

AN ANALYSIS OF DISAPPEARING TRADITIONAL TURKISH QUILTING: TİRE DISTRICT CASE

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Abstract: Quilting having existed from the Ottoman Empire to today's modern Turkey has been an indispensable part of folk arts with its colour, motifs, technique and composition features. This traditional textile art of ours carrying traces of life styles of societies have lost its importance with the effect of different dynamics such as the technology that have changes in the 21st century and the change of social structure. In this article, quilting, one of our intangible cultural heritages, is dealt with from artistic perspective and the problems of the profession is discussed. The population of this study focusing on the change of quilting in these days is composed of 4 craftsmen going ahead with this profession in Tire district of the city of İzmir the sampling of this study is composed of photographs shot from the quilts sewn by the craftsmen. In this study, the data obtained from the interviews made with craftsmen in Tire with an important potential in terms of traditional folk arts have been evaluated; the design and composition of quilts have been analysed over visual samples. At the end of the study, it is seen that there remain a few craftsmen performing quilting in the district and it is detected that the craftsmen are the last representatives of this profession because of the lack of apprentices to train.

Key Words: Cultural Heritage, Folk Art, Traditional Textiles, Tire District, Traditional Turkish Quilting, Quilt

KAYBOLMAYA YÜZ TUTMUŞ GELENEKSEL TÜRK YORGANCILIĞININ ANALİZİ: TİRE İLÇESİ ÖRNEĞİ

Öz: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan günümüz modern Türkiye'sine kadar varlığını sürdüren yorgancılık; renk, motif, yapım tekniği ve kompozisyon özellikleriyle halk sanatlarımızın vazgeçilmez bir parçası olmuştur. Toplumların yaşam biçimlerinden izler taşıyan bu geleneksel tekstil sanatımız; 21. yüzyılda gelişen teknoloji ve sosyal yapının değişimi gibi farklı dinamiklerin etkisiyle eski önemini kaybetmiştir. Bu makalede; somut olmayan kültürel miraslarımızdan yorgancılık; sanatsal perspektiften ele alınmakta ve mesleğin sorunları tartışılmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, yorgancılığın günümüzdeki değişimini de mercek altına alan bu araştırmanın evrenini, İzmir ili Tire ilçesinde bu mesleği sürdüren 4 usta, örneklemini ise ustaların diktikleri yorganlardan

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çekilen fotoğraflar oluşturur. Arařtırmada; geleneksel halk sanatları aısından önemli potansiyele sahip olan Tire’de, ustalarla yapılan mlakattan elde edilen veriler deęerlendirilmiŐ; grsel rnekler zerinden yorganların desen ve kompozisyon zellikleri analiz edilmiŐtir. Arařtırma sonucunda; ilede yorgancılıęı icra eden birkaç ustanın kaldıęı grlmŐ; yetiŐtirilecek ırak bulunamadıęından dolayı ustaların bu mesleęin son temsilcileri oldukları tespit edilmiŐtir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kltrel Miras, Halk Sanatı, Geleneksel Tekstiller, Tire İlesi, Trk Yorgancılık Sanatı, Yorgan

Introduction

Handicrafts, having witnessed the age and period they lived, have become an indispensable part of folk culture as a reach means of expression. Textile objects produced for meeting our requirements in our daily life such as weaves, carpets-rugs, kerchiefs, and felts in Anatolia have been applied with rich motives and ornament features up to today. Handicrafts, a reflection of our national culture, shed light on the period they are used in from the viewpoint of customs and traditions as well as their economic importance. Quilt, one of our handicrafts reflecting the traditional elegance and kindness of Turkish Culture for years, is regarded as “a cultural material reflecting public aesthetics as well as a product of an occupation” (Duvarcı, 2007: 507). Quilts, used for covering or protecting of people from cold climatic conditions, is a cultural product concerning the society closely since it is the most commonly used object in our life and at least one exists in each house (Al, 2005: 34). Quilt, which means covering, wrapping up, embracing and encircling in Old Turkish (Eyboęlu,1991:763), developed in Seljuks and Ottomans after the Turks adopted a sedentary life in Anatolia. It is possible to encounter the documents about quilts in the notes of Ottoman life, miniatures, and memoirs and archives of the Palace (zplat, 2010: 484). Quilts, commonly used within the important social events such as marriage, birth, and death that affect the daily lives of people in cities and villages, are tried to be sustained in ateliers rented at cheap prices in rural districts of few cities nowadays. People’s increasing demands and varying needs together with population growth have increased the demand for products and services. When all of these are added with the privileges to imports, globalization of fashion concept, people’s priorities have begun to change as well as their preferences of production and consumption. Depending on the understanding of common history, these occupations reflect cultural and artistic accumulation, aesthetical conscience, ways of life, and belief and emotional worlds of the societies they belong to (AltıntaŐ, 2006: 156).

One of the places where the art of quilting has been developed and is still continued is Tire district of İzmir. In this article, the current status of quilting that is still being continued in Tire district of İzmir Province has been searched. Within the scope of this study, the materials used in quilting and the features of patterns have been examined. In the study in which qualitative research method has been used, adequate information was obtained before the interview with quilt masters by literature scanning. The main problem of the research consists of the fact that the profession of quilting is shown to be among our arts that are about to disappear in time and there is not enough number of written documents in this field and the development of the art of quilting has not been documented in Tire district. Therefore, the results of this study are of importance in terms of determining the status of quilting art in Tire district.

