**TRADITIONAL FOLK COSTUME AND TRADITIONAL OBJECTS IN THE JIU VALLEY**

The traditional folk costume has evolved during history in shape and content depending on society’s development. We can find some details only in photographs, sketches and tales.

Researchers distinguish three steps in the evolution of the folk costume:

* during the first step, the clothing individualised itself in relation to that of the neighbouring people and differentiated itself depending on area;
* during the second step, the influence of the urban area was felt through both the use of new industrial materials and some urban clothing;
* finally, the third step, perhaps the most unfortunate one, is the current one, when the traditional clothing is used only on special occasions.

In Romania, the traditional clothing seems to have its roots stuck in the clothing of the Dacian ancestors. Just how in the Jiu Valley the locals were shepherds, their clothing was specific to this occupation with similarities up to the identification with those of fellow shepherds from Marginimea Sibiului (Sibiu county), especially for the Eastern Jiu Valley, and some influences from Gorj and Banat areas for the Western Jiu Valley, depending on the summer meetings of the shepherds in the mountains.

In the pastoral clothing, the traces of the Geto- Dacians is obvious: the shirt of the peasants that was rippled at the neck, the white decorative towel made from flax or hemp in the form of a turban, a long tunic made from hemp and over it a shorter one fastened with a belt. Regarding the men, the trousers (“*cioareci”*) made from white, thick cloth tightened on the thighs and haunches, and then a broad leather or thick cloth waist band, peasant sandals, fur cap, are ichnographically certified on Trajan’s Column and on the Adamclisi monument.

The clothing of the *momârlani* fall into two categories:

* for keeping, for celebrations: weddings, *nedei (= pastoral festivals)*, and other festivities, with floral polychrome stitchings,
* for wearing, which were used every day, less sophisticated, simpler.

Through the care of ancestors, the celebration clothes from the last hundred years were kept in drawers and today have become the pride of the descendants on festive occasions.

**Men’s clothing**

The ***hat*** was only black, a semisphere with smaller brims of 1-2 cm for young men and broader ones of 2-3 cm for the elders. These hats were made from a special woollen cloth made in the traditional workshops from Marginimea Sibiului area.

The significant piece from the men’s clothing was the ***cioareci***. These, called in other ethnographic areas *ițari*, are tight on the leg, made from white woollen cloth for the winter periods and thin hemp or cotton cloth for the summer periods.

The ***leather boots***, worn on festive days, gave a picturesque feeling to the *momârlan* clothing.

One of the most elaborate pieces of the men’s clothing was the ***shirt***. It is wide, casual, as opposed to the *cioareci*, with wide sleeves, down to above the knee and was made from a white material called *jolj*.

Over the shirt, men wore a ***waist band*** made from fine cow leather, in red colours for young men and black for the elders.

The ***vest*** made from cloth woven at home, then from red velvet, was worn over the shirt. It had a collar, buttons at the front, and two pockets on every side down and one on the upper left side. Lately, the vest was made from thin sheep, goat or even calf skin, dyed in black and brown.

For decades, the men’s shirt was composed from two pieces: the shirt itself, shorter, and the skirt that could be wrinkled easier and detached. The junction between those two pieces is made by tying the skirt with a cord at the waist, covered by the waist band.

**Women’s clothing**

The ***decorative towel*** was replaced gradually by ***scarves*** with which it circulated in parallel for some time, the scarves being worn by girls and young women, and the ***decorative towels*** by older women. The scarves were made from different materials as time went on: cloth, silk, lame, cashmere, etc.

The most sophisticated piece of the women’s clothing was ***ciupeagul*** ( or ***iia***) (= the blouse). This was made like the men’s shirt from white cloth, called *jolj*, decorated with ornamental stitches made manually with string and a needle.

Like the men’s shirt, the ***ciupeag*** doesn’t have a collar, but instead it has a system that closely imitates the collar resulted from the wrinkles with which it is tightened around the neck, closing on the right with two strings called ***cheotori***, but which at the end no longer have tassels like the men’s.

The sleeves are wide like the *ciupeag*, and at the wrist they are tightened with a stitching so that the extremities would splay in fan pattern, waving, ending with wide lace that was black in the traditional village. The back of the *ciupeang* doesn’t have stitching. However, on the sleeves and on the front, longitudinally, flow rows of black bands called *arnica*. These bands are about 1.5-2 cm wide and are called *șnoare* in the majority of villages, and *ciocănele* in Cimpa village. These longitudinal bands can be either 3 or 5, because more wouldn’t fit. The *ciupeang* is tightened around the waist with the string of the skirt.

