

**DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v9i2.2493**

**Citation:** Er, H., & Gürel, D. (2020). Metallic Embroidery and Masters of Thread-Breaking as an Example of Cultural Heritage in Turkish Handicrafts. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 9(2), 451-466. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v9i2.2493>

## **Metallic Embroidery and Masters of Thread-Breaking as an Example of Cultural Heritage in Turkish Handicrafts**

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### **Abstract**

One of the most important elements that give the insight to ensure identity and dimension to the societies is the tradition of handicrafts. These valuable traditions, which have been inherited from generation to generation until today, are now on the verge of extinction because of globalization and developments in production technologies. Local, national and international precautions have been taken by today's societies to sustain and protect these valuable traditions. The purpose of this study is to analyze the past, present, and future of the art of thread-breaking (a specific type of metallic embroidery named 'Bartın işi') which is one of the valuable Turkish traditional handicrafts. For this purpose, five embroidery masters who perform this traditional art were interviewed with semi-structural interview forms. According to the findings obtained through these processes: Metallic embroidery masters learnt this art out of curiosity with internal motivation, they performed this art within the frame of neighborhood culture, the art is usually learnt through observations and trial-and-error processes rather than master-apprentice relationship and there have been changes over time in the variety of the instruments and motifs used in the making of these embroideries and the areas of use. On the other hand, it was observed that the art of metallic embroidery has been mostly performed by individuals over middle age and today the young show little interest in this art. Participants of the study emphasized that it is necessary to support and increase the local and international advertising and educational activities to popularize this valuable art tradition.

**Keywords:** Turkish Handicrafts, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Thread-Breaking, Metallic Embroidery.

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## Öz

Toplumlara şahsiyet kazandıran kültürün en önemli unsurlarından birini o toplumun el sanatları geleneği oluşturmaktadır. Küreselleşme ve üretim teknolojilerindeki gelişmelerle birlikte kuşaktan kuşağa aktararak günümüze kadar gelen bu geleneklerin yok olma tehlikesi ile karşı karşıya kaldığı söylenebilir. Bu itibarla toplumlar yerel, ulusal ve hatta uluslararası düzeyde bu geleneklerin yaşatılması ve korunması için önlemler almaya başlamıştır. Bu çalışmada da geleneksel Türk el sanatlarından biri olan tel kırma (Bartın işi) sanatının dünü, bugünü ve yarınının, tel kırma ustalarının görüşleri doğrultusunda değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaçla geleneksel olarak bu sanatı icra eden beş tel kırma ustasına ulaşılmış ve bunlarla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılarak görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Elde edilen verilerden ulaşılan bulgulara göre; tel kırma ustalarının bu sanatı merak ve içsel bir motivasyon ile öğrendikleri ve devam ettikleri, komşuluk ilişkileri içinde bir araya gelinerek yapıldığı ve tel kırma işinin usta-çırak ilişkisinden ziyade gözlemler ve deneme-yanılma ile öğrenildiği, bu sanatın icrasında kullanılan araçların ve motiflerin çeşitliliğinde ve ortaya konulan ürünlerin kullanım alanlarında geçmişten bugüne bir değişim yaşandığı görülmektedir. Ayrıca tel kırma sanatının daha çok orta yaş üstü bireyler tarafından yapılmasının ve gençlerin bu sanata yönelik ilgilerinin azlığına dikkat çekilmektedir. Çalışmada katılımcılar, bu sanatın yaygınlaşması ve tanınırlığının artırılması için yerel ve ulusal düzeyde tanıtıcı ve eğitici faaliyetlerin artırılması gerektiğini de vurgulamışlardır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Türk El Sanatları, Somut Olmayan Kültürel Miras, Tel Kırma Ustaları, Bartın İşi.

## Introduction

Nations have always produced material and spiritual features in social, cultural, economic, political and religious areas throughout history and turned these values into valuable accumulations in time. Societies have kept these valuable accumulations throughout generations alive by passing them on to the next generation. This phenomenon called “culture” can be defined as the specific style of living, thinking, believing and behaving that is unique to a nation (Koca, 2003). Culture is also a set of values that form the basis of a nation’s personality, identity, and grounding (Ergin, 1986). According to the Turkish Language Society (TLS (TDK), 2020) heritage is: “Property that is or may be inherited; inheritance”. Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. In this frame, cultural heritage is not only the monuments and collections of objects but also traditions or living expressions inherited from ancestors and passed on to descendants (Erkal, 2010).

