



Threads Crossing the Warp

MODULE 14-1

**Collection of Representative Patterns and Designs in
the Balkans**



Partners



ΧΑΡΟΚΟΠΕΙΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
HAROKOPIO UNIVERSITY



Weaving as part of Folk art and Tradition in the Balkan Peninsula

Weaving is one of the *oldest crafts in the Balkan Peninsula* practiced as a home art on a loom.

It is a particularly hard job –especially together with the preparatory work, the dyeing of the threads and the development of the design –which requires special attention and dedication.

Secrets of the craft were transferred *from one generation to another* and young girls from the age of *six or eight* would, in the past, gradually learn how to spin and weave on the wooden loom, that existed in every household. The loom ended up being part of every girl's life, as she would prepare her dowry, fabrics to accompany her at every stage of her life.

Furthermore, dating back to ancient times, the process and instruments used for the preparation of the thread and fabric had *metaphysical connotations*, associated with *magical – religious* beliefs and practices.

Weaving as part of Folk art and Tradition in the Balkan Peninsula

Balkan textiles present multiple techniques and aesthetic variations. *Each region creates its own unique tradition*, based on its inspiration and aesthetics.

Local color is, however, often *distorted or enriched* with new elements that are conveyed through intermarriage, travel, trade and foreign influences. This input is assimilated and reconstructed according to local perception and aesthetics.

Works of high artistic value have come out of the loom, distinguished for their

- multiple and intricate *designs*
- clear, bright and harmoniously combined *colors*
- symbols of *tradition*, reminding of ancient and Byzantine origins, as well as eastern and western influences,

that have given textiles a very special position in Folk Art and tremendous significance for the Balkan cultural heritage.



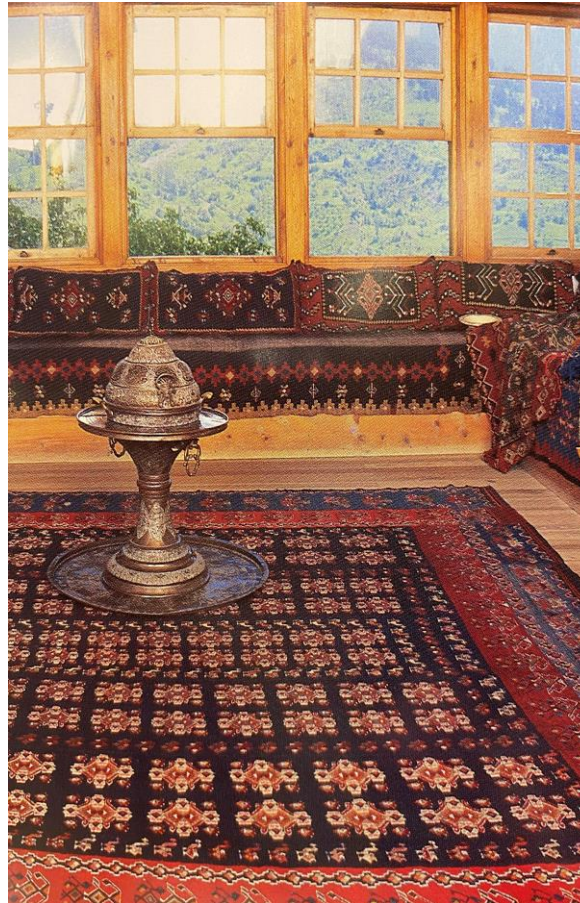
Collection of patterns and designs from Northern Greece and Nomad tribes

The following collection comprises:

- ❖ Patterns and designs from *Northern Greece*, that is, *Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace*, as
 - these geographical and historical regions of Northern Greece set the borders of Greece with the other Balkan countries,
 - have always been engaged in commercial relations with other Balkan nations and
 - have always exerted cultural and economic influences on each other.

Patterns and designs from Epirus, Greece

Contrary to the colorful and cheerful fabrics of the islands, *Epirus and Metsovo* in particular, were known for their *more strict patterns and designs*. Their textiles usually presented geometrical shapes, as well as small stylized plant and animal motifs on black background.



Patterns and designs from Epirus, Greece



Wall covers always had white background and offered warmth in winter. White textiles were also, generally, associated with the upper social class. The one on the left (1.64 X 1.90 m) has a definite top and bottom. Weft colors are red, yellow, green, grey and blue. Stepped borders contain small diamond shapes. The central field seems fully covered with multiple designs, among which, vases, apples and roses, which seem to be randomly scattered on the field. Similar is the wall cover on the right (1.50 X 2.05 m), the composition of which, yet, gives a more static feeling. A row of small knots creates short fringes at the top and bottom.



Patterns and designs from Epirus, Greece

The weaver wishes the family member, who was preparing to emigrate, “good luck and quick return to homeland”, woven on the wall cover on the left. Borders, that resemble chains, are typical of Metsovite textiles.

The wall cover on the right bears European influences, as depicted by the costumes of the two couples. Motifs are embroidered with cross stitches. The date of weaving is noted below.





Patterns and designs from Epirus, Greece



These rugs used to cover raised square surfaces along the wall, at the right and left side of the fireplace. The surfaces were covered with large sacks, stuffed with corn leaves, so that people could sit and sleep on them. The rugs served as bed linen or for decorative purposes. They were lightly woven, with rich decoration and colorful patterns. The background was usually dark blue, black, dark red and dark green. White covers were used at weddings and celebrations.



