Lefkara Lace: Educational Approaches to ICH in Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

In September 2009, Cyprus applied to include Lefkara embroidery in the *Representative List* under the name *Lefkara lace* or *Lefkaritika.* Lefkara embroidery merges different elements and has evolved over time without losing its original character, technique and creativity. The learning process starts at a very young age and takes a long time before an embroiderer can become fully competent in the craft. The local stakeholders are currently, or have been in the past, actively involved in educational programmes related to Lefkara embroidery, as a means of safeguarding. These programmes have common characteristics and a clear focus on transmitting to younger generations the knowledge of Lefkara embroidery. The paper explores the different programmes and discusses their success and potential, as by educating the public about Lefkara embroidery, the stakeholders have made a significant step towards creating an environment of appreciation to tradition and national ICH.

Keywords

Lefkara embroidery, Lefkaritika, Cyprus, educational programmes

Introduction

Heritage is often thought to be the *residue of static traditions.*[1] Yet socio-political transformations make people readdress and reassess their past culture, allowing for a more dynamic analysis of culture and heritage. As the idea of heritage is complex, it intertwines with issues of race, authenticity and identity, with the latter being expressed in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, heritage *clarifies the past by infusing it with present purposes*[2] as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is living heritage connected with all the members of a community. It is transmitted from one generation to another, which gives a unique perspective on community traditions, beliefs and local history.

UNESCO aims to establish a legal framework for the protection of cultural heritage. From the 1970s onwards, it had a defining impact in setting the framework for the nature and value of natural and cultural heritage. At the same time, the UNESCO conventions have covered two important concepts, that of 'shared heritage' and its 'universal value'.[3] The 1989 *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*, the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* and the 2002 *Istanbul Declaration* were UNESCO's final efforts leading to the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. The intention to safeguard the ICH on an international level is demonstrated with the establishment of the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,* and the *List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding*. The *Representative List* also contains all those elements that had been previously declared as *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* between 2001-2005.

In September 2009, Cyprus' nomination to include Lefkara embroidery in the *Representative List* under the name *Lefkara lace or Lefkaritika* was approved by the 4th Session of the Intergovernmental Commision at Abu Dhabi.[4] Additionally, the Cyprus Research Centre created a *Register of Elements of ICH,* based on the Centre's existing Oral Tradition Archive,[5] while the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO aims to establish a *National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Cyprus*.[6]

The local stakeholders have been actively involved in educational programmes on Lefkara embroidery. In view of recent developments in ICH educational programmes, it is reasonable to reassess them. They are presented and discussed along with the activities carried out by the local stakeholders. By educating the public about Lefkara embroidery, the stakeholders have taken a significant step towards creating an environment in which tradition and national ICH is appreciated. Lefkara embroidery has been at the core of several educational programmes going as far back as the 1970s, so its inscription in the *Representative List* was entirely appropriate.

Weaving and embroidery have a long tradition in Cyprus, which can be traced back to the Frankish Period (1192-1489). The establishment of workshops producing silk, woollen and gold embroidered fabrics is well-attested in historical sources. The demands of western markets for Cypriot fabrics gave the necessary impetus for development. The import of fabrics from the East and trade relations with the Greek islands that produced lace and embroidered fabrics had a multifaceted impact on local production. Taglienti's reference to *punto ciprioto* is one of many indicators of the developments that took place and of the high quality of the finished material. Late 19th and early 20th century foreign travellers have left detailed descriptions of how delicately and artistically embroidered Cypriot fabrics were, although the medieval fabric production is long forgotten and lost. Astreou-Christophorou and Hadjigavriel consider that the production of high quality local fabrics is the main reason behind the development of such high quality embroidery.[7]

Lefkaritika, or Lefkara embroidery as it is now known, holds a prestigious position amongst types of Cypriot embroidery. It is the most characteristic and best-known of them all, and is mainly produced at Lefkara village. *Lefkaritika* developed from an older type of embroidery called *asproploumia*.[8] The simple geometric patterns used for *asproploumia* were preserved and evolved further as part of *Lefkaritika*, as attested by samples of embroidery from the transitional period.[9] Astreou-Christophorou's research on such transitional pieces has shown that they have significant similarities with Venetian embroidery, both in design and nomenclature.[10]

The cultural value of *Lefkaritika* is confirmed by its longevity, and it is a product synonymous with the history of Lefkara. This particular type of embroidery merges different elements and has evolved without losing its original character, technique and creativity.[11] Moreover, it was one of the most important products Cyprus exported to Europe, Egypt and other areas.[12] In the early 20th century the Lefkara embroidery merchants, known as *kentitarides*, would travel abroad to sell their goods, the *Lefkaritika* that were locally produced by embroiderers, the *bloumarisses*.[13] The nomenclature of *bloumarisses* reflects the embellishment of the final product, as the Greek verb *bloumizo* means to 'elaborately embellish an object'.

