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TEXTILES AND FOLK CLOTHES – A DISTINCTIVE PART OF ETHNOCULTURE

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Abstrakt

The facts of various studies on textiles, clothes, garments, bedding and covers always come according to a stage that involves codifications in social, historical, customary levels and from century to century not only a diversity but also a permanent continuity is created in these garments. Thus, the linguistic, psychological, geographical aspect gives us and conveys a lot of data that intertwine and create connections sometimes visible and sometimes invisible between them.

The aesthetic expressions of folk costume always bring that thought of how these clothes have carried the desire for a better, more beautiful life in the conditions of everyday life and survival. Folk applied arts must be constantly studied for what they bring, the great variety of colors and at the same time the diverse motifs that express in themselves a rich world. It is of interest to see this wealth, their typology and artistic structure. Clothing has been important to the Albanian, and if we refer to traditions, he dressed his house, his friend's room, as best as possible.

If we see with our mind's eye a traditional Albanian guest room, from an ethnographic point of view we encounter careful work in woodwork, ceilings, doors, windows, shelves on the wall next to the fireplace, as well as carpets and other bedding that indicate a refined artistic taste. Likewise, the artistic motifs were extremely beautiful and full of expressions of different figures that inspired spiritual peace in the friend and brought a pleasant atmosphere. The variety of shapes, colors, connected and disconnected between them brought this and expressed all that fantasy that went into a mobile perfection.

Thus, the bedding and covers, or the various coverings of walls and domestic environments, are also related to a living space that is as comfortable, cozy, and aesthetic as possible, and always brought to certain spiritual functions that constituted a silent and enlightened aristocracy of the mountaineer ethnos. Likewise, clothing, bedding, and blankets have come from an old tradition, but they have also witnessed different social and economic conditions, the different movements and spaces of these movements, the different influences as a result of the invasions and migrations that the population has made to other areas of Albania or among other peoples.

Keywords: *Clothing, bedding and coverings, tradition, variety of shapes, colors, asymmetry
Geometric motifs, ornaments.*

Clothes, bedding and covers

The facts of various studies on textiles, clothes, garments, bedding and covers always come according to a stage that involves codifications in social, historical, customary levels and from century to century not only a diversity but also a permanent continuity is created in these garments. Thus, the linguistic, psychological, geographical aspect gives us and conveys a lot of data that intertwine and create connections sometimes visible and sometimes invisible between them.

Through linguistics and psychology, through the environment and various jobs, crafts, and specialties, the way of dressing is always explained, because folk clothing cannot be considered anything other than an inevitable reflex of these very important factors, and in this identifying parallel we say that we have arrived at a scholarly truth which brings us the pleasure of presenting it to the reader and the wider public.

These factors have been seen intertwined not only in Tropoja, but also in Plavë Guci, Vuthaj, Dukagjin, Has, Pukë, the Dukagjin Plain and beyond, to show that no clothing remains an isolated island even though each clothing preserves and specifies its own features within the general national typology. This has constantly brought a different perspective to the observation, and in this perspective we have always adhered to the principle that everything that borders on the other necessarily gives and takes while preserving its own features. Thus, we can rightly say that in these comparative or distinguishing levels, it turns out that the ethnographic regions I mentioned above can also be seen as a whole unit, not only because of proximity, but also because of their spiritual life and common historical destiny in dealing with the Slavic, Turkish element that came to these areas as a result of invasions and other historical circumstances. Viewed in this aspect, we can say that ethnicity has played a primary role, as have historical circumstances, always preserving the conservative element in folk and ethnographic clothing, an element that has distinguished and distinguished this clothing tradition over the centuries.

Likewise, this does not mean that the subjective element has not been preserved, that they have not given priority to colors according to the wishes of one or the other, and in this specific case, the different stylizations often create such surprises that they make us think about a free flow of the imagination of the folk clothing makers in these regions. Although many northern regions remained outside the administrative borders of Albania, they still retain these features in their clothing today, thus testifying not only to moral and spiritual resilience, but also to the fact that Albanian clothing is more beautiful and cannot be easily abandoned even though times and administrations change. During a good research work in the field, it has been observed that clothing varies not only from one area to another but also from one village to another. To study clothing in the Northern Highlands, it was necessary to focus on the materials that have been used for centuries for folk clothing and it is observed that they are materials that are closely related and come from the livestock environment.

