

Multiple Aspects of Beads

Past, Present and Future of Traditional Jewelry



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The exhibition *All the Faces of Beads – The Past, Present, and Future of Traditional Jewelry*, curated by Bojana Poljaković Popović and Sara Vladić Ružić, aims to showcase the diversity of traditional bead jewelry, while also telling the story of three artists whose works are featured in the exhibition. Vinka Mareković from Croatia, Ivan Terzić from Serbia, and Antonio Stojčeski from North Macedonia – three nations, three generations, and three different life stories, all connected by a shared love for traditional bead jewelry from around the world. Through its display, the exhibition introduces visitors to various jewelry-making techniques and highlights the cultural richness of Croatia, Serbia, and North Macedonia, as well as some distant locations from across the globe. The exhibition also includes personal stories from the jewelry artists, offering insight into their beginnings, interests, work, and future plans regarding traditional jewelry. All exhibited pieces were created by the mentioned artists, both for their own collections and for the collection of the Traditional Cultural Heritage Centre.

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Vinka Mareković

Vinka Mareković was born on December 24, 1952, in Osijek. From an early age, she began engaging in various traditional techniques, as she says she was lucky to have a mother who loved sewing, embroidery, crochet, and knitting, and who passed her knowledge on to her four daughters. This made needlework very familiar and dear to Vinka.

She has always loved folklore, and her greatest joy was wearing traditional costumes and taking part in parades or performances. She joined folklore groups during her school years and is now a long-time member of the Cultural and Artistic Association *Prigorec* from Sesvetski Kraljevec. It was for the needs of this folklore group that she started making traditional jewelry, and she began to take this craft more seriously 25 years ago. In order to create accurate replicas of traditional jewelry, she attended a jewelry-making course at the Narodno sveučilište Dubrava, Zagreb. At first, she focused exclusively on Croatian traditional jewelry made from glass beads, including jewelry from Croatian communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Vojvodina. Once she had recreated all the Croatian jewelry she could find, she expanded her work to include jewelry from all around the world. Vinka is constantly motivated and discovers a new necklace nearly every day, trying to decipher how it was made. She is particularly proud of her first *Samobor kraluš* necklace, which for a long time was the "queen" of her collection. Others followed, but this one remained her first love.

Professionally, Vinka worked as an electrical engineer at the company *Končar* for 30 years. She points out that her technical background has always driven her to make jewelry as authentic as



possible. For each piece, she strives to create a design plan and preserve the original crafting techniques, ensuring the final product closely resembles the original. Over the years, she has mastered many techniques that help her "decode" how different pieces were made. She sources original pieces from museums, from the folk costume lending collection of the Traditional Cultural Heritage Centre, and from books on traditional dress. Her research has often led her to collaborate with the Prigorje Museum in Sesvete, the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb and other cities, and the Cultural Heritage Centre in Zagreb. People often bring her jewelry pieces from family collections to examine. In many cases, these are damaged, allowing her to study the original techniques used in their creation. As for materials, working with authentic ones is nearly impossible today, so she uses substitutes: glass beads instead of coral, synthetic thread instead of yarn, and fishing line instead of horsehair. The hardest part is finding the right bead colors, but she understands that tradition is a living thing — it evolves and adapts to contemporary conditions, so changes are inevitable.

She is confident that this craft has a future. The many participants of her jewelry-making workshops — some of whom now teach their own classes and pass on the knowledge — are proof of that. She is very proud of their work. Vinka is a highly active and respected educator in this field, as evidenced by the numerous workshops she has led at the People's Open University in Sesvete, the Dubrava Cultural Center, elementary schools, cultural institutions, and public events in Zagreb. One of her most significant contributions is through the project *Hrvatska Etnoriznica* organized by the Cultural Heritage Centre, where she has been a demonstrator for the past 14 years. Another important collaboration was with the Center for Culture of the Public Open University Dubrava, through which she participated in three European projects. These projects allowed her to exchange knowledge and experiences about traditional jewelry-making with partners from Poland, Portugal, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic — countries she also visited during the project. She is especially proud that, through a European project, the skill of making traditional jewelry was introduced into the curriculum of the School of Fashion and Design in Zagreb, where she led practical classes as an external associate. Her workshops today have an international scope and are held in several countries, including Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Montenegro. She proudly showcases the results of her work and has taken part in many group exhibitions. Notable among them are the annual exhibitions at the Oblok Gallery in Sesvete, the Travno Cultural Center, the Croatian House in Vienna, the Konavle House in Čilipi, galleries in Pécs and the museum in Mohács in

Hungary, the Stara Skula Gallery in Govedari on the island of Mljet, exhibitions in Tivat, Montenegro, as well as in Rome and Molise, Italy.

Đerdan and Kraluš Necklaces and Beads – Traditional Croatian Jewelry

Mihaela Živić, MA in ethnology and cultural anthropology

Traditional jewelry has a special place in the Croatian traditional heritage. It is not only an ornament, but also a symbol of social status, a ritual object and an identity mark. The variety of jewelry reflects the complex history, regional differences, religious influences and folk customs. Jewelry made of glass beads, present in many parts of Croatia as an important part of female costumes and rituals, especially in Slavonia, Baranya, Posavina, Moslavina, and among the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, stands out within the diverse spectrum of ornamental forms.

The glass beads, locally known as *perle*, *perlice*, or *perline*, first appeared back in the 18th century when they became more easily accessible due to increased trade and imports from central Europe. Necklaces made of beads – known as *kraluš*, *đerdan*, *redaljka*, etc. – were an important part of festive female costumes, especially the wedding dresses.

Bead necklaces were particularly popular in Slavonia and Syrmia, where they were made by braiding the glass beads into regular patterns, most often geometric or floral. *Kraluš*, neckpiece worn close to the neck, often had geometrical, floral, or symbolical patterns and was used as a sort of laced collar, while *đerdan* was a multi-layered necklace with beads stranded on silk or cotton, sometimes adorned with metal crucifixes, medallions or coins (Vrtovec, 1985).

Beads were an important element of everyday life for women, but they also had symbolic significance to protect from curses and express belonging to a community. The colors in these ornaments were not chosen randomly – red symbolized vitality and protection, blue stood for spirituality, white for purity, while darker hues were a symbol of maturity or mourning. The ornamentation of the *kraluš* was often abstract, but it contained elements of local significance – crosses, floral stylization, sun motifs, stars – anything that reflected the world as seen by village women.

The art of bead jewelry making was exclusive for women, and was transferred through oral tradition and practical learning. Women made jewelry for themselves, their daughters and by special commission, and each artisan left her own mark through the rhythm of colors, density of threads and finishing touches. The jewelry was a matter of pride, but also an economic resource: it was traded, sold, or kept as family heirloom.

The beads were made from all sorts of materials, primarily from (Venetian) glass, and less commonly from ceramics, porcelain or corals. The techniques included:

- Braiding the beads in patterns (*kraluš*).
- Stringing the beads in multi-layered necklaces (*đerdan*).
- Combinations with metal crosses, medallions containing images of saints, coins, and ribbons.

The jewelry was an important indicator of material wealth. Also, women adorned themselves the most in the period leading up to their marriage, i.e. as maidens. This custom was also documented in many songs (Klikić, 2024). The beads were especially important in wedding customs. According to the catalogue called *The bride in the Croatian wedding tradition*, the bride's attire contained as many ornaments as possible – complex necklaces, *kraluš*, *redaljka*, crosses and goldwork. Jewelry played a double role: it was a symbol of a family's prestige, but also a symbolic means for protecting the bride during her transition from a maiden to married life.

Something similar was recorded during research on traditional jewelry of the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where jewelry was an important part of wedding attires, especially in the area along the Sava river, in central Bosnia, and western Herzegovina (Martić, 2006).