Patterns and designs from Macedonia and Thrace, Greece

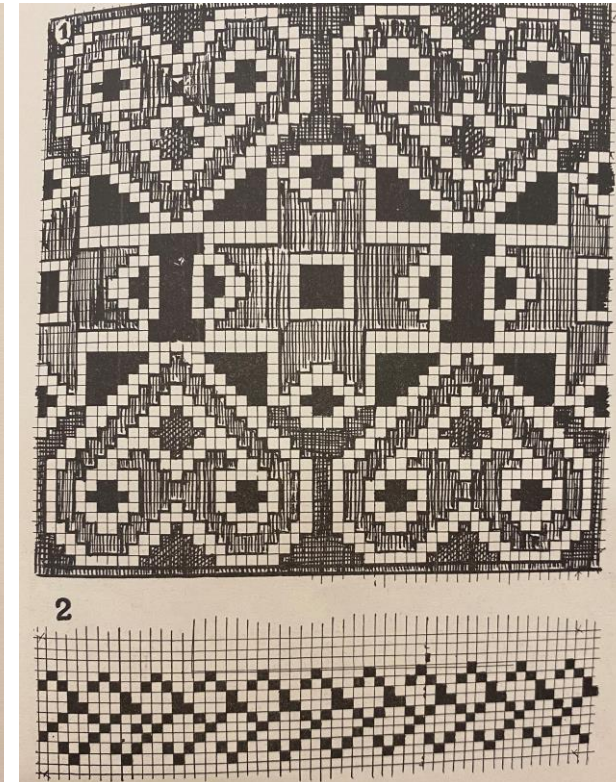
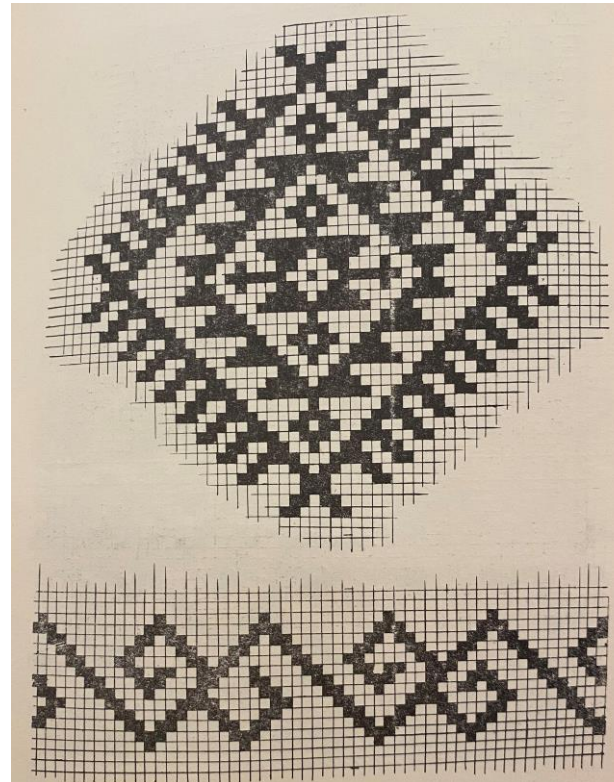
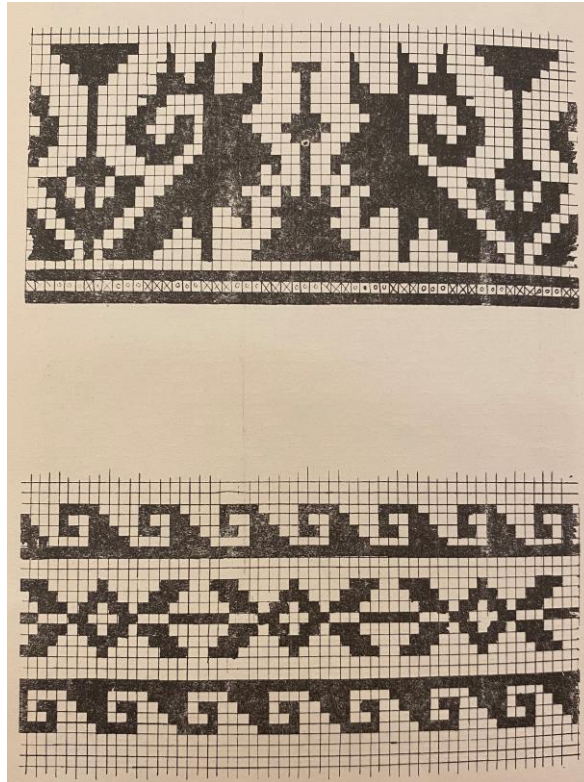
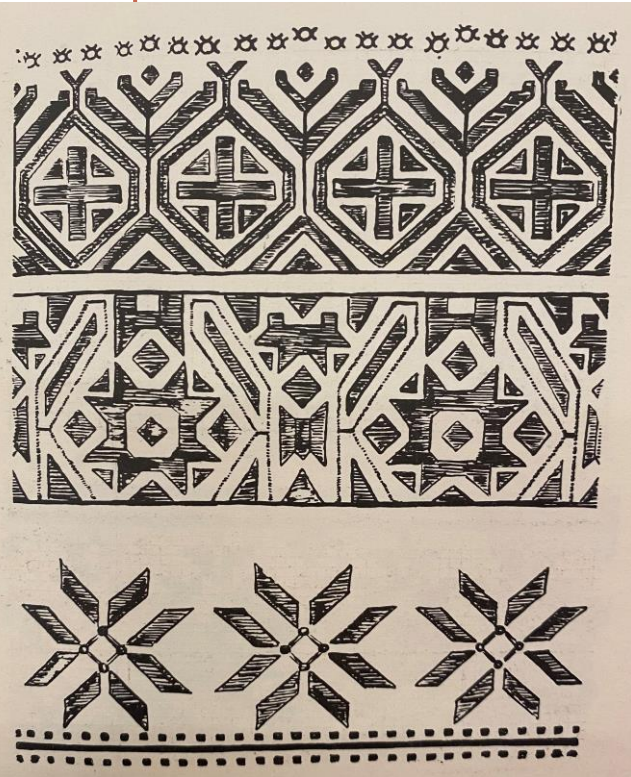
The weaving art has got a very long tradition in these regions. The raw materials used in their textiles were wool, cotton, hemp, flax and silk, all produced and processed locally.



Pictures: Decoration on the traditional costumes of Pylaia, Macedonia.

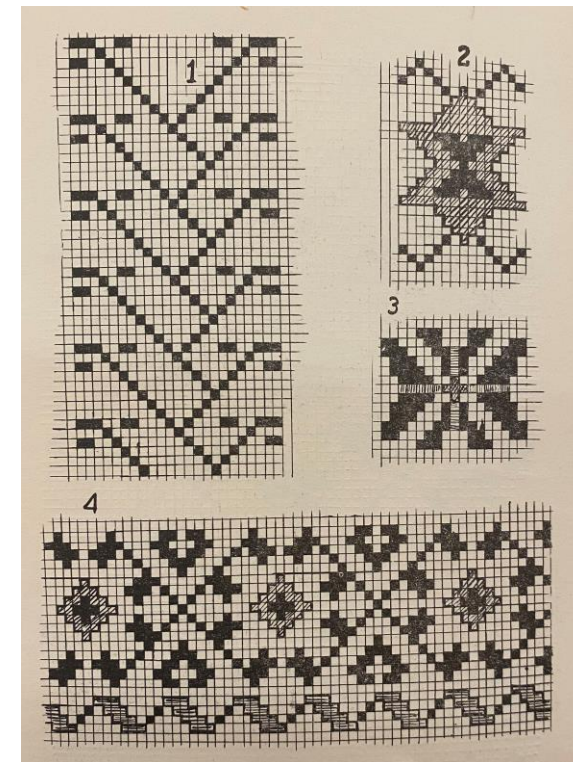
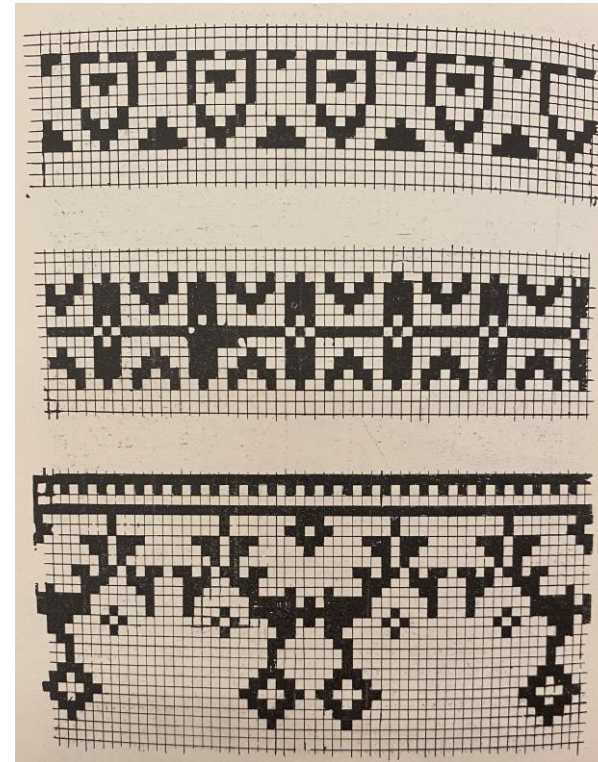
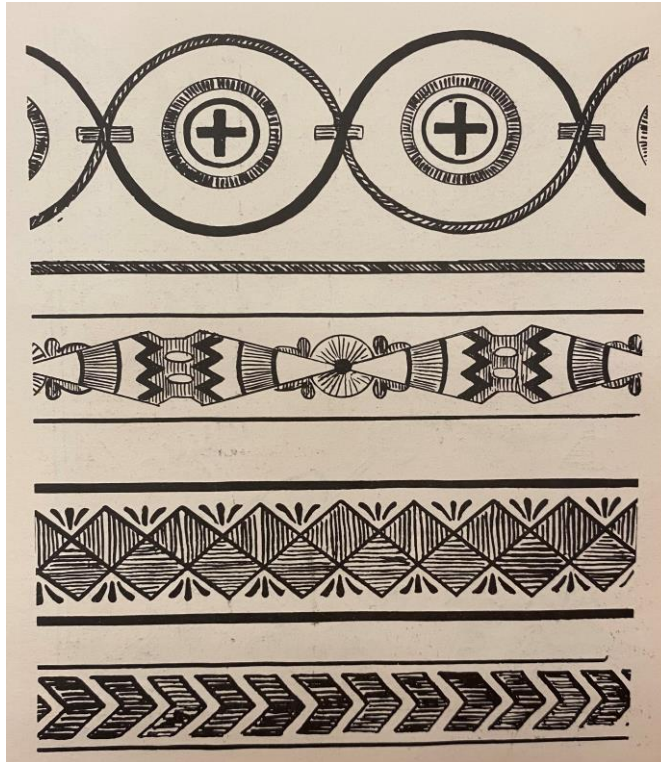
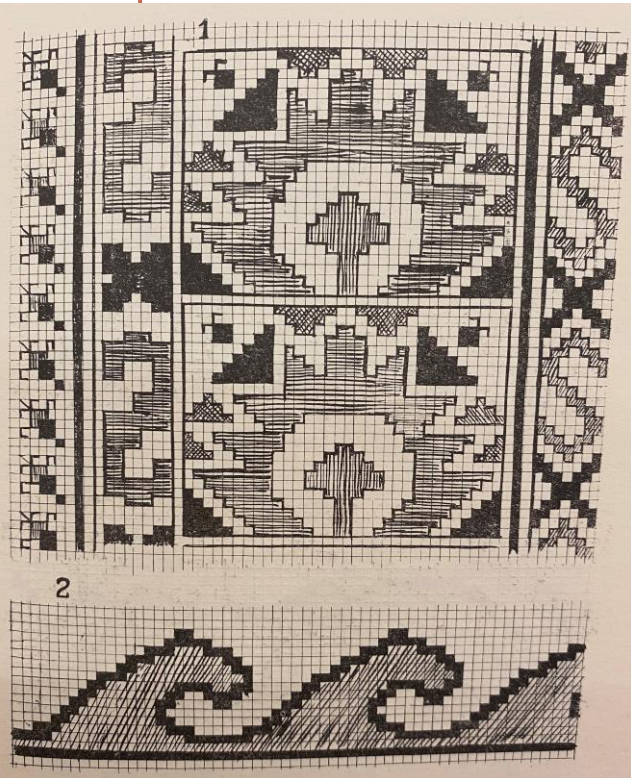
The design on the right appears on the mantle, while the central one appears on the shirt.

