

# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

## Workshop Traditional Textiles from Central and Eastern Europe

Muzeul Textilelor, Băița · 25–27 Septembrie 2023



This conference is based upon work from COST Action CA19131 - **Europe Through Textiles: Network for an integrated and interdisciplinary Humanities (EuroWeb)** supported by COST. COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for **research** and **innovation** networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to **grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers**. This boosts their research, career and innovation.



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# Albanian Traditional Garments and Textiles; an overview of their typology

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Traditional Albanian textiles and costumes date back many centuries, and some of them millennia. Very often these costumes, usually from the 18th-19th century and onwards, are preserved in different museums and private collections in the country and beyond. Divided on five main types of costumes for woman and man alike, these traditional garments over the years have developed into hundreds of subtypes with many changes depending on the region, gender, age, social status, religion, heritage, lifestyle and social occasions. Till early 18th century textiles and garments were mainly produced by women in households, later, workshops and guilds of textile workers could be found in all the major cities. However the main materials used on garments remained wool, cotton, and silk which was usually used on decorations. The colours and ornaments changed widely from region to region. Of course there are countless notable influences from other cultures, especially in garments and costumes of Albanian communities outside the country.

There is a big diversity not only on the ornaments and colours but on the typology and design of the costumes as well, with perhaps, the fustanella being the most recognised menswear garment and the most well spread till the end of 19th century. And on the other side, xhubleta being the most notable and unique womenswear garment.

In November 2022 Xhubleta, skills, craftsmanship and forms of usage, became the latest addition on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The garment requires great skill in the making to achieve its characteristic flared undulating profile. The full costume comprises a shirt worn beneath the xhublete, a waistcoat with fringes on the shoulders, a sash or waist belt, socks, apron, and several head scarves.

According to Andromaqi Gjergji, xhubleta was worn only by Albanian women and is not paralleled in other parts of the Balkans.

## Traditional Textile in Albania

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According to Frederik Stamati (researcher) the oldest textiles in Albania were discovered in 1983 and belong to the 6th-7th century (the material was Damask), while silk textiles are discovered for the first time in Apollon in the 7th century (coming from China). Studies show that in Albania the cultivation of silkworms began in the 11th century, and the development of silk reached its peak during the 18th-19th centuries. Shkodra (city in the north of Albania) was the main cultivator of silk threads in the 14th-15th centuries. The geometric motifs used in the fabrics of the 11th century are still used by Zadrima (Shkodra area) women. Nowadays, the women of Zadrima keep alive the tradition of silkworm cultivation and all the processes from collecting the filling, dyeing with natural colors and weaving the fabric in the loom.

Wool is another very important material used massively for hundreds of years, whose use was disappearing with the destruction of the communist system and the migration of residents to urban areas.

Nowadays most of the wool is thrown away and a very small part is collected to be cleaned, combed, spun and dyed with natural dyes to produce woven and shajak products. In the bazaar of Kruje, Gjirokastra and in northern Albania, the tradition of making carpets, rugs and folk clothing in an artisanal way continues to be preserved and passed down to the new generations.

One of the popular clothes which is made with wool in the shape of a shajak is Xhublet. The Xhublet is over 4000 years old, the oldest clothing of women in Northern Albania. In the 18th century jubleta was made in more colors, but nowadays black is used for women and black and white for girls. Once upon a time, the jubleta was used in everyday life and showed the status of the wearer, but with the establishment of the communist system, the use of Xhublet began to fade. Today Xhublet and all the processes of its work are part of UNESCO.

Another popular clothing that is used in all Albanians and especially in southern Albanians is Fustanella. Fustanella has been present since the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The Albanian version of the Fustanella has 60 sides and the material used to create the Fustanell is linen.

Other elements of uniqueness that are conveyed through popular clothing are: long shirt, long cape and pointed openings.

The presentation will describe in more detail the above-mentioned elements of the Albanian traditional costume.

## ***Sersigkas: The female dress of Missolonghi – Greece, 19<sup>th</sup> c.***

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Missolonghi, situated in Aetolia, Western Greece, is a historical town of the Greek Revolution of 1821 because of the resistance and subsequent death of its inhabitants to the siege of the Ottoman Turks, an event known as the Exodus. Because of this the city and all its cultural materials were utterly destroyed. As a result, we have not any dresses of that era saved.