Nowadays, the beads are a subject of scholastic interests, as well as of cultural revival. There are numerous workshops, ethnic design projects and museum activities dedicated to the transfer of information on this form of traditional women's creativity. Their role is now recognized as an important part of intangible cultural heritages, which is confirmed by activities conducted by relevant institutions.

In the modern context, the beads surpass their function and become a symbol of women's handicrafts, history, and local aesthetics, while maintaining the most important aspect – i.e. the story of community, family, and women.

Conclusion

Beads in the traditional Croatian ornamentation are not simply a decoration – they are a symbol of identity and history. Their splendor, colors and rhythms bear witness to generations of women who proudly wore them and made them. The *kraluš*, *đerdan* and *redaljka* pieces are infused with the history of the village, family, and fates. This is why bead jewelry is not simply an item of aesthetics – it is a narrative, ornament, and symbol of the vivid cultural memory.

Techniques of Glass Bead Jewelry Making

Vinka Mareković

The need for adorning has always been present among humans. People made jewelry out of bones, stones, wood, shells, semi-precious stones, amber, pearls, corals, and metal beads.

In the early 19th century, jewelry makers started using glass beads made in Italian, German, and Czechian factories.

In this region, jewelry was primarily made of corals or colorful glass beads of various sizes, often complemented with silver or golden coins or cowrie shells.

Various techniques were used, and were present in all parts of the world.

1. Stringing

Beads are strung using a needle and thread, thus creating a single or multiple lines. When strung on multiple lines, the beads used were often larger and made of blown glass, so that the jewelry would not be too heavy.

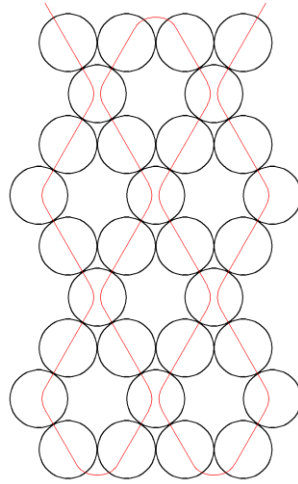
Sometimes home-made yarn was used instead of thread.

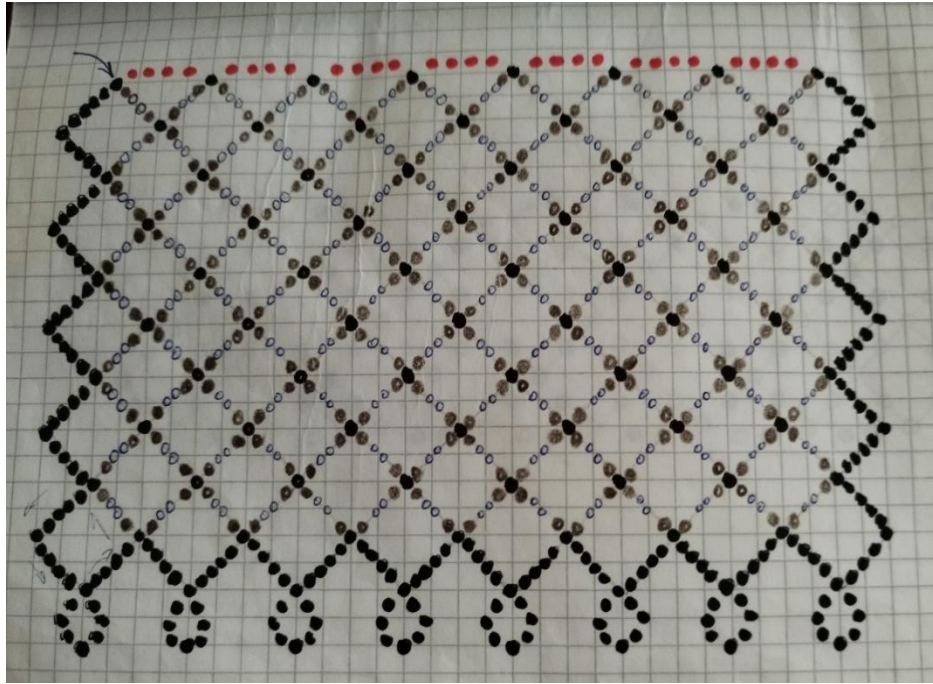


A coral necklace from Prigorje

2. Web making

A needle and thread are used to connect the beads into a web according to a pattern.

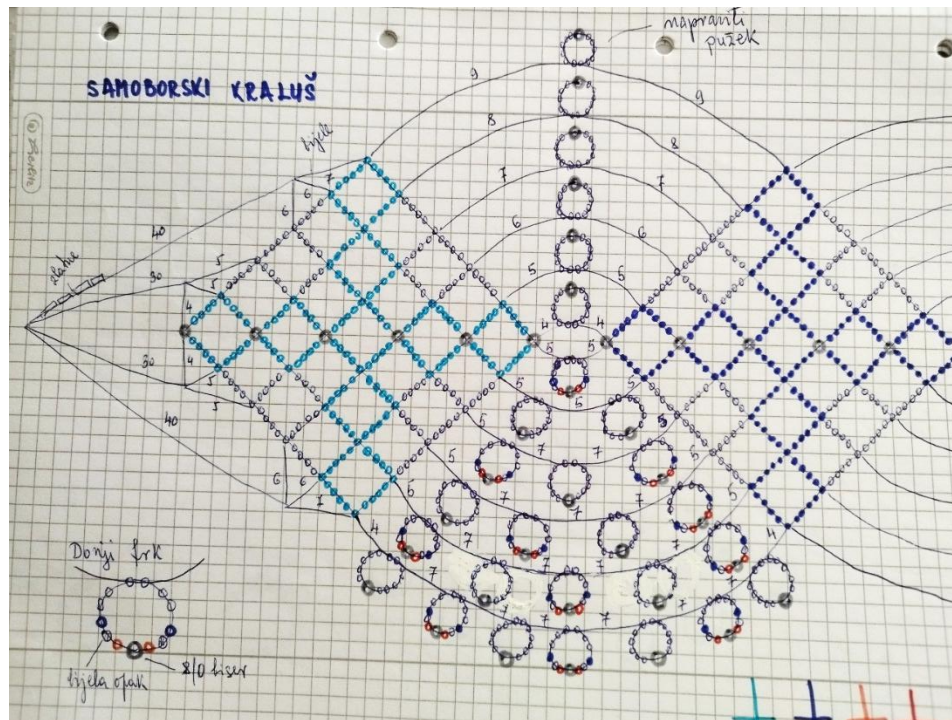




A pattern to make a necklace typical for Baranya, web making technique.

3. Multi-line braiding

In northwestern Croatia jewelry is made by braiding multiple line (4 – 12 lines). In the past, horsehair was used, but nowadays fishing line of 0,25 to 0,30 mm is the main material. The lines are braided to form a web according to a pattern.