It can be said that cultural heritage is generally analyzed from two dimensions as tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Aksoy and Ünsal, 2012). Tangible cultural heritage involves all of the cultural values ranging from the smallest to the biggest; intangible cultural heritage (ICH) on the other hand, is all of the cultural values that are traditional, contemporary and living at the same time, inclusive, representative and community-based (Çençen and Berk, 2014). When the concept of ICH is analyzed, it can be seen that it has a short history and went through a few phases as a result of the studies by UNESCO; the term has changed content considerably in recent decades. 1972 convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage by UNESCO involves the products of tangible cultural heritage. After this period, the concept of ICH was used by Bolivia declaration as “folklore” in 1973, by the unit established by UNESCO as “intangible culture” in 1982, as “popular and traditional culture” in 1989 recommendation, as “oral and intangible cultural heritage” in 1997-98 Proclamation of the Masterpieces Program. Finally, as a result of the UNESCO meetings in 2003 and

2004, it was concluded that the most proper name for the concept is Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) (Oğuz, 2013a).

It can be said that ICH represents a wide range of social practices. In this respect, UNESCO made a general classification by defining the frame of ICH (2003). According to this description, ICH involves:

- a) Oral traditions and expressions that have the function of transmitting ICH,
- b) Performance arts,
- c) Social practices, rituals, and festivals,
- d) Knowledge and practices about nature and the universe,
- e) The tradition of handicrafts.

It is quite important to inform societies about the meaning and elements of ICH; expanding the awareness and creating consciousness for the protection of them are socially very important. ICH is a chain of values; it shapes, surrounds human life and brings meaning to it. When viewed from this angle, ICH, which is affected by the human lifestyle and manner of approach, can only be protected when a sustainable social consciousness is ensured (Buluç, 2007; Yolcu, 2014). Education has a significant role in the sustainability of this significant process. Creating consciousness, awareness, and a sense of responsibility that are crucial in understanding and protecting the values of ICH in the hierarchical order of the modern societies can only be possible through education (Pehlivan and Kolaç, 2016).

There have always been changes and transformations throughout the history of mankind; however, people living in today's world have been witnessing increasingly rapid and deep changes that created the phenomenon of 'globalization'. Life of every human being has been irreversibly affected by different elements from multiple dimensions because of globalization. On one hand, this process positively affects humans and societies from many dimensions; on the other hand, it turns societies into prototypes through the mass culture (Akhan, 2014). When considered from this point of view, the protection and transfer of the elements of cultural heritage, which separate societies from one another and give them a sense of identity, is highly important. Local intangible cultural heritages in different geographic locations around the world represent the unique aspects of societies and are highly important cultural ingredients. Societies should define themselves based on their local and national cultural values and be universally accepted to prevent the destruction caused by globalization; it can thus be possible to contribute to the world common heritage.

Turkey is built on the lands which had been conquered and protected by very different civilizations throughout history; the lands of the country are very important in terms of human history. The land of Anatolia had been used as religious, political, commercial and cultural centers and it had been a "homeland" to different societies in different periods of history. Besides, societies that lived on these lands and the nations established in Anatolia reflected their cultural understandings, identities and viewpoints through their works of art, monuments and different types of constructions; they thus made great contributions to the world's cultural heritage (Oğuz, 2013b). Anatolia has become an open-air-museum as a result of this unique process. This richness and background bring a big responsibility along with it; it is important to protect this ancient, invaluable and rich cultural heritage and hand it down to the next generations. In this respect, "the tradition of handicrafts" which is significant and meaningful value in the frame of ICH, is one of these heritages that should be carefully protected and sustained.

In general terms, handicrafts are the unique values that reflect the happiness, sorrow, hopes, pleasures, and diversities of the local people, and they are formed through a historical process with the effort and devotion of the people who created them (Öz, 2019). In other words, making handicrafts

are a highly valuable field of occupation which form the basis of strong connections throughout history and reflect the characteristics of societies (Er and Hünerel, 2012, p. 169). In this respect, handicrafts are the works shaped through traditional aspects, and they reflect the cultural variety formed over the civilizations' experiences in thousands of years. Cultural varieties and experiences of different civilizations that lived on the same land throughout history are reflected in this art. Handicrafts, made for a variety of purposes such as ornamentation, decoration and earning commercial income, mostly combine the creative ability and social identities and thus –in a sense- reflect the tastes of different nations (Alyüz, 2007, p. 12).

