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LORD BYRON (1788–1824) IN ALBANIAN DRESS

A Sartorial Response to the Ottoman Empire

ABSTRACT

Europeans of many kinds—diplomats, soldiers, merchants, romantic adventurers, and artists—traveled in increasing numbers to the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century onward. Frequently, they adopted local dress for many reasons: courtesy to their host country, security in traveling to remote regions, curiosity. Among the garments that have survived is the complete Albanian dress which George Gordon, Lord Byron, purchased in Epirus in 1809. This article explores the dress as worn by Byron, its context in the richly varied tradition of Ottoman regional dress, and its use as a symbol of national identity after the recognition of an independent Greek state in 1832.

Through conquest and annexation, the Ottoman Empire evolved from modest beginnings in Anatolia during the thirteenth century into a formidable international power that controlled Arab and North African lands as well as most of south and central Europe. As major players in the politics of Europe and Russia—involved in a shifting network of diplomatic alliances, trade agreements, and wars—the Ottomans survived despite the erosion of their domain from the late seventeenth century onward, until their collapse after the First World War. Their presence influenced all aspects of life across their vast realm—administration, language, place names, religious and social customs—and was visually prominent due to the stately public and private buildings that dominated Constantinople and major provincial cities such as Cairo, Damascus, Tunis, and Sarajevo. However, the most striking visual evidence of the cosmopolitan wealth of the Ottoman world is seen in the many variations of dress and ornament worn at all levels of society, identifying rank, status, familial relationships, and religious and ethnic affiliations. Within this diverse cultural heritage certain garments were outstanding both for their style and origin and for their evolution into symbols of national identity. Here the *fustanella*, a man's garment with a full, white, pleated skirt, became a distinctive emblem of resistance against Ottoman rule—and, eventually, the official uniform of the Greek state.

One of the notable features of Ottoman decline, beginning in the late eighteenth century, was the emergence of powerful regional families who brought extensive territories under their

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control virtually independent of central Ottoman authority, which in turn stimulated Greek ideas of independence. The Albanian Ali Pasha of Tepelen (1740–1822) (fig. 1), son of a local leader, ruled from 1788 to 1822 as governor of the Ottoman province of Roumelia, territories corresponding to southern Albania as well as northern and central Greece, at Ioannina, capital of Epiros. By all accounts he was a remarkably successful ruler, cruel and ruthless but able to organize the infrastructure and economy of his domain well. A Bektasi Muslim himself, he employed both Muslims and Christian Greeks as his advisers based on their competence, regardless of their faith. While Ali Pasha usually kept apart from the Ottoman establishment at Constantinople, his three years of war (1820–22) against Sultan Mahmut II (r. 1808–39) led to his downfall and execution and contributed to the Greek War of Independence (1821–32). At the height of his power, however, he was recognized and cultivated by European powers—Britain, France, and Russia—and visited by diplomatic missions and independent travelers alike.

Byron and Ali Pasha: Narrative of a Journey

George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824), was among the most famous Europeans received by Ali Pasha. His travels through Ottoman territories marked a turning point in his life, introducing him to Greece, stimulating his literary work, and enriching his appearance through dress. Byron traveled with a group of young friends, including John Cam Hobhouse (1786–1869),¹ whom he had met at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1805. They crossed Europe and arrived at Preveza on September 29, 1809, and then traveled to Ioannina. Here, they met Col. William Leake (1777–1860), an officer in the Royal Artillery and a British spy who knew Greece well and spent two years, from 1808 to 1810, at Ali Pasha's court.² Leake organized accommodation for Byron and Hobhouse in Ioannina and arranged for them to travel to Tepelen, Ali

FIGURE 1. Mumias Dhrami, *Ali Pasha of Tepelen*, main square, Tepelen, Albania, mid-20th century. Bronze

Pasha's ancestral retreat, where he also kept court. They stayed for about ten days in Ioannina, exploring the city, meeting some of Ali Pasha's family, and enjoying shopping for clothing in the well-stocked bazaars. Byron's love of colorful Eastern dress had begun as early as the age of fourteen, when he attended a masquerade dressed as a Turkish boy; at twenty, he received a bill from a Nottingham tailor requesting payment for a jacket and a turban. His enthusiasm for the extravagance of Albanian dress is clear in the letter he wrote to his mother about his purchases: "I have some very 'magnifique' Albanian dresses the only expensive articles in this country they cost 50 guineas each & have so much gold they would cost in England two hundred."³ From Ioannina the travelers braved horrendous weather conditions to reach Tebelen on October 19; they were lodged in fine rooms in Ali Pasha's palace and were graciously received during the three visits which they paid to him. Byron was careful to observe correct European protocol: "I was dressed in a full suit of staff uniform, with a very magnificent sabre etc. The Vizier received me in a huge room paved with marble, a fountain was playing in the centre; the apartment was surrounded by scarlet ottomans."⁴

The group left Tebelen on October 26, and after a long journey through Greece they arrived in Constantinople on May 13, 1810; Sultan Mahmut II received them on July 10. Byron eventually arrived home in 1811; a testimony of his experiences, written in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, was ready for publication in 1812.⁵ For a few more years, from 1812 to 1815, Byron was both admired for his poetic success, looks, and charm and censured for his dissolute life. In 1816 he left England forever; he spent the rest of his life in Italy and Greece, dying in 1824, at the age of thirty-six, in Missolonghi, having joined the Greek War of Independence.

