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«THE SOCIAL ROLE AND THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF
WOMEN IN PATRA»

EDITING – STUDY RESEARCH
CHRISTIANA GRIGORIOU
CHRISTINA METAXIOTI

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3. THE SOCIAL ROLE AND THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF WOMEN IN PATRA

The INTERREG III, a Greece - Italy 2000 – 2006 cooperative programme, through its project entitled «Mother Language over the History», gave the chance to the team of “Patra’s Scientific Park” (PSP) to conduct an interesting research, regarding the modern history of woman. This research work analyzes the significant contribution of woman to the social and cultural development of Patra since 19th century.

The main aim of PSP was to investigate, for the first time, a subject for which minor information is reported in the existing Greek bibliography, regarding the “Woman of Patra”. Furthermore, PSP provided help, in order to appoint the region of Western Greece, so as to create new prospects of sustainable development and reinforcement of local tourism. This research work clearly elects cultural civilization as an alternative form of tourism, both for the Municipality of Achaia and for Western Greece in general.

This research work is also quite peculiar, as it pinpoints two primitive structures, society and civilization. These structures are special and closely related, as their range is wide and their aspects are numerous, both in research and in bibliographic terms. However, the main research field here, is just one, Woman, and especially the social role and the cultural identity of Woman in Patra, as it is outlined by the “Patra’s Carnival Custom” and the “Cultural Association of Greek Ladies of Patra”, since 20th century.

Aim of this work is to outline and investigate the “Woman of Patra”, through her role as a worker, mother, wife, and “female”. As we have already pointed, the available bibliography for the role of woman is large, but for the woman of Western Greece and especially for the Woman of Achaia is limited. This work was mainly based in primitive research, including interviews with key-people of Patra’s society, but also in a subsequent research to bibliography and articles, not to mention of course the important contribution of people,
public institutions, and Patra’s local associations which delivered to PSP original, archival material in order to support this effort.

The work presented here, is separated in three chapters. In the first chapter, all the information sources from the literature are reported. Thus, the cultural identity of women in Patra is highlighted, as it seen through the “Patras Carnival” and the customs of the city.

The second chapter analyzes the social role of “Woman of Patra”, through an awarded social research work, a case-study we could say, that contributes to the formation of the social identity of women in Patra. We refer to the “Cultural Association of Greek Ladies of Patra”, which through the interview of its President, Mrs Pinelopi Kretsi-Leotsini, and the archival material they delivered us, offered great help to the completion of the second chapter.

The third chapter records and analyzes the data we obtained from the interviews mentioned before. Finally, the conclusion of this research work follows. We hope that further social and cultural works regarding the Municipality of Achaia and Western Greece in general, will be based on the research presented here.
3.1. *Introduction*

Patra’s Carnival, holds a special position among Greek customs, in the last 160 years of Greece's civilization history. According to the existing bibliography, the last quarter of the 19th century and the first of the 20th were decisive for the formation of “Patra’s Carnival” to its present form. According to Nikos E. Politis, a distinguished journalist and historian, who has, by far, the most references to his work, “during those years, organised carnival events are being formatted, mass participation in these events is deployed, while people’s initiative is being encouraged”\(^1\).

The truth is, that no matter how hard someone tries to define the exact starting date of this custom of Patra, which still exists and remains an important social and cultural phenomenon, will hardly get any information. The only fact that we were able to verify, through the historical retrospection of N. E. Politis\(^2\) book, is that each decade of Patra’s carnival is so distinct, that it's of no use to try to compare them. The main reason is that, the phenomenon of Patra’s carnival is by itself, a social, political and cultural expression with no starting point, since all events are constantly changing in time.

It is worth mentioning that, since the dawn of 19th century, Patra’s port and geographical position, gradually transform the city into a Europe's Gate and a fine commercial centre. Especially, due to raisins trade, Patra is culturally connected with many European countries\(^3\) and embraces positive influences that affect the social life of Patra’s people and the way they entertain themselves during Carnival.

These cultural and social influences from the West, the emigration of many Greeks, especially Greeks from the Ionian Islands, and other nationalities to Patra, played an important role to the formation of the cultural identity of the “Woman of Patra”.

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1 Nikos E. Politis, *The Carnival of Patras*, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra,1987, pg. 11
3.2. Short historical retrospection of the social and cultural role of Patra’s women through the custom of Patra’s Carnival from the dawn of 19th century until now

The women of Patra have always played an important role to the Patra’s Carnival custom. Since the beginning of 20th century, women had a leading role in the carnival and traditional customs, regardless that their social role was still rather conservative and restricted.

As we shall see later on, the Carnival was a social phenomenon that acted beneficially in order all conservative taboos regarding women to be reversed. The Carnival of Patra gave the opportunity to every woman to gradually make her own social-cultural revolution.

Thus, the Woman of Patra, quickly adopted the fashion of the time, wore mini-skirts, smoked large pipes with jasmine flavor in the aristocratic lobbies of rich raisins traders during private dances, enriched her cultural property with dancing lessons, participated to theatre carnival plays, contributed to carnival organizing committees, modestly expressed their eroticism under a black mask in the well-known dance of “Bourboulia” and of course they controverted Church, which during the 19th and 20th century, wanted them to be debauched because of Carnival and because of the fact that during Carnival they weren't under the strict boundaries of their house and family, where they should always belong. In 1954, archimandrite Augoustinos Kioniotes described carnival events as “roman orgies, and that all people of Patra should wait for the expression of God's anger”. 4

As K. Magnis reports, “Patra’s Carnival didn't ever corrupt family, neither created debauched people, nor abolished the relationship between people and Church. Controversially, it was a positive catalyst for the binding of human relationships, the expression of an interesting creativity, even for the recognition of human, despite sex, to undertake responsibilities and enjoy rights inside the boundaries of a community”.

