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Patterns of Magnificence

TRADITION AND REINVENTION IN GREEK WOMEN'S COSTUME

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Front and back cover:

Mórkos, a long, sleeveless, pleated dress from Skopelos, Sporades. Early 20th century (cat. no. 17)

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Preface

This exhibition, the largest and most representative of one of the great costume traditions in Europe ever to have been mounted in London, has been the work of many hands since it was first proposed by one of us, Natasha, as a tribute to the memory of our mother, Koula Lemos.

Ioanna Papantoniou, of the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, eagerly responded to the proposal, and through her work and that of her collaborators, Maria Papadopoulou and Angeliki Roumelioti, turned the riches of the Foundation's collection into what the visitor can now enjoy. Mrs Papantoniou's deep and unparalleled knowledge of the subject has created a thematic structure which is truly impressive and original. This structure has been given physical form through the imaginative design of Stamatis Zannos.

Angelos Delivorrias and his colleagues at the Benaki Museum generously agreed to lend items to supplement the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation's collection, as did Eleni Tsaldari and her colleagues at the Lyceum Club of Greek Women.

On the suggestion of Edmée Leventis, Ian Jenkins and Judy Rudoe at the British Museum enthusiastically responded to the exhibition by arranging for the display of textiles from the Museum's own collections in the Parthenon Galleries and to take part in public events at the Museum and the Hellenic Centre. We hope that this will be the beginning of a long chapter of cultural cooperation between the Hellenic Centre and that great institution.

Maria Lemos and her colleagues Bianca Fincham and Lucy Hemelryk at Rainbowwave worked tirelessly to connect the exhibition with the world of contemporary fashion. The noted designer Marios Schwab generously agreed to promote the exhibition, and we hope that the concurrence of the exhibition with London Fashion Week will stimulate the designers of today to reinterpret the riches of the past. Thanks are also due to Stavroula Saloutsis, editor-in-chief of *Blue*, the magazine of Aegean Airlines, and to her associates Panos Kokkinis and Xenia Georgiadou for including an article about the exhibition in their magazine.

Thymios Presvytis, the designer of the catalogue, Timothy Cullen, the translator, and Georgia Panselina and Alexandra Pel, the text editors, spared no effort to meet deadlines. To them and to the authors of the catalogue essays, we are very grateful, as we are to all those who have agreed to give the evening talks which will accompany the exhibition.

Finally, at the Hellenic Centre we thank Agatha Kalisperas and her staff, Maria Kalli, Evangelia Roussou, Kay Stavrinou and Christina Vagioti, as well as the Chairman of the Executive Board, Sophie Kydoniefs, for their work in smoothing the organisational path for the success of the exhibition.

The Hellenic Centre was a cause dear to the heart of Koula Lemos. In hosting for the benefit of the public in Britain an exhibition of the hidden riches of one of the great and individual traditions of Greece, the Hellenic Centre is surely fulfilling the aims conceived 20 years ago by the other founding members and by her.

George and Natasha Lemos
Dinos and Calliope Caroussis

The Women's Costume of Astypalaia

Maria Passa-Kotsou

Astypalaia (Astypálaia, Astypaliá, Astropaliá, Stampalia), an isolated island in the Aegean lying between the Cyclades and the Dodecanese (to which it belongs administratively), is shaped like a butterfly with open wings. An isthmus divides the island into two parts, the western, with the main town, or Hora, with its Venetian castle, and the eastern. Its area is 97 sq. km; its highest point is the hill of Profitis Ilias, at 506 m; and the length of its much-indented coastline is 110 km. In the 2011 census its year-round population was recorded as 1310, and the local economy now depends mainly on tourism.

Immediately after World War II, when it had already been decided that the Dodecanese, under Italian occupation since 1912, should be united with Greece, the artist and writer Athina Tarsouli visited the island (Tarsouli 1996). At that time, Astypalaia had about 1000 inhabitants, who eked out a living from sponge-fishing, from the few patches of cultivable land and from the remittances sent home by islanders who had been driven to emigrate by poverty and the Italian occupation. While roaming through the alleyways of the town, she met the 80-year-old Maria Patinioti, who was wearing the local costume with all its

brightly coloured trimmings [...], a *kaliarato* chemise [see below], a fiery red dress, a cap with gold embroidery of the double-headed eagle, an orange kerchief, etc.' (Tarsouli 1996: 14); Tarsouli made a sketch of the costume (fig. 1). She tells us a good deal about the local costumes, often illustrated with her own drawings, and remarked on the willingness of the local women to open up their clothes chests and show her the costumes worn by their mothers and grandmothers, which they themselves no longer wore except on special occasions. She classified the costumes into four distinct types,¹ following the example of Marica Montesanto, who had been to Astypalaia in the early 1930s (Montesanto: 1930?).