Patterns and designs from Macedonia and Thrace, Greece



Pictures: Decoration on Sarakatsani traditional costumes from the area of Xanthi, Thrace.

Patterns and designs from Macedonia and Thrace, Greece



Picture: Left: Sleeve from the traditional costume of Antartiko, Florina, Macedonia.

Center left: Pattern from the traditional costume of Asvestochori, Macedonia.

Center right: Decoration on socks. Right: Details from clothing from Kozani and Florina, Macedonia. Top left and middle right Designs come from traditional costumes, top right comes from socks and design below comes from woman's apron.

Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



The Sarakatsani, pastoral nomads, originally came from the Pindos range of mountains and spread to almost the entire Greek mainland and other Balkan areas, such as Bulgaria and Serbia.

Their only occupation was herds and flocks, so they kept buying and selling sheep and goats, as well as trading wool and stock-breeding products.

Today, there are no Sarakatsani shepherds left. Wars and social transformations forced them to adjust to new life conditions and change occupation. Thus, they now live in villages and towns, with 80% of them being farmers.



Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani

Weaving was women's main occupation. They used four raw tree trunks to construct the loom and set it up into the soil, in a small hut near the bigger one that served as the house. The hut of the loom was so low, that they had to kneel down, in order to enter and dip their feet in the puddle they had dug.

Their raw materials were the sheep's and goats' wool, which they processed themselves.



Pictures: Sarakatsani women washing, carding, spinning with the rocket and preparing the loom.

Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani

During the centuries, they created a *distinct culture*, influenced by their pastoral life in the mountains, their *secluded patriarchal community*, but also by many *primitive and Byzantine traditions*. Their customs, their songs, their way of life, their huts with the cross at the top, are distinct as well. So are their arts and crafts and so is their tradition in textiles.

The main feature of their textile tradition was the “strict polychromy”, in which, black and white prevailed. The background was usually black, combined with white, brown or blue on the decoration. They mostly used natural thread colors.

Plant colors, such as dark red and dark green were less commonly used, often selected for wedding dresses embroideries.



Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



They used *very strict patterns* with a variety of designs, usually *linear*, in *harmonious combinations of geometric shapes*.

The sign of the *cross* and the *double-headed eagle* were the dominant motifs. The old Sarakatsani had a *tattoo cross* on their forehead, between the eyebrows, for *precaution* and *beauty* purposes. This is why the *cross* is so often used on textiles in various forms and compositions, called *moons*.

Other ancient shapes used are *zig zags*, *waves* and *meanders*, presented in rows. These are associated with spiritual forces and supposed to have a symbolic meaning. They also appear in all forms of their art, in linear designs and geometric compositions, as symbols of protection.



Pictures:

Woolen blankets made of thick sheep wool. They have a colorful decoration of the loom. The presence of the sign of the cross becomes apparent in the strictly standardized designs.

Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



The art of the Sarakatsani is *conservative*, like their entire life.

Shape is something specific. It is a *simple geometric shape*. And decorative patterns create a geometric synthesis, which is enriched with more geometric designs in repetition.

They are so strict on the patterns, that the motifs they use on textiles, are also used in knitting, embroidery, wood carving, even bread; a peculiarity not found elsewhere.

Their art is also *differentiated from that of other nomads*, whose textiles and embroideries reveal a great variety of designs, not only geometric, but also inspired by the flora and fauna, as well as shapes freely designed.



