

The Place of Lefkara Lace in Interior Architecture

Ezgi Özyiğit*

Eastern Mediterranean University

Abstract

Cypriot culture is very broad and has lots of values. One of the biggest values is undoubtedly handcrafts in Cyprus. Within these handcrafts, Lefkara Lace plays an important role by being the most unique and the popular one, as it has been under protection of UNESCO since 2009. Despite being famous and unique, there are currently very few studies about Lefkara Lace, most of which focused on the techniques of producing Lefkara Lace and the history behind it. There were no studies in regard to its usage. Many patterns of Lefkara Lace had already been lost, due to not taking it under protection and due to lack of documentation. Most of the patterns are in danger of being lost and all of them are constantly changing due to workers and instant surroundings. In addition to this, the number of people producing Lefkara Lace is decreasing day by day. This research has been done in order to understand the usage of Lefkara Lace in interior decoration, to look at its usage in the past and now, and to predict how it will be used in the future. In order to achieve this aim, interviews with producers (Cypriot women) were held to understand their relationship with Lefkara Lace. Moreover, interviews with non-producers were also held to understand their attitude to Lefkara Lace. Interviewees were selected from age group of 25 to 70 to examine the attitude from different generations. In conclusion, in this research it was studied that the usage and the production of Lefkara Lace have increased mostly as souvenirs. However, the usage of Lefkara Lace in interior decoration has definitely decreased. Its usage is limited mainly to protect it and to be able to pass it to next generations.

Keywords

Cultural Handcraft; Lefkara Lace; Interior Architecture; Alteration; North Cyprus

* Ezgi Özyiğit, Faculty of Architecture, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta- North Cyprus via Mersin 10, Turkey. E-mail: e-ozyigit@hotmail.com [ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1933-5789]

İç Mimaride Lefkara Dantelinin Yeri

Ezgi Özyiğit

Doğru Akdeniz Üniversitesi

Özet

Kıbrıs kültürü çok geniřtir ve birçok değere sahiptir. En çok öne çıkan değerlerden biri de, kuřkusuz Kıbrıs'taki el işleridir. Bu el işlerinin arasında, Lefkara dantelinin önemi, eşsiz ve popüler olmasıdır. Lefkara danteli, 2009 yılından beri UNESCO tarafından koruma altına alınmıştır. Popüler olması ve bir benzerinin olmamasına rağmen, Lefkara danteli hakkında yapılmış çok az araştırma olup, çoğru çalışma Lefkara dantelinin yapımında kullanılan tekniklere ve bu nakişin tarihine odaklanmakta; nasıl kullanıldığını ele alan çalışmaları yapılmamıştır. Birçok Lefkara danteli deseni, korunmadığından ve kayıt altına alınmadığından günümüze kadar gelememiştir. Birçoğru kaybolma tehlikesi altında, zanaatkarlar tarafından sürekli değıştirilmekte ve değışen çevresel faktörlere maruz kalmaktadır. Ayrıca, Lefkara danteliyle uğrařan insanların sayısı her geçen gün azalmaktadır. Bu araştırma sayesinde, Lefkara dantelinin iç mimaride nasıl kullanıldığını anlamak, geçmişteki kullanımına bakmak ve gelecekteki kullanımı hakkında tahmin yürütmek amaçlanmaktadır. Bu amaca ulaşmak için, zanaatkarlarla (Kıbrıslı kadınlarla) Lefkara danteliyle ilgili mülakatlar yapıldı. Buna ek olarak, Lefkara danteli hakkında tutumlarını anlamak için, zanaatkar olmayanlarla da mülakatlar yapıldı. Bu çalışma için mülakat edilenler 25 ve 70 yaş arasından, farklı jenerasyonlardan seçildi. Sonuç olarak, bu araştırma kapsamında Lefkara dantelinin kullanımı ve yapımının, çoğunluğru hediyelik eşya olarak arttığı görülmüştür. Fakat, iç mimaride Lefkara dantelinin kullanımı azalmış, çoğunla korunması ve ileriki kuřaklar için saklanmasıyla sınırlı kalmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler

Kültürel El İş; Lefkara Danteli; İç Mimari; Değışim; Kuzey Kıbrıs

Introduction

“Culture is the intersection of people and life itself. It’s how we deal with life, love, death, birth, disappointment... all of that is expressed in culture” says Wendell Pierce (Izmen, 2005). With globalization, humans are not only part of their culture but part of whole world which creates new modern and global culture. That includes common things, behaviours, perspectives, etc. With this globalization, small countries’ culture is up to be forgotten. In order to gain the cultures to the modern world, first they need to be understood deeply.

