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MODULE 3 WEAVING

Examples from Balkan countries



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Cultural heritage preservation: the art of traditional weaving

Textiles *connect us with our past and our traditions*. Textiles:

- ‘talk’ about materials, know-how and techniques available in each region at specific periods of time
- disclose hidden information related to *history and myths, religious and social values, observations of the nature, social and economic needs*
- express the spirit, the aesthetics and the sensitivity of the people and reveal the living conditions of earlier times

The traditions and the symbolism of centuries, can contribute to the maintenance of weaving art in the future.



Cultural heritage preservation: the art of traditional weaving

- Cultural heritage provides communities and nations a sense of identity and continuity.
- *When a society rejects tradition*, driving towards “progress”, it actually renounces and *sacrifices its distinctive culture and values*. Progress does not imply the elimination of the past; it 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 exploring contemporary pursuits. The awareness of common elements will help *develop a common identity* of countries lying within the Balkan Peninsula.



Weaving Tradition in the Balkan Peninsula

- Weaving is one of the *oldest arts in the Balkan Peninsula* practiced as a home art on a loom. It is demanding or even intimidating and requires special attention and dedication.
- The secrets of weaving were transferred *from one generation to another* and young girls gradually learned how to spin and weave on the wooden loom of the family. The loom was 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 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.



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Weaving in Greece

- In the regions of Epirus, Aetolia, Thessaly, Macedonia and in many Aegean islands, such as Cyclades and Crete, textile art developed mainly as a home art, but also in workshops, producing of all kinds of fabrics, for either personal use or for sale.
- Depending on their technique, woven textiles are distinguished into plain (fabric of any colour, without patterns), embroidered (motives are produced by hand at the backside of the textile), and crossed (the coloured threads of warp and weft create the patterns).
- The patterns of the textiles often reflect the geographical area or the population group that they come from.



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.





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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.





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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.





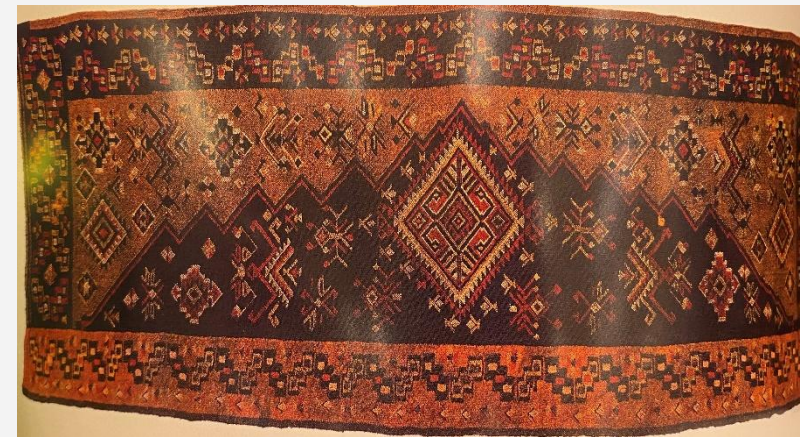
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Patterns and designs from Epirus, Greece

These textiles covered horizontally the lower part of the chimney, at the top of the fireplace. The left one (0.75 X 1.97 m) illustrates a double-headed eagle under the arch. Designs appear randomly scattered, although carefully placed and symmetrical. The blue, red, green and brown colors seem not to have been damaged by the fire, that burns below it. The jagged line resembles mountain peaks on the horizon and divides the textile in two. Borders are decorated with keys.

The fireplace fabric on the right (0.88 X 1.83 m) also illustrates a double-headed eagle and an arch, splitting the rug in two parts. The field contains a large variety of designs, including vases, while the border is also decorated with keys.





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Patterns and designs from Epirus, Greece

The fireplace textile on the left (0.85 X 2.10 m) is decorated with diamond shapes in black, red, yellow, orange, blue and purple, with white cotton. The central one contains a double-headed eagle motif. The field is covered with numerous designs, including stylized animal motifs. The lower part must have been burnt and replaced.

The fireplace fabric on the right (0.88 X 1.83 m) mentions the date it was woven, 1887, at the top of the pyramid-like arch. The field is covered with red, yellow, orange, green, blue and white motifs and the decoration is lighter than in other similar textiles.





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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.





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Patterns and designs from Epirus, Greece

Cushions had less complicated decorative compositions, due to their small size. They usually had a central pattern, mostly geometric, with a monochrome main border. An “appropriate” dowry should have had 3 sets with 8 pillows each.

Following, on the left, is a selection of covers for rectangular cushions. The bright colors were obtained from natural dye materials. Patterns and colors were chosen so as to match with bed covers. The back side was plain, dark colored with sets of double stripes.





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Patterns and designs from Epirus, Greece

