

FOLK ART IN GREEK MACEDONIA

1. *The Period of Turkish Domination*

Most of the foreign travellers who visited Macedonia in the 19th century have not failed to give some information about Macedonian folk art. Their remarks, of course, refer mainly to peasant crafts, particularly those of workshops, and much less to domestic production. However, this should not imply that the latter was in decline. On the contrary, domestic arts and crafts in the 19th century were in their heyday, for it was not only dire necessity that pointed the way for their practice but also the pleasant prospect of earning money by selling beautiful home-made products.

The blossoming of both workshop and domestic arts and crafts is largely due to the successful organisation of the Greek craftsmen into guilds, well-known during the Ottoman rule by the Turkish term of "esnaf." By their co-ordinated efforts, these guilds succeeded in making full use of all the handicraft potential of the country, both in the towns and in the rural areas. The great esnaf flourished in the towns which were administrative, industrial and commercial centers and, at the same time, easily accessible to the craftsmen of the surrounding area, so that the latter could keep in close contact with their colleagues in town. Communication facilities were particularly taken into consideration, for the products of the region's peasant art were gathered at the seat of the guilds.¹ Participation in the guilds was restricted to craftsmen who were permanent residents of the town, but through them village production was also regulated, because it was the guild that provided the peasant workers with the raw material and brought the finished work to market.

For the guilds of Macedonia we have only one special study, about the guilds of Kozani during the Turkish domination,² which deals with fifteen in-all guilds of this town on the basis of their letters of agree-

1. Ang. Hadjimihali, «Μορφές ἀπὸ τῆ σωματειακῆ ὀργάνωση τῶν Ἑλλήνων στὴν Ὀθωμανικὴ Ἀδτοκρατορία», [Some aspects of the guild organization of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire], *L'Hellenisme Contemporaine*, Athens (May 29, 1953), p. 283.

2. Michael Kalinderis, *Αἱ Συντεχνίαι τῆς Κοζάνης ἐπὶ Τουρκοκρατίας* [The Guilds of Kozani during the Ottoman Rule] (Thessaloniki, 1958).

ment and other evidence in the archives of the city. The most interesting item mentioned in the book is the formation, in 1909, of the "Union of the Guilds" with the co-operation of all the guilds of Kozani. Apparently, its goal was the promotion of commercial interests; actually, the thought behind it was that the bulk of the guilds - members could be effectively used for the defense and safe-guard of the city. Because, since the Young Turk revolution and the establishment of the Constitution in the countries of the Ottoman Empire, the Moslems of the neighboring villages had become more daring, and the danger of raids by disorderly Turkish troops had become imminent.

Interest for national causes was in fact not strange to the activities of Macedonian guilds; nor was philanthropic interest for that matter. Their organisation, however, rested mainly on syndicalistic bases and their primary concern was to serve the commercial and financial interests of their members. By the well-established organisation and the efficiency of their guilds, the Greek craftsmen had practically taken the economy of Macedonia into their hands, for in craftsmanship they were superior not only to the Turks, but also to their neighbors, the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Albanians. Ami Boué, who wrote the first comprehensive work about conditions in European Turkey at the beginning of the 19th century, and is therefore rightly called the first Balkanologist, gives the following characterization of the Greeks: "Les Grecs surtout ont des organes bien adaptés pour les inventions mécaniques comme pour les études mathématiques, et sont aussi presque les seuls architectes, les seuls ingénieurs, les seuls sculpteurs et peintres en Turquie."³

Another point to be considered in connexion with the contribution of the guilds to the development of arts and crafts in Macedonia is the specialization that made itself manifest in the various branches of popular industry. Not only individuals, but whole villages and even larger areas specialized in one particular craft, and issued a uniform production. This had two advantages: on the one hand, it helped to promote perfection of the technique and on the other, better regulation of economic and marketing problems such as the supply of raw material and the placement of the products in the market.

In Macedonia, the most widely distributed home craft was and still is weaving. On the hand-loom, which is still a common feature of the village household, the women weave various kinds of textiles for domestic use. But in places where textile industry flourished, production was com-

3. Ami Boué, *La Turquie d'Europe* (Paris, 1840), vol. 2, p. 136.

monly restricted to one variety of cloth. For example, Velvendos was well known for its cotton towels, which were exported as far as Constantinople.⁴ The near-by villages of Livadi, Ftera, Neochori and Kokkinoplo on the Chasia Mountains lived chiefly, according to the English traveller Leake, from "the manufacture of the coarse woollen cloth called skuti, of which are made the cloaks named κάππαις, in Italian cappe, extensively used in Greece and the Adriatic. The cloth is of two kinds, white and blacke, and is made shaggy in the inside; it is sent to Venice and Trieste in pieces called xyla, which are two peaks long and four or four and a half hands broad."⁵ According to the same traveller, in Veroia "the manufacturing part of the population spin the hemp and flax grown at the foot of the mountain, and make shirts and towels, particularly the makrama, or large towel used in the public baths".⁶ Good quality towels and bath-robcs made of hemp were also manufactured in Naoussa, as we are informed by Athanasios Psalidas, an erudite of the early 19th century. He adds that such products "are nowhere else to be found".⁷ In Kozani textile industry flourished particularly in workshops, so it was mainly practised by men. They manufactured cloth for mattresses, pillows, etc., a coarser kind used by the Turks for tents, and another kind called "kapnopani", that is, "tobacco cloth", exported to the tobacco producing areas of Kavala, Drama and Xanthi. In the town of Serres, which was an important market for cotton, they manufactured heavy fabrics for upholstery. In Drama, besides the coarser cloth for tents, "skenopano", which was exported to all parts of the Ottoman Empire, they made also, as we are informed by the Turkish traveller Evlia Tjelebi "aetherial fine linen, so fine, that the material for a shirt is placed inside a reed and sent to Constantinople as a present to the visirs, the ministers, the magistrates and even to the Sultan of the Osmanlis himself".⁸ Equally famous with the linen of Drama was the silk gauze of Thessaloniki "a material stronger and less like French gaze-de-soie than the gauze of Prussa".⁹ It was exported in pieces, about

4. F. C. H. L. Pouqueville, *Voyage de la Grèce* (Paris, 1826), vol. 3, p. 86.

5. W. M. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (London, 1835), vol. 3, p. 335.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 291.

7. G. Charitakis, «Ἡ Τουρκία εἰς τὰς ἀρχὰς τοῦ ΙΘ' αἰῶνος ὑπὸ Α. Ψαλίδου» [Turkey in the Beginning of the 19th Century by Athanasios Psalidas] *Ἡπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά*, vol. 6 (1931), p. 56.

8. Nicephoros Moschopoulos, «Ἡ Ἑλλάς κατὰ τὸν Ἐβλιᾶ Τσελεμπή», [Greece according to Evlia Tjelebi], *Ἑπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν*, vol. 15 (1939), p. 155.

9. G. Christodoulou, *Ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη κατὰ τὴν τελευταίαν ἑκατονταετίαν* [Thessaloniki during the Last Hundred Years], (Thessaloniki, 1936), p. 34.