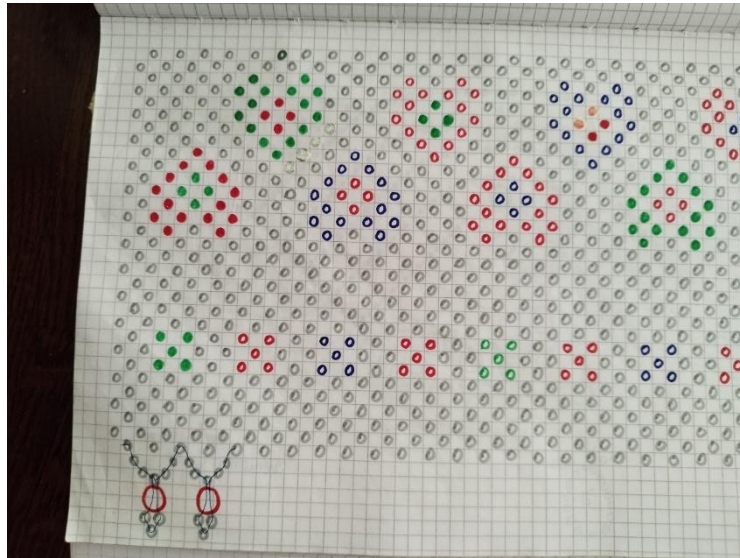
Pattern for multi-line braiding



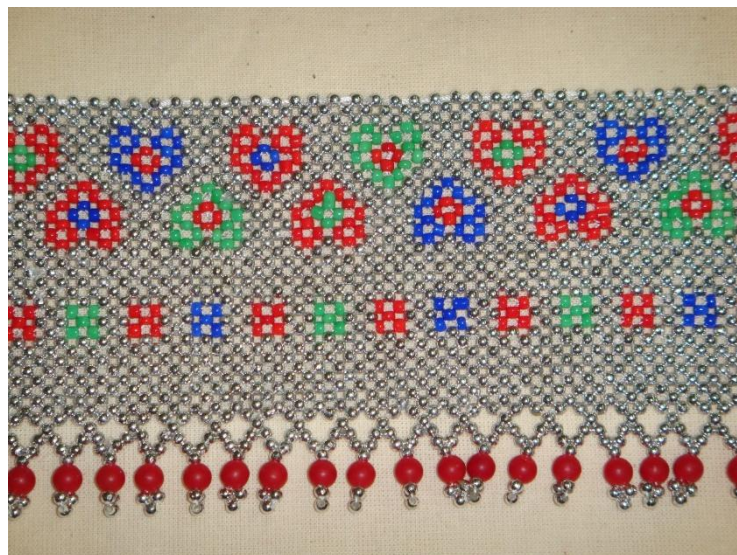
The best known jewelry made using this technique is the *kraluž* from Samobor, which is a registered intangible cultural asset in Croatia.

4. Stringing with two needles

To make this jewelry, two needles and thread are needed. The thread passes through a bead making little crosses that are then connected to each other. The technique is often called „monastery knitting”.



Pattern for stringing with two needles



A detail from a Baranya necklace made by stringing with two needles

5. Weaving

A warp of thread is made on a mini loom, which is then interweaved with beads strung on the weft. The beads are tightened by passing a needle and thread through all beads on the other side.



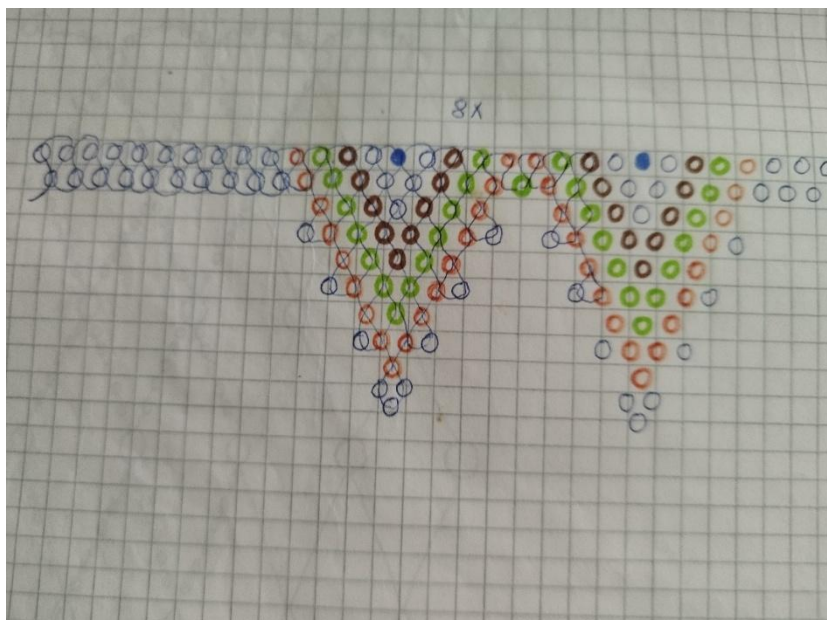
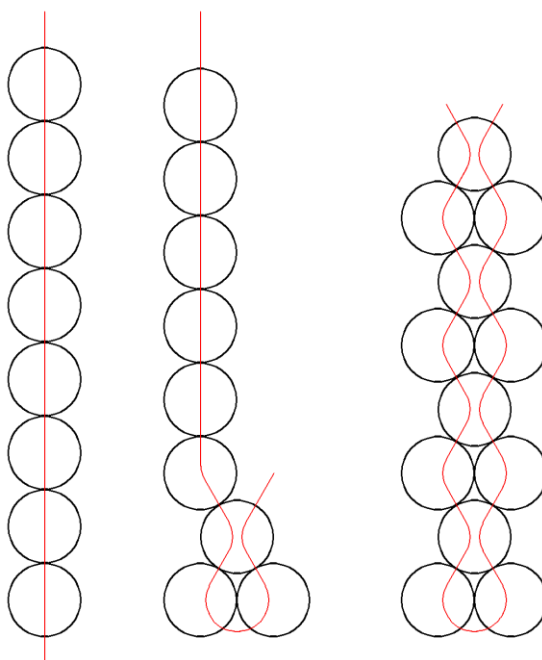
Pattern for woven bracelets



Working on a mini loom

6. Peyote stitch

Beads are strung using a needle and thread in a way that in each column a bead is added and then one skipped and passing through the next.



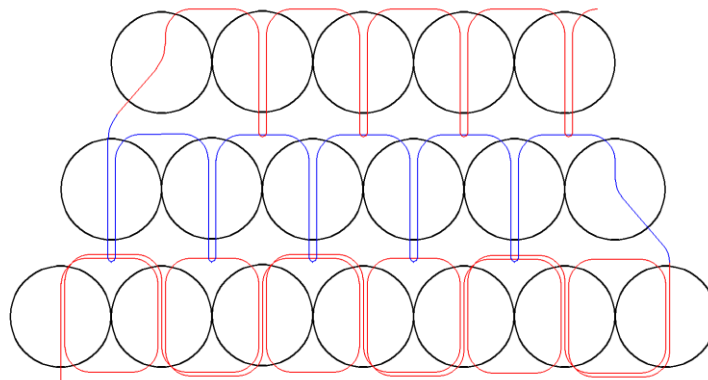
Pattern for a necklace from Čadavica



A necklace from Čađavica (Podravina) using the peyote stitch technique

7. *Brick stitch*

Beads are stacked like bricks using a needle and thread, which means that the thread in every new row is not passed through the beads below, but rather loops around the thread between the two beads.



