



Summary :

Presentation of the typology and the social function of traditional Cappadocian clothing among the Greek-Orthodox.

Date

19th - 20th century.

Geographical Location

Cappadocia

1. Description of the General Type

Research has difficulty deciding on a general type of costume in [Cappadocia](#) until 1924 because of the diversity and differentiation¹ among regional types.² According to records and pictures from [Anaku](#), [Gelveri](#) (Karvali), [Misti](#), [Axo](#), [Çarıklı](#), [Flaviana](#) ([Zincidere](#)) and [Sinastos](#), the prevalent structural type of costume, with occasional differences in either the number of items or the quality, is as follows:³

- Loose cotton undergarment down to the ankles with a long, central part. Everyday costumes, woven on looms, are usually unadorned, while formal costumes have embroideries or an interlined lower part (*vratsi*, *patsá* in Misti, *tsindiáni* and *salvári* in Çarıklı and [Niğde](#)).
- Long-sleeved garment down to the ankles, almost trapezoid in shape. It was usually made of fabric woven on the loom (*met*, *imat*).
- Sleeveless tightly fitted garment down to the waist, which buttoned on the chest. It was made of felt and cotton and had plain embroidery (*ousloús*).
- Long garment with a tight upper part, one-piece front part and seamless sides from the waist down to the hem. Everyday costumes had usually striped patterns and were bought in [Nevşehir](#) (Neapolis), [Niğde](#) or [Prokopi](#), while formal or wedding costumes were made of fabric from Constantinople or were imported from Syria (*seyterjí*, *enteri*, *gomás* – names attributed to expensive fabrics and, as a result, names given to the garments).
- Long and double-breasted formal, mainly female, clothing fully covering the garments worn underneath. It was sewn and embroidered by special craftsmen (*tsóha* or *tsohá* or *tsogá*).
- Light outer short coat, worn over the dress, with or without sleeves (*sálta*, *kirlík* in Anaku after 1880, *zoubouína*, *eslitsisereflouí*, with thin folds on the back: *selík* for elderly women, *libadé*, *ziboúna* / *vamvakoúla*, *férmene* in Sinastos).
- Long rectangular apron for everyday use. It covered the front part of the costume. The formal *tsóha* was accompanied by the *tizlíka* with suitable embroidery. It tied around the waist with laces ending in bobbles (*tizlíka* in Karvali and Misti, *igilík* in Anaku and *peskír* in Sinastos).
- After the age of twelve the costume should include the waistband, tied either over the *tizlíka* (Çarıklı, Axo, Misti) or fastened directly on the dress or the *tsóha* (Niğde, Gelveri). The plain everyday waistbands were made of fabric woven on the loom, while formal ones were made of imported fabric (*kemér*, *lahouíri*).

Additional clothes were worn in winter, such as the *babouklouí*, a waistcoat with cotton lining over the shirt, and the *koutouk*, a long coat in Gelveri.



The head was covered with a kerchief (*yemení, yasmá, tiváh, kivráh*, with beads all around); in light colours for the young and dark colours for the elderly. All over Cappadocia there are elaborate and large, although usually archaic, wedding headbands⁴ [*terlítsi* in Misti, *tsáfka* in Axo, *táka* or *tahíá* in Anaku, *také* in Zincidere in the shape of a fez, *kássapa* in Sinasos]. The hair was held in high esteem as indicative of female beauty.⁵ The commonest hairdo of Cappadocian women was the braids, four for the girls and the young and two for elderly women. On formal occasions and in areas such as Gelveri, Sinasos, Anaku and Flaviana (Zincidere) there were up to forty braids.⁶ In larger cities, such as Sinasos, Telmessos and Anaku, there were special hairdressers,⁷ who braided the hair. Sometimes girlfriends braided each other's hair, while on the wedding day the godmother of the bride, or the *syntéxa*, a woman whose children had been baptised by the bride's parents, braided the hair of the bride. After they parted the hair in the middle, they formed it into small strands, the so-called *fitília*. Gold coins (*sats-altiní*) were fixed at their ends and then a felt cord with stitched coins and beads was threaded through the strands so that the *fitília* would join together below their half length.