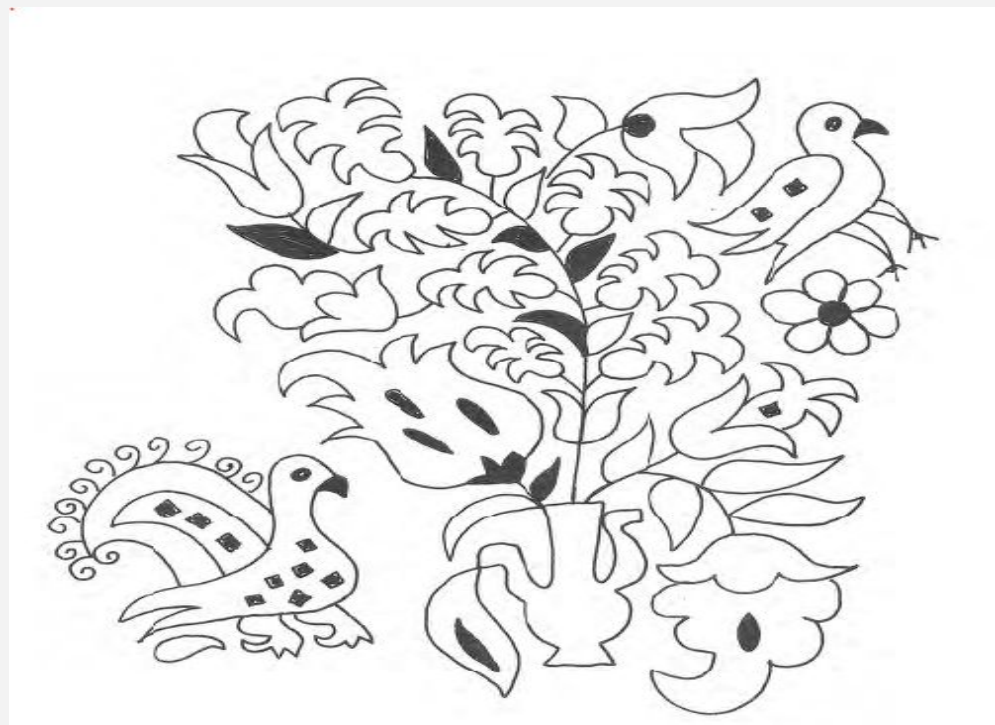




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Epirus, Greece





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Patterns and designs from Macedonia and Thrace, Greece

The weaving art has got a very long tradition in these regions, from the times when their borders extended beyond those of nowadays, including cities, which were major centers of the Greek textile industry. After the exchange of populations, the refugees who arrived, brought their traditions, experience and know-how and practiced the weaving craft in their new homeland. Thus, they gave an impetus to the already successful textile industry of the area.

Nowhere else was, therefore, the art of weaving so closely connected with the family and economic life, as in these regions; it was a fixed element in their tradition, their customs and their prejudices.

The raw materials used in their textiles were wool, cotton, hemp, flax and silk, all produced and processed locally.

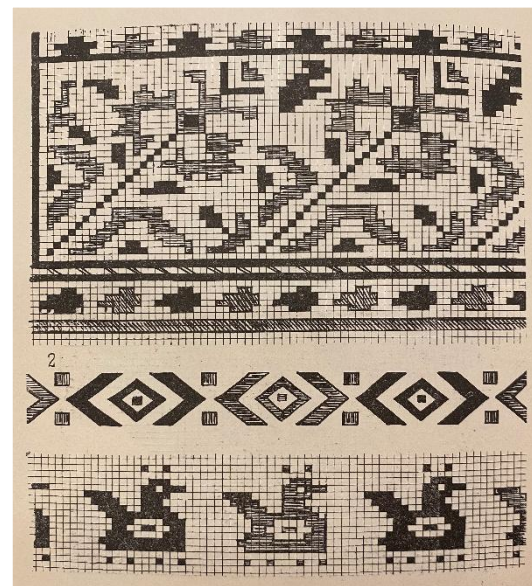
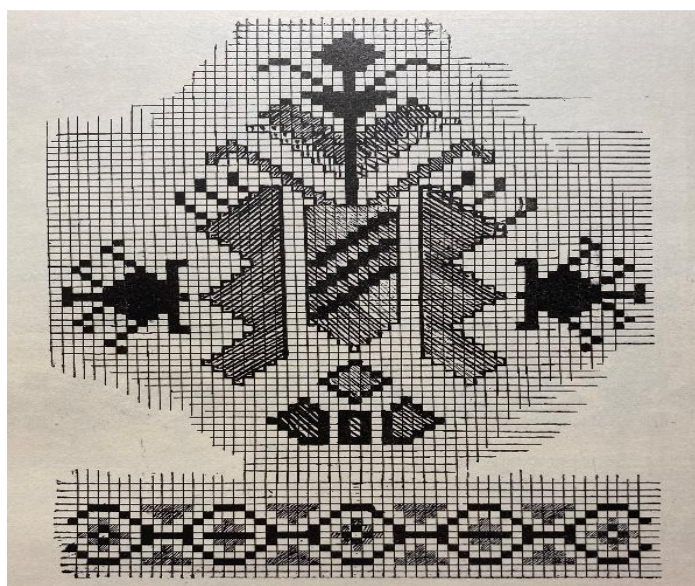


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Patterns and designs from Macedonia and Thrace, Greece

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.

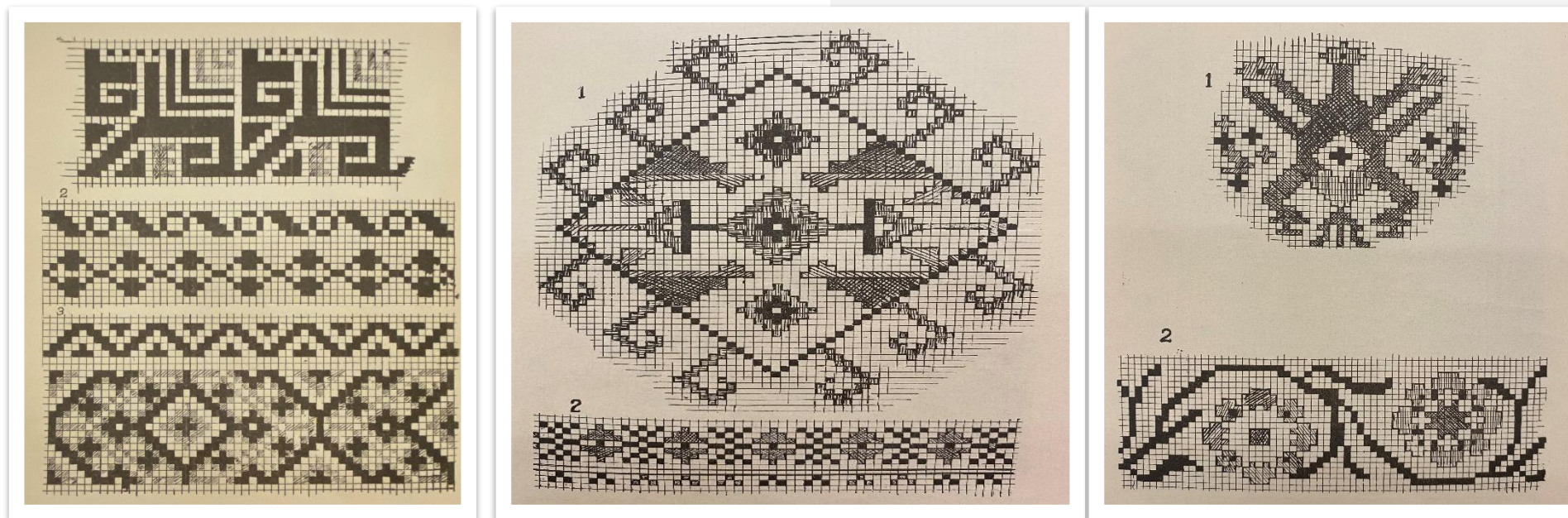
The design on the right appears on the mantle, while the central one appears on the shirt.