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4 Nikos E. Politis, The Carnival of Patras, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra, 1987, pg. 165
During the 20th century, Patra’s Carnival is systematically organized and enriched with new ideas and events. People and communities from all social layers, despite sex, are participating. Thus, a tradition is established and Carnival becomes the “social law”, as Panagiotis Kanelopoulos characterizes it. 5

21st century finds Patra’s Carnival and Patra’s youth to be as active as it never was before. It contributes to new ideas, and tries to present and participate to new events, which are distinctive of their age and which revive the customs of a long lasting Patra’s tradition.

21st century finds women of Patra’s being deliberated from taboos and superstitions of past decades. They are active members and even Presidents in Carnival's committees, and associations. The woman-mother of Patra, teaches her children to participate in Carnival through the “Children’s Parade”, where thousands of mothers accompany their children, while they sing and dance through the streets of Patra. In that way, Patra’s Carnival is transformed to an expression of joy and fun of Patra’s family, and passes from one generation to another without any kind of distinctions. Thus, Carnival is set off as an important cultural and tourist’s event not only for the Municipality of Achaia and the city of Patra, but for the whole country as well.

3.3. Fashion, European motifs, and Carnival disguise

Let us examine closely the characteristics of Patra’s Carnival that reflect the cultural identity of “Patra’s Woman”. Such characteristics are fashion and carnival disguises.

According to the historian N. E. Politis, “the emancipation and evolution of women in Patra wasn’t rapid, but evolved through a slow and steady process”6. It started due to Patra’s Carnival with its disguises and according to the epoch's fashion.

At the dawn of 19th century, it is more than obvious that the development of Patra’s economy, affects culturally its people. “Lawns from european motifs, fashion and models are becoming apparent to music, types of entertainment, dance and disguises. ”Patra’s Carnival and, consequently, many families,

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5 Nikos E. Politis, _The Carnival of Patras_, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra, 1987, pg. 82
6 Nikos E. Politis, _The Carnival of Patras_, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra, 1987, pg. 26
depend on the raisins' price: good price is equivalent to a good year, to fun and vice versa”\(^7\).

Influences from Europe, don't only affect Athens but Patra as well. “We verify that especially during the 19\(^{th}\) century and later on, women in Patra were no minor comparing to women in Athens”\(^8\). The intense sociality because of the port, the migration of Greek and foreign nationalities, and the association of Patra’s women with other Greek or foreign women gave them, «an air of civilization, something indefinite, that made stand out.\(^9\)

According to bibliography, women in Patra were always informed about fashion and always took care of their appearance. They wore fancy dresses, and many were those that, because of their financial state, were exaggerating. At the end of 19\(^{th}\) century, a favorable characteristic of women’s dressing was hat, which was considered to be an indispensable accessory for every dress. It was so important that it was almost inconceivable to appear in church, theatre or streets without a hat.\(^10\)

It is worth mentioning that, in 1912, the Director of Athen’s Police Academy, Zimvrakakis, with a special police order, was forbidding the use of big hats in theatres, trams or public gatherings because several unfortunate incidents had been reported. This prohibition of tall and big hats in women changed the 20\(^{th}\) century's fashion, which turned to smaller hats.\(^11\)

As far as the carnival disguises of Patra’s women are concerned, bibliography isn't of great help. Thus, we can't define exactly when women started to disguise. But 1920's carnival is distinct for another social revolution that ordered for the first time the use of decollate. Dancing dresses of this time were considered to be blatantly revealing, as they were revealing women’s' shoulders and their length was reaching their knee.

The social revolution, ordered by fashion, would continue both in 1926 and in 1927, as Patra’s Carnival would contribute towards to a new kind of women’s emancipation. In 1926, while Greece was under the dictatorship of Theodoros Pagalos, the actress Fotini Loui is performing a sketch in the revue “Ballerine”, where she satirizes the prohibition of short skirts and carnival's masks by the dictatorship.\(^12\)

\(^7\) K. Magnis, The Cultural Countenance of Patras, UNIVERSITY OF PATRAS PUBLICATIONS, 1997, Patra, pg. 380
\(^8\) Nikos E. Politis, The Carnival of Patras, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra,1987, pg. 26
\(^9\) Nikos E. Politis, The Carnival of Patras, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra,1987, pg. 26
\(^10\) Nikos E. Politis, The Carnival of Patras, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra,1987, pg. 28
\(^11\) Nikos E. Politis, The Carnival of Patras, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra,1987, pg. 29
\(^12\) Nikos E. Politis, The Carnival of Patras, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra,1987, pg. 118
In 1927, the dance of fashion, Charleston, arrives at Patra and becomes popular among all aristocratic families. Dresses shorten even more. As we shall see later on, this dance among others that appeared in Patra’s Carnival, brought up a social-cultural revolution and an air of change in Patra’s people and especially youth, despite the fact that the press was referring to carnival as a custom that “insults the public sense of morality”.

3.4. **Dances, “Bourboulia”, Queens, Beauty Contests, and the game of “Hidden Treasure”**

3.4.1. Dances

Women of Patra, despite of fashion, carnival disguises and west-European influences, were, according to existing bibliography, some of the most emancipated and progressive women in Greece. They were taking place in Patra’s Carnival and other Carnival’s events without “any superstition or hesitation”. As we shall see later, they played an important role is several Carnival’s events like, war with flowers and candies, mascarates, dances, beauty contests, the game of the “Hidden Treasure”, but also in the custom of Carnival’s Queen.

The fact that made Patra’s Carnival really special, was the massive participation of people in all Carnival’s events. Participation in all kinds of dances, including family dances, public dances, dances for charity reasons, night dances etc was always impressive.

