

### 1.1. The period of Ottoman Rule (1571-1878) Greek Cypriot dress

Under the Ottomans, the Greek Cypriot subjects presented a differentiated social stratification. An active class of local merchants and artisans, organized into guilds, had developed in the two main urban centers, Nicosia (the capital) and Larnaca (the main port and seat of consulates). They formed the middle stratum of the social hierarchy, far apart from the peasantry and the poor working class, and at a far greater distance from the ruling class, the level of which only a limited number of very rich people could approach. The top of the pyramid comprised of high-ranking members of the orthodox clergy, the Dragoman of Cyprus, a few notables and wealthy merchants, who formed part of the elite of the Cypriot society. The lifestyle of the elite was expressed in all aspects of material life, first of all, houses sheltering the private lives of eminent proprietors, the interior arrangement, furnishings and decoration, and last but not least, the appearance of such persons, their dress, jewellery and personal items. Richly decorated fashionable dresses were normally the privilege of the wealthy class which could afford such luxury.

The elite of the Cypriot society was not homogeneous. Among the outstanding merchants figure Greeks, Jews and Armenians, but also Europeans. About 62% of the trade was in the hands of foreign merchants. Venetians, French, British, Neapolitans, Ragusans and Greeks from the Ionian Islands, but also local merchants, settled mainly in Larnaca, which from the 17th century had become the seat of the consulates of the European states. As merchants and money-lenders, the consuls were involved in the economic affairs of the island, especially those of the Church, and were to some extent integrated into the local society. The exemption from taxes and other privileges, which the citizens of the European states enjoyed, due to the practice of capitulations, could also be extended to non-European subjects. Thus, rich Christian subjects who wished to safeguard their properties, paid heavily in order to become *protégés* or *beratli*, through 'lettres de protection'.

The consuls made a business of these titles of privilege to such an extent that the Porte was obliged to interfere. Among other privileges, the purchaser of a *berat* could enjoy the distinction of wearing the Ottoman dress consisting of certain coloured clothes and yellow shoes, like those of the Ottomans. In 1806 Ali Bey noticed that these *protégés* were

‘distinguished by a tall black cap of bear’s skin, called calpac’. He had also seen Greeks who were not *protégés*, wearing the calpac unnoticed by the Turks.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Cyprus, the appearance of the people of the upper classes mainly reflects two different co-existing cultures: the European and the Oriental.

In Larnaca, diplomats and traders from European states, but also merchants, doctors and wealthy people from the Ionian Islands, basically followed the European fashion. Donors depicted in early 18<sup>th</sup> century icons which belonged to families from the Ionian Islands established in Larnaca, give us an idea of the Western fashion in the days of flowing wigs, lace ruffles and silk stockings. Remarks, however, made by people of those times about the appearance of the elite of the town, offer a different view: Consul Drummond, in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, observed that ‘even the Franc, or European, ladies dress in the Grecian mode, which is wantonly superb, though, in my opinion, not so agreeable as our own. Yet the ornaments of the head are graceful and noble’. About a century later, in 1801, Edward Daniel Clarke described the oriental dress of the ladies of Cyprus, and was impressed by the headdress which women of all ranks, including the wives of the consuls, used to wear; this was ‘modelled after the kind of Calathus represented upon the Phoenician idols of the country, and upon Egyptian statues’. Some years later, another traveller who dined with several consuls and their wives, commented: ‘These people appear to have been Levantines, and the fair consulessees had tinged their fingers with henna a la Turque’.

According to Otto Friedrich von Richter, who visited Cyprus in 1816, ‘The attractions that Larnaca offers to a European returning from Asia are the various traces of Europeanism in the local dress code; here the hat has pushed the turban aside’. During the centuries of Ottoman rule oriental dress became fashionable, not only in Cyprus, but throughout the Empire, which from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century extended over three continents, assembling under its umbrella ethnic groups of diverse cultures, languages, religions and traditions. Oriental dress was promptly adopted by the upper classes, by privileged persons who could afford to buy high quality imported items. The same tendency was apparent when Cyprus was under Venetian rule; wealthy people imitated the appearance of the Venetian aristocracy and even after one century of Ottoman rule, at least until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, donors depicted in icons are dressed in Western style. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, oriental dress had become prevalent among the well-to-do, as it is known from travellers’ descriptions and representations of this