The embroiderers use linen as their base material and cotton thread for the designs. The difficulty of this type of embroidery lies in the technique itself, as it involves cutting some of the threads and 'drawing' them to form specific designs. These consist of four basic elements: hemstitch (*ghazi*), cut work (*kofto*), satin-stitch fillings (*gemisma*), and needlepoint edgings (*telioma*), which are grouped together in different ways to form geometric patterns or floral designs and result in intricate motifs.[14] (Plate 1) Various types of hemstitch are used to define the edges of the cloth or to finish



Plate 1
A curtain with a daisy design on the left.
Source: http://www.mcit.gov.cy/mcit/chs/chs.nsf/All/9B678B56B083CA77C225747A002D184A/$file/lefkbig6.jpg?OpenElement [Accessed 17 March 2017]



Plate 2
A tablecloth with the river design (*potamos*) dividing it into sections, filled with floral and geometric designs.
Source: http://www.mcit.gov.cy/mcit/chs/chs.nsf/All/79970053EAFBDCD0C225747A0028C1C9/$file/lefkbig2.jpg?OpenElement [Accessed 17 March 2017]

a piece, which the embroiderers call *bloumi* (embellishment). Other basic elements also come in various types and complement the most complicated of the geometrical patterns, the 'river' (*potamos*).[15] (Plate 2)

In 2009, the Intergovernmental Committee concluded that Lefkara embroidery fulfilled the criteria for inscription on the *Representative* List, but it was clear that this age-old tradition was under threat.[16] Embroiderers begin to learn their craft at a very young age as it is laborious and it takes a very long time before an embroiderer is fully competent to execute the most difficult motifs.[17] Furthermore, not all embroiderers can achieve this level of skill unless they wish to express themselves artistically.[18]

The stakeholders and the educational programmes

The UNESCO 2003 *Convention* mentions on multiple occasions 'who' is involved in ICH, referring to them as *communities, groups, and individuals*, without providing any further definition. It is clear that those are the interested parties, i.e. the stakeholders. This issue was addressed in the 2006 Expert Meeting organised by the Intangible Heritage Section of UNESCO and the Asia / Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU).[19] For this paper, the stakeholders involved in the safeguarding and promotion of Lefkara embroidery were identified and interviewed.[20] These were:

- the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC)
- the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO
- the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (MoARDE)
- the Cyprus Handicraft Service
- Lefkara municipality
- private workshops and artists
- the Association for the Production and Promotion of Lefkara Embroidery.

These stakeholders are currently, or have been in the past, actively involved in educational programmes related to Lefkara embroidery. It became clear that they had fundamental differences, leading to varied perspectives on promoting Lefkara embroidery as reflected through their respective programmes.

The first four stakeholders are governmental bodies, fulfilling different roles related to the safeguarding and promotion of ICH. Therefore, they have different goals and approaches but the organisation of educational programmes is one they share. Starting from the first two, one should note that the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO functions under the Ministry of Education and Culture. It implements all UNESCO programmes and resolves all issues relating to them, has a very specific mandate and serves both as an advisory body to the government and a liaison between the various governmental departments, semi-governmental bodies,

NGOs and other groups. Its unique character gives it a distinct focus on promoting and safeguarding ICH, especially through educational programmes and cultural activities.[21]

The MoEC focuses on education at all levels: primary, secondary and tertiary, through schools, colleges and universities, and vocational education through adult learning centres. Its primary aim is to provide general education and gradual specialisation to students in order to prepare them for their academic or professional careers. The school curricula include discrete modules (e.g. Greek and History) and interdisciplinary courses (e.g. Health Education), complemented by extra-curricular activities aiming to provide students with a well-rounded education. Consequently, there is significantly less focus on adult education, although adult education centres have been operating since 1952. The Ministry's approach to ICH is fundamentally different from that of the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO because it has a different role to fulfil. However, ICH has been promoted to an extent through school curricula since the 1960s.

The MoARDE was initially established as the Department for Agriculture in 1896, during the British administration, and remains responsible for the national agricultural policy and the sustainable management of natural resources. It also monitors the development of rural areas and has implemented a series of measures over the years to combat urbanisation. The Rural Development Programme that ran in 2007-2013 reflected this effort. A third priority was to diversify the rural economy and improve the quality of life in rural areas.[22] This was based on the promotion and preservation of rural heritage to encourage tourism, along with the revitalisation of rural communities as an incentive for population growth. The Vocational Scheme for Lefkara embroidery reflects the ongoing efforts of the MoARDE to combat urbanisation and develop new job opportunities for young people.

