



**NATIONAL INVENTORY
OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE
OF GREECE**

**BULLETIN OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE
ELEMENT**

GENITSAROI KAI BOULES OF NAOUSA

1. Brief Presentation of the Intangible Cultural Element

a. Under what name is the element recognized by its bearers:

“Genitsaroi kai Mroules” tis Naousas [«Γενίτσαροι και Μπούλες» της Νάουσας],
Carnival season custom.

b. Other name(s):

“Boules” tis Naousas [«Μπούλες» της Νάουσας, *“Genitsaroi” tis Naousas*
[«Γενίτσαροι» της Νάουσας – Janissaries of Naousa], *“Gianitsaroi” tis Naousas*
[«Γιανίτσαροι» της Νάουσας], *“Gianitsaroi kai Boules” tis Naousas* [«Γιανίτσαροι και
Μπούλες» της Νάουσας].

c. Brief Description:

This is a Carnival [*Apokria – Αποκριά*] custom held in the town of Naousa, in Northern Greece. Its main characteristics are masquerades and disguise, wearing masks, singing *patinades* [πατινάδες] while wandering in procession through the streets of the historic and heroic town of Naousa, pausing at specific crossroads or squares, where participants dance the traditional circular dances to the sound of the *zournas* [ζουρνάς - *zurna* pipe] and the *daouli* [νταούλι - *davul* drum]. The participants in this event exclusively join groups [*bouloukia – μπουλούκια*] of teenagers and young men, (unmarried, as a rule), called *Genitsaroi* [Γενίτσαροι - Janissaries]. They move about in pairs and accompany the *Boula* [Μπούλα] or *Nyfi* [Νύφη – Bride], who is always impersonated by a young man wearing a modified local bridal dress. The procession is preceded by little children wearing *foustanella* [φουστανέλλες - traditional, pleated skirt-like men’s garments]. The *Genitsaroi* and the *Boula* wear special masks and ornate headdress, while the children wear caps.

d. ICH Domain

- X Oral traditions and expressions
- X Performing arts
- X Social practices – rituals – festive events
- X. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- X. Traditional craftsmanship
- X. Other

e. Region where the element is to be found:

Prefecture of Imathia, Heroic Town of Naousa.

f. Key words:

Genitsaroi [Γενίτσαροι – Janissaries], *Boules* [Μπούλες], *Gianitsaroi* [Γιανίτσαροι], *Naousa* [Νάουσα], carnival event [αποκριάτικο δρώμενο], custom [έθιμο], mask [*prosorida* – προσωπίδα / *prosoros* – πρόσωπος], *daouli* [νταούλι - *danul* drum], *zournas* [ζουρνάς - *zurna* pipe], Naousa carnival [ναουσαίικη αποκριά]

2. Identity of the bearer of the ICH element

a. Who is/are the bearer(s) of the element?

The members of the Society for the Protection and Promotion of the custom of “*Genitsaroi*” and “*Boules*”.

b. Headquarters/location

Headquarters of the Society for the Protection and Promotion of the Dances and Custom of Naousa “*Genitsaroi*” and “*Boules*”

Address: Naousa, Prefecture of Imathia, 14 Chr. Pardikari St., Postcode 59200

Tel.: 2332022671,(Headquarters)

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<http://www.genitsari-boules.gr>

c. Further information regarding the element:

Persons in charge:

Name: Aristeidis Tosios

Capacity: President of the Society for the Protection and Promotion of the Dances and Custom of Naousa “*Genitsaroi*” and “*Boules*”.

3. Detailed description of the ICH element, as found today

Genitsaroi and *Boules* are the pre-eminent carnival custom in the town of Naousa. Its main characteristic is the performative action of disguised men wearing masks. Preparations start quite early, with the formation of the *bouloukia*, the groups that are going to take part in the event. Preparations may last an entire year, but their culmination is during the Carnival season. The custom begins on the third Sunday from the start of Carnival, continuing with a slight variation on the following day (Monday). It is repeated on the next Sunday (*Kyriaki Tyrinis* - Cheese-eating Sunday) and on *Kathara Deutera* ("Clean Monday", the first day of Lent).

