

Interaction of Artistic Production in Early XVIIth Century Ottoman Costume Albums And Iznik Ceramics

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Abstract: *The privileges, which were given to the Europeans during the reign of Sultan Süleyman (1521-1566), allowed many envoys, merchants and travellers to visit the capital Istanbul from the beginning of XVIIth century. Furthermore, an interest towards diverse geographies which was raised in this period in Europe, caused the production of art objects such as illustrated costume albums and Iznik ceramic dishes commissioned by European visitors.*

This interest was especially increased in XVIIth century towards purchasing and collecting artistic objects such as Iznik ceramics. Concurrently, the production of illustrated costume albums displaying Ottoman and non-Muslim figures were also being commissioned by European patrons to be produced at the painting ateliers out of the court. It is interesting that both Iznik ceramic dishes with human figures and illustrated costume albums with single human figures reveal obvious interaction of collective artistic production in terms of the figures' drawing and painting techniques. The forms and positions of the figures with their gestures and the colours used are perfectly alike, so that this suggests a possible interaction of artistic production between Iznik ceramics and miniature paintings in the costume albums of that time. Although these examples are unaffiliated with the Court Atelier's style, it is thought that they are still significant regarding the possible usage of drawing templates by the painters and ceramic artists.

Keywords: XVIIth century Ottoman Art, Iznik ceramics, Ottoman Illustrated costume albums.

XVII. Yüzyıl Başı Osmanlı Kıyafet Albümlerinde ve Iznik Seramiklerinde Sanat Üretimi Etkileşimi

Öz: *Sultan Süleyman'ın (1521-1566) saltanatı zamanında Avrupalılara verilen ayrıcalıklar, pek çok elçi, tüccar ve gezginin XVII. yüzyılın başından itibaren başkent İstanbul'a seyahat edebilmelerini sağlamıştır. Bununla birlikte, Avrupa'da, farklı coğrafyalara bu dönemde artan ilgi, Avrupalı ziyaretçiler tarafından sipariş edilen resimli kıyafet albümleri ve Iznik seramik tabakları gibi sanatsal objelerin üretimine neden olmuştur.*

Iznik seramiklerinin satın alınması ve toplanması konusundaki bu ilgi özellikle XVII. yüzyılda artmıştır. Aynı zamanlarda, Osmanlı karakterleri ve gayrimüslim kişilerin betimlendiği resimli kıyafet albümleri de Avrupalı sanat hamileri tarafından saray dışındaki atölyelerde üretilmek üzere sipariş edilmiştir. İlginçtir ki, insan figürlerinin yer aldığı Iznik seramik tabakları ve resimli kıyafet albümleri, figürlerin çizim ve boyama teknikleri bakımından, kolektif sanat üretimi anlamında açık bir etkileşim olduğunu göstermektedir. El hareketleri (jestleri) ve kullanılan renklerle birlikte figürlerin biçimleri ve duruş pozisyonları son derece benzerdir; bu nedenle, dönemin Iznik seramik tabaklarında ve kıyafet albümlerinde betimlenmiş insan figürleri arasında sanatsal üretim bakımından muhtemel bir etkileşimden söz edilebilir. Bu örnekler Nakkaşhane üslubu ile ilişkili olmasa da, çizim şablonlarının ressamlar (nakkaşlar) ve seramik sanatçıları tarafından muhtemel kullanımı bakımından dikkat çekicidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: XVII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Sanatı, Iznik seramikleri, Osmanlı resimli kıyafet albümleri.

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Introduction

About the art production at the Ottoman court, the end of XVIth and the beginning of XVIIth centuries are times of change in taste and tendency to experience new modes in artistic practices. It is possible to associate this eagerness towards new modes and styles with the reigning sultans' own artistic tastes. However, this can as well be explained by the increase of European envoys', merchants' and travellers' visits to the capital Istanbul from the beginning of XVIIth century. This is parallel with the period that an interest towards diverse geographies raised in Europe, caused the production of art objects such as illustrated costume albums and Iznik ceramic dishes commissioned by European visitors.