Byron and Albanian Dress

A romanticized image of Byron was visually complemented by the forty or more portraits of him in oils, drawings, prints, and engravings that were repeatedly circulated through exhibitions as well as magazine and book illustrations, contributing to his fame. In this context surely the most outstanding portrait of him was painted by Thomas Phillips in London in 1814, copied in 1834 (fig. 2), and exhibited at the Royal Academy.⁶ In this painting, Byron wears the magnificent Albanian dress, acquired during his journey of 1809–11 to the Ottoman world, which he so much admired:

The Albanians in their dresses (the most magnificent in the world, consisting of a long *white kilt*, gold worked cloak, crimson velvet gold laced jacket & waistcoat, silver mounted pistols and daggers), the Tartars with their high caps, the Turks in their vast pelisses and turbans, the soldiers & black slaves with the horses, the former stretched in groupes in an immense open gallery in front of the palace, the latter placed in a kind of cloister below it, two hundred steeds ready caparisoned to move in a moment, couriers entering or passing out with dispatches, the kettle drums beating, boys calling the hour from the minaret of the mosque, together with the singular appearance of the building itself, formed a new & delightful spectacle to a stranger.⁷

After his initial enthusiasm for Albanian dress, his response at home is intriguing. While he was content to pose as a handsome, fascinating sitter for his portrait of 1814, he apparently never wore his Albanian clothes again; they had served their purpose in publicizing his image, so he was ready to discard them. He gave them to his friend Margaret Mercer-Elphinstone, writing to her in May 1814:

I send you the Arnaout garments—which will make an admirable costume for a Dutch Dragoon—The Camesa or *kilt* (to speak Scottish) you will find very long—it is the custom with the Beys and sign of rank to wear it to the ankle—I know not why—but so it is—the million shorten it to the knee which is more antique—and becoming—at least those who have legs and a propensity to show them—if you like the dress—keep it—I shall be very glad to get rid of it—as it reminds me of one or two things I don't wish to remember.⁸

Byron's gift of his Albanian clothes to his friend ensured their survival. Mercer-Elphinstone married into the Lansdowne family and took them to Bowood House in Wiltshire, the home of the Lansdownes, where they lay in a storage trunk for years until Doris Langley Moore, a Byron scholar and dress historian, discovered them in 1962.⁹ She was planning to open a costume museum in Bath and was looking for garments to display when she was invited by Lady Lansdowne to look through the family collection. As she and the housekeeper searched the storage trunk, she found and recognized the clothes, matching them with those modeled by Byron and painted by Phillips in 1814. The Albanian clothes were displayed in the Museum of Costume, Bath, which opened in 1963, and were then returned to Bowood House, where they can be seen on a model figure (fig. 3). In 2002 they were again featured in an exhibition—at the National Portrait Gallery, London, exploring the creation and survival of Byron's legacy.¹⁰

FIGURE 2. Thomas Phillips, *George Gordon, 6th Lord Byron (1788-1824) in Albanian Dress*, 1834, after an original portrait of 1814. Oil on canvas

FIGURE 3. Byron's Albanian dress, Ioannina, Greece, ca. 1809

Byron's Albanian Dress

Because it is so well documented, the costume is important apart from its remarkable survival in almost pristine collection. It is a rare complete example of aristocratic Albanian dress with a definite provenance, a dated historical sequence from its purchase in 1809 to its presentation in the portrait of 1814 and subsequent donation to a secure home. Comparison of the garments with the portrait shows that Phillips interpreted them well, highlighting the folds of the white skirt and the sheen of the red and green velvet jacket, lavishly embroidered with gold thread in designs of stylized foliate motifs. Study of the garments provides further information about their fabrics, construction, and techniques of stitching and embroidery.

The foundation of the costume is an example of the long white shirt—with long sleeves, a high neck, an upstanding collar, and a full skirt—that is a generic garment of Albanian and Greek male dress. The full skirt—*fustanella*—is made by the insertion of between six and eight triangular pieces on each side from waist to hem.¹¹ The length of the garment is significant, as it varies according to the rank of the wearer; as Byron noted in his letter to Mercer-Elphinstone,

"The Camesa or *kilt* (to speak Scottish) you will find very long—it is the custom with the Beys and sign of rank to wear it to the ankle—I know not why—but it is so." The shirt—of firmly woven white cotton—is well made, with seams of white floss silk sewn in neat run and fell stitching, which ensures that there are no raw frayed edges. Seams and hems are outlined in a double running stitch, which also secures the double thickness of fabric of the upstanding collar. A *fustanella* can also be a separate pleated skirt.