Pattern for the brick stitch

8. Crocheting

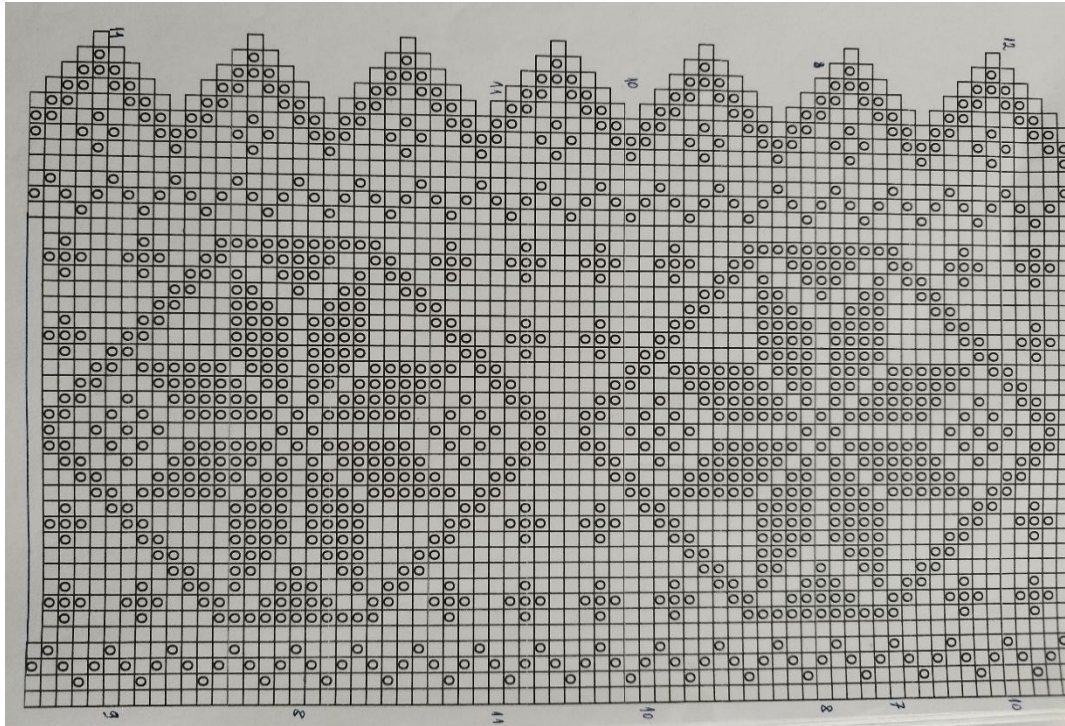
Beads are strung on crochet yarn using the single crochet by placing a new bead after every loop and yarning over it.



Guja necklace from Usora, Bosnia and Herzegovina

9. Knitting

Beads are strung on knitting yarn and then knitted using two needles and the flat stitch. The beads are placed and knitted according to a pattern. This is used for adorning *šticla* bracelets and socks, as well as aprons and belts in some regions.



Šticla bracelet knitting pattern



Šticla bracelets

10. Patching

In this technique, the beads are sewn onto a plush ribbon or an item of clothing. They can be sewn in one by one, or a piece of jewelry can be made from the beads and then sewn onto clothing.



On the left: Female jewelry from Turopolje
On the right: A detail from a necklace from Baranya



On the left: A detail from a *parta* headpiece from Posavina
On the right: A detail from a woman's belt from Kordun



Necklace *tumbalki*
Rodopi
Bulgaria



Women's
necklace
Vrnjavokolo
Kosovo



Women's necklace
Zambezi river
Mozambique



Necklace *tumbalki*
Bulgaria



knitted bracelets *šticle*
west Slavonia
Croatia



Knitted bracelets *šticle*
Slavonski Brod
Croatia



Knitted bracelets *šticle*
Bizovac
Croatia



Women's knitted bracelets
Lithuania

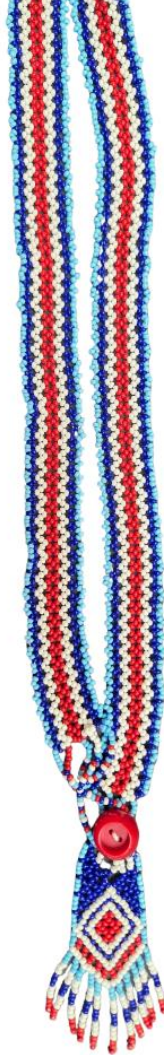


Men's knitted bracelets *šticle*
west Slavonia
Croatia





Women's necklace
Ukraine



Women's necklace
Nagaland
India



Love letter
Zulu tribe
Africa



Love letter
Zulu tribe
Africa



Love letter
Zulu tribe
Africa



Love letter
Zulu tribe
Africa



Love letter
Zulu tribe
Africa



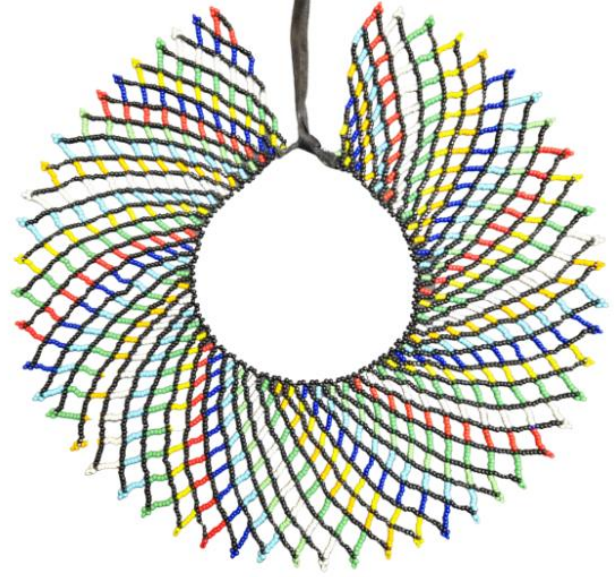
Love letter
Zulu tribe
Africa



Love letter Kotiljon
Ukraine



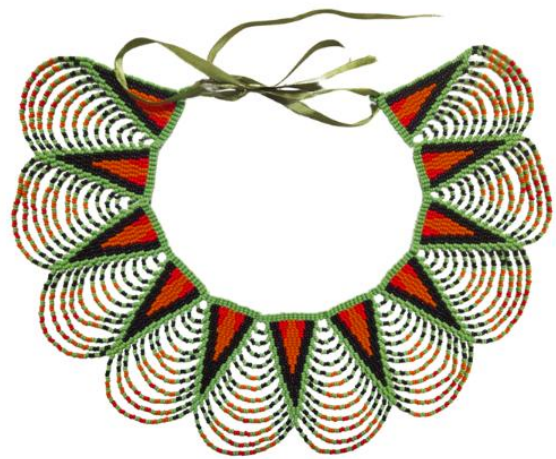
Women's necklace
Tolisa
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Women's neckalce
Zulu tribe
Africa



Necklace
Hungary



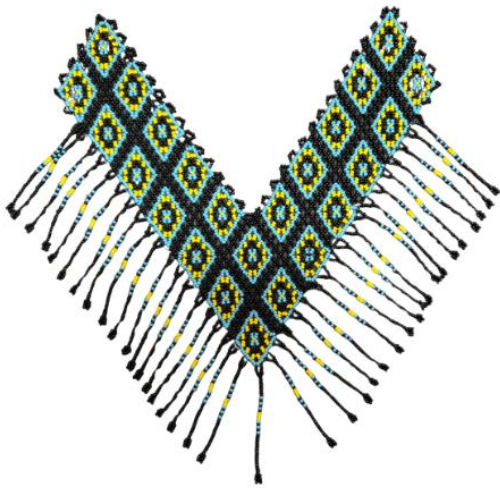
Necklace
Zulu tribe
South Africa



Women's necklace
Romania



Women's necklace
Posavina
Croatia



Women's necklace
Amazona
South Africa



women's necklace
Zulu tribe
South Africa



Women's necklace
Romania



Women's chest decoration
Turkmenistan



Women's waist decoration
Mandaya tribe
Philippines



Women's necklace
Afar tribe
Ethiopia



Belt
Guerrero Zihuantanejo
Mexico



Women's necklace
Kalbeliya tribe
India



Women's necklace
Peru



Women's necklace
Borneo



Women's chest decoration
Embera tribe
Panama



Women's brooch
Pokuplje
Croatia



Men's tie
Xhosa tribe
South Africa



Women's brooch
Tomislavgrad
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Groom's tie
Bistra
Croatia



Partica (a part of a bride's head decoration)
Bratina
Croatia



Women's necklace
Davor
Croatia



Women's necklace *kraluš*
Samobor
Croatia



Women's necklace *struka*
Moslavina
Croatia



Women's necklace *kraluš*
Bistra
Croatia



Women's necklace
Tuzla
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Women's necklace
Baranja
Croatia



