

Towards the Creation of the Digital Library for the History and Culture of the Cypriot Dress

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Abstract

The project for the History and Culture of the Cypriot Dress aims at the creation of an innovative digital library that will facilitate the study and dissemination of the history of the Cypriot dress in its broader socioeconomic and cultural context. Utilizing the available written, visual and material evidence, primary focus is given to the early modern and modern eras corresponding to the periods of Ottoman and British rule. During this time the development of Cypriot dress mirrored aspects of the cultural identity, the daily life and the socioeconomic aspirations of the various strata of Cypriot society as they transitioned between the insular realities of Ottoman Cyprus and the island's gradual Europeanization in the colonial context of the British Empire.

Overall, the aims are: a) to collect information and present dress items and costumes used in Cyprus, in a way that will facilitate their study and scientific research, b) to evaluate and preserve the documented material as a valuable part of both tangible and intangible heritage, as expressions of national, religious and cultural identity, and, c) to tell the story behind each item, to reveal the know-how, the secrets of all arts involved in their creation, to bring out the symbolic meaning hidden in each object, to decipher the codes of communication between the people who used to wear them.

Furthermore, the Digital Library for the History and Culture of the Cypriot Dress will be an integral part of the framework of Dioptra, the Cyprus Institute's digital library for Cypriot Culture. It is worth mentioning that the project that started in 2015 will be the first comprehensive attempt to utilize the great opportunities offered in the field of Digital Cultural Heritage for the study and dissemination of the history of dress in Cyprus.

Keywords

Digital Library, Cypriot Dress, Ottoman Rule, British Rule, New Technologies.

Introduction

In 2015, a project entitled "Digital Library for History and Culture of the Cypriot Dress" was inaugurated aiming at the creation of an innovative digital library that would facilitate the study and dissemination of the history of the Cypriot dress in its broader socioeconomic and cultural context. The use of advanced digital technologies and applications offered a unique approach to an important aspect of Cypriot Cultural Heritage. Digital documentation, 2D and 3D imaging and database applications contributed to the creation of a web-based digital platform that would virtually narrate and explore the cultural development of the Cypriot dress. Furthermore, the project is an integral part of the framework of Dioptra, the Cyprus

Institute's digital library for Cypriot Culture. It is also worth mentioning that this is the first comprehensive attempt to utilize the great opportunities offered in the field of Digital Cultural Heritage for the study and dissemination of the history of dress in Cyprus.

Under the supervision of Dr. Euphrosyne Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou, (Professor Emerita University of Cyprus and Adjunct Professor of The Cyprus Institute) and Prof. Nikolas Bakirtzis (Scientific Advisor and Dioptra Digital Library Coordinator) Historical Dress Researchers and Technical Research Specialists are working towards the creation of a digital library accessible to the broader public.

The first step towards the creation of the Digital Library is to create a structure of the scheduled activities, the analysis of the methodology and the important phases of the project. The Implementation Plan is the analysis of the methodology; it was based on Work Packages and Planned Timetable for their completion. The Project Management Work Package was established in order to ensure the effective exchange of information which sets the grounds of fruitful cooperation among the research team members. The Historical Dress Researchers¹ worked for the Collection of Data and Development of Digital Library Specifications Work Package, with the aim to collect any available information and specify the way it will be presented to the end user of the digital registry. At the same time, the Technical Research Specialists² worked on the Technical Realization of Digital Library Work Package to create a searchable digital platform of Cypriot dress. Later on, both of the teams worked together for the Population of Digital Registry Work Package, that included the incorporation of the material provided by the Historical Dress Researchers in the digital platform. After opening the Digital Library to the broader public, the Dissemination Work Package was aiming to Raise awareness in the intended target group, both in one-to-one base like: Cultural Heritage Institutions and Professionals, The Academic Community, Education specialists, Tourism conductors, etc. Additionally, it was necessary to generate understanding and obtain the support of others in disseminating information like participating in conferences, festivals, presentations, etc., aiming gradually at the local first, then the wider European and eventually the global public. Last but not least, the Valorisation Strategy Work Package refers to the continuation and sustainability plan of the project.