Male costumes usually followed the type found in the wider region of Cappadocia. In particular, apart from differences, mainly among fabrics used, due to local home industry and job particularities, male costumes until the mid-19th century consisted of:

- Undergarment (*vratsíe*).
- Shirt (*met, imát*).
- Trousers (*salvár, kiatipiyés*, looser than ordinary trousers and tighter than a *salvári*, worn in the transitional period of male clothing towards the late 19th century).
- Waistcoat (*islíts*).
- Waistband (*kemér* and *silahloul*).
- Jacket (*sálta*).
- Coat: fur, cloak, *yampsí*, draped and sleeveless, externally lined over a layer of felt. It was common among Russians and was often worn by people from Misti when they travelled there.

Jewellery, mainly gold coins, was used in wedding and formal costumes. The chest of both men and women was adorned with rows of coins stitched on felt (*gizdanouhi* in Niğde and Misti) or threaded on a chain (*gildín*), while women's waistband clasped with an elaborate brooch (*baskousagouidia*).

Locally produced *tsarouhia* or socks (*beértsia* in Çarıklı, *sapouhia* in both Çarıklı and Misti, *podórtia* in Sinasos and *tsourápia*) knitted by women covered the needs for shoes. It was not until the 19th century that the use of *patín kalós* was generalised – possibly a Muslim influence. Leather *kontoures* or *kalikia* manufactured by shoemakers in big commercial centres were used as formal shoes.

2. Social Function of Clothing

Clothes reflected the social characteristics of both men and women in Christian, Greek-speaking and [Turkish-speaking](#) populations of Cappadocia, and were associated with social structure.



Inbreeding was followed by Christian communities even within the same settlement.⁸ There were local clothing standards that did not alter the abovementioned general type, while they functioned as alternatives and formed a kind of 'dialect' among the inhabitants of the same community. Obedience to the established local clothing types⁹ was necessary for social acceptance in Cappadocia. The waistband for both men and women when they reached age twelve, fewer braids in elderly women as well as the absence of red, dark blue and black colour¹⁰ from everyday clothes were some of the main dictates of the Cappadocian clothing code, common in most local versions. Each colour detail or garment worn carried a deeper and important implication. For example, in the ball of St. Basil the newlywed women used to wear light coloured and elaborate scarves, the *tiváh*, while those married long ago wore plainer scarves.¹¹

Perhaps the most typical feature of the married Cappadocian woman's clothes, beyond the strict customs of some events, such as the wedding, was the entirely covered head – except a small opening around the eyes. According to popular belief, brides were transmitters and receivers of "evil eye"¹² and, as a result, their faces during the wedding ceremony were covered with densely woven veils¹³ fixed on the headbands and sometimes draping down to the knees¹⁴. In Cappadocia the woman after the wedding, which often was before her eighteen years, should cover her head with a garment down to the forehead and have it fastened on her neck by folding it around the throat and covering the nose and the mouth. This type of clothing indicated the woman's social class in Cappadocia. Patrilocality, the bride's residence with her husband's kin, stressed the subordination of women¹⁵ to the male members of the family: she was not even allowed to eat¹⁶ and talk with them or even exist as an independent person.

Very interesting in this aspect is the custom of "brideprice". The bridegroom's family gave an amount of money to the bride's family as the latter was to be deprived of the bride's labour. The agreement was usually reached when the bridegroom offered a fine, plain or flowered scarf, the *yasmá(h)* or *yemení*, which was worn as an everyday headband all over Cappadocia. By implication, the names of the scarves came to be used as synecdoches for the the custom of buying the bride out.

The composition of the costume defended shyness, a primary female virtue in traditional societies, which imposed silence and lowered eyes: the *tsóha*, long and almost motionless –because of the cut, material texture, plain ornamentation and dark colours–, allowed slight movements in both circular and square dances.