period: In 1738 Richard Pococke noticed: 'The common people here dress much in the same manner as they do in the other islands of the Levant; but those who value themselves on being somewhat above the vulgar, dress like the Turks, but wear a red cap turned up with fur, which is the proper Greek dress...' The headdress he described was the kalpak. Similar remarks were made by Giovanni Mariti, who lived on the island from 1760 to 1767: 'The men dress alla Turca, like those of Constantinople, and so too the women of any position, except as to the adornment of the head, which is high and striking... Their head dress consists of a collection of various handkerchiefs of muslin, prettily shaped, so that they form a kind of casque of a palm's height...'. Mariti described also the women's outer garment, a long mantle called *binis* (long cloak), and the low boots of yellow leather, under which they used to wear slippers.

The oriental looking dress was typical for the elite even by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as noticed by Ali Bey in 1806: 'Persons of any position always wear long coats, like the Turks, from whom they are distinguishable only by their blue turban; but many wear other colours, and even white, without offending the Turks'.

During this period, Ottoman influence led to dress codes different from those of the preceding eras of Venetian and Frankish rule. Now, oriental dress became prevalent among the well-to-do, not only in Cyprus but throughout the Empire. The clothing of men of the upper classes consisted of: *ipokamison* (shirt) which originated by the Byzantine *episarkion* a fluid sleeved tunic, and remained the most significant item being in direct contact with the human body; it was combined with *tzaktziria* (baggy breeches), usually red, onto which were sewn the *mestia*, footwear made of yellow morocco leather, locally produced. The color of footwear was a distinguishing feature strictly defined for subjects. It was a privilege to wear yellow shoes. Over the shirt they wore an *anteri* (gown open at the front) with a sash around the waist, and as outer garment a *gunna* (fur), or a *tzouppe* (mantle) made of costly fabrics, usually lined with fur. About fifteen different kinds of furs have been recorded in the lists of properties of deceased Orthodox Christians. The most expensive were those of *samur* (sable), the ashy grey Siberian squirrel, and the ermine, snow white decorated by the furriers with black spots. The pelisse was the favorite object of luxury, the mark of opulence, hence of social prestige and power. Furs costing between 500 and 1,500 piastres, were bestowed on the appointment of officials and archbishops, and were offered as honorary gifts to consuls. Ample soft garments were most suitable for sitting comfortably on low sofas in the luxurious divan rooms of the mansions.

Members of the high-ranking clergy wore the same type of apparel with a different headdress. The headdress was the most distinctive feature and conformed to a strict hierarchy. The *sarik* (turban) was the headdress of the Moslems. Dragomans and doctors, the Greek nobility, Armenians and Jews, wore *kalpaks*. They were either two-pointed, made of sable fur surrounding a leather cap, or in the shape of a mitre. Finger-rings set with precious stones or signet-rings and watches suspended from chains, are the only items of jewellery recorded in the possession of notables.

The latter type was worn by Phanariotes, the nobles of Chios and Livadeia, the rulers of Moldovlachia. Members of the high clergy wore the same type of apparel with a different headdress. Their luxurious appearance reflects the wealth and glory of the Orthodox Church, which under the Ottomans was restored to its ancient privileges.

Women's dress comprised similar garments. Shirt and *salvaria* (long pantaloons) gathered around the ankles, on top of them the *anteri* bound at the waist by a large sash or girdle fastened by silver buckles, or a similar type of dress, the *sayia*, and as outer robes a *pinishin* (loose mantle), usually red, or a *tzoupe* often lined with fur. Yellow shoes, a variety of headscarves composing an impressive headdress, as well as a profusion of gold coins, chains and jewels with precious stones, corals and pearls completed the outfit. Various types of ornaments are recorded by name. The quantity and quality of jewellery was an element of financial and social distinction. Ladies improved their appearance with two basic cosmetics, which survived until recent years in the rural areas: *Cholla*, a black pigment applied around the eyes, and *henna*, an orange-red dye, extracted from the plant *Lawsonia inermis*, and used for the hair and the decoration of hands and feet.