10.000 per year because, as we are told by the English traveller Mackenzie, "the silk is made in private houses in pieces, each sufficient for a shirt".¹⁰

Besides silk gauze for shirts, in Thessaloniki were also manufactured silk shawls, which the Janissaries wrapped round their turbans. For the Janissaries, who constituted in Thessaloniki a large percentage and at the same time a calamity for the population, there was a special manufacture of heavy woolen fabrics, dyed blue, out of which their uniforms were made. According to a Venetian ambassador, who travelled from Venice to Constantinople in 1751, "this woolen fabric is manufactured exclusively in Thessaloniki. All revenue from the capital tax that the Grand Seigneur collects from this city is spent for the manufacture of this cloth, which is in the hands of the Jews".¹¹ This industry had actually been in the hands of the Jewish population of the city since the time of Bajasid the Second (1479 - 1512), when weavers came from Castille and settled down in Thessaloniki, after their expulsion from Spain.¹² Another industry practised primarily by the Jews of Thessaloniki was the making of carpets through the technique of tapestry weaving. In the market they were known as "Turkish carpets" and they were exported to Constantinople, where they competed with the same kind of carpets from Smyrna. Evlia Tjelebi describes them as follows: "All Jews manufacture unique carpets of felt with colorful designs, real works of magic".¹³ That these carpets indeed deserved praise is illustrated by the fact that the Venetian consul in Thessaloniki sent, in 1742, to the Baylo in Constantinople a carpet from the local factories as a token of his "unlimited devotion".¹⁴

Worthy to be sent as presents were also according to Evlia Tjelebi the famous ceramic products (cups and bowls) of the town of Zichni in Eastern Macedonia. "For its clay is so good that it looks like the amber-colored clay of porcelain, which is found in the island of Elmeni (?). They resemble those made of chinese porcelain and are sent to all the vilayets as presents. There is also a proverb, common in the mouth of all, saying: Every town is celebrated for something; Zichni for its cups and jugs, the fair ladies of Serres are many, their houses are kiosks".¹⁵

10. Muir G. Mackenzie and A. P. Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey in Europe*, (London and New York, 1866), p. 17.

11. Constantine Mertzios, *Μνημεία Μακεδονικῆς Ἱστορίας* [Monuments of Macedonian History], (Thessaloniki, 1947), p. 142. See also pp. 132, 207.

12. Pouqueville, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 75.

13. Nic. Moschopoulos, *op. cit.*, ΕΕΒΣ, vol. 16 (1940), p. 356.

14. Con. Mertzios, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

15. Nic. Moschopoulos, *op. cit.*, ΕΕΒΣ, vol. 15 (1939), p. 157.

For silver- and gold-work many important towns of Macedonia could boast. Center of this art, however, was the region of North - Western Macedonia, especially the towns of Monastir, Megarovo, Krousovo, Neveska and Moschopolis. The late Professor Keramopoulos has attributed its flourishing in Upper Macedonia to an age-old tradition, which he links with the finds of Trebenishte (6th century B.C.) near the lake of Ochrida.¹⁶ More specifically he compares the chains of Trebenishte to the filigree work, which is the predominant technique in this region. In Ochrida, as we are told by Margaret Walker who travelled in Macedonia in the middle of the 19th century, "the filigree work is carried to great perfection; they ornament it with coral". Monastir was also celebrated for its filigree work in silver and gold, as well as for the enormous clasps (belt - buckles) and other ornaments in base silver.¹⁷ For the people of Naoussa Leake tells us that "they were formerly noted for working in gold and silver, and still carry on the manufacture to a smaller degree".¹⁸

Metalcraft, mainly copper - and bronze - ware, beaten out by hand, was widely distributed in Macedonia. Here in Thessaloniki the workshops of the "kazaci", the Turkish term that supplanted the Greek "chalkeis" meaning workers in bronze, occupy the same district as in byzantine times, and the church of the 11th century situated there is called "The Virgin of the Bronze - workers".

In the big towns we find, of course, craftsmen from all over the country. Some villages were almost deserted for long periods by the male portion of the population, who usually followed one profession and left their homes alone or more often organized in companies, "the guilds for work", to seek employment in the cities. For example, in the village of Vogatsiko in NW Macedonia, the inhabitants were masons and carpenters, who used to find work at Constantinople and in the other principal towns of Turkey, and after residing there for several years returned home with their gains.¹⁹ To the talent and craftsmanship of the master masons from Western Macedonia and Epirus we owe the best examples of religious and profane architecture of this period in this part of the world. It was they who built the stately mansions of Kastoria and Siatista that have for more

16. Ap. Keramopoulos, «Ἡ ἀρχαϊκὴ νεκρόπολις τοῦ Τρεμπένιστε» [The archaic necropolis of Trebenishte], *Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερὶς* 1927 - 1928, p. 66.

17. M. A. Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, (London, 1864), p. 140.

18. Leake, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 287.

19. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 321. See also A. P. Vacalopoulos, *Οἱ Δυτικομακεδόνας ἀπόδημοὶ ἐπὶ Τουρκοκρατίας* [Emigrants from Western Macedonia during the Turkish Occupation], Thessaloniki 1958, Institute for Balkan Studies, *passim*.

than two centuries resisted the destructive power of human and superhuman elements,²⁰ and the others in Veroia, Kozani and elsewhere that were demolished in the course of time.²¹ “Le Grec s'établit pour l'éternité”, says Victor Bérard speaking of the houses of Kastoria. “La terre et le bois suffisent au Turc ou au Slave qui se contentent éternellement de choses provisoires. Le Grec n'emploie que la pierre”.²²

Justly has architecture been placed by the great German philosopher Wilhelm Wundt at the top of the arts; for it combines “the two ends of all artistic development: its rise out of the necessity of material existence, and the expression of the content of spiritual life in concrete forms”.²³ In the popular architecture of Macedonia we have at one end the peasant house, whose wise structure, the outcome of centuries of experience, fully corresponds to the climatic and living conditions of the region, and on the other end we have the Macedonian mansion. For its final form and appearance many artisans joined their efforts: first, the master mason, the popular architect; then the peasant sculptor, whose work often adorns the exterior of the house in the form of stone reliefs and the interior in the form of plaster ornaments on the elaborate fireplaces, on the false windows over the real ones, and on the walls. But for the interior decoration all credit should undoubtedly go to the wood-carver, whose beautiful woodwork in high or low relief or intricate panelling covers the ceilings and part of the walls, and to his associate, the peasant painter. The latter decorated the wooden panelling, when it was not carved in woodwork, with colorful flower designs, and sometimes also ventured into larger compositions, like the beautiful “View of Constantinople” in the guest chamber of the Nanzi mansion in Kastoria. In exceptional cases, as in the “Manousis” mansion in Siatista (1746), the art of the Occident was brought into the picture as such, that is, not modified and assimilated by the local artists as was usually the case, but imported straight from Venice in the form of stained glass panels for the windows of the guest chamber. The Vienna fashion, on the other hand, intruded in the form of chairs and other pieces of furniture,

20. For the houses of Kastoria see *‘Η Πανακοθήκη τῆς Τέχνης τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Λαοῦ* [Gallery of the Art of the Greek Folk], Part 1 (Athens, 1948). See also N. Moutsopoulos, *Καστοριά, Τὰ ἀρχοντικά* [Castoria, The Mansions] Athens 1962. In Siatista the Government has bought two old mansions, the “Manousis” mansion built in 1763, and the mansion that belonged to the Poulkidis family, built in 1759 and situated in the lower part of the town called “Geraneia”.