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Patterns and designs from Macedonia and Thrace, Greece



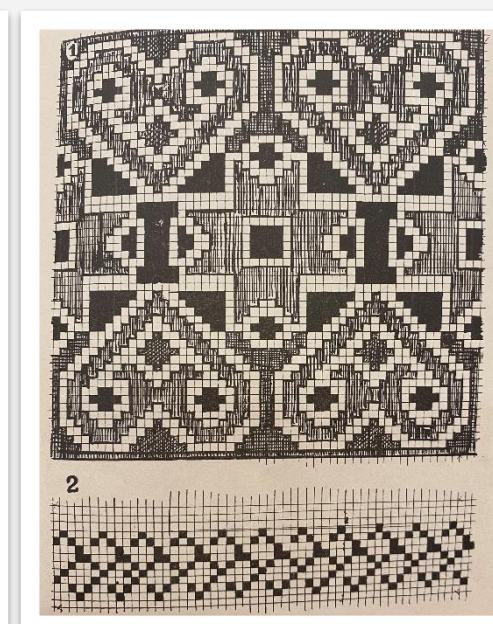
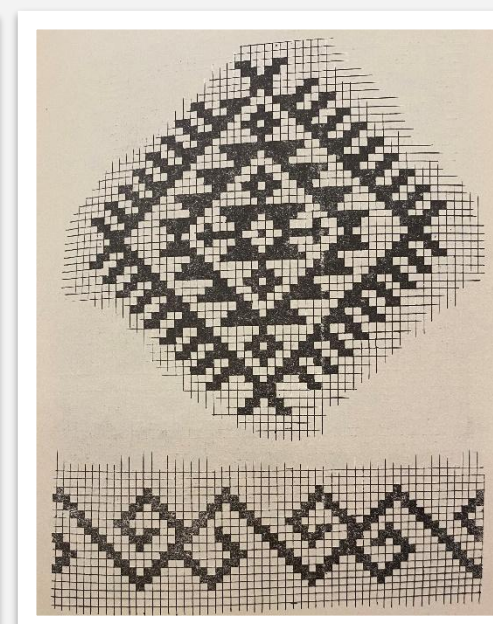
*Pictures: Left and center: Decoration on Sarakatsani traditional costumes from the area of Xanthi, Thrace.
Right: Decoration on socks, featuring double-headed eagle and below, detail from woman's apron, from Kozani, Macedonia.*



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Patterns and designs from Macedonia and Thrace, Greece



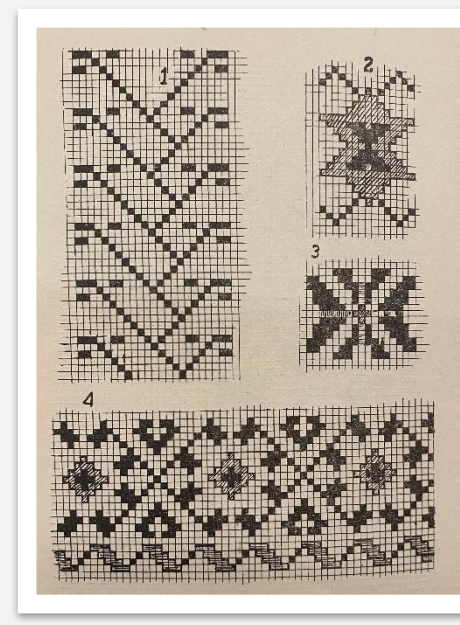
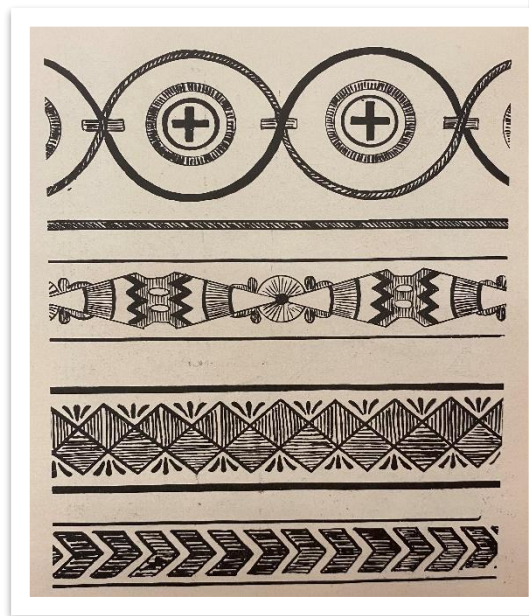
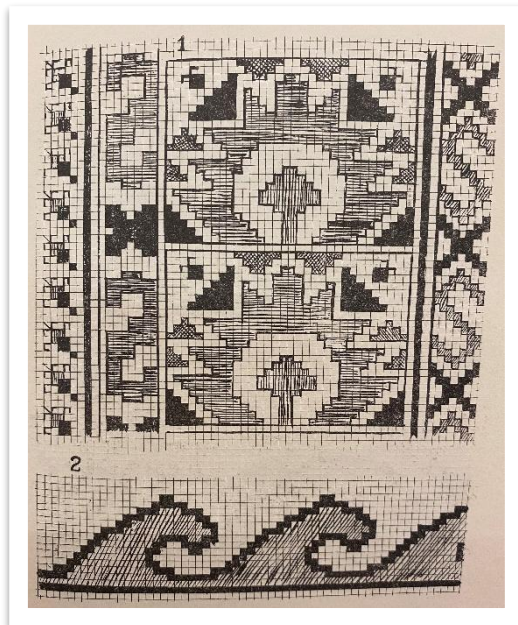
Pictures: Decoration on Sarakatsani traditional costumes from the area of Xanthi, Thrace.