Through dances, we can easily define the social layer that each family belonged to. Thus, we have dances reflecting upper social layers and, correspondingly, dances reflecting lower layers. It is obvious, according to bibliography that the “aristocratic part” of Patra’s society participated in the

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Dances of “Friends of Music Association”, Military Association or Journalists Association. In these dances, all rich traders, scientists and upper state employers were participating. It was this social structure that contributed to the final formation of Patra’s Carnival. Women were flaunting during those dances about their “dresses and the jewellery they bought”.\(^\text{15}\)

Women belonging to lower social layers, were participating to mascarate dances, and were going out at streets in large groups, mainly at evenings. They were camouflaged and wearing masks so that they could not be recognized. They were running on the streets, teasing and making fun of other people with “a sense of freedom unimaginable for the time being”.\(^\text{16}\)

Dances of the urban and working class of Patra’s society inspired poets, authors, composers, painters and other artists to create various symbols, paintings, literature, poems or even political satyriasis. All these ingredients have remained unchangeable through time and have helped preserving Patra’s Carnival tradition.

\(^{15}\) Nikos E. Politis, *The Carnival of Patras*, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra, 1987, pg. 37

\(^{16}\) Nikos E. Politis, *The Carnival of Patras*, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra, 1987, pg. 40
In 1914, dancing lessons were gradually a part of women’s lives, while the west European influences were increasing. Women wanted to learn how to dance tango, Charleston, foxtrot, Lambeth walk and rock n’ roll. During 50’s there were so many carnival dances being organized, that carnival associations were competing about which association would get the best dancing hall. This “dance mania” that prevailed during the 20th century created new entertainment halls and 

3.4.2. “Bourboulia”

The dance of “Bourboulia” is, until now, a fine example of an exclusive Patra’s Carnival custom, where the woman of Patra is again the leading character. The starting date of this custom is still undefined, but certainly started after 1872

“Bourboulia” made its own history, clearly reflecting the social-cultural character of women in Patra. If we consider that this custom started around 1872, when the relationships between two sexes were strict, “Bourboulia” is considered to be an “annual escape and a place of real or imaginative sexual experiences for the women of that time”. 

The “Bourboulia” dance, was nothing more than an evening dance, where women participated freely and unaccompanied and were wearing a long, black domino dress and a mask, so that they could

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17 Nikos E. Politis, The Carnival of Patras, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra, 1987, pg. 152
18 http://www.westnet.gr/carnival/groboub.htm
19 http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/%Πατρινό_καρναβάλι
not be recognized. They also had the initiative in selecting a partner. During “Bourboulia”, women were able to be absent from their houses, pretending that they would simply meet their friends.

It was, and still is, a dance where flirt and teasing between men and women blossoms, as everyone hides his identity under a mask. «Men ready to be seduced by a “female world”, hidden in black dominos and black masks”. No identities, mystery in its peak. Ladies please arrive, your partners are waiting”.20

This custom, extremely eccentric for the time being, had an evoking philosophy. It was rousing all social classes to participate, despite of age, sex or nationality, and caused Church to resent. Through an exaggerating church brochure Church was claiming that for example “In Bourboulia a woman was naked under her domino”21. Today Church has a more considerate position towards Carnival and “Bourboulia”, in order to avoid social intensities. In a theoretical level, it is the freedom of will that will determine the point to which someone will participate in Carnival’s customs. 22

Today, the women of Patra, but also Greek women in general, still participate every year in “Bourboulia”. The dance of “Bourboulia” inspired song writing and gave new ideas to artists to create new theatrical plays and other carnival events.

3.4.3. «Carnival’s Queen»

Carnival’s customs, pinpoint some other quite significant aspects of the feminine nature in the local society of Patra. Two customs with women as a leading character are the “Queen of Carnival” that started at 1951, and “Patra’s Beauty Contest”. Participation in both customs was astounding, as women in Patra gained for a while social publicity.

As far the “Carnival’s Queen” custom is concerned, we discovered that since 1939, the Queen of Carnival came from Patra. In past years, for reasonable reasons, Greek woman’s emancipation wasn’t at a level that she could participate in such contests, because her role was strictly bounded by family, and rising of her children. For this reason, the Carnival’s Queen, was either an actress or foreign dancers.

The first Queen from Patra, was Mrs Tasia Louta, who appeared in a float made of flowers, accompanied by the “Ladies of Honour”, “Courtiers” men with the appropriate uniform, five horsemen, trumpeters, timpanists and

guards that escorted the float. The whole picture was astonishing.\textsuperscript{23} The social promotion of the Queen was significant. There were times when, during Carnival the weather was bad and cold; however the Queen was “satisfied because she gained the applause and admiration of people, as a return to her smile”.\textsuperscript{24}

It is important to mention that, during dictatorship (1967-1974), carnival’s satyrism was prohibited. Thus, the role of Carnival’s Queen was assigned to well known beautiful girls of that time and not to women from Patra, just like in 1969 or 1973, when the role was assigned to Star Hellas and Mrs Hellas correspondingly.

The role of Queen still exists. Every year, through a certain process and interviews, the Queen is elected by a special committee of the “Patras Public Association of Cultural Development”.

3.4.4. Beauty Contests

The “Carnival’s Queen” wasn’t the only event that each year every young woman from Patra would anticipate in order to gain some publicity, but beauty contests as well. This event was initially a Carnival’s dance organized by the “Journalists Association”. Every year, a young beautiful girl from Patra was hoping to be elected as the dance’s Queen. Later on, this dance transformed to a beauty contest. In 1930, seven beautiful girls from Patra entered for the title of “Mrs Patra”. With nine votes for and three against, the contest’s commission voted Eugenia Aggeli to be the first woman from Patra to be “Mrs Patra”.\textsuperscript{25}

3.4.5. The “Hidden Treasure”

The custom that really gained people’s greatest interest, and had the largest participation numbers, since 1966, was the game of the “Hidden Treasure”. This custom was of vital importance for the survival of Patra’s Carnival, as it gathered all the youth of the city, not only in a massive participation perspective, but also as an event with cultural quality. According to K. Magni, the game of the “Hidden Treasure”, was transformed from a simple stream to a big wave, accepting in its arms Patra’s youth in terms of a geometrical progression.\textsuperscript{26} During 80’s two thousand people participated in the game, while now over fifty thousand people participate.