One of the principles of traditional dress from all regions of the Ottoman Empire was the wearing of layers of garments, such as jackets and coats of varying shapes and textures, both for practical reasons of warmth and protection from harsh climates and as indicators of official rank as well as economic and social status. Byron's clothes indicate both his personal choice and taste and the status of a wealthy Albanian. He wore three upper garments: a tight waistcoat and a short jacket, both of crimson-red silk velvet, and a sleeveless coat made of black wool broadcloth. The waistcoat is of simple shape, sleeveless and with a short slit at each side for ease of movement, and is fastened at the front with a row of five blue silk loops over plaited silk buttons. The decoration, the work of skilled professional craftsmen, is lavish, consisting of gold braid that is both plaited as bands to the edges of the neck and armholes and used as single cords couched into designs of spiraling foliage on the body of the waistcoat.

The jacket worn over the waistcoat is of similar shape, with the addition of long sleeves with slashed cuffs turned back to reveal the contrast of a dark green velvet lining. It is possible to garner some understanding of the construction, as all of the seams are covered with a narrow band of plaited gold braid. The cut is based on blocks of a central rectangular back and two front sections joined at the shoulders; two sections on each side link the back and front sides. Each sleeve is a long rectangle set at a right angle to the bodice, with a seam from the underarm to the opening of a deep cuff. Lavish decoration of gold braid is worked in diamond and triangular shapes of foliage, as well as bands of S-shaped motifs, and is used in plaited borders that run all over the bodice and sleeves. The long, sleeveless black coat can be worn in several ways: over the jacket and waistcoat, draped over the shoulders as a cloak, or folded over the arm to display the gold braid decoration to best advantage, as in Phillips's portrait of Byron. Such coats were worn by the elite throughout the European and Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. A single length of crimson striped silk is wound into a loose turban, an alternative to the red felt cap worn by most Albanians. Decorated leggings and a broad swathed sash would have completed the costume (figs. 4–5).

Albania and the *Fustanella*

Byron's splendid costume illustrates Albania's turbulent history and complex ethnic structure. Albania, one of the poorest and least-developed provinces of the Ottoman Empire, shared a common border with northern Greece. The population—Albanians, Greeks, Vlachs, and Aromani-ans, both Christian and Muslim, and speaking many dialects—was both settled and nomadic. Sir Charles Eliot, a diplomat who had known the Ottoman world well since his first visit to Constantinople, in 1884, summarized the differences among the main groups, including the Greek-speaking Albanians of Epirus and Ioannina:

The Southern Albanians differ from the Northerners in many important respects. Their generic name is Tosk, which has often been conjectured to be the same as Tuscan, though no one has ever explained what the connection may be. The inhabitants of the country around Janina and Preveza are known as Chams, and those of the district round Premeti as Liapa. They can at once be distinguished by their costume, the *fustanella*, a voluminous white petticoat, reaching to the knees and similar to

FIGURE 4. Amadeo Preziosi, *Albanians in Constantinople*, plate 23 from *Stamboul moeurs et costumes*, Paris, 1883

FIGURE 5. Albanian man's dress, Constantinople, ca. 1880

that worn by a ballet-dancer. This dress certainly looks somewhat strange when worn by stout and stalwart men, but its effeminate appearance is somewhat lessened by the custom which prescribes that it must always be soiled and dusty "clean petticoat" being a term of reproach implying sloth and cowardice. The *fustanella*, though never worn by the Ghegs, is not peculiar to the Tosks, being in general use in Greece, even in the Morea, and also among the rural Turks of the Valley of the Vistrizia.¹²

His description is clear: the *fustanella* was worn by southern Albanians and by Greeks.

Limited resources and constant tribal feuding led to emigration abroad in search of a better life. Apart from those who rose to high office as Ottoman bureaucrats, Albanians at a more modest level found ready employment in the nineteenth century as *korujus*, watchmen who guarded foreign embassies and the homes of the wealthy, especially in Constantinople and Cairo. They took with them the *fustanella*, which eventually evolved from the disheveled garment observed by Eliot (see fig. 4) into a formal standardized uniform (see fig. 5) that reflected the status of their employers. The *fustanella* was still worn, either as a separate garment or as part of a long white shirt, but a short, embroidered dark blue jacket with trailing false sleeves replaced the layers of garments worn over the shirt. In contemporary Albania, Ali Pasha

is remembered as a patriotic hero and is commemorated in the main square of Tebelen with a large bronze statue by the sculptor Mumias Dhrami (see fig. 1). Here the pasha reclines, bristling with weapons and dressed in the acknowledged national dress of pleated *fustanella*, embroidered jacket with trailing false sleeves, embroidered leggings, shoes with *tsarouchia* tassels, and a fez. During his lifetime he would not have worn the *fustanella* but the formal robes, fur-lined coat, and turban of an Ottoman governor appropriate to his rank.

Europeans and Their Reaction to Ottoman Dress

Byron was one of many in his reaction, admittedly with one distinctive garment, to the immensely varied dress culture of the Ottoman world. Europeans from the sixteenth century onward had traveled to Constantinople and beyond in increasing numbers as diplomats, soldiers, merchants, artists, scholars, curious travelers, and (later) archaeologists, and as a result had amassed considerable knowledge of its institutions and customs. As relations developed, it was necessary to adapt to Ottoman society, and one of the most convenient means of doing so was adopting local dress, which was both practical and a courtesy to the citizens of one's host country. While plenty of visual and written evidence demonstrates that Europeans wore Ottoman dress, the British experience is the result of economic reality.

