



THE TRADITIONAL AROMANIAN COSTUME

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ABSTRACT

THE TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF THE AROMANIANS, PERFORMED DURING MAJOR LIFE EVENTS OR ANNUAL CELEBRATIONS, RESONATE PROFOUNDLY, ESPECIALLY AS PARTICIPANTS PERCEIVE THE WEARING OF THEIR TRADITIONAL ATTIRE AS AN ANCESTRAL DUTY IMBUEWED WITH MEANING, REPRESENTATION, AND PROTECTIVE SIGNIFICANCE. AS PART OF THE DIVERSE AND EXTENSIVE CATEGORY OF BALKAN COSTUMES, AROMANIAN GARMENTS NATURALLY INDIVIDUALIZE THE SCENARIOS PRACTICED BY THE COMMUNITY DURING FESTIVE OCCASIONS, A SUBJECT EXPLORED IN THIS CHAPTER. THE AROMANIAN COSTUME HAS SERVED AS A CATALOG OF IDENTITY, REFLECTING OCCUPATIONAL PROFILES, GEOGRAPHICAL AFFILIATIONS, AND DISTINCTIONS OF SOCIAL STATUS AND AGE, AS DEMONSTRATED THROUGH THE WAY GARMENTS WERE WORN AND COMBINED.

KEYWORDS: TRADITIONAL, COSTUME, AROMANIAN

The traditional Aromanian costume is a genuine expression of ethnic creativity, showcasing the ingenious use and combination of textile fibers, transformed into true works of art. These textiles not only symbolize the cultural identity of the Aromanians but also provide a testament to a refined craft, passed down through generations. Historically, the pieces of the traditional costume were crafted with remarkable skill, either in specialized workshops or by itinerant tailors known as "*arafta*" or "*araftu*". These skilled artisans worked on commission, adapting each garment to the requirements, dimensions, and preferences of the wearer. Their mobility allowed them to reach various communities, where they worked directly in the clients' homes, bringing to life unique pieces appreciated for both their refinement and authenticity.

From an aesthetic perspective, traditional Aromanian textiles stand out through a subtle interplay of contrasts. Surfaces of imposing sobriety, dominated by shades such as burgundy and black, are harmoniously complemented by vibrant accents of color—red, yellow, violet, and green—that imbue the decorative ensemble with brightness and dynamism. This chromatic balance gives the Aromanian attire a distinctive elegance, proudly preserved as part of their cultural heritage.

THE TRADITIONAL MALE COSTUME

The traditional Aromanian male costume, dominated by the color white, eloquently reflects the cultural identity of this pastoral community, symbolizing functional simplicity and profound symbolism. The choice of white, while naturally derived from the use of unprocessed



wool, transcends its practical aspects. This color takes on a broader meaning, representing purity, prosperity, and moral values—central elements in the lives and traditions of the Aromanians [1].

The entire costume was meticulously crafted, with each piece combining utility with a specific aesthetic. On their heads, men wore round hats made of lambskin, whose simple and elegant lines occasionally resembled monastic headgear, subtly evoking a connection to spirituality and religious traditions. The basic attire began with a woolen flannel worn directly against the skin for thermal comfort, over which was layered a cotton shirt, discreetly decorated with black braid along the edges and chest—details that emphasized both sobriety and refinement.

Over the shirt, a sleeveless, short vest known by names like *gumădane* or *ilek'e* was worn. These vests were made in different colors depending on the wearer's age, with young men wearing red and older men opting for white or black, thus marking distinctions of status and life stages. For the lower body, men wore long woolen trousers called *čoariț*, fitted tightly to the leg and fastened with clasps. The color of these trousers adhered to the same symbolic code: white for young men and darker tones for the elderly.

Traditional footwear consisted of thick woolen socks and leather sandals secured with cords, often decorated according to age or occasion. Around the waist, men wore a woolen belt, either red or navy blue, which not only supported the outfit but also added a striking visual accent. A special piece that highlighted elegance and social status was the *kândușea*, a vest adorned with braid, proudly worn on special occasions. For grooms, a highly refined garment was the *fustanela*, an intricately pleated attire consisting of four side pleats and twenty-two at the back, conferring a ceremonial distinction.