Cypriot culture is one the broadest ones, including very different combinations in its history. Surely, it has lots of cultural heritage to be studied and handcrafts is one of the greatest. The handcrafts are very broad; especially Lefkara Lace which is the most famous handcraft in Cyprus is originally based in Lefkara Village and it has a history for approximately 700 years, from the Venetians period. Thus, it is believed that it is a combination of Venetian Lace and White Work, which was based in Cyprus as well. In addition, it was seen in the ‘Last Supper’ painting of Da Vinci. It is believed that he came to Cyprus and used the Dere pattern of the lace in his painting, in the corners of the tablecloth (Newman, 2012). The legend of Da Vinci’ visiting the island in 1481, taking and using Lefkara in his ‘Last Supper’ drawing was mentioned in various sources (Ekingen, 2016) (Hadjiyasemi, 1999) (Izmen, 2005) (Figure 2). According to the legend, Da Vinci’s visit ended up by using this unique work in Milan Cathedral. As it was said, they renewed that lace in October 1986 so that in a way, it increases the probability of this myth to be close to being more real (Hadjiyasemi, 1999). Also, a Lefkara Lace tablecloth was given to Queen Elizabeth in 1953 (Newman, 2012).

Besides this worldwide fame, Lefkara Lace is very unique due to its materials and techniques; which is why it has been under protection of UNESCO from 2009 (Hadjiyasemi, 1999).

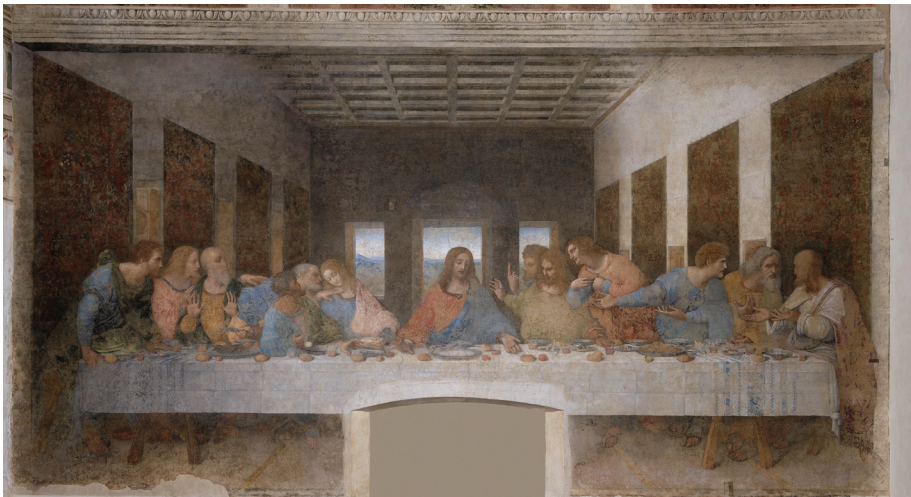


Figure 1: Da Vinci's Last Supper Original (McGrogan, N/A)