Montesanto visited the island at a time of rampant Italian nationalism. She had her own reasons for going there, however, as her family, originally from Piacenza, had emigrated to Astypalaia around the end of the 14th century; later, probably after 1540, they moved to Cephalonia after Astypalaia had been captured by the Ottomans. She made



Fig. 1. This may have been the same Maria Patinioti that Athina Tarsouli had drawn some years earlier. She is wearing an everyday *misó* costume with a sewn-on apron and the sleeves of the chemise turned up. Photo: Maria Chrousaki, 1950. Benaki Museum Photographic Archive, Athens



The Costume of the Ladies-in-Waiting to Queen Olga:

Court Elegance Using Local Materials

Xenia Politou

Olga, a Grand Duchess of Russia and member of the Romanov dynasty, was born on 3 September 1851 in the Pavlovsk Palace near St Petersburg. A daughter of Grand Duke Konstantine Nikolayevich and Grand Duchess Alexandra Iosifovna (born Princess Alexandra of Saxe-Altenburg), she was married in 1867, at the age of 16, to King George I of the Hellenes and thus became Queen of Greece. Olga was on the throne for 46 years (1867-1913), until her husband's assassination in 1913. Thereafter, apart from a short period in 1920 when she was regent, she divided her time among Russia, Switzerland, Great Britain, France and Italy, where she died on 18 June 1926. She left behind her a great legacy of good works, having founded hospitals and charitable institutions and been patroness of numerous schools, mostly for young girls.

One of her priorities on becoming Queen of the Hellenes was to learn Greek, which demonstrates her willingness to adapt to her new role. The same attitude could account for her initiative in creating an official costume for her ladies-in-waiting, inspired by Greek local costumes (fig. 1). In this, she would appear to have been following the example of her German predecessor, Amalia, the first Queen of Greece, who devised a form of court dress that combined contemporary European fashion trends with features of traditional Greek costumes.

The same philosophy was also to be found in the formal dress of the Russian court, with which Olga was undoubtedly familiar. The dress code for ladies at the Russian court, laid down by Nicholas I's Edict on Court Dress of 1833, remained in effect, with some modifications, until 1917. It combined the Romantic style of that period with Russian tradition. The main garment of the ensemble was a gold-embroidered velvet coat dress with long, wide sleeves that could be thrown back over the shoulders – a characteristic feature of the old Russian costume – and a skirt with a long train. This garment seems to have been inspired by the *sarafan*, the long, straight coat dress of the traditional Russian costume (Nicholson 2013). With the narrowing of the waistline and the addition of the train, 'According to an apt remark of a contemporary, the costume reminded one of a "Frenchified" *sarafan*.' (Alyoshina *et al.* 1977: 25). The 'Frenchified' *sarafan* was worn over an embroidered white silk dress, part of which was visible, as the *sarafan* was open

Fig. 1. Queen Olga with her ladies-in-waiting, c. 1885. National Historical Museum Photographic Archive, Athens



Linomániko, Karagouna costume chemise

Thessaly. Early 20th century

H. 1.2 m

Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Nafplio

Donated by Ioanna Papantoniou

1976.6.633

The *linomániko* of the Karagouna costume is made of beige linen, with long sleeves, upright collar and a neck opening at the front. It is embroidered with geometric designs in black, crimson, green and blue, with silk thread. There are red and black tassels on the sleeves and black tassels on the hem.

The bridal or festive costume worn by the Karagounes (fig. 7) of the Thessalian plain comprises the *linomániko* chemise and two richly pleated cotton coat dresses, the *sayádes*. The outer *sayás* is usually indigo in colour and has an appliqué embroidered hem, which matches the waistcoat, embroidered by specialist tailors using multicoloured fine cords. The chest is covered by a cotton dickey. The costume is completed by a felt apron and the *kavadománika*, again embroidered by a specialist tailor using multicoloured or gold cords. The head is covered by a black cotton or silk kerchief made up in an unusual shape, and thick tresses of faux hair are attached at the back. A great deal of jewellery, mostly chains with coins, is worn on the head, the chest, the waist and the apron. Small locks of the wearer's own hair are often left peeping out from under the headdress on the cheeks: these are called *ramónes*.



Fig. 7. Photo of a Karagouna from Trikala, Thessaly. Early 20th century. Benaki Museum Photographic Archive, Athens



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Off-white bridal chemise

Episkopi, Imathia, Macedonia. Early 20th century

H. 1.29 m

Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Nafplio

Donated by Ioanna Papantoniou

1990.6.507

This bridal chemise has a small upright collar, a vertical opening at the front and long, wide sleeves. The hem has four square panels embroidered with multicoloured geometric motifs and crosses.