This interest was particularly towards purchasing and collecting artistic objects such as İznik ceramics. Concurrently, the production of illustrated costume albums with Ottoman and non-Muslim figures were also being commissioned by European patrons to be produced at the painting ateliers out of the court. It is interesting that both Iznik ceramic dishes with human figures and illustrated costume albums with single human figures reveal obvious interaction of artistic production in terms of the figures' drawing and painting techniques. In the illustrated costume albums, the quality of workmanship is evidently lower comparing to the ones associated with the court atelier's style. The similarity of pattern between the human figures in the illustrated costume albums and the human figures in Iznik ceramics produced almost at the same period is remarkable in terms of artistic interaction among the two different media.

In this article it is intended to exhibit the conditions and similarities of production styles and application techniques of two different branches of art through a limited number of group of images representing human figures seen in XVIIth century Ottoman illustrated costume albums and on Iznik ceramic plates. It is thought that this evaluation may lead the paper into a conclusion that these images are still significant examples regarding the circulation of sketches and the possible usage of drawing templates by the local painters and ceramic artists who were not affiliated with the court style.

1. Changing Artistic Tastes of the Ottoman Court and the Conditions of Artistic Production in Early Seventeenth Century

Beginning from the earliest times of the Ottoman Empire to its classical and late times, the Ottoman art adopted a static mode of artistic production whereas its dynamics were dependent on a single center regarding the centralised structure of the state administration. Such a centralised conception of artistic production led the way to a unification of images and created unity in visual language. Thus, certain styles and modes were flourished in a collective manner shaped by the court's tastes and selected by the sultan.

About the Ottoman court arts, the most effective factor in having a collective body and the interaction of diverse branches of art is that the arts were being produced inside the court. The Ottoman court was not only the residence of the sultan:

“...The employment of large numbers of artists and craftsmen by the court meant that it was also the center for Ottoman art. As with other imperial courts, the Ottoman sultans gathered around them poets, musicians and scholars. Beyond that, however, architects, artists and craftsmen engaged in all the various decorative arts were also employed in the palace... Furthermore, all such court artists and craftsmen were incorporated into a body known as the Ehl-i Hiref, carrying out their diverse activities within the various companies of this comprehensive organization... The primary task of these companies was to produce articles for the palace... By far the most important artists within the Ehl-i Hiref, the designer-decorators’ tasks extended considerably beyond the arts of the book to various activities...”. (Çağman, 2000:46-50)

According to Necipoğlu (1992:205),

“...Central control of patronage and the concentration of Ehl-i Hiref workshops in Istanbul, most certainly contributed to the unification of taste accross media and helped promote an original visual language associated with the court. Archival evidence proves that stylistic unity was further achieved by drawings that the designer-decorators of the court prepared for various artistic media including manuscripts, tiles and textiles.”

Furthermore, Çağman (2000:53) indicates that a document provides clear evidence of cooperation between the designer-decorators and the tile makers of the Ehl-i Hiref, and, at the same time, she mentions about some other documents indicating tiles kept being produced in İznik according to samples supplied by the court. However, even the existence of ceramic ateliers in İstanbul staffed with court artisans are known, İznik ceramic artists are not cited in the court’s payroll registers. Unlike the court’s ceramic ateliers which produced only for the sultan, those in İznik were never fully controlled by court patronage (Necipoğlu, 1990:140).

During the time that İznik ceramics produced under the control of the court’s design atelier, stylized vegetal motifs are extensively used. However, animal and human figures are also seen in XVIth and XVIIth century İznik ceramics¹. Parallel to this, another media exhibiting depictions of human figures at that time are costume albums. At the end of XVIth century and the beginning of XVIIth century, costume albums were produced upon the requests of European envoys and travellers by the painters working at the independent ateliers in İstanbul (Atasoy and Raby, 1989:256-284). It is also a time that cultural

1) For detailed descriptions about the XVIth century Ottoman ceramics with animal figures and their symbolism which is published in Turkish and in English, please see: Sitare Turan Bakır; “Osmanlı Hayvan Figürlü Seramikleri”, *Seramik Türkiye, Seramik Federasyonu Dergisi*, No: 04, Nisan-Haziran 2004, pp.70-78.

