

“Doulamas” the Magnificent

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Abstract:

The “doulamas” is an exceptional garment worn in the Balkans, by men and women, during the Ottoman Empire Period, presenting geographical class and other interesting variations. The paper tries to analyze the terminology variations, pattern-cuts, the materials and decoration of the “doulamas” and finally proposes new ways of its use in the theatre and fashion.



Fig. 1:
“Doulamas” from Patras, Greece and “pirpiri” from Ioannina, Epirus, Greece. PFF collection.

Information referring to the “doulamas”, the “pirpiri” (fig. 1) and all the similar garments derives mainly from the visual arts. It is well known that artists used costumes without them belonging necessarily to the particular geographical area. For example Delacroix painted “The Massacre at Chios” without ever having visited the island, using theatrical borrowed “oriental” costume. On the contrary the German painter Peter von Hess (29 July 1792-4 April 1871) is acknowledged as trustworthy.



Fig. 2:
"The Arrival of King Otto in Nauplia on February 6, 1833". Oil painting by Peter von Hess, 1835, Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Neue Pinakothek.

In the painting "The Arrival of King Otto in Nauplia on February 6, 1833" (fig. 2) we perceive nearly all the range of garments under discussion. For example, on the left upper part of the painting a group of women is sitting on a ruin wearing in a very free way "pirpiri" on top of similar other garments. At the front of the painting, right and left, the warriors welcoming King Otto wear red "doulamas" coats, some of them being well known heroes of the period. We observe that the "doulamas" upper part was often separated from the lower part and was usually red (fig. 3).



Fig. 3:
Christian Perlberg, "Ein griechischer Adeliger mit seiner Familie" (A Greek nobleman with his family), 72 x 60 cm, 1836, Otto-König-von-Griechenland-Museum (King Otto of Greece Museum collection, Ottobrunn).

The population of the Argolid and Nafplion was of different origins, mainly Illyrian "Arvanites" farmers, which were invited in clans during the thirteenth century by the despots of Morea, following the thinning of the population after a series of plagues. None of these clans were left behind namely at the areas of what is now South Albania.

In Nafplion there were also some remaining Frankish and Venetian families from the Napoli di Romania periods (Frankish 1212-1388, Venetians 1389-1540, 1686-1715). It is of course impossible to disregard the Greek population which could not have disappeared from the area and who actually belonged to the ruling class, mainly collecting taxes for the Ottoman invaders, later becoming part of the Greek War of Independence (March 25, 1821).

The fact that the "doulamas" and the "pirpiri" are acknowledged as Balkan costume by the Ottomans does not explain their origin or coincidental presence as pattern-cuts in Georgia and Iran. In the Turkish dictionary "dolama" means wrap. The Turkish "dolama robe" or "dolama kaftan" inspired the Hungarian military jackets known as "dolman" which eventually influenced other uniforms and fashion.

The PFF “doulamas” belonging to a Patras family is exactly the same as an Albanian wedding ensemble of the MET collection and a “dzoumbes” from Prizren, Kosovo of the Ethnographic Museum of Belgrade collection. We must keep in mind that the Western Balkans presented a unity during the Ottoman period and people moved freely from one end to the other. Ioannina was in a way the capital of Western Balkans, base of the unscrupulous ruler Ali Pasha as such it was an important centre of silversmithing and gold cord embroidery at least during the nineteenth century. Shkodra and Prizren were accordingly, among others, important centres of the same periods.

According to the Turkish scholar Lale Görünür the equivalent women’s sleeveless coat was the “pirpiri kaftan”. It is difficult to explain the misleading terminology of similar or extremely different coat garments. For example, in Sifnos island the brocaded overcoat of a completely different pattern-cut is called “doulamas” and the red camelhair felt overcoat of the Arcadia area in the Peloponnese is known as “dzoumbes”. In Greek terminology “dzoumbes” was a long black loose outer coat for men worn until the late nineteenth century by the Prime Minister Dimitris Voulgaris who refused to wear European fashions in Parliament and was known by the nickname “Dzoumbes”.

Terms describing more or less the same garment are “Pirpiri”, “Pirpiri kaftan”, “Doulamas”, “Doulamas kaftan”, “Dzoumbes”, “Xhybe”, “Anderi”, “Cübbe”, “Cüppe”.

I’ve been planning for a long time an exhibition on the subject of “Doulamas the Magnificent”. I took the opportunity of my participation in the 2017 ICOM meeting to propose to a number of Greek designers an experimental exhibition, leading to a larger one, on the “doulamas” and the “pirpiri”, having as an example the Dries van Noten “Inspirations” exhibition in MoMu, Antwerp 2015 (fig. 4).



Fig. 4:
Experimental exhibition “Doulamas the magnificence”. On the left inspirations. On the right “doulamas” costume allegedly worn by Otto, first King of Greece (Lyceum Club of Greek Women collection) and other authentic coats.

In the theatre I designed on the “doulamas” pattern-cut creating variations by the use of textiles of my choice in several combinations. The results were impressive.

At the “Libation Bearers” of Aeschylus (fig. 5) and the “Caucasian Chalk Circle” by Bertolt Brecht (fig. 6) I have tried to experiment with both asymmetrical use of textiles and decoration.



Fig. 5:
“Libation Bearers” (“Choephores”), Aeschylus, Thessalian Theatre 1992. Costumes: Ioanna Papantoniou.



Fig. 6:
 “The Caucasian Chalk Circle”, Bertolt Brecht, National Theatre of Greece 2005.
 Costumes: Ioanna Papantoniou.

“Doulamas the Magnificent”. Why?

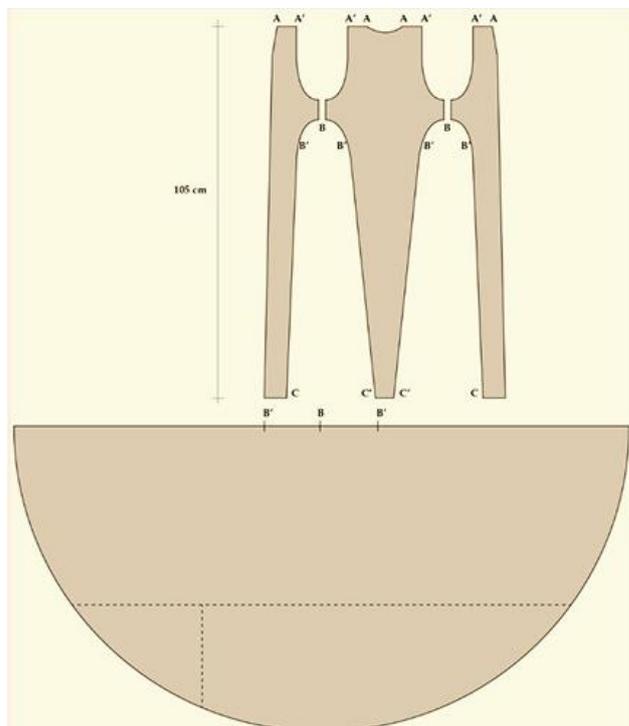


Fig. 7:
 Pattern-cut of “doulamas the magnificent”, as developed by me for the theatre, without or with added sleeves.

The reason I call the “doulamas” coat as magnificent is the diversity offered by the pattern-cut. The use of the two semicircular side panels creates an unbelievable variety of effects. The choice of materials, the decoration, their placement of the semicircles, symmetrical or asymmetrical, can create “fingerprint” variations (fig. 7).

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