The first serious attempts of the British to wear Ottoman dress arose from their commercial relations with the Empire from the 1570s onward, which resulted in a lucrative trade in silks, carpets, and the precious spices essential for the preservation and flavoring of food. The Levant Company, founded in 1581, established agents in Constantinople, Smyrna, Aleppo, and Iskenderun. These representatives' long periods of residence influenced their attitude toward dress. Wearing Turkish dress was useful for developing good relationships with the local authorities and also provided anonymity and security; wearing local dress, the Levant Company's agents could move around on business without attracting attention. They had ample opportunities to observe and obtain Turkish dress; they saw the range of clothing worn in daily life, and received garments as part of their exchange of lavish gifts with the sultan and senior officials. During their years of residence among the Ottomans they needed to replenish their wardrobes repeatedly, which they did with locally made clothing. In time, some came to enjoy wearing the garments.¹³ Conditions of personal safety were variable according to the place, the situation, and the experience level of the traveler; the survival skills of a seasoned Levant Company agent would arguably be greater than those of a scholar or artist. Such considerations caused Col. Leake, in 1804, to recommend that Rev. John Palmer, a Cambridge scholar, adopt local dress for security and comfort when traveling in Greece.¹⁴

Many sources record the adoption of varied fashions of Ottoman dress by European visitors. Portraits of European sitters in a range of dress and poses, painted by professional artists in various media, depict such clothing in meticulous detail, as in Phillips's oil portrait of Byron (see fig. 2). Graceful studies in oil, watercolor, and pastel of French and English aristocrats dressed in elegant versions of Ottoman clothes reflect more the passion for *Turquerie*—an artistic fashion based mainly in France during the eighteenth century, which influenced painting as well as designs for the applied arts of porcelain, metalwork, and textiles—than the practical needs of merchants and travelers.¹⁵ Written sources such as journals and memoirs, as well as official diplomatic, consular, and trade reports, supplement the visual record and become increasingly important from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, as many include photographs of both local people and the authors themselves in regional dress. The most important and direct sources, which surpass both artistic renderings and written information, are the surviving garments, preferably securely documented, which, as textiles, are fragile and perishable.

They are divided between museum and gallery collections and private owners, who in some cases are the descendants of the family and friends of an original wearer, such as Byron.

Four British Travelers of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

During the late eighteenth and principally during the nineteenth century there was an increase in independent travelers to the Ottoman world, especially writers, artists, and retired professionals, such as doctors and engineers, who could spend more time than the diplomats and merchants indulging in explorations of local life and dress. Some of these travelers can be identified as sitters for portraits or matched with either a surviving garment or a detailed description of such. Four English men—Thomas Hope, Robert Wilson, Edward William Lane, and David Roberts—wore the dress of a middle-class Ottoman citizen of either a European or an Arab province, where there were relatively few differences among the urban elite, apart from level of income and personal choices of color and accessories. The Albanian *fustanella* does not feature here, but the general Ottoman principle of layers of garments—caftan robes worn over trousers—is observed.

Thomas Hope (1769–1831) (fig. 6) was a wealthy classical scholar who undertook an eight-year tour through Europe, the Ottoman lands, and Africa, recording his impressions in many

FIGURE 6. William Beechey, *Thomas Hope*, 1898. Oil on canvas

drawings. On his return, in 1798, he was painted by Sir William Beechey in the Ottoman clothes he had purchased in Athens: voluminous trousers, a white shirt, a combination of close-fitting embroidered jackets, and a turban. One of these garments—a green velvet waistcoat embroidered in gold with a design of spiraling scrolls—has survived in the collections of the National Portrait Gallery, and is comparable in cut and decoration to that worn by Byron. Later, Hope wrote a long, picaresque novel—*Anastasius*, published by John Murray in 1819¹⁶—which includes very detailed descriptions of contemporary Ottoman dress.¹⁷

By contrast, Robert Wilson (1787–1871) (fig. 7) was a professional, born in Banff in north-eastern Scotland and trained in medicine at Aberdeen University's Marischal College. On graduation he was employed as a surgeon with the East India Company's Maritime Service; beginning in 1805 he completed five voyages, which introduced him to foreign cultures. By 1814, Wilson had earned enough money to leave Company service and travel until 1825. His journey began, conventionally enough, with Europe, and then he ventured into Ottoman territories: Greece, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Persia, and eventually India. His journeys transformed him into a keen amateur antiquarian; he collected vases, coins, sculptures, and scarabs in Italy, Greece, and Egypt, keeping meticulous records of his acquisitions. Wilson returned to Banff, where he spent a long retirement involving himself in local activities and organizing his collections. He bequeathed the collections and his papers to Aberdeen University, where they are divided between the library and Marischal Museum, to which he had also allocated dedicated funds.¹⁸ Wilson's will also refers to "three marble statues and a bust of myself with a portrait in Turkish costume [which] will, I hope, find a place in the repository . . . The portrait which was painted in Rome eighteen hundred and twenty four, is at present in charge of my cousin, William Alexander Stables at Cawdor Castle."¹⁹ The portrait features a formal composition, with Wilson seated on the right, a dignified figure dressed in the handsome Turkish clothes he had purchased in

FIGURE 7. Robert Wilson, 1824. Oil on canvas

Athens. Receding into the background, somewhat blurred, are classical Greek ruins: the columns of the Temple of Olympian Zeus and the Parthenon on the Acropolis. Wilson's clothes have survived and have been displayed, alongside the portrait and some of his furniture, in the Marischal Museum.²⁰ The comparison with Byron's clothes is obvious, as both sets are well documented, with proof of ownership and date. Wilson's clothes are in excellent condition, which may indicate that they were not worn after his return to Banff, where he would have had little opportunity to display them.