The *bouloukia*, groups of participants, consist only of men. Their number varies every year. Little boys, not wearing the characteristic masks, also take part. The young men playing male parts in the *boulouki* are called *Genitsaroi*. The children are called little *Genitsaroi*. The only female part in each *boulouki* is that of the *Boula* or *Nyfi* (bride), also impersonated by a young man. Besides the general name, *Genitsaroi* and *Boules*, the name *Boules* is generically used to refer to all the performers.

On Carnival Sunday [*Kyriaki tis Apokrias* - Κυριακή της Αποκριάς] and the last Sunday before Lent [*Kyriaki tis Tyrinis* - Κυριακή της Τυρινής] the ritual preparations begin and participants get dressed up, in their homes. The costume of the *Genitsaros*, whose key element is the *fustanella*, consists of many accessories and is completed by the *prosopo* [πρόσωπο – face], the typical mask with tiny openings for the eyes and mouth. Similarly, the man who dresses up as the *Nyfi* [Νύφη – Bride], puts on a wide, fancy, flowery dress, with characteristic accessories of the local women's dress of Naousa. He too, wears the *prosopo* [mask] (without the moustache) and a bridal headdress with flowers and ribbons.

The dressing up ritual is attended by relatives and visitors; once it is completed, each participant waits in his home, until the *boulouki* [μπουλούκι – group] drops by, accompanied by *zournas* [pipe] and *daouli* [drum], picks him up and, all together, they continue their dancing procession. When the melody *Zalistos* sounds out, the *Genitsaros* comes to the window or out on the balcony to greet the group, raising his arms up high and shaking his upper torso three times. He then bids his family farewell and the persons who helped dress him, crosses himself at the threshold, takes the other dancers and musicians by the hand, and merges with the rest of the group. Participants greet each other by shaking hands, at the same time hopping three times on one leg, so the *asimia* [ασήμια] can be heard; these are coins, jewels and amulets pinned to the costume at chest height, to the back and to the *fustanella* of the *Genitsaros*.

Similarly, the man who is to impersonate the *Boula*, also gets dressed at home, following a specific ritual. As soon as the group arrives outside the house, accompanied by the musicians, *Boula* emerges, bids farewell to the family members, bows before each one and kisses their hands, while they tip her with money. She then greets the group and the musicians in the same manner, and they all begin wandering the town streets singing *patinades* [πατινάδες]. Once everyone has been gathered, all groups set off for the Town Hall, where they arrive around noon, by which time crowds of spectators have gathered.

The captain of the *boulouki*, accompanied by the *Boula*, enters the Town Hall and, lifting his mask to reveal his identity, greets the Mayor and requests formal permission for the event to begin. This is the moment when the participation of the Municipality in the custom is formally declared, through the highest elected local authority. This is the only moment when the Captain briefly raises his mask, revealing his identity. However, late in the afternoon, when all *bouloukia* arrive in the *Alonia* [Αλώνια - Threshing Floor] neighbourhood, all participants raise (or remove) their masks and reveal their faces. The removal of the mask at any other time is considered to be an insult. In turn, *Boula* also bows low and accepts money as a gift [“*dorisma*” - «δῶρισμα»] from the Mayor.

From the balcony, the Captain announces that permission is granted to his group and gives the signal for the most ritualistic part of the custom to begin. The *Genitsaroi* unsheathe their *pales* [πάλες – sabres] and, brandishing them, they dance outside the Town Hall. They dance particular circular dances, the Captain leading, followed by *Boula*. They then set off, singing a *patinada* and follow a predetermined route, stopping only at set points, where they dance.

During the *patinada*, the celebrants dance in pairs, facing each other, while frequently crossing their sabres, commemorating a recreation of battle, the musicians having first given their musical signal. The procession passes through specific landmarks of Naousa that once formed the town's old boundaries, making interim stops at seven different crossroads, where they perform circular dances (*Lamia's crossroad*-τριόδι του Λάμια, *Kammena-Kamμένα*, *Pouliana's*-της Πουλιάνας-, through the *Batania-Mpatánia* neighbourhood to the *Pontos-Pόντος* crossroad [*Megas Mahalas*- Μέγας Μαχαλάς], the *Kioski*-Κιόσκι, *Ai-Giorgi*- Αϊ-Γιώργη] and via Saint Minas' [Άγιος Μηνάς] church they end up at *Alonia* [Αλώνια - Threshing Floor] neighbourhood. Each dancer dances at the crossroad near his home, paying tribute to his family. While each first dancer leads the dance, his friends and relatives distribute money in his honour to the musicians, placing it on their musical instruments or in their pockets. As long as the *boulouki* (the group of dancers) is in motion, none of the spectators are allowed to sing or dance with them, or even lead the dance.