Women's necklace
Rus



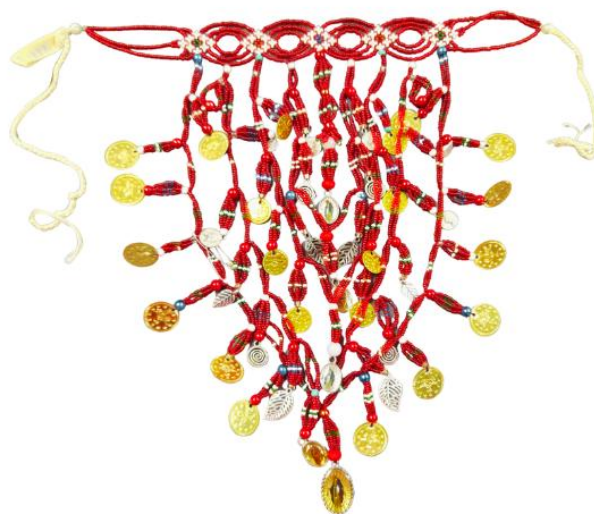
Women's necklace
Romania



Women's necklace
Hungary



Women's necklace
Beograd
Serbia



Women's necklace
Letnica
Kosovo



Women's belt
Imljani
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Women's belt
Kosovo



Women's belt
Bosnia
Bosnia i Herzegovina



Women's belt
Vrlika
Croatia



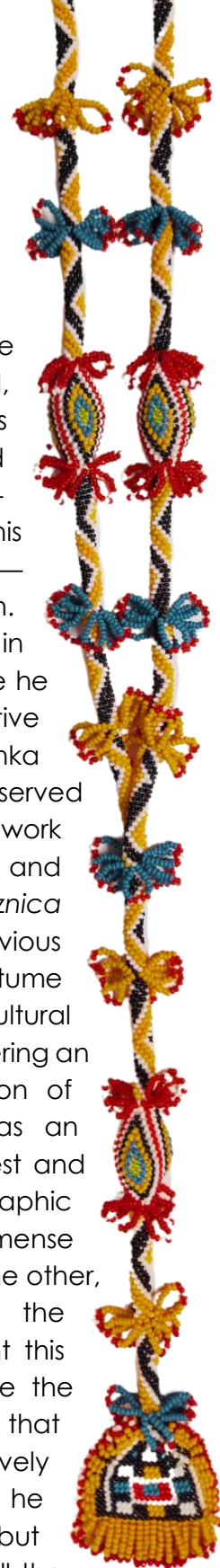
Women's necklace
Baranja
Croatia



Bride's head piece *parta*
Posavski Bregi
Croatia

Ivan Terzić

Ivan Terzić was born in 1978 in Užice, Republic of Serbia. He holds a degree in ethnology and anthropology, is married, and is a father of three. He lives and works in Belgrade. His connection with folklore dates back to his elementary and high school days, when he was a member of the cultural-artistic society *Prvi Partizan* in Užice. That's where he had his first encounters with traditional song, dance, and costume—an experience that ultimately shaped his professional path. After high school, he enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, majoring in ethnology and anthropology, where he later earned his degree. His first and most formative knowledge of traditional jewelry-making came from Vinka Mareković, at the Croatian *Etnoriznica* project, where she served as educator and demonstrator of traditional beadwork techniques—on that occasion as well as at all previous and future *Etnoriznica* events. He attended his first *Etnoriznica* workshop on the island of Brač in 2012, following previous ethnological collaborations and projects with the Folk Costume Lending and Workshop Center (today the Traditional Cultural Heritage Center) and his colleague Josip Forjan. Upon entering an environment where he witnessed the practical creation of objects he had previously known mostly in theory as an ethnologist, jewelry-making instantly captivated his interest and became his focus. Having access to various ethnographic collections in Serbia, and realizing on one hand the immense richness and diversity of traditional bead jewelry, and on the other, its near-total absence and lack of recognition on the contemporary folklore scene, he was inspired to present this hidden beauty to a wider public and to help revitalize the forgotten techniques of its creation—techniques that, until that point, were virtually unpracticed in Serbia. He works exclusively with bead jewelry—primarily traditional pieces, though he occasionally creates jewelry using traditional techniques but with a final form that suits contemporary wear. Among all the items he has made, he especially remembers his first *čustek*—a specific type of men's jewelry worn in the region of Kosovo Pomoravlje. As he says, it gave him quite a challenge! From drafting the design and threading about 11 meters of beads one by one, to crocheting each individual bead into the pattern, the process took nearly a month, with 6–8 hours of work each day. When creating jewelry intended for folklore ensembles, especially pieces that will be publicly displayed and may inspire other



groups to acquire or create similar items, it's crucial that these "revitalized" pieces remain as true to the original as possible, retaining their identity through accurate technique, materials, and form. As for the tools used, they are fairly straightforward: various types of threads (cotton, synthetic, nylon) and different types of needles (fine sewing needles and occasionally small crochet hooks). The main challenge lies in sourcing materials—particularly the beads. In Serbia, it's difficult to find Czech Preciosa beads, which have proven to be ideal due to their consistent size and broad color range. He usually sources them either from Croatia or directly from the Czech Republic, often relying on travelers to bring them back. He gathers information on old techniques and original pieces in various ways. The easiest method is working from original examples, either from fieldwork or museum collections. When those aren't available, color photographs help a great deal. Over time, even black-and-white photos, and sometimes just a textual description, become enough to reconstruct a piece—provided one already has a solid background in traditional techniques, color schemes, shapes, and local variants of bead jewelry.

What motivates him most in his work is something he calls "*smirela*"—a sense of calm and relaxation that comes from creating with his hands in a world increasingly dominated by screens. The process of creating something from nothing is deeply fulfilling. He is encouraged by the current trend of returning to tradition in all its forms. In Serbia, a large number of young people are now dedicated to collecting and revitalizing traditional clothing from their regions. Jewelry plays a vital role in completing traditional outfits, and many strive to make each ensemble as authentic and representative as possible—including commissioning or recreating appropriate jewelry if it's missing. At the same time, the techniques used in traditional bead jewelry are easily applied to modern, wearable designs. This gives today's artisans creative freedom and broader opportunities to develop their own styles. Whenever possible, he happily shares his knowledge through short online tutorials, how-to guides, and specially organized workshops. He is always willing—and genuinely delighted—to pass on at least a part of his expertise in the hope of sparking others' interest in bead jewelry making.

The Connecting Thread: Traditional Bead Jewelry Among the Serbs

Ivan Terzić, ethnologist – anthropologist

People have always had the need to adorn themselves. The need was not only aesthetic in nature. In the deepest sense, it was a manifestation of belonging, hope, power, faith, or love. Jewelry was one of the first man-made things that combined the work of hands and spirit – something made, but also felt. Something that decorates, but also speaks. The following lines are dedicated to traditional beads jewelry – jewelry that was worn, made, gifted, and inherited both in this region, as well as all around the world. The creation of this jewelry was closely connected primarily to women, their hands and their sphere, but in various locations it transcended the borders of sex, age, and social status. The jewelry was a part of traditional costumes, but also a part of the wearer's soul – a symbol of maturity, protection, an indication of family honor, a silent witness to personal and collective history. The tiny beads of diverse colors and light were made into long strings, added to weaves, ornaments, stories. Each nation left their mark in these pieces: through the layout of colors, motifs, materials. And each artisan brought a piece of themselves into them – their taste, skill, time, patience. The beads thus became more than just an ornament. They became an invisible, but firm tissue connecting the past and the present, the individual and the community. A body adorned with jewelry turns into a story – a silent, unpublished story telling us everything we would like to know about the wearer without asking a single question, without saying a word.

Jewelry is one of humanity's oldest forms of art and symbolic expression. It can be defined as decorative items of various forms and types used to adorn bodies and clothes.