Towards the Creation of the Digital Library for the History and Culture of the Cypriot Dress: The Historical Dress Researchers contribution

Collection of Data and Development of Digital Library Specifications Work Package

For the creation of the Digital library, the Historical Dress Researchers, especially the Project Coordinator and Cyprus Institute Principal Investigator Prof. Euphrosyne Rizopoulou-

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²Avgoustinos Avgousti (Research Technical Specialist and Digital Cultural Heritage Specialist), Ropertos Georgiou (Research Technical Specialist and Digital Imaging Research Technical Specialist) and Andriana Nikolaidou (Research assistant)

Egoumenidou had to give a description of the project and explain the material that was going to be integrated in the Digital Library.

Dress is a multi-dimensional cultural phenomenon and its development is affected by many factors, climatic, geographical, historical, political, social, religious. Dress denotes difference or similarity, devotion and defiance. National identity, class identity, gender or political allegiance, ethnic or regional distinctions are expressed in dress. Furthermore, dress is the mirror of history and culture, the outcome of the exploitation of local natural resources but also of imported materials acquired by trade; it reflects the technological standard at any given period, the political and financial situation, the social stratification, the religious beliefs, customs and rites; it incorporates tradition and reflects identity, as well as foreign influences selectively adopted and/or assimilated. Clothing has been characterized as the visual expression of cultural norms, a complex system that involves economic as well as social and aesthetic factors.

In the case of a whole population, it reflects not only the standard of living but also the level of cultural development, the history and traditions of a place, its relations with the rest of the world, its capacity to assimilate and its sensibilities. Costumes in a country moreover differ in many ways, including the region (hilly/flat or rural/urban for example), the age of the wearer, the season (summer/winter), even the nature of a given day (festive/ordinary) or with events and circumstances in life (marriage, periods of mourning or confinement). Clothing is a code whose messages are automatically conveyed and immediately understood by people of the same community, but remain as a general rule inaccessible to the foreign observer.

In pre-industrial societies, tradition played an essential role. In contrast with fashion, tradition resists abrupt change and tends to selectively adopt novelties and absorb new features that can be assimilated. Traditional dress is characterized by conservatism and slow development.

The digital library facilitates the study and dissemination of the history of the Cypriot dress in its broader socioeconomic and cultural context. Dress in Cyprus includes the apparel of the Greek Cypriots, who represent the majority of the population, as well that of the Turkish Cypriots and the Armenian community in Cyprus. Utilizing the available written, visual and material evidence, primary focus is given to the early modern and modern eras corresponding to the periods of Ottoman and British rule in Cyprus. During this time the development of Cypriot dress mirrored aspects of the cultural identity, the daily life and the socioeconomic aspirations of the various strata of Cypriot society as they transitioned between the insular realities of Ottoman Cyprus and the island's gradual Europeanization in the colonial context of the British Empire. The use of advanced digital technologies and applications offers a unique approach to an important aspect of Cypriot Cultural Heritage.

First of all, it was considered necessary to present a historical back ground to any possible user of the Digital Library. The definition of space and time was important since we aimed a broader public. The historical part was separated in two sections: I) Cyprus under Ottoman Rule and II) Cyprus under British Rule.

For the three centuries that followed the conquest of the Medieval Kingdom of Cyprus by the Ottoman Turks in 1571, the island developed with a new structure in administration, new systems of taxation, exploitation of land and resources and of economy in general, and new orientations in trade. At the same time Cyprus formed part of a wider entity, together with other countries, which included ethnic groups of diverse cultures, languages, religions and traditions, all of them assembled under the umbrella of the same political power. The main centre which nourished the peripheries in many ways, and was also the focus of fashion in dress, was the capital of the Empire, Istanbul (Constantinople). It was during this period that the people of Cyprus came into closer contact with Oriental dress and other aspects of Ottoman culture.

The increasing interest of Great Britain in expanding commercial activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, coupled with political aspirations, resulted in the 1878 Cyprus Convention, under which the administration of Cyprus was handed over to the British Crown. Authority was exercised by the High Commissioner, who acted as president of both the Legislative and the Executive Councils. In 1914, the island was annexed to the British Empire and in 1925 was declared a Crown Colony; from that time the High Commissioner was referred to as the Governor of Cyprus. In the course of the first half of the 20th century, the economic improvement which had started in the last decades of the 19th century continued despite two world wars and brought prosperity. The government policy was trade orientated, and a wide range of foreign goods were consumed by a growing urban class. Muslins, cotton, linen, silk and woollen manufactures, yarn and thread, which were imported from the U.K. and its colonies, European countries, China and Japan, Egypt and Turkey, invaded the local market and affected both dress and household fabrics. Industrially processed threads were available for use even in traditional weaving, while chemical dyes altered the chromatic range of clothes. More and more commercial advertisements for all sorts of local and imported industrialized products, among other goods fashionable clothing, fabrics and accessories, modern house equipment and machinery, appeared in newspapers and journals.

