

THE EFFECTS OF HISTORICAL TEXTILES ON TURKISH SERIES: AN EXAMPLE OF “THE MAGNIFICENT CENTURY” TARİHİ TEKSTİLLERİN TÜRK DİZİLERİNDE ETKİLERİ: “MUHTEŞEM YÜZYIL ÖRNEĞİ”

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Abstract

Interior textiles and costumes are important design tools in TV series about a historical era for fictionalizing the realism. Textile, which was used for covering and keeping away from cold, was a symbol of status representing the political and economic power in the 16th Century Ottoman Empire. The combination of textile and TV series has served for the popular culture in the course of time. In this study, how the orientalist expression was reflected via the textiles has been tried to be explained over the TV series “*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*” (*The Magnificent Century*) in 2011-2014, which was about Suleyman the Magnificent, one of the most important Sultans of the Ottoman Empire, and which appealed to a wide audience. The era at issue has been tried to be explained via the visual samples of the textile objects and their design.

Keywords: The Magnificent Century, Historical Textiles, Textile Design

Öz

Tarihi dönemi konu edinen televizyon dizilerinde, iç mekan tekstilleri ve kostümler, gerçekliği kurgulamada önemli tasarım araçlarıdır. Başlangıçta örtünme ve soğuktan korunma amacıyla kullanılan tekstil, on altıncı yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda siyasi ve ekonomik gücü temsil eden statü sembolüydü. Aynı çark içinde olan tekstil ve dizi birlikteliği, zaman içerisinde popüler kültüre hizmet etmişlerdir. Çalışmada, 2011-2014 yılları arasında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun en önemli padişahlarından Kanuni Sultan Süleyman’ı konu alan ve geniş bir izleyici kitlesine hitap eden *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* Dizisi üzerinden oryantalist söylemin tekstil aracılığıyla nasıl yansıtıldığı araştırılmıştır. Söz konusu dönem, tekstil nesnelерinin görsel örnekleriyle tasarım düzleminde açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Muhteşem Yüzyıl, Tarihi Tekstiller, Tekstil Tasarım

Introduction

Since the second half of the 20th Century, the great tradition of handicrafts has started to be seen as a branch of arts, influenced by the modern approaches of arts and the technological means. Textile is a material with a dynamic feature, which has many variables and components in it. As textiles have come to be seen in different fields and disciplines of art, it has gained more and more importance. Television is only one of the disciplines related to textile by its nature and the semantic and technical

components within it. Textiles with a high value in terms of the cultural continuity are important materials in the design of interiors and costumes used in the historical TV series. In recent years, textile objects with the combination of material, style and a creative approach have become the primary factors in historical TV series with the meaning they give to the place and they have become visible at that place. The Ottoman textile, which has gained a place in history scene with the richest examples of its color, pattern and material, has attracted more attention in recent years. During the literature review of this study, it has been found that there are many other studies about the Ottoman Textiles, however the relationship between the TV series and textiles of the era has not been mentioned enough. In this article, whether the pattern design of the Ottoman textiles is compatible with the reality has been studied within the sample of TV series “*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*” (*The Magnificent Century*).

Method

In the study in which qualitative research method is used, the effect of a TV series on historical conscience has been examined in terms of arts and aesthetics in reference to 16th century textiles; the mentioned textiles have been discussed on the basis of literature. The events, individuals or the objects in the TV series, *The Magnificent Century* have been tried to be defined according to historical facts. Here, it has been examined whether the textile objects used in designing the indoor setting are compatible with the reality or not. Because each episode of the series was in accordance with the aim of the article, the sampling has been chosen randomly. The visual samplings have been interpreted about the 12th episode by taking the screenshots of costume cloths and textile objects in the palace.

Findings

In this study, it has been found out that the TV series *The Magnificent Century*, a popular example of historical TV series, has affected the historical process in a meaningful way though not in a chronological way. This effect has had a reflection on the ideological approaches in social life. It is possible to say that the textile patterns used in the indoor settings, the costumes of the historical characters, curtains, pillows, rugs, carpets and covers were compatible with the era. However, the costume designer’s explanation that “they wanted to reflect a stylized modern Ottoman era rather than the classical one” shows that they did not consciously abide by the historical fact. When the selections have been taken into account, it

is understood that the designer applied to a modern way of interpretation. It is possible to say that this may be caused by the wish to act accordingly to the popular language used on the TVs.