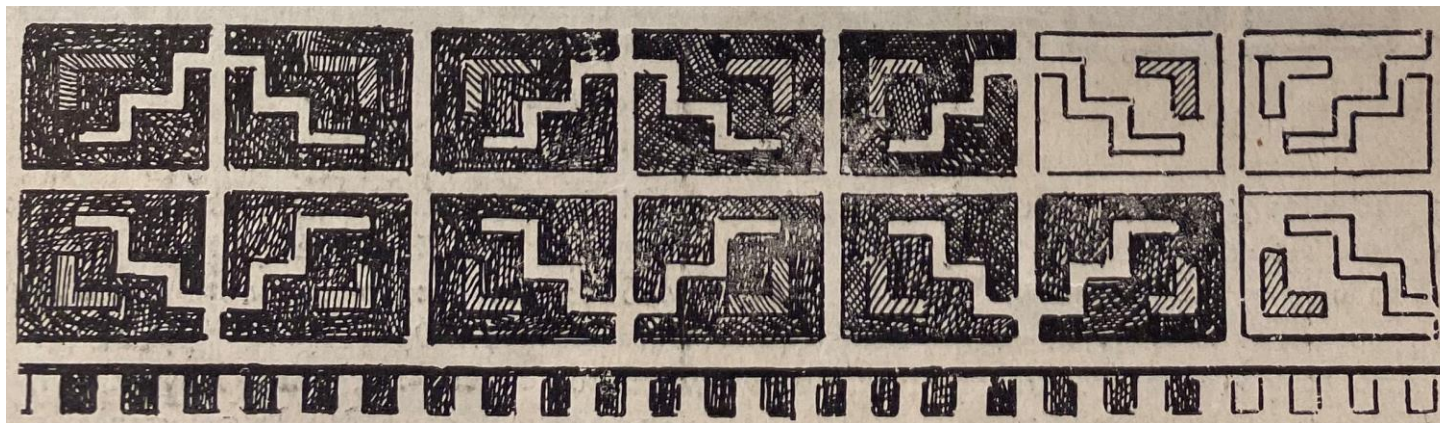
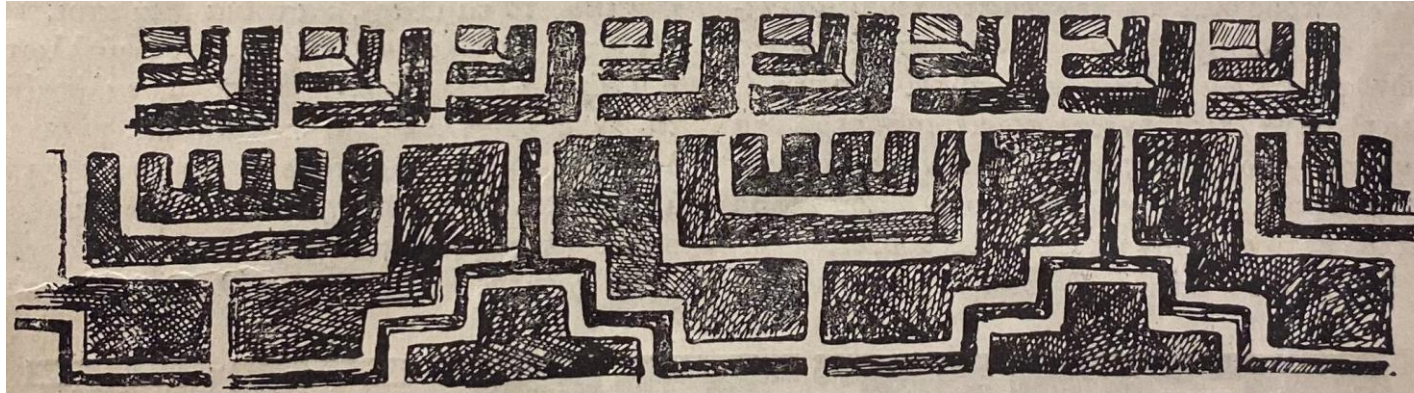
Pictures: Left: Bride and groom costumes.

Center left: Photo of a bridal couple of the late 40's. Bride keeps the traditional costume, while groom wears the European one.

Center right: Women's costume is characterized by strict colors and presents local variations. Here are costumes worn in Epirus, Thessalia and Central Macedonia (from left to right).

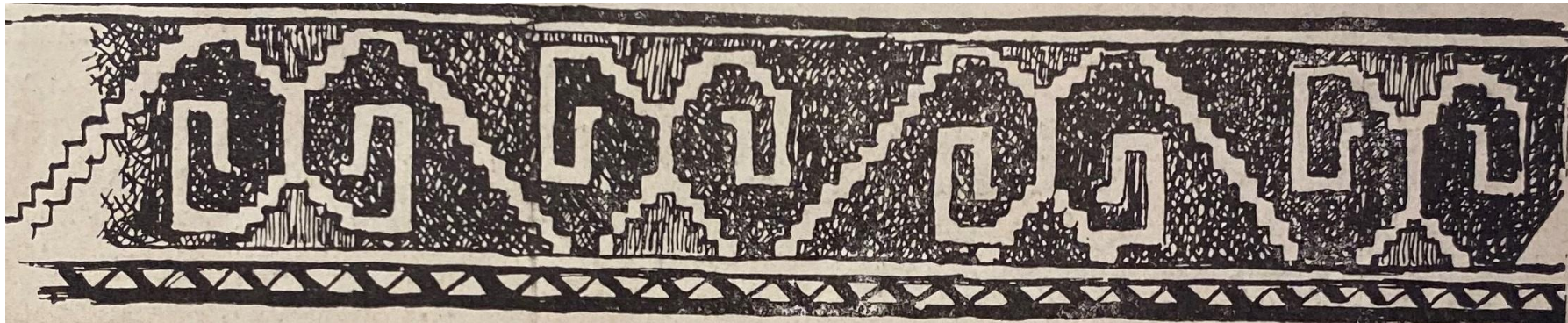
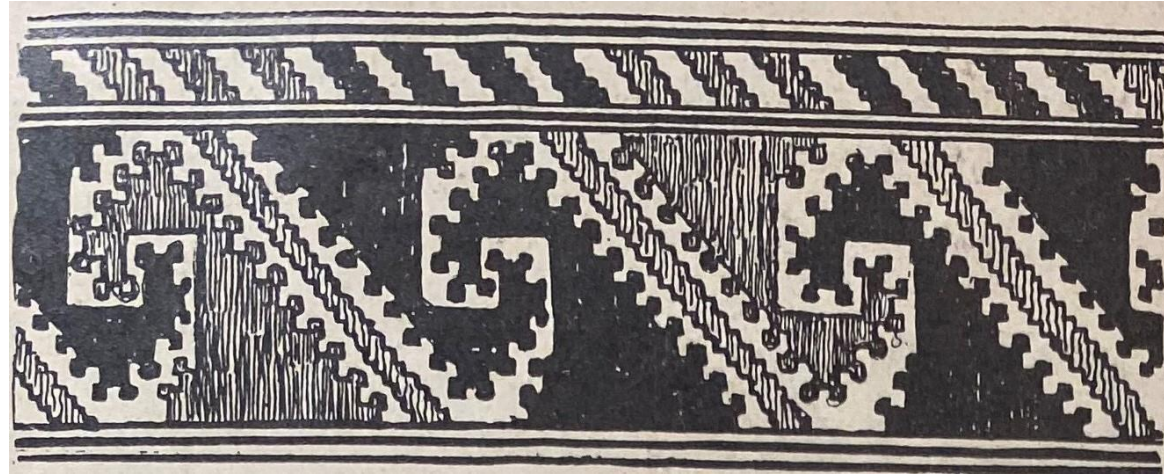
Right: Man wearing traditional fustanela.

Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



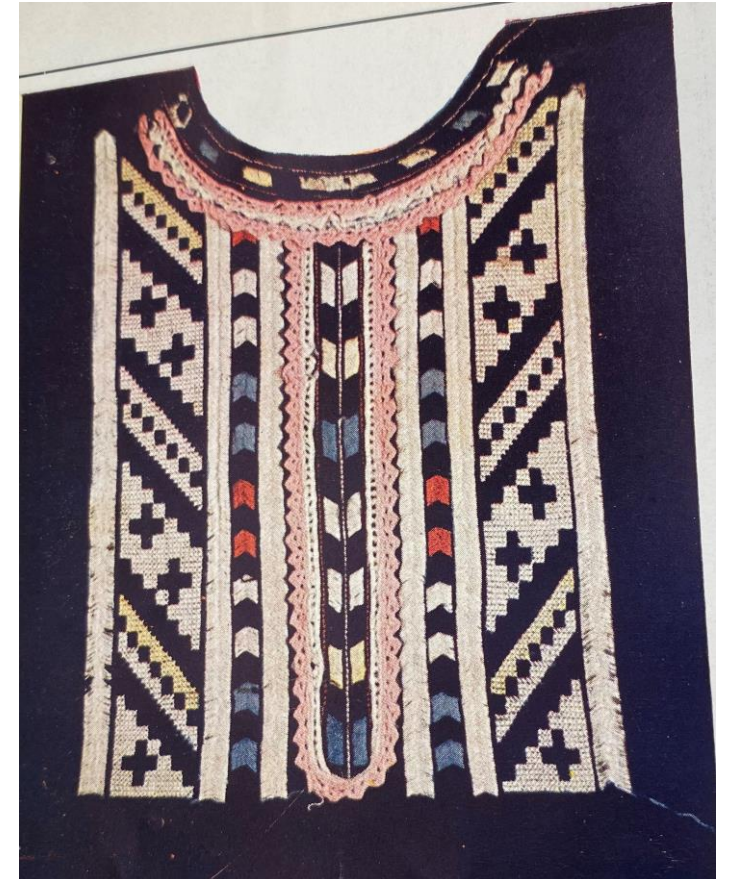
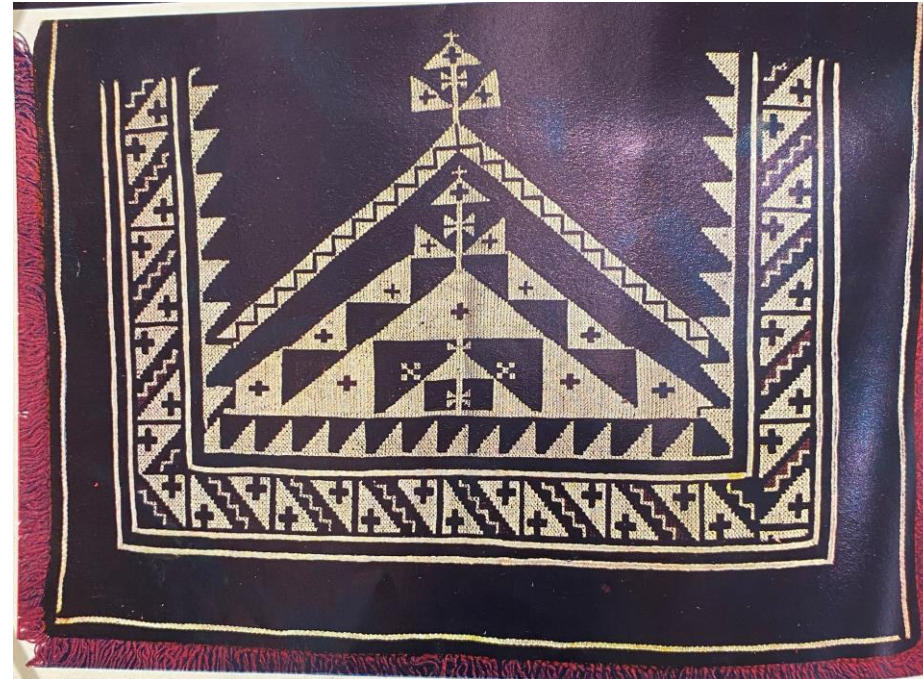
Pictures: Collars' decoration. The one above illustrates signs of the cross.

Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



Pictures: Meanders on shirts' designs.

Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



Pictures:

Left: Decoration on sleeve of wedding gown, featuring half moon. Center: Decoration on female clothing. Right: Collar decoration.

Maintenance of the craft of Weaving and Register of traditional Patterns and Designs

Textiles are one of the *links that connect us with our past and our traditions*. On one hand, they reveal the materials, the know-how and the techniques, that were available in each region at specific periods of time. On the other hand, they disclose hidden information that is related to *history and myths, religious and social values, observations of the nature, social and economic needs*.

Textiles express, therefore, the spirit, the aesthetics and the sensitivity of the people and reveal the living conditions of earlier times.

And all this knowledge, the traditions and the symbolism of centuries, is what the maintenance of the art of weaving can help us maintain and perpetuate in the future.

Maintenance of the craft of Weaving and Register of traditional Patterns and Designs (2)

When traditions are preserved, they give people the sense of a nation's continuation. On the contrary, *when a society rejects and abolishes all its traditions*, believing that this will lead to “progress”, it actually renounces and *sacrifices its distinctive culture and true values*. Because, progress does not imply the elimination of the past; it only constitutes the natural evolution from the past to the future.

There are many differences among traditional societies, but there are many similarities as well. Folk art and weaving open up a great opportunity to *seek the similarities*, by digging into past traditions and by exploring contemporary pursuits. The awareness of common elements will help *develop a common identity* of countries lying within the Balkan Peninsula.

Patterns and designs of Albania

Albania, over 2000 years old and one of the smallest countries in Europe, is located on the Balkan Peninsula in the southeastern part of the continent. Primarily a farming country, with two main cultural groups, the Ghegs who live in the mountainous north, and the Tosks in the south. Each has its own dialect; however, the official language is based on Tosk. Living in a less isolated region, the Tosks have been influenced by other cultures, such as the Greeks.

Several national handcrafts are practiced in Albania, including weaving, rich embroidery, crocheted lace and gold embroidery work. Many traditional homes have a loom used to weave wool, silk, cotton and linen into clothing, carpets, blankets, cushions and other household items.

Patterns and designs of Albania

Albanian women are known for their handicraft skills, which have been inherited from generation to generation. Local costumes are traditionally embellished with intricate embroidery. Carpets and rugs, sweaters, socks and gloves made with local natural wool are also handcrafted. Famous all over the country are the laces of Gjirokastra; as well as crochet and embroidery.

The technique of knitting (weaving) in antiquity was practiced mainly by women as a result of meeting the needs for clothing, bedding and cover. So the same woman who wove the fabric for the dress, maybe even with the same tool (loom) wove the rug, the cover, the carpet. Thus we can state that: the same colors, motifs, symbols are used in the clothes, as well as in the bedspreads and carpets.

Patterns and designs of Albania



Crocheted tablecloth

Patterns and designs of Albania

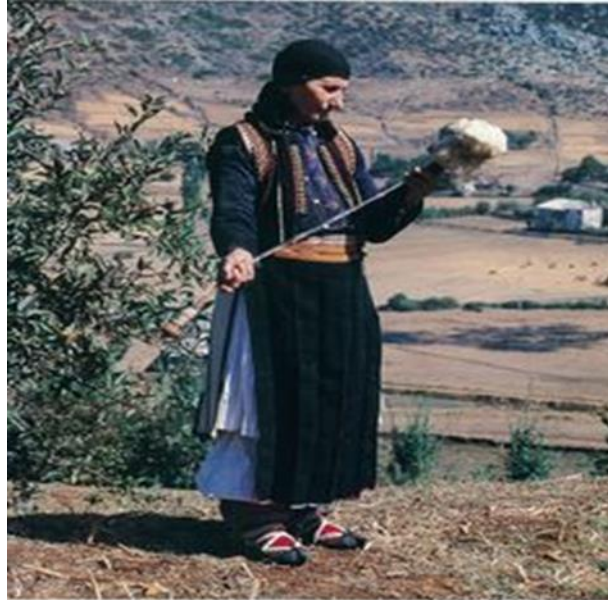


Embroidered tablecloths

Patterns and designs of Albania



spinning, wool weaving and shajak



*Heqar gjatë shpëtimave, Luftë. Pëllëz i dhokë. Në
Heshtje nën shi, 2011. Beginning of the 33 series.*



Albanian folk costumes in the early
Robert Ellsie postcards

Patterns and designs of Albania

If we compare the motifs of the Xhubleta (Albanian autectural clothing over 4000 years old) as the most representative among the Albanian costumes, with the motifs of the carpets, we can see that exactly the same fantastic, cosmic motifs are spacious in almost identical forms.