21. See Nicolaos Moutsopoulos, *Τὸ Ἀρχοντικὸ τοῦ Σιῶρ-Μανωλάκη στὴ Βέροια* [The Mansion of Sior - Manolakis in Veroia], (Athens, 1960).

22. Victor Bérard, *La Turquie et l'Hellénisme Contemporaine* (Paris, 1896), p.326.

23. Wilhelm Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie*, vol. 3 (Die Kunst), p. 291.

for which in former days there had been no use. The wide sofas, the big round metal tray with beautiful incised patterns, which was placed on a low stool and served as table, the built-in cupboards and the carved wooden dower chest completed the original furniture of the Macedonian house. Everything else was a later addition brought home by the merchants, who had made their fortune in the cities of Western Europe.

But the picture of the interior of the Macedonian mansion would be incomplete, if we forgot to add the colorful carpets and other textiles that embellished the rooms, the beautiful embroideries and the painted pottery. Should we also imagine the lords and ladies of the house in their traditional dress, heavily ornamented with gold embroidery and with an enormous amount of jewelry. I think that we could have a complete picture of the artistic faculties of the Greek Macedonians during the long years of the Turkish domination. This picture naturally leads to the thought that it was indeed not strange for people who grew up in such an environment to be able to achieve that state of taste and refinement which became the hall-mark of Macedonian peasant production during the 19th century. When was it that good taste declined and why, we shall see further on.

2. *Folk Art in Greek Macedonia since its liberation in 1912 - 1913*

In the history of modern civilization a curious phenomenon is observed: while the people of less developed areas "grasp modern machine-made appliances with the eagerness of a child confronted by a new toy",²⁴ the civilized portion of the population reverts with love and tenderness to the products of simple industry and peasant art. And it might look at first glance as if interest for folk art was simply reversed from village to town; as a matter of fact, however, the two aspects of the phenomenon never occur simultaneously in a country. For a time, peasant art is neglected and falls in decline until, someday, people become tired of the excessive use of factory-made products and a strong desire for change becomes manifest. At this point, the products of simple peasant manufacture make a triumphant entrance into the region of advanced culture, not only because of their undoubted artistic merits, but especially because, in a world of mass production, their aesthetic value is enhanced by the personal touch of their maker. For the peasant artisan sets his heart into everything he makes. This is how interest for folk art is rekindled, but it is obvious that this time it is a renaissance directed from above.

24. A. Goff and Hugh Fawcett, *Macedonia, a Plea for the Primitive*, (London 1919?), p. 98.

In Western Europe peasant art has found its recognition within the climate of Expressionism, a theory of art which sought inspiration from sources more sincere and aimed at an expression more personal than the previous artistic trends. Its echo, of course, did not reach Greece until later on. Here the interest for folk art went through a historical stage first. That is to say, interest for the preservation of oral literature from the period of the Turkish domination was extended to include material remains as well. "Even the smallest remnant and that discarded scrap of lost existence should be collected, because very often the solution of important questions and fundamental problems depends on the preservation of an insignificant remain." This was the objective purpose of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece, as defined by its president T. I. Philemon in 1883,²⁵ which led to the formation of the "Historical and Ethnological Museum" in Athens. Later, in 1909, the historical viewpoint retreated in favor of the aesthetic value of folk art, which was thus admitted into the framework of Modern Greek Folklore in its aesthetic merits primarily.²⁶ The founding of the "Museum of Ornamental Arts", now "Museum of Folk Art" in Athens, and to a certain extent the founding of the "Benaki Museum" also in Athens marked the turn from the historical to the aesthetic outlook.

Since that time, interest for folk art has been steadily manifested in Greece primarily in two ways: 1) By the collection of peasant works of art and the founding of folklore museums, and 2) by the efforts directed toward a revival of popular arts and crafts, a revival which involves, on the one hand, teaching the peasants anew the traditional methods of technique, and on the other, the creation of the economic, commercial and artistic conditions that will favor a new blossoming of folk art.

In Macedonia, after the liberation, interest for folk art has been expressed in both ways described above. Naturally, the collecting activity came first with the founding of two folklore museums in Thessaloniki: 1) The Folklore Museum of Northern Greece, and 2) The Folklore Museum of the University of Thessaloniki. The former was founded by the "Makedoniki Philekpaideutiki Adelphotis" (Macedonian Educational Fraternity), which was a pioneer in collecting folklore material in Macedonia. For this task the Fraternity showed the same measure of devotion

25. T. I. Philemon, «Πρόλογος», *Δελτίον τῆς Ἱστορικῆς καὶ Ἐθνολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας τῆς Ἑλλάδος* [Introduction to the First Volume of the *Bulletin of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece*], vol. 1 (1883), p. 7.

26. N. G. Politis, «Λαογραφία», *Δελτίον τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Λαογραφικῆς Ἑταιρείας* ["Laographia", *Bulletin of the Greek Folklore Society*], vol. 1 (1909), p. 14.

that it had shown before the liberation for the educational cause. But after the liberation the Fraternity handed over to the Greek Government the Gymnasium of Tsotyli in Western Macedonia with all its property, and channeled off its activities to new objectives, namely, the collection of Macedonian folklore and folk-art. The collection of artifacts was indeed more fortunate than that of literature, and finally resulted in the creation of the Folklore Museum of Northern Greece. Of course, the apartment in which the Museum is housed affords neither enough, nor suitable space for a museum exhibition. However, if one reflects how this Museum came to be, from a few donations and limited purchases, as much as the meagre budget of the Fraternity allowed, one realizes that indeed a great task has been accomplished by the Fraternity. In the course of its realization it was once more amply proved that, as least as far as Greek reality is concerned, human will has the power to overcome all financial difficulties. Initiator of this project and actually founder of the Museum was John Tares, president of the Fraternity until 1961. His successor in the presidency and in the direction of the Museum, Constantin Kephalas, continues with the same zeal and devotion to enrich the Museum with new acquisitions and at the same time works toward a better presentation of the collection.

The richest and most interesting part of the Museum is the collection of Northern Greek national costumes. Among them distinguished for their purely peasant character are: 1) the heavily embroidered costume from Ventzia, 2) from Avgerinos, 3) from Andartikon in the region of Kastoria, laden with colorful embroideries in wool, and 4) the very interesting costume of Pylaia, a village just three kilometers outside Thessaloniki. The urban costumes of Veroia, Naoussa and Kastoria are undoubtedly more expensive and elaborate, worked in gold by professional embroiderers, they lack, however, the gay color combinations and the traditional decorative designs of peasant dress.