The Effects of Historical Textiles on Interior Design

Interior textiles are important in terms of the visual effect and the narration of a TV series. If the mentioned textiles are included in a TV series which is about a historical era, they should comply with the characters and the places. The objects, materials and interior textiles to be used are selected in a way to reflect the sense of reality for that period. Thus, the TV series can easily reach the audience. History tells the past events with concrete evidence. TV series, on the other hand, is a field of popular culture that reproduces and presents cultural values and events. Since the cinema and TV series industry found a way to record the past with technological tools, TV series has become one of the most important memory devices for cultural life. What the historical TV series deals with is the past events. They are the reflector and the reminder of the period for which they were produced (Demir and Çencen, 2015:16). The TV series industry, one of the biggest industries of our age, is in a close relationship with the history and the past depending on the necessity for remembering and narrating (Erkılıç, 2005:74). It is a common case for TV industries to get popular by telling a historical era. *The Magnificent Century*, which deals with the era of Suleiman the Magnificent, is one of the best examples of it.

When the 16th Century Ottoman textile surface designs discussed in the article are considered, it is observed that the traditional Turkish motifs were used in a rich variety. These textiles, which are also at the forefront in the political and economic fields, have become a status symbol that reflect the power and might of the sultan as well as providing a great income for the state treasury. The idea of eternity is the basis in all of the composition schemes used on the cloths. Among the cloth patterns, those made with printing on plain cloths have a special place. These patterns include the lines, moons, three spots and flower motifs. Oval and round medallions are among the mostly used compositions, and they are generally filled with spring branches. In the ateliers of the court, the designs were drawn by the miniature artists and developed by Sernakkaş Karamemi (Çağman, 1981:11). Ornaments in court cloths mean the transmission of a tradition. Therefore, it is necessary to stick to the originality as much as possible because recreation is not possible. The TV series *The Magnificent Century*, which has a semantic narration, is shaped on the life in the court. As such, all the objects in the court and all the costumes worn by the characters play an important role in narrating the past.

The relationship between textile and place can be explained as the textiles affecting the place, the textiles affected by the place, the textiles designing the place, and the textiles included/exhibited in the place (Tok Dereci, 2014: 55). Because the attention was generally given to the indoor settings in *The Magnificent Century*, the textiles mentioned in this article can be classified as the textiles affecting the place and the ones designing the place. Among the places in the court, the harem, the chamber of Hurrem Sultan, the chamber of Suleiman the Magnificent and the bath are in the forefront. The interior textiles are composed of the upholstery

fabrics used for the pillows, carpets, curtains, armchairs and chairs. The fabrics used in the court, which are called Kemha, Çatma, Serenk, Zerbaf, Kutnu, Hatayi, Atlas and Seraser, vary depending on their weave types and field of use. The most important feature of these fabrics is that they were weaved with gold and silver threads. These fabrics, which are a symbol of status and glory, attract attention with their being rich in variety of motifs. Considering the indoor settings of *The Magnificent Century*, it is understood at first that the events, general matters and design elements of the era were analyzed before. History is a comprehensive language, however the works in television and cinema are open to the interpretation of the artist (Stoddard et al.,2010: 83). It is possible to say that this statement is valid for the TV series as well.



Figure 1. The chamber of Sultan Hürrem. 12th Episode. (Screenshot by author. 2019.)

It is possible to see that there is a couch, a pillow and a curtain as the interior textiles of the chamber of Hurrem Sultan. *Saz Üslubu* (*Saz Style*) which is an ornamental style used in the Ottoman era, was used for the pattern design of the couch fabric. While the ground of the original Kemha fabric was preferred to be made mostly in green or red color, the ground of the example is in powder color, the floral motifs are red, yellow and blue, and the leaves were in green color. The patterns are composed of dagger leaves, penç (a stylized shape obtained by drawing a bird's eye view of a flower) and semi-stylized flowers, and they match with the historical fabric. The pillow is green and it reminds the atlas (satin) fabric of the time. The curtain is made up of a horizontal-striped organza fabric, however it does not match with the curtains of the era. (Figure 1).