Turkish culture is one of these significant cultures that were shaped in Anatolia, which covers a wide area. The tradition of handicrafts has been a very important element of Turkish culture throughout centuries. The works that are produced for serving the needs of daily life and easing the life of individuals have become the records of social identity and arts that directly reflect the richness of Turkish civilization (Demir and Varol, 2019). Types, colors, and techniques in handicrafts reflect the societies in the most sincere and natural sense and they have reached modern times through generations (Alpaslan, 2003, p. 11). One of these handicrafts traditions is thread-breaking, which is a specific kind of metallic embroidery; the art tradition has a significant place in the history and is still an important part of today's Turkish society (Karaçorlu and Yetim, 2016).

Metallic embroidery is unquestionably as old as the history of Turks themselves; it is usually applied on fabrics such as cloth, satin, velvet, linen, and broadcloth using metal threads (usually gold or silver). The threads used for a pattern are 'bent and broken' without using scissors, which separate this technique from the other traditional Turkish embroideries. The process of breaking metal threads is associated with the city of Bartın in the western part of the Black Sea region in Turkey and usually called "Bartın işi". The embroidery technique differs from the others with its unique patterns and technique. The technique was officially registered as "Bartın işi" in 2009 and became the production with a geographic indication (Demir and Varol, 2019). As the special thread used in this technique is bent and broken, the method is named "thread-breaking" (Tel kırma in Turkish). Different fabrics, needles, hoops, and metal threads are the types of equipment used in this traditional art. The tradition is developed, performed and used in the region of Bartın, which is why the city's name is given to the technique (Korkusuz, 1971, p. 311). It is believed that the history of art goes back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and discoveries are indicating that the art of metallic embroidery has been common in Bartın since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Based on these findings, it is believed that the first metallic embroidery was created by Hatice Ağaçkiran (nickname Kâtip Kızı) living in Asma neighborhood, Bartın. Different findings are supporting this information. Especially when the harbor of Bartın had become functional in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was an increase in commercial activities and income of the city's residents. It was thus possible to reach imported fabric, clothing and different materials used in dowries. It is believed that the art of metallic embroidery started, developed and expanded through this interaction (Ballı, 2015).

The necessities of societies formed as a result of difficult living conditions caused the creation and development of handicrafts. As handicrafts have been used to meet a variety of needs in different fields of life, different types of materials and techniques have been preferred. The basic elements that form different traditions are production techniques, materials, and region of the materials' resources, the variety of materials, the fields of use, and ethnic, religious, geographic roots of profession experts (Öz, 2019). Handicrafts, which have become traditional over time and reached us through generations, reflect the diversity of civilizations that lived in different times; they give us the chance to witness the values formed in thousands of years. Especially in the context of ICH, the tradition of handicrafts is very important as it not only reflects the diversities but also presents us valuable cultural

accumulations. In this respect, it is very important to support the masters of such professions to sustain and protect the unique traditions that reflect history. Masters have the role of carrying traditions from the past to the future; this is why, the goal of this specific research study is to research the experiences and opinions of the masters of thread-breaking, which is a significant element of Anatolian handicrafts tradition. For this purpose, the answers to the below-mentioned questions were researched in the scope of this study:

- How and why did the participants learn this art?
- How is the process of thread-breaking according to the participants?
- With whom and in what kind of environment did the participants perform this art?
- What are the obstacles in performing this art according to the participants?
- What are the suggestions of participants about handing this art down to the next generations and expanding it?

### Method

Semi-structured interview forms were used in this study which has a qualitative descriptive case study design. The basic purpose of the case study is to understand a process by seeking answers to the questions of what, how and why (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2014). The case study design was used in this study to evaluate the past and present of metallic embroidery (Bartın işi), which is the traditional handicraft of Bartın, based on the masters' opinions. For this purpose, the semi-structured interview technique (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013), which is one of the most popular data collection tools in qualitative studies, was preferred in this study.

### Study Group

The study group of the research involves a total of 5 individuals; it can be said that this study group is sufficient for this research (Creswell, 2013). Individuals were determined by purposeful and criterion sampling methods (Palinkas et al., 2013). The criteria of the study group were; individuals should be the residents of Bartın city or neighborhood, they should be over the age of 50, they should have learnt the art without taking any formal education and they should be experienced in the art for minimum 25 years. The strategy was preferred as it enables individuals in the research group to give sufficient information about the matter in hand (Patton, 2014). Besides, the snowball sampling method was used to reach individuals who meet these criteria (Patton, 2002; Cit. Gelesne, 2013). The purpose of this method is to reach any individual who meets the criteria determined for the study group and then to reach another individual through that first individual. It is thus possible to use time more efficiently in the process of finding individuals that meet the specific purposes of a study.