Xhubleta is a bell-shaped bottom, which comes wavy at the end, especially at the back. It consists of a large number of pieces and narrow shajak belts, placed horizontally and intertwined with bands of braids. Hanging on the shoulder with two wide straps. In the century. XVIII, the jubilee was made in many colors, but the colors that have arrived today are: black for women and black and white for girls. Other parts of the costume with the jubilee are: armpits, jackets, skirts, paraniks, canes and soles, etc. Xhubleta is of ancient origin.



ALBANIAN XHUBLETA



Patterns and designs of Albania

In Kukësi city the tradition of making wool in avlëmend is very ancient. Wool was used in the production of clothing and all the fabrics a house needed. The fact that Kukësi has been very isolated from the rest of Albania due to the lack of road infrastructure, has had a positive impact on the preservation of folk art traditions that comes almost unchanged to this day.

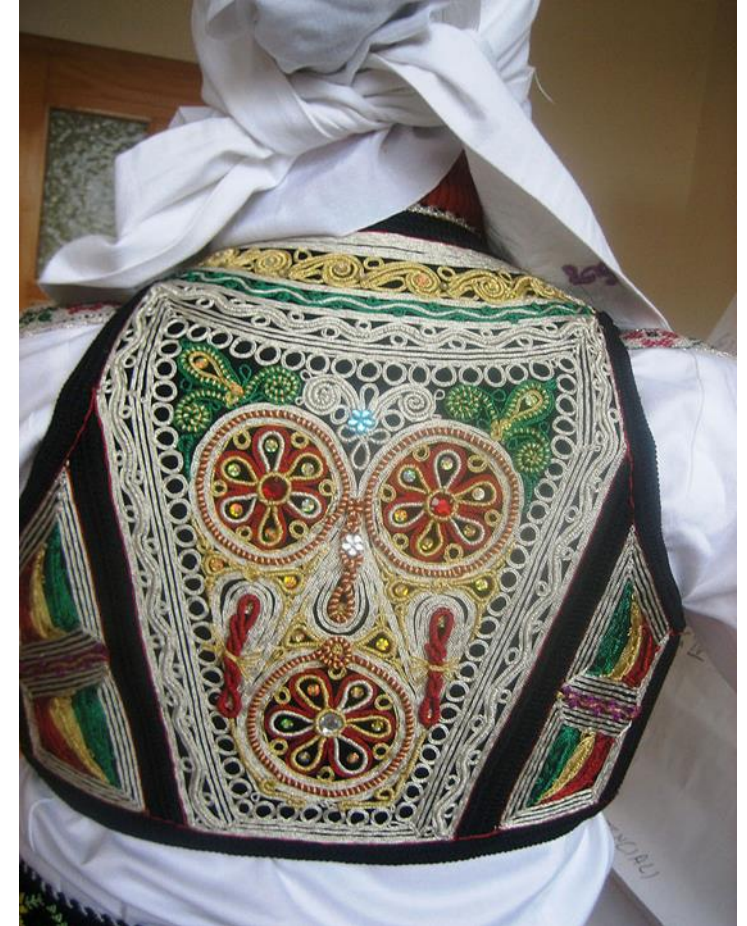


Patterns and designs of Albania

In nowadays the interest for the artistic products of tradition has been revived and the attempts to organize small private businesses have started. Handicraft fairs have started to be organized in Kukës and in nowadays the women's organization has expand the geography of these fairs in Albania, but also to its neighbors.

An important place in women's handicrafts is occupied by the preparation of traditional folk costumes of women and men. They have been preserved originally and are a clear expression of Kuksi identity. Today there are few people who wear these costumes during ordinary days. This is done only by the elderly, or even the youth, but in remote villages where climatic conditions dictate their maintenance. These costumes are unveiled in all their beauty only during folk festivals, other popular celebrations, or weddings.

Patterns and designs of Albania





Patterns and designs of Albania

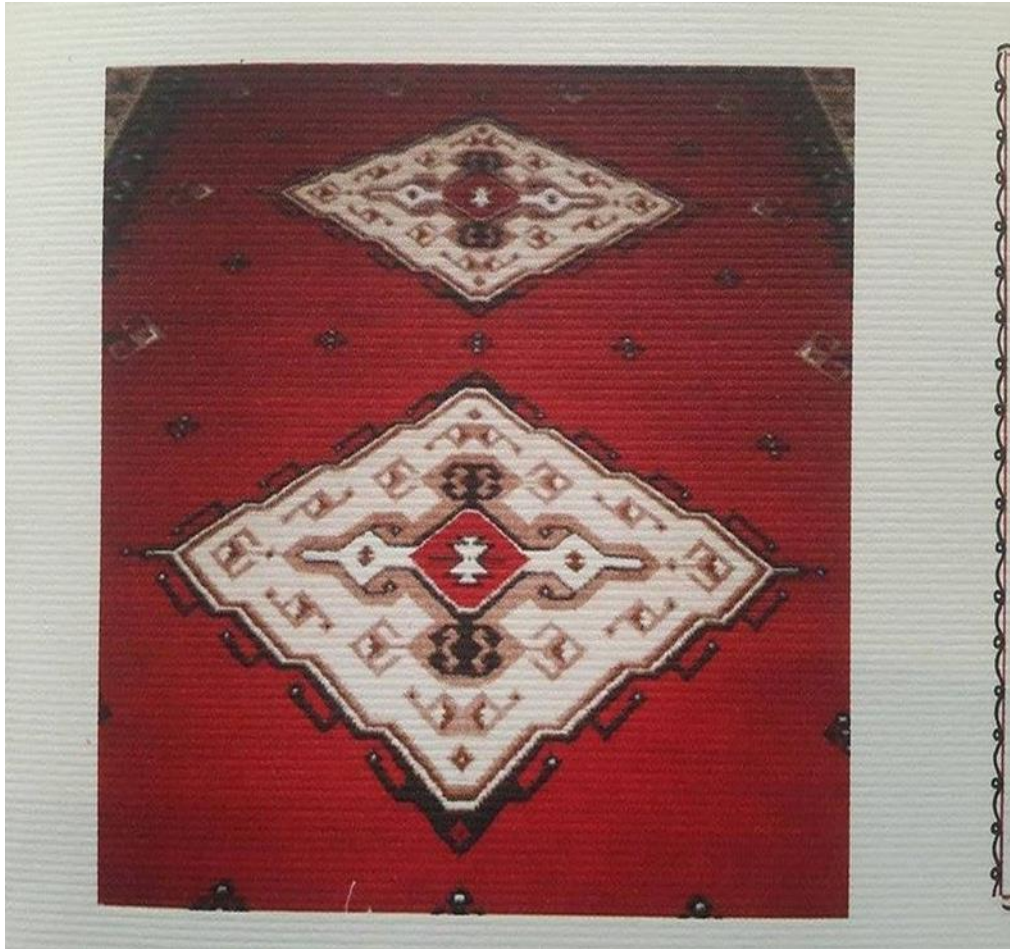
Wool was used in the production of clothing and all the fabrics that a house needed. Kuksi woolen textiles are distinguished for their unique technique, just as knitting, yarns, lace, and various embroideries are special. Folk costumes manifest the traditional culture of the area and are the inheritors and transmitters of many elements that come from antiquity. Characteristic and ancient are the popular motifs used in the production of carpets and rugs, with colorful combinations with exquisite artistic taste.