In traditional societies of our region, jewelry was much more than decoration – it was a symbol of social status, represented transfers between life stages, as well as magical protection from evil forces. On traditional costumes, the jewelry also worked as a “personal ID”. One could “read out” the age, marital status, even the economic status of the wearer and the community they came from. The jewelry worn by maidens introduced to society was especially significant, as was the one worn on wedding days. On those occasions, the most beautiful and the lushest jewelry was selected, often accompanied by details representing reputation and the status of the family.

One of the most widespread and visually most impressive forms of jewelry was the one made of beads – tiny glass, natural, or metal beads strung using various techniques to adorn necks, heads, chest, arms, even parts of clothing. Beads jewelry did not only have a decorative function, but was also proof of skill, patience, and aesthetics of the person who made it. The symbolics of this jewelry may have vanished in the modern age, but its beauty is still remarkable.

Considering its variety, the beads jewelry in traditional culture can be categorized by various criteria: as male and female, village or urban, home-made or craftsmen made... It can also be categorized by the techniques used to make the jewelry, as well as by the part of body it was worn on. In the Serbian traditional culture, jewelry making developed in relation to the traditional costumes, following the human physical shape in every detail. It is for this connection with the human body that it is most often and naturally categorized by the part of the body the jewelry was worn on.

The headpieces were among the most complex and most important parts of women's traditional costumes. These came in various forms: wreaths, crowns, diadems, *počelica* and *tepeluk* headpieces, earrings, chokers, pins, pendants, as well as decorative feather bonnets, hair decorations, and rich floral "bouquets". The ornaments were not just for decoration; they often served a ritual purpose, especially in the context of fertility rituals, the transition from maidenhood to marriage, and as public identification of the woman's marital and social status. One of such ornaments was *čelenka*, a headpiece typical for urban areas of Kosovo and Metohija, especially Prizren. *Čelenka*, made using filigree technique with hanging *parice* extending to the forehead, was set on a semi-circular base covered with cloth and richly adorned with sets of sewn-in metal *parice* or coins, dominated by a large ducat in the center. The position of this ducat indicated the woman's social status: when uncovered, it symbolized maidenhood, and semi-covered meant the woman was married. Strings of small beads, corals, shells, ambers, and bead crochets called *manistre* extending from the *čelenka* down the cheeks all the way to the shoulders turned the headpiece into an item with deep symbolic meaning.

The jewelry worn around the neck came in a wide variety of shapes and styles – from single or multiple strings of beads and coins to complex necklaces that formed collars with both decorative and symbolic function. In villages, women often wore several necklaces at once, and their appearance depended on marital status, local tradition, as well as on the skill of the person who made them. The necklaces were made by stringing glass beads (*đinđuvica*, *mrnđelica*, *manistre*, *bobaka*), but also by adding gemstones, shells, buttons or metal coins on various strings: textile, horsehair, even thin wires.

The jewelry that was used to cover the chest was among the most impressive parts of women's traditional costume since it did not serve only as decoration, but also a symbol of social and economic status and religious affiliation of the woman. This group included *nadgradnik*, *toka*, *đerdan*, *ćustek* – various pieces of jewelry made of beads, pâte-de-verre, silver, small metal coins, and often combined with textiles or leather.

Unlike the classical necklaces that were worn close to the neck, this type of jewelry was placed directly over the chest and was often attached to clothes using special hooks or ribbons. In the wider areas inhabited by ethnic Serbs, *nadgrudnik*, also known as *đerdan*, *gerdan* or *perišan*, was particularly widespread. In its simplest form, it was made of thin metal chains with small pendants, and was attached to clothes on the shoulder area. The more complex pieces were made on a rectangular piece of homemade linen, richly adorned by sewn-in beads and strings of small coins. The ornament on the chest was not only visually impressive, but also reflected the skill of the women who made it, matched the occasion on which it was worn, as well as indicated the community the wearer came from.

The ornaments worn around the waist were another important segment of women's traditional costumes, which had both a practical and a deeply symbolic purpose. Belts were used to hold the garments together and visually emphasize the entire figure, while the materials, techniques used, and the wealth of ornaments on them clearly indicated the woman's social and marital status or regional origin. This category includes belts made of textiles with woven-in or sewn-in beads, leather belts with metal patches, metal buckles, buttons and tassels, as well as various decorative pendants added to the sides or suspended down the thighs. An especially impressive example of this is *akičar* – a lavish festive belt that was part of brides' jewelry in the Dinaric region of Montenegro, Herzegovina, and parts of Dalmatia in the 19th century. These were made of thick, often double-layered leather and richly adorned with semi-precious carnelian stones of warm colors ranging from orange to dark red, which were framed by granulated metal loops. The carnelian stones were strung equally in three lines, thus covering the entire front portion of the belt. Apart from being visually appealing, the *akičar* belts also had protective (apotropaic) symbolic meaning: the color red was considered a mighty ally in the preservation of health and protection from evil forces. The belt was worn with festive costumes as a visible sign of prestige, protection and blessing.

Hand jewelry, as a visually prominent detail completing the dress composition on the wrist and hand, was a blend of practical use, decorative use, and personal expression. Apart from metal rings and *grivna* bracelets made by craftsmen, bracelets made of small glass beads were particularly popular in villages. These were made by stringing, knitting and crocheting colorful beads on cotton, wool, or tow yarn. These bracelets were shaped to look like sleeve endings or cuffs, two to five centimeters wide, and were often worn several at a time. The motifs were various – from vines and flowers, diamonds and zig-zag lines to inscriptions such as the owner's name. The colors used were very bright: most often red, orange, yellow, and green. To protect them from wear, they were often padded with homemade linen from the inside. *Šticla* (*šticna*, *zašaknica*, *narukvica*...) was another interesting form of jewelry worn by both Serbian men and women. These were wide woolen bracelets, most often knitted, worn above the hand or over the sleeves. The bracelets were decorated in one of two ways: with colorful embroidery, or with woven-in beads following pre-determined ornamental patterns. The beads were mostly white and were pre-strung on a thread, and then woven into the knitting according to a determined scheme, thus creating

geometrical, floral, or even figurative motifs. The most complex and the most colorful *šticla* bracelets were a combination of the two techniques: the knitting was first decorated with beads, and was then complemented by an embroidered colorful chain. Such examples were mostly typical for Slavonia, and Bosnian Posavina, reflecting a blend of aesthetic intenseness and regional stylization.

Although they were less common than other types of jewelry, leg ornaments still had their place in the traditional culture. They often served a practical purpose, but were also used as an aesthetic enhancement – the ornaments were used to tighten the socks in the calf area, thus improving the neat and compact look of the entire costume. Leg jewelry most often included various forms of *dizge* and *potkolenke*, that were knitted or woven, and then decorated with tassels made of colorful wool, metal coins, and glass beads. Although they were more discrete, these details bear witness to the attention given to each part of the body and all layers of clothing.

The above categorization of jewelry by body parts is not just a practical systemization, but also reveals social roles, aesthetic achievements and symbolic connotations of each ornament. The function, form, and materials used for jewelry reveal a complex link between the body, clothing, and cultural identity in the traditional life. Every piece of jewelry was a personal statement and a message to the community, as well as a mark of status, sex, age, even the emotional or ritual state of its wearer.

Unlike the jewelry made of noble metals, the one made of beads was most often created at home by hands that learned the skill of stringing, tying, and adorning within the family and passed it on from generation to generation. The main materials were glass beads imported from central Europe, primarily Czechia and Venice, but also from the east, the Orient, Türkiye... Domestic production was not that common, but it did contribute to the wealth of shapes and colors that characterized our traditional jewelry. The beads were purchased in the market or were given as dowery, and their value was not simply in their aesthetics, but also in the wide variety of creative applications.