Individuals in the study group are all women as the tradition of metallic embroidery in the region is carried out by females. Demographic information about the study group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Data about the Demographic Features

Name-Surname	Gender	Date of Birth	Years of Experience
Ayten DAL	Female	1936	70
Pembe TURP		1938	70
Hanife PORTAKAL		1942	67
Türkan TURP		1959	50
Hatice KARADAĞ		1964	26

According to Table 1, it can be said that the average age of the study group is 71, 4 and the average years of experience are 56, 6. The study group consists of a total of 5 individuals and they were all (100%) female.

### **Data Collection**

A semi-structured interview technique was used for collecting data. The interview is one of the basic data collection methods used in case studies (Glesne, 2013). The researcher got appointments from the participants and the interviews were held in participants' houses on different dates. The purpose of this process was to enable participants to feel comfortable during interviews. The meetings continued for 25-40 minutes approximately and were recorded by voice-recording instruments after taking the participants' approval; the records were then transcribed in the computer environment.

### **Data Collection Tool and Analysis of the Data**

Semi-structured interview forms were used for collecting data during the research. In qualitative researches, it is believed that it is important to prepare specific forms before the interviews as they are important for directing conversations (Lichtman, 2013). Expert opinions were taken and specific questions in the forms were accordingly prepared to meet the purpose of the research study. To test the understandability and the practicability of questions, a specific interview was held with a thread-breaking expert whose demographic features were similar to that of the study group. Necessary corrections were completed and the interview form was finalized. The final version included a total of five main and seven sub-questions in concordance with the purpose of the study. It is believed that the number of questions is proper and sufficient for the research (Creswell, 2013). Questions in the interview form are presented below:

- Q1. How did you learn the art of metallic embroidery?
  - a) Did you have a master? If yes, who was it?
  - b) Why do you perform this art and how did you become interested in it?
- Q2. How do you make thread-breaking? Please explain the process.
  - a) Which instruments are used in the process?
  - b) Is there a technique/techniques? If yes, what are they?
  - c) Which patterns are mostly preferred?
  - d) In what areas do people use the products of thread-breaking?
- Q3. With whom did you perform this art? In what kind of environment did you perform it?
  - a) Were there any assistants, apprentices or students to whom you taught this profession? Who were they?
- Q4. Do you think that there is any obstacle or problem in performing this artistic profession today? If yes, what are they?
- Q5. What are your suggestions for carrying this art into the future and popularizing it?

For continuing the interviews with participants without any setback, different hypothetical questions were asked by considering the participants' states (Glesne, 2013). The data obtained through interviews were analyzed with a descriptive analysis approach and the direct quotations were accordingly interpreted.

## Findings

In this section of the study, findings obtained in the scope of research questions are interpreted under specific titles in line with the questions and presented along with the direct quotations from participants.

### Findings of the 1<sup>st</sup> research question

The question “How did you learn the art of metallic embroidery?” is analyzed in this section of the study. The answers of the participants to this question and two related sub-questions are presented and analyzed. According to the participants’ answers, it can be said that they didn’t learn the art of thread-breaking in a formal training center or through a master-apprentice relationship. The participants mentioned that they learnt the art either through their neighbors or family members. It was seen that they learnt the art through interaction and observation. Learning environments were mostly any place where women come together (for ex. in front of a house); in other words, it was found that the learning process was natural. The participant statements are presented below:

*“Our master was an old lady. There was an old lady in our neighborhood, she taught us. She was our neighbor. She used to work with tambour (gergef); we saw her and wanted to learn. We wanted her to teach us, and then we started. There was no electricity; we used to work under the lamp. That old lady showed us how to make thread-breaking with tambour (gergef), were a group of 6-7 girls in the neighborhood. We started doing it.” (Ayten DAL)*

*“I was in 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade at primary school. My mother used to make thread-breaking. Women used to sit in front of their house and make embroidery. In front of old houses. There were tambours, do you know them? They were in the shape of a rectangle, made of wood we used to place the tulle on it. Old women were doing it. We were children, we wanted to learn. My mother used to give us a needle and the frame; we would look at her and try to do the same. This was how we learnt. So, my mother was my master. I used to watch my mother, try to imitate her. After that, I worked at a public education center as a qualified instructor. I had students, I trained them and I retired.” (Türkan TURP)*

*“I used to be with the ladies in the neighborhood. I was working for a charity, I was helping them. I also used to have a desire to learn. I learnt the art from them. I didn’t have a master. We used to watch one another and learn. Nobody taught anybody. My children learnt it from me but I didn’t teach them. They just watched and naturally learnt. Orduyeri (a neighborhood in Bartın) was the center. People used to make embroidery and send it to Istanbul or Zonguldak for sales. We used to make and our elder sisters in the neighborhood used to sell.” (Hanife PORTAKAL)*