The social role of clothing as a 'collective institution'¹⁷ is upgraded on special occasions. In the wedding ceremony the woman should always wear the *tsohá*, which was originally established in Cappadocian cities and was later generalised as formal attire in poorer regions as well. In periods of mourning neither men nor women wore elaborate clothes; they wore the same outer garments for a long time – a practice controlled by the community.¹⁸ Despite economic distress, formal clothes¹⁹ should be included in all households. As a result, almost all women had more than one *tsohá*. In order to follow the established practice, particular types of social solidarity were activated. In case a woman from Misti could not afford to buy ready-made *tsohá* or fabric from Neapolis (Nevşehir), Prokopi (Ürgüp) or Constantinople, she borrowed it from another woman from the same place, although this was held as derogatory.²⁰ At times the church granted the red ceremonial wedding robe, which must have been a "communal"²¹ dress, since there has been no evidence proving that it was hired out. Sometimes²² the *al*, the wedding veil, was donated by the bride to the village church, which often hired it out to other brides.



The relation between the Cappadocians and their clothes supports the opinion that the latter represent parts of the body they cover.²³ Thus, on several occasions the Christians²⁴ dedicated or promised²⁵ clothes to churches, which in turn auctioned them to cover ecclesiastical needs.²⁶

3. Historical Background and Clothing

The development and the final standardization of Cappadocian female and male costumes were formed within a specific historical framework. Christian populations abode by the dictates concerning the clothing of the several **millet**, the ethno-religious communities of the Ottoman Empire. The Muslim element was strong; a great part of the Christian population increasingly, either extensively or exclusively, spoke Turkish, while religion was the only tenacious bond of ethnic identity. Therefore, the sartorial choices of the Christians, and particularly of women, were loaded with garments signifying their intercommunal character and identifying community cohesion. As a result, Christian Cappadocian women did not adopt the *salvâri* as their main outer garment, which is adopted by Muslim women though, while their wedding headbands had their origins in the Byzantine years and were different from the Muslim ones. However, interactions²⁷ were inevitable. The braids or the entirely covered head and face can be found among both Christian and Muslim Cappadocian women.

When towards the late 19th century²⁸ the Cappadocians **migrated** for commercial and occupational reasons, or they just began to travel, the wider social conditions started to change: the social position of the woman improved, the Muslim populations employed in the farms of the emigrant merchants were bolstered and new clothing habits were consolidated. The **Tanzimat** reforms favoured the above developments as they included fewer restrictions than any previous regulations. Every time the emigrants returned home they brought scarves, waistbands, *lahouÿria* and fabrics (such as striped silk from Damascus) as presents purchased in the cities of SE Asia Minor or in Constantinople. The women manufactured clothes of these materials or incorporated new dresses into the former ones.

The communication of the Cappadocians with the cities had immediate impact on male clothing as well, which was influenced by the dominant population of each place. As a result, those related to the northeastern provinces adopted Russian clothing habits;²⁹ people in Axo, who were engaged in internal commerce, followed the Turkish standards in clothing and language;³⁰ those who travelled to Constantinople were the first to wear 'Frankish' (western) clothes.

From 1870 on there were several sartorial changes in female clothes as well. Strict principles declined thanks to the appearance of shops that provided the necessary stuff, such as threads, needles, or even fabrics and ready-made clothes; the impact of the markets of Niğde and ,³¹ the influence of the peddlers and the merchants who returned home. Already from 1850 in Nevşehir the bride's covering of her face had acquired a solely ritual character, free from the social implications of the 18th century.³² The original type started to become gradually plainer in 1870: a tendency for modernization then appeared in Axo.³³ The first new dress (*foustani*) was worn in Anaku. However, it was not until 1920 that western clothes were made widely available.³⁴