During colder days or special events, the costume was completed with thick garments, each designed for specific purposes. For example, the *șăgunea*, long and elegant, featured multiple pleats at the back, while the *sarica*, shorter and made of white or black *dimie*, was valued for its versatility. Other garments, such as the *duluma*, *mal'otul*, or *tălăganul*, appeared in various lengths and were used for festive occasions. The *tâmbarea*, a heavy coat with a hood, offered protection in harsh weather, while the *capot*, a robust cloak without inner fur, exemplified practical yet elegant clothing [2].

Accessories complemented this attire with meaningful details. The *chiusteca*, a slanted chain for a pocketknife, symbolized prestige and utility, while the *marțu*—a string of beads—and the *câmbâloghi*, associated with elegance and authority, emphasized the wearer's social status [3]. This ensemble was not merely a means of weather protection but also a form of identity expression, a work of art that encapsulated the traditions, values, and creativity of the Aromanians.

Over time, the Aromanian male costume evolved, absorbing external influences while preserving its essence. Each stitch, each ornament remains a bridge between past and present, keeping alive the spirit of a tradition marked by remarkable complexity and beauty [4].

THE TRADITIONAL FEMALE COSTUME

The traditional costume of Aromanian women from Gramos represents a true masterpiece of folk art, a flawless synthesis of functionality, aesthetics, and cultural symbolism. This complex and elaborate ensemble expresses the identity, social status, and creativity of the women in this community, with each element bearing profound meaning and a unique story.



The centerpiece of the costume was the *șcurtac*, a sleeveless vest that formed the foundation of the attire, imparting an air of sobriety and elegance. Over it, the *căpăci* was worn, a vest with wide, turned-back sleeves, adorned with intricate embroidery that highlighted the craftsmanship of every stitch. Beneath the *căpăci*, women wore *mănicoace*, finely crafted cuffs that added visual continuity and harmony to the ensemble. On the chest, a white fabric called *chiptar* was placed, over which a carefully arranged golden coin necklace, known as *flurii*, was worn, symbolizing both wealth and belonging to a community with deeply rooted traditions.

The head held a central place in the structure of this costume, adorned with exceptional attention to detail. At the top of the head sat the *amura*, while the *tas*, a component typically made of silver pieces, was arranged meticulously at the back, adding a touch of brilliance and prestige to the entire ensemble. The *câcula*, a specific hat, was made from red or burgundy cloth and had a truncated cone shape, entirely decorated with golden or woolen braids, underlining the sophistication and status of the wearer. On the upper part of the *câcula*, a silver disc was fastened, from which coins were suspended, while the lower edge of the hat was embellished with another row of coins and a strand of beads known as *lilice di mărdezeale*.

Beneath the *tas*, women wore a brocaded cap, and their hair, carefully braided into *cusițe* or *păltănițe*, was arranged with exceptional precision. The hairstyle was secured with a beaded cord called *măgur*, which passed under the chin, ensuring the stability of the arrangement and adding an extra element of elegance. In traditional Aromanian culture, the head and its adornments were regarded as a visual key to identity and social status, forming an integral part of the symbolic communication expressed through attire.

Another essential element of the costume was the apron, a piece of particular significance that transcended its practical function. The apron testified to technological skill and artistic refinement, blending local traditions with external influences and a universal language of elegance. Every detail, from the texture of the fabric to the decorative motifs, resulted from creative subtlety, transforming the apron into an expression of cultural identity and belonging to a unique aesthetic universe.

This costume, remarkable in its complexity and beauty, was not merely a vestimentary ensemble but also a reflection of the values and traditions of the Gramos Aromanians. Each element found its place in perfect harmony, telling a story of elegance, creativity, and respect for cultural heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

In a world increasingly shaped by modernization and globalization, where cultural differences often risk being homogenized or lost, the traditional Aromanian costume asserts itself as a vibrant symbol of national pride and cultural resilience. This piece of attire, worn with dignity at celebrations, weddings, and other community events, is not merely an expression of tradition but a profound act of reaffirming collective identity and maintaining a connection with ancestral roots.

The Aromanian costume is not the product of a single creator but a collective work crystallized over generations. Every detail, every embroidery, or stylistic line reflects the contributions of a family, a lineage, and ultimately, an entire community, granting it profound symbolic value. Its design, masterfully refined to its essence, is more than a mere aesthetic expression; it is a bridge between past and present, a living testament to the collective spirit that has endured the passage of time while preserving its authenticity.



REFERENCES

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