Another issue very important for the organisation of the Digital Library was that the population of Cyprus was not homogeneous.

The conquest of the island by the Ottoman Turks also marked the genesis of the Turkish Cypriot community, which has remained a permanent element in the population of Cyprus ever since. The first nucleus of Ottoman Muslims was formed by part of the military troops, 2,666 sipahis (cavalrymen) and 1,000 janissaries, who stayed in the island after the completion of the conquest. With a view to remedying the depletion of population and revitalizing the economy, between the years 1571 and 1577 the Sultan issued several firmans ordering emigration to Cyprus from a number of provinces of Anatolia. In 1738, Richard Pococke noticed that the island was not well peopled 'eighty thousand souls being the most that are computed in it', and also mentioned that two thirds of the inhabitants were Christians. On the other hand, according to Archimandrite Kyprianos, in 1777 of the total population of the island, which numbered 84,000, 37,000 were Christians and 47,000 Muslims. The increase of the Muslim population has been considered a consequence of the conversion of many Christians to Islam. According to the Russian Consul, I. Atsali, in 1785 the total population of Cyprus reached 120,000. The Armenians possessed the former Benedictine

convent of Our Lady of Tortosa near the Paphos Gate in Nicosia. The church, dedicated to Virgin Mary, was given to the Armenians by a firman in 1570 and remained the main church throughout the period of Ottoman rule. In the 17th century there were 200 Armenians in Nicosia.

According to the first census by the British in 1881, the population numbered 186,173 inhabitants (73.9% Greeks and 24.4% Turks), and 81.1% of the total lived in rural areas. In the following decades the population increased, but the percentage of the Turkish element declined, as a result of migration from 1878 onwards, and especially from 1923-26 with the declaration of Cyprus as a British colony (in 1931 there were 79.5% Greeks and 18.5 Turks). By 1960, when Cyprus became an independent Republic, the population had more than tripled, numbering 573, 566; 63.7% lived in villages and agriculture continued to be the main occupation. Under the British, the Armenian community of the island was particularly strengthened. The number of Armenians in Cyprus increased significantly after the massive deportations and the Genocide perpetrated by the Ottomans and the Young Turks (1894-1896, 1909 and 1915-1923). Over 10,000 refugees from Cilicia, Smyrna and Constantinople arrived in the island; about 1,500 of them made Cyprus their new home.

So, the Dress Material entering the Digital Library was categorized in A) Greek Cypriot Dress B) Turkish Cypriot Dress and C) Armenian Dress in Cyprus.



The final step of the Collection of Data and Development of Digital Library Specifications Work Package was the presentation of the Sources for the study of Cypriot dress. Historical Dress Researchers decided that the material needed to be separated in three main categories 1) The Written Sources, 2) Visual representations and 3) Preserved items

The remnants that survived from all the variety of dress items of the periods of Ottoman and British rule are incredibly poor. We have at our disposal a very thin and fragile warp on which we attempt to weave the polychrome textile of the apparel. The earliest authentic, well-preserved examples of garments date from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. In view of the scanty tangible evidence, our knowledge of the Cypriot attire before that time can only be based on artistic representations and written sources.

The accuracy of the descriptions of native dress found in written sources can be checked by comparing them with illustrations, such as drawings, engravings, paintings and photographs. Travellers' books often include illustrations, to which some of their comments refer. As far as artistic works are concerned, the subjects depicted, either landscapes or people, invariably pass through the personal filter of the artist. Consequently, compared with photographs, paintings are usually conventional or less accurate. The study of the local dress has to take into consideration all these sources, even more so the surviving dress items.

Donor portraits on icons and frescoes in churches, engravings, drawings and paintings (for example the portraits of Dragomans, a lady painted on the wooden case of a grandfather clock etc.) offer a precious testimony of what Cypriot people wore. More information is extracted from photographs, particularly during the period of British rule.

Written sources comprise dowry contracts, travellers' accounts, consular reports, ottoman documents, folk songs etc., as well as manuscript lists of properties of deceased people. These inventories, which date to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, analytically record garments, jewellery and other personal belongings.