The semi-stylized flowers, which still resembles the original ones although they were stylized, were also used together with the classical motifs such as hatayi, penç and rumi as well as keeping their compositions on their own. The composition scheme varies depending on the field of use of fabrics.

1. "Saz Üslubu (Saz Style) is ornaments are known as the motif which are formed by curvy, long, notched leaves. And the ornaments are attributed to the creation of Sah Kulu who was the Ottoman Palace painter in the 16th century". Mizuno Yamanlar, M. 2000. The formation of the Saz Style ornaments: From Taihu-Rocks to saz leaf Ornaments. J-STAGE Home / Bulletin of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan. Vol:43. Issue:1 Pages:71. See also: Mahir, B. "Osmanlı Bezeme Sanatında Saz Üslubu", Hat ve Tezhip Sanatı, T.C Kültür Ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Edi.Ali Rıza Özcan, Ankara.s.379-399

For example, the patterns of Uşak carpets were used on the rugs; the flower-bordered patterns were used on the prayer rugs and the court carpets. There is a large carpet with oval medallions on it in front of the Suleiman the Magnificent's (performed by Halit Ergenç) throne in a scene, who is known as one of the most powerful Sultans of the Ottoman Era. Large-sized hand-woven carpets were used in the Ottoman Era. The inside of the medallions on the carpet with a red ground were filled with floral motifs and leaves. On the edges of the carpet, there are sequential motifs in the thick and thin borders. The whole ground of the carpet was adorned with green curved branches. Crème, brown, and yellow colors were preferred to be used in the details and the borders. The lines, which are the most basic element of design, are straight, thick and curved, and the colors were mainly red and green in this example, which represents the Turkish culture. The motifs were distributed equally, symmetrically and regularly. There is a contrast with the red and green colors on this carpet, which was designed in compliance with the repetition principle. As mentioned before, carpets are important textiles of a place.

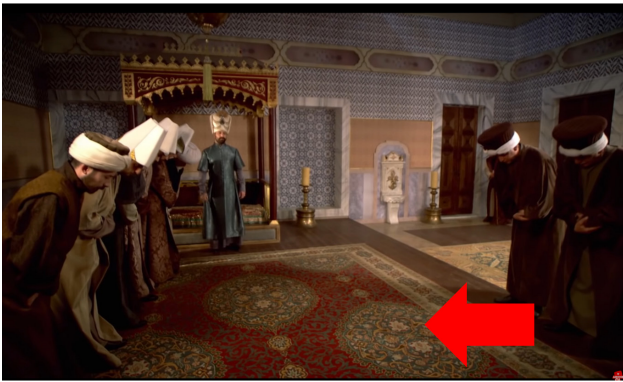


Figure 2. The Imperial Hall (Hünkar Sofası) 12th Episode. (Screenshot by author. 2019)



Figure 3 The chamber of Sultan Valide. 12th Episode. (Screenshot by author. 2019)

There is a large carpet again in the forefront, which is in the chamber of Valide Sultan (The Queen Mother performed by Nebahat Çehre), the

mother of Suleiman the Magnificent. There are intertwined medallions on a blue ground, and plant motifs inside of these medallions. The carpet ground in tan color is composed of the plant leaves and flower motifs in yellow and crème colors, and both its ground and border ornaments reflect the 16th century Uşak carpets. The upholstery fabric of couches/ sofas, which are very long as an indoor furniture, are in maroon color, and on the surface design of the seating part, there are *Hatayi*, *Penç* and *Rumi* motifs in golden yellow color on a brown ground. In addition, on the surface are the dagger leaves ornamented with small flowers in them, which can often be seen on the *Zerbaft* fabrics (Figure 4). Because these fabrics are woven with gold threads, they are so valuable. The image of gold in the TV series was created with the fabrics woven with golden yellow or silvery threads. The curtains are made of a golden yellow fabric, which represents the wealth and power of the Empire. As for the costume designs, it is seen that the most possibly satin fabrics were used in one color.

One of the costumes are made of the fabric with horizontal stripes on it like the two-colored *kutnu* fabric, which consists of horizontal yellow and green stripes. Another costume, which is mostly in green color, has little flowers in green tones. The other two costumes are made of one-colored fabrics. Considering the fabrics of the clothes, it is understood that the atlas-like fabrics were mostly preferred to be used. "Atlas fabrics are generally solid-colored, tough, stiff and lustrous fabrics woven densely of silk. Because the weft threads are hidden in weaving, the warp yarns become side by side and give a sparkle peculiar to itself" (Tezcan, 1984; Gümüşer, 2011: 26).