Late in the afternoon, when the dance groups finally arrive in the *Alonia*

neighbourhood, the participants remove their masks. From this moment on, the dancers may be joined by persons who had taken part in the event in previous years, without, however, wearing traditional costumes. Holding their sabres and singing *patinades* with all the rest, they follow the route up to *Kammena*. It is a way of paying tribute to all those older dancers, for having contributed to the custom. After the big celebration at *Alonia*, the groups follow the route *Galakeia – Stravos Platanos- Triodi Lamnia* [Γαλάκεια-στραβός Πλάτανος-Τριόδι Λάμνια]. The procession will culminate at the location of *Kammena* [*Dioikitirio* – Government House), where the final dance is held.

On the first Monday following Carnival Sunday and on Clean Monday [*Καθαρά Δευτέρα*], the celebrants, not wearing masks or headdress, visit the homes of the group members, who have invited them to party, with dance, songs, *mezedes* and wine. Partygoers also include everyone following the procession from one house to another. On Clean Monday, in particular, after the home visits have ended, the groups gather and head for *Kammena* Square, where they dance circular dances. After the final dance, the *Genitsaroi* drive their sabres into the ground saying, “whatever we’ve said or left unsaid, let it remain here”, then surround the musicians and call out “May you always be worthy!” (*Panta axios!* – Πάντα άξιος!). Then they bid each other farewell and wishing “May we repeat this next year!” (*kai tou chronou!* – Και του χρόνου!).

There are a number of interpretations, local or other, according to which, the custom of the *Genitsaroi*, bears elements vesting it with the quality of a custom wishing for a good year. The time of year that the custom takes place, is at the end of winter and the start of spring; it is the season when nature prepares to flower and bear fruits. The elements of disguise and transformation through the use of masks, the overturning of balance permitted throughout the Carnival period, with men impersonating women, the role of the bride and references to bridal customs as fertility symbols, are the means by which germination and growth, and nature’s bounty may be achieved, as well as health and human eugenics. With their songs and circular dances, the loud sounds of the *zournas* and the *daouli*, aiming to ward off evil powers, *Genitsaroi* and *Boules* are a custom with a powerfully symbolic character, connected to warding off evil and to nature’s revival.

4. Location/facilities and equipment connected to the performance/practice of the ICH element

The musical instruments used in this custom are exclusively the *zournas* [*ζουρνάς* - *zurna* pipe] and the *daouli* [*νταούλι* - *davul* drum].

The outfit of the *Genitsaros* consists of:

- The *penevreki* (*πενεβρέκι*) (*long men’s underpants*

- The ***betsfes (μπέτσφες)*** (long white stockings, from the thigh to the ankle)
- The ***skoufounia (σκουφούνια)*** (white woolen socks)
- The ***voudetes (βουδέτες)*** (long black fabric tapes that hold up the socks and end in tassels)
- The ***kontela (κοντέλα)*** (a white shirt with very wide sleeves)
- The ***fustanella (φουστανέλα)***, the basic item of clothing of the *Genitsaros'* costume
- The ***pisli (πισλί)*** (a type of waistcoat, worn over the shirt)
- The ***asimia or asimika (ασήμια ή ασημικά)***, silverware, including a great variety of coins, jewellery and amulets. Each one, depending on its design and manufacture, has its special name. They are pinned to the chest, the back (sewn on a waistcoat) and on the *fustanella* of the *Genitsaros*
- The ***zonari - moraitiko (ζωνάρι - μοραϊτικό)*** a waistband/sash for the waist, like the one worn by the bridegrooms of Naousa
- The ***seliachi (σελιάχι)*** (a leather accessory worn around the waist, over the sash)
- The ***prosoro or prosorida (πρόσωπο ή προσωπίδα)*** – the “face” a kind of improvised mask, in two basic colours, white and red, with a round gold symbol on the forehead. It is made of thick fabric, using a special mould. Inside, it is lined with wax, a material which is wearer-friendly, as it keeps the face cool. A characteristic of both faces (male and female) are the tiny eyes and small mouth
- The ***tarampoulo or zonari (ταράμπουλο ή ζωνάρι)*** (a long silk sash which is elaborately tied around and above the mask)
- The ***mantili (μαντίλι)*** a kerchief tied around the right wrist, used when dancing
- The ***tsarouhia (τσαρούχια)*** – typical/ traditional rustic shoe with a black woolen pom-pom
- The ***pala (πάλα)*** (a sabre, i.e. a sword with a broad curved blade) held by the *Genitsaroi* when they dance