The Cyprus Handicraft Service was established in 1976 as a department of the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism. At the time, its main aim was to provide employment for refugees who had experience in various crafts, and to systematically revive folk art based on modern handicrafts, with funding from UNHCR. Today, the service has broadened its horizons in terms of the crafts it promotes through the Handicraft Centre and its present-day goals.[23] The Service actively fights urbanisation, an effort which running in tandem with a general endeavour to revive folk arts and crafts as a way of promoting and safeguarding ICH. The ICH is, of course, only one of the courses of action set by the service, as is the case with the MoEC and MoARDE.

The Lefkara Municipality is one of the main stakeholders. The municipality has implemented a series of measures since the 1980s - the publication of Olga Polemitou's doctoral dissertation on Lefkara embroidery, collaboration with various organisations and governmental bodies, the organisation of the annual Lefkara Festival, co-organising and hosting educational programmes, the establishment of the Lefkara Handicraft Centre, and more recently, the establishment of the Association for the Production and Promotion of Lefkara Embroidery. All these efforts revolve around the creation of a new nucleus of Lefkara embroiderers and this is evident in the curricula of the educational programmes. The primary goal is to teach the techniques of a dying craft and transmit it to younger generations. Ultimately, it is hoped that the young embroiderers will carry on the craft and revive it, which is a very ambitious target.

Since the early 20th century, there have been several Cypriot artists who have incorporated elements of folk art in their work, re-interpreting them and bringing a fresh perspective. Of these, Julia Astreou-Christophorou has chosen weaving and embroidery as the means to create and recreate contemporary pieces inspired by traditional crafts and folk art designs. Her research on woven fabrics,



Plate 3
Julia Astreou-Christophorou with some of her work.
Photo: Author, 19 March 2016.



Plate 4
The embroiderers at the Lefkara Handicraft Centre.
Source: http://www.lefkara.org.cy/portals/0/Images/Kentro%20Xirotexnias/oie_21172834GVa66hZI.jpg [Accessed 17 March 2017]

embroidery, lace, and garments has allowed her to use traditional weaving and embroidery as an artistic medium. (Plate 3) She regularly hosts educational workshops which reflect her particular perspective: traditional crafts as an artistic medium that promotes ICH.[24]

The Association for the Production and Promotion of Lefkara Embroidery was created in 2013, as part of the efforts of the Lefkara Municipality to establish the Lefkara Handicraft Centre.[25] There are currently 70 embroiderers registered with the Association, and they are involved in the various activities organised by the municipality. Those involved in the Lefkara Handicraft Centre can offer guidance and educate those interested in learning Lefkara embroidery, participating in exhibitions and cultural events, and promoting the cultural heritage of Lefkara. (Plate 4) However, since the Association has only recently been established, it does not yet have any other educational activities.

The Lefkara embroidery educational programmes: children's education

1. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the school curricula

Lefkara embroidery was taught in schools as part of the high school curriculum for Home Economics until the 1980s. Home Economics has always been a practical subject that initially focused on teaching children basic cooking and handicraft skills. Based on the new analytical programmes that have been introduced in junior high schools since 2011, the appreciation of Cypriot folk art is now part of the curriculum.[26]

In the past, students were taught how to create their own piece of Lefkara embroidery. The practical part of the class was accompanied by an introduction to the specific embroidery techniques, the motifs and a very brief historical background, all included in the student textbook.[27] The purpose was to introduce the students to Lefkara embroidery, its elements and characteristics, to perform a typological and chronological classification of pieces of embroidery, and to help them understand the importance of folk art and tradition.[28] Although this was a programme about embroidery techniques, it also offered a substantial amount of information about Lefkara embroidery with its thorough description of the stitches, patterns and structural elements, along with a series of informative drawings.

Today, Lefkara embroidery remains on the curriculum of Home Economics but with limited information, and is addressed to students registered in the 2nd grade of junior high school (14-year olds). Home Economics is a compulsory course for all students, therefore they all have access to the information about Cypriot traditional culture in general, and Lefkara embroidery in particular. Between 2010 and 2016, a total of 46,973 students attended the course, with an average of 7,829 students per year.[29] (Figure 1) Lefkara embroidery is taught during a single, 40 minute lesson, along with *Fythkiotiko*, another type of Cypriot embroidery. The information given to the students is limited compared to the previous approach, and they are only required to complete a worksheet and have some basic knowledge of the subject,

