**Introduction**

- Present to class the koloji (bottled gourd) (3 mins)

* **What do you think this object is used for?**
* **What is it made of?**
* Ask participants to share thoughts before revealing the objects history and significance.
* Short introduction explaining the reason behind the selection of this object as my subject (5 mins)

Before I get into the object's meaning and significance, I would like to share a little bit about myself and how I came about choosing this object.

I come from Cyprus, from an immigrant family. Both my grandparents on either side of my parents had to emigrate to the south after the war in 1974. They were working class families and my grandparents both had to work in the fields, as builders and in other jobs to support their families.

I grew up closer to my mother’s family. My grandparents from that part of the family owned an animal farm for years, which resulted in me being around shepherds and other farmers or agriculturists.

On my father’s side, my grandparents had a large piece of land where they kept their own animals and grew their own crops. My grandfather died when I was very young, and everything I know about him comes in bits and pieces from stories told by others. One of the few things he did when he was younger was to grow his own gourds and carve them with different designs and patterns.

I never had the opportunity to keep any of his dried gourds — I don’t even think there are any left, as his family is not very good at holding on to sentimental objects. This has always left me with a sense of loss, a feeling that part of my heritage has disappeared before I could fully grasp its significance.

30 years later, I found myself in a vintage store near King’s Cross with a friend to pass the time before a book reading at a bookshop across the road. To my surprise, I spotted one of those Cypriot dried gourds lying on top of a pile of other superfluous objects. It was as if time had folded in on itself and brought me back a piece of my grandfather’s world in the most unexpected places. As I held it in my hands, I felt a strange mix of emotions — recognition, nostalgia, and a deep connection to a past I never quite knew, but always longed to return to. It made me think about the way objects carry stories, how they survive even when the stories fade, and how material culture can offer us a tangible connection to lost traditions and personal legacies.

**What is a Gourd?** (5 min)

**(provide printout 1)**

Quick Facts:

* Gourds belong to the **Cucurbitaceae family** (like pumpkins & melons). Otherwise known as calabash, bottle gourd and opo squash.

**(provide printout 2)**

* **What other ways do you believe they used dried gourds, what other objects did they make out of it?**

- Used for centuries in Cyprus, Greece, and Middle Eastern cultures for **storage, as a household good, music, and decoration.**

**(provide printout 3)**

- **Naturally durable, lightweight, and biodegradable**.

- Gourds take about **nine months** to develop from seed to harvest.

**The Role of Gourds in Cypriot Culture**

*Traditional Uses*:

- **Containers**: Used for storing water, wine, oil, and food.

- **Musical Instruments**: Crafted into "**tamboura**" and other folk instruments.

- **Decorative Art**: Painted, carved, and engraved for festivals & home decoration.

- **Folklore & Symbolism**: Associated with fertility, protection, and good luck. Mention that it was also used in wedding ceremonies, to perform a ritual.

**Crafting & Decorating Gourds**

Step-by-Step Process:

1. **Growing & Harvesting:** Left to dry for months before use.

2. **Cleaning & Prepping**: Outer skin removed, inside hollowed by inserting shards of glass or chert (sharp rocks/quartz) and shake the bottle.

3. **Decoration Techniques:**

- Carving & Engraving (traditional patterns from Lefkaritiko lace).

- Burning (Pyrography) create detailed images.

- Painting & Dying (folk motifs, religious icons, floral designs).

- Embedding Metal & Beads (used in festivals).

4. **Varnish:** they would use either olive oil, pine resin (not so easy to find) or varnish

***Hands-On Activity:*** (5 mins)

- Provide **paper** and **drawing pencils**.

- Let participants **draw their own patterns**, making drawings almost like creating their own family crest.

**Gourds & Sustainability** (3 mins)

**Eco-Friendly Benefits:**

Zero waste: Used as containers, utensils, instruments, and birdhouses.

- Low-carbon impact: A natural, biodegradable material.

- Modern Revival: Artists and designers use gourds in eco-crafts and sustainable design.

**Discussion**: (2 mins)

- Ask: "How can we use traditional crafts in sustainable design today?"

**Any other examples of traditional/folk crafts used in fashion/arts for their sustainability?**

- Link to fashion, packaging, and eco-conscious living.

**Gourds in Contemporary Cypriot Art**

**Modern Adaptations:**

- Cypriot artists use gourds in sculpture, jewellery, and interior design.

- Revived in cultural festivals & folk-art markets.

- Used as clocks, lampshades, birdhouses, special cups, and bowls.

- Innovations include wine ageing vessels and experimental drinks storage.

**Small Group Discussion:**

- "How do we keep traditions alive in modern art and education?"

- Ask participants to brainstorm ways to use heritage crafts in teaching.

**Participants feedback and Q+A** (7mins)

**Key Takeaway:**

**"Objects carry history, culture, and identity. By engaging with them, we connect to the past while shaping the future."**