More in keeping with the concept of a Folklore Museum, which purposes to give a living picture of the people's everyday life, is a room that has been arranged to look like the interior of a peasant home (fig. 1). It has the loom and the other weaving implements, a narrow sofa and some kitchen utensils. Here we also find an interesting series of sickles, and a rich collection of copper-ware, plates mainly, stamped with a name and a date (some as old as 1767 and 1772) but seldom with any ornamentation other than a simple herring-bone pattern. The name and date stamped on the plate served, no doubt, to establish their antiquity and to proclaim their ownership.

Many other objects are also on exhibition in the Folklore Museum of Northern Greece, such as gold - plated and silver - plated jewelry, wood - carvings, embroideries, a rich collection of textiles and colorful knitted socks. To describe them, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

The Folklore Museum of Northern Greece of which we have given a brief survey, owes its formation to the love of its founders for the works of the Macedonian peasant and the eagerness to save them from the destruction, which time and neglect will inevitably bring. The Folklore Museum of the University of Thessaloniki, on the other hand, was created with educational and scientific purposes in mind. Educational, because the teaching of Folklore, particularly of the material aspect of the people's life, demands a living knowledge of the tools and utensils, of the dress and jewelry, in short, of all objects connected with custom, and scientific, because "there is more to folk art than ornamentation, expressiveness, color; there is the heritage of past ages conserved in symbolism".²⁷

The intimate relationship of folk art with popular religion, custom and belief may, if studied from the right angle, shed new light on folklore research in Greece. The symbolic or magic meaning that the folk attaches to certain numbers, designs, representations and colors is best illustrated in the objects which he uses or wears, and especially in those connected with important happenings in his life, as for example, birth, marriage, great festivals, etc. The significance of the representation of Saint George slaying the Dragon on metal amulets is one of the easier to recognize; it symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. Symbolic is also the meaning of the representation of Saint Constantine and Helen holding the Cross between them, but it has taken a special study to prove its symbolism.²⁸ In the amulet (fig. 2) many magic powers have been assembled. It consists of two nails connected in the form of a crescent, from whose ends two small effigies of toads are suspended. The blue stone in the middle as well as the two coral beads on each side have apotropaic meaning, while the three pendants suspended from wheels or rosettes also have symbolic form. The magic meaning of the number three is amply illustrated in this amulet.

27. Marija Gimbutas, *Ancient Symbolism in Lithuanian Folk Art*, (Philadelphia, American Folklore Society, 1958), p. 3.

28. Anna Hajinikolaou, «Μετάλλινα μαγικά εικονίδια Κωνσταντίνου και Ἐλένης», *Ἐπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* [“Metal, magic representations of Saint Constantine and Helen”, *Annual of the Society of Byzantine Studies*] vol. 23 (1953) pp. 508 - 518.

Similar observations may be made on all objects in the Folklore Museum of the University of Thessaloniki, because their selection, owing to the limited funds for the formation of the Museum, was done so carefully that all of them combine aesthetic value with scientific interest. To illustrate this point, I think that the collection of embroideries will serve us best as an example. This is the richest collection of the Museum, both from the point of view of variety and number of specimens. It comprises about 200 embroideries, ranging from whole embroidered frocks and other items of costume, to hem- and sleeve-embroideries detached from the frock, which form by far the majority. These are of great importance for the study of popular ornament, because the woman's frock or chemise (*hypokamison*) which they adorn, has been for a very long time the main dress in the Balkan area and has preserved its original form and decoration. This becomes apparent if we compare the traditional embroidered frock of Macedonia to similar representations in Byzantine mosaics and frescoes. Of course, the ornamental patterns of earlier days were much modified in the course of time, but on the whole they retained their fundamental features until the end. In the series of embroideries in the Museum, one can clearly discern the various stages in the conventionalization of the design from the more naturalistic to the more geometrical (fig. 3).

Now as regards the other objects of the Museum, it is important to note the rich collection of wood-carvings, mainly distaffs, (fig. 4) and the collection of ceramics, comprising various types of pottery, two of which offer special interest. The first (fig. 5) is a collection of pitchers from the town of Florina, some plain and some more elaborate, with spouts in the form of birds' or horses' heads and a lot of other decorations, mainly effigies of birds, rosettes and faces modelled in clay and baked onto the surface of the wheel-made pot. They are usually dark brown or dark green, and their peculiarity consist in that water flows not from the spout, but from an opening on the handle. In former days, the plainer pitchers had a strange use: they were filled with water and placed on the tombs as offerings to the dead. Their form and color differed according to the age of the deceased. This custom is obviously originated from the ancient belief that the dead are thirsty and in urgent need of water, which has survived in Modern Greek funeral customs. Today these pitchers are still used in Florina, but not quite in the same way as before. They are filled with water and given by the family of the deceased to the relatives and friends to drink and pray for the deceased that "God may forgive him". This is done during the *mnemosynum*, a "feast of remembrance" celebrated on the 40th day after death and on special days set apart for the celebration

of feasts of the dead collectively, the so-called "Psychosabbata" or "Soul's Sabbaths".

The more elaborate pitchers from Florina play a prominent part in the marriage ritual. They are adorned with ribbons and artificial flowers, filled with wine and taken along for the invitation ceremonial (*ta kalesmata*), which consists of giving to the person invited to drink wine out of the pitcher and to wish the best for the forthcoming wedding.²⁹ The custom is still in use today and this is why the manufacture of this kind of pottery has not been abandoned in Florina.

The second type of ceramics in the Museum that draws our attention is the collection of the works of the famous potter of Thessaloniki Minas Avramidis. Minas' origin was from Kioutacheia in Asia Minor, whence he emigrated after the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1922. He came to Macedonia and settled down first in Florina and later in Thessaloniki, where he continued working until his death six years ago. Minas, though bred in the Kioutacheian style and technique, which he cultivated while in Florina, exhibited his artistic faculties best in the new style, which he himself developed in Thessaloniki. This was inspired by the decoration and technique of Byzantine painted pottery, which he came across in a very peculiar way: a great number of Byzantine sherds were being found here while the excavations for the city's drainage system were going on; Minas saw them, copied their designs, imitated their technique, and developed a style of his own, using the long-forgotten motives of Byzantine painted pottery, namely, the beasts, the mythical birds, the animal combats.

I have said "copied" their designs, but this is true only for a limited number of Minas' productions. Like a true peasant artist he did not copy, but reproduce the original design according to his innate sense of form and beauty. And this is the wonderful thing about him. The peasant artist works without copying because he merely uses familiar motives and ways of composition from the living tradition. Minas was centuries removed from the Byzantine tradition, yet he picked it up where it had been left off and, as if the intermediate connecting links had never been broken, pursued it further (fig. 6). But the Byzantine style, which he primarily cultivated, did not limit his inventiveness. Though entirely illiterate, he was a master in accepting and assimilating new influences and new elements in his art. He always looked for something new and, having an extremely

29. This custom is described in G. F. Abbot's *Macedonian Folklore*, (Cambridge, 1903), p. 164.

keen eye and an easiness in drawing, he tried his hand in mythological scenes as well (fig. 7), which he copied from archaeology books, and in compositions of original inspiration, like "The Naufrage" (fig. 8). Notwithstanding the enormous amount of Minas' production, you would not find two objects that have identical ornamentation, because he never repeated himself.

