

NATIONAL COSTUMES IN TODAY'S MODERN TIME

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Abstract

Albanian cultural heritage is one of the most ancient pillars of national culture, which shows the material and spiritual evidence of our people.

Our tradition, in this regard, is very rich. A folk costume is a stand-alone exhibition of folk art. It is amazing the variety of folk costumes in our country.

To achieve the set objectives, a range of methods of social sciences are used: the method of observation (direct and cultural anthropology), analysis and the historical method. The purpose of this paper is studying the use of folk costumes embroidered according to our tradition, but also the embroidery of modern times in more detail.

- Are these embroideries of special value?
- The commodification of national costumes and ambiguity as a value in time and space?
- The use of national clothing in today's age of globalization.

Today there is a relatively large use of these garments embroidered with gold thread, especially of costume parts such as: dressing with *dimia* and gold vest, dress with *dollama* etc., therefore we have a variety of motifs and patterns of national costumes, beautifully embroidered by the hands of girls, women and men, embroidered with much taste and mastery that have been applied to clothing once, but which even today continue to be quite present.

Keywords: national clothing, embroidery, golden thread, tradition, art, etc

Introduction

Studying and analyzing the general traits of ethnoculture cannot be done without studying its specific features, such as ethnographic provinces with its cultural wealth and its evolution over time. Therefore, the Albanian cultural heritage is one of the most ancient pillars of the national culture, as it represents material and spiritual testimony of our people.

In this regard, our tradition is very rich. A folk costume is an exhibition of folk art on its own. The variety of folk costumes in our country is impressive, along with extensive details imbued into them. We have an endless number of floral motifs beautifully embroidered by the hands of girls, women and men.

Folk costumes are embroidered in line with our tradition, but there is also more contemporary embroidery. These embroideries are of particular value and represent art on their own, akin to folk costumes, because gold-threaded embroidery has been extensively applied to clothing and is featured prominently to this day.

The use of these garments embroidered with gold thread remains quite prevalent to this day, especially costume pieces such as *dimi* and gold waistcoat, *dollama*, etc.

Therefore, folk costumes are believed to be an indisputable proof of the evolution of Albanian life and history in many aspects (Halimi-Statovci, 2009, p. 9).

Some aspects are distinguished here based on area, geographic position, ethnographic province, as special type of clothing due to their shape, color, etc., which distinguishes them according to the embroidery work used making them.

Gold-threaded embroidery is conducive for expression of beauty and creative skills, provides good render of color combination, (the background color is red, blue, green, embroidered with white or yellow gold thread), by applying floral motifs, symmetries and asymmetries, as well as other compositional forms. Rendering geometrical schemes onto textiles represent a wonderful tableau.

As the author M. Tirta emphasizes, these clothes and bedding were made by Albanian women and girls. Their embroidered work on clothes or fabric represent an attempt not only to make useful and sturdy items for living, but to also make them beautiful, with finesse and symmetry, color and "reliefs", to employ diverse motifs and reflect a whole world of fantasy and taste, with motifs from nature, mountains and religion, social life, as expressions of human feelings, expressions of virtues, feelings of social good and patriotism (Tirta, 2003, p. 498). The eagle's motif is embroidered in paintings of many houses in Kosovo as a national symbol.

1. The role of national garments in the present day

The role of folk costumes, their use and function have, in the present day, aroused a sense of sympathy in young women who are preparing for marriage. Of course, for such cases, more complete variants of the festive garments of the given zone are preferred, however, in the present course of events, the range of garments reproduced is increasingly narrowing, thus blurring the differences of age, gender, civil status, social strata, etc. conveyed by the clothes. When discussing national costumes, it is worth noting that these costumes have always been valuable and costly. This is equally valid today due to renewed sense of tradition where, according to the author Halimi-Statovci: "Pride for national culture and nostalgia for the past have stirred a new movement in material culture" (Halimi-Statovci, 2009, p. 33).

Tradition is subject to continuous change and is enriched with new elements. Therefore, when discussing tradition and national costumes, we concur with Rr. Zojzi who noted that it is now customary to label as national clothing any clothing that differs from the general European clothing of the time (Zojzi, No. 4, p. 144). It is clear that clothes that people use nowadays are also imported and are not all national clothing.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the ceremonial folk costumes, which, as noted above, were used to also convey ethnic traits, have recently gained much greater popularity than they have previously enjoyed. This is due to increased attention to the preservation of and appreciation for the cultural-artistic heritage. In this regard, the organization of folklore festivals, rich museum collections and exhibitions at fairs and shops inside the country, as well as wear and use of national clothing for festive occasions abroad (in the diaspora), scientific publications and showcasing on media by our pop singers, represent an excellent contribution.