1. There were differences mainly in ornamentation, manufacturing materials, even in the names, according to the language – Turkish or Greek.
2. Cappadocia is divided, according to the classification of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, into seven districts: Kaisareia, Prokopi (Ürgüp), Neapolis (Nevşehir), Aksaray-Gelveri, Niğde, Pharasa and colonies of Pharasa. See Πετρόπουλος Δ. – Ανδρεάδης Ε., *Η θρησκευτική ζωή στην περιφέρεια Ακσεράι-Γκέλβερι*, (Athens 1971), p. 14.
3. The identified systems of sartorial classification (Papantoniou, Chatzimichali) could include the general sartorial type of the Cappadocian costume in the type of costume with a *kavadi*. According to the system of classification a group of experts tried to introduce at the Musée des Arts et des Traditions Populaires in the 1980s, this type could be considered an outfit of tailored clothes worn from the head, while most of them hang from the shoulders. For more details about the new system of classification, see Groupe de Travail sur le Vêtement, 'La constitution d'un protocole d'enquête', *L'Ethnographie* 92-94, *Actes du colloque national CNRS 'Vers une anthropologie du vêtement'*, Musée de l'Homme (9-11 mars 1983) publiés sous la direction d' Y. Delaportes (Paris 1984), pp. 287-289.
4. Κορρέ- Ζωγράφου, Κ., *Ο νεοελληνικός κεφαλόδεσμος* (Athens 1991), p. 10.
5. Κωστάκης, Θ., *Ανακού* (Athens 1963), p. 100. The hair was considered a basic element of the female beauty. In Gelveri when the girls wanted to strengthen and lengthen their hair, they tried to expose them to the first rain of May; see Πετρόπουλος, Δ. – Ανδρεάδης Ερ., *Η θρησκευτική ζωή στην περιφέρεια Ακσεράι-Γκέλβερι* (Athens 1971), p. 164. What happened during the exchange of populations (1924), when compulsory sanitary measures were imposed on the refugees, shows how important was for women to have rich and long hair,. 'When we came here as refugees, in quarantine, they cut our hair, they cut the *fitili*. Oh! If only you could see what happened then. We were all in tears! A girl nearly tried to dive into the sea so that she could keep her *fitilia*. A bride shouted: "How can I go now to my husband?" Another bride died of grief. It was then that we were allowed to keep our hair'. Testimony of Iordana Kouvaroglou from Telmessos, given to Sophie Anastasiadis in 1950 and included in the records on Cappadocia from the material of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies.
6. The selection of number 40 for the braids should not be considered accidental. From the Byzantine years number 40 was among the symbolically meaningful numbers. See Σπυριδάκης, Γ.Κ., *Ο αριθμός τεσσαράκοντα παρά τοις Βυζαντινοίς και νεωτέροις Έλλησι* (Athens 1939), pp. 101-102. The above strengthen some testimonies supporting that during the feast of the Forty Martyrs in Gelveri the women used to stitch their embroidery forty times or did forty stitches in their looms so as to bring good luck. See Πετρόπουλος, Δ. – Ανδρεάδης Ε., *Η θρησκευτική ζωή στην περιφέρεια Ακσεράι-Γκέλβερι* (Athens 1971), p. 151. Moreover, the mother-in-law in the same village offered the fiancée of her son forty gold coins for her braids on Holy Saturday; see Πετρόπουλος Δ. – Ανδρεάδης Ε., as above, p. 156.
7. Testimony of Iordana Kouvaroglou from Telmessos, given to Sophia Anastasiadi in 1950 and included in the records on Cappadocia from the material of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies. Information is also provided about the working conditions of the hairdressers, who were employed on an annual basis. In the early 20th century their annual payment was 6-7 kuruz from each woman.
8. The Greek-speaking Misti is a typical case; Women hesitated to get married in another village because when they would wear their strange clothes there, they would become an object of 'curiosity and ridicule'. See Κωστάκης, Θ., *Το Μιστί της Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1977), p. 202. For more information about the importance of practices within marriage for establishing the various sartorial types, see Μελλίδου-Κεφαλά, Ν., 'Η γυναικεία παραδοσιακή φορεσιά από το Μέγα Ζαλούφι', *Εθνογραφικά* 7 (Nauplion 1989), p. 68.
9. 'If you brought a hundred women close to each other, they all were dressed in the same clothes, like soldiers; they could not wear different clothes because they were fooled'. See Κωστάκης, Θ., *Το Μιστί της Καππαδοκίας*, vol. I (Athens 1977), p. 144. This had nothing to do with the concept of 'fashion', as it is today, but with the function of the dress as an identification code among the members of a community and a means of acceptance and integration. See Τσένογλου, Ε., 'Τα γυναικεία καστelloριζικά ενδύματα', *Εθνογραφικά* 4-5 (Nauplio 1985), pp. 59-61.
10. Ιωσηφίδης, Κ., *Η Καρβάλη της Καππαδοκίας - Η Φορεσιά* (Nea Karvali 1988), p. 13.
11. Κορρέ-Ζωγράφου, Κ., *Ο νεοελληνικός κεφαλόδεσμος* (Athens 1991), p. 132.
12. For more information about the power of the evil eye, see Μιχαλοπούλου-Βέικου, Χ., *Το μάτιασμα, η κοινωνική δυναμική του βλέμματος σε μια κοινότητα της Μακεδονίας*, doctoral thesis (Athens 1996).
13. In Misti, a village in the district of Niğde, this veil is called *al*, while shortly before the exchange it had been worn only for a week. In earlier times, even more conservative attitudes were recorded. See Κωστάκης, Θ., *Το Μιστί της Καππαδοκίας*, vol. I (Athens 1977), p. 230. In Axo the newly-married women had to customarily wear the veil for an indefinite period, which sometimes was one year, according to the will and the decision of the head of the family. See Μαυροχαλυβίδης, Γ., *Η Αζό Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1990), pp. 217, 221.