\textsuperscript{23} Nikos E. Politis, \textit{The Carnival of Patras}, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra,1987, pg.134
\textsuperscript{24} Nikos E. Politis, \textit{The Carnival of Patras}, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra,1987, pg.149
\textsuperscript{25} Nikos E. Politis, \textit{The Carnival of Patras}, ACHAIKES PUBLICATIONS, Patra,1987, pg.123
\textsuperscript{26} K. Magnis, \textit{The Cultural Countenance of Patras}, UNIVERSITY OF PATRAS PUBLICATIONS, 1997, Patra, pg.387
The women of Patra, had and still have, an important role to the game, depending the rules set by the game’s committee. For example, in the first game of 1966, one of the basic rules was that in the car of each group, there have to be two women, one dressed in a black domino, and the other in a bikini, and they should search for the hidden items, following the radio instructions they would get. The game of the “Hidden Treasure” is in reality a social phenomenon, which brings people together. It is a valuable piece of Patra’s Carnival, which under a sequence of questions, puzzles and activities ends up to be a “brainteaser” for the contestants, causing fun, laugh and joy.
THE SOCIAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN PATRA

Case study: “Cultural Association of Greek Ladies of Patra”

3.5. Short history of the “Cultural Association of Greek Ladies of Patra”

The Cultural Association of Greek Ladies of Patra, was founded in order to help women gain general, social and professional knowledge, gain consciousness of their rights and obligations and finally protect and properly entertain working women. All these decades, that the association exists, thousands of women have taken lessons of painting, cutting, couture, brodering, gymnastics etc.

Founder and first president of the Association, from 1931 to 1962, was Lampriani Sofi, to whome the city of Patra owes a lot. Today, president of the Association is Pinelopi Krets-Leontsini. The Association has 180 members and is administered by a 12 member council. It is a member of the National Council of Greek Women, the Confederation of Women’s Associations, and the General Federation of Women Club. Association’s action has been awarded many times. Special occasions were the awards received by the Athen’s Academy, Ministry of Health, Municipality of Patra kai Rotariano Club.

One of the most important moments of the Association’s history, is the foundation of a primary night school for women in 1933. Since then, many girls and illiterate women graduated, from which 4,635 received a certificate of studies, acknowledged by the state. In parallel with the night school, there were cutting, couture and embroidery lessons. This section is still active until nowadays. Also, the Association offers a significant social work through a number of actions.

It was not until 1920, that women’s organizations started to be founded in Patra. The aim was all the services of these associations to be provided with no charge and of course the same happened with the “Cultural Association of Greek Ladies of Patra”.

Photo 13: Association’s Members (archive of the Cultural Association)
3.6. The social contribution of the Association

Since the early years of its foundation, the Cultural Association of Patra’s Ladies still continues to offer an important social and charity work. The peak of the association’s efforts was its reward from the Ministry of Social Prevision in December of 2005, under the administration of the Minister Mr. Nikitas Kaklamanis. The President of the Association Mrs. Leotsini-Kretsi Pinelopi, received the award.

The Cultural Association of Patra’s Ladies, contributed to the education of women in Patra. It founded in 1933 the public female night School, where many girls and illiterate women graduated. 4,635 of them received a certificate of studies, acknowledged by the state. The Association also founded schools for foreign language learning. The first school for foreign language learning was for French (1937). Occasionally, the association created learning sections, dedicated to children with special needs. In these sections, children learned couture, freehand drawing and typewriting.

In order to help parents to their pedagogic work, and to shape a proper personality as a part of a family and society, the Association founded in 1974 the Department of Social Work, with the help of the Philosophy Department of Patra’s University and the supervisors of Primary and Secondary Education. It is worth mentioning that, for many years, inside the bosom of the Association, a Consultative Children’s Psychology Union was functioning, under the administration of the Patra’s University Philosophy Professor, Mr. A. Kosmopoulos. The Association also supports a lending library, which includes many pedagogic books. Every parent can anytime search and obtain useful information.

From the beginning of the Association’s function there was also a lecture session. Many awarded lecturers from all around Greece honored with their presence the session. The topics analyzed, were related to family, parents relationships, children raising etc. The duration of each lecture is 40’ minutes for the introduction and then a discussion is conducted over the topic. During the last years, two lectures are organized each month.
The Association also wanted to help working mothers. As a result, it founds in 1940 a mountain camp, in an effort to strengthen the moral of women and also update their social role. During the next years the Association accepts a significant financial reinforcement from Patra’s Industrialists and the Air Force Administration of Araxos. Some years later, the Association obtains its own residence for the camp in Tsapournia-Miha location. With the state’s, Red Crosse’s and the Association of Greek Women of Philadelphia(USA) financial support and with several grants received from simple civilians, the Association made many extensions and improvements in the existing settlements. Until 2001, the camp could host 200 children in two 22 day periods. The camp is no more functional due to financial problems.

During German’s bondage in World War II, the contribution of the Association’s President, Mrs. Lamprini Sofi, was important, as she managed to provide food to children. The money for this purpose came from the earnings of a shoe workshop, where many girls volunteered to work.

Moreover, the Association organized a fund raiser for the support of Cypriots, after the Turkish invasion in 1974. It brought to Patra 50 children from Cyprus, who were hosted to the houses of Association’s members for one year, and 10 of them were adopted.