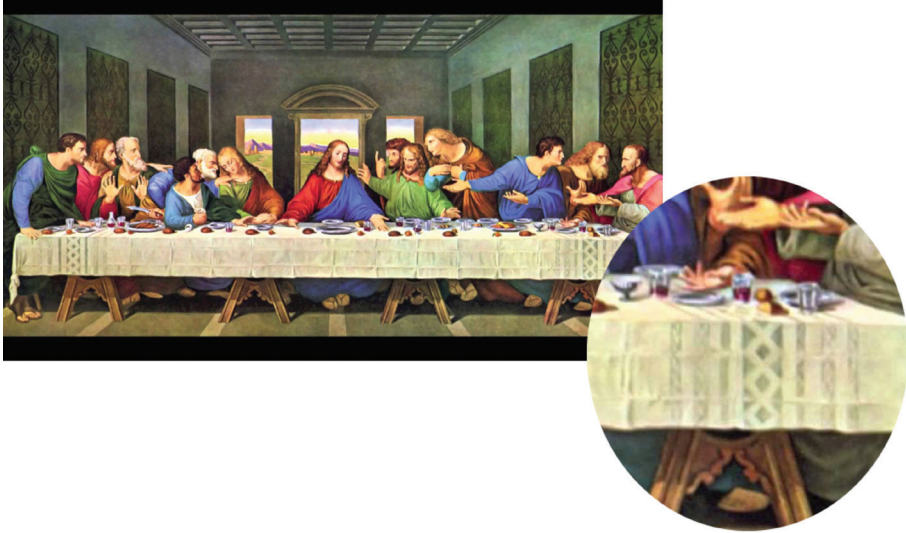


Figure 2: Da Vinci's 'Last Supper' Illustrated Version showing detailed Dere Pattern of Lefkara Lace (Shyana, 2014)

In today's World, where people have almost no time and the consumption is demanded very highly; such handicrafts are in danger of getting lost, in terms of production. Since the production is very difficult and requires lots of time and effort, it can be said that this unique Lace need very delicate care. Because of this required care, its usages are getting decreased in this fast everyday life. Due to today's conditions, it is observed that production of Lefkara Lace is decreased, as well as its produced scales. Although it was used as large-scale products in the houses of wealthy people in the past; nowadays, it can be found in much smaller scale products, such as coasters and trays. These products are mostly for sale for tourists.

In addition, due to lack of documentation about Cyprus and its culture, many patterns of Lefkara Lace were lost, and the others are still in danger of getting lost with other handicrafts (Ekingen, 2016). This includes how the Lefkara Lace was started, for what aims it was produced and how it was used. The first aim of this study is to fill the gap in literature. The second aim is to understand the usage of Lefkara Lace in the houses since Venetians' time when it had started to be seen, to the present. The third aim is to make some predictions for the future in order to take some precautions to stop the danger of getting lost.

Literature Review

In Northern part of the island, there are two main books which give details of the history and also the examples of Lefkara Lace. Faiz mentions the history of the work, the communication it provides within the community which is believed to make it different from any other work, the economic opportunities and analysis of the lace, another analysis of its global perception and what can be added from today to the

cultural lace. Mostly, Faiz's book is about comparison of southern and northern part of the island with Lefkara Lace as a tool. The materials that are used to make Lefkara Lace were also mentioned in this book. The methodology was making interviews with women who had been producing Lefkara and since there were no data about the number of people working on this lace, the most popular villages were chosen for the interviews. Faiz stated that Lefkara Lace has been losing its value; due to decrease in practice and due to not being worth the effort (Faiz, 1993).

Ekingen (Ekingen, 2016) mentions about history, techniques, materials, variations and origins of Lefkara Lace. She says that there should definitely be more research about Lefkara because it is about to be extinct. According to the legends, Cypriot women learnt the lace from Venetian ladies during the Venetian period in Cyprus, which was from 1489 to 1570/71 and they continued the tradition until 1970s in Lefkara Village. The lace had spread all over the island after '74 War with migration (Ekingen, 2016). She mentions the materials were produced in Cyprus but after Cyprus Government, Irish Linen and French Yarn have been used. They have always been beige linen and tons of white, green and brown yarn (Ekingen, 2016) (Figure 3). Different options of usage of Lefkara in the past are classified as bed lings (Figure 5), tablecloths, chair cloths, curtains and lightings.



Figure 3: Producing Lefkara Lace (Pier, 2012)

In the southern part of the island, Lefkara Lace was believed to reflect strength, understanding and awareness of Cypriot women, since it requires too much effort and skills. It is stated that modern period embroidery has been changed and simplified due to high production cost, the effort and losing its value over generations. Hadjiyasemi (Hadjiyasemi, 1999) mentions the origins of Lefkara coming from White Embroidery which is believed by lots of writers, too. Materials and technical details were explained, where the linen was produced and how different parts are produced differently (Hadjiyasemi, 1999).