14. This is the case in Axo, where the bridal veil, the *douvalji*, is called *alis* and consists of a red transparent tulle 50 cm wide and almost 1m long. See Μαυροχαλυβίδης, Γ., *Η Αζό Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1990), p. 249.
15. In Anaku, although because of the special social conditions (increased migration of the men to Constantinople, contact with other, more or less important cities, etc.) the position of woman was not so much degraded, there was the saying "bride and slave have no soul". See Κωστάκης, Θ., Ανακού (Athens 1963), p. 183.
16. When the woman wanted to eat, as long as she was allowed to sit on the table the men were sitting, she had to turn her head, raise the veil or lower the *yasmá(h)*, bring the spoon to the mouth and, before she gulped, raise the headband again every time she took a bite. Every time she took a bite she went through this procedure. See Μαυροχαλυβίδης, Γ., *Η Αζός της Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1990), p. 222.
17. Παπαντωνίου Ι., 'Συμβολή στη μελέτη της γυναικείας παραδοσιακής φορεσιάς', *Εθνογραφικά* 1 (Nauplio 1989), p. 5.
18. Κωστάκης, Θ., *Ανακού* (Athens 1963), p. 193.
19. Μαυροχαλυβίδης, Γ., *Η Αζός της Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1990), p. 73.
20. In case her father did not offer her *tsóha* for the wedding, the bride would vent her grievance with the phrase: 'Have the tailors broken their needles for me?' See Κωστάκης, Θ., *Το Μιστί της Καππαδοκίας*, vol. I (Athens 1977), p. 219.
21. Μαυροχαλυβίδης, Γ., *Η Αζός της Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1990), p. 214.
22. Κωστάκης, Θ., *Ανακού* (Athens 1963), p. 182.
23. It is the concept of *pars pro toto*, according to which the part functions on behalf of the whole. See Λεκατσάς, Π., *Η καταγωγή των θεσμών, των εθίμων και των δοξασιών* (Athens 1951), p. 56.
24. Very interesting is a custom found in both Christian and Muslim populations of Cappadocia, an obvious result of religious syncretism. On the way to Göstük both the Muslims and the Christians hanged small pieces of their clothes from a pear-tree wishing to be healthy and prosperous. See Πετρόπουλος Δ. – Ανδρεάδης Ε., *Η θρησκευτική ζωή στην περιφέρεια Ακσεράι-Γκέλβερι* (Athens 1971), p. 85. An identical practice has been preserved until today by Muslims in Sinasos, in the yard of the ruined church of St. Nicholas.
25. Μπαλτά, Ε. (edit.), *Προκόπι* (Athens 2004), p. 102, testimony of Elisabeth Isaakidou (1949).
26. Μαυροχαλυβίδης Γ., *Η Αζός της Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1990), p. 147.
27. Apart from the sartorial customs, there were influences in the ways they cleaned or attended the body. In Anaku, for example, on the eve of the wedding there was a ritual depilation in the private parts of the body of both men and women with the help of a herb – a practice not found in other Christian populations, although particularly widespread among Muslims. See Κωστάκης, Θ., *Ανακού* (Athens 1963), p. 168. For more information about influences associated with convictions and customary behaviour, see Πετρόπουλος Δ. – Ανδρεάδης Ε., *Η θρησκευτική ζωή στην περιφέρεια Ακσεράι-Γκέλβερι* (Athens 1971), p. 56.
28. The Cappadocians from northern Cappadocia immigrated mainly to Constantinople, while those from the central and southern Cappadocia went SE (mainly to Adana). See Κωστάκης, Θ., *Ανακού* (Athens 1963), p. 391.
29. The people from Misti working on the felt spent considerable time in other regions, while they sometimes traveled as far as the provinces bordering the Russian territory. The climatic conditions of each place often made them adopt clothes like the *yampsí*, instead of their familiar cloak, or the *paslik*, an overcoat with hood. See Κωστάκης, Θ., *Το Μιστί της Καππαδοκίας*, vol. II (Athens 1977), p. 449.
30. The clothes of the merchants from Axo who travelled in mainland Asia Minor were influenced by Turkish populations: the cloak was replaced by a felt *sálta* and then by a *sakko*, while the long cloak by the Arab *maslah*. The *salvár* from black woven fabric, typical in Axo, was replaced by the *kiatipiyés*, trousers tighter than the *salvár*, while the rustic fez was abandoned and was replaced by the Turkish fez with the long tassel and later by the *dalfes* with the small tassel. See Μαυροχαλυβίδης, Γ., *Η Αζός της Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1990), pp. 85-87. As for shoes, the Christian merchants from Cappadocia imitated the Turkish potentates of the cities and replaced the *tsarouhia* and *koutoures* by *potin kalos*. See Μαυροχαλυβίδης, Γ., *Η*