In the beginning of 1990 many immigrants from Albania arrived at Greece. The Association was moved, and founded a school for the Greek language learning and many immigrants’ children attended the lessons.

The Association also organized various cultural events, and all the incomes were offered to charity constitutions. For example, in 2004, the Association held a concert in the Conference Hall of Patra’s University with the famous...
“Terpsihori Papastefanou” chorus. The incomes were offered to the Association of Children with Cancer, named “Floga”.

3.7. COMMUNICATION

Cultural Association of Greek Ladies of Patra (CAGLP)
Pinelopi Kretsi-Leotsini, President of CAGLP (main interviewee)

Inside the frames of this study on the social work of CAGLP, a series of discussions and interviews with members of Association was realised. An extensive interview with the chairman of the Association was also realised. The interview is provided in the annex, as well as in an optical disk.

The creation of the Association was a result of the need to help illiterate women to participate in the elementary education, provide the potentiality of learning an art (cutting - embroidery) and help them to be professionally restored. Furthermore, there was a need to help working girls enjoy a period of recreation in the camp of Tsapournia-Miha, help women conceive their rights and indicate a way of claiming them, even during the years 1920-1940, but also later during the German bondage, when the world of Patra suffers from poverty, help provide some food, and finally make charitable offers.

Since the beginning of 20th century the feministic movements brought changes to the place that women had in society, thus influencing both her social and economic state. These realignments ensured women with the right to study in universities and to ensure their professional award, something that was not possible in the past. The women of Patra were influenced from other foreign societies because of the big commercial harbour, which helped them develop their spirit through education and culture, and made them capable of conveying this new spirit through Carnival.

The Association contributes to the intellectual development of Patra’s women with various lectures, with subjects that are related to family, mother, relations of parents with children etc. It is worth mentioning that, for many years, inside the bosom of the Association, a Consultative Children’s Psychology Union was functioning, under the administration of the Patra’s University Philosophy Professor, Mr. A. Kosmopoulos.

Furthermore, participating as a member in the Association, someone can learn and participate in various activities like cutting, embroidery, or handicraft, that existed from the first years of Association’s foundation, while during the last years painting, and gymnastics were added.
The activities that we reported helped the members to participate actively in Patra’s Carnival and in other Carnival events by manufacturing themselves carnival uniforms. The Association made an appreciable presence in Patra’s Carnival with the organisation of a children's macerate dance, as well as with the organization of the annual dance for adults that is continued until now.

Moreover, it participated in the foundation of a school for hearing impaired people and offered its offices (they were located in Ermou St.) for this reason. In this attempt, ringleader was Mrs. Dionisia Xenaki, who was a schoolteacher of hearing impaired people and founded five schools for them in Patra. During the decade of 1950 it served children from all Greece because no other schools for hearing impaired people existed. Then, it dealt with the education of newer teachers for hearing impaired people who worked in our city but also in other cities as well.

Other important women that were distinguished for their work are Mrs Galatia Saranti who became an academician, the writer Athina Kakouri who dealt with historical and folklore subjects of Patras with her work “Primarolia” and with other works, Mrs Maria Karela (litterateur - writer) member of the Greek-Italian Friendship Connection, with appreciable writing work and the litterateur Mrs Giota Kaika-Mantanika with three distinguished works referring to the city of Patra:

- Patras everyday life during Belle Epoque
- The urban life in the neighborhood of angels (1st Cemetary)
- Patra’s society from 1880 to 1920 (under publication)

According to Mrs. Kretsi-Leotsini, we can figure out that that the woman of Patra allocates perspicacity and broadness of spirit, devoutness and appears to be close to the religious and ecclesiastical happenings. She is interested in making progress in the professional field but at the same time she fights so that her professional activity is not controversial to her family. She is concerned about the proper upbringing of her children and seeks the scientific aspect of the relationship between parents and children. She is socially activated and satisfactorily informed for all the social matters. She also has an important presence in the political track (Minister - commissioner).
Despite the fact that Patra’s woman lives mature in a technocratic season she maintains the diachronic moral values and the innate feminine sensitivity towards social problems. Also she participates in charitable work, ecclesiastical organisations or associations, with charitable work, like CAGLP.

As a result, the woman of today, having formed a wide intellectual horizon, has increased needs for specialised knowledge in the entire social spectrum. Participation in CAGLP has contributed towards this

Photo 18: The current President of CAGLP is in the middle, together with other members of CAGLP.
(archive of the Cultural Association)
LYCEUM OF GREEK WOMEN OF PATRA

A branch of the Lyceum of Greek Women has been founded in Patra, since 1976. The Lyceum of Greek Women was founded with the aim to rekindle and maintain Greek customs and traditions, in the frames of our national life but also the uplifting of the Greek Woman and the moral support to mother and children.

Participating in the Lyceum of Greek Women of Patra, someone can learn Greek traditional dances and songs from specialised schoolteachers. Those who participate are individuals of almost every age, from small children to adults. Today, almost 200 people participate in the Lyceum. The Lyceum participates in various cultural events, feasts and dancing demonstrations, not only in Greece but also in abroad mainly in the Greek-speaking villages of southern Italy. Important was its presence in the International Festival of BRIWSSUM of Holland in 1987, where it was rewarded among 33 countries.

For the appearances abroad or in Greece, it uses traditional costumes from its own archive, that covers all regions (Sterea Ellada and Islands), which it collects and preserves. It is worth mentioning that the Lyceum of Greek Women founded and maintains an archive of Folklore and Historical Greek costume museums, where all the costumes that use for its appearances are maintained.

Through the research centre it has founded, in order to explore our cultural heritage, it maintains and propagates the Greek culture all over the world. We have to pay extra care to the preservation of our cultural heritage because it is in danger, something that is continuously stated in the association.