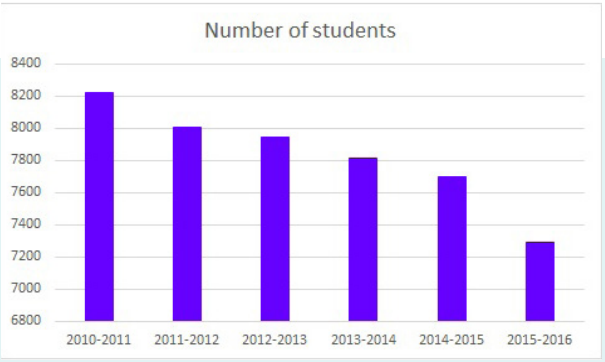


Figure 1
The registered students in 2nd grade (junior high school) per year, who also attend the compulsory Home Economics class and learn about Lefkara embroidery.

instead of creating a piece of Lefkara embroidery themselves.[30] One can argue that this reflects the aims set by the MoEC and the underlying difficulties in teaching ICH to children. The Vice-Director of Secondary Education commented that students should understand and embrace every aspect of their national folk art.[31] Additionally, the analytical programme for Home Economics simply focuses on students recognising each type of embroidery and not on issues of ICH,[32] reflecting the current view of the Ministry.

One could argue that the junior high school curriculum could be used as a way of exposing students to issues related to ICH through a wider and more comprehensive analysis of Cypriot folk art and culture. The option of junior versus senior high school is further related to the Cypriot educational system, as school attendance is only compulsory until the final grade of junior high school. As ICH is a complex concept, children find it difficult to understand it without tangible evidence.[33] Such abstract concepts are better suited for older, more mature students who have developed the necessary critical thinking and understanding. However, there are significant advantages in teaching teenage students: the information is transmitted in the context of formal education and reaches almost 8,000 students a year.

2. The UNESCO Associated Schools (ASPnet)

The UNESCO ASPnet was established in 1953, aiming to encourage contact between young people in member states of the organisation. Another goal was to strengthen co-operation between students and teachers to contribute effectively to the implementation of UNESCO's vision.[34] Cyprus has participated in the network since 1969-1970, and 20 public and private schools are currently included in the network. Each year, there is a different theme and a series of related activities. For the school year 2011-2012 the main theme was raising awareness about Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2014-2015, it was the 'elements of ICH of Cyprus', and in particular those currently registered in the *Representative List*.[35]

The network members co-operate with people and bodies involved in safeguarding the ICH, aiming amongst other things, to transmit knowledge by using new technologies in recording, utilising oral history and visiting museums, workshops and cultural areas that are related to the ICH elements under study. The annual change of theme makes it difficult for both teachers and students to focus firstly on ICH, and secondly, on Lefkara embroidery. The thematic areas are chosen directly by UNESCO and are applied by the 9,000 educational institutions that participate in the scheme across 180 countries.[36] Therefore, schools can only implement the instructions given by UNESCO. Despite these difficulties, the ASPnet context is ideal, as students are exposed to various concepts and issues related to tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The participation of every school across the island would be desirable, as the ASPnet context would be combined with the existing curricula for mutual benefit.

The Lefkara embroidery educational programmes: adult education

Educational institutions have nowadays included several activities for children in relation to the promotion of ICH. The pioneer educators who introduced oral history into education were the same people who had earlier participated in oral history programmes for communities. Later on, it became evident that adult learning programmes should also be developed, as adults had been cut off from their roots and were unable to transmit their knowledge to the rising generation. The 1972 UNESCO *Convention* says that adults learn to embrace and actively participate in their culture when involved in traditional activities.[37]

Adult education is about people managing their personal free time, co-operation, the role of the community and culture and ecology, in a landscape of more 'anthropocentric' and less 'econometric' choices.[38] Educating adults plays a crucial role in the development of society, as noted in the First International Conference on Adult Education in 1949 and reaffirmed in 1976, with the approval of the Nairobi *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education.* The 1976 *Recommendation* expresses the promotion of adult education as a core element of a country's educational system within a life-long learning scheme.[39] Adult education has evolved since then and is now seen as central to economic, political and cultural transformation, whether that is of an individual, a community or a society. Most importantly, although the interpretation of adult education still varies widely, one cannot disregard the fact that the evolution from education to learning is an important conceptual change.[40]

1. Educational centres run by the Ministry of Education and Culture

The MoEC Educational Centres were first established in 1952, and they run annual programmes in urban and rural areas. These are currently the largest programmes for general adult education (age 15+) via the life-long learning scheme. Their general purpose is the all-round development of the personality of each individual and the social, economic and cultural progress of both citizens and society. They also aim to provide life-long learning opportunities to Cypriot citizens to mitigate educational inequalities and fully integrate them in the social nexus.[41]

Lefkara embroidery was offered as a subject until 2015, and the students took a total of 24 weekly, 90-minute classes. The aim was for the students to produce their own pieces of embroidery, and usually the first introductory class gave the participants some background information about the craft.[42] These courses taught embroidery and only offered a fraction of the wealth of available information about Lefkara embroidery. They were taught in all major cities and the very low cost (55 euros) facilitated the participation of people from all socio-economic backgrounds.