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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.



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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.





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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.





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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.



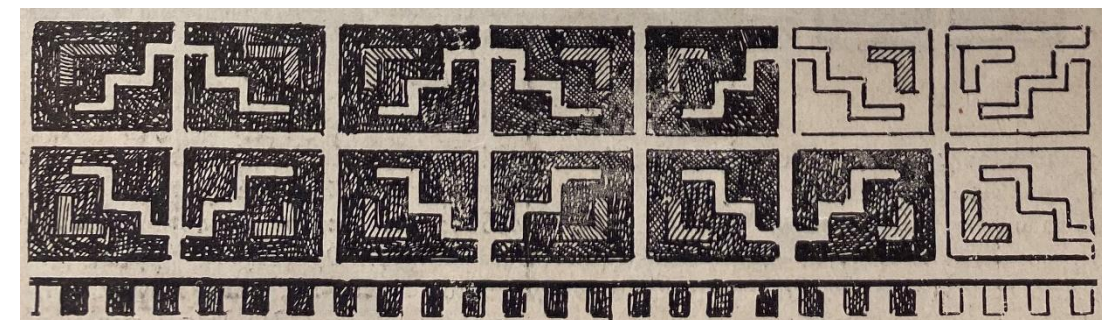
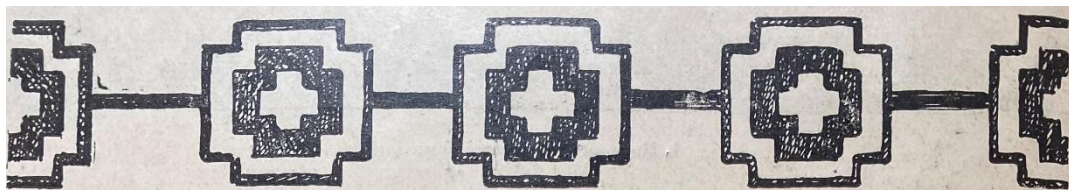
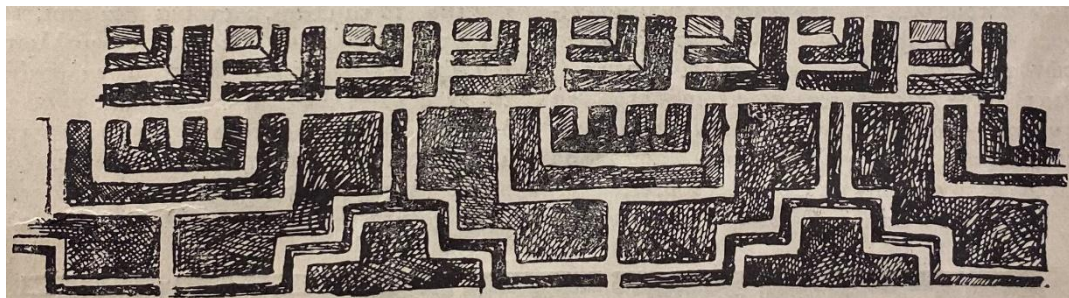
- Pictures: Left: Bride and groom costumes.
- Center left: Photo of a bridal couple of the late 40's. Bride keeps the traditional costume, while groom wears the European one.
- Center right: Women's costume is characterized by strict colors and presents local variations. Here are costumes worn in Epirus, Thessalia and Central Macedonia (from left to right). Right: Man wearing traditional fustanela.



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Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



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



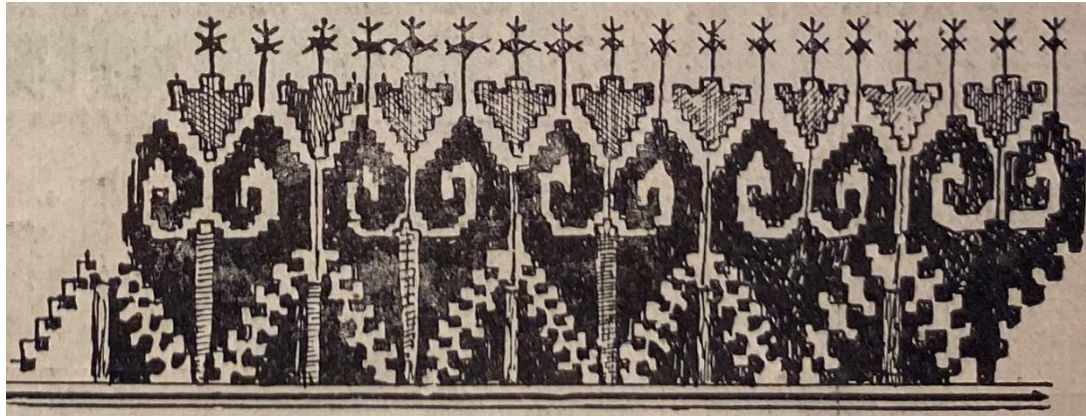
- Pictures: Meanders on shirts' designs.



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Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



- Pictures above:
- Fabrics decoration.
- The one above features saw

- Pictures right : Sleeves' decoration.
- The one on top features signs of the cross.