An important role for the collaboration of all members for this multifaceted activity plays the chairman of the Administrative Association who is no other than Olivia Igglesi-Sokari, who bears the position of the chairman since the foundation of the Lyceum of Greek Women.

3.8. INTERVIEWS WITH IMPORTANT PEOPLE OF PATRA

The 3rd chapter analyzes the social and cultural dimension of women through a primary research. Primary research was realised by the interviews of four individuals: 1) Ntouli Dimitropoulou (special Adviser of the Mayor for Carnival subjects and a substitute Artistic Director), 2) Maria Iliopoulou (Person in charge for “Bourboulia”), 3) Panagiotis Andriopoulos (professor in the Arsakeio School of Patra and founder of the Artistic Group "POLYTROPON"), 4) Vasilis Manthopoulos (resident of Patra) and 5) Anna Manthopoulou (Handwritten Testimony). In the 3 chapter we make a
summary of what they told us in their interviews. The interviews are in Annex B (digital material).

3.8.1. Interview of Mrs. Ntouli-Dimitropoulou

Mrs Ntouli-Dimitropoulou is a special Adviser of mayor for Carnival subjects and a substitute Artistic Director. For years she was a vice-president of the Carnival’s committee. She has founded two Carnival associations. The first was the "Carnival club of Patra", where she is also the chairman. It was founded in 1988, lasted for four years and was dissolved for economic reasons. In 1992, in collaboration with Mrs Vicky Aggelopoulou, she founded the second association the Carnival Comitato", which is still functional.

The women participated from the very old years in the Carnival, even in the organisation of dances that were taking place in houses. In those dances women appeared dresses with toilets. Few were the women that were disguised.

Later, “Bourboulia” became an exclusive Patra’s custom. The women participate in the dance without ticket, dressed with domino and mask. Any woman could participate, wedded, unmarried, old, or young. “Bourboulia” gave precedence in the women. In “Bourboulia”, men pay a ticket and are dressed with their regular clothes. During the dance women select their dance partner.

In the past only women from urban and working classes were participating in “Bourboulia”. No one could distinguish them because the domino dress, thus a woman from a working class could wear an expensive dress and vice versa. It was clearly an expression of unity between the urban and the working class.

There was a bad fame for “Bourboulia”, because there existed an air of liberality in the way women behaved. According to Mrs Ntouli Dimitropoulou opinion, she does not believe that there exists a single woman of Patra that hasn’t participated in “Bourboulia”. Even today, women hide the fact that they participate in “Bourboulia” because they fear the social outcry. “Bourboulia” was a feminine event, and was the only one that remained
unchangeable. There are no other, exclusively feministic Carnival events today.

A famous dance is also the "Black Domino". Many thought about it as a type of "Bourboulia". The dance of "Black Domino" was for the urban classes and took place once a year, while it’s character was much more official than "Bourboulia". The role of Domino is characteristic, because it is a live testimony that elects the sets off the role of woman of Patras through the History of Patra’s Carnival.

When the carnival was over, a special brochure was published that described all the carnival’s events, that is to say the behaviour of women, the toilets that they wore and also their partners in the dances.

Women did not emancipated because of the carnival of Patra but simply, the Carnival gave her the opportunity to escape from the narrow social environment and their daily routine. Gave her the opportunity to disguise and feel free and beautiful. Mrs Ntouli-Dimitropoulou reports to us in the interview something that has astonished her. All the women (thin, fat, tall, etc.) during Carnival are taking care of themselves by making different hairstyles and make-ups. This care makes them all beautiful and they give-off a sense of self-confidence, that they are most beautiful women in the world. This is something magic.

Today working women have the opportunity pull out from everyday’s routine during the period of Carnival. However there are also other feminine presences that participate actively in the organisation of Patra’s Carnival. Mrs Ntouli-Dimitropoulou mentions three women: Mrs Maria Iliopoulou, who is responsible for “Bourboulia”, Mrs Vicky Aggelopoulou, vice-president of the Public Organization for Cultural Development of Patra, and Mrs Vaso Mpouganopoulou. She also comments that beyond the technicians partipated in Carniva’s preparation, no other man participated, except for Mr Stathis Xrisikopoulos.

There are also women that work in the Carnival’s workshops. There is a special working category only for women, called “chartotria”. This work had to do with covering the chariot with different types of paper. When the final shape of the chariot has taken its final form, women cover with newspapers the whole chariot, so it has a smooth surface and then it can be painted. The process that we just described
was exclusively made by women.
The Carnival custom has today unimaginable prospects the organisation is bad.

3.8.2. Mrs. Maria Iliopoulou Interview

Mrs Maria Iliopoulou participates in the Carnival committee since 1978, an honorary member for the last three years and a person in charge for “Bourboulia”. She is the first woman that has been rewarded by the mayor of Patras Andreas Karavolas in the Apollon Theatre, for her offers in the city of Patras the Carnival period. She has represented Patra many times in the abroad, as member of the Carnival committee. She was member of the Club of Waltz in Vienna.

As we mentioned before she is responsible for “Bourboulia”. Through our interview she makes also a small historical retrospection for the custom of “Bourboulia”

The dances were taking place in houses, not only in the urban houses but also in the working class houses. In the “Ano Chora” location, (historic city of Patras) all houses made benders, in which women participated actively. “Bourboulia” was a bit “downy”, that’s why it considered illegal, and so every participant wore a mask to hide his identity. But of course, the mystery of “Bourboulia” is created by the mask.

Women of all orders were given the opportunity to go to the theatre, dance and have fun. No one knows which women participated in “Bourboulia”. Few are those that admitted they participated in “Bourboulia”. It is also known that during the last years many young girls participated. In the past “Bourboulia” were taking place Wednesday and weekends. Today they take place in Wednesdays and Weekends and some other days.