In 2015, the two embroidery courses offered by the Educational Centres at Nicosia and Paphos were merged into one under the name 'Cypriot embroidery'.[43] The Educational Centres at Larnaca and Famagusta no longer offer the courses, while the Centres at Limassol offer a course on Lefkara and Karavas embroidery.[44] The changes are mostly related to the low numbers of participants, while a course wholly dedicated to Lefkara embroidery is not currently viable. Given the island-wide range of the scheme, a revised course including a component about the various difficulties and threats faced by ICH would be more effective. The language in which the courses are taught should also be considered, as courses offered in English would give foreigners the opportunity to participate and embrace both the craft and Cypriot ICH.

2. The Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment vocational scheme

The MoARDE collaborated with Lefkara Municipality and offered a Vocational Scheme dedicated to Lefkara embroidery that ran in 2010-2012. Both beginners and advanced learners could participate, while those under 40 were entitled to a daily allowance of €18.[45] This was another course teaching the craft, and in this particular case the target group was young women, as Lefkara embroidery was traditionally done by women. The aim was clear: the creation of a new nucleus of Lefkara embroiderers to preserve the craft. To that end, in 2010, there were also groups for primary school and junior-high school students in an effort to preserve the dying craft.[46] Although the vocational scheme came to an end for financial reasons, it was noted that it did promote Lefkara embroidery.[47] The scheme also demonstrated that the term 'embroiderer' has a very different meaning than it had in the early 20th century.

3. The Cyprus Handicraft Service, Lefkara embroidery programme

The Service has a social, cultural and economic role in modern-day Cyprus. The promotion of traditional crafts has an economic impact, offering an incentive to continue the production of local products, and supports small handicraft businesses.[48] The promotion of ICH is done in numerous ways, ranging from hosting annual educational programmes in rural areas, to exhibitions and participation in cultural events. The Centre offers the following educational programmes and training courses:

a) Retraining: this type of course is requested by people or groups who have partial knowledge but wish to expand it (craftsmen, teachers from primary and secondary schools, organised groups).
b) Training for people without any knowledge of a particular craft: the courses are offered annually, they are government-funded, and take the participant's skill levels into consideration.



Plate 5
The Lefkara embroidery workshop at the Cyprus Handicraft Service building.
Photo: Maria Ktori, 27 March 2015.





Plates 6 and 7
Some of the finished products on display at the Cyprus Handicraft Centre.
Photo: Author, 27 March 2015.

c) Specialised training for professional craftspeople; the service hires them and trains them to make products for the Handicraft Centre Souvenir Shop.

The Centre offers Lefkara embroidery classes through the embroidery workshops (Plate 5), which are solely focused on training the participants to become a new nucleus of embroiderers. The workshop's embroiderers are highly skilled and act as tutors for the classes. When not teaching, they continue their daily embroidery activities (making new pieces or experimenting with new concepts). (Plates 6 and 7) These particular classes are strictly for learning the craft and focus on embroidery techniques rather than the underlying ICH background. Moreover, they are available only in Greek, which poses significant limitations regarding their potential outreach. Thus far, the participants have only been women. The fact that they are run on an annual basis, charge low fees and give the participants a good grounding in Lefkara embroidery techniques, makes the classes effective and popular. They are currently the most successful examples of craft-based courses on Lefkara embroidery, while the Cyprus Handicraft Service Director said that the approach to the curriculum will not change as it serves its purpose well.[49]

4. The Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO

In 2013, the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO organised a pilot programme on Lefkara embroidery in collaboration with Lefkara Municipality. The 7-day course took place at Lefkara in September 2013, with 6 participants from diverse background (archaeologists, artists and others). The participants were tutored by 3 embroiderers, who were also their hosts.[50] (Plate 8) The participants had a unique opportunity to learn the craft of Lefkara embroidery in Lefkara itself, understand the transmission of the craft across generations, its development according to modern needs and the personal approach of each craftswoman.[51]

The 2013 pilot programme was successful and was repeated in 2014. This time the target group was different as it was aimed at primary school and high school art teachers, as well as artists.[52] The main goal of the 12 participants and 6 embroiderers was to formulate proposals to incorporate Lefkara embroidery in art classes through worksheets and instruction manuals. Another goal was the creation of an e-book with ideas and applications that could be used by the teaching community.[53] In addition, the programme aimed to



Plate 8
The 2015 Lefkara embroidery short course of the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO.
Source: http://www.unesco.org.cy/ImageStream.aspx?ObjectType=Document&ObjectID=4859&ImageName=Image.jpg&Width=0&Height=0 [Accessed 17 March 2017]

help the participants acquire basic Lefkara embroidering skills and to offer a socio-economic incentive to recognised embroiderers for transmitting their skills and knowledge.[54] The necessary theoretical background was offered in a lecture by Mrs. Androula Hadjiyiasemi, who gave an overview of Lefkara embroidery and showed works by Cypriot artists that have been inspired by it.

