Turkey

The history of crafts in Anatolia can be traced back to 6500–5500 B.C.E. to Çatalhöyük, a Neolithic settlement where pottery making, painting, and embellishing were far ahead of other civilizations in the Near East and the Aegean world (Erbek 2002, 15). The native Hatti settlement that invented the potter’s wheel, the highly aesthetic craftsmanship of the Hittites, Phrygians, Urartians, and Lydians, and later on Roman sculpture, Seljuk carpet weaving and tile making activities, the cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire, must have had significant influence on the development of handicraft traditions in the Republic of Turkey.

In Turkey today, the craft production associated with women comprises carpet and kilim weaving, quilting, crochet work, lace-making, knitting, needlework (edging embroidery), tatting, hand-dying, basketry, doll making, frame embroidery, knitting socks, knotting, marbling, tile painting, and textile weaving on home looms. It represents the skill, creativity, and imagination combined with the knowledge that mostly rural women acquire from their female kin or network in their early childhood. Besides the religious and cultural significance of these crafts in daily usage, they also serve as a medium for nonverbal communication through which women find a way to express their feelings within the traditional social structure dominated by religious and patriarchal values. As opposed to intergenerational transmission of the craft repertoire among women in rural areas, there are schools, courses, workshops, university departments, and community training centers that teach traditional handicrafts as an economic or leisure activity, as a hobby, or as a career in the urban areas.

Internal migration and the rapid change in traditional economic and cultural structures since the 1950s resulted in the emergence in big cities of squatter settlements inhabited by rural migrants. Rural women are categorized as unskilled labor force in the market economy. Their handicraft skills became an income generating activity as they engaged in home-based production, formed part of a chain of production, or worked in textile and carpet factories in the cities. Thus, handicraft production for domestic usage became a commodity.
in the market. Lack of proficiency and education needed to attain jobs in the formal sector forced women to work in the informal sector. The structural changes in the economic policies of the 1980s resulted in "flexible" forms of production on the way to industrialization, namely "the informalization and decentralization of employment, whereby firms rely more on part-time, casual or temporary workers, subcontracting production and/or using homeworkers" (Çağatay and Berik 1994, 78).

Statistics show that the participation of women in the labor market is 25.4 percent overall, whereas it is 18.3 percent in the rural areas and 36.7 percent in the urban areas (DIE 2004). "Unpaid and informal sector work are largely uncounted in labor force and national income account. As a result they remain statistically invisible and despite their importance, are generally ignored in national human resource and economic policies and in budgetary priorities" (Esim 2000, 8). Thus, traditional handicraft production is one of the forms of home-based activity of women. There are also state or NGO supported cooperatives as well as self-employment. The transformation of the traditional knowledge of women in handicrafts to paid work dates back to the 1980s: "policy oriented studies concerning women in development have emphasized the importance of women in paid work as a way to improve their socio-economic position. This concern has led to the development of income-generating projects, most notably in handicrafts, for women in the 3rd World as a means of incorporating them into the development process and alleviating poverty" (Berik 1987, 1).

Turkish crafts have a distinguished place within world handicraft production and heritage due to their authenticity, functionality, variety, richness, and high quality. In the early periods of modern Turkey, a special emphasis was given to the continuation and preservation of authenticity and revival of the cultural heritage; however, today, many crafts are either disappearing due to the death of their producers or have to compete with cheap and less time-consuming factory goods. State and local authorities develop and initiate projects for the protection and continuation of these handicrafts via workshops in folk training centers and supply marketplaces to sell them. There are also women's cooperatives, NGOs, and other organizations that promote women's crafts as an economic activity (see related websites). A committee in the parliament works for the development and protection of these crafts for their more effective utilization in cultural and economic areas, including forming a cultural heritage databank, supporting e-commerce, and incorporating handicraft education into the public school curricula.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

H. O. Barista, Turkish handicrafts, Ankara 1985.
M. Erkek, From Çatalhöyük to the present Anatolian motifs, Ankara 2002.
H. Eskek, Turkish traditional art today, Bloomington, Ind. 1993.
Ç. Kaptanlıoğlu (ed.), Sex roles, family, and community in Turkey, Bloomington, Ind. 1982.
I. Öztürk, Geleneksel Türk el sanatları giriş, İzmir 2003.

Related Websites
<www.albcnisanatci.com>, Grassroots women hand-system model handicraft production for the market.
<www.anatolianartisans.org>, Non-profit organization, providing support for the revival of cultural traditions and artisans of Turkey.
<www.lobug.com>, Woman-run carpet cooperative in Orselli.
<www.gapculturalheritage.com>, EU funded Cultural Heritage Development Program in Southeast Anatolia.
<www.gap.gov.tr>, Multi-purpose Community Centers (CATOM).
<www.kulturturizm.gov.tr>, Turkish ministry of culture and tourism official site.