Men wouldn’t even think to “touch” a woman, except if he was provoked to do so. Certain unwritten laws, like no one does should try to remove the masks of women because the rest participants would protest.

No photographs were allowed in “Bourboulia”. After all, every participant wore a black mask, thus any photograph would be useless. For this reason,
photographers weren’t allowed to enter “Bourboulia”. Many tried to take pictures, but the rest participants took their camera away. Today, due to mobile phones, several photos from “Bourboulia” exist.

Women had to wear a domino in order to participate in “Bourboulia”. It is a simple black dress with buttons in the front. Most of them are also the same so participants cannot be distinguished.

The history of domino begins from the square of Mark in Venice and then came to Patra. In the square of Mark, women were gathering and they wore a domino, that was basically a cape. Venice’s dominos were sewed from felt, velvet, heavy buckrams, because there was cold, but here in Patra, they were manufactured with thin buckrams. In the beginning dominos were silken and then satin because they were cheaper. The satin fabric also gave a nicer sense when a man hugged a woman, because it is smoother than other fabrics.

Domino’s could be sewed or rent from couturiers. All girls that rented their dominos should check that they had been cleaned. This was ascertained from a label that was stack from the inside of the domino. The domino that Mrs Iliopoulou owns and uses every year, is an accurate copy of an authentic domino.

Years ago, in order participants to synchronize their arrival to “Bourboulia” they wore camellias in their lapels. Later on, many adopted this habit and synchronization was infeasible. Even for the most experienced participant, it is very difficult to distinguish someone wearing a domino.

There was also the custom of throwing waxed eggs in dances and including “Bourboulia”. Many men were looking under their wife’s shoes to see if they had stepped on an egg, and thus discover if they had participated in “Bourboulia”.

Mrs. Iliopoulou also describes some other customs that no longer exist. The Sunday before the start of Lent, when the time was exactly 5 to 24:00, people let their forks down, and the woman of the house gave an egg to each member of the family saying "with this egg we shall start the fast and with the same we shall finish it", meaning that they would be abstinent during the fast. On the Carnival’s last Sunday they did not eat meat, they ate dairy, something that is not happening today.

The custom of the Queen is still alive after many years. Mrs Iliopoulou doesn’t agree with the custom’s current form. She believes that not only beautiful women should become the Queen of the Carnival. She supports that Queens should wear masks and thus every girl can participate. Every Queen has her own beauty with her carnival uniform, and thus her real appearance should not be revealed.
Mrs Maria Iliopoulou is one of those residents of Patra that entertains herself only during the Carnival. She says that even the poorest man in Patra would participate in Carnival. This happens only in Patra.

In previous years people would disguise themselves, by using everyday things. The financial state of most people was bad, so they would use simple things to disguise. Mrs. Iliopoulou recalls that when she was in the third grade of primary school, she was dressed like an old granny. A pillow in her back was her hunch, took her grandmother’s crook, and with the use of carbon they painted wrinkles in her face. This is carnival, people being disguised.

Today, few people disguise themselves with handmade uniforms. Mothers are occupied because of their work or other obligations, so they simply give their children money to buy a uniform instead of making a handmade uniform.

The Municipality of Patra supports the initiative of mothers to persuade their children and their friends to disguise. A nice example that shows how a mother should contribute to Carnival is Mrs Iliopoulou herself. She says: "my granddaughter had a doll, and wanted to get dressed like her toy. We bought together the buckram for the uniform, additional accessories and sewed the uniform in a couturier. All this process is magic. My granddaughter was happier with the uniform we sewed for her, that with any pre-made trade uniform". She even sewed uniforms for her son. In order to preserve Patra’s Carnival magic mood, women must follow all the customs.

Women nowadays have a more active role in Patra’s Carnival. Carnival isn’t considered as something bad, and women benefited from it. Society is developing, women emancipated, and Carnival was helpful towards this direction. Women had the innate need to come out and offer to society, and Carnival, especially “Bourboulia”, was decisive for this evolution.
3.8.3. Mr. Panagiotis Andriopoulos INTERVIEW

Mr Panagiotis Andriopoulos is a professor in the Arsakeio School of Patras and founder of the Artistic Group “POLITROPON”. and through his interview we can discover the social role and the cultural identity of Patra’s women through the Carnival.

The woman of Patra is no different that the rest Greek women. Most of them are not born in Patra. Only few women are descendants of old urban families of the city, and their characteristic is apparent in charity and educational matters.

Important feminine personalities that they have distinguished for their social work are Mrs Maria Stefanopoulou, who takes care of refugees and illegal immigrants, Mrs Stavroula Toula, who offers an enormous financial help for various public works in the city and the Mrs Panagiota Lazari, who founded and administrates for decades now, "Folia", an organisation which brings up orphan children. Unfortunately, such kinds of women are rare today.

He even refers to the “Cultural Association of Ladies of Patra”. He pinpoints volunteerism which is the base of the Association and also the fact that it supported and elected women of Patra.

In Patra’s society, there is a disbelief regarding women, and few are those that participate in the public life of the city. The local society is leaded mainly from men, and as a result men are more active in the public issues of the city, while women have accepted their marginalisation, concerning the publics and they do not claim their contribution to public issues.

Women have always participated actively in Carnival. An important element that we have to pinpoint is that, depending on the social place that women possessed, they took part in various events for the Carnival, for example in the dances women were the basic part of Carnival. We find references to women of Patra even in songs. According to Mr Andriopoulos, the song “Lenio wear your domino”, is the Carnival’s march since the decade of 1910

Mr Andriopoulos doesn’t support the opinion that women emancipated because of the Carnival. In contrary, he believes emancipation of women was
influenced by other social developments like the Europeanization of Patra’s society in the 19th century and by the feministic movement in the 20th century.

