

University for Business and Technology in Kosovo

UBT Knowledge Center

UBT International Conference

2023 UBT International Conference

Oct 28th, 8:00 AM - Oct 29th, 6:00 PM

ASYMMETRY OF HAS CLOTHING AS A SOCIAL CATEGORY, SERVING THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Nexhat Cocaj

University for Business and Technology - UBT, nexhat.cocaj@ubt-uni.net

Follow this and additional works at: <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference>

Recommended Citation

Cocaj, Nexhat, "ASYMMETRY OF HAS CLOTHING AS A SOCIAL CATEGORY, SERVING THE FASHION INDUSTRY" (2023). *UBT International Conference*. 2.

<https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference/IC/ID/2>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Publication and Journals at UBT Knowledge Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in UBT International Conference by an authorized administrator of UBT Knowledge Center. For more information, please contact knowledge.center@ubt-uni.net.

ASYMMETRY OF HAS CLOTHING AS A SOCIAL CATEGORY, SERVING THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Dr. Nexhat Çoçaj

UBT - Institution of Higher Education, Lagjja Kalabria, 10000 p.n., Prishtinë, Kosovë,

nexhat.cocaj@ubt-uni.net

Abstract

The asymmetric elements of Has clothing are ancient elements of this attire, which have withstood all changes and transformations made over time. Asymmetry, primarily used in women's clothing, has conveyed protection against evil eye, indicated the desire for the number of children, and the relationship within the couple. The asymmetry in the women's clothing of Has can otherwise be said to be the alphabet or hieroglyphs of clothing, through which desires for the family's economic status and desired professions are also shown. The hieroglyphs of clothing asymmetry are expressed through colors, floral and zoomorphic figures, which can only be interpreted through the functions they have performed in the past and continue to be preserved today, wherever they are used.

Keywords: *asymmetry, evil eye, colors, floral figures, zoomorphic, etc.*

Introduction



Figure 1: *Bride's attire on her wedding day, where elements of asymmetry are observed*

Despite modern clothing's global cultural influence, there's a notable trend of integrating designs from diverse cultures, showcasing unique styles and modes of expression beyond mere functionality. This underscores the crucial role of national and distinctive garments in maintaining cultural identity, as seen in the traditional clothing of Has women. Notably, their attire features ancient asymmetrical elements that have endured through time, symbolizing not only the garment's history but also the motives and communicative language of its creators.¹ These elements, predominantly found in women's attire due to their role in garment preparation, express their inner world. Although these garments have faced challenges and transformations, they remain significant in preserving history and a content-rich language. Some parts of these garments have survived over the decades, representing a rescue of forgotten treasures. Highlighting this phenomenon in Has women's clothing could immensely benefit the fashion industry, which often incorporates asymmetry in modern collections without fully understanding its meaning and communicative aspects. This study aims

¹ Jill Condra, Editor, Encyclopedia of National Dress - Traditional Clothing around the World, Volume 1, ABC-CLIO, California, 2013, p.10.

to provide a detailed analysis of the reasons behind the use of asymmetry in Has women's clothing, categorizing them based on their perceived functions.

1. Reasons for the Use of Asymmetry in the Clothing of Has Women



Figure 2: Elements of asymmetry in women's clothing are also noticeable in everyday life

The asymmetry in the dress of Has women can be said to be the alphabet or hieroglyphs of the dress, through which desires for the economic status of the family and desired professions are also displayed. The hieroglyphs of the asymmetry of the dresses are expressed through colors, floral and zoomorphic figures, which can only be interpreted through the functions they have performed in the past and continue to be preserved today, wherever the women's dress is worn. Despite the changes that have been made to women's dress in recent decades, the motifs and reasons for using asymmetry remain what they have been in the past.

In the distant historical past, it can be said that the dress of men and women was the same both in form and motifs, due to the use of the same animal skins for dressing, not for looking good, but for protecting the body from the cold and heat.² Over time, with the invention of textiles, style and fashion were also invented, along with

motifs, which began to change depending on the location during the development of life. Thus, the asymmetry in the dresses of Has women is as old as the dress of this region itself, which is thought to be as old as the xhubleta in terms of temporal extension.³ The journey of this dress, with its main symbol of asymmetry, is thought to have occurred to preserve the communicative language, because in no other way could the isolated woman express her world to society, the environment, and marital life through words, due to sanctions or patriarchal life. At a time when women's rights were limited to expression, to show desires, goals, and concerns, she, as an artist, invented motifs in the dress to communicate with them and to speak in the language known to the environment, specifically the feminine world. The asymmetric decoration of the dress of Has women can otherwise be called "preferred" by Has folk artisans. This decoration, in a slightly more faded form, is also found in other ethnographic areas, such as in some villages

² Thomas John Bernard and Marcy Linton, Historical Pattern Archive, Women's Clothing 1837–1969, LONDON, 2020, p. 13.