Although beadwork was technically simpler than metalwork, it required fine motor skills, a sense of rhythm and composition, as well as knowledge of local decorative patterns. And that was its main value: each piece was unique, a reflection of the artisan's personality, as well as a witness to the cultural matrix they belonged to. Unlike the modern mass production, each traditional piece was unique, not only in material and color, but also because of the technique used to create it. The technique was learned in person and through practical work, and was transferred from generation to generation, often within the family or the local community, as well as by roaming artisans who would spread their skills wider.

Basic beadwork included stringing: first on horsehair, then on cotton or linen threads, and later on the fishing line. From this technique, various approaches developed: from simple stringing (where the string would pass through a bead only once) to more complex patterns that included braiding of the strings under various angles, thus creating geometrical webs, zig-zag patterns and colorful spirals. These schemes were

not mere decorations. They carried meaning, often conveying age, festive occasions or local ornamentation. Bead weaving on mini looms was perhaps the most colorful method of jewelry making. The tiny beads would be interwoven into colorful bands with rhythmical ornaments, and then worn as bracelets, necklaces, decorative bands, even patched onto textile parts of traditional costumes. Bead embroidery had a similar role. In this technique the beads would be sewn directly onto a cloth, thus shaping a motif made not of strings, but the beads themselves. Such embroidery was used to decorate aprons, headpieces, sleeves, even footwear. The patterns ranged from geometric to floral ones, but maintained a deeper symbolic meaning and eluded a sense of harmony and symmetry.

Some techniques were even more complex. Bead knitting, for example, involved tiny ornaments included in the knitting itself, strung in advance according to a precise scheme so that each bead would end in a particular spot. Although unintrusive, this method required great concentration and skill, especially when used to make *šticla* bracelets or decorative parts of socks and aprons. The same applies to the bead crocheting technique. The beads would first be strung on yarn, and then crocheted spirally, thus making a *gajtan* of beads. Its visual appearance depended on the layout of strung beads in the initial scheme. These structures were often shaped into bulbs called "bombonica" – protrusions achieved by increasing the number of beads per circle – and ended with suspended ornaments in the shape of a bell, triangle, three raised fingers or circle.

None of the techniques was isolated from the others; they were also combined, supplemented with metal elements, pieces of cloth, leather, or even coins. The beads were inserted into *toke*, *pafte* and buttons or sewed into tassels, and then attached to headpieces, chest pieces or belts. Their diversity reflects not only the skills required, but also a deeper message. The layout and color of the beads, the type of ornament, technique used and the method of wearing the jewelry made up a complex system of visual communication. They quietly, but clearly conveyed the origin, status, age, and identity of their wearers or creators.

Regardless of different opinions, scientific presumptions, or cultural interpretations, one thing is for sure: jewelry represents one of the oldest cultural manifestations of human history – present, recognizable, and popular among all nations around the world. Its existence does not depend on a historical period or a civilization, but encompasses an entire spectrum of human cultures, from prehistoric times to the modern age. All other roles, values, and symbolic meanings that have been attributed to jewelry with time – whether it was a ritual, social, aesthetic or magical function – actually reflect the cultural needs and convictions of individual communities. On the one hand, jewelry is a deeply personal category, a part of every nation's cultural code. On the other, it is universal – a cultural element connecting various communities, and especially the ones living under similar natural, economic, social, or spiritual conditions. It is this duality (personal and general human) that makes jewelry an immortal witness for the human need of beauty, identity, and sense.

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Belt
Gora
North Macedonia



Belt *bobani kolan*
Teslić
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Women's belt *kolan*
Bulgaria



Belt *bobani kolan*
Teslić
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Belt *bobani kolan*
Bosanska Posavina
Bosnia and Herzegovina



women's belt *nadkolan*
Kosovsko Pomoravlje
Kosovo



Women's belt
Pčinja
Serbia



Belt *kolan od manistre*
Bulgaria



Belt *kolan od manistre*
Skopje area
North Macedonia



women's belt *tkanica ukrašena bobicama*
Prnjavor
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Belt *kolan od manistre*
Serbia



Belt *bobani kolan*
Prnjavor
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Belt *kolan od manistre*
Serbia



Belt *kolan od manistre*
Serbia



Women's belt *kolan od manistre*
Prizrenska gora
Kosovo



Bobani (beaded) belt
Imljani
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Belt
Banja Luka
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Women's head piece
Livno
Bosnia and Herzegovina



brooch for women's vest jelek
Pčinja
Serbia



Satnik (pocket watch case) od manistre
Serbia



Women's head decoration
Kosovsko Pomoravlje
Kosovo



brooch bašlija
Teslić
Bosnia and Herzegovina



brooch bašlija
Imljani
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Necklace od manistre
Pčinja
Serbia



Guja (a snake) od manistre
Bujanovac
Serbia



Women's čustek
Kosovo



Women's đerdan
Sjeničko-posterska visoravan
Serbia



Women's chest decoration
Metohija
Kosovo



Girl's ċerdan
Buđanovci
Srbija



Necklace
Kosovo



Girl's *đerdan*
Kosovo



Necklace *nakiče*
Raška
Serbia



Necklace *od manistre*
Pčinja
Serbia



Women's gendar
Imljani
Bosnia and Herzegovina



WOMen's ċerdan
Metohija
Kosovo



Women's chest decoration
Novake village
Kosovo



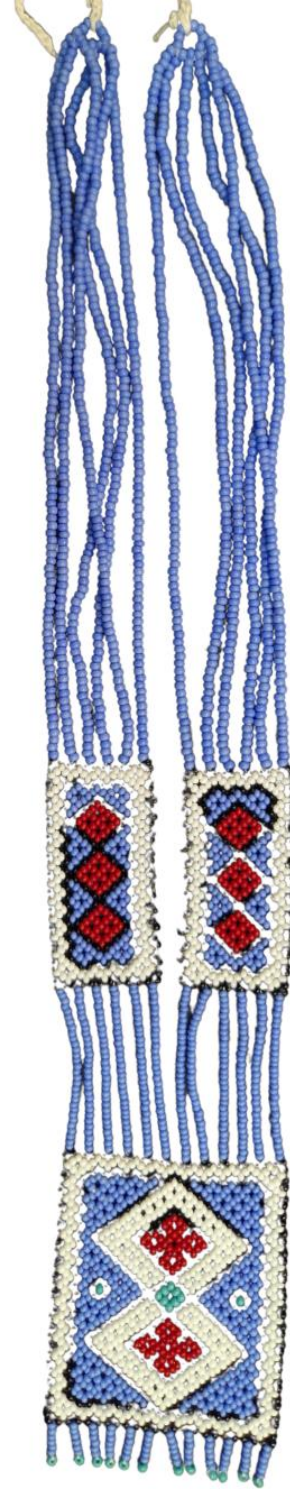
Uplitnjaci za kosu (hair decoration)
Imljani
Bosnia and Herzegovina