relations showed progress because of the privileges the Ottoman Empire had given to the Europeans. These privileges allowed many European envoys, merchants and travellers to visit the Ottoman Court and the capital Istanbul. Furthermore, an interest towards diverse geographies which was raised in this period in Europe, caused the production of art objects such as illustrated costume albums and Iznik ceramic dishes commissioned by European visitors. Some of them wrote diaries as travel books and added paintings depicting the Ottomans in their clothes and formal costumes. In these albums, which the English called *Costume Book* and the Germans called *Trachten Buch*, there was occasionally a short introductory text, but most of the time there were only brief captions in English, Italian or German. Because of the script and placement mistakes seen in some of the albums, it is possible to think that they were produced in a manner of series production as repetition works (Renda, 1998:153-160). These albums produced at the painting ateliers in Istanbul are products of a painting activity out of the Ottoman court, and, it is thought that local painters who are not affiliated with the court ateliers worked in these albums (Bağcı and others, 2006:232). It is highly possible that while preparing these human figures in certain sizes on the pages, they used a copying system with the help of drawing templates.

About the existence and location² of the local painters, the following quotes are valuable in terms of detailed information of their activities³:

“...We know from albums made in the later XVIth century for Western European Courts (e.g. by Melchior Lorichs and Nicolas de Nicolay) and an anonymous album made in 1590 for the Habsburg ruler Rudolf II (now in Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vindob. 8626) that European visitors to Ottoman Turkey were much taken by the picturesque or sensational sights that they saw – strangely dressed dervishes, Turkish baths, executions, tortures, the Bagnio where the galley slaves were chained, low women, and such like – and were very ready to commission bazaar painters in Istanbul to do

- 2) About the location of court ateliers, Fisher (1985:118) quotes from Bobovi’s (music instructor at the Topkapı Palace) detailed descriptions of the palace even though Bobovi did not mention exactly where the manuscripts were produced, and Fisher arises the question whether the manuscripts were produced inside the Topkapı Palace. Therefore it is possible to think that during the seventeenth century there were other production places outside the palace. Another point about the production places in Fisher’s article is the corpus of information mentioned by Bobovi and Evliya Çelebi. According to Bobovi, some of the best craftsmen worked near the bazaar, and by the mid-seventeenth century Istanbul was full of craftsmen and artists. According to Evliya Çelebi, Istanbul had large guild groups, and the *nakkaşan* (the group of painters) is said to have had one hundred shops in Istanbul (Fisher, 1985:118-119).
- 3) About the activities of local painters (so called “bazaar painters”), please refer to Metin And’s comprehensive articles as he is the first scholar to have used the name “bazaar painters” (“çarşı ressamları” in Turkish): And, M. (Aralık 1990). “17. Yüzyıl Türk Çarşı ressamları ve Resimlerin Belgesel Önemi”. *Kültür ve Sanat*, İş Bank. Yay., Yıl: 2, S. 8, ss.5-12.; Metin And; “17. Yüzyıl Türk Çarşı Ressamları”, *Tarih ve Toplum*. İletişim Yay., S. 16, Nisan 1985, s.40-45.; And, M. (Mart 1993). “Türk Çarşı Ressamlarının Gözünden Çalgıcı Cariyeler”. *Kültür ve Sanat*, İş Bank. Yay., S. 7, ss.4-7.

sketches of them. Even Melchior Lorichs seems to have relied on such sketches, using them as the basis for worked-up versions fit for albums to be presented to Western European rulers, and this very probably explains why such figures began to appear in albums made for the Ottoman court. The best European versions, however, lacked the sophistication expected of the Palace nakkaşhane, and the consequent lowering in quality of much XVIIth century Ottoman court painting must be seen as the first results of Western influence in the painting of Turkey.” (Rogers-Çağman-Tanındı, 1986:251).

Parallel with the illustrated travel books, a great number of European engravings and books came to the Ottoman Court, and illustrated albums including only costume depictions became widespread during the reign of Ahmed I (r.1603-1617). According to Rogers (1986:251), by the end of XVIth century art production was decreased because of the military campaigns, and,

“...the sultans were obliged to expend progressively more in administrative costs than any other activity at the palace. This had an effect on the production of the Nakkaşhane; till the reign of Murad III the sultans had not had to begrudge the considerable expense of financing illustration and illumination of the highest quality; thereafter financial constraints led to a decrease in the number of works executed”.

