

## **Gypsies Women Costumes in Egypt Analytical and Field Study On Sharqia and Beni-Swiff Governorates**

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### **Abstract:**

Gypsies are rough people spread over the community marginally all over the continents in the form of closed groups. Their conditions are characterized by mystery, they are highly adhering to their own customs in terms of life style, behaviors, morals and art passion. They are distinguished in one of the most important life contexts namely costumes or fashion in every environment they reside within and they consider it as a mandatory type of social adaption and consistency. They are tribes having no unified identity, nor nation combining them nor homeland to control over or return to one day. They are groups believing that all countries are their homeland but their delay is their curse, they have no customs nor traditions. In real life, we cannot talk about the race nor identity of gypsies. Their identity is the same, i.e. labyrinth, they are stranger travelers. When those gypsies appear in the world, they arouse great wonder and the thesis behind their origin are disappearing. Along centuries, they succeeded in keeping their distinguishable identity and showing great ability on adaption and survival. Naturally, any people within which the gypsies live, see them as different and distinguish groups as they do not belong to special culture in the world as they do not adopt certain culture. The historical study of Gypsies shows that they are people holding over other peoples' culture whether those Gypsies have their own culture or not and this is reflected on their costumes and accessories and this will be handled in this study.

In the light of this, we have no doubt that Gypsies costumes and their characteristics are affected by the peoples they passed through during their travelling and the peoples with which they were living or are still living. This illustrates the similarity in some elements and basis of costumes among certain Gypsies group and non-gypsies people. For example, the costumes of Gypsies women in Egypt often include the images of the environment where they grow up as well as some details of the life they live. Similarly, we can see the linkage between the nature of women life in their own community, the geographical conditions and the costumes, its form, structure, the materials of which it is made and its accessories. The study aims at studying the nature of gypsies in Egypt in public and Al-Sharqia and Beni-Swiff governorates

in particular as well as studying the impact of the social environment on Gypsies through studying and analyzing women costumes.

### **Introduction:**

Fashion and customs, like arts, architecture, literature and music, forms a mirror reflecting all cultural aspects and alike all cultural phenomena, the fashion and costumes are considered as a tool transferring information of society where they are formed whether it is material or symbolic. Fashion and costumes are playing an important economic role in various communities over years, it was as an indicator of the economic state. In addition, the fabrics, its types, models of styling, formations and weaving are considered as distinguish marks reflecting the social and economic position of those who are wearing them, in addition it forms symbolically the religious morals and political norms of the society<sup>1</sup>.

Costumes in the definition of linguists means the identity distinguishing peoples<sup>2</sup>. Popular costumes are defined as costumes of public in villages or rural populations in general as well as popular classes in cities. These costumes are not subject to cultural art disciplines and it is characterized by linkage to customs, traditions and social systems and it belongs to the popular sector as they create it with their innate and special style.

Depending on this definition, we will find that the gypsies costumes subject to the previous definition as they are the costumes of the primitive community and it is an innate result formed through societal heritage and inheritances in the culture of gypsies' society as a result of the interaction between gypsies and various environments where they travel and live. It is considered as an art belonging to people culture not individual containing various mixture of life they lived and parts of various popular cultures.

Popular costumes in general are the inherited costumes that distinguish certain community individuals in the general appearance<sup>3</sup>. The manufacture of the costumes of gypsies is mysterious as they agree together to design its characteristics and form its basis to express and point to them to become a silent witness with blur colors about their miserable life. Thus, they exaggerate in the details and colors of their clothes and volumes of furnishings to attract the attention. Therefore, some people take them while the other are affected by it and they are also affected by others.

Gypsies costumes are considered as distinguish heritage of primitive communities for Egyptian and Foreign communities. These costumes reveal the essences, the culture and the implications of whole community, i.e. the gypsies' community, that reflects the ideas and culture of this community and certain customs and traditions that they hold created by the public and inherited by generations who adjust them to be convenient with their environment conditions and characteristics. Those are costumes made by culture over days innately and spontaneously that are connected by their origins and add value and special features for gypsies community expressing the group spirit as whole and giving implications of those who are wearing them and coincide with their styles through its inclusions in terms of aesthetic aspects and artistic elements that some of them are fixed even if the races of the gypsies are differing and the other are changeable according to the community that surrounds them and in which they engage. Thus, it gives certain impression for those who are wearing them and it becomes expressive for gender whether male or female, his/her age, the place of existence, the position, the cultural environment and the occasion in which it is used. The geographical and

timing dimensions (place and time) are playing an important role in forming gypsies costumes, its type and ornaments without affecting its features, characteristics and special nature, thus it is distinguishable.