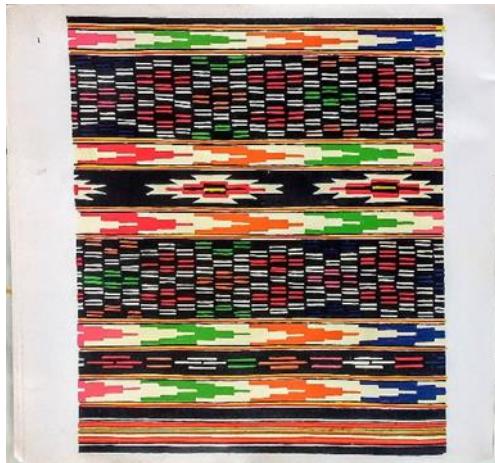
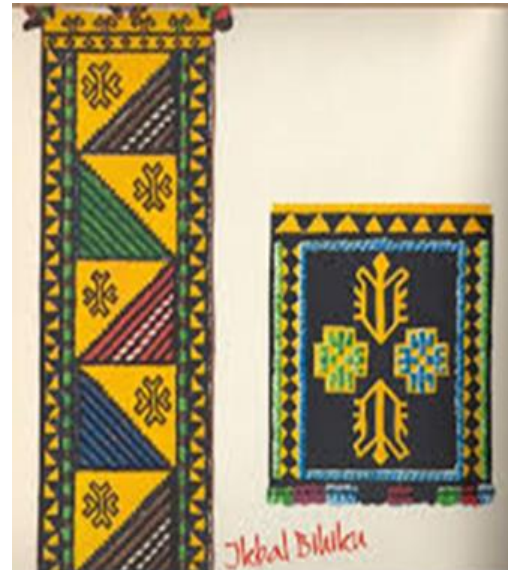
Wool weave in the
loom



Patterns and designs of Albania



Patterns and designs of Albania



"Albanian folk art woolen works on looms"; RPSSH Academy of Sciences; Institute of History Sector of Ethnography; 1977



Patterns and designs of Albania



Patterns and designs of Albania

Today, weaving has been almost exclusively commercialized, although many communities and individuals around the world continue to weave by hand, either for fun, for cultural identification, or out of necessity. Automatic power operated looms now dominate the trade, greatly improving and streamlining this important aspect of the textile industry.

One full-length crocheted, the other beige cotton with silk thread embroidery. Flowers, found both in the wild and in courtyard gardens, are a typical motif used in Albanian linens and are embroidered in bright colors. It is the embroidered pillows traditionally used on the backs of chairs at the dinner table. Traditionally, women embroider on linen or cotton, while men work on wool. Wool is widely available locally as large flocks of sheep are kept in Albania. Cotton, linen and silk are imported to supply embroiderers.



Pillow case

Patterns and designs of Albania

In Tropoja city in north of Albania, women are distinguished for their golden hands for exquisite artistic taste in wool making, embroidery, sewing, etc. Vectaria - is the most common craft that women are engaged in. Fabrics, carpets, rugs, woolen pillowcases, hammers, straps, etc. are made in the vek.



Patterns and designs of Albania



Patterns and designs of Albania

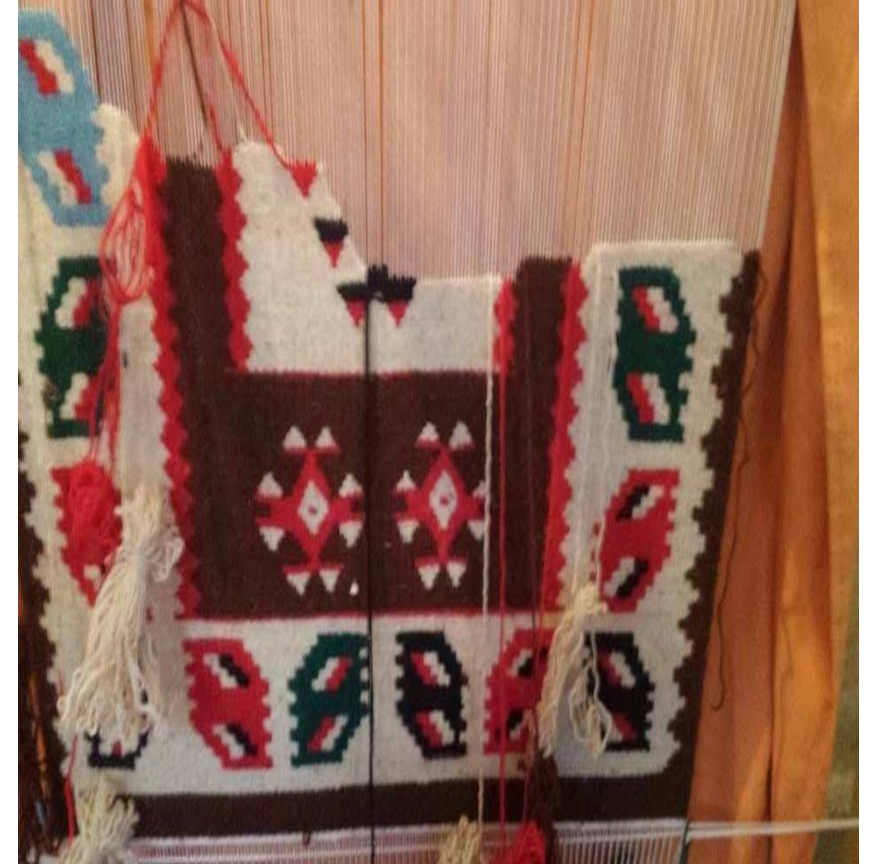
In old bazaar of Kruja city in Albania there are numerous artisan shops. The owners of the shops are in the same time traditional handmade carpets weaver. Since in the young age girls get used, using this craft after their mother passed the weaving tradition to them, which is an essential part of the family business in nowadays.

For the production of a high quality carpets is used always sheep wool.



Weaving a kilim

Patterns and designs of Albania



Patterns and designs of Albania

The motifs of Albanian carpets have some features in relation to other carpets. Regarding the Albanian ethnos, the main ones have geometric motifs, because this is the most special specification of the motifs of the Albanian carpets. In addition, all Albanian carpets have a clarity in conception and color, which is very obvious.

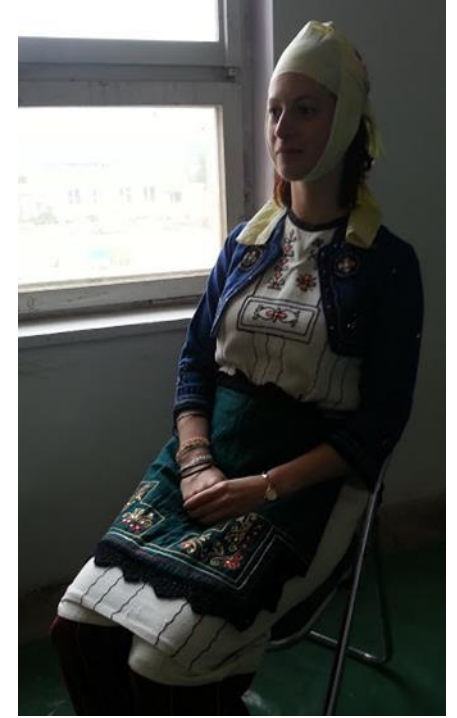
Color ratios are often special and strange. There is colors mismatch from the pictorial point of view and at the same time the motifs lead to abstract figures, which are often reminiscent of sparse motifs, which at the same time resemble our national costumes.