The work of Minas is, I think, characterized by three fundamental traits: the perfect balance between the elements constituting his composition, their symmetrical arrangement to each other and to the composition as a whole, and the unique movement of his figures (fig. 9). "Symmetrical" should not in this case suggest rigid symmetry or exclusively by-symmetrical arrangement, but dynamic symmetry between figures in vigorous motion. Another feature of Minas' art, common in popular ornamental work, is the adjustment of his pattern to the decorative field to which it is applied. He does not hesitate to twist about and distort his figures of animals or birds in order to fill up all the available space (fig. 10). He too, like all peasant artists, is haunted by the "horror vacui".

One more collection is worthy of mention before leaving the Folklore Museum of the University of Thessaloniki. It is the collection of 22 silver-plated amulets in repoussé work, suspended by a chain and worn round the neck. They encompassed a parchment with verses from the Psalms or other parts of the Holy Bible, which the person wearing it had written himself as a child. These amulets present an interesting variety of representative decorations with a symbolic meaning, such as St. George the Dragon-Slayer, St. Demetrius killing the pagan champion Lyaios (fig. 11) and St. Constantin and Helen with the Cross (fig. 12). The representation of St. George (fig. 13) is interesting because it includes the Princess and her father on either side of the victorious Saint, and the child holding a pitcher, mentioned in the miracles of St. George as having been saved from his Saracen master and brought safely home on the Saint's horse.³⁰ The inside of the amulet (fig. 11) is an excellent example of the monastic art of Mount Athos in minute wood-carving. On the left cover we have a symmetrical foliate design, whose interlacing circles enclose scenes from the Twelve Feasts of the Church and busts of the Evangelists and Prophets. The foliage stems from the back of a reclining figure, which suggests the well-known subject of the "Tree of Jesse". At the top of the tree is carved the Holy Trinity, in the two circles on the left

30. Joh. Aufhauser, "Das Drachenwunder des Heiligen Georg", *Byzantinisches Archiv*, vol. 5, p. 3.

the Transfiguration and Baptism, and on the right the Annunciation and Death of the Virgin (Koimesis). On the other cover an analogous symmetrical foliage is carved, which stems from the back of Jonah in the Monster's mouth. At the top of the tree we see the Ascension, in the circles on the left the Crucifixion and the Descent into Hell (Anastasis), and on the right the Incredulity of Thomas and the Entry into Jerusalem. This amulet can be dated at the end of the 18th, while the others belong to the first half of the 19th century.

To the collections of the Folklore Museum of the University mentioned above, we should also add a variety of belt-buckles in base silver (fig. 14), some inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 15), jewelry with symbolical designs (figs. 16, 17), model houses of the Macedonian countryside, a model plough and a yoke, some musical instruments, and photographs and pictures that supplement the actual objects and enlighten the viewer on their use. The fact that from the very beginning Professor Stilpon Kyriakides, the founder of this collection, tried to include in it all aspects of the material culture of the Macedonian people reveals his intention of creating a nucleus, which would in time develop into a complete Folklore Museum of Macedonia and Thrace. Unfortunately, the effort was cut short by the Second World War, and the Museum has since then remained almost stagnant.

Interest for folk art, however, has been increasing during the last four years in the School of Architecture of the University of Thessaloniki. Under the guidance and personal supervision of Professor Moutsopoulos, a great deal of work has been accomplished in sketching, photographing and reproducing on a small scale the Macedonian churches and private houses of the period of the Turkish occupation. Today, the Museum attached to the Seminar of Architectural Morphology contains minute models of about one hundred houses and churches all-over Greek Macedonia, in which one can trace the development of the Macedonian type of house, and distinguish its fundamental features.

Concerning the collection of peasant antiques, the truth is that the Macedonian countryside does not offer today such an abundance of peasant works of art as it did before the Second World War. During the long years of strife that wore the country out, many villages were burned down, the people were scattered, and the dowry chests, that had so jealously preserved the trousseaus of former days and the old tradition, were now destroyed and pillaged. After the War better communication, which day-by-day connects more villages with the towns, caused a new way of life to develop even in the remotest village. The new conditions

now created, the drive of the peasants toward the civilization of the city and their ardent desire to avail themselves of its advantages, in short, what is today wont to be called "the revolution of rising expectations", pressed forward the issue that the rural population should somehow be provided with an additional income, in order to be able to cope with its increasing wants. Peasant industries and manufactures offer in this respect good chances of extra employment so that, provided that their products have a good market here and abroad, the solution aiming at their revival might prove successful for the economy of the rural areas.

Along this line, the first attempt on a large scale in Macedonia was undertaken by "Their Majesties Fund", a welfare organization whose interest is primarily centered in the Greek village and its problems. The Rural Youth Centers established by the Fund in a great number of villages in Macedonia and Thrace took it upon themselves to teach the village boys and girls the local crafts that had been forgotten or abandoned and at the same time new ones, that would in time bring a handsome income. Among the novel crafts taught to the peasant population of Macedonia, first ranks the technique of knotted carpets or "persian rugs", because it offers the best possibilities from the commercial viewpoint.

The manufacturing of knotted carpets was unknown in Macedonia before 1922, at which time it was introduced by the Greek refugees from Asia Minor. To support and further its development, the Government instituted at a very early time the "Greek Tapestry Organization", which was the first to establish training schools for the teaching of the technique. In Thessaloniki, the manufacturing of knotted rugs soon became the most important craft, and in 1928, when it reached the peak of its development, there were 15 carpet workshops in this city. Their products were exported mainly to the United States, but after the American Depression in 1928 they found new markets in Yugoslavia, Germany and England. Today there are 10 carpet workshops in Thessaloniki, but the technique is particularly flourishing in the prefectures of Pella and Kozani.