The connection between man and the environment is an important condition in the study of clothing, livestock work and livestock with its wool has been an important source of livelihood and clothing. The first was the red sheep, then the black sheep, which was used by the Albanian highlanders and from which the clothing material, wool, was also obtained. Later, linen or various fabrics were also used according to industrial development and the opening and expansion of the market with two main centers: Shkodra and Gjakova. Goat wool was also used less, and this use came from the different atmospheric conditions, humidity, snow, cold, to which goat wool is more resistant and does not transmit atmospheric agents inside the human body.

Also, in the studies conducted, the various folk tools that served for knitting various pieces of wool that were used by the highlanders are described and deepened. They are described quite well in these studies and they show how they were used, by whom, and what their use brought about. The weft was the main tool that was used in the Gjakova Highlands.

These studies have always seen the clothing of the Albanian highlanders of the northern Highlands intertwined with the lifestyle, traditions, customs, construction and functionality of the Albanian tower, especially in this region. In many thematic divisions according to a structural organization of these studies, this is given, always remaining faithful to descriptive authenticity and drawing the appropriate conclusions from this. Although studies regarding the tower and the men's room, or its specific divisions, have not been limited and have brought their appearance to a complete state, there is still work to be done, because some of them are collapsing and remain abandoned by their owners.

"Our current reality has shown and is showing that, in the era of socialist construction, on the one hand, there is a limitation of the sphere of daily use of traditional clothing, but, on the other hand, their appreciation in several other directions increases greatly. Let us briefly mention some of the most important ones.

1) *Clothing is a rich source for reconstructing a vivid picture of the lifestyle of the broad peasant masses, at least for the period from the mid-19th century until the Liberation,*

2) *The study of folk costumes is of great importance due to the fact that they, as has been proven by numerous research in this field, are an important ethnic indicator. In them, especially in those elements of peasant clothing that, even in our century, were prepared entirely within the household economy, ancient shapes, cuts and ornaments are often preserved, which, compared with ancient medieval archaeological finds, etc., help us discover genetic connections with the culture of our ancestors, the early Albanians and the Illyrians, as well as analogies with the culture of other peoples.*

3) *Another aspect for which we appreciate folk costumes is undoubtedly their artistic value....."*¹

¹ Andromaqi Gjergji, *Mbi disa kritere të vlerësimit të veshjeve popullore*, Konferenca Kombëtare e Studimeve Etnografike. f.398 (28-30 qershor, 1976).

The aesthetic expressions of folk costume always bring the thought of how these garments have carried the desire for a better, more beautiful life in the conditions of everyday life and survival. Folk applied arts should be constantly studied for what they bring, the great variety of colors and at the same time the diverse motifs that express a rich world in themselves. It is interesting to see this wealth, their typology and artistic structure. They constitute a great wealth of our cultural heritage, bringing them into a perspective that from time to time must stop at them to understand all that great arsenal of artistic expression which makes us aware of this valuable wealth and which can be brought from time to time into new perspectives and brings numerous possibilities of in-depth scientific insights. Clothing has been important to the Albanian, and if we refer to traditions, he dressed his house, his friend's room, as best as possible.

"In Albanian ethnoculture, there are quite diverse folk costumes, some of which have been inherited since Illyrian times. They are the wealth of specific local communities, which should be presented as identity values that come from ancient times. The Xhubleta comes to us from the Bronze Age, attested in Klicevac in Bosnia (Dalmatia) from 4000 years ago, garments of this nature have been attested and in terracotta of ancient Minoan in Crete. From the Illyrian era we have the fustanella, the llabana, the dalmatic, etc. In them are preserved the values of the historical memory of the ancestors of the Albanians. Also worth mentioning in later times are the dresses with a shawl, a zhgun, a frock, and many other pieces worn by men and women in Rugova, Drenica in Kosovo, in the Gjakova Highlands, in Labëri, in Korça, the rirake dress in Myzeqe, the dress of Çermenika, etc. Albanian clothing has historical and aesthetic value. These must be preserved and exhibited as strong evidence of the cultural identity of our people, and they reinforce this identity even today, among Albanians and foreigners." ²

"Art in ethnoculture, as is evident in those mentioned above, has a syncretic nature: an element or phenomenon of art is connected to other elements or phenomena; they complement each other, giving each other even more meaning. In these artistic creations, a series of mindsets, ideas inherited from tradition, geographical conditions, myths and beliefs, various moral and ethno-legal phenomena, various norms of social organization according to older traditions operate....."