This study shows rechecking the heritage elements connected to gypsies costumes that its date traces back to long times affected by it and their distribution on the borders of the country affects keeping their heritage and privacy and gives them special and distinguish nature.

### **The Problem of the Study:**

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- 1- The need for academic methodological study of the history of the Egyptian Gypsies Costumes.
  - 2- The need for benefitting from Gypsies heritage in designing Egyptian costumes and the promotion for it in an appropriate way for usage internationally.
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- In addition, the nature of Gypsies and their separation, the shortage of inspired designs of Gypsies arts despite its richness.
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### **The Significance of the Study:**

The study gets its significance through the following points:

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- 1- Studying the popular heritage of Gypsies in Egypt, showing its aesthesis, spreading it over in an appropriate way to insure the appearance of characteristics of this closed type for authentication and benefit for its survival, continuity and preservation against disappearance.
  - 2- Adding to Arab Library the specialized scientific study in the domain of Gypsies costumes in Egypt.
  - 3- Studying Gypsies culture in order to acknowledge the nature of Gypsies life deeply as well as contributing in understanding the distinct nature of them in general and the style of their costumes in particular as Gypsies groups preserve its peculiar nature despite its duplication and despite the differences in the communities with which they live in various countries all over the world, those groups resist the integration within the community although some are pretending with integration or showing up. The study of Gypsies culture is aiming at enriching our knowledge with these distinct groups.
  - 4- This study leads to the possibility of comparison that reflects important social phenomena. Thus, we can compare between Gypsies culture in specific community and the main culture of the society to know the similarity and differences between the elements included by each, consequently, identifying the degree of Gypsies distinction culturally or the degree of their standing for community culture. This reflects indirectly the nature of the relations prevailing among the two groups as well as the social and cultural position of Gypsies.
  - 5- Studying Gypsies Folklore contributes in shedding the light on Gypsies history as their popular tales and talks can reflect the historical period in which they lived, the incidents for which they exposed as well as the groups with which they lived.
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### **Gypsies Women Costumes in Egypt**

Gypsies women costumes are considered as an art. They create it to be distinctive and it was inherited by the generations who adjust it to be appropriate for their characteristics and their changeable environmental conditions in which they live. It reflects hints of their history as well as their country history in which they were found. In addition, it expresses truly Gypsies cultures and their identity and it is highly connected to their life, practices and rituals. Its forms do not depend merely on style nor materials nor colors on which their costumes depend, but it is a response for customs, traditions and norms as well as its forms, types and embellishments and it performs many tasks other than clothing.

Gypsies costumes in Egypt of women who are living in rural areas are different from costumes of women living in cities. The costumes of Gypsies women in countryside are characterized by customs and traditions prevailing in the countryside and its integration with Gypsies customs, traditions and nature as a mixture between the two heritage. In general, it is characterized by using square "Sufra" sometimes and circle one sometimes. The arrangement of the elements contained in their costumes distinguish them and they are known by it.

The researchers, through the previous studies of Egyptian<sup>4</sup> Popular Costumes and concentrating on its origin, comprehend the Gypsies women influence within villages by the rural community in designing their costumes as Gypsies women depends on some used symbols as well as structural and constructive formation of costumes and this is a natural influence resulting from the interaction of Gypsies with place and prevailing culture.

This does not mean that they are wearing rural costumes, but they take some simple lines and add to them some components and other elements in a primitive traditional creative form including aesthetic aspects and artistic elements in new form to manufacture their clothes and embellish them to reflect their ideas, culture and distinguish them among others.

Young women wear contemporary costumes in bold and attractive coordination but non-comfortable for eyes. These costumes are featured by mixing colors, printings and various carvings such as flowers, flannel and fringes. They adjust them in a comfortable multi-layer form and sometimes they are wide. Usually, they are made of natural materials such as kattan, chiffon, silk, leather, cotton and velvet.

Gypsies are wearing comfortable shoes without very high heels- except in weddings and ceremonies- as well as they use more accessories in coordinative and balanced way, they wear rings, earrings and hats. In addition, they use dyes and turns their hair to yellow or red colors and use veils.

