

Some Comments on the Female and Male Costumes of Kalavryta During the Greek Revolution

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Abstract

The female and male traditional costumes of Kalavryta (19th century, era of the Greek Revolution) are considered of unique cultural value for a number of reasons. This brief article presents an overview of these two ensembles for the first time. The female traditional costume exhibits several similarities with the corresponding costume of Edipsos (Evia), mainly regarding embroideries. The jacket however is absent. Regarding the male traditional costume, the sources are very few. It has a characteristic meandering embroidery similar to the one of Tripoli. The costumes have been manufactured by hand and the main materials used are canvas, sayaki and felt. The traditional costumes of Kalavryta are considered of particular significance for folklore science today, as they may contribute to re-approaching the historical documentation of traditional clothing at a nationwide level.

Introduction

The female and male traditional costumes of Kalavryta (19th century, era of the Greek Revolution) are considered of unique cultural value for a number of reasons:

- a) the area of Kalavryta is a geo-cultural zone of increased historical value, especially with regard to recent and modern social history. Therefore, it is profoundly evident that the costumes function as part of a mosaic in every mosaic composition of cultural interest;
- b) to date, they have not been described, documented, published in a complete and official manner in any printed academic publication or other reputable medium of museum/exhibition content or purpose (e.g.,

Magazine, Volume, Art Catalog from a Museum or Folklore/Ethnological Institute),

c) these two ensembles do not date back to the (early) 20th century, like most of the traditional costumes officially presented to date. Therefore, its presentation in a museum/exhibition would serve as a stepping stone to reassess the relevant category of material culture collected;

d) the aforementioned lacuna allows for the potential of modifying original local and national modern Greek history, by adding to other cultural circles with competing interests who wish to structure and reinforce their own cultural development through the fabrication of non-historically-folkloric documented narratives, and

e) their official documentation will help revive a nationwide feeling of philhellenism. The Peloponnese being the mother-land of the first capital of the Greek state will always maintain a central position in the thinking of the organizations and associations of philhellenes abroad. Kalavryta should participate in this spectrum, or, in other words, it is beneficial to strengthen their participation in the costume's reconstruction.

Technical and critical analysis

The female and male traditional costumes of Kalavryta (19th century, era of the Greek Revolution) are remarkable elements for studying the Greek tradition, given that they preserve notions running through the respective geo-culturally reinforced *genius loci* since ancient times. This is made evident through the successive transformations they underwent in order to ultimately match the contemporary socio-cultural facts and prevailing aesthetic notions (Mazarakis-Ainian & Lada-Minotou, 2016; Papantoniou, 2000; Papathoma, 2019). In other words, clothing can function as a regulator of "internal homogeneity" for the local-cultural as a total (Papantoniou & Maha-Bizoumi, 2014). Of course, a correct folklore-costume documentation, even if it is concise, should include as much information as possible, on the one hand, regarding the context of its use (e.g. place, time, gender, age, social class, occasion, and on the other hand regarding the conditions of its construction.

The female costume of the Kalavryta of the 19th century (the time of the Greek Revolution of 1821) belongs to the most difficult cases of description-documentation due to the minimal and sporadic references that we find in studying the sources (surviving examples, sketches, testimonies, etc.). Nevertheless, according to the relevant information, initially recorded by Angeliki Hatzimichalis (1978) and Gysis Papageorgiou

(2011, using the folklore collection of Andreas Papageorgiou), it is known that the costume under scrutiny shows several similarities with the corresponding costume of Edipsos (Evia), mainly regarding her embroideries (Hatzimihalis, 1969). In the Kalavryta costume, however, the jacket is absent. At the same time, the canvas shirt has sleeves with - at least - triple decorative bands, dominated by elaborate geometric patterns, which in turn create an impressive pseudo *horror vacui*. Similar embroideries can also be seen on the hemline, from which the pillars of Edipsos' costume are missing. The siguni -which slightly resembles that of Edipsos- is white, also decorated, for the weaving of which the raw material used is sayaki, i.e. a kind of woolen fabric with a coarse texture, which is certainly suitable to the climate of that geographical zone. The apron is made of felt, and is mainly decorated with floral motifs. The apron varies, primarily in terms of its color and secondarily in terms of the choice of floral decoration, depending on the age. Hence the aprons of the younger women are red, with the lower part of them decorated with flowers of various vivid colors, while the aprons of the older women are black, with the lower part of them decorated with very simply rendered heart-shaped petals and not whole-flowers emerging from the earth. This fact refers to the cycle of life, to the end of puberty.

There are doubts about the existence of a buckle. Here, opinions differ, as the above standards do not allow us to draw certain conclusions. Also, we know that not all costumes necessarily included buckles or at least they did not carry such a utilitarian-decorative accessory as an integral costume element. In other words, they did not on every occasion. In the case of our study, due to the individual construction-composition elements of the costume, the existence of a buckle as a rule would not be necessary, except under special circumstances (e.g. festive buckles), in which the beautification of the whole ensemble would be more "imposed". Also, at this point, it is worth pointing out that buckles, in general, are the best-known and most geographically spread-out object-residue of material culture from the time of the Byzantine Empire. In fact, when we refer to these specific objects, we refer mainly to men's clothing accessories, since their main role is to hold the belt (belt or garter belt). The luxurious materials, such as gold and precious stones, that some buckles are manufactured of, as well as their ornate decoration, prove that they have been worn repeatedly and decisively and classify them in the category of both men's and women's jewelry (Nika, 2014; Poulos-Papadimitriou, 2002; Ministry of Culture and Sports, 1997). Actually, newer folk tradition inherited from urban, or even regional, Byzantine silversmithing workshops includes a multitude of designs and patterns with a particular semantic value, fundamentally differentiated for men and women but always deliberately chosen. As already mentioned, the costume itself, either as a whole or in its constituent parts, is a medium for declaring (and co-manifesting) messages and testifying various aspects of a person's social life.

Therefore, designs such as snakes-dragons, horses, crowns, eight-pointed stars, ten-leafed roses, eyes, ankles, etc., consciously survived along the evolutionary course of the Greek cultural flow and were incorporated into compositional elements of traditional men's and women's clothing.

The costumes of Kalavryta, among others, are considered of particular significance for folklore science today, as they may contribute to re-approaching the historical documentation of traditional clothing at a nationwide level. As is widely known, the first traditional costume that has been fully recorded is that of Psariani, which was worn during the same period as the costume of Kalavryta. In fact, it definitely dates back to 1827, as confirmed by a watercolor by the Philhellenic officer Karl Krazeizen (1794 – 1898), considering that all the individual components of the costume are the same as those of the related costume housed in the National Historical Museum (Mazarakis -Ainian & Lada-Minotou, 2016).

Regarding the traditional costume of men, the sources we have available are even fewer. Therefore, the documentation process becomes more difficult. Based once again on the testimonies of Gysis Papageorgiou (2011), we believe that the male costume of Kalavryta stood out for its black (or dark blue) waistcoat, which had characteristic meandering embroidery around the perimeter, like that of Tripoli. A woolen cape was placed over the waistcoat, while the whole outfit was completed by a black woolen cap. The cape and the cap served practical purposes of the daily shepherd's life, especially given their needs arising from the geomorphology of that specific area.

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