These folk costumes embroidered with gold thread are quite rich, as the author U. Xhemaj emphasizes. The waistcoat is completely covered with gold thread, which is used to render its whole surface with motifs, which represent solar, lunar and other elements (Xhemaj, 2005, p. 266). These same gold-embroidered waistcoats or *dollamas* can be found in Pristina, Peja, Gjakova, Prizren, Rahovec, Malisheva etc.

Therefore, this dress is a valuable artifact, because it belongs to the Albanian culture, it is worked and decorated by Albanian artisan masters and professional craftsmen. The *dollama* piece is particularly distinctive, as it was previously an active garment for both genders but has since been restricted to clothing for brides and young women only, sustained by the desire to look nice and preserve its status as a national dress.

2. National clothing embroidered with golden thread and social background

The market has expanded considerably more than before the last war in Kosovo (1999), thus bringing about mutual influence between urban and rural areas on clothing embroidered with gold thread, because now the shape and cut are generalized, affecting mostly *dollama*, *dimia* and gold waistcoat, thus erasing provincial distinctions, making room for contemporary clothing. Although the names are of Ottoman influence, the *dollama* originates from the Albanian *guna*, worn by both sexes and made both with and without sleeves. In addition, author A. Gjergji assumes that: “Men of rich backgrounds wore, instead of *flokata*, various *dollama* or *xhybe* (a form of a gown), made of expensive fabric and embroidered with gold or silk braids, such as red *dollama*, embroidered with gold and worn by wealthy men from Shkodra, (Gjergji, 2005, p. 111) while the best *guna* (gown) among women was bridal *guna*, which was a kind of a white felt (*shajak*)”.

Our people have always been capable of creating beautiful things, as the author Onuzi notes: “Our people have shown their love of beautiful in every aspect of their lives - in clothes, in their homes, its furnishings, in other objects of daily use, etc. Wherever you look, even in the simplest object, there is art, there is feeling, there is a desire to convey something” (Onuzi, 1987, p. 37). As ethnologist M. Tirta points out: “Of course, there were women who were real artists: they made decorations on folk costumes and on bedding with breath-taking ability, born artists. Others yet made simple things and made common items. There were also those who produced very elaborate items, as an additional employment from home: they did paid work for others” (Tirta, 2003, p. 450). This practice is common in Kosovo and beyond to this day, but it is worth noting that the design and the structure of the national clothing is yet to attain its original quality. Today, artisans are increasingly responding to the demand or to economic capacities of buyers.

3. Valorization – the value of gold-thread embroidery now and before

One of the important aspects of the way of life is the folk costumes, whose variety and variants enrich the Albanian cultural heritage. In the process of the development of human society, clothing gradually evolved in accordance with the season, gender, its intended use, age, occupation and the social status.

All these factors contributed to building the wealth and variety of clothing. Like all peoples of the world, Albanians, although small in number, have developed this cultural wealth. In time, the ethnic types of Albanian folk costumes were also created. The aesthetic tastes used for decoration, but also the way of styling reflects the ethnic features. The evolution of clothing is closely linked to the historical developments of this population, and consequently, to the history of the Albanian people.

In present day, this is made easy, because folk costumes and clothing are broadly accessible in the free market, at everyone's choice. Additionally, there are cultural heritage and handicraft fairs, held in different cities of Kosovo and Albania, some of which award prizes for the best work. Today, orders can also be placed via the Internet, facilitated by easy advertisements made possible through social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

Embroidered textiles have evolved and constantly changed in the course of history. *Dollama* represents a particular item in the variety of embroidered textiles, either as a morphological structure, ornamentation, or as Albanian symbolism. This dress has been used widely after the last war in Kosovo (1999), representing the most valuable women dress, not only of a country or of a province, but it is also a phenomenon spanning ethnographic Albanian regions, representing the centerpiece of clothing. The red, green and blue colors are embodiment of social symbolism they imbue in the young age.

Mass means of communication such as computers, internet, local radios and televisions exert major influence today; they are instrumental in presenting the contemporary identity, which, in my view, have an effect on the youth of our country. This is also noted in the book and performance of students and ethnologists in the "Lecture-Liberto Ethnological Clothing", whereby the author claims that "Clothing perseveres throughout our history and the present; furthermore, it is equally capable to deal with complexities of modernity and globalization." (Halimi-Statovci, 2010, p. 7). National clothing is also preserved in museums.

