



Threads Crossing the Warp

MODULE 15

**Collection of Books/Museums, Associations/Organizations
and Stakeholders across Partner Countries and International**



Partners



ΧΑΡΟΚΟΠΕΙΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
HAROKOPIO UNIVERSITY



Weaving through the centuries – Transfer of Craft Knowhow

Weaving is one of the oldest crafts on earth, known since antiquity. Starting from the simple processing of animal skin and plant fibers, in order to survive from cold and rest in a somewhat comfortable shelter, man came to make elaborate fabrics for clothing and decoration of his private space. Knowhow was spread from one generation to another and, as mankind gradually got more ingenious and skillful, the craft evolved.

Through the centuries and in organized societies, weaving secrets were transferred from mother to daughter, as it was considered a women's duty and responsibility within the household. Later on, the techniques were further developed, as specialized workshops popped up, flourished and, assisted by technology, gradually evolved into factories. The significance of the art of weaving was, apparently, tremendous during these centuries; a large part of countries' active population was engaged in the textile industry and the craft enjoyed great commercial value.

Weaving through the centuries – Transfer of Craft Knowhow (2)

Lately, the interest in folk art, and weaving in particular, has been stirred further. People have realized that the uniqueness of the weaver's job on the household handloom cannot be easily met by the standardized products of the trade. And the wealthy often search for the original, high-quality, handmade items.

But what is more important is the cultural heritage that is conveyed through traditional folk art. Weaving reveals people's inspiration, feelings and emotions, shaped according to society's traditions, customs and beliefs. It also reflects the aesthetics that prevailed and mirrors the socio-economic conditions of every region and period of time. Weaving encompasses peoples' cultural identity and constitutes a valuable and integral part of the intangible cultural heritage of each country. And, as such, it must be safeguarded; studied, analyzed, registered, displayed. It must be preserved for future generations and further enhanced, so as to inspire new craftsmen in their artistic practices and breathe new life into creations made of threads.

Weaving through the centuries – Transfer of Craft Knowhow (3)

In this context, people and organizations have been objecting to the decline of the traditional village handloom in favor of big textile industries. And not only those involved in the business, but also members of the cultural elite have become active, trying to safeguard the traditional craft. So has the State, so have local and international institutes and corporations.

They all aim at reviving the art of weaving and highlighting the masterpieces so far elaborated, while, parallelly, developing new business opportunities. These are:

- ▶ **Institutions, associations and organizations**, either local, led by prominent personalities of culture or international ones. They, not only inform, but also set up laboratories, initiate training sessions and elaborate activity plans to increase awareness and involvement.
- ▶ **Museums**, which enrich their collections and strive to draw public's attention to the values that traditional crafts convey. They also seek to arouse people's interest and participation in events.
- ▶ **Information** also flows through printed and digital means. Secrets of weaving and samples of masterpieces developed are made available in abundance.

A. Institutions, Associations, Organizations

The most outstanding example of an international, specialized agency is that of **UNESCO** (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), which was founded in 1945 and numbers 193 member states and 11 associate members. Its objective is to promote world peace and security through international cooperation in education, sciences and culture. And, with regard to the latter, it is all based on the belief that heritage is an irreplaceable source of life and inspiration, while it constitutes a source of identity and cohesion for communities.

UNESCO has adopted a threefold approach: it spearheads worldwide advocacy for culture and development, struggles to set clear policies and legal frameworks within the international community and supports governments and local stakeholders to safeguard heritage and encourage cultural pluralism.

UNESCO has been producing a wide range of publications, periodicals, brochures, information kits, books, manuals, reports and a map of World Heritage sites.

<https://en.unesco.org>

A. Institutions, Associations, Organizations (2)

A pioneering project has been that of the **“Penelope Gandhi” mission**. It was launched 20 years ago by the “University of the Mountains”, a non-profit organization of the University of Crete. Its objective is to save weaving from falling to oblivion and to revive traditional weaving techniques. The initiative was welcomed by modern people, who desired to return to handicrafts, to feel proud of personal creation and personal connection with tradition and to experience the idea of being part of a community through joint creation.

Old weavers have returned to their handlooms and teach the newcomers. The team has been recording the riches of weaving, has created Faculties, has been developing small-scale economies and new cottage-industry forms of production, has been producing and processing flax, wool and silk and has been marketing internationally certified textiles that depict the Minoan art. Given the crisis, the project gives people a way out and the option to return to local production and economy.