On the other hand, Fetvacı (2011:243) states that the production shift from illustrated histories to illustrated albums was about the needs of a new audience:

“...Scholars have tried to propose various explanations for the decreased production, often linking this phenomenon to a decline in political power. This is far from the truth: during the seventeenth century other types of artistic products became more popular, namely, albums that showcase examples of calligraphy, painting and drawing. Along with new types of books, the seventeenth century also brought about new audiences: artists and album compilers were now a part of patronage circles. In the end, the move from illustrated history to album should not be seen as the abandonment of a traditional art form. The illustrated history was produced during a certain period to meet specific needs and to cater to new audiences, and its disappearance signals the declining importance of its function and changing notions of the book.”

During the XVIIth century, at the Ottoman court, the change in taste or fashion about the illustrated manuscripts was towards more single figure drawings and scenes from daily life. The illustrated album (Topkapı Palace Library, H.408) which was prepared for Ahmed I is a significant example for this new format.⁴

4) According to Fetvacı (2011:261), *“...the Ahmed I Album has been interpreted as an early example of the interest in costume albums that prevailed among Ottomans and Europeans during the later*

In the same period, the conditions of artistic production in Iznik was rather different with regard to the economical conditions at the end of XVIth century. Denny (1998:164-165) draws attention to the period of change in İznik starting from 1580's which resulted with a different kind of experimentation and innovation:

"...All of the experience and aritstry put into play in the previous two decades contiuned to flourish, but in the tiles of this decade the dominance of the precise, elegant and linear court style begins to give way to increasing colour and dramatic forms unknown in the tradition of court book illumination and decorative drawings. Many of these innovations apparently stemmed from İznik itself, rather than from the Nakkaşhane in Istanbul, as the worlds of the ceramic artist and the professional designers moved into a new kind of balance. It is form the mid-seventies onward that we may confidently date some of the most unusual and innovative ceramic wares, and we must assume that some of these innovations, geared to the free market and the bazaar, also overflowed into tile production."

The reasons for the decline of quality in Iznik ceramics were mostly economical. By the 1590's, İznik ceramic artists encountered difficulties with the rise of the importation of Chinese porcelain and the decrease of the court's commissions (Atasoy and Raby, 1989:272). Furthermore, Turan Bakır (2004:77) suggests that ceramic masters of XVIIth century also served and produced for the free market which resulted with a decrease of quality in workmanship and the quality in raw materials such as clay and glaze. Accordingly, during XVIIth century, ceramic artists could have re-interpreted the court's tastes and produced ceramics for different patrons in various levels of quality.

The deformation in the quality and character of drawings in Iznik ceramic plates occurred around XVIIth century. Untill 1590's, there is almost no evidence that human figures are used as motifs in Iznik ceramics.⁵ Most of the plates from the first decade of XVIIth century are decorated with human figures very similar to the ones seen in the Album of Ahmed I. But, this is not necessarily an evidence implying that court artists also made drawings for the Iznik plates. At the first decade of XVIIth century, despite the economical circumstances, Iznik ceramic artists still sought inspiration at the Ottoman

XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries. Until the XVIIth century, costume albums had been prepared mostly for a European audience. Such interest in costume types attests to continued Ottoman participation in a cultural dialogue with neighbors to the west, and perhaps it indicates the court's interest in what local artists were creating for a foreign market." For detailed information about the production and style of Album of Ahmed I (TSM, H.408) please refer to Emine Fetvacı; "The Album of Ahmed I.", *Ars Orientalis*, v.42, Washington 2012, pp. 127-139.

5) About the İznik ceramic dishes with animal and human figures, please see: Ezgi Gökçe; "Bonhams Müzayedelerinde Satışa Sunulmuş Bir Grup Figürlü İznik Tabağı", *Yedi: Sanat, Tasarım ve Bilim Dergisi*, 2013, Sayı:10, pp.37-47.

court; but, towards the second half of the century, they were no longer impressed by the court styles and started to use their creative imagination. Accordingly, it is likely that the production of these Iznik plates are associated with the illustrated costume albums produced outside the court. When the human figures from the illustrated costume albums prepared for European patrons are compared with the ones dated around mid-XVIIth century Iznik plates, the direct influence of paintings on the plates and the artistic interaction is apparent. (Atasoy and Raby, 1989:284).

