



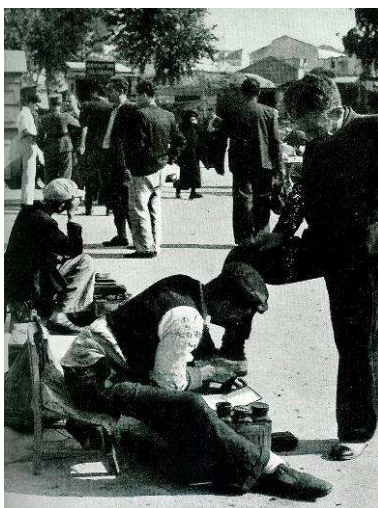
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Cretan Handcraft: Leather ware and Weave work

Weave- and Leather goods from Crete are on focus of the souvenir shops today. Leather goods (e.g. shoes, boots and belts) are offered surprisingly inexpensive. Competition forces at low prices and profit margins are accordingly low. Even custom sandals, offered, for example made in the "leather-mile" of Chania, cost a fraction of the manufacture "at home". Much looks like Souvenir-"Industry" and the traditional, small craft are rare – but they still exist! In small workshops, often stashed in narrow roads in the cities, and in the mountain villages of Crete the tradition is still alive!



In Chania there yet still exists a boot maker which draws the typical Cretan, hand-stitched and almost indestructible boots: they are part of the traditional Cretan costume of men, but are still worn in everyday life by "well-off" mountain farmers.



At the beginning of the tourist boom many Cretans changed from craft companies in the emerging services, especially the young ones. But also the face of services changed. Shoe- and bootblack (such as on the picture from 1948 in front of the market in Chania) you search today in vain.

Today's services are seasonal and are mainly in the restaurant and hospitality industry, as well as in the souvenir shop. From the craft industries only a few managed to enter profitable in the souvenir shop, such as for example, weaving products made by working from home.

Pictures: U. Kluge (12/2004)

Fig.source (left) from: STÜRZL, E. & FEICHTENBERGER, A. (1948): **KRETA** - Die Insel im Herzen der alten Welt. – 153 S., 96 Abb., 1 Karte; Verlag L.W. Seidel & Sohn, Wien.

The handicraft weaving, which in its current form dates back to the 19th Century, probably has its origins in much earlier times. The weaving is passed from mother to daughter. Up to 1870 the patterns are mostly geometric, whereby the diamond shape dominates. There are local variations on Crete such as paired together coherent diamonds that are characteristic of the Centre of the island. Motifs that are inspired by nature and historical events appear later. In the mountain villages of Crete, women still produce in many places hand-woven goods for the Interior: Carpets, wall hangings and bedspreads.



Weaving has not changed for half a century: manufacturing technique of weave applications remains the same; see picture left (2004) and right (1948) in Anogia, the Cretan "Mecca" for weavings.

Pictures: (left): *U. Kluge* (12/2004) / right: *A. Feichtenberger* (7/1948)



Cretan carpets have almost always rug format; larger are sewn together from several panels. This is due to the size of the looms that allow only a specific width. The Cretan carpet production centres are Anogia and Axos. Their woven goods are vital for these villages and therefore a loom is in many homes. The living room of families are often also workshop and showroom. What is produced here can be bought everywhere in Crete, but not cheaper - and the people of course prefer to sell directly to tourists because they pay usually more as the purchaser of the gift shops. So you hear "come and lock" which also often usually black dressed women.

Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling

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