³ <https://attireclub.org/2019/03/29/skirts-for-men-a-short-history/>

of Tropoja, but it is encountered through some parts of the dress in a more limited way also in the villages of Drenica, specifically in the villages of Skenderaj.⁴

Regarding the motifs, specifically the reasons why asymmetry has been used in the dresses of Has women, based on research conducted so far, it appears that asymmetry is the soul of Has women's clothing, through which this unique element can communicate to express the world around them. To better understand the informative function carried by asymmetry through certain parts of the dress, here are some of the main reasons:

- a) Asymmetry in the dress of Has women has conveyed protection against the evil eye.
- b) Through asymmetry, desires for the relationship between couples have been shown.
- c) Asymmetry has been used to present obstacles or problems in life.



Figure 3: Women's shirt, through which the evil eye is warded off

The evil eye, or protection from it, has been one of the reasons why the folk artist began implementing asymmetry in the most visible parts of the dress. Through the application of asymmetry in certain parts of the dress, it is suggested that women are protected from those who possess the ability to cast an evil eye, especially on young women (brides), pregnant women, and those in healthy marital relationships. The use of asymmetrical symbols implies that these changes are immediately noticeable and, according to beliefs, in this way, the power of the evil eye is lost, and its consequences are minimized.⁵

Beyond the function of protection from the evil eye, asymmetry in the dresses of Has women has also been used to figuratively show the relationship between couples. In some cases,

these relationships have been shown through colors, but often the colors are accompanied by figures.

In general, colors and figures to demonstrate couple relationships have served to show plans and desires to others, and there have also been cases where they express concerns and obstacles that accompany a couple's life. Thus, all these elements are expressed through asymmetry. Today, asymmetry is widely used in modern collections and styles, primarily encountered through colors, where one part of the dress is one color and another part a different color, as shown in figure 4.



Figure 4: Modern clothing, used worldwide

⁴ Agim Bido, *Arti popullor në veshje e tekstile*, ASHRSH, Tiranë, 1991, f. 87

⁵ Nexhat Çoçaj, *Hasi enciklopedi etnokulturore III – Veshjet e Hasit*, Prizren, 2013, f. 212.

2. In which parts of the Has women's clothing is it expressed



Figure 5: Clothing of Has women with towers

The dresses of Has women, like all other traditional garments around the world, primarily reflect the personality of the wearer. They not only represent the individual wearing them but also the society in which she lives. Therefore, every part of the Has women's clothing is accompanied by symbols expressed in the structure of the garment, the choice of color, the determination of the figure, and the reasons behind choosing a particular color or figure.

By examining the colors and figures on parts of the Has women's clothing, one can understand that their emotional world was vibrant and very active. For this reason, these symbols, specifically through asymmetry, are expressed in the most visible and exposed parts of the clothing, so that they can be "read" more quickly and effectively by others.⁶

This practice reflects a deep connection between dress and communication. The clothing serves as a medium to express not just aesthetic preferences but also deeper aspects of the wearer's life, emotions, and social status. Asymmetry in this context is not just a design choice but a language in itself, conveying messages that are understood within the cultural context of the Has community.



Figure 6: Asymmetrical decoration, an expression of family planning Neckline of the shirts, where poetry is seen as decoration

The shirt of Has women, unlike shirts from other ethnographic areas, differs in the decoration of asymmetry, which is expressed through its neckline. The neckline of the shirts of Has women is one of the most richly decorated parts with figures, which can be said to contain the alphabet

⁶ <https://www.canadashistory.ca/education/classroom-resources/symbols-in-fashion-history>

of the life of Has women. The embellishments on the shirts of the women are mainly made on the front part of the shirt, near the chest, including embroidery with colorful threads, beads, and in some cases even small coins. This decoration, or embellishment, has been done because this part of both the clothing and the female body symbolizes regeneration and the growth of humanity. Therefore, as mentioned above, to protect a nursing mother or a mother with young children from the evil eye, asymmetry was invented for protection. But also, to express desires for marital life.

The asymmetry used in the shirts of Has women expresses the two sides of a couple. The desires of the wearer - the woman, and the desires or concerns of the man. According to field data, the left side is dedicated to the man, while the right side is dedicated to the woman. Thus, when observing the asymmetry of the neckline of the shirt, we can read the two sides of the marital couple, which often have different motifs, as the desires or plans are different. Therefore, through the shirt, specifically the figures distributed asymmetrically, they express, in special ways, the informative functions, to show more clearly or very specifically what problems or plans the woman is facing in marital life.