Figure 4. The Detail from the chamber of Sultan Valide. 12th Episode. (Screenshot by author. 2019.)

It has been observed that while the colors were limited for the costumes, the patterns and motifs were given more importance. It is understood from the examples in the museums of many different cities, especially in the large museums such as Topkapı and Dolmabahçe Palaces. The designs and motifs are original and various, which reflects the Turkish values (Gürsu, 1988:57). Although the patterns and motifs come to the forefront on the court fabrics, it is obvious that the colors used were not selected coincidentally and they give some messages. For instance, the red color on the ground of the carpets and fabrics symbolizes sovereignty, supremacy and power in Turkish tradition. From this point of view, the

red color used in the 16th century, when the Ottoman Empire was at the top in political, economic and artistic terms, forms a wholeness with its meanings in the former periods. The dominant colors after red were yellow, blue and different tones of green (Gümüşer and Aşar, 2018:241).



Figure 5. The chamber of Cafer Ağa. 12th Episode. (Screenshot by author. 2019.)

“The fabric *kutnus* and its wefts are made of cotton while the warps of it are silk. Weft yarns are pulled by the help of shed as a double. It was one of the oldest specimen of the lustrous fabrics. It was mostly woven in colored lines. The warp yarns look bright like in the atlas fabrics because they were woven through the use of cotton or silk” (Önlü, 1992; Gümüşer, 2011:27). In the last example, there is the kutnu fabric seen on the sofa. The sofa was combined with the pillows, which are made of green and yellow satin fabrics. There are thin red borders on blue ground and crème-colored motifs on the floor, which were often used on the carpets. In the room all the floor of which the carpet covers, the caftan with plant-motifs of the character sitting near the floor table was in two colors. As stated by Pramaggiore and Wallis, “the costume of a character has powerful meanings about his/her culture” (2011:106). The character was wearing a caftan made of a fabric with bright silver color. There was an embroidered pillow with stylized flowers on the sofa. The embroideries both on the costumes and on the textile objects attract attention in many episodes of the series.

Considering the relationship between the interior textiles and the historical TV series tried to be explained with limited examples, it is understood that the designed textiles comply with the style in that period and what was mostly preferred in pattern compositions is the Turkish motifs. Visual language of television, which is shaped with the values of the popular culture, has caused the development of the narrations which do not depend on the holistic perception of the historical theories brought about by modernism (Bilis, 2013:20).

Conclusion

In this study, which analyzes the 16th century Ottoman court fabrics depending on the examples of the interior textiles in a popular TV series, it has been found out that the modern interpretations are dominant although there are some historical examples encountered. In other words, today’s popular life was also integrated with the TV series *The Magnificent Century*. It is possible to say that the colors of red, yellow, blue and green were often used on the fabrics, and the TV series comply with the period with the use of these selected colors. These colors, which belong to the Turkish culture, have symbolic meanings. It is possible to say that they were preferred in the series because of the meaning they have. On the other side, the Ottoman fabrics with many patterns and motifs were less seen in the series while the single-colored atlas fabrics and the two-colored kutnus were mostly preferred. Some of the traditional motifs were used on the sofa upholstery and pillows while some of them were used on the costumes of the Sultan and his family. As it is seen in the visual examples, there are penç, rumi, hatayi, dagger leaves, clouds and floral flowers, which are the motifs representing the period. The fabrics used were with less motifs and this may be caused by the fact that there is a wish to create a modern image or the fact that the cost was avoided since the weaving such fabrics is hard and costly. It is clear that a television is a device to access to a larger audience in terms of the fact that the past should be introduced to the next generations.

Thanks to the televisions, the textiles representing a nation’s culture and shedding light to history are going beyond just being included in some sources and displayed in some museums. In conclusion, the above-mentioned textiles can be seen as a sign of the importance given to the colors by the high state officials. These textiles, in the example of *The Magnificent Century*, have strengthened the meaning and aesthetic dimension of the place and reflected the glory of an era on the screen.

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