The outfit of the *Boula*-Bride consists of:

- A wide gaudy dress
- The female mask and a headdress with brightly coloured paper flowers, ribbons and accessories from Naousa women's “best” dress

- Gold coins on the chest
- ***Saltamarka (σαλταμάρκα)*** (a tight waistcoat with sleeves)
- Collars/ ruffs
- A gold embroidered waistband with the ***kolani (κολάνι)*** (the characteristic buckle of Naousa, embroidered in the local style..)

5. Products or material goods in general which are the outcome of the performance/practice of the ICH element

Masks and various decorative items

6. Historical facts relating to the ICH element

There is very little written evidence providing information on the performance of the event in the distant past. The first written mention is by Gerasimos Kapsalis (*Bulletin of the Greek Folklore Society, Vol. VI - Γεράσιμος Καψάλης - Λαογραφία (Δελτίο της Ελληνικής Λαογραφικής Εταιρείας, τόμος Στ΄)* in 1917-1918, followed by articles in local newspapers (1928 and 1929), together with oral testimonies, descriptions and narratives by pre-war dancers. On the basis of these testimonies, it is surmised that the custom, at least in form, remains unchanged until today (as far as the dances, the melodies, the songs, dress, the formal ritual and overall ethos go).

The custom flourished in the late 19th and early 20th century. During World War II it ceased temporarily and was revived in 1954 with the participation of several old, pre-war dancers. Since then, it has taken place unfailingly. The entire ritual reflects elements of local tradition, songs, myths and legends that are reminders of the recent history of the town of Naousa and, more specifically, the heroic fights of the people of Naousa with the declaration of the War for Independence in 1822.

The "*Boula* - Society for the preservation and promotion of local dances" was founded in 1971, and in 1979 it was renamed as "Society for the preservation and promotion of dances and the custom of *Genitsaroi and Boules*". In 1978, after a fifty-two year interruption, the Society revived a variation of the event on Orthodox Church Sunday [*Κυριακή της Ορθοδοξίας*], with the participation of *Genitsaroi* (without masks) and their families, who visit the *Spilaio [Σπήλαιο]* area, possibly to commemorate the anniversary of the declaration of the War of Independence in Naousa in 1822.

7. The significance of the element today.

a. **What is the significance of the element for the members of the community/its bearers?**

The element is of great importance for the members of the Society. Participation in the custom requires, beyond dedication and passion, a great effort and ample time (for the preparation of costumes, rehearsals, etc.). For the inhabitants of Naousa, it is an integral part of their individual and collective identity, as well as a key element for the unification and revival of the local community, since expatriates, internal and external migrants from Naousa return annually to their town of origin, to participate in the event. Members of all cultural societies and any other young person who so desires may also join a *boulouki* and participate in the event, provided they follow the predetermined ritual. Furthermore, it is customary, during the performance of the event on Carnival season Mondays, for all town institutions (educational, cultural and business), to treat the dancers with a variety of delicacies. During the preparations and performance, unbreakable bonds are formed between participants, their feeling of pride for their land of origin is strengthened, and their collective historical memory is kindled.

b. What is the significance of the element for contemporary Greek society?

The custom is of the utmost importance to contemporary Greek society, as it highlights, over time, the local traditions, the myths, legends, songs and heroic struggles of Naousa. The custom is a key element of local identity, a living tradition of the town and a fixed point of reference for the people of Naousa everywhere. Furthermore, it attracts a large number of visitors to Naousa during the Carnival period, thus notably strengthening local economy.

c. Did the community participate, and how, in the preparations for the inscription of the element in the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage?