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A gypsy woman dress  
in Sharkia governorate

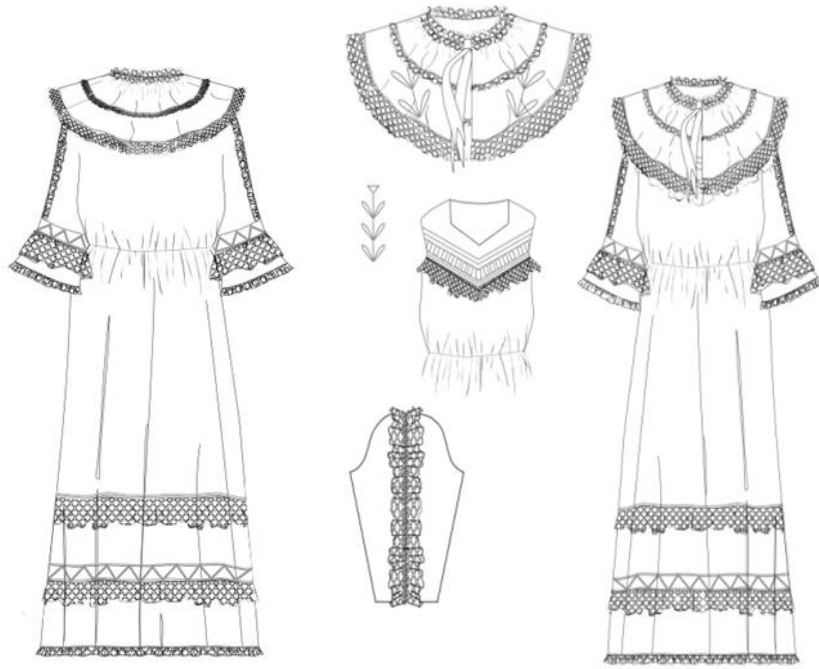


Fig (1) Fig (2)  
The Technical drawing shows a model  
of Roma clothing in Egypt  
- Sharkia Governorate -  
(front – back)

## Conclusion:

Gypsies are belonging to many people since the beginning of their migration to Europe in the fourteen century and they engage in many environments, thus they are formed according to any environment they live in. Their costumes and used materials are formed from one place to other as they take the existed elements and reform them within fixed features and main characteristics in their costumes on which they are agreed and known. This is clearly appearing in the form of Gypsies costumes in general in Egypt in terms of adhering to general design elements, type of texture in addition to used embellishments and embroidery. Usually, this is limited to reforming the old costumes to process them for re-usage.

Gypsies women costumes in Egypt are characterized by cheap local materials, light various colors that are combined together in innate and irregular way but attractive. In addition, there is a fluency in embellishment method in terms of forming various elements together in one piece in various volume and techniques in unfamiliar form for eyes using some elements of clothes found in their neighbors' costumes of non-gypsies. Thus, they form them in their own way and nature forming new cloth connected to past origins and affected by current environment.

## The Results of the Study:

Now, it is shown that the distinct nature of Gypsies costumes is represented in:

**Influences:** Gypsies costumes are affected by the environment in which they are found. Some elements of the neighbors' clothes of non-gypsies are used and they reform them according to their nature and method that distinguish them among other. Gypsies art is characterized by originality as it is connected and affected by origins, civilizations and environments they passed through as well as the manufacturer ideas.

**Structural Lines:** directing towards simple structural lines in costumes and forming various elements in one cloth with each other through various volumes and techniques in unfamiliar form.

**Materials:** using local materials of environment, using cheap materials and cotton comfortable materials such as plain and engraved adding to them some colorful stripes that are differing with costumes.

**Performance:** Gypsies are making their costumes usually by hand. Thus, rarely they are in need for buying clothes from shops. Usually, this matter is limited to reforming the old costumes to process and add Gypsies characteristics to them for re-usage. Whereas rich Gypsies buy their costumes that are found in the environment where they live.

**Ornamental Method:** Fluency in ornamental method for making unfamiliar forms and leaning towards embellishment to show the main elements whether in their volumes or colors especially as they are using different blur colors.

**Accessories:** using big and many accessories with creativity in coordinating them to achieve balance. They wear rings, earrings, hats and jewelers around wrist and neck. They are wearing accessories as if they are agreeing together on a mark to distinguish them to know each other regardless their age and place of existence.

## References:

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<sup>2</sup> Khaled Al-Sayed Mohamed Abd Rabou Al Nahas, the Impact of Popular Heritage on Al Araes Theater Costumes- Cairo, Faculty of Housing Services, Helwan University, 2002, p.52

<sup>3</sup>Fawzeya Hussein, Popular Costumes of Egyptian Women in Giza Governorate (PHD. Thesis), Cairo, Faculty of Housing Services, Helwan University, 1979, p. 17

<sup>4</sup> Ola Al-Toukhy Ismail, Egyptian Popular Costumes as an Entrance for Creating Contemporary Costumes, Unpublished MPA, Faculty of Applied Arts- Helwan University 2016.