2. Similarities of form and Drawing Techniques between İznik Plates and Ottoman Illustrated Costume Albums with Human Figures

Both Iznik ceramic plates with human figures and illustrated albums with single human figures reveal an interaction of collective artistic production in terms of the figures' drawing and painting techniques. The forms and positions of the figures placed in the composition with their gestures and the colours used are perfectly alike, so that this suggests a possible interaction of artistic production between Iznik ceramics and paintings in costume albums of that time. According to the centralised art production, when Iznik ceramics are being produced for the Ottoman court, Iznik ceramic artists used to receive any kind of designs and drawings from the court designers. Just like in this case, it is possible to think that while producing ceramic plates with human figures, İznik ceramics artists could have been inspired from the drawings of painters outside the court. Besides, the possibility that ceramic artists could have seen the human figure depictions in costume albums is supported by the fact that these ceramic plates are dated to the following years. Furthermore, even these two different artisan groups, the miniature painters and the ceramic artists, did not produce art for the court at that period, it can be said that the collectivity that forms the unique nature of Ottoman court arts still existed.

The human figure depictions, which are widely used both in costume albums and in Iznik ceramic plates by the beginning of XVIIth century, do not reveal portrait features and they are drawn according to certain formulas and drawing techniques. With these human figure depictions used in both media, it is aimed to show the identity and to inform about the costumes of Ottoman characters. Especially on the pages of the costume albums, usually the title or name of the person is placed above or below the painting, margin decorations are rarely used.⁶ However, on ceramic plates the figure is placed in the centre surrounded by typical Iznik floral motifs and the composition is finished with a border around the plate.

6) An unusual costume album with marginal floral decorations produced with the technique of 'ka'ti' which is a traditional paper-cut technique is held by the collection of Illustrated manuscripts at the British Museum: Peter Mundy Album, 1974-6-17-013, BM. For detailed information about this album please refer to: Adıgüzel Toprak, F. (2012). "1618 Tarihli Peter Mundy Albümü: Figürler Üzerine Bir İnceleme". *Atatürk Üniversitesi, Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi Dergisi*, Sayı: 22, ss. 69-83.

The human figures in illustrated costume albums and in Iznik ceramic plates are represented in specific body forms and drawn almost identically in repetitive poses. Of all the images, human figures are depicted typically as standing figures; the poses show varieties according to the gestures and what the figures hold in their hands. The faces of the figures are shown in $\frac{3}{4}$ profile, and the same forms are used for the lower part of the body and for the feet of the figures. In almost all the figures, it is obvious that a particular measurement is used for the proportion of the body. Thus, it is possible to say that the artists must have followed a common pose making more or less the same gestures. This is probably derived from the traditional drawing technique which can be applied on either manuscripts or ceramics; because, this drawing technique allows the artist to apply different versions of a single form on different medias. First, the design is prepared as underdrawings in black and white sketches which is the skeleton of all the design process in artistic production of the Islamic world⁷, invisible in the final product. Indeed, it is a well known fact that these black and white sketches made for miniature paintings are kept in drawing albums to be used as patterns on other media as well, such as ceramics and textiles. These sketches served as models for finished designs and this is probably one of the reasons for the interaction of costume book painters and ceramic artists. The sketches might have been passed from painting ateliers' to ceramic ateliers as if they were delivered from the centre of art production at the Ottoman court; this can be the case especially for identical figure versions.

Because the costume albums and the ceramic plates were designed and completed according to the patrons' demands, they were probably produced faster than usual in the style of mass-production. It is thought that the stylization of the anatomic features of the figures are composed in a way to accelerate the drawing and painting process. For instance, in the ceramic plates, the use of thick contours with single brush strokes surrounding the figure's body is remarkable. Besides, one of the most significant techniques of miniature painting which is striking the brush only one time as a contour surrounding the figures to create a degrading line effect from thin to thicker scales, is not used.