The oriental apparel of both sexes is recognizable in depictions: A panorama of the clothing of the upper class is presented on the wall painting (1747) depicting the Dragoman Christofakis and his family as donors of the Church of St. George of Arpera in Tersefanou, a village near Larnaca. Their overcoats are made of precious brocades lined with ermine fur. Another Dragoman, the old Hadji Joseph, appears with his family in an icon of 1776. His wife's pointed headdress, called *tarposin* (Turk. *tarbuş*) is similar to that of the wife of another donor, Michael, depicted with his family in an icon of St. John Prodromos, dated 1794, in the Church of St. John Prodromos, in Dromolaxia.

This and other depictions document the view that it was not only dragomans or other high officials who wore the oriental dress, but wealthy people in general. Donations to churches and monasteries, for the repose of the soul, were a pattern of behaviour, and the well-to-do were the most generous benefactors and donors. Charities were not simply an expression of religious feelings, but also a manifestation of power.

Giovanni Mariti, who lived in Cyprus from 1760 to 1767, refers to a costume consisting of a tight vest and a skirt of red cotton cloth as the *alla Cipriotta* (Cypriot type) dress, distinguishing it from the *alla Turca* dress that was fashionable all over the Empire with Constantinople as the main centre.

In written sources of this period, but also earlier, appears the term *foustani*, to denote a single-piece female garment. Depending on the quality of its fabric, it was found in the possession of rich ladies as well as ordinary people.

The Revolution of 1821, in which Cyprus was indirectly involved, resulted in the liberation of Greece and the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece in the 1830s, while Cyprus remained under the Ottoman yoke. Although politically separated, Greece and Cyprus moved closer together from this time onwards. The feeling of Greek national identity became increasingly stronger in Cyprus and found its expression also in dress. The most typical case of national costume in Cyprus is the women's dress known as *Amalia*. It was linked with the name of Amalia, Queen of Greece (1836-1862), and was well established in the urban centers of Cyprus by mid-nineteenth century, as a variation of the Greek national costume. The *Amalia* costume, known from portraits and dowry contracts dated from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, became the formal dress worn by the town ladies. This costume comprised a silk shirt, a skirt or dress, a gold-embroidered jacket and a red fez adorned with black tassels and flowers made of tiny pearls.

In contrast with the rich attire of the elite, the average merchant or craftsman and the wider strata of the population in general, used to wear what was later to become the national Cypriot costume for men. It consisted of shirt, *vraki* or *tizlikkin* (baggy trousers), *zostra* (girdle, sash), *yelekkkin* (waistcoat), *zimbounin* (sleeved jacket), *capotto* (capote, coarse cloak) and *podines* (top-boots). Different types of scarves, with or without a fez, covered the head.

The characteristic male costume worn both by Greek and Turkish Cypriots, in the towns and the countryside, had the *vraka* (baggy trousers) as its main component. It belongs to the island type of dress that was well established during the later Ottoman period. *Vraka* was either introduced by the Venetians, or, more probably, it was the dress of the corsairs and the inhabitants of the coast of Algeria, from where it spread to the Mediterranean, Asia Minor, Crete and Cyprus.

‘Poverty seldom consults fashion in dress’ stated William Turner, who visited Cyprus in 1815, commenting on the appearance of the peasants. The most common garment he observed among the male, was one of coarse cotton, all white. It consisted of a short vest tight round the body, with loose trousers down to the feet, fastened round the waist by a drawing tape or by a red girdle. The *turban* was mostly of white cotton. Light cotton garments, woven in the loom, for both sexes, were most suitable for people working in the hot sun, and continued to be in everyday use until recent times. Women’s clothes, loose enough to float in the wind, did not display their shapes but were convenient for work. Their pantaloons were exceedingly large and tied at the ankles and waist.

Undergarments and shirts were white, but, as revealed by written sources and representations, outer garments were surprisingly colorful, reassuring the fact that restrictions concerning the use of colors were not as strict in remote provinces of the Ottoman Empire as they were in Constantinople.

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