The bridal costume of Episkopi (fig. 12) has the *fanéla* next to the skin, with ornamental sleeves sewn on, and a white cotton chemise. The hem of the chemise has four large ornamental square panels, two at the front and two at the back, embroidered with multicoloured silk and gold threads. Next come the *kavádi*, a long-sleeved overdress made of spotted crimson velvet, silken *taraklí* or some other luxury fabric, and the white or blue *sayás* with sleeves rolled up to the elbow to show the *bougasia* (the red lining). The two decorated inner parts of the *sayás* that show when the sleeves are rolled up are called the *póli*; in church, the sleeves are not turned back. Round the waist is a multicoloured woollen textile sash, folded diagonally, reinforced by the apron strings. The apron, or *diplári*, is short, almost square, with woven-in gold and multicoloured geometrical designs. Over that is a gold-embroidered velvet belt with silver buckles. The headdress, or *kalpáki*, worn only by married women, consists of a small kalpak (high-crowned cap) filled out at the base with padding, which is worn angled to one side (*lítsko*), with a covering of fine red material, and held in place by the *trákma*, a gold-embroidered band to which plaits are fastened at the back. Over the kalpak and arranged in a distinctive way is a gold-embroidered white *tsembéri* fastened by special pins called *koumbouféles*. The costume is embellished with jewellery and ornaments of various kinds on the chest and the headdress. The knitted white stockings, called *tsourápi*, have toes and heels of a different colour.



Fig. 12. Photo of a woman wearing the bridal costume of Episkopi, Imathia, Macedonia. Early 20th century. Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation Photographic Archive, Nafplio



Chrysomándilo, bridal or festive costume

Astypalaia, Dodecanese. c. 1870

Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Nafplio

This bridal or festive costume of Astypalaia, the *chrysomándilo*, belonged to the Palatianos family and, according to Irini (Rinaki) Palatianou, it had been passed down through four generations starting with her great-grandmother, who was born around 1850. The *chrysomándilo* takes its name from the gold-embroidered, pearl-encrusted frontlet of its headdress. The basis of the headdress consists of the *margaritarénia skouífla* (pearl-encrusted cap), the *koulóúra* (coil) and the two *bólies*, one yellow (called *asiménia*, literally 'silver') and the other white with embroidered ends (the *panomoustouchiá*). The headdress is secured with long silver pins (*kombovelónes*) and decorated with artificial flowers at the temples. The *skolopendrátó* chemise is renowned for its embroideries, which cover the whole of the sleeves (fig. 17). The sleeved silk dress (*zatoúni*) is made of flowered satin imported from Istanbul. The ornaments include *vérges* (earrings), the *zonári* (sash) and the two *zosiés* forming the chain-link belt with its *kremasídi* (pendant). (For another form of the women's costume of Astypalaia, the *skléta*, which was the second-best festive costume, see cat. no. 22.)

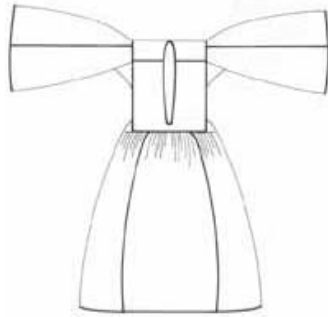


Fig. 17. Pattern of a chemise of the costume of Astypalaia, Dodecanese.
Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation Archive, Nafplio



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Orange bridal *sayás*, silk coat dress

Asvestohori, Thessaloniki. Late 19th century

H. 1.14 m

Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Nafplio

1985.06.0105

The dress has red cloth with embroidered designs on the chest and on the turn-ups of the sleeves. The lining is of white material.

The *sayádes* characteristic of most of the costumes of the Macedonian lowlands are nearly always made of a cotton fabric in balanced plain weave or in twill. They may be left white or dyed dark green, blue or black, and they often have a glossy finish (by being heavily starched and then ironed) by a professional dyer. They are embroidered on the inside of the front flaps of the skirt (*podíés* or *skoútes*) and the turn-ups of the sleeves, so that the embroidery will be visible when they are turned back, except in the costume of Pylaia (formerly Kapoudzida), where they are never turned back. A specialist tailor and embroiderer, the *terzís*, cuts, sews and embroiders the *sayás*.



Porcelain doll dressed in local costume

Kimolos, Cyclades. 1912-1913
Lyceum Club of Greek Women, Athens
Donated by Queen Olga
AM 14493

In 1914 Queen Olga donated to the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Athens a set of porcelain dolls dressed in local costumes. She brought them from London in 1912-1913, with the intention of sending them in pairs (one female and one male) to the regions of the then Greek world to have the dolls dressed in local traditional costumes. Each doll wears an accurate copy of the costume it represents and so preserves in minute detail all of its numerous garments and accessories, the cut of the garments, and the whole range of their designs, colours and decorative motifs. (On Cycladic costumes, see cat. no. 32; for the other doll with a regional costume from the collection of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women, see cat. no. 35.)





Fig. 32. Nikiphoros Lytras, *Amalia*, 1893,
oil painting, 260 x 150 cm.
Society for the Promotion of Education and Learning
[Philekpaideutiki Etaireia] Gallery, Athens



Fig. 33. Louis Dupré, *Mariage grec à Athènes* (Greek wedding in Athens),
hand-coloured lithograph, 38.5 x 32 cm.
From his book *Voyage à Athènes et à Constantinople*,
ou collection de portraits, de vues et de costumes grecs et ottomans,
peints sur les lieux, Paris 1825.
Alpha Bank Photographic Archive, Athens