In the costume albums, the figure is directly painted on the paper surface without any compositional or marginal decoration. The figures' contours are painted with red around the face and with darker tones of red around the body.

One of the favourite poses is the standing woman figure holding a flower in her hands (**Image 1-2-3**). This pose of any figures with the gesture of holding a flower is widely used in Ottoman portraiture at all periods. According to art historians, the use of woman and man figures holding flower in their hands goes back to Uighur wall paintings in the pre-Islamic era. Most probably these figures do not reveal any kind of symbolic meanings apart from representing persons of the Ottoman elite. The most significant features of

7) About the use of such sketches in 17th century manuscripts please refer to: Mahir, B. (1998). "Resim Gösterim Amacıyla Hazırlanmış Bir Grup 17. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Minyatürü". In: 17. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Kültür ve Sanatı, 125-139. İstanbul: Sanat Tarihi Derneği Yayınları.

these figures is that the shape of the body looks like it is widened from the shoulders to the lower parts of the body. With small breasts and wide waists, this figure represents the ideal woman type of the XVIIth century Ottoman world (İnal, 1984:85).



Image 1. Woman figure. 1928-3-23-046. British Museum, folio 112b.



Image 2. İznik ceramic plate with woman figure, around 1600. Sold at Bonhams Auction, lot 148, 4 October 2011.



Image 3. İznik ceramic plate with woman figure, around 1600. Sold at Bonhams Auction, lot 212, 29 April 2004.

Another favourite pose is again the standing figures holding their waistbands with one hand and holding an object on the other hand; yet, these figures may also display gestures (**Image 4-5-6**). In the costume albums, figures holding objects related with their professions are usually used as the painters mostly intended to show the jobs of the characters. In the ceramic plates, it is more a display of favourite images and themes such as figures holding tobacco sticks (**Image 7-8**). Besides, woman figures playing instruments are also frequently used (**Image 9-10-11**).



Image 4. A middle-class woman. 1928-3-23-046. British Museum, folio 110b.



Image 5. Hatuncuk (a young woman). 1974-6-17-013. British Museum, folio 46 b.



Image 6. İznik ceramic plate with woman figure, around 1600. Pic.782, Spink & Son, London.



Image 7. Woman figure. 1928-3-23-046. British Museum, folio 123b.



Image 8. İznik ceramic plate, around 1600. Sold at Bonhams Auction, lot 266, 15 April 2010.



Image 9. Woman figure. 1928-3-23-046. British Museum, folio 125b.



Image 10. Woman figure. 1928-3-23-046. British Museum, folio 126b.



Image 11. İznik ceramic plate with woman figure, around 1600-1610. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 67.178.1

Conclusion

As the centralised art production at the Ottoman court created a single visual language, starting from the end of the XVIth century the activities outside the court was also continuing. With all the foreign factors, diverse demands and necessities, this kind, which is not associated with the court style, had its own purposes to produce art.

Both in costume albums and in ceramic plates, the most remarkable and characteristic features of the standing woman and man figures are the still and static poses with the lack of expression in their faces. They do not transmit any emotions to the viewer and do not seem to belong to a certain place. All the figures are depicted statically without any facial expressions, which helped the painters to copy and reproduce the images easily and rapidly. This could also have served the painters to use drawing templates. So, we can speak of a possible interaction between the two varied artistic production in terms of uniformity in poses, costumes, proportions of the body and facial features of the figures. The miniature paintings in the costume albums and the Iznik ceramic plates are both produced for specific demands and commissioned by patrons who are not from the Ottoman court. Especially the inelaborate workmanship seen in each media can be interpreted as the local artists are not well trained and educated like the ones who worked with court masters. Besides, the Ottoman court was the supplier for the art materials and had a large budget for all commissionings. However, artists working out of the court could have been in need of art materials for a better production.

As a result, we can speak of the existence of collectivity of artistic production out of the Ottoman court during the XVIIth century in two different fields of art. Although these examples are unaffiliated with the Court Atelier's style, it is thought that they are still significant regarding the possible circulation and usage of drawing templates by the painters and ceramic artists, reflecting the collective nature of Ottoman court arts.

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