In this art, especially in the villages, in the highlands, creation had an individual nature, so the creative person, whether a woman or a man, put his or her own dough, feelings, thoughts, inspiration, artistic skills, as the case may be, but it also relied strongly on the tradition inherited from older generations, from the social environment where they lived and created. Creation here was intertwined with heritage: in songs, in stories, in dances, in laments, in clothing decorations, in stone, wood, metal works"³

If we see with our mind's eye a traditional Albanian guest room, from an ethnographic point of view we encounter careful work in woodwork, ceilings, doors, windows, shelves on the wall next to the fireplace, as well as carpets and other bedding that indicate a refined artistic taste. The cult of the friend for the Albanian was an impressively subtle cult and almost in this typical room in our highlands we always encounter a rich display of these garments, sleeping clothes, blankets, quilts, even

² Mark Tirta, *Tradita Etnokulturore dhe Bashkëkohësia*. Qendra e Studimeve Albanologjike, Instituti i Antropologjisë Kulturore dhe studimit të Artit, Tiranë, f. 117-118, 2011

³ Mark Tirta, *Etnologjia e Shqiptarëve*. Mitologjia e besimet popullore). Arti popullor. 1. Kuptimi i funksionit të artit popullor, f. 468. 2004

sheepskin blankets, etc. The wealth of motifs and colors is rare; we will see bright colors combined with other, calmer colors. Likewise, the artistic motifs were extremely beautiful and full of expressions of different figures that inspired spiritual peace in the friend and brought a pleasant atmosphere. The variety of shapes, colors, connected and disconnected between them brought this and expressed all that fantasy that went into a mobile perfection. (Fig.22.23). This old tradition of guest room bedding and various crafts testifies to an ancient past that has been passed down from generation to generation, bringing it to our days with a wealth of shapes, geometric and floral motifs. The straight lines, the twists, the asymmetries of the geometric figures expressed that unbridled fantasy of the highland woman who, confined within certain canonical norms and a social constriction, poured all her creative nerve into these beautiful and harmonious works of beauty. The primitive forms of these garments testify to precisely this and give us that spiritual wealth as well as the high care in dressing the friend's room, because the friend was a cult to the Albanian.

"The artistic Feature of Albanian Carpets.

Apart from the characteristics we mentioned, we have the decorative aspect of the Albanian carpets, which reflects the power of the personal feeling of our people, the artistic taste of their application and the distinguished talent of practicing it.

The Albanian Carpets are of a high standard, with harmonious combinations of colours, they express decorative and figurative designs which sometimes assume a symbolic stage.

But alongside these high developed forms there are carpets of a lower level on the artistic point of view, of a starting stage assuming the path of development.

Starting with these primitive forms, the Albanian Carpets passed various stages of development until they reached the present stage. We are studying the historical process of this development in three aspects: the technique of execution, the content of the designs, the style of the expressions.

1) The technique of execution: The Albanian Carpets, express the beauty only through the colours. The technical variations at work do not aim at embellishing them as it happens in general with the textile production, but they aim at the change of colours.

The first stage of artistic development appears only when colours are used.

2) The Designs and Their Content: Our country has inherited an ancient culture. In no other field are the traditions of its culture demonstrated more clearly than in the field of the designs of the people's art. In most cases, the same designs found on wood, are also found in the ornaments of the clothes, in the textiles, etc. The same designs are also found in the carpets of the country, The clue to get into the content of these designs is given by the people themselves, who call the objects with the names of the designs they are adorned with: We have carpets with wreaths, with disks, with cups, with mosques, with white loaves of bread, with stamps, with lams, with basins, with glasses, fold-and-unfold ones, with sun, with sun-flowers, with a stool, etc. names which are given from the main design of the object.