The “*Genitsaroi kai Boules*” Society submitted a nomination file for inscription of the custom in the National Registry for Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece, in order to safeguard it and make it more broadly known. The desire and finally the submission of a Bulletin for the inscription of the custom in the National Registry for Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece was the outcome of an initiative of the Municipality of the Heroic Town of Naousa, that took place between 2011-2014, thus recording and scientifically documenting the custom. The Municipality’s request broadly reflects the desire of all inhabitants of Naousa. Research was conducted locally by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Department of Modern and Contemporary History, Folklore and Social Anthropology). Ms Eleonora Skouteri-Didaskalou, ... Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern and Contemporary History, Folklore and Social Anthropology, bore scientific responsibility for the project. The research group also included Mr Iakovos Michailidis, Assistant Professor in the same Faculty, Ms Miranda Terzopoulou and Ms Zoe Margari, both researchers at KEEL [KEEA- Research Centre for Greek Folklore of Athens Academy], as well as a group of postgraduate and undergraduate students from the Faculty of History and

Archaeology of AUTH. The research findings are included in an unpublished paper by Ms. Skouteri. Certain key research data (reports, memoranda, transcriptions and digital interviews, as well as individual research data) were submitted to the Municipality of Naousa in 2014. Key findings were announced in an event organized by the Municipality. Since 2011, the Society's Board of Directors have actively participated in the preparations for the inscription of the element in the National Registry for Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece, by collecting historical evidence, providing information, bibliographical references, photographs, material evidence, etc. Furthermore, they participated in meetings with competent authorities to defend the application. In all aforementioned actions, the Society's Board of Directors, consisting of Aristeidis Tosios, Petros Koutsogiannis, Nikolaos Bratsis, Stergios Anthopoulos, Michalis Agiannidis, Theodosios Tsoukalas, Grigorios Paschoulas, had the full support and cooperation of all the former Presidents of the Society (Messrs Georgios Agris, Georgios Zachariadis), the Hon. President Dimitrios Baitsis, as well as all town Mayors until today, Messrs Georgios Polakis, Anastasios Karampatzos, Nikolaos Koutsogiannis, and Nikolaos Karanikolas.

8. Safeguarding / Promotion of the element

a. How is the element passed down to the younger generations today?

The custom's ritual is transmitted experientially from one generation to the next up until today. The event is safeguarded and remains alive and important to younger generations, not only through oral tradition, but also through dance and song classes, as well as teaching of the process followed for dressing the participants with the characteristic costumes.

Dance rehearsals of the custom take place at the Society's headquarters and this is where the participants' costumes are kept. This is also where all activities take place, that are related to the performance ritual of the custom and its transmission to younger generations (classes for folk singing, music and local dances of Naousa). Clearly, active participation in the custom presupposes mental stamina, deriving from true passion and dedication – the so called *meraki*, love, and the experience of every participant.

b. Measures taken in the past or being implemented at present for the safeguarding/promotion of the element (on a local, regional or broader scale)

The Society's primary concern is to safeguard and promote the custom, through a systematic effort for the transmission of the ritual to younger generations. Besides the classes offered, the Society's activities include the publication of books and papers, exclusively through the care and attention of the members of the Board of Directors. The audiovisual and print material is kept in the Society's archive.

The Society's efforts have the unanimous support of Naousa's society. The municipality of the Heroic Town of Naousa contributes towards the promotion of the

custom; besides the personal participation of every Mayor in the custom's ritual, they provide ancillary and varied support (e.g. financial support and promotion) for all activities related to the custom. Furthermore, the local press contributes towards the custom's promotion through articles and special coverage. The numerous visitors during the Carnival period provide an additional means for spreading and promoting the event outside Naousa.

c. Proposed measures for safeguarding/promotion of the element for future implementation (on a local, regional or broader scale)

The necessity to preserve and safeguard the custom from the danger of commercialization exclusively as a tourist product is pressing. This, naturally, does not exclude initiatives and actions for the highlighting and promotion of the town as a tourist attraction during the custom's enactment.

However, every single effort needs to be guided by the aim of promoting the custom as a living tradition and an important element of the collective memory of the people of Naousa, rather than as a musical and dance performance intended for tourists.

9. Basic Bibliography

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10. Additional documentation

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b. Maps (Appended to the Bulletin)

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d. Web sources (hyperlinks)

- 1)<https://www.naoussa.gr/culture>
- 2) <https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Μπούλες>.
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- 4)<http://thesingingfish.eu/genitsaroi-kai-mpoules-sti-naoussa>.
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11. Particulars of the Bulletin's author

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12. **Final additions/updating of the Bulletin**