The programme was repeated in 2015, with a different target group: undergraduate or graduate students of Fine and Applied Arts. The participants created works of art that incorporated and reflected Lefkara embroidery, which they elevated and transformed into new artistic and cultural elements (Plates 9 and 10). The works were displayed in an exhibition in October, as one of the European Days of Cultural Heritage events.[55]

The Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO had set specific goals for the programme:

a) To propose new and viable ways of transmitting oral traditions and traditional crafts.
b) To educate the public and professional groups about the importance of ICH through experiential learning.
c) To provide professional groups with the necessary knowledge to embrace, be inspired by, and reproduce traditional crafts in their own disciplines.
d) To encourage interaction between the embroiderers and the participants, to understand and appreciate Lefkara embroidery through experiential and oral learning.
e) To promote the involvement of the local community in preserving the craft through activities that provide socio-economic stimuli.
f) To nurture the development of on-going contact and co-operation between the embroiderers and the participants.
g) To facilitate the development of oral traditions and crafts into novel artistic and cultural traditions that enrich the cultural heritage of modern Cyprus.[56]

It is a unique programme that primarily promotes Lefkara embroidery as an element of ICH, and further reinvents the concept of the craft through dynamic experiential teaching. Each year, the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO pushes the boundaries further and tries to enhance the multi-faceted experience offered through the course. The programme is targeted but is open to both men and women as it does not seek to create an all-female nucleus of embroiderers. It would be worth exploring other options, such as hosting courses in major urban centres which would include weekly classes, specialised lectures on ICH and Lefkara embroidery, and day trips to Lefkara. The lectures could deal with a variety of issues, such as the history and evolution of the craft, Lefkara embroidery within the ICH context, Lefkara embroidery and the arts, as well as lectures on Lefkara embroidery and education. As funding is generally limited, such a course could be offered for a small fee, but the proposed structure and frequency of the classes would enable a larger number



Plate 9
Asproploumistres (Antigoni,Nedi, and Eurydice) ceramic sculptures by Anastasia Lambaski-Onisiforou.
Source: Polyneiki, 2015: 28.

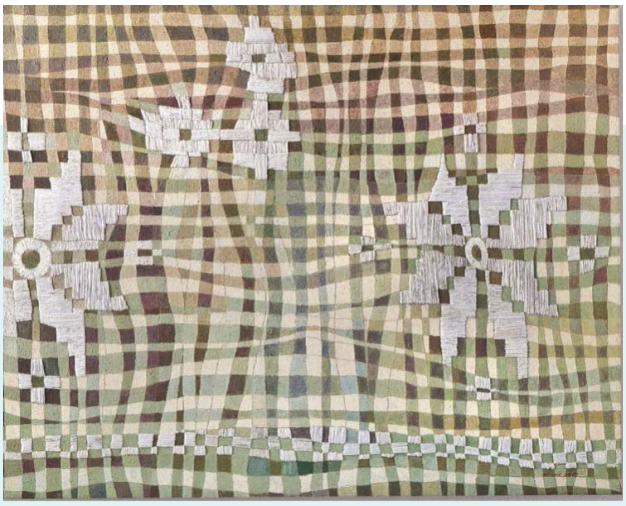


Plate 10
Mare Nostrum and Lefkaritiko [oil on canvas and cotton thread] by Nitsa Hadjigeorgiou.
Source: Polyneiki, 2015: 34.

of people to participate. Moreover, by focusing on education and cross-curricular links, Lefkara embroidery would acquire a higher profile and the knowledge could be more effectively transmitted to students, young and adult alike.