In the prefecture of Pella rug-manufacturing has had a great development compared to other crafts, and this is mainly due to the great number of refugees from Asia Minor who have settled there. In the Prefecture of Kozani, besides the rug-factories in Kozani and Velvendos run by private enterprise, the "Greek Tapestry Organization" has established training schools in Siatista and Vlasti, and "Their Majesties Fund" has established ten smaller training schools in an equal number of villages. In Eastern Macedonia, the "National Tobacco Organization" has also established similar training schools in the villages Makrichori, Moustheni and

Paleochori of the Kavala Prefecture, and in the village of Draviscos of the Serres Prefecture.³¹

Among the training schools in rug-manufacturing established by "Their Majesties' Fund" all over Macedonia, one which deserves our special attention is the workshop at Ouranoupolis on the Chalkidiki Peninsula, just on the border of the monastic center of Mount Athos. It follows an older tradition which distinguishes it from the rest. Founded in 1928 by an English lady, Mrs. Locke, it soon made good progress, because the inhabitants were refugees from Kaisareia in Asia Minor and the islands of the Sea of Marmora, and were familiar with the knotted-rug technique. In the beginning, it is true, only two families worked on the looms, but in a short time all the women of the village learned the technique and worked either in Mrs. Locke's workshop, where they were paid on the thousand-knot basis, or at their homes. The designs of the carpets which they still use after the factory was taken over by "Their Majesties' Fund", were introduced by Mr. Locke who copied them from original Byzantine patterns in the illuminated manuscripts or the embroideries in Mount Athos. Mrs. Locke gave them names such as "The mantle of King Tsimiskes", which was actually copied from the decorations on the mantle said to be of the Emperor Tsimiskes in the treasuries of Mount Athos, "Vatopedino", "Dragons and Birds", "The Life-tree", etc. It should also be noted that the rug-factory of Ouranoupolis is the only one where the wool is dyed locally, with dyes manufactured from vegetable sources such as almond-tree leaves and wicker-tree leaves, which produce the golden-yellow shade of the Byzantine designs.

As we have seen, in Macedonia rug-manufacturing is today, thanks to Government assistance and private enterprise, the most promising popular industry. Alongside this technique, which is comparatively new to the region, flourishes textile weaving, which has been the most favorite craft of the people in this part of the world since time immemorial. Today, centers of textile production are primarily the Prefectures of Veroia and Florina, with the Chalkidiki Peninsula and the Kozani area following close behind.

In the Florina Prefecture, Argos Orestikon has a systematically organized textile manufacture, in which 50-60% of the population are

31. For this information I am indebted to the National Organization for Greek Handicrafts (E.O.E.X.), who has allowed me to use the information in his archives pertaining to the handicraft potential in Macedonia. This was collected during a field-research that covered almost all parts of Greece, conducted between August - 1 December 31, 1959 by a team of young technicians and experts.

engaged. They manufacture mainly heavy woolen covers, which can also be used as carpets, made shaggy on the one side with long flocks of wool, called "floccates" (from the lat. word *floccus*) and "kilims", which are carpets woven by the tapestry method. Good quality "floccates" are also manufactured in three villages of the Florina Prefecture, Vevi, Flambouro, and Drosopigi. "Kilims" are manufactured in Kleisoura and Nymphaion. Weaving by the tapestry method is taught in thirty Rural Youth Centers of "Their Majesties' Fund" in this Prefecture.³²

In Veroia, where the textile producers have been organized into a corporation numbering 600 members, they also manufacture "floccates" and kilimia. In Arnaia they make the well-known kilimia of the "Chalkidiki" type, and in Kozani and Grevena, women coming from the mountainous region of Samarina on the Pindus range make heavy woolen covers of goats' wool. They, too, are organized into corporations. In Kozani, the old tradition of manufacturing various kinds of cloth has been kept up, but it is now in the hands of women, not of men. The last man-weaver, Lazaros Bokas, died two years ago aged 103, and to the very last he refused to hand over to the women weavers the holy ikon of Saint Spyridon, the patron Saint of the guild. Of the varieties of cloth manufactured today in Kozani, the most representative is, I think, the so-called "brouzoukenio" (50% natural silk, 25% cotton and 25% artificial silk). It is used for curtains. Some time ago, they also used to make large quantities of a certain type of cotton handkerchiefs (15 × 36 cm. usually), with simple decorative patterns on each end in red and blue, which were called "mantelia me ta psalidia". They were made for the villages, where each girl should have at least 150 of them in her trousseau, to give away as presents at her engagement and wedding. Now this habit has become obsolete, so the manufacture of the handkerchiefs has also died out. Before white cotton yarn made its appearance in the market, the cotton made at Kozani was "whitened" at the near-by village of Krokos, where all the women had become skilled in this job.

The making of fur-coats by sewing together little pieces of fur, the scraps of fur left over by West European "pelletterie", is not remarkable for any artistic features. However, on account of the important part that it plays in the economy of Macedonia, may appropriately be considered

32. This information is also from the archives of the National Organization for Greek Handicrafts.

here. This craft is centered in the towns of Kastoria³³ and Siatista, and the Government, in order to encourage its development in these two cities, has exempted them from the import tax paid on the scraps of fur imported mainly from Frankfurt, Paris, London and New York. The fur clippings are made here into fur-coats and exported again, mainly to Germany.

The processing of fur clippings has played an important part in the development of Kastoria and Siatista as early as the 17th century, but in those days it was a in quite different way. There were no workshops as such in the two towns, but the furriers from Kastoria and Siatista had their business established in Austria, Germany, France and England, whence they sent money to their home-towns. The wealthy Greek communities in the towns of Austria and Germany were to a great extent founded by fur-merchants from Kastoria, who were always willing to use their wealth in order to embellish their home-towns or to help in educational and welfare projects. In Vienna, we find furriers from Siatista as early as 1700, but in Siatista proper the first workshops were established only in 1912.

I think we should expand a little more on the case of furriery in Siatista because it has a very important bearing on the economy of the town today. After its heyday of wealth and prosperity in the 18th century, Siatista fell subsequently into decline. The reason was the economic depression in Austria, around 1800, which followed the unfortunate war against Germany, and caused the bankruptcy of the commercial firms connected with Siatista in the Austrian towns.³⁴ But the decline was somewhat prevented by the cultivation of the famous vineyards of Siatista, which produced, according to Leake,³⁵ four varieties of wine. When these vineyards were gradually destroyed by phylloxera between the years 1928 - 1935, the people of Siatista would have remained without means of existence, had it not been for furriery, which absorbed the unemployed and gave them good salaries. Even the young girls, who work in the rug-factory established, as we have seen, by the "Greek Tapestry Organization", prefer to leave their job for a better paid one in the furrier's craft.

33. In Kastoria there are 124 furriers' workshops. The Ministry of Commerce has established a training-school for the teaching of this technique.

34. Ioan. Apostolou, *Ιστορία τῆς Σιατίστας* [*A History of Siatista*], (Athens, 1926), p. 17. According to this writer, the period from 1700 - 1800 was the "Golden Age" for Siatista, which was then called by the neighboring towns "florochori", meaning "village of the gold coins".

