



ΤΙ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΓΙΑ ΣΕΝΑ
ΑΛΙΕΥΤΙΚΗ
ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΤΙΚΗ
ΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΙΑ;

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ΑΡΓΥΡΗΣ ΣΑΠΟΥΝΙΔΗΣ

1. What is fishing cultural heritage to you?

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Πεζότρατα, άπλωμα του δικτιού κοντά στην ακτή, την δεκαετία του '50 (φωτογραφία αρχείο Συνεταιρισμού Παράκτιων Αλιέων Καβάλας).

Cultural heritage, those tangible and intangible elements of our culture passed down to us by previous generations, forges a deep chain of connection between us and the places where we live. It links us to the past and acts as a guiding thread into our future. It gives us a sense of comfort, security and the feeling of belonging. The loss of cultural heritage can weaken social ties with a place and between the members of a society, resulting in increased conflict and lawlessness, reduced cooperation and the loss of the sense of identity.

The above observations are particularly relevant in today's world. Rapid and often radical changes at all levels of life leave many of us bewildered and with a deep sense of anxiety and insecurity. The cultural heritage of our immediate community or homeland, but cultural heritage we share with others, with our neighbours, friends, allies and indeed with the whole of humanity, all help us re-establish and secure our place in the world. Some elements of the Greek cultural heritage, such as the antiquities, have been protected since the first decades of existence of the independent Greek state, while the traditional life of the Greeks (or more precisely some aspects of it) has, also from early on, been studied, recorded and rescued, under the broad heading of folklore. Gradually, more and more elements of the Greek cultural heritage are recorded and becoming part of a protected regime. The Tobacco Museum in Kavala and the Silk Museum in Soufli, for example, recognize the importance of tobacco and silk, both for the economy and in the shaping of the identity of the communities involved in their production. It is now becoming increasingly clear that cultural heritage does not only include the monuments and material remains of the past, but also knowledge, experiences, ideas and perceptions. New technologies allow accurate recording of these intangible aspects of cultural heritage, but also can make it comprehensible and accessible to the public in a very effective way.

There are, however, serious dilemmas. How can cultural heritage be preserved when everything around it is in flux? Are all elements of heritage equally worth preserving and passing on to the next generations? How

can these elements of cultural heritage be adapted to the contemporary needs of a society and remain true to its essence? Does this very process separate cultural heritage from the context that gave it being, and so turn it into an empty shell? Who is responsible for answering these concerns? Who then is responsible for managing cultural heritage? Should local communities have the power to define what they consider important in cultural heritage and act accordingly? Or is it, perhaps, the exclusive prerogative of the state to deal with these issues through its governing mechanisms? All of the above circumstances and uncertainties are targets of research and deliberation at the level of states, groups of states, global organizations (such as UNESCO), as well as individual research centers and universities all over the world.

The European Union, both recognizing the need to promote and support the unity of the people making it up and appreciating the benefits of empowering and motivating local communities to address concerns about themselves and the union, funds and supports research and actions around cultural heritage issues. This book is the product of a research program, financed by the HORIZON 2020 initiative, which became known by the acronym PERICLES. The objectives of the program are described in its long and yet apposite title «Preservation and sustainable management of cultural heritage and cultural landscapes of European coastal and maritime regions». The program focused its activities on the coasts and seas of Europe. With the cooperation of eight countries and twelve research institutions it sought to investigate how local communities view their coastal and maritime cultural heritage, what they think about its future and what they do about it. Information on the PERICLES program, its theoretical principles and on a panorama of actions in the participating countries can be found on the program's website <https://www.pericles-heritage.eu/> and for the Greek part of it at <https://pericles.inale.gr/>.