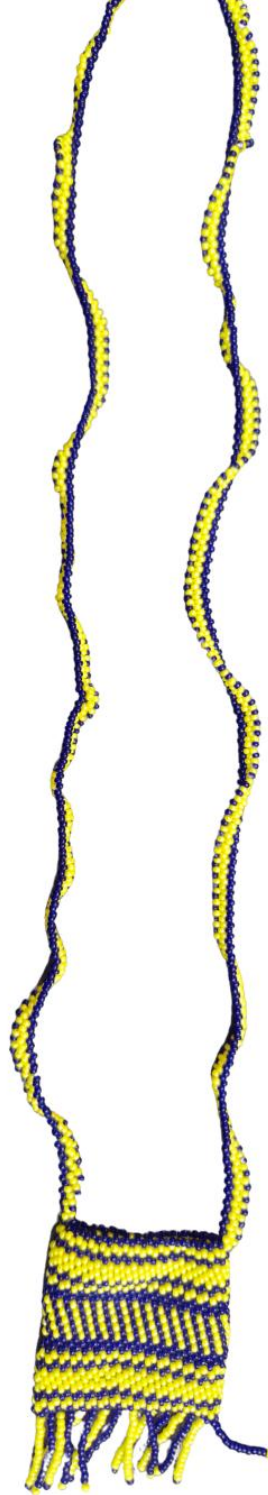
gajtan od manistre
Bujanovac
Serbia



Women's chest decoration
Kosovo



Necklace
Haha group of Berberi tribe
Morocco



Bag for coins
south Balkan



Necklace
Russia



Necklace
Kata tribe
Afganistan



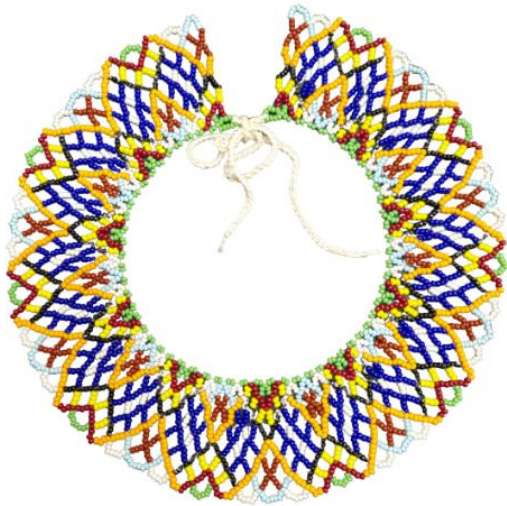
Men's chest decoration
Mapuchi tribe
Argentina



Chest decoration
Uzbekistan



Women's necklace *razmetki*
Russia



Necklace
Greenland



Women's necklace
Zambia and Zimbabwe border area



Necklace
Xhosa tribe
South Africa



Necklace
Kmeri tribe
Cambodia



Women's necklace
Galaganz people
Tanzania



Necklace *podnizok*
Russia



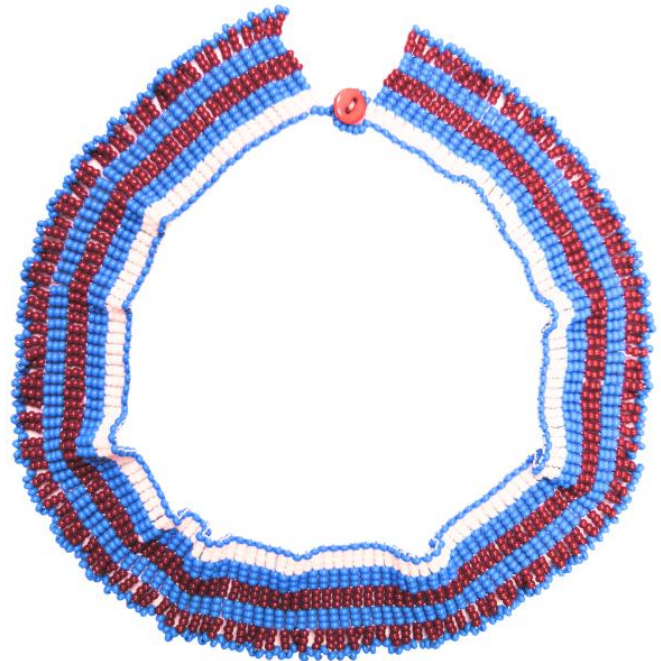
Necklace
Zulu tribe
South Africa



Necklace
Xhosa tribe
South Africa



Women's necklace
Embera tribe
Panama



Necklace
Xhosa tribe
South Africa



Necklace *orlovski gajtan*
Russia



Boy's necklace
Bagobo tribe
Philippines



Necklace
Galaganza people
Tanzania



Bride's fes (head piece)
Kosovsko Pomoravlje
Kosovo



Women's fes (head piece)
Janjevo
Kosovo

Antonio Stojčeski

Antonio Stojčeski comes from Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia. By profession, he is an ethnochoreologist and is employed as a professional dancer at the National Institution TANEC. He graduated from a secondary music school in the Department of Traditional Music and Dance, specializing as a traditional dancer and singer, and later continued his education at the Faculty of Music Arts, Department of Ethnochoreology. There, in addition to learning traditional dances, songs, and instruments, he also gained extensive knowledge about traditional costumes and their adornments. Under the mentorship of Prof. Dr. Vladimir Janevski, he created a large part of the bead jewelry for the Academic Ensemble of Macedonia. To further develop his skills, he began studying professional literature on costume making. On one occasion, at a competition for reconstructed folk costumes in Trnjani, he won first place in the category of reconstructed costumes of other nations. His prize included a trip to Pučišća on the island of Brač, to attend the workshop "Reviving Heritage," organized by the Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage (CTKB). There, he had the opportunity to learn many techniques used in the creation of Croatian traditional costumes, many of which are also found in Macedonian traditional dress. In particular, he had the chance to learn about traditional bead jewelry-making from Ms. Vinka Mareković and Mr. Ivan Terzić, with whom he now exhibits as part of this exhibition.

He cannot single out one specific piece as his favorite, as he dedicates himself fully to each creation and strives to make them as close to the original as possible. However, he says that he especially enjoys working on sokais—the first fully embroidered head coverings, additionally decorated with beads, coins, and shells. He is currently collecting materials for his upcoming exhibition dedicated to Macedonian sokais.

He uses materials that can be sourced worldwide, though he mainly purchases them from Turkey, Greece, and the Czech Republic, with the majority still found in Macedonia.

For creating replicas, he primarily relies on old photographs, museum exhibits, catalog samples, academic literature, and original jewelry pieces from his private collection of traditional items.



He believes that this craft has a future, especially in the fashion industry, where a return to roots and ethno jewelry and ornamentation is only just beginning to take shape. He has passed on his experience through workshops attended by students of the Ilija Nikolovski-Luj State Music and Ballet School Center, Department of Traditional Music and Dance, specializing in traditional dance and singing. In his work, he is also supported by his girlfriend, Anastasija Boškovska, who is also skilled in handmade bead jewelry craftsmanship.

A Note on Macedonian Bead Embellishment

Antonio Stojčeski

In the first decades of the twentieth century in Macedonia, beads began to be widely used in jewelry-making and found broad application among the rural population. Beaded jewelry is present throughout Macedonia—in some regions (such as Eastern Macedonia), it served as the primary form of adornment, while in other regions (like Western Macedonia), it was a supplementary decoration to metal jewelry. In certain parts of Macedonia, bead embroidery is also used to decorate parts of clothing: the front panels of girls' shirts, the lower parts of shirts, sleeves, ends of woven belts, pendants for men's socks, headscarves, sokaks (embroidered head coverings), and more. It is typically made by young girls and women, categorized as domestic handcraft, yet at the same time represents an important segment of folk art, characterized by a harmonious use of color and distinct geometric and floral ornamentation.



Podbradnik (under-chin decoration)
Bitola-Prilep field
North Macedonia



Women's waist decoration *prečnik*
Bitola-Prilep field
North Macedonia



men's belt *kolan*
Gornja Morava
North Macedonia



girl's belt *kolanče*
 Bitola-Prilep field
 North Macedonia



Belt *kolan*
 Struški Drumkol
 North Macedonia



Belt *kolan od pafte*
 Radoviški Šopluk
 North Macedonia



Belt *kolanče*
Malesija
North Macedonia



Belt
Skopska Blatija
North Macedonia



Women's belt *kolan*
Kosovo



women's belt *kolan*
Slavište
North Macedonia



Decoration *kiska*
Bitola-Prilep field
North Macedonia



Necklace
Ljerinsko Polje
North Macedonia



Necklace *votus*
Donji Polog
North Macedonia



Chest decoration
Bregasori tribe
Montenegro



necklace *gerdan*
Donja Prespa
North Macedonia

Multiple Aspects of Beads

Past, Present and Future of Traditional Jewelry

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