

## FROM TRADITIONAL ATTIRE TO THE MODERN DRESS: Modes of Identification, Modes of Recognition in the Balkans (16<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Centuries)

New Europe College (Bucharest)

Convener: Constanța Vintilă-Ghitulescu, historian, researcher at the Nicolae Iorga Institute of History, Bucharest, NEC and GE-NEC alumna

Time: June 13-14, 2008.

Location: New Europe College, 21 Plantelor str., 023971 Bucharest, Romania.

Deadline: Should you be interested to take part in this symposium, we kindly ask you to send us the title of your contribution and a short abstract (200-300 words), together with a one-page CV (including title, positions, institution, degrees, awards, main publications) until January 31, 2008 to Constana Vintila-Ghitulescu: c\_ghitulescu@yahoo

The selection committee will inform you about their decision in due time (by the end of February at the latest).

The working languages of this international symposium will be French and English.

The organizers will cover travel and accommodation expenses within the limits of the budget. We would be grateful if you could also find additional financial support for participating in our symposium.

According to a Romanian saying, »the dress doesn't make a person«. True as it may be, the moral implications of this saying are of less concern to us here than its possible social significance, which would rather suggest its reading in the affirmative that the manner of dress is indeed important. In the past, how one dressed was an important social indicator. It revealed a lot about a person's social condition, his/her status and wealth. But dress can also provide information on the evolution of a society, on the dynamic interrelation between fashion and social behavior. Dress can thus become the prime matter for the analysis of a society through the joint efforts of historians, anthropologists, ethnologists, and sociologists.

The Balkans, with its cultural, ethnic and social mosaic, provides an ideal setting for such a research. Within the same geographical region, one can find similarities on a regional level, as well as significant differences coexisting in proximity. An oriental mode of dressing, induced by Ottoman occupation or domination, was taken over by the elites of a community as a token of loyalty towards the regime; at the same time, one could find a diversity of »folk« costumes, the garb of the »common people«. As the Ottoman Empire declined, dress became one of the major means of asserting the emancipation of the former subjects and the modernization of the Balkan societies, of expressing the mental changes taking place within them. In a Europe of nations, the »folk« costumes became bearers of political and ideological meaning, emblems of the newly established nations. Their instrumentalisation didn't end with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however. In some cases, they were rediscovered by the Communist regimes and put to use in the construction of a novel identity.

The symposium proposes to gather researchers from various fields, and from a number of academic and research centers in South-Eastern Europe and in other parts of the world, inviting them to focus their reflections on dress and its role in social, political, and ideological change, along the lines suggested below:

- A. The significance of dress in the establishment and acceptance of a political regime**
  1. the »oriental dress« and the modes of representation of a social elite
  2. »from oriental attire to the tail coat«: dress as an indicator of modernization
  3. dress and its manipulation in the process of social/political emancipation
- B. Diversity in dress/Diversity of social categories**
  1. dress, color schemes, norms as indicators of social hierarchy
  2. the dress of the »parvenu« as a symbol of social promotion
  3. egalitarian modes of dressing and the leveling of »social visibility«
- C. Dress and identity construction**
  1. Romanticism and the rediscovery of the »national« costume
  2. identity construction – dress construction
  3. the folk costume between tradition, modernity, and contemporary handcraft
  4. fashion: lost or reconfigured meanings in a unified Europe

The preservation of local identities in an enlarged European Community has become a growing concern. Can dress still define social categories and peoples? Or have certain types of traditional dress become mere museum objects? Do they find refuge in a handcraft that reinvents and refashions an idealized, barely known, largely imaginary past? The symposium will attempt to investigate the ways in which dress entered the political, social and cultural fields; the major role attributed to dress by social actors in a more or less distant past, and within its various constructions; its instrumentalisation in modern times, in search of identity. The Balkans, where an earlier common history developed into a variety of distinct trajectories, are a particularly propitious field for such a research, which may shed some light on certain peculiarities of »Balkanism«.