

Textile heritage in rural and mountain environments: material and intangible dimension. Continuities and evolutions.

Field of Study : Anthropology, Arts and Culture, History

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ABSTRACT

The textile heritage has barely been investigated, much less in rural and mountain areas. It is a field of study with few methodological reference works, perhaps because it is a feminized heritage and, therefore, relegated. However, it is an object of study of great interest for several reasons. Firstly, because it presents in an indivisible way a material and an immaterial dimension, which can be a paradigm for the study of other tangible heritages. Secondly, because it includes both the processes and techniques of growing and collecting raw materials, manufacturing fabrics, and making and decorating them. Thirdly, because it is related to everyday life and its narrative, but also to festive and identity expressions and their narratives. Finally, because it is a heritage that is constantly evolving, even open to the innovations of current designers. Generating a reference methodology for the study of such a complex heritage, therefore, is a very important objective. On the other hand, investigating this heritage in rural and mountain areas gives the opportunity to assess adaptive and sustainable responses to this environment. The textile industry is responsible for an enormous ecological footprint both in the manufacturing and management of textile waste. The methodology required for research of this type has to be based on the analysis of very varied contents and sources, among which ethnographic field work is essential.



Research aims and methodology

The ITEM of the UPPA has a long history in the study of the intangible heritage of mountain and rural areas. In this area he has studied, for example, the continuities and evolutions of mountain sports. Proposing the study of textile heritage gives the opportunity, in addition to addressing a type of heritage that has been little studied, to integrate its material and immaterial dimensions, as well as studying the evolution of artisanal products and techniques.

The main objectives of this research proposal are as follows:

- Locate and identify bearers of knowledge and techniques associated with textile heritage: create a census of informants and artisans.
- Inventory and catalog the assets of textile heritage in rural and mountainous areas.
- Propose safeguarding measures for the textile heritage of these areas.
- Promote the valorization of this heritage.

The main research questions revolve around the vitality, intergenerational transmission, and viability of the knowledge and artisanal techniques associated with textile heritage.

More specifically, the aim is to answer a series of questions:

- Who are the bearers of this heritage?
- What are the main assets in the rural and mountainous areas? Is there vitality and transmission of traditional knowledge and artisanal techniques?
- How is the transmission done? Is there economic viability?
- What risks and dangers does this heritage face? What safeguarding and protection measures have been taken? In light of best practices in other territories, what measures can be taken in the future?
- How has this heritage been valued? Is there invisibility due to gender? Is there invisibility due to belonging to a domestic social sphere? What valorization measures have been taken? In light of best practices in other territories, what measures can be taken in the future?

The research methodology, pending a more detailed design, is outlined as follows:

1. Starting with an in-depth study of documentation, literature, and multimedia sources, assets, knowledge, and artisanal techniques related to textile heritage in rural and mountainous areas of Navarra will be identified. Likewise, good safeguarding and valorization practices related to it in other territories will be identified.
2. This initial phase will be complemented by fieldwork that allows for obtaining new ethnographic sources through in-depth interviews with bearers and artisans. Virtual ethnography will also be used to capture oral and audiovisual sources on the internet and social media.
3. Creation of a geolocated census of bearers and artisans using a digital tool.
4. Using content analysis methodology, an inventory of knowledge, techniques, and assets will be developed. They will be geolocated on a digital atlas. A thorough study of dangers and risks, as well as safeguarding measures already taken, will be conducted.
5. As a conclusion to the study, a final diagnosis of this textile heritage will be made, and safeguarding and valorization measures inspired by identified best practices will be proposed.



Relevance and added-value of the proposed research in relation to the current state of knowledge

This is a groundbreaking research that, for the first time, addresses textile heritage from both its material and immaterial dimensions. This integrated perspective will enable the inventory and cataloging of the assets of this heritage, allowing the establishment of safeguarding measures to preserve techniques and traditions.

Furthermore, it will shed light on a heritage, textile heritage, which may be undervalued, perhaps because its carriers and transmitters are predominantly women. This gender-focused approach to heritage seems of great importance and necessity in heritage research, especially in domestic and family realms that are often overlooked.

Lastly, including the valorization of textile heritage from a perspective of sustainable development in its most modern conception, which includes not only environmental factors but also sociocultural, economic viability, and transgenerational transmission factors, will turn this research into a tool or resource for territorial development strategies. Following this research, I hope to propose a methodology for the study, safeguarding, and valorization of textile heritage from an inclusive perspective. Additionally, I would like it to serve as a transferable model for addressing this heritage in other territories and to generate a model for studying other heritage that is often neglected or less visible due to reasons related to the intimate or domestic social sphere, or gender.

Interdisciplinary nature of the research together with the alignment with the CHORAL programme and complementarity expertise of the teams

The CHORAL program, in its Cultural Heritage Center, includes lines of research that fit perfectly with this proposal:

- **Study and preservation of tangible CH:** visual arts, monuments and buildings, archaeological sites, palaeontology, industrial archaeology, places of memory, museums and collections, art conservation and restoration, legislation for the protection of cultural and natural heritage.

As has already been said, textile heritage is a cultural heritage of great scientific interest, because it proposes the integration of the material and immaterial dimension. On the other hand, from a historical point of view, it is also related to industrial heritage and the first industrial revolution. Finally, from the point of view of sustainability, it is also a relevant study.

- **Intangible CH and identity narratives:** oral traditions, romance languages and literature, performing arts (music, dance, drama), rituals, travels, cultural identity, religion, collective and individual memory, migrations, vulnerable communities, gender studies, transnational history, values, human rights...

Inventorying and recording traditional techniques and knowledge regarding clothing is a task that remains to be done, perhaps because it belongs to a more familiar or home-based social environment, and especially feminine. Textile crafts incorporate iconographic designs and symbols of great aesthetic and identity value that can be studied in their historical continuity, but also in the evolutions and adaptations to the current moment. Finally, the way of dressing has been, for centuries, a sign of social identity, which has distinguished social classes and has contributed to a multimodal narrative that distinguishes the elites.

- **Enhancement and dissemination of cultural and natural heritage:** tourism and valorisation, education, communication, heritage management, digitisation/digital tools, storytelling, institutions and heritage.



Traditional designs and techniques need special protection that WIPO has begun to outline. Current designs based on ethnic motifs are not always respectful of the collective rights of the carrier communities. In other cases, however, they represent a factor for the economic valorization of local crafts.

- **Innovation policies for the development of marginalised areas:** natural heritage and cultural landscapes, climate impact on mountain/rural areas, flora, agriculture, and landscape, culture and food, fauna, livestock farming and biodiversity sectors to ensure the economic strength of mountain regions and cross-border communities.

By focusing the study on these rural and mountain areas, the adaptation and uniqueness of the textile heritage of those areas is sought.

Output plan including publication and dissemination activities

The main scientific publication is a methodology for inventorying, cataloguing, safeguarding and valuing textile heritage exemplified by the study of rural and mountain areas.

Secondly, the social uses of textile heritage in those areas will be explored.

As for dissemination, it would be interesting, in addition to informative publications, to hold a traveling exhibition. In the scientific field, a seminar or conference on this topic would also be quite novel.

Estimated schedule

The first milestone is training in intangible cultural heritage: inventory, mediation and valorization.

This phase will be led by the UPPA ITEM (Month 12).

Previous training in the material dimension of textile heritage will also be necessary (Month 18).

The UPNA will work especially on historical and sociological aspects of the uses of textile heritage (Month 24).

Research: documentation, field work and analysis of contents and sources (Month 32). Writing the results of the investigation and defense (Month 36).