5. The Lefkara Municipality and the Association for the Production and Promotion of Lefkara Embroidery

As mentioned above, the three programmes organised by the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO were held at Lefkara in collaboration with the Municipality. In his interview, the Mayor gave a clear view of the current situation of the embroiderers and Lefkara embroidery. The Municipality launched a survey in the village in an effort to create a new nucleus of embroiderers. This was followed up by the establishment of the Association for the Production and Promotion of Lefkara Embroidery, which has 70 registered members. Unfortunately, there are no young women interested in Lefkara embroidery, as the competition from the Chinese market which produces cheaper products, is overwhelming.[57]

To counter this, the Municipality carried out a series of actions, aiming to promote and safeguard Lefkara embroidery:

1. The digitisation of about 4,000 photos, articles, interviews and other material related to Lefkara embroidery.
2. The creation of a handicraft centre, which opened on 27 April 2015 with students from the United Kingdom, Greece, Spain, Austria and the Technical School of Larnaca. The embroidery classes were taught by local embroiderers.
3. The MoARDE vocational scheme.
4. The Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO Lefkara embroidery programmes.
5. The organisation of the 35th Lefkara festival.
6. Efforts to reinstate the teaching of Lefkara embroidery in schools.

In this case, the promotion of Lefkara embroidery will be mainly done through the Lefkara Handicraft Centre. The Centre will function as a 'Lefkara embroidery learning centre' which is directly related to a series of actions that need to be taken to ensure the success of this initiative. More specifically, these actions should be:

a) The employment of professionals who will be both embroiderers and embroidery teachers.
b) Hosting weekly Lefkara embroidery classes for beginners and more experienced embroiderers.
c) The production of Lefkara embroidery when the embroiderers do not have teaching duties.
d) Insistence that the production of Lefkara embroidery must be based on national standards[58] and must be branded as genuine.

Although these classes have not yet been implemented, the Municipality and the Association are aiming for a comprehensive approach to the subject, including discussion of Lefkara embroidery as an ICH element.[59]

6. Private workshops and artists: the case of Mrs. Julia Astreou-Christophorou

Julia Astreou-Christophorou is a textile designer, artist and researcher based in Nicosia. She has worked for the Cyprus Handicraft Service for 21 years and has done extensive research on Cypriot textiles, and was the textiles advisor for two films on traditional Cypriot weaving and Lefkara embroidery (*Weaving Ladies of Cyprus*, 2008; *Lefkara Lace*, 2012). She created the Cyprus Textile Route website and booklet in cooperation with the European Textile Network, and has represented Cyprus in many textile art exhibitions.[60]

Mrs. Astreou-Christophorou established her workshop in 2003 [Plate 11], and has been promoting ICH since then by participating in conferences, the International Triennial of Tapestry, exhibitions, and giving public lectures in Cyprus and abroad. She has also taught weaving and embroidery to women who are interested in these crafts, organising



Plate 11
Examples of Julia Astreou-Christophorou's work displayed at her workshop-cum-showroom.
Photo: Author, 19 March 2016.

intensive 3-day courses. During those, the participants had the opportunity to attend lectures on traditional crafts and issues related to ICH, before delving into the practical part. Mrs. Astreou-Christophorou hosted the first specialised workshops on Lefkara embroidery in October 2016, with the collaboration of experienced Lefkara embroiderers. Those workshops consisted of theoretical lectures on the craft by Mrs. Astreou-Christophorou and practical sessions, all aiming to give the participants comprehensive knowledge of Lefkara embroidery. The first workshops have served as the basis for future ones, as they provided the necessary feedback regarding structure, content, and duration. One should note that these are craft-oriented workshops where the student has a unique opportunity to receive personal, almost private, tuition on what is a very complex form of embroidery.[61]

Conclusions

The development of educational material related to ICH has been piloted by UNESCO through the project *Promoting ICH in Education for Sustainable Development* in Palau, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. The project aimed to show teachers how to incorporate local elements of ICH and principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into teaching and learning practices. In all cases, UNESCO believes that the material should correspond to the specific needs of each country, with appropriate local guidelines and materials for teachers being essential. As a preliminary thought, the material related to Lefkara embroidery is diverse and could easily be integrated into history and art classes.

The difficulties of developing educational materials for students and the complexity of describing the ICH-related issues are less of a factor in the case of adult educational programmes. The Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO is a great example of how one can bring together various disciplines and bridge the gaps. This particular programme offers both the theoretical background and the empirical knowledge of the socio-historical context in which Lefkara embroidery has developed and continues to exist.

The Lefkara embroiderers are carriers of ICH, giving the participants of the various programmes a unique perspective. They are motivated to safeguard their knowledge and promote their heritage, while the final hand-made products express aesthetics and also embody information derived from the experience of countless people from past generations. As previously seen, all stakeholders strive towards the protection and promotion of Lefkara embroidery through various activities and programmes. The educational programmes have a core practical segment, i.e. the participants learn how to embroider, and all focus on transmitting the knowledge of the craft. This is done at various levels depending on the specific needs and goals of each programme. In realising the importance of the promotion and safeguarding of Lefkara embroidery, the stakeholders have expressed their determination to support this effort in various ways. The analysis of all the educational programmes demonstrated that by educating the public about Lefkara embroidery, stakeholders have taken a significant step towards creating an environment in which folk art and tradition and the national ICH are appreciated.