The clarity and simplicity of Albanian carpets has a logical similarity with Albanian costumes, especially the older ones; for colors, ratio of figurations and knitting by zones.

The motifs of the jubilee, one of the most representative of the Albanian costumes, together with the dress and the plush with the motifs of the carpets, resemble the fantastic, cosmic and special motifs, which are found almost in similar and almost identical forms.

During the weaving of a carpet, the technique of realization is harmoniously mixed with the inner world of persons





Patterns and designs of Albania



To create ideas of ornaments, the women use their inspiration, but also reproduce traditional ornaments which are typical different in Albanian towns and regions, the design is also based on geometric figures. In addition, many carpets are weaved and purchased on request, in this case both the ornament and the color ideas of the product depend on the client's wish, so they can jointly develop any carpet model.

Patterns and designs of Albania

National costumes are some of the most requested items of Kruja's Bazaar which explains the rich variety available there. The elaborate costumes come from every region of the country and, thus, you will see fustanellë (kilt), xhubletë (a bell-shaped skirt), traditional shoes embellished with tassels, costumes with tirq (traditional tight-legged trousers for males) or çitjane (traditional wide trousers for females, harem pants).

The traditional folk costumes of the women were rich with embroidery adorned with precious metal threads; those of Lunxhëria and Dropull are kept by the most beautiful.



Traditional dresses of Lunxheria



Traditional dresses of Dropull



Traditional dress of Tërbaçi (village of Vlora city)



Traditional dress of Gjirokastra



Traditional dress of Tepelena



Traditional dress of Vlora

Patterns and designs of Albania

Traditional men's suits include white woolen sweatshirts, things at the waist that end tight at the legs and are paired with leggings on the thighs or white dresses with sides, accompanied by a vest and opinga with tassels. On his head was a long black cap, made of lamb's wool or a pointed shajak bag.

Folk dresses (garment, cloth) are obviously one of the most expressive manifestations of traditional culture. They inherit and convey many elements that come down from ancient times and Middle Ages, but at the same time they are an expression of cultural relations with other peoples over centuries.

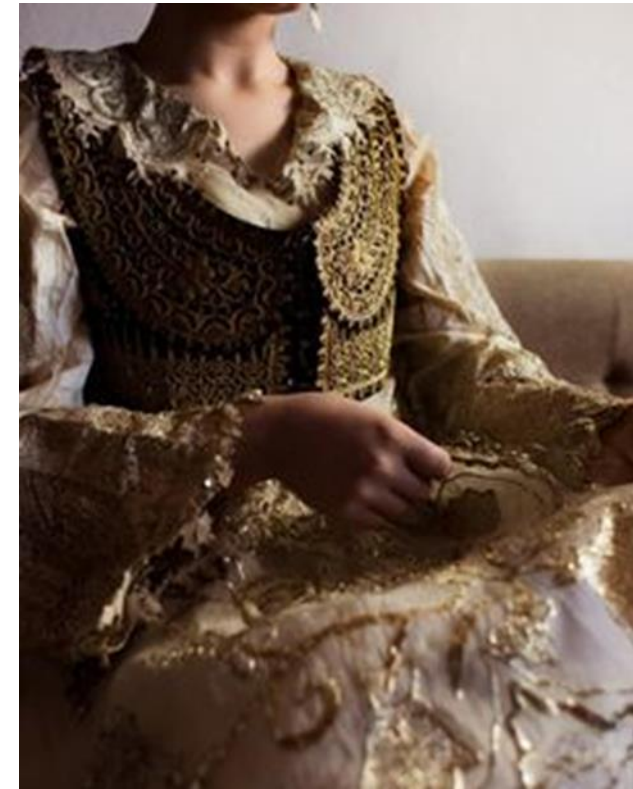
Patterns and designs of Albania



Group one: visible elements: "Shifra e gjendjes me dy ane, "Vestja e shtrime" et gjurmë të tjerë të tilla, i shkëlqet, "Shifra e shtrime" et gjurmë të tjerë të tilla, i shkëlqet. "Shifra e shtrime" et gjurmë të tjerë të tilla, i shkëlqet. "Shifra e shtrime" et gjurmë të tjerë të tilla, i shkëlqet.



Two pieces of the blouse of a woman belonging to the upper classes, Tirana.



Clothing of the city of Tirana in embroidery with tyrtyl and gjyrmysh. Gold and silver thread embroidery techniques are found both in the elements of clothing created within the household, such as: shirts, headgear, socks, etc.

Patterns and designs of Albania



Dress of Elbasan



Dress of Tirana



Dress of Labinot

Patterns and designs of Albania

In Albania, woolen textiles, like carpets are produced with a series of different techniques, were widely used and carried a great many local features which made the works of one region distinguishable from those of another.

Many are the artisan workers which masterfully weave silver, gold or copper threads in the national costumes, sword or knife sheaths, jewelry and many other objects offered at the bazaar. The elegance of the filigree makes these objects some of the most stunning and preferred choices for gifts and home decorations.





Patterns and designs of Albania

The richness and variety of Albanian folk costumes were first photographed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The traditional isolation of Albanians from the rest of Europe made folk costumes display special and often rare features, which amazed the first European travelers.

In the Northern Highlands every tribe, even every valley and every village, had their own clothing which was visible to the general population. Folk costumes showed not only tribal and religious affiliation, but also - for women in many cases - whether the woman in question was married or not.

Albanian folk costumes were in general use until the 1930s, and in some Albanian territories even after the Second World War. Even in the first decades of the twenty-first century it is not uncommon to see women who wear folk costumes daily, or at least on shopping day. This applies primarily to the North of Albania in the districts of Shkodra, Malësia e Madhe, Lezha and Mirdita, but the costumes appear occasionally in the remote areas of southern Albania.

Patterns and designs of Albania

Outstanding figures of world literature have also taken special interest in Albanian traditional garments and clothing. Among them is the famous poet George Byron (Lord Byron), who has even been called “the discoverer of Albanian subjects” Byron, the famous British poet of the 19th century, had taken with him more than one Albanian folk costume as precious artworks to dress himself with and to expose to the world.



Lord Byron in Albanian dress by Thomas Phillips, 1813. Venizelos Mansion, Athens (the British Ambassador's residence)

Patterns and designs of Albania

No Albanian arts-and-crafts tour would be complete without the inclusion of the most recognizable Albanian object: the qeleshe, a traditional white woolen hat. This simultaneously functional and decorative hat enhanced every traditional male costume and is, perhaps, the main symbol of Albanian tradition.

Man working for the traditional white woolen hat



Patterns and designs of Albania



A felt maker



Different models of “qeleshe” according to the region of Albania.

Models of ‘qelesh’ change according to the cities, regions of Albania but the way how they are produced and the materials used for it are the same.

Patterns and designs of Albania



Crafts Wool slippers handmade proction in Kruje, Albania. June 2018

Same as 'qeleshe' and wool slippers have different models that changes according to the region of Albania. But different from that kind of hats that are used only from men, wool slippers are used from men and women. Models are different for men and women. In nowadays 'qeleshe' are used from women and girls as well when there is a celebration (traditional, independence day of Albania etc.)

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