35. W. M. Leake, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 305.

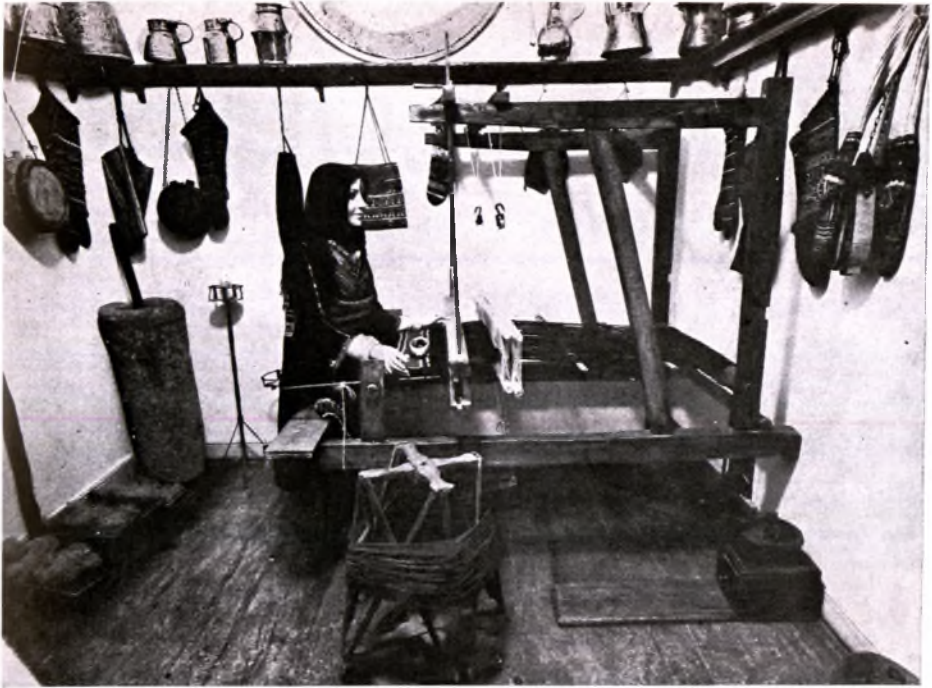


Fig. 1

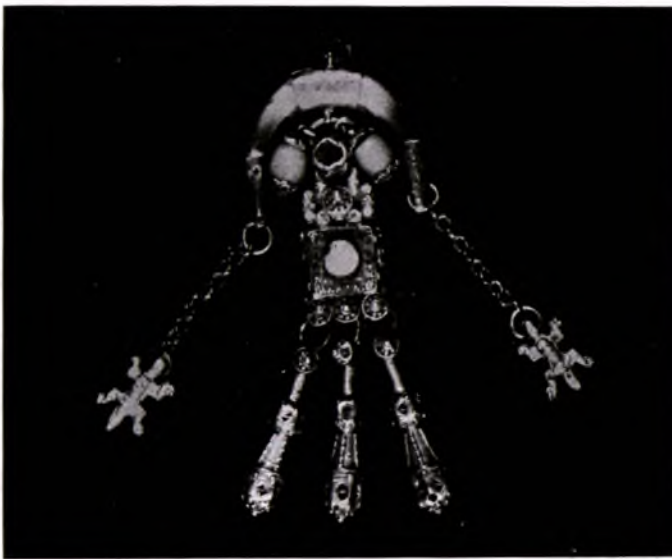


Fig. 2



Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b



Fig. 3c



Fig. 3d



Fig. 3e



Fig. 3f

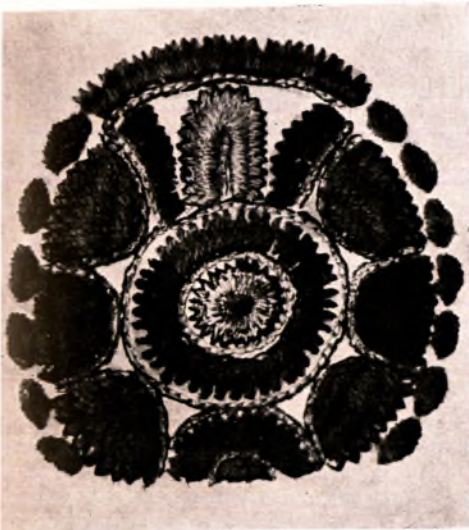


Fig. 3g

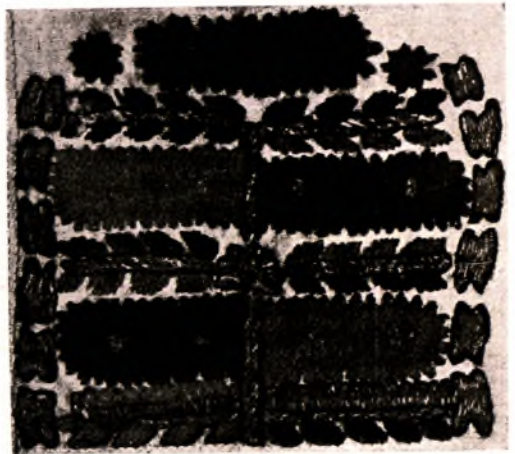


Fig. 3h



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

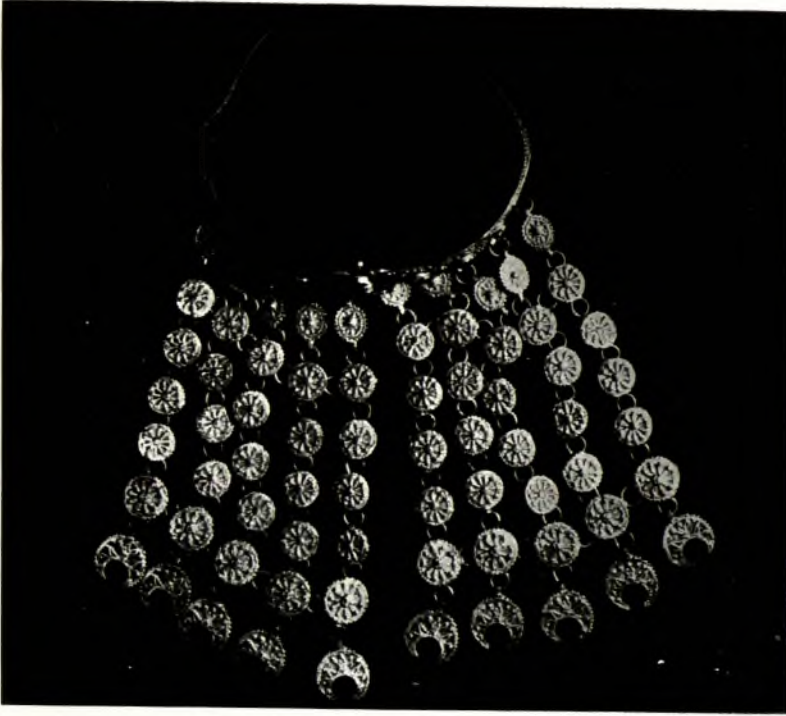


Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19

We have dealt up to now with peasant crafts, whose products are meant for trade. We shall now turn to the home-crafts of weaving and embroidery, whose products are meant to meet the household necessities and adorn the girls' trousseau. Textile weaving has well survived in the Macedonian homestead as a technique, but it has completely departed from the traditional designs. The same is true of embroidery, with the additional observation that in this case the variety of the old stitches has also been forgotten, and simple cross-stitch has become the general substitute. The reason why the old designs have become obsolete is not due only to the fact that they are difficult to make and people nowadays have become practical, but also to the fact that people do not like the traditional patterns any more. Artistic tastes have suffered a radical change in the now enlightened villages and the old feeling for beauty would have surely perished if it were not for its advocates in town, who tried to preserve it and, when possible, to revive it.