While some limited sources described Lefkara as 'the perfect mirror of Cypriot culture', other sources added that the sale of the lace were being done by the Italian merchants to Europe and in Frank era (UNESCO, N/A). However, it is stated that the sale of the lace was interrupted by World War II and could not be recovered since then (Newman, 2012).

The journal, "Halkbilimi", has also published brief information about it in their few editions (Faiz, 1990) (Nailer, Yalçın, Nailer & Aldağ, 1987) as well as the websites. In an interview, a retired examiner from Ministry of Education, Ozay Soykan, talked about the usage of Lefkara in interiors. She said that "in the past, it was produced to be used, too, not only for commercial purposes. It was necessary in every girl's dowries. Only tablecloths, bed lings and even ties were made" (Facebook, N/A) (Figure 3).

Almost every source talk about the technique of the lace, which is still difficult. One of the main specialities of Lefkara Lace is that its back looks the same as the front. It is also a repetition of geometric patterns with only one colour wool and only one ball of wool in a piece. The main patterns are always framed with supporting patterns around them. In a basic version, Dolgu (Filling), Kesme (Cutting), Sarma (Wrapping), Acur and Kenar (Side) knitting techniques are used. In addition, the patterns are based on ethnic patterns (Ekingen, 2016). Due to these main specialities, the lace has always been respected.



Figure 4: Photo from the Past (Cyprus Inform, 2016)

To sum up, even though there are some books, articles and hearsay information about Lefkara Lace, it can be concluded that there is limited amount of information regarding it. Moreover, its usage in Interior decoration and why it is about to become extinct in usage, has not been clearly stated anywhere which creates a gap in the literature.

Methodology

Research Method

The research aim is to understand whether or not the usage of Lefkara Lace in interior decoration is decreasing and if so, to understand the reasons behind this decrease in usage. Empirical research type was selected. Due to lack of documentation, there is no evidence of the usage of Lefkara Lace in the past and the reasons behind this. Therefore, qualitative method was chosen to be used by collecting the main information from Cypriot women, similar to Faiz's and Ekingen's work (Ekingen, 2016) (Faiz, 1993).

As the chosen subject is both about history and culture, there were various methodologies that could be used during the research including historical and ethnographic research methods (Vestbro, Hurol & Wilkinson, 2005). However, the research also includes answering why and how the use of Lefkara Lace has changed over time. For this reason, an Exploratory Case Study method, which begins with Qualitative method and continues with Quantitative method in order to ensure the results, was undertaken. (Baxter, 2008). Open-ended questions were asked to producers and non-producers as interviews and to support the research, open-ended questionnaires were given to randomly selected Cypriot women. In this case, the results from interviews were studied together with supporting questionnaire and observations.

Data Collection

Interviews were done where there were on-going observations during the process as well. The main reason for doing so was the fact that the source of information about the subject is about to get extinct just as the laces' unique patterns. Interviews were done by using semi-structured questions.

In order to support the observations to be more objective, questionnaire was used, too. It was prepared as a very general questionnaire, which asked how people have used Lefkara Lace in their houses. They were done in Turkish and translated in English afterwards.

Sample Size

The study was carried out only in northern part of the island and to collect correct data, only Cypriot women were selected. The number of interviews was not limited to be more flexible and to reach more data, but when the results from them started to repeat each other, they have been stopped with numbers of 4 non-producers and 4 producers of Lefkara Lace. The Cypriot women were selected randomly. Besides these women, for reaching more valuable information; Ekingen who is the writer of the book *Lefkara Nakışı* (Ekingen, 2016) and the owner of Lefkara Corner and Lisaniler, who is the designer of modern versions of Lefkara Lace and the owner of Gambilili shop were interviewed.

Additionally, for observations, there were not any limitations, every kind of interior was aimed to be observed and at the end, six houses and one working place were examined. These were also places where interviews took place. According to State Planning Organization, by 2013 there are more people living

in Nicosia than other cities (Sabah, 2013). Thus, Nicosia was selected as limitation for questionnaire. Since there is no exact number of amounts of Cypriot women in Nicosia, questionnaires were made with 34 Cypriot women, randomly. On the other hand, both interviews and questionnaires were done randomly with different age groups from 25 to 70 to understand each generation's attitude.

