oko Lake, shepherds while herding sheep in the National Park.

<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to speculate how far back will this trend for ever older patterns reach. According to Kroh “in late 1920s and early 1930s, when young people from Bukowina started to imitate their peers from Zakopane and introduced the fashion for more traditional types of dress (which are nowadays considered ‘typical’ and ‘timeless’), the older generation was outraged. In Ciche the first owners of richly embroidered *portki* were dubbed *kurwiorze* (whoring boys) and only reluctantly admitted into the church. If a highlander from one hundred years ago rose and saw the contemporary folk costume, he would not guess that it is the attire from Bukowina” (1995, 69).

To a great extent, the current status of regional dress in Podhale reflects the current situation of the local Podhale culture and the direction of the changes. It mirrors both the positive and the negative cultural phenomena that are nowadays taking place. “One cannot expect the life of the peasant to forever remain as it is today or to return to what it was in the past, yet those elements which had not changed do not clash with modernity and should be cherished and preserved, even if they can be observed only on special occasions” (Zborowski 1972, 397).

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