*“My dear, I started this at the age of 11. Now I am 81 years old. I stopped doing it two years ago. I cannot see anymore my son. I had a friend back then, I was very eager to learn, I asked her and she taught me. I begged a very close relative, I said: “please bring me to her, I want to learn”. She introduced me to her and I learnt. I used to make cross-stitch, thread-breaking, and lacework. We used to do all of them. We used to come together in front of a house or a garden and make embroidery.” (Pembe TURP)*

*“I saw thread-breaking when I had come to Bartın. I was assigned to the Public Education Center in December 1993 as a qualified instructor. I used to see women making different embroideries with frames as I was going to my workplace or returning from it. They used to come together in the neighborhood after they finished their works at home. I was*

*interested. I used to usually watch them; then I met them and learnt the art.” (Hatice KARADAĞ)*

When the question of *why* they learnt the art was asked, it was observed that the participants usually became interested as a result of an interaction. The participants mentioned that as a result of an interaction they tried to perform the art and it became a habit in time. The satisfaction of producing something motivated them. On the other hand, it was determined that although the art had been a kind of habit at the begging, they started to make income which increased their motivation. The participants specifically mentioned that this process encouraged them to continue their art. The participant statements about the issue are presented below:

*“My deceased mother used to have reels in her dowry chest. I saw them. They were also called tinsel in the past. Ladies used to make sheets for their dowry. I was them in my mother’s chest. I took them out, took a look at them, I was curious; I wanted to see how they were designed. Then I said to myself, I will learn. I used to make cross-stitch, I learnt thread-breaking by imitating cross-stitch. I relay liked it. There was a woman who used to sell things for dowry; we used to make embroidery and give it to her. She would bring them to different places, sell them and give us money.” (Pembe TURP)*

*“It is very pleasurable, thread-breaking. I cannot live without it. I would do it even if I didn’t earn any money. I earned a lot of money, but I never did it for money. I went to Çaycuma (a district of Zonguldak) and taught it to many people. Our products were very cheap, but we would do it. I was very happy doing it. It is also soothing. Men used to go fishing, I would make thread-breaking.” (Hanife PORTAKAL)*

*“Firstly, we were interested in. We would also make money. She (the old master lady) used to give us threads, we would start. We would finish our works and hand them to her. Sometimes one lira, sometimes two liras, whatever we earn. We were also doing it for money.” (Ayten DAL)*

*“I was curious, interested. We were children, my mother and her friends used to make thread-breaking. I learnt and continued. When I got married, I saw that my mother-in-law was making it. We used to do it together. It was like a therapy for me. Especially when I started making different patterns, producing different embroideries I felt like I was producing something for the future generations. My purpose was to discover, see my artistic skills. I used to be more motivated as I continued producing. Besides these, I made a great contribution to the home economics.” (Türkan TURP)*

*“I feel satisfied while doing this art. Watching the process is a kind of excitement while performing is another kind. It is like eating sunflower seeds; the more you eat, the more you want. Thread-breaking is just like that. You make a pattern, and then you want to make another. There is a constant desire. I became more interested in this type of embroidery with the support of the manager of the institution in which I am working.” (Hatice KARADAĞ)*

### **Findings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question**

The question “How do you make thread-breaking? Please explain the process” is analyzed in this section of the study. The answers of the participants to this question and four related sub-questions are presented. According to the answers of participants, the type of thread used in the art of thread-breaking and the method used in the process are the factors that make the art ‘unique’. The



participants mentioned that *the process of thread-breaking* starts with a specific backstitch; the stitch is prepared on a piece of fabric or tulle according to the specific measures. Combs or lines based on the sample pattern that is to be used on the fabric or tulle are counted. After that, the pattern is prepared according to the measure of the fabric or tulle. The silver thread is threaded on the pattern with the help of a needle; the thread is broken with a nail and pressed after the threading process is completed. This process is repeated until the pattern is complete. The participants' statement about the traditional process of thread-breaking are presented below:

*"We carefully plan the process before we start. We prepare the pattern in advance. After that, we prepare the backstitch according to our measurements on the fabric or tulle. This enables us- in a sense- foresee the product. We count the combs or lines according to the threading style we prefer. After that, we measure the proportion, prepare the fabric or tulle and start the pattern. We follow the pattern as we process. We break the thread with the nail, we don't use scissors." (Hatice KARADAĞ)*