The mission is called after Penelope, Homeric weaver and queen, who kept weaving and undoing, awaiting Odysseus’ return, as well as after Mahatma Gandhi, who was promoting the idea of India’s independence through the domestic production of textiles.

The mission keeps organizing thematic events and interactive exhibitions across Greece. It also reaches school children, as it has managed to incorporate weaving in Middle and Primary Education as an elective subject.

www.panoreon.gr/en/gandhi/identity; <http://www.panoreon.gr/en/article-penelope-gandhi/pg-amh-gr.html>

A. Institutions, Associations, Organizations (3)

At a local, as well as international level, numerous organizations, associations, guilds and networks aim at bringing professional and amateur weavers, knitters, crocheters and other fiber artists together. Lists per country are available for fans to seek advice and join classes and events. Through Internet, one may discover a large number of groups and associations practicing the art, providing guidance and tips over the web and organizing tutorials and workshops.

An example of a Greek Association dedicated to weaving, is **Ilakatie**, based in Athens. There are also **Centers providing specialized cognitive training seminars**, like **KalliPratto**, the **Contemporary Art Workshop To Spirto** and the **Notios Space of Art & Action**, as well as **Skills Empowerment Centers** for people with special needs, like **Margarita** and **Theotokos**. The majority of weaving associations and training centers operate under the aegis of Municipalities or the Church.

<https://www.facebook.com/Ηλακάτεια-Σύλλογος-Ελληνικής-Υφαντικής-Τέχνης>

www.kallipratto.gr

<https://www.tospirto.com>

www.notios.gr

<https://margaritafoundation.net>

www.theotokos.gr

A. Institutions, Associations, Organizations (4)

An example of a Greek cultural institution that helps preserve and shed light on traditional crafts is the **Cultural Foundation of Piraeus Bank**.

In the context of promoting national cultural heritage and supporting local communities, the Foundation maintains, among others, a *Silk Museum* in Soufli. All phases and stages of pre-industrial sericulture and silk weaving are presented there –specifically, the spinning/unwinding of the cocoon thread, the dyeing and weaving of silk. Unique costumes and accessories of local clothing, as well as impressive Chinese opera costumes, are also exhibited.

The Silk Museum organizes periodic exhibitions, related cultural activities, as well as educational programs for pupils of Primary and Secondary Education.

The Foundation maintains a Historical Archive and Library, while it conducts research, publishing work, educational programs, cultural and scientific events.

<https://www.piop.gr>

B. Museums

Museums have, by definition, a key role in collecting, maintaining, studying, interpreting and finally making accessible to the public, objects, samples and documents, that constitute artistic, scientific and historical evidence. Yet, apart from enriching their collections, they also strive to draw people's attention and highlight the values their collection conveys. This is why they also set up workshops, initiate training sessions, organize events and elaborate activity plans to gain awareness and involvement.

A museum of particular importance for folk art tradition is the **Museum of Modern Greek Culture**, established in 1918. Its aim is to exhibit its collections, not only on the ground of the aesthetics, but treated as reflections of the Greek social, economic and ideological life in individual time periods. Objects are, therefore, examined within a historical context, with the focus on the life conditions and aspirations of the people who created them.

Its collection of woven textiles and other folk art handicrafts geographically covers the whole of Greece. The Museum also has a Library, photographic and multimedia Archives, conducts research and publishing work, as well as organizes educational programs, workshops and activities for people of all ages.

<http://www.mnep.gr>

B. Museums (2)

Another important ethnographic museum is the **Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation**, established 47 years ago, with collections that number c. 50.000 artifacts related to modern culture, among which a large number of costumes. It also houses an exhibition on the production, on the processing of different natural fibers, on the dyeing of yarns, on the preparation of textile strips and various handlooms, on water mills, sewing, embroidery, knitwear, lace and prints, as well as on the preparation of wedding and dowry, all covering the period from 1835 to 1945.

The Foundation carries out research and publishing work, as well as organizes seminars and related activities.