Edward William Lane (1801–1876) (fig. 8), a scholar of Arabic language and literature and a pioneering ethnographer of Egyptian life and customs, had the greatest number of opportunities to adopt local dress. He began learning Arabic in London and in 1825 moved to Cairo to improve his language skills and develop a circle of Egyptian friends. He stayed there until 1828 and continued to immerse himself in Egyptian life with further long stays—1833–36, 1842–49—during which he worked on a comprehensive account of Cairo's society and daily life,²¹ a translation of *Arabian Nights*, and an *Arabic/English Lexicon* with the financial support of

FIGURE 8. Richard Lane, *Edward William Lane*, 1829. Marble

his patron, Lord Prudhoe. He lived in a house furnished in traditional Cairene style and always wore the Turkish dress of middle-class Egyptians. A collection of his clothes preserved in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford²²—consisting of undergarments, voluminous trousers, a selection of shirts and loose-fitting jackets, plus personal accessories such as his embroidered purse and skullcap—is especially valuable because these articles represent practical daily clothing rather than the formal dress which Hope and Wilson had chosen. These objects are supported by archival documentation; among the Lane papers in the Griffith Institute, Oxford, is a notebook of his accounts that includes a list of the first set of clothes, with prices, that he purchased upon his arrival to Alexandria in 1825.

The Scottish artist David Roberts (1796–1864) (fig. 9) had very specific reasons for wearing Turkish dress: he wanted to travel in Egypt to prepare sketches and watercolors of monuments, catering to increasing public enthusiasm for pictures of Pharaonic temples and tombs in picturesque settings. Roberts traveled in Egypt, Nubia, Sinai, and Syria from September 1838 to May 1839, building up a portfolio of material which was eventually published in six magnificent volumes of lithographs (1842–49), ensuring his reputation as one of the leading artists of Middle Eastern scenes.²³ His encounter with Turkish dress resulted from his observations of

FIGURE 9. Robert Scott
Lauder, *David Roberts*,
1840. Oil on canvas

the outstanding Islamic architecture of Cairo, the delicacy and precise details of which appealed to the disciplined technical style of much of his work. Roberts negotiated a firman with the governor of Cairo, who gave him permission to make drawings of the interiors of mosques on the condition that he dressed correctly in local clothes.²⁴ An entry in his travel journal, dated January 2, 1839, records this request:

Wednesday, This morning had a visit from Mr. Warne the Consul with a Mr. Perring who informed me that in order to visit the various mosques, let alone make drawings, I must assume the Turkish dress. I have therefore purchased a suit today and tomorrow I must divest myself of my whiskers—this is too bad but I have taken too long a journey to stand now about trifles. I think after all I shall be about the first professional man who has sat down here to make a drawing—we shall see how I get on—Saturday is appointed for visiting and I have tried on my dress which fits me capitally and my servant informs me I become the dress very well—but he is such a thorough rogue I can believe him in nothing.²⁵

Roberts's portrait—painted by Robert Scott Lauder (1803–69) in 1840, after his return from the East—depicts the sitter posing confidently in the clothes of a wealthy Turk, from the elegantly coiled turban to the dark robes swathed in a richly patterned cummerbund and enveloped by a striped coat.

The Creation of a Greek National Dress

While Hope, Wilson, Lane, and Roberts wore the classic urban Turkish dress of the Ottoman provinces of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—reacting according to their means and needs, including expediency, security, diplomacy, and discretion—it was the flamboyant Albanian costume admired and worn by Byron that evolved into the national dress of Greece. During this period, Greece was a dynamic and complex web of powerful local families to whom the Ottomans delegated authority in return for maintaining law and order; such delegates, who ruled over towns and villages within their domains, included Ali Pasha of Ioannina and Petrobey Mavromichalis (1765–1848) (fig. 10) in the Mani. This compromise was abruptly shattered when Petrobey and his Maniots declared an uprising on March 17, 1821, in Areopolis, launching the Greek War of Independence, which the Greeks won in 1832. Apart from the political and social impact of the war on the Greek people, one of the most striking visual results was seen in the modification of dress. The *fustanella* became popular, especially among the armed irregulars—klephts and *armatoli*—who wore the garment as a symbol of defiance against the Ottomans. Traditionally, Greeks of the Mani did not wear the *fustanella*; they wore voluminous trousers. The gilded statue of Petrobey that was installed in the main square of Areopolis between 1987 and 1989 shows him in formal dress. He wears very full knee-length trousers gathered into the tops of leggings; a short, tight embroidered jacket over a shirt with slashed cuffs; and a cap closely wrapped with a turban. His waistband bristles with weapons. There is evidence that some version of Albanian dress was also worn in the Peloponnese, as Col. Leake noted in March of 1805, when he met a local Bey whom he found in “a miserable cottage in Aianni, surrounded with his followers in Albanian dresses, and himself clothed like a chieftain of the same people, in a waistcoat and cloak covered with gold lace.” Leake also wrote about Albanian dress during a visit to Hassan Bey, governor of Monemvasia:

