

THE REFLECTION OF TRADITIONAL OTTOMAN COSTUMES ON KUTAHYA CERAMICS

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The costume culture -- which had its roots in the necessity to protect people from bad weather conditions -- has become a way of expressing oneself through the use of widely accepted status symbols.

Throughout time, the use of costumes has developed and people have created many different styles and shapes. However, costumes gained importance with the advent of the family as an institution. Weather conditions, the natural environment, religious beliefs, political views, and the financial status of the local people are also factors which affect clothing. In this respect, the costumes which began their lives as fur, leather, leaf and various parts of plants which people encountered in nature have evolved within the framework of certain patterns, especially since the 14th Century.¹

Over the centuries, people shared their own traditions with other nations and were inspired by their designs or motifs as they changed location or migrated to somewhere else in the course of history. This being the case, it can be said that costumes present us with a kind of 'colourful history album'.

Each society has its own costume culture. The nomadic Turkish society of Middle Asia lived a life being permanently on horseback and thus their costumes were similar for both men and women. Of course, the variety of costumes and the importance attached to clothing increased when these people started to lead a settled life. The costume culture in Ottoman Turkey had unique properties which were also influenced by Islamic culture. Costumes were given great importance as they showed the status of people in society (see Figures 1, 2 and 3).



Figure 1: A Vizier and his Minion.



Figure 2: A Hunter.



Figure 3: Minion.

The sultans who loved clothing established weaving ateliers in the palace, and the designs drawn by the muralists were woven meticulously (see Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7).

The Ottoman Palace was leading the clothes' industry in Istanbul, the capital city of Turkey in the 15th Century. While people in Istanbul wore gorgeous and expensive clothes, the people in the villages and towns of Anatolia and Rumelia preferred plain fabrics and modest clothes (see Figures 11-19).



Figure 4, 5, 6 and 7: Ottoman Royal Costumes, c.1800.



Figures 8, 9 and 10: Ottoman Royal Costume Caftans.



Figure 11: Belt.



Figure 12: Traditional Public Costumes at Anatolia in 1850.



Figure 13: Urban and Rural Costumes at Anatolia in 1870.

The most general feature of Ottoman costumes was that the costumes of men and women were similar to each other, and they were loose, cloaked and long. The costumes were mainly caftan-like robes with baggy trousers, cardigans, shirts, dresses, rawhide sandals and boots. In addition to these, the belt in which snuff bags and the dagger – a person's most important weapon -- were placed, had an important place in clothing. Each profession had its own costume.

Of course, an element which occupies a vast place in social life cannot be disregarded by art. The costume culture had been a theme in ceramics and tile art, as in every field of art, in Turkey. It is possible to see similar designs and



Figure 14: Peasant Costumes at Anatolia in the 19th Century.



Figure 15: Peasant Women and Two Men with Bridal Costumes at Anatolia in 1870. (The man on the right is a bridegroom.)



Figure 16: Traditional Public Costumes at Anatolia in 1870.



Figure 17: Traditional Public Costumes at Anatolia in 1870. (From Left to Right: Urban Man, Christian, Policeman.)



Figure 18: Traditional Public Costumes at Anatolia in 1870. (Two Men on Left: Swashbuckling Heroes of Southwestern Anatolian Villages and a Merchant.)



Figure 19: Traditional Public Costumes at Anatolia in 1870. (The Man on the Left: Soldier Belonging to the Irregular Troops of the Ottoman Army, and Rural Costumes.)

colours in fabrics, tiles and ceramics. They show the integral characteristics of Ottoman culture reflected even today. Besides the similarities in design, there are very differently styled ceramic products which depict the costume culture in the eighteenth century in Kutahya, one of the ceramic production centres of the country.

Kutahya is among the cities well-known for tile and ceramic art and is rich in ceramic and tile raw materials. Thus, every society ruling the city from the Phrygia to the Seljuks and Germiyans and then the Ottomans continued to sustain this art form. Tile ceramics has been both a branch of art and an indispensable source of income for the region over many years.