In regions like Greece, where the presence of the sea is dominant, the maritime cultural heritage is particularly important and multifaceted. Ports, coastal settlements, industries and handicrafts of the sea, shipyards

and boats are examples of the material aspects of cultural heritage. The maritime professions, the way of life of the coastal communities, the knowledge of the sea and its technologies, their customs and worldview comprise some of the most elusive but equally most important intangible aspects of this heritage. The Greek participation in PERICLES focused on the fishing cultural heritage in the NE Aegean region, an area of rich seas, high production from fisheries and a fishing culture that is encountered everywhere and felt as a natural and integral element of life in the region. Although fishing cultural heritage in NE Aegean has very deep roots in time, its historicity, complexity and diversity are but little known or explored. With the exception of the work of some local historians and institutions that have started documenting /rescuing local fishing history (with excellent results), the largest part of this heritage still remains unrecorded and therefore largely unknown.

The fishing cultural heritage of the area is mainly perceived as the local fishing tradition and the people we talked to described it as such. One goal of PERICLES was to make a preliminary recording of the fishing cultural heritage that yet exists. This involved an extensive ‘mapping’ as the first step, which will facilitate future in-depth studies. The collected data take the form of videos, photographs, interviews, questionnaires, bibliographies, financial records etc. They have all been stored in a database, managed by the Fisheries Research Institute of the Hellenic Organisation DIMITRA (ELGO - DIMITRA) and the University of Crete – Laboratory “Visual Anthropology. Image, Music, Text “.

In the course of conducting the PERICLES research we spoke to many people who are related to fishing cultural heritage in various capacities, from fishermen and fishmongers to marine biologists, local government agents and families that place fish on the table on a regular basis. We asked everyone one basic question, which is also the title of this book: **“What is fishing cultural heritage to you?”** The answers were varied and often unexpected. Many had a note of melancholy for what is lost, a strong measure of concern for what is rapidly changing but also a clear

determination to keep the local fishing traditions alive. The people we talked to realize that *something must be done about it*, without, however, having a clear idea of what this could or should be.

A significant part of the fishing cultural heritage of the NE Aegean comes in the form of material traces, such as buildings, objects, paper documents etc. The *dalyans* (fixed fish-capturing devices) in the lagoons along the coasts of the region, for example, are elements of this cultural heritage. The same is true for the exhibits of the Municipality Naval Museum of Kavala. Preservation or repurposing of such material items and structures is perceived as something achievable. But the other side to fishing cultural heritage – the fleeting, intangible, and yet very distinct aspect – faces greater challenges. This includes the non-material side of the experience of those who live by the fishing tradition of the region: the rich and complex knowledge required to locate the fish (without sonars), to rig a net, to catch the fish, to pickle the sardines properly, to succeed in smoking the *lykourinos* (grey mullet). The embodied skills required for

these tasks are also part of this intangible heritage: the movement of the wrist that operates the razor-shell rod, the twisting of the fishermen's bodies as they haul the heavy beach seine onto the shore. These are learned through experience and participation, transmitted from generation to generation with practice, almost unconsciously. The religiosity of fishermen, the stories told about real and imaginary creatures and events, the genealogies that reach far back in time, are all and similarly components of this intangible heritage, so deep-rooted in time.

These are the elements of heritage most vulnerable and easily lost when people stop practising them, remembering them, and cease talking about them anymore as integral parts of the daily round. They are lost for good when the last of old fishermen and fisherwomen depart from the world and when no apprentices exist to carry them on forwards.

This book pays homage to these fishing folk who have preserved both the physical and intangible fishing heritage of the NE Aegean for countless generations, who

shaped and enriched it. It records fishing stories as they know them and as they understand them. They are stories remembered by the people who claim their fishing cultural heritage, who are its living practitioners and want it to remain part of their future.

The content of this book

The book concerns itself especially with the Intangible dimensions of the fishing cultural heritage: its content is formed by the memories of those who experienced or listened to the stories of fishing in the old days or who studied its history.