In this presentation, we will introduce the reconstruction of the traditional urban female dress of Missolonghi, step by step to its components. The study is based on iconographic and literary evidence, as well as the knowledge of textile craftsmanship of the era. Information has also been taken by comparing similar outfits of the era, as all were under the ottoman influence. At the same time, we will refer to the many challenges and dilemmas of the historical dress reconstruction when no original artefact survives and how these were addressed.

## **Looking at the dynamic of Traditional Ecological Knowledge for the research and the exhibition of traditional textiles from modern Greece**

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This paper will suggest the application of Traditional Ecological Knowledge as a theoretical and methodological approach to the research and exhibition of modern Greek (17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> c.) traditional textiles.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge as a theoretical and methodological approach was developed mainly for the anthropological research of Native American communities. At the same time, it is currently being applied to similar research in several communities worldwide. Its application in folklore studies in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe is limited. The approach could be used to re-connect textile museum exhibits with the traditional ecological knowledge of the communities that produced them, as well as the social meanings that were applied to them.

After a very short presentation of this approach, I will present a case study to discuss the advantages of this approach in researching modern Greek traditional textiles.

# Medieval Women's Headwear in Middle Europe

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Headwear can and was used throughout history for a number of reasons. One of the very important functions of headwear for women in medieval Middle Europe was to show their marital status. A number of written sources explain the signaling function of certain types of headwear, such as the "gebende" or the "schapel", and images or statues show us a huge range of variations of headwear worn by women – from very simple to quite elaborate.

In some cases, it is possible to link written sources and pictorial sources more or less securely to each other. These connections give us an insight into the marital status associated with a specific type of headwear. In most cases, however, a lot of questions remain, starting from what exactly a specific term may have referred to, what materials were used, how the textile shown on an image was shaped, draped, and secured on the head. Finally, where a headdress also fulfils a practical function such as protection against sun or dirt, the question comes up whether it was exclusively worn by married women or if it could also be used as a protective cover by unmarried women.

The presentation will show some of the many styles we can see in Middle European medieval artwork and highlight the open questions about them. As there are parallels at least between some Lithuanian traditional headdresses for women and the Middle European medieval women's headwear, hopefully more parallels to Eastern traditional headwear can be found – and this might help to get a better picture of the complex signaling system in medieval headwear.

# Craftspeople, artefacts, and institutions. The general picture of traditional textiles in the eastern part of nowadays Romania

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In the last decade, traditional textiles have played a crucial role in creating international awareness of the Romanian cultural heritage by inscribing on the UNESCO lists of Intangible Heritage the *traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship* (2016) and the *traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder* (2022). Also, it contributes to maintaining cultural identity, especially for the Romanian diaspora, and sustainability in contemporary design culture.

In the newly created context, it is essential to preserve not just the artefacts but, also, the knowledge and skills that lie behind traditional textile crafts and increase their social, economic, and cultural significance. We aim to explore how the different interest groups working with traditional textiles collaborate to make the intangible tangible. Are there any platforms for sharing and exchanging ideas and information between the craftspeople, cooperative organisations, cultural heritage workers, textile researchers, museum curators, textile conservators, textile designers and collectors?

My initiative was inspired by the very enthusiastic atmosphere that *EuroWeb* encouraged for seeing the multiplicity of viewpoints, and the advantages of joining forces. Besides, I think that understanding living, traditional textile crafts allows us to better investigate the *knowledge transmission system* existing in the past, even when no actual textile survives, as is often the case in archaeological research.

# Chromatics within the Romanian household textile industry - recovery and revitalization

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The presented work explores the world of traditional colors within the context of Romanian household textile industry. The primary objective is to comprehend the dynamics of practicing traditional dyeing, the factors that affected it and the process of its dissolution, in order to pinpoint components worthy of recovery and revitalization.

Traditional dyeing craft slowly disappeared due to chemical dyeing introduced by modern industry. Although society's perception is pragmatic and oriented towards simplifying textile production, ignoring this know-how would represent a loss from the perspective of aesthetics, sustainability and conservation of textile heritage.

The research was approached through a multifaceted methodology. Old texts were scrutinized, fieldwork was conducted, and historic dye recipes and sewing methods were reconstructed and updated. This effort was supplemented by archiving projects, restoration initiatives, and community engagement, such as the revival of "*șezătoare*" gatherings in Bucharest.

We began by studying old dyeing methods recorded more than a century ago by the rural intellectuals of the time. This was followed by a field research as a case study in Bisoca village. Here, the local textile heritage is centered on the so-called shirt "sewn in *broci*". It is about a specific embroidery made with wool threads dyed with the root of the *broci* plant, a species of *Rubia tinctorum*, once cultivated for dyeing the wool in dark red. Remains of „broci” cultures can still be found there, on the people lands and gardens.