3) The Style of the Artistic Expressions: The style of the artistic expressions used in our carpets is equally interesting. This proceeded its development side by side with the technical development of the application and of the content of the designs.

As a first element in the style of artistic expressions used in our carpets, in their joining. Its aim is to wipe out the impressions that the carpet is made up of several parts, to limit its extent and to make the carpet seen to be a whole unit as a picture.

Within the surface of the carpet the designs are set in order according to the importance they assume”⁴

The nuances of colors and their combinations express both a real and a fantasized reality, seeking the search and pouring of a dream into subtle stylistic procedures. It is understood that the layouts, their subtle artistic works, have come from an old tradition, are also testifying to the different material conditions of the people in different historical periods, providing the social and historical environment, and traveling through time, determining the stage of social and economic development of each time. In a comparative view, they differ in appearance from one region to another and even within a region from one area to another, but always having a common thread of similarity where harmonious colors and geometric motifs dominate as decorative elements. In naming them, we will encounter different words, for example, somewhere they call them qilim, qylym (carpet), somewhere stroma, shtrojë, sexhade (tapestry), plaf, cergë, floke, mutaf, etc.

”The motifs, whether in the art of entertainment and ceremonial, or in the applied art, are of a provincial and other national nature. Their combination in various creations differs from those of other peoples. When you see them in the complex, you can see that they are Albanian and that they differ entirely from similar motifs of other neighboring and non-neighboring peoples, even though specific elements are the same, borrowed from one and the other.

Folk art, created among the common people by virtuoso artists and masters, has lived its life in those same environments, has been inherited from generation to generation, and has therefore performed certain functions:

1. It has been food for the people: it has fed them with beauty, with taste, it has created pleasure, relaxation. It has developed tastes, mindsets, ideas about beauty. It has been a means of peace and social equilibrium.

2. It has ennobled feelings, tastes, thinking and acting in life.

3. It has been a means of communication between people in inter-provincial and regional communities. It has spoken to others through the art of song, music, dance, with ornaments on clothing, in stone, wood and metal: a noble communication, with language, melodies, rhythms, symbols, sweet colors. It is a very attractive, alluring communication.

4. It has had teaching and educational functions, through ethnoart, traditions of speech, melody, dance have been inherited through ornaments with motifs from generation to generation. Having a syncretic nature, it has nourished the new generations with the traditions of their ancestors, with old traditional artistic culture. Speaking and debating through art has a very great effect on people's thoughts and actions.....”⁵

Names of beds and their use

Despite the different names in the general description they are called shtroje which comes from the word me shtrue (to lay, to set, to cover), and also calling the other word mbuloje (cover it). In

⁴ Rrok Zojzi, *Qilima shqiptarë*, Album, U.Shtetëtor i Tiranës, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, sektori i Etnografisë. Tiranë, f.8-9, 1975

⁵ Mark Tirta, *Etnologjia e Shqiptarëve*. (Mitologjia e besimet popullore). Arti popullor. 1. Kuptimi i funksionit të artit popullor, f.469. 2004

the highland regions there was a silent psyche that expressed the pride and strength of every house that was called a good house. This psyche culminated in a pride that expressed a certain social and economic stage in the conditions of social development at that time. The more friends a certain house accommodated and covered, the more it was mentioned and honored or vice versa. The cult of the friend and its density expressed strength and pride and within the social circumstances of that time, it also expressed social relations that also came to the perfection of a word that was used in men's assemblies. The beds came to a certain origin of the sitting. The sitting was done cross-legged or with legs stretched out and not on objects. The tradition of sitting on objects is obviously ancient. The mountain house, the tower built with a special architecture where the guest room was part of its best side, could not be conceived at the same time without bedding and covers. Thus, in the corners, gazebos, raised podiums, everything had to be with bedding, pillows and cushions decorated along the wall. These amazing decorations of the pillows and all the quilts or velours, the carpets, the rugs, of course, had to shine with great purity and bring a peaceful world where the friend had to feel as calm and cared for as possible.



Fig.22. Tapestry, Motinë. Gjakova Highlands, 2015

Woolen pillowcase, woven on a loom