*"We use tambours and tulle called "honeycomb" (she shows the tulle); we have specific thread needles, we use them. We have a piece of paper and a sample model on it. The tulle can be white, red or it can have a different color." (Ayten DAL)*

The participants state that the *materials* used in the process of thread-breaking are an embroidery frame, a silver thread, needle and tulle or fabric on which the embroidery will be designed. The materials used today are tambours, tulle, copper, silver or gold threads and special needles. Opinions of the participants about the materials used in thread-breaking are presented below:

*"We use tulle, embroidery frame, special needle, not like an ordinary needle, and we use silver thread hasp." (Türkan TURP)*

*"Most women use embroidery frames. There is no such thing as tambour (gergef). Needle, silver, copper or gold threads, a little expensive, tulle, embroidery frame." (Hanife PORTAKAL)*

The most preferred traditional *patterns* in thread-breaking are: Street of the drunk (altar), zucchini blossoms, arched bridge, grape leaf, the plate of cream, carnation, rose, rose in the garden, millstone, snowy and different geometric patterns. On the other hand, plus (+) and cross (x) score techniques are used in thread-breaking. Statements of the participants about the materials and techniques used in thread-breaking are presented below:

*"There is a pattern called the street of the drunk, it is also called altar. We use it. There is another pattern called zucchini blossoms, we use them on scarves. We use blossoms on bed linings. We also use the pattern of angel. We use water, rose patterns." (Ayten DAL)*

*"There is leaf, star, carnation, street of the drunk, which is also called altar (the pattern looks like people who slouch) arched bridge (the name of a bridge in Bartın). There was a rug pattern in the past. There was also snowy; snowflakes are used amongst roses." (Pembe TURP)*

*"Surely there is a technique. We use the technique of plus score. We use it in a regional embroidery style. There is also the technique of cross score, but we don't use it. Plus score technique is older than the other. There are some specific steps and we make knots after these steps, the thread is bent and broken by hand." (Türkan TURP)*

Thread-breaking products have a wide range of *areas of use*. Participants mentioned that the embroideries were used on scarves, belly bands, bundles, special scarves used in traditional henna nights and Islamic memorial services. On the other hand, according to the participants, this specific embroidery type is now used in almost all products in daily life including bed linings, pillows, tablecloths, neckerchiefs, trays. Some of the statements of participants about the *areas of use* are presented below.

*"It was used in dowries in the past. These embroidery pieces used to be locked in chests. This is why; we use them in our house for decoration. We use them as ornaments on gifts or clothes. They can be used in any kind of area ranging from large or small products. Glasses cases, bags, trays, belts, jewelry, lace pillows, pillowcases, linens, accessories in living rooms are some of these products. People used to use them in wedding ceremonies, on special scarves used in henna nights. I am using them in clothes now. I am making baby clothes."* (Hatice KARADAĞ)

*"They can be used almost anywhere. Bed linings, scarves, neckerchiefs, tea trays are some examples. Different souvenirs can be designed by using these embroideries."* (Hanife PORTAKAL)

#### **Findings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> research question**

The question "With whom did you perform this art? In what kind of environment did you perform it?" is analyzed in this section of the study. The answers of the participants to this question and one related sub-question are presented. According to the answers of participants, they learnt the art through family members or neighbors; either family members or neighbors passed it on the next generations. On the other hand, some participants mentioned that they were professionally interested in the art, taught it in the institutions they used to work.

*"We used to do it with neighbors. People still do it; neighbors in Orduyeri still come together, sit in front of a house and make thread-breaking. I didn't teach it to anyone here, but I taught it to a few teachers in Çaycuma. I explained the process, demonstrated and they took notes."* (Hanife PORTAKAL)

*"I used to make thread-breaking. I had no assistant. There was nobody in my family doing it. There were a few friends in the neighborhood making this embroidery like me. We used to come together and do it under a gas lamp as there was no electricity. I taught thread-breaking to many people. Some girls were interested, so I taught them. I taught it to 4-5 girls. I taught my daughter too, but she didn't continue."* (Ayten DAL)

*"I don't have a student or apprentice now. My mother was my teacher. I was a master in the public education center, so I made many disciples. I currently don't work. I do it on my own now."* (Türkan TURP)

#### **Findings of the 4<sup>th</sup> research question**

The question "Do you think that there is any obstacle or problem in performing this artistic profession today? If yes, what are they?" is analyzed in this section of the study. The answers of the participants to this question are presented and analyzed. In this context, participants mentioned that especially there has been a decrease in the interest of the young, which is one of the problems in sustaining this art. It is observed that the participants compared today's conditions with that of the past. Besides, the participants stated that the other obstacles in this art are carrying out this art only for financial

purposes, lack of advertisement and support, insufficient support of non-governmental organizations, difficulties in the recruitment of some materials.