2.2. Asymmetry Expressed Through Braids or Cords

The structure of decorations on the braids of Has women, aside from their asymmetrical form, sometimes presents through the interweaving of figurative designs, but it is important to emphasize that we are dealing with an interweaving. Within the context of women's clothing, through which a woman could distinctly express her life, namely her desires, obstacles, or generally her "biography," the braid, as a part of the attire that catches the eye at first glance, has been significant. Regardless of the type of braid or the group of garments, the braid generally has represented a range of emotions expressed through asymmetrical decoration.



Figure 8: Braid of the Has attire with towers

asymmetry
women's
forms.
the braid,
presented,

A common
feature of
this part of Has women's clothing is that in

all sub-areas, the braid is used as part of the attire only by married women, regardless of the age group of the wearer. The fundamental distinction of this part of the clothing from the Has Highlands is the fact that based on this part of the dress, classification or division of traditional costumes into several sub-areas across the territory of Has is made. The braids of Has women's



Figure 9: Braid of the attire with two braids, used in Krumë

Depending on the economic and social status, the expressed in the braids of Has clothing appears in different. Primarily, the field or space of where asymmetrical figures are conveys emotions and descriptions of events or life experiences of the wearer.

clothing are rectangular, whereas in other similar garments they usually have a trapezoidal shape. They also differ in terms of the use of asymmetry as communicative embellishments. Asymmetry in the braids of Has women's clothing is mainly found in the Has attire with towers, predominantly used in the villages of Has in Prizren and in some villages of Gjakova, and in the Has attire with two braids, primarily used in Krumë and its surrounding villages.⁷

2.3. Asymmetry Expressed Through the Headscarf



Figure 10: Asymmetrical decoration in the headscarves of Has attire

asymmetrical decoration is much clearer due to the presence of more figures, offering greater opportunities to express the inner emotional world of a woman.⁸



Figure 11: Ends of the headscarf, where elements of asymmetry are seen

The headscarf, as a part of the traditional attire of Has women, possesses its own unique characteristics where asymmetrical decoration finds its form to express the emotional world of the wearer. The headscarf, as a part of the dress of Has women in which asymmetry is expressed, is primarily part of the Has attire with towers, worn in the villages of Has in Prizren, Gjakova, and in some villages in Albania, where it is known as the dress of Vlahna. Through the women's headscarf, the presentation of

In the vernacular of Has attire, the parts where the asymmetrical decoration is most noticeable are typically found in the corners or ends of the headscarf, which are only attached to the part called the headscarf and tied at its two sides after being worked with a needle. One corner is placed on the head and is usually accompanied by various figures. The other corner, or the other end, is placed on the back. For preserving the originality of Has attire, the way of tying the headscarf around the head plays a significant role. Like

the shirt, the headscarf is another part of Has women's clothing that, precisely because of its decorations, which are masterpieces of folk art, is divided into two parts: the body of the headscarf and the ends, which are attached to the two edges of the body. Therefore, since in some sub-areas of costume design the headscarves and their ends are worn only as a joint whole, in this way we shall also treat them, although we will talk about some characteristics of these two sub-parts of the Has women's headscarf.⁹

⁷ Andromaçi Gjergji, *Veshjet shqiptare në shekuj*, ASHRPSSH, Tiranë, 1988, f. 181

⁸ Nexhat Çoçaj, *Hasi enciklopedi etnokulturore III – Veshjet e Hasit*, Prizren, 2013, f. 420.

⁹ To look up more deeply on the book of Agim Bido, p99

2.4. Asymmetry Expressed Through Gloves and Fasteners

The asymmetrical decoration in the dress of Has women has been and remains a perspective and vision of artistic communication, which we encounter almost in every part individually, because the figures and colors express their significant power as separate parts. The most typical example of presenting asymmetry both through color and through figures, which are evident, is in the gloves and fasteners (the ties with which the front braid is connected to the back braid)."



Figure 12: Gloves and fasteners, which are distinctive, but never the same and best express asymmetry as informative decoration

Through the gloves, as seen in the photographs, asymmetry is most clearly displayed, also due to the fact that these are used on both hands, respectively one glove on one hand and the other on the other hand. However, the figures, as well as the colors, are never the same, because the desires, plans, and problems are of different natures.

Conclusion

Asymmetrical decoration in the dresses of Has women is the best example of presenting the social status of a woman, who, unable to express herself freely, expresses herself through clothing. First and foremost, through asymmetry, she protects herself from the evil eye, then expresses her feelings for special occasions related to her social status as well as desires and plans in marital life.

In this way, the asymmetry of Has clothing can serve in the textile industry, specifically in the design of new models of contemporary clothing. If the informative function of Has clothing is taken into account, namely how it can be incorporated into the new styles of the textile industry. Asymmetry in modern clothing only enriches the attire, making the style more meaningful and adding another attribute to the clothing, that of emotional information.¹⁰

¹⁰ Nexhat Çoçaj, Hasi enciklopedi etnokulturore III – Veshjet e Hasit, Prizren, 2013, f. 391.