The Albanian dress is daily becoming more customary, both in the Morea and in the rest of Greece; in the latter from the great increase of the Albanian power; in the Morea, probably in

consequence of the prosperity of Ydhra, which is an Albanian colony, and of the settlements of Albanian peasantry that have been made in some parts of the Morea, particularly *Argolis*, as well as in the neighbouring provinces of *Attica* and *Boeotia*. The dress is lighter and more manageable than the Turkish or Greek. It is common for the Turks of Greece to dress their children as Albanians, though it would not comport with their own dignity and prejudices to adopt it themselves. Hasan's son is dressed a l'Albanoise—himself as a galionji, or Turkish seaman.²⁶

In addition to the standard Ottoman urban style, Greece's regions have long been home to richly varied local traditions of dress, which in small towns and villages included both voluminous trousers and a garment similar to the *fustanella*. This is a loose knee-length shirt with long, full sleeves made of coarse white cotton fabric and worn over knitted white wool yarn stockings or long, straight trousers. When bunched together and belted at the waist, the skirt resembles that of the *fustanella*, but, unlike the latter, it was never transformed into a dashing, glamorous garment.²⁷ The Albanian *fustanella*, however, became an important garment when it was adopted into the handsome uniform worn by the freedom fighters of Central Greece and the Peloponnese during the Greek War of Independence; eventually, it became an emotive symbol

FIGURE 10. Petrobey Mavromichalis, main square of Areopolis, Mani, southern Greece, 1987–89

of national identity, which has generated much research and discussion among historians of Greek dress,²⁸ particularly concerning its origins and name—suggesting that it was based on the Roman military skirt and that the term “*fustanella*” is a diminutive of the Greek word “*fustani*,” from the Italian “*fustgno*,” which can mean “garment” or “cotton cloth.” Alternatively, the name could be derived from the Persian word “*fustan*,” which means “dress” or “shirt.” The basic garment is made of about forty meters of strong white calico cotton cloth, cut into two parts; six to eight triangular sections are joined together to form a full pleated skirt when fastened at the wearer’s side. Originally, the *fustanella* as worn in Greece was long, reaching almost to the ankles, but it steadily became shorter, due to both stylistic preferences and ease of movement.

The ideal—and most popular—length was just below the knee, as seen in a portrait of the freedom fighter Odysseas Androutsos (1790–1825) (fig 11). Here he wears the *fustanella* as the dominant feature of a flamboyant uniform of layers of waistcoats and jackets encrusted with gold braid and embroidery. He also wears gold-embroidered gaiters over thick hobnailed red shoes. Pistols and daggers are thrust into a waist pouch encrusted with gold plaited braid. A red felt cap completes the dress. As the war progressed, this dress became the officially recognized uniform of Greece, and the beginning of a formal dress code. By 1829, the emerging Greek government had created a small army,²⁹ modeled on Western European forces, whose officers and soldiers wore the *fustanella* and jackets decorated according to rank. Dress in Greece continued to evolve, however, and the *fustanella* faced competition from the European clothes worn by Greeks of the diaspora, including members of the Filiki Eteria (Friendly Society), founded in 1814 in Odessa, by Greek merchants, to support liberation and the creation of a modern state. Inevitable tension between locals and Westernized expatriates was reflected in the contrasting dress codes of the colorful finery of the freedom fighter and the formal dark European suit of the modern bureaucrat.³⁰

The establishment of the Greek state, in 1832, was followed by the long reign of King Otto (r. 1833–63), son of King Ludwig of Bavaria, which was a turbulent period of attempts at reform and bitter fighting—but was also important for the evolution of Greek dress. A system evolved in which European clothes were increasingly worn by the majority of Greeks, with traditional dress continuing in villages. The uniform with the distinctive *fustanella* was mainly the preserve of the army but also was brought out on ceremonial occasions and feast days. When Otto created his court in Athens he was determined that there should be a dress code appropriate to all ranks. He much admired the *fustanella* and the accompanying waistcoats and jackets, a combination that he established as the official court dress in 1835. His wife, Amalia, adopted and wore dress based on the local costumes of Attica.³¹ After Otto was deposed in 1863 he continued to wear the full costume during his exile in Munich, until his death in 1867.