In the chapter *The daily life of a coastal fisherman in 1950*, the son of a fisherman records what his father taught him about fishing techniques and methods in coastal waters, while in the chapter *In the days of the frisses...*, the son of another fisherman describes his own childhood experience of his fisherman father. His recollections take the reader from the deck of the fishing boats to the family table and the delicacies of the sea. In the chapter *Father and the longlines*, the son and the daughter of a fisherman narrate their parallel experiences, revealing the different ways in which two children of different gender experienced the fishing identity of their father. In the chapter *The dangers of the profession* we hear the voice of a small-scale coastal fisherman, who ploughed the seas around the island of Samothrace and who had many adventures. It is a transcript of an interview he gave to his children in 2000. *Mrs Zoe and the silk nets* takes us into a different world, to that of the women who took on the task of net-rigging and repairing and introduces us to the role of women in fishing communities. The next chapter *Tsipouraki with anchovies and the fish salteries of Kavala* brings to life the artisanal fish salteries of Kavala, an important economic domain in the area in decades past, through the lively testimony of the owner of a small saltery. The chapter *The value of tradition and the monk-fishermen of Mount Athos: Fotis Kontoglou* comments on the concept of tradition, as perceived by Fotis Kontoglou and other intellectuals of his time, and reproduces a fascinating description of the life of monk-fishermen at Mount Athos

in the 1930s. The next chapter *Fishing on the ancient shores of the NE Aegean* takes us even further back in time and describes fishing on the shores of the NE Aegean thousands of years ago. Archaeological and historical evidence testify to the fact that today's memories of fishing, whether we realize it or not, have deep roots in the area.

The way fishermen see themselves, others and the world of fisheries, is evident in their words, which find shape and life in the *Stories about fishing cultural heritage*. The chapter presents excerpts from interviews taken as part of the PERICLES program research. The next chapter *Memories and the fishing identity in Kavala* uses the same material to investigate a recurrent theme within this book: memory, particularly memories related to the historical events of the Asia Minor catastrophe in the early 20th century and the planned, forced movements of both Greek and Turkish populations. Technologically developed fishing as practised by Greek fishermen in the Çesme region of Asia Minor was transferred to the NE Aegean and its shores with the refugees during the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in 1923. This was a pivotal moment in the history of Greek fisheries and provides the dominant framework in which the present identity of the fishermen of that area is shaped. This section of chapters is complemented by one titled *Talking files: fisheries in the Alexandroupolis region*. It describes fishing there based on archival, written and photographic material. Archives complement and support memory. The next section of the book focuses on maintaining, highlighting and managing fishing cultural heritage. It begins with the chapter *A museum of the sea in Kavala*, which presents and describes the Municipal Naval Museum of Kavala and its treasures, but also the challenges associated with the creation of such an institution. There follows a chapter dedicated to the local naive painter *Diamantis Kefis*, a distinctive figure of the Kavala harbour, who used his brush to immortalise boats, activities and people of his time. Works of his are exhibited at the Municipal Naval Museum of Kavala.

The next four chapters focus on how the physical world, the seascapes,

fish and seafood become the background as well the protagonists in the creation of fishing cultural heritage. The first of these chapters describes the *Natural world of the fishermen of the NE Aegean* and comments on how it helps shape the fishing culture in the region. Chapters *Sharks: scary, sensitive and charming*, *Kefaloi: the great cultural capital* and *The nostos of eels: A story of endurance and metamorphosis*, each focus on a different fish. These creatures have left deep cultural footprints and affected, each in their own way, the economy, science, art and the imagination of people from antiquity to the present day.

The chapter *Proverbs of the sea* includes a large number of proverbs and expressions related to fishing and the sea. They were collected through a questionnaire from all over East Macedonia and Thrace, Greece and are all part of our everyday language. They reflect the richness and depth of fishing cultural heritage in NE Aegean. Even when we do not think about it, even when we do not identify with the world of fishing, fishing culture is yet part of us all.

Finally, the book concludes with a photographic epilogue. A series of old photographs illustrate aspects of the fishing cultural heritage of the NE Aegean. They are a visual archive and complement for a number of the topics raised in the previous chapters.