

Technology of Wool Cloak Production in West Georgia

Abstract: According to the archeological data in Georgia, cattle-raising seems to have developed from the first steps of productive economy. In ancient Kolkha, sheep-raising is assumed to have been well-developed since it provided inhabitants with food and clothing as well as wool to contribute to the farming economy.

Since a high-quality wool cloak greatly depended on wool quality and a multi-step, complicated treatment of the wool the present research is based on empiric experience with such high-quality products.

Furthermore, since length and color were also essential elements for a wool cloak, field research and sources also support the article's analysis.

Keywords: Cattle breeding, sheep breeding, wool.

According to the archeological data, cattle breeding seems to have been developed from the initial stage of productive farming in the Western Georgia. Sheep breeding also seems to be a developed field.

Information about development of sheep farming in Kolkha is referred in the literature of the ancient period and in the later sources. It is mainly associated with the Golden Fleece from the legend about the Argonauts and it presumably referred to Kolkha, and in general, the highland of the western Georgia, where historically sheep farming was developed together with the cattle breeding (there are many historical data about moving of the Kolkhetian sheep producers to Greece and Rome by Greek new-settlers). There is an assumption, that ancient Greek sheep contributed to development of the Italian and Sicilian soft wool sheep formation, which was introduced to Spain later, finally gave the ground to the high-cultural traits of Merino sheep. (Рчеулишвили 1913: 165-179)). According to K. Gunter, the eastern Black Sea coast, in particular Kolkheti, should be considered as one of the earliest homelands of soft-wool sheep (Gunter K. 1951: 224).

Based on the special studies, the high culture of soft wool sheep breeding was defined in the ancient Kolkha and the tendency of VIII-VII centuries Black Sea Coastal Greek sheep breeding was revealed later. (Borozdin and others, 1927: 29, 3, 482).

Since ancient times this sector of the agriculture was versatile. It met the needs for food and cloth, but also provided the material for artisan industry in the form of wool.

Complicated technology of felt cloak production obtained during the field studies was proved by the rich empiric materials, demonstrated the high quality of the produce and existing demand on it.

The Megrelian artisans selected and processed wool for the felt cloak based on their great practical experience. They used the short easy-processing autumn wool for the cloak, while longer wool (Nabutu) trimmed before moving to the summer grazing land was much better by quality. However, they did not use it due to complexity of the processing.

The wool string defined the quality of the cloak. According to the informants, the short wool-string was more relevant for the felt cloak (the shorter the wool, the material is better).

Processing of the wool for the cloak seems quite difficult and it consisted of several stages: certain amount of wool (it required 7-8 **Laghankoni** i.e. 3.5-4 kg of wool) was combed manually first, then processed by combing machine/**Opetashe**. As a result it was sorted, the longer wools were used for the lower layer of the cloak, while softer one – **Orshvili** for decoration of the upper layer. The quality of felt cloak, having long wool was depended on the Orshvili. The second phase included working on the **Shkvili** (Skvili is the yarn on the bended stick), where wool was combed softly. According to the interpretation of a teller, the process is known by the name of Shkvili Rakua.

Distribution and processing of the wool on the Chachabi (Chachabi was the cloak size wide pallet plaited from flax or millet straws) used to start only this way. After sprinkling hot water on the wool arranged in the order described above (**Omoshiri** as the first layer, **Orshvili** as the second layer), chachab would be rolled like **Doputalande** by means of two Lanchvasha (**Lanchvasha** is the pointy-headed stick). The Chachab rolled together with the wool was kneaded manually, but mostly by food energetically for one or two days, then they spread it, removed thick pieces from the cloak. After that, they rolled only cloak, sprayed it with hot water, left it for one night and kneaded again. This stage of

processing was called **Doscamua**. After that, the final third stage started, then the cloak was placed on the pallet made from the walnut sticks and rolled, like **Dochertande**.

The felt cloak rolled on the withy pallet was sprayed by the hot water and kneaded again. After it is considered that kneading is completed, the cloak was spread out on the field and combed by the sharp comb with a wooden handle.

If a cloak had not much hair, they spray the ash (the ash makes more hairs) together with water and hitting by Lanchvasha – they collect **Dochortuat** hair.

They waved the wool in a special manner and it was the sign of high quality of the produce.

4-5 men used to hit the cloak for several times (7-8 times) strongly on the river (Kigiashkvandes), Thus, the fur was better gathered and washed from ash and other impurities. A washed felt cloak, folded into four, was kept into a pot for dyeing and the skin of Alder tree (Tkhomushi jak) was used for it (they left it for a night in the pot, and boiled it next day). Boiling of the felt cloak in the Krtbaki, which was applied during the second phase, made it more shining.

A tailor used to sew such cloak (Abesadze 1986: 21) from the whole piece of felt (the cloak was sewed only in the shoulders), the plaited leather **Bechili/Shibili** was attached on the breast and on both front skirts. The flat colored twisted belt was included in the same places of the cloak. There were two leather hooks in the collar, called **Kaka**, where the leather tie was placed. The felt cloak had shoulders (two types of shoulders were made rounded and pointed one) were narrow at the top and were widened at the bottom, though the lining was included only in half, up to waist.

The families of the Arkanias and Gogilavas from Jvari and the Muzhavas (almost every Muzhava family was familiar with this art), the Pipias and the Chanturias in Nagurus, the Adamias in Chkvaleri and the Goguas in Kurzu were famous with producing art of the felt cloaks;

According to the informants, they produce wedding and working felt cloaks. The working felt cloaks were thick and short ,while cloaks for

the guests “**Tumash Dokvakbili** were thin and long haired. The value of the cloak was defined based on its quality, length and decoration.

The information about high quality crossed felt cloak quality is found not only in the field materials (Abesadze, 1986: 27), but also in the literary sources. According to T. Sakhokia, in Samurzakano people used the felt cloaks “..Local felt cloaks almost are not sold. Mostly traders give the goods to the villagers for the felt cloaks instead of money ... shorter people use local felt cloaks more, those who are slim, they prefer to buy the felt cloaks from the village Jvari (Zugdidi Mazra) (Sakhokia 1986: 968).

The felt cloak production technology is typical for the Caucasus. As the Caucasian people developed similar culture and traditions during living together and long-term neighborhood, they demonstrate the local peculiarities caused by empiric life, which is also reflected in the diversified terminology and unique processing style.

References

- Abesadze N., *Artisan Production and Lifestyle of artisans in Georgian cities*, Tb., 1986.
- Borozdini K., Raf.Eristavi and Mourier, *Serfdom in Georgia*, Tiflis, 1927.
- Don Christophoro De Castelli, *Notes and Album about Georgia*, decoding of a text, the study and comments are added by Bezhan Giorgadze, Tb., 1977.
- Sakhokia T., *Travel, Guria, Adzharia, Samurzakano, Abkhazia*, Tb.,1986.
- Лорткипанидзе Г., *Животноводство и промыслы античной Колхиды*, С. Л., № 1 , 1967.
- Рчеулишвили М. , *К истории овцеводства Грузии*, Тб., 1913.
- Gunter K., *Formen und Urgeschichte der Schafe*, Gothingen, 1951