Continuity and Adaptation in Greek National Dress

The *fustanella* continued to be worn in situations in which its dashing image could be exploited as an emotive symbol of Greek national identity. The freedom fighters of the Greek War of Independence had been replaced by the soldiers of a professional army, who—while they might wear the *fustanella* on such ceremonial occasions as parades and while escorting dignitaries—were dressed in modern uniforms. Nostalgia for the style of the freedom fighter, however, is seen in popular oil paintings commemorating important moments in Greek history. The portrait of Odysseas Androutsos painted around 1870 by Kostas Desyllas (see fig. 11) shows him as the hero who confronted the Turks at Gravia on May 8, 1821. A portrait of Eleftherios Venizelos (1864–1936) taming the lion of Bulgaria (fig. 12) copies this imagery by ingeniously fusing the Greek prime

minister's head with the body of a splendidly dressed klepht. This symbolism refers to the Second Balkan War (1913), after which Bulgaria signed a peace treaty to Greece's advantage.

Visitors to Greece in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries admired the dress as an exotic feature of the local scene, and one to be sketched, painted, and photographed. The American writer Jane Anthony Eames, who visited Greece in 1860, enthused about the handsome and picturesque clothes: "I am perfectly in love with the costume worn by the men; the full kirtle, the richly embroidered gaiters and jackets, the large open sleeve flowing behind and displaying the full sleeve of the shirt, dazzlingly clean and white, the red cap, gracefully hanging down one side, with its long blue tassel, combined with the graceful walk of these men, make them look like heroes on a stage."³² Her description marks the transfer of the *fustanella* as a picturesque asset to Greece's tourism industry, which has contributed to the garment's survival. The travel company of Thomas Cook was well aware of this; his sons dressed in the *fustanella* to advertise the first agency they opened in Athens.

The costume continues to appear in many forms. The two main characters of the traditional Greek shadow-puppet play, Karagiotsis and Hadjiavatis (fig. 13), who are always quarrelling,

FIGURE 11. Kostas Desyllas, *Odysseas Androutsos*, ca. 1870. Oil on canvas

FIGURE 12. Eleftherios Venizelos Taming the Bulgarian Lion, ca. 1913. Oil on canvas

often wear the *fustanella*. This form of the costume has now been simplified so that it can be produced by machine with decoration quickly stitched in a looped chain stitch; the skirt is very short, and the layers of embroidered garments have been reduced to a single waistcoat or a jacket with false sleeves that hang behind the wearer's back like a pair of wings. The *fustanella* is seen also on popular souvenirs—icons, especially in the dress of male saints, such as St. George of Ioannina; costumed dolls; postcards. Traditional dance groups wear the *fustanella*, as do schoolboys during the annual celebrations of Greek Independence Day, held on March 25. The most distinctive and visually striking survival of the *fustanella* is its role in the uniform of the Evzones, the elite presidential contingent recruited from the Greek Army, which guards the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Parliament building in Syntagma Square, Athens (fig. 14), and takes part in military parades. They have a distinguished history of wearing the *fustanella* that dates back to 1867, when it became their official ceremonial uniform; they alternate seasonally between khaki and navy blue short tunics. Daily, they march on the hour, with their high-kicking ritualized steps, in the ceremony of changing the guard at

FIGURE 13. Traditional Greek shadow play puppets: the main characters Karagiotsis and Hadjiavatis in Albanian dress

FIGURE 14. Evzones of the Greek Presidential Guard in national dress. Tourist postcard purchased in Athens

the Parliament.³³ They are an impressive presence and a constant reminder of national identity to both the Greeks and the foreigners who watch the ceremony; they also provide evidence of the importance of dress.

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Notes

- 1 John Cam Hobhouse wrote a narrative of his travels with Byron, *A Journey through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia to Constantinople during the Years 1809 and 1810* (London, 1813), which includes a very detailed account of his meeting with Ali Pasha in October 1809. After his return to England he had a distinguished political career, holding senior governmental posts, including president of the Board of Control of the East India Company.
- 2 William Martin Leake's *Travels in the Morea*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1830) discusses Byron's journey.
- 3 L. Marchand, *In My Hot Youth: Byron's Letters and Journals* (London: John Murray, 1973), 1:231.
- 4 Quoted in Fiona MacCarthy, *Byron: Life and Legend* (London: John Murray, 2002), 104.
- 5 George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt*, cantos 1 and 2 (London: John Murray, 1812); George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt*, canto 3 (London: John Murray, 1816); George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt*, canto 4 (London: John Murray, 1818); George Gordon, Lord Byron, *The Bride of Abydos* (London: John Murray, 1813); and George Gordon, Lord Byron, *The Corsair* (London: John Murray, 1814).
- 6 Thomas Phillips, *Byron in Albanian Dress*, 1814. Oil on canvas. British Ambassador's residence, Athens. I have located two additional versions of this portrait, both copied by Phillips: figure 2 and a copy from 1840 held at 50 Albemarle Street, London, the premises of the publisher John Murray. A colleague, John Chapman, claims to have located more than thirty variations of the portrait in various media. I refer the reader to figure 3, which shows the full dress mounted on a mannequin.
- 7 MacCarthy, *Byron*, 103.
- 8 L. Marchand, *Wedlock's the Devil: Byron's Letters and Journals* (London: John Murray, 1975), 4:113.
- 9 Doris Langley Moore, "Byronic Dress," *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society* 5 (1971): 8.
- 10 *Mad, Bad and Dangerous: The Cult of Lord Byron*, National Portrait Gallery, London, November 20, 2002–February 16, 2003. A selection of five garments—shirt, waistcoat, jacket, sleeveless coat, and turban—was displayed in a glass case. My notes are based on what I could observe; I was not able to handle the objects.
- 11 Ioanna Papantoniou, *Greek Costume* (Navplion: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, 1970), 4.
- 12 Sir Charles Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1908), 359. Sir Charles Eliot visited Turkey in 1884, 1889, and 1890. He was secretary to the British Embassy in Constantinople from 1893 to 1898.
- 13 Dudley North, *Discourses upon Trade* (London, 1691). Dudley North was a successful merchant who lived in Constantinople from 1670 to 1680; he became a great authority on Turkish law and language, and he wore Turkish dress.
- 14 Cambridge University, St. John's College Library S.72 (James 464).
- 15 See Haydn Williams, *Turquerie: An Eighteenth-Century European Fantasy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014) for a comprehensive survey.
- 16 Thomas Hope, *Anastasius*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1819); reissued in one volume by The Long Riders Guild Press in 2008.
- 17 Hope, *Anastasius*, 1:108.