From the point of view of embroidery, the tendency to preserve and make known the traditional Macedonian designs was started by the Workshop of the "Patriotic Institution for the Protection of Children", which was founded in Thessaloniki in 1922. Its initial purpose was to give work to poor women, but both its first president Mrs. Sophia Mavrogordato and her successor Mrs. Virginia Zanna saw beyond the purely utilitarian purpose of the Workshop the possibility to teach these women the technique and the excellent taste of the old Macedonian embroideries. With the help of the Folklore Museum of the University of Thessaloniki, which placed at their disposal the embroidered specimens of its collection, the Workshop specialized in Macedonian embroidery and is in a position today to reproduce the most beautiful traditional embroideries, however difficult they may be.

For the last three years, the Folklore Museum of the University has also been supplying the designs for the embroideries executed at the Work-therapy Department of the Mental Hospital of Thessaloniki, with remarkable results.

The "Ladies' Association for Help to the Poor" (Philoptochos Adelphotes Kyrion) was founded in 1876 with the purpose also to give work to poor women. The Workshop of this Association soon acquired a reputation for its excellent embroidered work, so that the trousseaus of all the well-to-do brides of Thessaloniki were ordered there. In former days, the art of embroidery was systematically taught at this Workshop by skilled embroideresses, who had at least until 1887 preserved the technique of ecclesiastical embroidery, as we see it in the holy ikon of Saint John the

Almsgiver, the patron Saint of the Association, embroidered according to its inscription by Aik. Nikousi on the above mentioned date (fig. 18). It seems that the tradition of ecclesiastical embroidery in Thessaloniki, which had, during the Byzantine era, produced masterpieces such as the Epitaphios of the 14th century now at the Byzantine Museum in Athens, saw the last glimpses of its existence in the Workshop of this Association.

Besides the repetition and reproduction of embroideries that adorned women's dresses in former days, noteworthy efforts have also been made for the preservation of the authentic costumes themselves. In Thessaloniki, this has been one of the objectives of the organization entitled "Lyceum of Greek Ladies", which owns today about 50 authentic costumes from Macedonia and Thrace. One of them, the costume from Alexandria in Central Macedonia, is particularly interesting on account of its head-dress, which covers the ears and temples and looks like an ancient helmet. It is called *katsouli*, and the whole costume is by analogy named after it. The story goes that Alexander the Great, who is naturally the most popular hero in Macedonia, in order to punish the men, who had shown cowardness during a battle, and reward the women, who had not stopped bringing water to the soldiers while the battle was raging, took the helmets off the soldiers' heads and placed them on the women's. This is how the *katsouli* originated.³⁶

Peasant costume is the center of interest of still another organization of Thessaloniki, whose activities for the revival of popular art have much to be commended for. The "Macedonian Corner" (fig. 19), founded in 1953, did not confine itself to the preservation of the old, local costumes. It ventured into the more difficult task of reproducing them. The next step was to present the peasant costumes of Northern Greece abroad, in Paris, Palermo and New York.

Thus far we have seen that the activities directed to the revival of peasant art had a more-or-less local character and limited objectives, with the exception of "Their Majesties' Fund", whose work is planned on a large scale basis. The co-ordination of all efforts pertaining to the revival of popular art in Greece was entrusted by the Government to the "National Organization for Greek Handicrafts", established in 1958 as an autonomous organization attached to the Ministry of Industry. Although comparatively new, the Organization has done a remarkably good

36. Ang. Hajimihali, *Ἑλληνικὴ Λαϊκὴ Τέχνη* (Ρουμλοῦκι, Τρίκερι, Ἰζαρία) [*Greek Popular Art* (Roumlouki, Trikeri, Icaria)], (Athens, 1931), p. 36.

job 1) in educating young artisans in the traditional and the modern techniques of decoration, 2) in assisting financially and otherwise promising crafts in various parts of the country, and 3) in creating new artistic forms inspired by old popular originals. We have seen the results of this last work in the beautiful dress materials, the carpets and the jewelry designed by the Organization's assistants. Indeed, the Organization has seen the problem of the revival of peasant art in Greece in its true light and confronted it on a sound basis.

It must be admitted that the artistic imagination of the Greek folk, which created the works of taste and refinement that we admire today in the Folklore Museums, has almost become extinct. Sometimes it lingers still in the hands of an individual artist who cultivates a traditional art, but he is not going to pass his knowledge on to his children because there is no more use for the things he makes. The works of popular art are essentially things useful, not merely decorative. So if the practical reason for their existence has disappeared, the peasant cannot be expected to create them anew. But even if he did, his products would never be the same with those we have preserved in our Folklore Museums. The ideals of beauty have changed, and the process of the adoption of the new tastes has indeed been a long one. As early as 1752, the Venetian consul at Thessaloniki made some enlightening remarks on the subject. He wrote: "The use and consumption of the woolen fabrics made in France for the Levant has partially been introduced here, too, during the last war in Europe... they (the fabrics) have very bright and peculiar colors and people's eyes have become used to them. Besides, in these multi-colored French clothes people look better than they actually are, so they prefer them".³⁷ We should add here that to the prevalence of the novel color schemes the part played by the purely technical factor must not be underestimated. The chemical dyes, which replaced the dyes produced from vegetable sources, contributed much in changing the familiar color chart.

The adoption of new tints and color combinations was followed by the adoption of new decorative designs in Macedonian folk art. However, the patterns of roses and other naturalistic flowers and leaves that found their way inland with the factory-made products and the pattern-books of Western Europe never became actually assimilated by the artistic tradition of this region. They remained sterile elements in the realm of folk art, for, although continuously repeated, they were never anything more than exact copies of patterns in which the imagination of the peasant

37. Constantin Mertzios, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

played no part whatsoever. It was not their fault. When folk art was a living reality in the life of the people, foreign influences were easily assimilated, and novel artistic elements unconsciously adjusted to conform to the requirements of popular style. But when these West European patterns made their appearance, decadence was already on the way and the tradition had no more the power to assimilate. Modern civilization was slowly but steadily gaining ground at the expense of traditional culture in the Macedonian interior.

Since the Second World War, this decline has been going on at a greater pace because of better communication, which carries the effects of twentieth century urbanism and mechanical progress to the remotest nook of the Macedonian landscape. From now on the current flows incessantly forward, and nothing can make it turn back. If anybody should go back, to the sources of our national tradition and artistic heritage, this must be the educated artist and artisan and the folklorist to show them the way. Thus out of the old forms and patterns new ones will emerge, which will combine the traditional with the modern element in art. Actually, this is the new orientation of all serious effort for the revival of popular art in Greece. It is not going to be a continuity of the old folk art, but a contemporary artistic creation based on Modern Greek popular motives. This trend is now slowly finding its definition through the various techniques of popular manufacture (tapestry, embroidery, weaving, metal-work etc.), and the final goal is to make the peasant artisan himself work along this line in his own home and village.

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