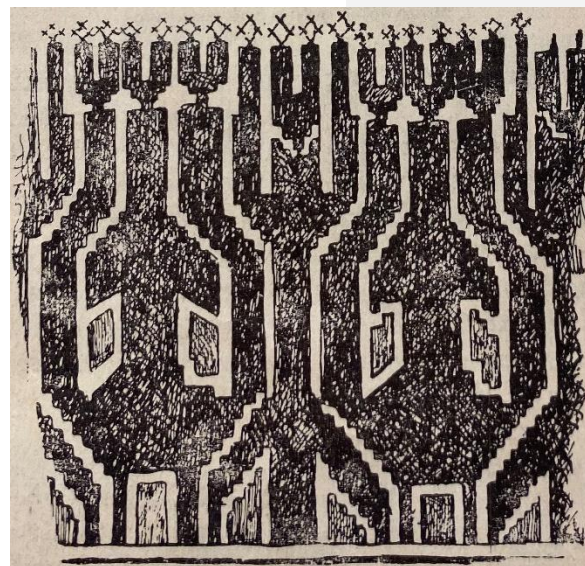




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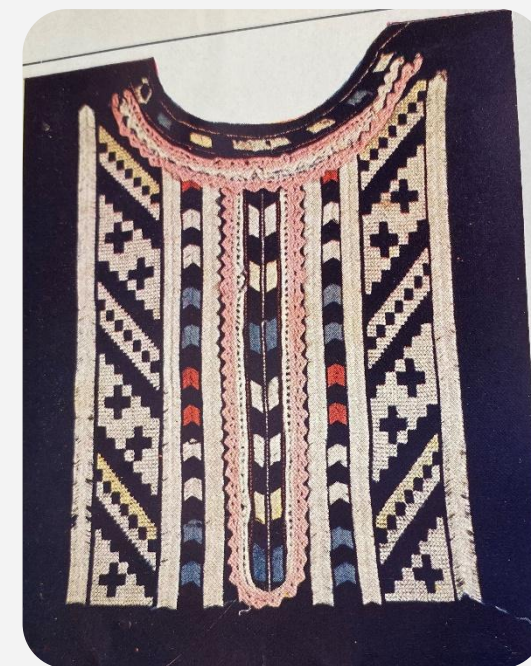
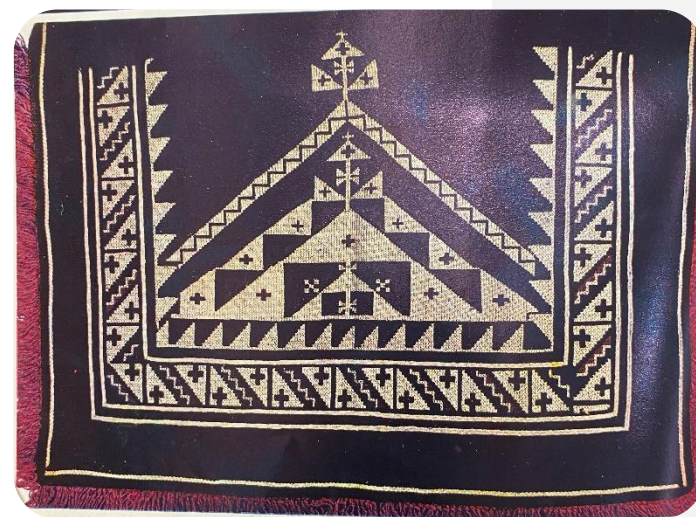
Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



- Pictures:
- Left above: Fabric decoration symbolizing the sun. Center above: Shirt decoration. Right above: Decoration on woman's apron.



Patterns and designs of the Sarakatsani



- Pictures:

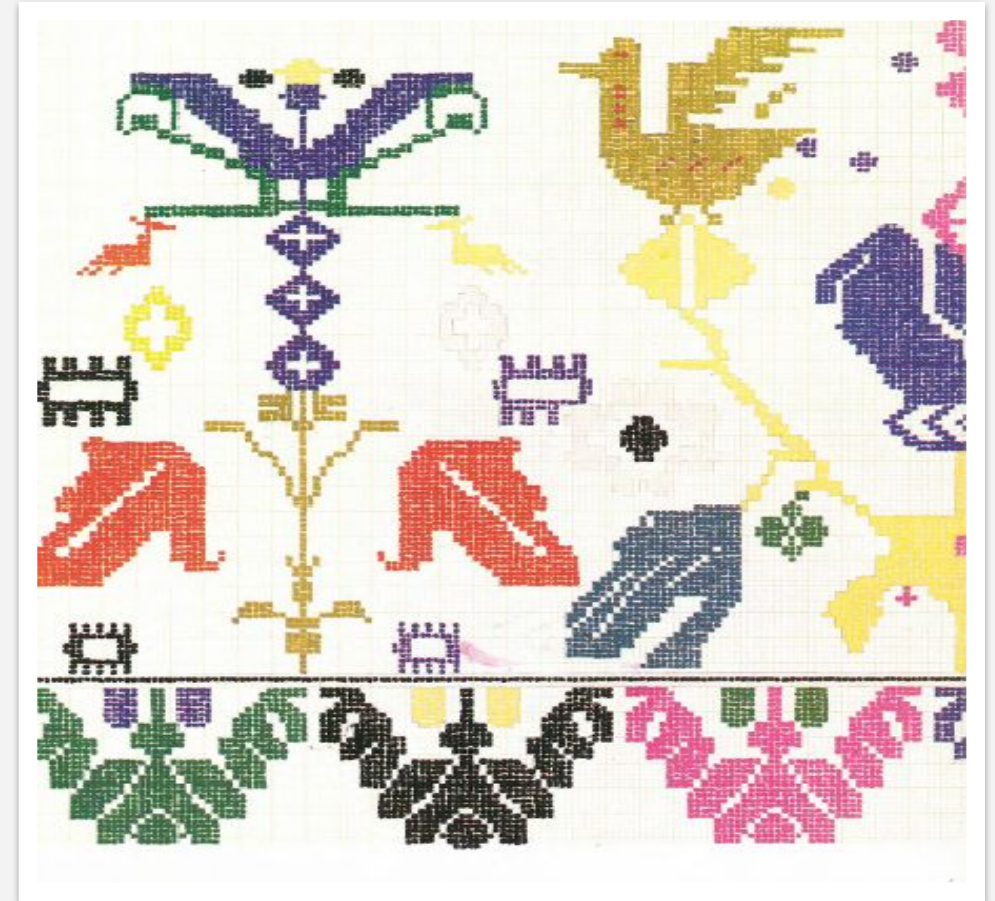
Left: Decoration on sleeve of wedding gown, featuring half moon. Center: Decoration on female clothing. Right: Collar decoration.