- 18 His collections, furniture, and clothes, as well as some papers, are in the Marischal Museum, and his journals are in the King's Library, University of Aberdeen.
- 19 Robert Wilson's will, signed "R.W. 15.5.1862." King's Library, University of Aberdeen.
- 20 Robert Wilson's trousers, jacket, and fez have been placed on a model figure and displayed alongside his portrait in one of the galleries of the Marischal Museum. The clothes have been on permanent exhibition for many years, but currently the Marischal Museum is closed for renovation.
- 21 Edward William Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1836).
- 22 Lane's clothes were donated to the Ashmolean Museum by the artist Catherine Dupre, one of his descendants. The document in the Griffith Institute, Oxford, listing his purchases is Lane mss. 2.1. I have made detailed notes on a selection of the clothes.
- 23 David Roberts, *Egypt and Nubia* (London, 1842–49).
- 24 For example, the mosque of the Bahri Mamluk Sultan al-Hasan (1347–1361) in Cairo, built between 1356 and 1360.
- 25 David Roberts, *Journal*, National Library of Scotland, acc. 7663.
- 26 Leake, *Travels in the Morea*, 1:189–90. I am grateful to Professor Malcolm Wagstaff of Southampton University, who is an authority on Leake, for his guidance.
- 27 The garment continued to be worn by Greek peasants well into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Thomas W. Gallant, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 1768 to 1913: The Long Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 106, for a photograph of a Greek peasant in this garment, crossing the Corinth Canal on his way to Athens in search of work.
- 28 See *Pleats and Folds: Multiple Meanings, Conference Proceedings, Athens 21–25 June 2004* (Navplion: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, 2009).
- 29 See Gallant, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks*, for images of the New Greek Army (p. 103) and Greek soldiers in Thessaly (p. 164).
- 30 Ioannis Kapodistrias (1776–1831), the first president of the Greek State, was murdered in Navplion on October 9, 1831, by Konstantinos and Gorgios, brother and son of Petrobey Mavromichalis.
- 31 The Museum of Popular Art in Navplion includes fine examples of court dress, including the costume of an aide-de-camp to Kapodistrias.
- 32 Jane Eames, *The Budget Closed* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860), 133–34.
- 33 There is a wealth of publications about the Evzones, ranging from serious studies of their formation, their military training, and their present role in the Greek Army to popular articles in the press, tourist brochures, and postcards. It is also possible to watch video clips of their marches on YouTube.

Figure Credits

- Figure 1. Mumias Dhrami, *Ali Pasha of Tebelen*, main square, Tebelen, Albania, mid-20th century. Bronze. Photograph by Jennifer M. Scarce, 2010
- Figure 2. Thomas Phillips, *George Gordon, 6th Lord Byron (1788–1824) in Albanian Dress*, 1834, after an original portrait of 1814. Oil on canvas. National Portrait Gallery, London
- Figure 3. Byron's Albanian dress, Ioannina, Greece, ca. 1809. Bowood House, Wiltshire
- Figure 4. Amadeo Preziosi, *Albanians in Constantinople*, plate 23 from *Stamboul moeurs et costumes*, Paris, 1883
- Figure 5. Albanian man's dress, Constantinople, ca. 1880. National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh
- Figure 6. William Beechey, *Thomas Hope*, 1898. Oil on canvas. National Portrait Gallery, London
- Figure 7. Robert Wilson, 1824. Oil on canvas. Marischal Museum, Aberdeen
- Figure 8. Richard Lane, *Edward William Lane*, 1829. Marble. National Portrait Gallery, London
- Figure 9. Robert Scott Lauder, *David Roberts*, 1840. Oil on canvas. National Portrait Gallery, Scotland
- Figure 10. *Petrobey Mavromichalis*, main square of Areopolis, Mani, southern Greece, 1987–89. Photograph by Jennifer M. Scarce, 2015
- Figure 11. Kostas Desyllas, *Odysseas Androutsos*, ca. 1870. Oil on canvas. Benaki Museum, Athens
- Figure 12. *Eleftherios Venizelos Taming the Bulgarian Lion*, ca. 1913. Oil on canvas. Benaki Museum, Athens
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