*“There are no obstacles to sustaining and promoting this art. There are many people in different neighborhoods doing this type of embroidery, but we weren’t doing it for commercial purposes. Today, people do this for money, completely for commercial purposes. In addition to this, women over the middle age are generally doing this art today. It is necessary to teach it to the young.” (Hanife PORTAKAL)*

*“We sometimes have some problems with tulle. We have a hard time finding it. Some tulle isn’t useful for thread-breaking. Besides, there is not an efficient non-governmental organization interested in this art. We established a society in the past, but couldn’t find a proper area for carrying out our activities, so we had to shut it down. People used to prefer making geometric patterns associated with Anatolia, but they are using different patterns now. It is important to protect special Anatolian patterns.” (Hatice KARADAĞ)*

*“The young aren’t interested now. Young people in the past used to be more eager to learn. There are surely some individuals who want to learn this art today, but there were more people in the past.” (Ayten DAL)*

#### **Findings of the 5<sup>th</sup> research question**

The question “What are your suggestions for carrying this art into the future and popularizing it?” is analyzed in this section of the study. The answers of the participants to this question are presented. In this context, the participants mentioned that advertising activities are highly important. According to them, arousing the interest of the young is crucial as this art is continued mostly by women over middle-age; it is thus significant to attract the attention of the society, primarily the young. On the other hand, the participants stated that training courses should be established, carrying out advertising activities especially about the financial income got through this art, and establishing local markets in which these products can be sold are important steps to be taken.

*“We can make this art more popular. We can open more courses for that. We can encourage people to attend these courses. The support of the state would be very good. People would think that art is protected; at least they would believe that the government supports them.” (Pembe TURP)*

*“Institutionalization is crucial. Non-governmental organizations can be established. Municipality organizations and the governorship should increase their support in advertising. Ateliers about advertising should be established; it can thus be possible to make people realize the value of this art. Prioritizing geometric Anatolian patterns is important for sustaining the tradition. There should be more social responsibility projects. Women carrying out this art should be supported in gaining more income. Advertisements in national channels or TV programs can be beneficial.” (Hatice KARADAĞ)*

*“Training courses for the young should be organized. Young girls aren’t interested in art. Women over middle age generally make this type of embroidery. This is why it is necessary to increase the interest of young girls, something should be done.” (Hanife PORTAKAL)*

*“People would be more interested if there was a market, an opportunity for commercial income. The interest of the young should be aroused. There should be advertisements for informing people.” (Ayten DAL)*

*“There should be more courses to popularize it. The state and families should encourage people to take these courses. There can be advertisements for thread-breaking.” (Türkan TURP)*

### **Discussion, Results, and Suggestions**

Handicrafts, which are important elements in local and global scales as Intangible Cultural Heritages (ICH) are an ancient pursue that reflects the identity, cultural accumulation, and variety of the society. It can be said that the products of this ancient pursue can be ornaments, different kinds of objects put in dowries or things that are used in daily life; the common point of all these different products is that they reflect viewpoints, understandings, and lifestyles of people and societies that create them (Alyüz, 2007). The regional or local differences are reflected through the symbols, figures, patterns, and materials.

The art of thread-breaking (Bartın işi) is a specific type of embroidery and a different type of regional handicrafts tradition; it has an important place in Anatolian cultural diversity. This traditional handicraft is associated with the city of Bartın in the western Black Sea region in the north of Turkey. The ornaments designed in this art are completely handmade, in other words, no technological instrument is used during the process. The products serve different purposes besides ensuring the local people to earn income. Using special needles and threads (silver, gold or bronze) are used in the process, no yarn is used; the final pattern is designed based on the ‘plus technique (+)’, which makes the handicraft different from the others (Adaş, 2019). The patterns used in the thread-breaking technique are usually formed by taking inspiration from nature. Rose, tulip, carnations, and different type of flowers are preferred in plant designs; fly, honeybee, butterfly, spider, etc. are some of the animal designs; diamond, triangle, square, star are some of the examples of geometrical patterns preferred in these ornaments (Yolcu, 2014).

According to the research, the masters of this special art, who have learnt thread-breaking in different places under different circumstances have an undeniable, crucial role in sustaining the technique and passing it on to the next generations. It can be said that as these masters keep the technique alive both culturally and historically, they serve the purpose of protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage elements. In this respect, it is very important to research the masters of this art, discover them and give support. As is known, traditional elements disappear in today’s world if they aren’t supported. Most of the Intangible Cultural Heritages have been undergoing the process of decay and being slowly forgotten; this is why interviews should be made with the masters of specific cultural heritages, their ideas and knowledge should be recorded and their situation in daily life should be improved. Creating awareness about the importance of these people is very important.