Field Study

The interviewees were divided into two groups in order to understand different perspectives. The first group was composed of people who produce Lefkara Lace and the second group was composed of people who do not produce Lefkara Lace. Based on the Coding Technique which is separating the meaningful expressions within the interviews, interviewees' perceptions were grouped and analysed in table format, as seen below, to be able to see the results clearly.

Interviews with Non-producers

Four non-producers who came from different professions were interviewed. Within these four interviewees, only one of them did not have any Lefkara Lace but all of them were definitely interested in it. Their relatives have learnt to make it in the handcraft's courses for women. Only one of these interviewees met with Lefkara Lace in childhood.

She tells the story of how her family has met it: "My mother has one tray which was made by my grandmother. In the past, teachers were really important in the villages. They used to teach women how to cook, how to produce laces, and give classes for students. When my grandmother was pregnant, a teacher came to her village. She was very industrious; she was going to the gardens to work, teaching women to cook and produce laces, also teaching parents how to communicate with their children. She had also taught Lefkara Lace to women to teach the culture. My grandmother really liked her and since she was pregnant, she gave her child the teacher's name. My grandmother saw Lefkara Lace from her, for the first time and for keeping a memory, she produced one piece. Now, my mother has it but we have never used it, in order to protect it due to its high value to us." Almost every interviewee preferred not using it in traditional ways, such as tablecloths because of its high value and the danger of getting damaged. With the change in ways of using, interviewees have started using it more, as smaller products such as trays or coasters, which are under glass covers.

All of the interviewees agree on the change of Lefkara Lace. They think main change has happened in the ways of using it. In the past, they had seen Lefkara Lace as curtains, covers, cloths, suites of furniture (Figure 4 and Figure 5) but nowadays, they see Lefkara Lace as trays, mostly, accessories, jewelleryes, coasters, panels. One interviewee said; "Young generation can use Lefkara Lace which their grandmothers had produced, in very different places." Since the world is getting modernized day-by-day, traditional ways get out of fashion and people prefer modern-style interior decoration.



Figure 5: Bedlinen (Gounesco, N/A)



Figure 6: Interior (Tripadvisor, 2015)

Interviewees believe with these new versions of usages, which actually had been started for tourists' attraction; local people have started to support it more. On the other hand, they also agreed that usages will increase. "I think it won't be used as cloths, trays because our lifestyle has changed a lot. But maybe, as panels, decorative accessories it may be used more." said the interviewee #2.

As interviewee #4 says; “I think we are in a stage that lots of things that are related to culture are denied. It is a stage that directs us to use more modern, global stuff instead of our own culture. I believe that these efforts to provide it to society will end up positively and young people will own Lefkara Lace in order to protect it.” Each interviewee thinks the attitude to Lefkara Lace is bad, but this can be improved by producing modern versions, more functional objects. Also, according to one of the interviewees who is 30 years old, since there are very reachable and fashionable products now, young people do not attempt to learn the handcrafts and spend that much effort.

“Maybe someone who does not know about Lefkara Lace may think that it is expensive but if the given effort is considered, I do not think it is expensive. Think about a painting, how the painter spends time on it and care for brushes, Lefkara Lace is the same. It is an art of making lace on the wires. If we think about how many days a woman spends to make a tray cloth, for example, and how much it costs to make; it can be considered as an expensive product. The endeavour is the most expensive thing.” says interviewee #3 about the cost of Lefkara Lace.

Table1: Perceptions of non-producers

Statements	Number of Interviewee who Agree
In the past, it was produced in bigger scales than now	4
Prefer using it in smaller scales, ex. Trays, coaster, etc.	3
It is expensive and it prevents usage in bigger scales	4
Young people will be interested if usage will be adapted in modern ways	4

Interviews with Producers

The four producers were in the age group of 50 and 70. One of them is a teacher in the courses for women in the villages, another one is a producer who sells laces and other two produce Lefkara Lace for themselves. These two women had learnt to produce it in the courses in the villages (Figure 7). According to them, it has not changed but it became free on adapting. Both of them said it was in bigger scales; suite of furniture, cloths, curtains in the past. Depending on the effort, they couldn't sell their products and prefer giving them as gifts to loved ones. As one of them said; “With all the materials, it is impossible for me to sell it cheaper. I do not even sell it at all. I can give them as gifts but never sell it.”