Of course, there are always going to be some incidents that happened during Carnival, that have created a negative impression, regarding women. The place of woman was never provocative in Carnival now was she used as sexual object, her participation has always been equal to men’s.

At the end of the interview Mr. Andriopoulos pointed out that he would like women to have a more dynamic role today in the organisation and further upgrade of Carnival. Perhaps, she should work more on the “Children’s Carnival”, because of the special bondage between mother and child.

3.8.4. Deposition of Mr Vasilis Manthopoulos

Mr Vasilis Manthopoulos is a pensioner, 84 years old. He participated in the parade of Carnival in 1984 at the age of 61, which was something unusual for that season. With his family and the remainder relatives they shaped a Carnival Group. Many consider that he established familial Carnival Groups. The first group was named “Kokkinosoufitses” and gained pecuniary reward of 38,000 drh.

Through our discussion with Mr. Manthopoulos, he shared with us memories from the earlier years of Carnival. With his family he had fun in taverns and organised dances in houses. The participation of women was intense in all these events, but they were always accompanied by a man (father or brother or spouse). They were officially dressed, men wore a tuxedo and women wore toilets.

“Bourboulia” is the second point in our discussion, and he characteristically says: “Bourboulia” is keeping the customs and dignity alive, it is a beautiful afternoon dance and evens the social inequalities".
The game of “Hidden Treasure” helped the carnival to move from the old years on to the modern life. The participation of women was bigger than men, and many times they administrated the Carnival groups.

Accordingly, his son says that, his mother played an important role for the mixtures of his father in Carnival. Their mother did not prevent nor his father neither her children to participate in the Carnival. She was always near his father and she never disputed him.

Here is a characteristic example that shows the unit of the family. They had a workshop under their house in the Gerokostopoulou St. that manufactured uniforms or masks for the group. One year they had made a lot of masks. Our mother then, agreed put the masks in the fan heater in order to dry. This stood for all the families of Patra.

Through Carnival women began to participate in the society in a more equivalent way than from the past. Today there are women who are leaders in Carnival Groups. Also, Mr. Manthopoulos has been rewarded for a characteristic photograph, which presents the participation of three generations (father, son and grandson) in the Carnival of Patra in 1988.
Photo 28: “Clown Group”, the photo has been awarded for the 3 generations it depicts (V. Manthropoulos archive)
3.8.5. Handwritten testimony of the 16 year old Anna’s Manthopoulou (V. Manthopoulos’ granddaughter) about the way she sees Carnival (12-1-2004)
3.9. CONCLUSIONS

In times of subversions, in societies of risk and uncertainty, the woman owes to daily prove not only the dynamic management of her vested rights, but also her effectiveness in all the multiple roles that she shoulders (work, citizen, mother, and spouse).

However, during the 18th century, women declared that mind does not have a sex (according to the expression of Londa Sceibinger). They claimed their participation in intellectual life. Consequently, the problem was not the perception that women are intellectually inferior to men, but the fact that the type of interests and bents of women differs from men.

The woman of Patra played and still plays an important role in her society, both in the cultural and in the social aspect of society. Through this research we elected her cultural dimension through Carnival and the social through the “Cultural Association of Greek Ladies of Patra”.

It is widely acceptable that women were in a more unfavourable social place comparing to men some years before. It was very rare to see a woman participating in social or cultural events. Women were simply absent and depended in men. Also the opinion that the public world of ideas was mainly a world of men, prevailed.

The carnival helped women of Patra to participate in cultural and social events. She found the opportunity to come out from the "isolation of" their house and to go outside, however always accompanied by a man (spouse or father or brother). The women of the urban class always took care of their appearance, but this was more intense during the period of Carnival. Only in “Bourboulia” they went out alone. No one knew the identity of the girls participating in “Bourboulia”.

Carnival grew generations after generations of people, making it one of Patra’s mostly famous customs. Sometimes Carnival established other related to it customs. One of these was the game of the "Hidden Treasure" and as mentioned previously in this work, it helped to the passage of Carnival from the old era to a modern way of life. What is now lost, according to local residents of Patra, are respect and the chastity, which are now replaced with profit.

The cultural dimension of Patra’s woman became more apparent through “Bourboulia”. “Bourboulia” made woman of Patra socially free. Only during “Bourboulia” they could go out alone. They were arranging an appointment at a certain spot of the City, and went to “Bourboulia”, concealed from their men. No one knew who the women that went to “Bourboulia”. 
Today women's participation is more active during carnival. There are women who possess administrative places in the organisational structure of Carnival, as Mrs Ntouli Dimitropoulou (Adviser of Mayor for “Bourboulia” and a substitute Artistic Director) and Mrs Maria Iliopoulou (person in charge for “Bourboulia”). Apart from the organisational structure of Carnival, the presence of women in the Carnival's Groups are also intense, and many times they are the leaders of the group.

However, many women do not deal with the Carnival because of personal or professional obligations, so that they do not transfer Carnival's customs in their children. New generations aren't disguised with home made uniforms, but they prefer to buy pre-made uniforms, thus Carnival's originality is gone.

The Cultural Association of Greek Ladies of Patra, since its foundation, had the aim of "re-establishing" social and professional education to women. Through the Association, woman gained various skills (embroidery) and consequently they easily re-established to the working process. The Association developed woman's intellectual level through various lectures but also aroused her charitable sentiment as well.

The Educative Association preserved tradition through the arts that women were taught. Due to this, the Association safeguarded tradition delivered it to the new generation, helping tradition not to degrade with the passage of time. An example is embroidery, an art that was maintained inalterable in time.

Today women have the opportunity to studies, vote, deal with politics, work and make a career in her working environment. At the same time, along with her professional development, she can have a family and bring up her children. In general, she has the same rights with men.
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