***Poalele*** (underskirt)are a kind of wide, white skirt, made of the same material like the blouse and can have a circular embroidery in the middle. These embroideries can also be made on the lower edge of the skirts or a narrow lace (r. *ciptă*) can be applied.

Under the skirts, the ***polițe*** are worn, tighter on the body, of coloured materials, with flowers, laces and embroideries, being shorter than the skirts. They become visible during the dance, when the woman is being swirled under her hand, remaining soft on the body as the skirt extends into a fan.

The ***apron*** (r: *șurțul*) is applied in front over the skirt, is made of fine black cloth (r: *pănură*) with horizontal, golden seams in the lower third, with lace on the sides and tassels (r: *ciucuri*) of 4-5 cm long at the lower edge. The back apron is called *catrință*. It does not have tassels and has lace all around. The apron and the ***catrință*** are tied at the waist with cords fixed to their upper part, over which a woven, decorated with rich flowery motifs waist band (r: *brăcire*) is applied, giving the impression of a narrow belt. It can be replaced with a tricolor ribbon.

Over the blouse, a vest made of velvet (r: *pieptăruț* or a *pieptar*) is worn, made of lambskin, but it has never been clogged for women. Even the vest made of lambskin, with wool inside, sewn with floral motifs, is split in the front.

Over time, low-heeled shoes and sandals appeared, and now, on special occasions, high-heeled shoes and boots, with low or high heels are worn.

The elements that form the ***traditional momarlan clothing*** were usually made in the “workshop” of each house. Between fasts, during winter and the beginning of spring, that is from Bobotează (Epiphany) to Easter, women from each house, mothers, daughters, daughters-in-law sewed chicken stitches on men’s shirts, or they were weaving on the loom.

Traditional sewing has, over time, had the same technique, being different only in the type of materials and threads used. The fundamental element of the chicken stitch sewing is an “X”, a cross sewed on a three-thread range both in width and height, similar to the sewing on the embroidery sheet. Accidentally or not, this “X” represents the cross of Saint Andrew, the Apostle, who played an important role in the christening of the Romanian people.

At the beginning, in the old village, the linen cloth, woven on the loom in the house, was used. Only black cotton thread was used for sewing. It was usually sewn with three threads in one place detached from the waist band. Then the elastic threads appeared.

Along with the black colour was introduced the yellow, golden thread, a bright colour that gave elegance to the seam. To begin with, these golden threads were torn from lamé materials, used by the “ladies of the city”. From them, this golden, flat material was removed thread by thread, and with it the fillings for the chicken stitching were sewn. Over time, special yellow round threads appeared this time, like the black thread that made the work easier.

The traditional clothing of the inhabitants of Jiu Valley region was, as we have seen, of an immaculate white as clean as the nature was, in which they carried on their activity. White represented for the peasants the light, the life, the good mood, the daily hospitality, in contrast with the sober, gloomy, sadder color, characteristic of the pollution in the big cities.

Today, unfortunately, the traditional costumes are worn only on occasions and only by certain people. Their number is constantly decreasing. Unfortunately, women who knew how to sew and make traditional costumes began to disappear one by one. If we do not intervene to teach young people these skills, we may see over the years traditional costumes only in museums.

THE LOOM

In the traditional village, all the goods and clothes that family members needed were woven on the loom, using as prime material: wool, linen, hemp, and for fine cloths, cotton, that came from trade, having the advantage that the threads were “shredded” (r: *toarse*). Thanks to this situation, the loom did not miss from any rural household. Usually, the loom was used during the winter, after the Christmas fast started. When the work in the mountains and harvesting crops was over, the women wove until spring, when the agricultural work began.

Today, there are rare houses where a woman dares to weave cloth from which she can make traditional bags and saddlebags. We still see on the streets of the villages but also of the towns of the Jiu Valley women carrying *săcăteie* as a purse.

Until they get to weave the cloth on the loom, the housewives use several household textile tools: rășchitorul, sucala, vârtelnița, furcafor, melița, peria de fuioare etc.

***Fusele de tors*** (spindles) had a distinctive element characteristic to Marginimea Sibiului, being much longer than the spindles known in other ethnographic areas of the country. The actual body of the spindle has four faces, with equal notches on the edges formed by the fours faces, having the role of keeping the woolen thread twisted as best as possible. These notches sometimes evolve into complex ornaments similar to the house pillars. The alternating evolution of these motifs makes the spindle look like an endless column.

***Furca de tors*** (***distaff***). As in other cases, there are no ornamental elements specific only to the Jiu Valley area. They look like the distaffs of the surrounding areas.

Generally, the models on the old distaffs combine the three working techniques used in the Jiu Valley: carving, piercing and notching associated with geometric and floral motifs, alternating with the distaff axis, the end of the distaff always has the aspect of a rosette.

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