Many utensils and decorative products have been made since the 14th Century in Kutahya. The tiles and ceramics started with red-clayed examples in that century, and continued with blue-white examples in the 15th Century. White-clayed ceramics were decorated with various flower designs and underglaze techniques until late in the 17th Century. In the early Kutahya ceramics, the human figure was used in a limited sense due to the influence of Islamic art; therefore, plant designs and geometrical designs were focused on. Works with an excellent style in a modern sense began to be produced in Kutahya works since the early 18th Century. These ceramics were produced in a modern sense and showed varieties of designs during the course of the 18th century. In this period, Kutahya tile studios started to produce brand new products with a strong style and free brushwork. In addition to the small realistic flower motifs done with brush strokes, there were leaves, ivories, and human and animal figures. The most important feature of the white or cream-clayed works coated with white clay and transparent glaze was that there were designs depicting human figures with local costumes on them.

The women surrounded with various flowered branches in these works were generally shown with kaftans, dresses, baggy trousers, belts, and hats. There were also figures of men in the designs. Decorations were also seen on the flasks, bottles and sugar bowls (see Figures 20–33).



Figure 20: Bottle with Women Figures Hand-in-Hand with Rose and Tulip Motifs Wearing Caftans, Shalwars, High Head Dresses and Belts.



Figure 21: Plate with Women Figure Wearing Turquoise Dress, Shalwar and Belt; Man Wearing Green Caftan, Yellow Dress and Head Dress; and Flowers.



Figure 22: Plate with Women Figure Wearing Purple Dress, Shalwar, Turquoise Belt and Head Dress; with Flowers.



Figure 23: Plate with Women Figure Wearing Green Caftan, Yellow Dress, Shalwar, Wide Blue Belt and Head Dress; with Flowers.



Figure 24: Plate with Women Figure Wearing Green Bolero, Yellow Dress, Shalwar, Blue Belt and Head Dress; with Flowers and Smoking Tobacco.



Figure 25: Plate with Women Figure Wearing Purple Caftan, Shalwar, Turquoise Belt and Head Dress; with Flowers and Smoking Tobacco.



Figure 26: Plate with Women Figure Wearing Green and Black Caftan, Shalwar and Head Dress; with Flowers.



Figure 27: Pitcher with Two Male Figures Hugging; One Wears a Parish Cap, the Other Wears a Turban; both Wearing Caftans and Shalwars. Figure 28: Detail of Figure 27.





Figure 29: Plate with Male Figure Salesman Wearing Purple Caftan, Green Shalwar; Yellow Belt and Head Dress; with Equipment on Belt.



Figure 30: Plate with Male Figure Wearing Blue Bolero, Green Shalwar and Head Dress, Riding a Donkey; with Dagger.



Figure 31: Plate with Male Figure Wearing Turquoise Caftan, Dress, Shalwar and Head Dress; with Flowers.



Figure 32: Plate. With Male Figure Wearing Yellow Bolero, Shalwar and Head Dress; with Flowers.



Figures 33: Plate with Male Figure Wearing Caftans, Shalwar and Head Dress; with Labarum and Flower.



Figure 34: Water Bottle with Male Figures Wearing Traditional Costume Smoking Tobacco.

In conclusion, all these human figures and other motifs reflect and depict the features of the region. The artists of the period freely drew the figures and added the costumes which reflected the daily life and the status of the people. The different brush strokes in the designs on the plates show that they were not made by one artist. "Lack of attentive work indicates that they were produced serially to meet the heavy need."² No matter what the purpose was in making them, the works are interesting and have documentary importance in terms of reflecting the ethnic make-up of Kutahya in the era and for showing the local clothes.³ The 18th Century was truly the period when Kutahya tiles reached the peak in their aesthetic interest, elegance, and quality.

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1 James Laver; *The Concise History of Costume and Fashion* (London: Abrams, 62, 1979)

2 See Sadberk Hanim, 2000. *Kütahya Çini ve Seramikleri*, 20 = http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadberk_Han%C4%B1m_Museum

3 See *Bilgi University Index*, 2005, 20.