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Crete

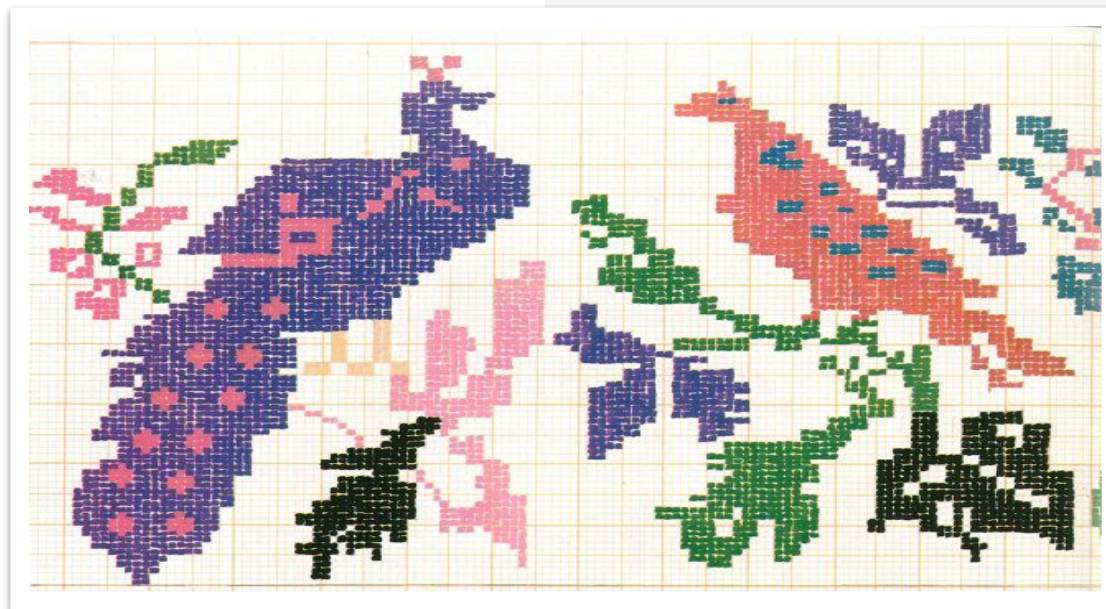




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Crete





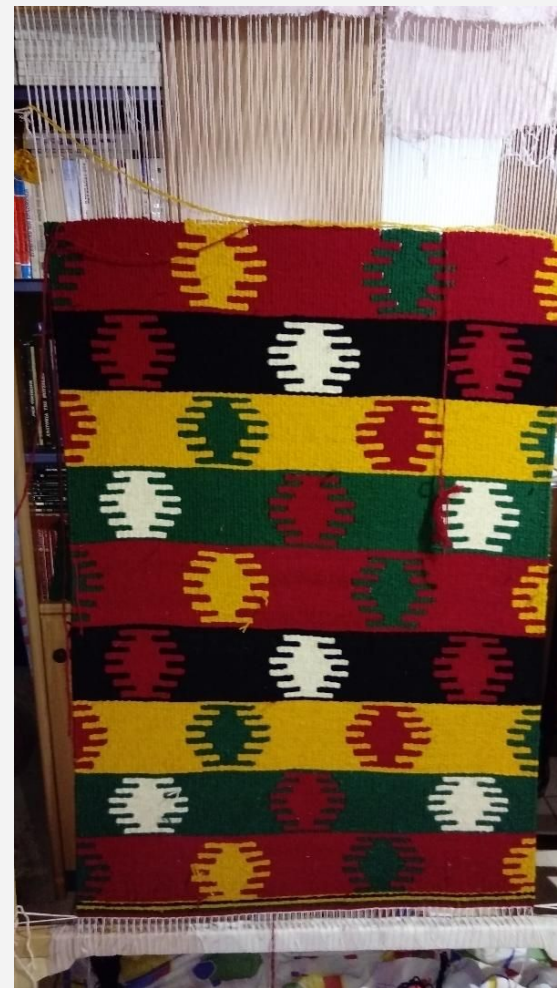
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Tsakonia - kilims



“American”



“Little hands”



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Geraki Lakonias





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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.



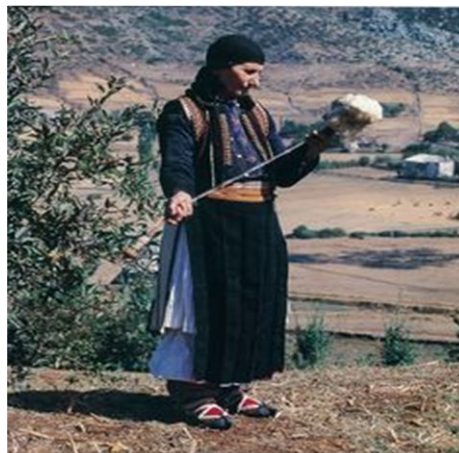
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Patterns and designs of Albania



spinning, wool weaving and shajak



Spinning wool in the mountains of Albania. Photo: Robert Elsie, 1908.



Albanian folk costumes in the early Robert Elsie postcards



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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.





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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.



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Patterns and designs of Albania





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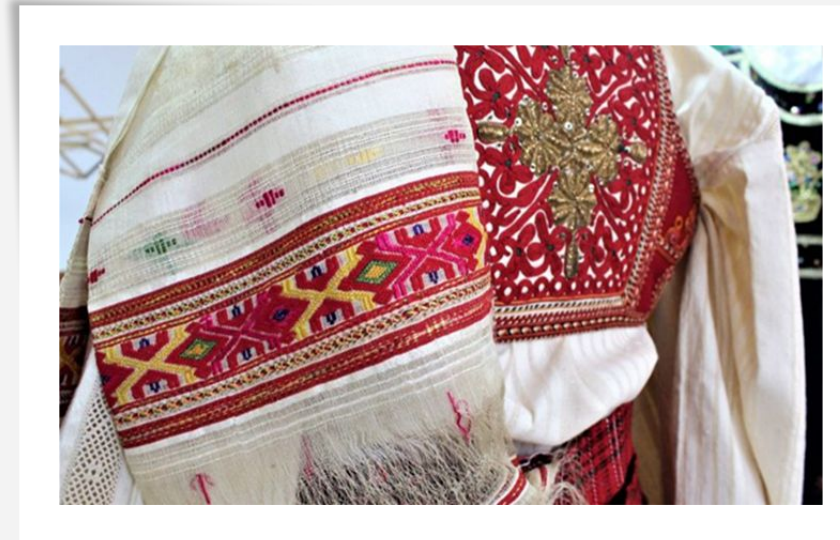