Weaving also has a central role in the **Metsovo Folk Art Museum**, operating as of 1955. It is an old mansion of the local aristocracy, which exhibits family's valuable objects and extensive collections in their natural space, with the philosophy of an "open museum". Among the objects of historical importance for the nation, such as weapons and swords of the Greek Revolution of 1821, a large variety of clothing, gold-embroidered saddles, looms and elaborate textiles are also exhibited.

<https://pli.gr> metsovomuseum.gr/folk-art-museum

B. Museums (3)

The **Museum of the History of Greek Costume** has been operating as of 1988, yet with costumes being collected as of 1911. It was created by a group of Greek women, followers of a romantic “back to the roots” movement.

Its purpose is the collection, maintenance, study and promotion of the history of Greek local costume. It is, therefore, a thematic museum including about 25,000 items, mainly authentic local costumes and jewelry of the historic Greek area (late 19th - early 20th century), copies of Minoan, archaic and Byzantine clothing, as well as 23 porcelain dolls dressed in traditional costumes.

Another museum with worthwhile collection is the **Ethnological Museum of Thrace**, which possesses 5,000 objects, archival photographic material, records and 3,700 books, from which, only 500 objects are on display. Among the topics addressed are local weaving and clothing, as textile production played an important role in the economic and cultural life of the area from the 18th till the 20th century. It is noteworthy that wool processing in Thrace still takes place within the household.

The purpose of the museum is to examine in depth how modern life is related to traditional one. It also conducts research and publishing work, seminars, lectures, educational programs and workshops.

http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/1/gh151.jsp?obj_id=3380 <https://emthrace.org>

C. Books, Literature

Printed and digital means exist in abundance, narrating the historical background of the art, analyzing the economic evolution and statistical data of the textile industry, disclosing the secrets of weaving and presenting samples of masterpieces created.

Following are relative Greek books, used in the context of the project:

- Andrioti – Bourcha, K., 2010. *Tsesmes. Culture and Everyday Life. Household items, handicrafts and home life experiences of refugees from Tsesmes (Fountain) of Asia Minor*. Athens: Center for the Study and Promotion of the Culture of Asia Minor.
- Center of Planning and Economic Research (KEPE), 1989. *Small and Medium Manufacturing Enterprises*. Athens.
- Chatzimichali, A., 1957. *Sarakatsani*. Athens: self-published.
- Chatzimichali, A., 1927. *Sarakatsani. Decorative themes in their Embroidery Art*. Athens: Nea Estia.
- Institute of Economic & Industrial Research (IOBE), 1990. *European Integration and Textile Industry*. Athens.

C. Books, Literature (2)

- Georgopoulos, D., 1999. *Greek Folk Art. Architecture – Weaving*. Athens: self-published.
- Gikas, G., 1985. *Life and Art of the Sarakatsani and their Museum in Serres*. Athens: Hellenic Organization of Small – Medium Enterprises and Crafts.
- Grant Thornton. 2013. *Greek companies & the effects of the economic crisis per industry. Financial presentation for the period 2008-2012*. Athens: self-published.
- Katsou, G., Ch. & Ioannou, Chr., 1986. *Planning Issues. Exploration of development possibilities. Textile Industry, Clothing*. Athens: Center of Planning and Economic Research.
- Kyriakidou – Nestoros, A., 1965. *Textiles from Macedonia and Thrace*. Athens: National Organization of Greek Handicrafts.
- Papadaki, E., 1965. *Information and Designs from Woven Textiles and Embroidery*. Thessaloniki: Municipality.

C. Books, Literature (3)

- Rokou, V., 1989. *The Home Textile Industry. Metsovo 18th - 20th c.* Ioannina: University of Ioannina.
- Staikou, G. Pantazi, 1984. *Traditional Crafts – Home Textile Industries in the Province of Olympia.* Athens: Andritsaina Youth Cultural Association (in Greek).
- Van Steen, C. & Lykiardopoulos, E., 2006. *With Warp and Weft. The textiles and Costumes of Metsovo.* Athens: Kapon Editions.
- Wace, A. & Thompson, M., 2009. *Nomads of the Balkans. Description of the life and customs of the Vlachs of North Pindos.* Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis Bros.
- Tsambasis, P., 1941. *The Home Textile Industry.* Athens: self-published.
- Tzahili, I., 1997. *Weaving and Weavers in the Prehistoric Aegean 2000 - 1000 BC.* Crete: University Publications of Crete.