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ENDNOTES

1 Kenny, 2009, p. 151.
2 Lowenthal, 1998, p. xv.
3 Smith and Akagawa, 2009, p. 1.
4 http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/RL/00255, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/download.php?versionID=29517
5 Pouradier Duteil-Λοϊζίδου, 2012, pp. 20-21.
6 http://www.unesco.org.cy/Programmes-Ethnikos_Katalogos_Aylis_Politistikis_Klironomias_tis_Kyproy,EN-PROGRAMMES-04-02-03,EN
7 Astreou-Christophorou and Hadjigavriel,1996, pp. 11-15.
8 Hadjiyasemi, 1987a, pp. 9-10; Pieridi, 1991, pp. 3-50.
9 Astreou-Christophorou and Hadjigavriel, (op cit. 7), p. 30.
10 Ibid, pp. 30-31; Pieridi, (op cit. 8), pp. 257-259; Papademetriou, 2008, pp. 24-59.
11 Pouradier Duteil-Λοϊζίδου, (op cit. 5), p. 123.
12 Pieridi, (op cit. 8), pp. 55-56; Oakley, 1989, p. 515.
13 Hadjiyasemi, (op cit. 8), p. 13.
14 Pieridi, (op cit. 8); Polemitou, O., 1983a, p. 4.
15 Hadjiyasemi, (op cit. 8), pp. 19-34; Polemitou, 1983b, p. 6.
16 http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/download.php?versionID=29517
17 Polemitou, 1985a, pp. 4-5; Polemitou, 1985b, pp. 4-6; Polemitou, 1985c, pp. 4-5.
18 The Department of Antiquities currently has no projects or activities related to Lefkara embroidery although this may change in the future. For that reason, it has not been included.
19 UNESCO, 2006, p. 9.
20 Ibid.
21 http://www.unesco.org.cy/About-National_Commission,EN-ABOUT-02,EN
22 Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, 2014, pp. 8-20.
23 Papaefstathiou, 2015, personal interview.
24 Astreou-Christophorou, 2016, personal interview.
25 Xenophontos, S., 2016, personal interview.
26 Loizou and Lambi, 2014, p. 3; Georgiou and Charalambous, 2008, p. 13.
27 Hadjigiasemi, 1987b.
28 Hadjigiasemi, (op cit. 27), pp. 5-6.
29 Ioannou, 2016, personal email.
30 Loizou and Lambi, (op cit. 26), pp. 22-26; Georgiou and Charalambous, (op cit. 26), pp. 111-119.
31 Loizou and Lambi, (op cit. 26), p. 3.
32 Georgiou and Charalambous, (op cit. 26), pp. 28, 111-119.
33 Bouchenaki, 2005, p. 3.
34 http://www.unesco.org.cy/About-National_Commission,EN-ABOUT-02,EN
35 http://www.unesco.org.cy/Programmes-UNESCO_Associated_Schools_ASPnet,EN-PROGRAMMES-01-02,EN
36 Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO, (op cit. 35).
37 Neuenschwander, 1976, p. 8.

38 Mouzakis, 2006, p. 13.
39 UNESCO, 2009.
40 UNESCO, ibid, p. 12.
41 http://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/index.html
42 http://econtent.schools.ac.cy/moec/epimorfotika/programma/2014_lefkosia.pdf, pp. 5, 37.
43 http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp2742b, http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp2742f, p. 17.
44 http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp2742c, p. 31.
45 Lefkara Municipality, 2010a, p. 7; Lefkara Municipality, 2011, p. 8; Lefkara Municipality, 2012, p. 9.
46 Lefkara Municipality, 2010b, p. 8.
47 Xenophontos, (op cit. 25).
48 Papaefstathiou, (op cit. 23).
49 Ibid.
50 Paraskevas, Polyneiki and Papantoniou, 2015, personal interview.
51 Polyneiki, 2013, pp. 20-23; Christodoulidou, 2014, pp. 40-41.
52 Polyneiki, 2014, pp. 4-5.
53 Antoniou, 2014, pp. 6-9.
54 Paraskevas, Polyneiki and Papantoniou, (op cit. 50).
55 Polyneiki, 2015.
56 Polyneiki, (op cit. 55), pp. 11-13.
57 Xenophontos, (op cit. 25).
58 Cyprus Organisation for Standardisation, 2015.
59 Xenophontos, (op cit. 25).
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61 Astreou-Christophorou, (op cit. 24).

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