Other two producers learnt Lefkara Lace in their childhood. Seller learnt from her mother, who was from Luricina (Akıncılar), and the teacher learnt it from a neighbour. The seller has mentioned that it has changed a lot and it became easier, as they have produced it in smaller scales. For the usage in the past both of them agreed it was more used as bigger scales, as for actually using it in the houses but now, young generation does not prefer that, they choose using it as trays more. Both of them said that they have used it in their houses, as both decorations, like tablecloths, bedcovers and functional objects, like trays. However, due to its difficulties to take care of, they have removed large amount of them. As they said, the cotton was different in the past; it had more quality so that it did not get deformed easily.

Compared to non-producers' interviewees, these women think, Lefkara Lace production will decrease. Young people do not have enough time and patience to learn and produce. On the other hand, they mentioned the usages will decrease too.



Figure 7: Woman with Lefkara Lace (Photo taken by author)

Table2: Perceptions of producers

Statement	Number of Interviewee who Agree
In the past, it was produced in bigger scales than now	4
Prefer using it in both bigger and smaller scales	2
Due to amount of effort, prefer keeping it as a memory	4
Usage will increase in functional ways	4

Interviews with Şenay Ekingen and Aydan Lisaniler

Şenay Ekingen learnt Lefkara Lace when she migrated to Luricina in 1964. The other migrators, from Dali and Bodamyra which have been the centre of the Lefkara Lace; brought Lefkara Lace to Luricina. As she has researched, it is "imprisoned in the villages" which makes lots of information stay hidden. She mentioned the usage of it was mainly the big-scaled covers, but she said that only wealthy people had it, in the past, due to its materials' prices, the effort and taking care of it. "Lefkara Lace has always been related to money, it was not seen in every house in the past. Also, it is made up of linen, which requires good care" she explained (Figure 7).

Every region had its own unique patterns; thus, the traders were asking for these specific patterns from these different regions, during the migrations. With this way, it has been protected. Nowadays, she is concerned about the future of Lefkara Lace. In terms of today's usages of Lefkara Lace; she only produces and sells traditional versions, which are mostly bought as formal gifts by locals and by tourists.



Figure 8: Lefkara Lace Tablecloth (Everett, 2012)

Compared to Şenay Ekingen, Aydan Lisaniler has designed modern versions of Lefkara Lace; as she says “I have started thinking how I can sell my products. I began to produce things in smaller scales, because the cost is directly related with the scale, if it is bigger, it costs higher. I was thinking to produce things that can be affordable. It is important to sell these things to tourists; they carry our culture over the world. Thus, I produced jewellerys, like necklaces, rings. That is how I started adapting cultural things into modern versions.” She started designing new versions two years ago and then, especially the necklaces have spread to all over the island.

As she says, young generation has started to be more interested in new versions and also in their culture. Now, there are lots of people who are producing Lefkara Lace almost in every village. “Some of them are only replica of Lefkara Lace, the fabric is the same and the buyers, who do not know, do not understand the difference.” In spite of this, she thinks that spreading our culture to the world is exciting.

Table3: Perceptions of Şenay Ekingen and Aydan Lisaniler

Statement	Şenay Ekingen	Aydan Lisaniler
In the past, it was produced in bigger scales than now	X	X
Prefer using it in both bigger and smaller scales	X	X
Modernizing is promising		X
With accelerated production, it loses quality	X	

Observation

Since the starting point was observational, observations continued during the research. Seven interiors where the interviews took place had been examined and shown in the following table.

Table4: Observation of different interior decorations

Statement	Number of Interiors who Support
Having modern-style interior decoration	7
Using Lefkara Lace as part of interior decoration as covers, curtains, etc.	1
Using Lefkara Lace as small objects, such as trays, coasters, etc.	4
Prefer modern versions of Lefkara Lace	4

Questionnaire

It was done to support the observation generally, as there was no chance to examine lots of interior decorations in Nicosia. Within thirty-four women, twenty-four of them knew Lefkara Lace generally from their childhood. Eighteen were interested but only three were producing it. Twenty of them thought it has been changed over years, mostly in usage, variety and scales.