Population of Digital Registry Work Package

During the population of the Digital Registry the Historical Dress Researchers and the Technical Research Specialists worked together to form the interface to insert all the necessary data for the documentation of the dress material. A very important factor is the User Experience and Design since nowadays, many systems are criticized by its interface and not by the functionality that happens behind the scenes, usually a poor interface design can cost the system to fail and for this reason many software systems are never been used. When designing the system, we had in mind the end user. We try to develop a system that it's easy to use by anyone without the need of any technical knowledge.



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| Periods | Turkish Cypriot dress TC > The period of British Rule (1878-1960) TC B > Preserved items TC B PI |
| Description | Fez (fesin, turk. fes) made of dark red felt. The felt is stuck onto cardboard, which forms the inside lining and keeps the fez in shape. From the centre of the top protrudes a piece of felt, on which is stitched a tassel made of twisted black thread. The fez is old and worn. Diameter of top: 14cm. Opening: 18cm. Height: 12cm. Length of tassel: 16.5cm. |
| Type | cap |
| Gender information of the object | Male |
| Primary Material | Felt |
| Color | red |
| Place | Nicosia The Aziz Damedelen Collection |
| Time | First half of the 19th century |
| Source | The Aziz Damedelen Collection, Kioneli (Gönneli) |
| Bibliography | Rizopoulos - Egoumenidou, E. and Damedelen, A., 2012, Aziz Damedelen, Turkish Cypriot dress The Aziz Damedelen Collection, Nicosia, 224. |

The Documentation of the dress material was mainly done by the Historical Dress Researchers since they have performed the Preliminary bibliographical research on existing material and the study of publications considering dress items and costumes, located the Photographic archives and researched for relative material, which is further catalogued and examined.

The use of advanced digital imaging technologies and applications during the documentation with the contribution of the Technical Research Specialists offer a unique approach to an important aspect of the research of material. Digital metadata documentation, two-dimensional and three-dimensional imaging and database applications help create an interactive digital platform which recounts virtual and investigate the evolution of History and Culture of Cypriot Dress. New opportunities and challenges for the documentation and development of desktop and web-based applications for the visualization of those objects have been integrated in the fields of Cultural Heritage. The digital acquisition pipeline has been the direct consequence of advances in the field of three-dimensional (3D) representation.



Additionally, the results of the application of RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging) photography on some of the paintings and frescoes depicting dress items offered exceptional visual analysis. RTI images capture the surface texture of the painting panels, revealing impressive details contributing to the documentation.

Activities completed in 2016/2017

Cultural mapping of the museums and private museums in Cyprus: Letters were sent to all municipalities and selected private museums and collectors in Cyprus, asking them whether they possess traditional costumes and/or dress items in their collections, also whether they

would be willing to permit their presentation in our digital library. It was mainly museums, as well as a few private collectors, that responded positively to our request. We were granted permission to use the Cypriot costumes and dress items exhibited in the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation (Nafplion), the Lyceum Club of Greek Women (Athens), the Historical - Folklore Museum of Corinth, the National Historical Museum (Athens), the Benaki Museum (Athens), the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia, the Limassol Folklore Museum, the Andreas Georgiades collection, as well as the photographs in the Archive of the Phivos Stavrides Foundation – Larnaca Archives, the photographs of Stavros Lazarides Collection, and the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation photographic collection. With the permission of the Department of Antiquities, the portraits (oil paintings) of the Dragoman of Cyprus Hadjigeorgakis Kornesios (last quarter of the 18th century), the portraits of his son and his daughter in law (dated 1852 and 1851 respectively) as well as the depiction of a lady painted on the wooden case of a grandfather clock were photographed in high analysis by Ropertos Georgiou (Depth Map and Specular Enhancement).

Conclusions

So far, more than 400 items have been documented and partially uploaded to the Digital Library. Recognizing the significance of the proposed topic, The Cyprus Institute created and planned to launch in 2019 the digital library that will address the rich cultural history of the dress in Cyprus. This effort will offer new perspectives to known materials while shedding light to unknown hitherto evidence of the heritage of the Cypriot dress, the gradual adoption of the European dress and its integration in the daily life of cities, towns as well as the Cypriot countryside. The proposed project is also particularly timely, as it will enhance recent scholarly attention and interest in the tangible and intangible heritage of the Eastern Mediterranean. Highlighting the role of Cyprus in these developments is of central importance. The use of advanced digital technologies and applications offer a unique approach to an important aspect of dress heritage.

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