Patterns and designs of Albania

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





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Patterns and designs of Albania

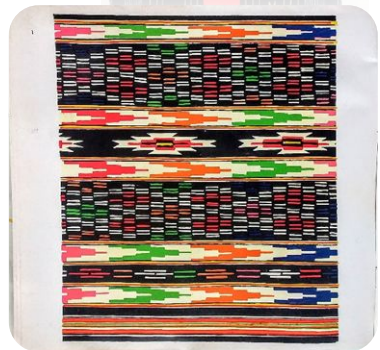




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Patterns and designs of Albania



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



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Patterns and designs of Albania



<https://milibutka.blogspot.com/2017/06/m-o-t-i-ve-t-u-t-e-n-t-i-ke-tek-q-i-li.html>



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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



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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.

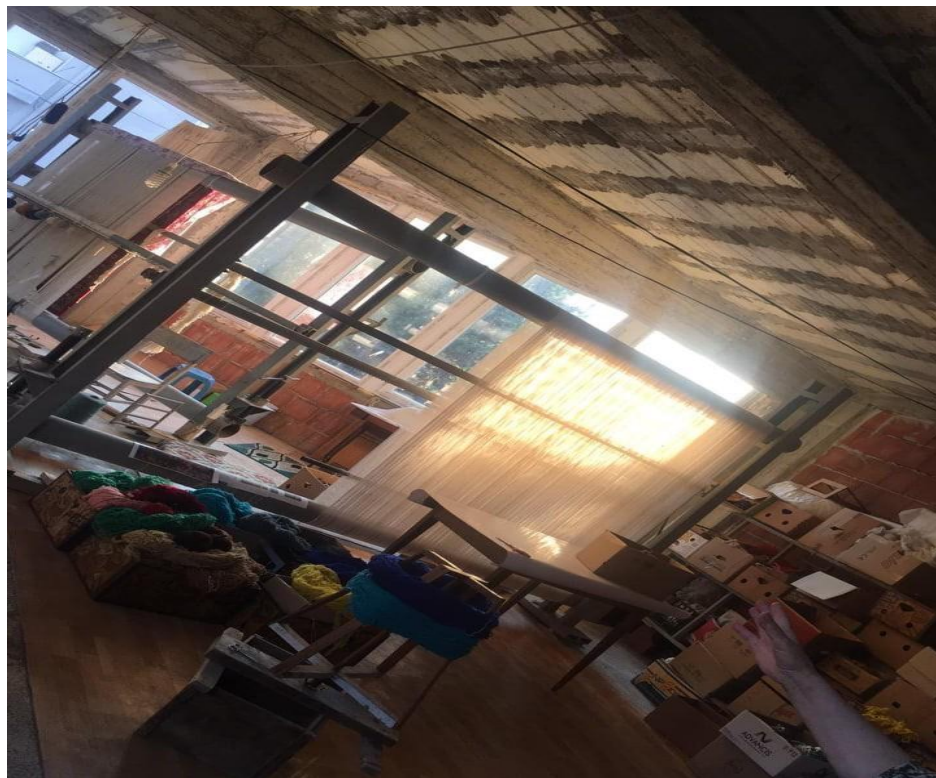




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Patterns and designs of Albania





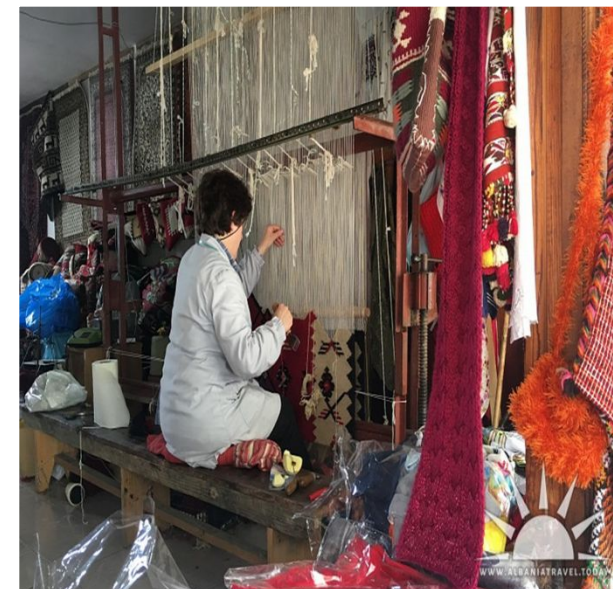
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Patterns and designs of Albania

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



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Patterns and designs of Albania





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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



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Patterns and designs of Albania

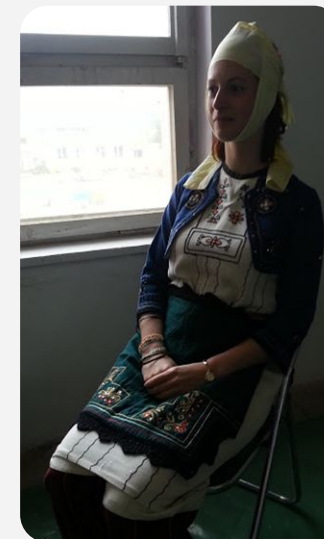
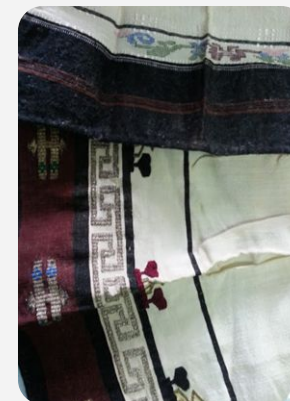
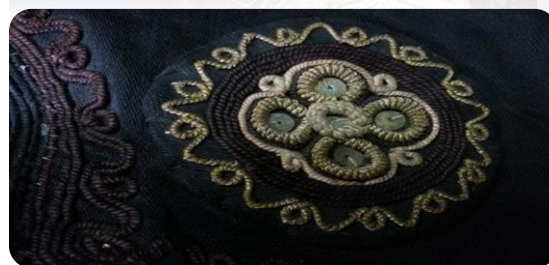




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Patterns and designs of Albania





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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.