Involvement in the "*Șezătoare București*" activities and in the "Zestrea bisoceană" heritage project for recovery and promotion of the shirt „sewn in broci”, enriched the study.

The research's outlook could be the extension of reconstitution for dyeing recipes across all plants, colors, and materials recorded in old texts. Furthermore, a future study of the measures of safeguarding and revitalizing the existing heritage elements without affecting their authenticity through interventionist measures is considered.



# Dyes in traditional textiles from Romanian collections

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Traditional textiles are relevant witnesses to document rural life of Romanians and minorities living in Romania, in the 19-th and 20-th centuries. Preserved in museum collections but still waiting to be revealed in the peasant houses, pieces of the traditional costume, decorative and household textiles, they are typical for the time, place and the artistic skilfulness of those who made them. According to written and oral sources, these textiles are homemade, mainly by using nearby materials. The most common fibres are wool and hemp, documented to have been used on these territories since Neolithic and late Neolithic respectively. Coloured silk decorations are adopted later and refers to high statute people and mainly to garments to be worn at special events and festivities, while the use of cotton would indicate a date after 1900.

Natural dyes were the only source for colouring fibres until synthetic alternatives became available in the last decades of the 19-th century. In a collection of dyeing recipes edited by the Romanian Academy in 1914, which includes about 300 descriptions of dyeing procedures sent by peasants from various areas in Wallachia and Moldavia, only less than 15% refer to the use of imported dyes or synthetic alternatives.

Analytical investigation of dyes in traditional textiles revealed that local and imported biological sources co-existed in the late 19-th and early 20-th century with synthetic dyes. This information is based on several studies performed since 1997 as part of a larger project aiming to enrich the existing knowledge on textiles in Romanian collections by dye analysis.

The presentation will review the most important knowledge accumulated in these studies with an emphasize on those obtained in the last years on Romanian and Saxon textiles preserved in the ASTRA Museum in Sibiu. Natural local sources discussed include madder, dyer's broom, sawwort, weld, young fustic, *Rhamnus* berries, emodin based dyes while carminic acid containing insects will be referred to as the most frequently identified imported dye sources. The contribution of synthetic representatives fuchsine (1856), methyl violet (1861), orange II (1876), quinoline yellow (1882), rhodamine B (1887), Victoria blue (1883) and brilliant green (1879), who totally replaced the natural sources in the first decades of the 20-th century will be also explained.

## The Traditional Woman's Blouse of Pădureni

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Pădurenii are a Romanian group of population inhabiting the Poiana Ruscăi Mountains located at the south-west area of the Romanian Carpathians. The textile heritage preserved by the Pădureni population is outstanding. In particular, they are proud and distinguish themselves from people inhabiting other regions by their knee length blouses' dense embroidery, made on white fabric, predominantly in red for youngers, and in black for the elderly. In Romanian the blouse's name is *cămașa*.

Although, the *cămașa's* typology and materials used for its construction are common to a larger area of the Carpathians, the embroidery's motifs, techniques, and distribution over the blouse, in particular over sleeves, mark the identity of the Pădureni's blouse. These features are related to the types and names of the blouses. Therefore, blouses categorized by the distribution of the embroidery over sleeves include: the blouse with *pui peste cot*, which has a band of narrow embroidery made around sleeves' elbows. This type of embroidery is predominantly made in black; *coșile*, which has the embroidery distributed vertically over the sleeves in two, three, four or five sections closely positioned to each other, and with small colorful motifs centered within the red or black dense embroidery; and the vertical distribution of embroidered motifs, always positioned within sections demarcated with an outline named *corzi*, or in square or rectangular sections named *dăraburi*. The *cămașa's* names given by the type of embroidery stitches made over a counted number of warps and wefts, include: *ațăște* (pattern darning stitch); *șinorește* (half cross stitch); and *coșoită* (straight Gobelin stitch). Perhaps the most complex naming of Pădureni's *cămașa* is by the name of the main embroidered motif, and include: *gogâște* (swastika), *budiana* (a composed motive), *pup* (flower bud), *pizar* (S), *tri* (three), *mărul* (the apple), *heli cu patru ochi* (that with four eyes), and *steaua* (star).

The presentation will include preliminary information related to our ongoing research on the traditional textiles of Pădureni area.

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