Table5: Usages of Lefkara Lace in the past and now

The usages of Lefkara Lace in the past	Number of interviewees who used it	The usages of Lefkara Lace now	Number of interviewees who use it
Suite of Furniture	1	Panels	1
Cloths	8	Jewelleries	3
Bedcovers	3	Trays	20
Dowries	4	Coasters	15
Big scale objects, everywhere in the house	10	Souvenir Products	15

Table6: Frequency of usages of Lefkara Lace in the past and now

The frequency in the past	Number of people	The frequency now	Number of people
Difficult to find	3	Less frequent	15
More frequent	16	More frequent	5



Figure 8: Statistics

Although sixteen of them mentioned that they use it in their houses, they use it mostly as trays, not as part of interior decoration.



Figure 9: Lefkara Lace Tray (Lefkara Corner, N/A)

Data Analysis

Based on the interviews, it is observed that even though Cyprus is a small island; handcrafts have been regional. Cypriots have had different laces based on their regions.

Everyone agreed that the usage of the lace was more in bigger scales in the past. The reasons that it is getting smaller are mainly due to the amount of effort it needs which increases the cost and the given value making people want to keep it safe. The modernizing world is another issue, not only about Lefkara Lace but about all handcrafts.

For some, the new versions are against the nature of the Lefkara Lace, but they have become very popular, especially for young people. Now, interviewees are happy about using it in smaller scales, since it provides better market and also makes the prices lower; which can be a solution on the effect of cost and on lack of interest.

While producers think the production will decrease, non-producers mainly think that production of Lefkara Lace will increase but in more functional ways. Both perceptions have their own advantages and disadvantages; if the production in traditional ways decrease, the usage will decrease directly because people will want to keep it safe as a memory from their mothers. However, the given value of the lace will be higher. If the production in modern ways increases, the usage of the lace will increase accordingly, which is also a great way of cherishing culture; but it will definitely lose its value and be ordinary.

According to important names, Şenay Ekingen and Aydan Lisaniler, the production will increase. Ekingen thinks this increase may cause it to lose its quality and roots while Lisaniler thinks that it can be a great, modern way of using and presenting Lefkara Lace.

In terms of perceiving and caring about Lefkara Lace, people value it more than they did in the past. The given value can be understood by people's not preferring to use it with the aim of protecting it. These have caused it to be produced in smaller scales and decreased the usage as parts of interior decoration.



Figure 10: Lefkara Lace Bag (Lefkara Corner, N/A)

Figure 11: Lefkara Lace Coasters (Lefkara Corner, N/A)

Figure 12: Lefkara Lace Necklace (Blogcu, 2014)

Conclusion

This article has analysed Lefkara Lace in terms of its place in interior decoration from the past to the present. Since there are no written documents about this subject, the main aim of the article was to reach examples and stories of the lace; which was achieved by doing ten interviews with producers, non-producers and Şenay Ekingen and Aydan Lisaniler. These interviews were supported by observations and questionnaire.

It has been concluded that in the past, it was used in the houses as work in bigger scales such as covers, curtains, tablecloths. Moreover, due to its high cost and the high effort used in the production and the extra care necessary to keep it safe, they were mostly owned by wealthy people to keep it as a memory for next generations. For these reasons, the usage of it has changed. It has started to be placed under glass covers in order to protect this special work and the scales are getting smaller because producers save time and effort. Also, the smaller scales make the prices lower.

Besides, with globalization, it has been modernized by using different colours and new usage versions, such as jewellerys and accessories. Despite the arguments that the modern ways are taking over the traditions; it is shown with this research that the modern ways encouraged everyone, especially young generations, to use Lefkara Lace even more. Since our way of living has been changed, Lefkara Lace may not make a comeback to the interior decoration of the houses; while it can be predicted that it will be seen a lot as small objects, all around. However, although modernization has directed Lefkara Lace to another place and due to the gap in the written documents about Lefkara Lace, it is feared that it may lose its quality and history in time.

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