Αζός της Καππαδοκίας (Athens 1990), p. 26.

31. Κωστάκης, Θ., *Το Μιστί της Καππαδοκίας*, vol. II (Athens 1977), p. 440.

32. Κουκίδης, Γ., *Η Νεάπολις της Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1975), p. 80.

33. Μαυροχαλυβίδης, Γ., *Η Αζός της Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1990), p. 243.

34. The common costume that finally prevailed consisted of a shirt (*imát*), a vest (*kirlík*), a dress with a tight waist, a close-fitting upper garment, long sleeves and a tight jacket. See Κωστάκης, Θ., *Ανακού* (Athens 1963), p. 99.

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Glossary :

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| | millet |
| <p>The millet system was based on the division of the Ottoman subjects according to religion. The millets were the central communal institutions for the members of the respective ethno-religious groups, in particular for the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire. The millets had its own institutions and functions concerning self-administration, religion, education, justice, and social coherence. Although the division of the subjects according to their religion had always been fundamental in the Empire, the millets in their fully organized form originate in the end of the 18th century. In the 19th century, in particular during the period of the tanzimat reforms, the millets became the main institutions through which the non-Muslim subjects were incorporated in the Ottoman Empire.</p> | |
| | tanzimat |
| <p>The 19th-century reforms in the Ottoman Empire, which were inaugurated in 1839 with the edict of Hatt-i Şerif and came to an end with the Constitution of 1876. The reforms, which were considered an effort for the modernization and liberalization of the state, concerned every aspect of the political, social and economic life in the Empire. Of particular importance were the ones that equated legally Muslim and non-Muslim subjects.</p> | |