4. Commodification of national costumes and ambiguity as a value in time and space

The commodification of folk costumes, is related to objects of a specially culturally marked and distinct type, while as a historical process it defines, in very important ways, the relation of construction between objects - socialized objects. Ambiguity as a value in time and space, mainly of national clothing, are mainly clothing for young people. It is also used and worn by artists during musical performances.

Embroidered clothes are sold and bought in special stores, but also in other solemn clothing stores; there are also designers and households that place these products on the market. When clothing is produced at home, there are special spatial arrangements and layouts associated with such production. The clothes, richly embroidered with gold thread, are also made by professional craftsmen in their professional shops.

These clothes also serve to promote commercial influences, hence increased production of appropriate clothing, responding to customer requirements. These requirements may vary, depending on the desired appearance for the given occasion.

The anthropological-cultural aspect is reflected in its value as an artifact, which reflects beauty, represents a certain historic value, rendered additionally valuable due to its production by hand, or by machine, its variety of models and colors, all combined into a well-rounded product.

This is indicative of the particular attention our people have always afforded to their appearance, as Sh. Sinani noted: Caring for a culture of image is caring for identity. Germans, French, Italians and great cultures at large, not otherwise threatened by today's globalization processes, do the same (Sinani, 2006, p. 167). The image culture is created along with a refined taste, leading to an increased demand. This is also apparent with gold-threaded embroidery, mainly in clothes referred to as "national".

5. Globalization and the future of craft and handcraft

Clothing is subject to change, which is "inherent, innate and goes hand in hand with economic and social development, but also borne from foreign, external influences" (Halimi, 1994, p. 279). Embroidery has also undergone changes, although there is a revival of old motifs - ornaments.

Among the many embroideries and handicrafts, there are also rare samples, such as the case of the great epitaph of Glavenica, which dates in 1373; there is also embroidery on *xhubletë*, an Albanian gown, embroidery on waistcoats and *dimia*, *dollama*, dresses persisting to modern-day designs. This year's popular models and dresses at "Fashion design" in Pristina featured embroidery thread, with prevalent use of beads and precious stones. There are also everyday clothes, such as jackets, jeans, scarves, etc, which are embroidered with threads of various fabric, which are highly demanded by buyers.

It should be noted that, in such cases, the structure of a national costume is often truncated, therefore it is incomplete, but these phenomena are created by a customer, who uses and combines folk costumes according to his taste and desire. These are not criteria shared by professional and researchers.

"Folk costumes are preserved and conserved to honor tradition, as a legacy of the older generations, especially as they are passed on from mother to daughter, and preserved as an identity and a national sign." (Halimi-Statovci, 2009, p. 81). These embroideries are still preserved and produced, such as embroidery on gold clothing, then embroidery on various fabric, such as tablecloths, gold quilt, embroidery on sheets and pillows, cradle and bedspreads for children's beds, covers, etc. These motifs are mainly floral, but there are also others motifs. The craft has awoken the appreciation for the beautiful by young women, for embroidered and decorated things, to express their talent and mastery in a substantial manner.

Conclusion

Of the extensive breadth of cultural heritage, from the historical, artistic and museum documents and the objects that have remained in the old coffer of the characteristic Albanian houses, or displayed in the few ethnographic museums, we are aware of the great wealth of embroidery, gorgeous accessories, bracelets, rare pendants, silk and velvet garments diligently worked and embroidered that are quite impressive for foreign visitors.

A wealth of motifs is equally visible on fabric. These motifs derive from the life of the people, elements of the environment which surround them, the working and production tools as well as products themselves. Thus, the shapes of sun, the moon, the river, the mountain, the bird, the plow, the sickle, the pergola, the grain of wheat, the vine, the kettle, the cup, as decorative motifs are present. Indeed, we are at a time when original costumes are impossible to realize. Therefore, our task is to enrich this field of study with scientific papers, to open museum exhibitions featuring embroidered folk costumes, identify different ways to incentivize those who make these garments and seek funding to preserve these crafts, even if we encounter difficulties. Embroidery is woven into everyday clothes, in different shapes and models. Over the years, there were changes in styling, which have become more studied and often inspired by the creations of artists, singers, etc. While trying to preserve their originality, they are, nonetheless, a clear expression of Albanian identity, but their interest lies in the historical value of Albanian clothing. Gold-embroidered national costumes, as a legacy, are undoubtedly one of the most powerful manifestations of traditional culture. Above all, they

both inherit and convey many elements, dating to antiquity and beyond, but are also an expression and intertwining of cultural relations.

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