Five thread-braking masters were interviewed in the scope of this research study and their statements during these one-on-one meetings were analyzed. In the scope of the first research question, their statements about how they learnt thread-breaking, did they have a master or not, why did they do the handicraft and how did they become interested were analyzed. According to the findings, participants generally became interested in the profession and learnt it from their neighbors, friends or family members and they acquired the skill through observation. It can be said that one of the reasons why they continued this art over years with high motivation is that they didn’t learn it based on a master-apprentice relationship. In other words, as the participants learnt the embroidery at a small age, in a social environment based on personal skill and willingness, they continued the art for long years with high motivation.

The satisfaction and happiness in the process of making embroidery along with the financial income are surely highly important in sustaining this art. In this respect, as mentioned by Demir and Varol

(2019) this tradition is still alive and well-protected in today's environment as local women who adopted this art, continued it with passion, created different patterns and designs, formed new figures, The participators answered the questions of how do they make thread-breaking, what are the techniques and tools, what are the patterns and the use areas of the products with these embroideries. Their opinions and statements were analyzed in the scope of this second question group. It was determined that the participators generally told their experiences and gave details, they mentioned similar tools and they mostly used the plus (+) technique. On the other hand, they mentioned that they mostly preferred natural and local patterns in their embroideries. In terms of the area of use, participators said that the products with thread-breaking patterns were used in a limited area such as traditional regional objects put in dowries; however, these embroideries are now being used in a wide range of areas such as souvenirs and decoration objects. At this point, it can be said that the areas of use have undergone a transition in time, and today the designs are eye-pleasing and used in daily life. While the embroideries made with the thread-breaking technique were used in traditional clothes and objects for dowries, they are now used for various purposes including home decoration, clothing, and souvenirs. The point that should be specially mentioned is that the designs have become diversified, they now attract more attention and they have transformed in a way that they now fit the conditions of the era.

In the scope of the third research question, the participators answered the questions of "with whom they performed this art, in what type of an environment they performed it and did they teach thread-breaking to somebody else". In general terms, participators mentioned that they came together with family members or neighbors either in a house or in front of a house, and there was an interaction. On the other hand, participators mentioned that they didn't have systematic teaching experience, in other words, they mostly didn't participate in training at courses; however, they taught this embroidery type to a few eager girls around them. The important point here is that the learning style is based on self-education, and women doing this embroidery adopted the same principle in terms of teaching it to somebody else. It can be said that this type of learning process is disadvantageous in terms of the sustainability of the art and passing it on to the next generations.

In the scope of the fourth research question, the participants were required to answer the question "do you believe that there is a problem or obstacle in carrying out this art?". Participants generally mentioned that there has been a decrease in the interest; thread-breaking is now made for financial income and there is a lack of support. On the other hand, the lack of advertisements and support are the other obstacles according to the participators. Based on these statements, it can be said that institutional support is important for arousing and increasing interest. Non-governmental organizations and state institutions can ensure support by making organizations. People carrying out thread-breaking tradition can thus be financially supported, sustainability can be ensured and the tradition can reach large masses. At this point, it is important to note that people devoted to this profession should come together, be organized and have the ability to act together.

The participants stated their opinions about the suggestions for passing this art on to the next generations and popularizing it. At this point, they generally focused on arousing interest, advertising activities, training courses, exhibitions, and marketing areas. As also mentioned by Öz in his study (2019), the locals should be well-informed about the cultural values of the traditional Turkish handicrafts used in daily life. Financial and organizational supports should be ensured as it is significant to advertise handicrafts in different open public spaces such as exhibitions, bazaars, and fairs; these supports will contribute to the sustainability of these valuable handicrafts. Although the context of this research study is thread-breaking, these suggestions of participators are important for protecting and sustaining Intangible Cultural Heritages (ICH) as they are delicate fields of a profession which are based

on self-learning and require effort and devotion. Based on that, it is necessary to build open public spaces for exhibition and marketing and make advertising activities on local and global scales; it will thus be possible to give moral and financial support to local people who are devoted to this handicraft. Passing this art on to the next generations and ensuring people see and understand the value of these unique embroideries is very important in this respect.

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**Appendix 1. Interviewed Metallic Embroidery Masters**



**Appendix 2. Metallic Embroidery Examples**