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Patterns and designs of North Macedonia

Discovering North Macedonian Weaving

North Macedonian weaving is a rich tradition deeply ingrained in the cultural heritage of North Macedonia. Dating back centuries, North Macedonian weaving reflects the history, lifestyle, and creativity of the region's people. Through intricate patterns, vibrant colors, and skilled craftsmanship, North Macedonian weavers have preserved their stories and traditions.



Patterns and designs of North Macedonia

Techniques and Materials

North Macedonian weaving utilizes various techniques passed down through generations. One prominent technique is the use of vertical looms, where weavers meticulously thread yarn to create intricate designs. Traditional materials include wool, cotton, and silk, sourced locally and dyed with natural pigments. From basic patterns to complex motifs, North Macedonian weavers showcase their expertise in every piece they create.



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Patterns and designs of North Macedonia

In the Šar Mountains, the rugged terrain and pastoral lifestyle have influenced the local weaving, with heavy woolen textiles being predominant. These textiles are often used for clothing and home furnishings, designed to provide warmth during the harsh mountain winters. The weavers here utilize vibrant colors and complex patterns that reflect the natural beauty and cultural richness of the area.

Mavrovo, on the other hand, is known for its more delicate and intricate designs, often featuring subtle colors and detailed motifs that tell stories of the local folklore and traditions. The weavings from Mavrovo are highly prized for their craftsmanship and are often passed down as family heirlooms, each piece a testament to the skill and artistry of the weavers.

Both regions exemplify the diversity of North Macedonian weaving, showcasing how geographical and cultural factors shape the craft in different areas.

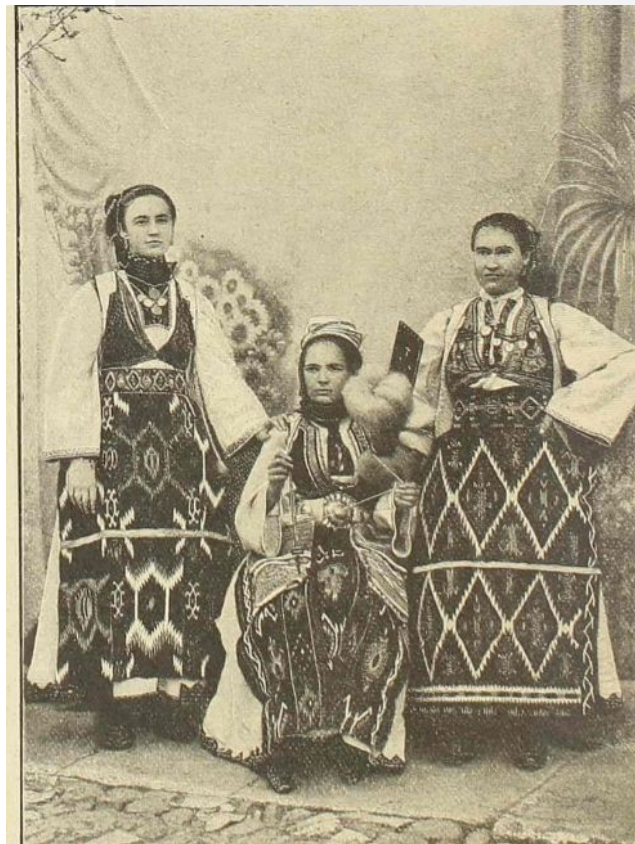


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Patterns and designs of North Macedonia

North Macedonian
woman from the region
of Kumanovo





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Patterns and designs of North Macedonia

This North Macedonian
weave is heavily decorated
with geometric designs in
black and red in
the main body. Most likely
woven with homegrown
silk.





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Patterns and designs of North Macedonia

North
Macedonian
woman from the
region of
Galicnik





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Patterns and designs of KOSOVO

Among 140 types of traditional Albanian costumes, the Podgur's attire Veshja e Podgurit is Kosovar, differentiated by its variety and is an influence in all other regions.

Traditional men's clothing of Podgur, characterized by marhama, as he carries the traditional instrument Lahuta

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_clothing_of_Kosovo





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Patterns and designs of KOSOVO

Women's Podgur apparel
characterized by the crown lace

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_clothing_of_Kosovo





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Patterns and designs of KOSOVO

The clothing of the southern region of Has is among the distinctive types of clothing in Kosovo.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_clothing_of_Kosovo



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Patterns and designs of KOSOVO

A with a display of traditional weaving, in the Konaku i Tahir Beut, Tahir Begu's Konak (residence), a great example of 19th century Turkish architecture, built in 1800, now the ethnographic museum of Peja



Photo by Ludo Kuipers, Tue Oct 09, 2018

https://ozoutback.com.au/Kosovo/peja/slides/41_20181009007.html



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Pattern and Design

This theme organizes, provokes,
highlights the traditional elements that
are disappearing.

So today we classicize a very large group
of shapes, colors, folklore elements -
istic treating them with extravagance and
the audacity of avant-garde trends.



Egzona Aliovska
Weaving technique, 2023
When Traditional meet folk
MTU-Skopje



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Material for Practical Training

CROSSWARP_Trainees_Manual-General_Population

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/5f62e0c9-1b59-41cc-876f-64b1a65d23ed/CROSSWARP_Trainees_Manual-General_Population_English.pdf



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Assignments

1. Carry out a case study based on the weaving traits specific to your own country.
2. Find, if you can, traditional textiles from your family and friends, photograph them and make a short photo album (digital or print)