Traditional Quilting in Tire Currently Situation

Tire (old name Thyraion), one of the biggest districts of İzmir, possesses the rich documents of Turkish Islamic cultural heritage and the traces of Ottomans and previous civilizations (Ülker, 1985: 5). Tire, which was established by three tribes of Pelasgians, the first settled clan of Asia 5000 years ago, derived its name from the word “three”, meaning three in Indo-European languages. Today, it is one of the most favorite districts in Turkey with its history, culture and natural beauties (Anonymous, 2017). The district is known not only as a key point for the roads to Anatolia and lively trade center but also as a center of science, culture and religion in the period of beyliks and Ottomans (Armağan, 1994a:15). Tire has a very rich position in terms of the quality and quantity of handicraft products. The residents have protected handicrafts by being aware of the values they have. Yet, the living conditions having changed with modernization have decreased the demand for products based on hand work in the course of time. Therefore, many handicrafts specific to Tire have disappeared and some are being continued in today’s hard conditions by a small number of craftsmen. Although fabricated quilts have been produced by today’s technology, quilts are still being produced in Tire with traditional methods. Because it is a basic necessity, quilting is in a luckier position than other craft branches in terms of sustenance (Armağan, 2000: 21).

According to the information obtained from quilt masters from Tire performing the art of quilting which is the subject of our research,

this occupation has sustained generally from father to son or with master-apprentice relationship. Quilt makers have learnt their profession first by getting to know the materials nearby the master they started to work with then by making simple works. It has been necessary for a quilt apprentice to work with patience for a long time to become master. The designs are surely the factors for a quilt, one of the works of crafts, to gain an artistic identity. The designs used in quilt sewing have been shaped either with the application of what the quilt master learnt in apprenticeship or depending on the master's imagination. Therefore, a previously-existing designs can be applied exactly the same as well as the master can convert it to a new designs with his ability. Designs are named by considering the whole of the applied motives or composition. In Tire, fifteen different instruments are used in traditional quilt sewing such as carding machine, stencil, level line, needle, thimble, ruler, tape line, weighing machine, compass, scissors, chalk, soap, sewing machine, and wax. As the filling material of the quilt, the natural situation of washed and scribbled raw wool fibers was preferred by being puffed up. These wools could be cleaned by being washed up in every ten years and at the same time had the advantage of being sewn again in the event of felting (Kmrc, 2005: 87).

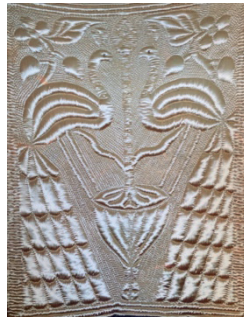
Quilt master Ismail Dađdven (55), who is trying to keep quilting alive having learnt from his father the quilting which has come to disappear due to changing living conditions, states that the above-mentioned traditional materials are not used any more. For example, he states that they use the nylon-mixed low cost fabric named *kristal sire* (crystal sire) instead of the expensive one *ipek sire* (silk sire) from Bursa and they get cotton from UŐak instead of raw wool as a filling material. Halil Akaydın (75), trained by the oldest masters of Tire and working with son Hseyin Akaydın (50) whom he trained, states that the pattern of bright silk quilts (Altıparmak) which were on great demand in the past are no more now, but plain silk quilts continue to be made. Another master Yusuf ırpar (65) having grown up from apprenticeship, says that the quilt pattern is drawn with cardboard stencil and after the composition is drawn on the fabric with chalk, the quilt is sewn with traditional method. He adds that a person who becomes master after some time does not need to use any stencil. The masters who say that they complete a double quilt in two days express that they take 80% of the motives they use from old masters but they add their interpretations. Patterns are determined according to the motives, colors, materials and composition the clients choose from the quilt catalogue photographs.

The quilt prices change depending on the size and material of the chosen model. Considering the quilt samples preferred in the past at most and removed from catalogues today but still continued to be sewn;

From plant motives, ornaments with patterns of violet, rose, lemon seed, pumpkin seed, tulip, willow tree leaf, daisy, five-head rose, and clover attract attention; from object motives, ornaments with patterns of ribbon, star, chain, tray, compass, scythe, tiara, rug, pinwheel and sun attract attention; from figure motives, ornaments with peacock, cleat, and bird attract attention; and from geometric motives, ornaments with seven-head frame and diamond line attract attention. In quilts, a few ornaments together form a composition just as a single motives repeat. In fabrics dore, lilac, green and pink colors are dominant. The *peacock* model in figure 1a is one of the most common figured patterns in Tire quilts, which was made on order by İsmail Dağdöven owner of Özlem Yorgan Dikimevi. In this quilt, he designed with flower branches from plant motives, dore color crystal sire, and white cotton fabric in its lining have been used. Another interpretation of *Tavuskuşu* (*Peacock*) in figure 1b is seen in a work by Yusuf Çırpar. He designed two corners of the quilt with plant motives in a model named *Çift Tavus Kuşu* (*Double Peacocks*), used light dore colored-satin fabric. Another work is a quilt with figure on it named *Koç Başı* (*Cleat*) used frequently by ancient masters. In this model made with thin plain sewing technique by Halil Akaydın, the owner of Temiz-İş Yorgancılık, the figure of cleat was symmetrically placed and was complemented by diamond lines. Akaydın has a quite extensive pattern catalogue since he is the oldest among the masters (Fig.1c).



Figure 1a: Tavus Kuşu



b: Çift Tavus Kuşu



c: Koç Başı

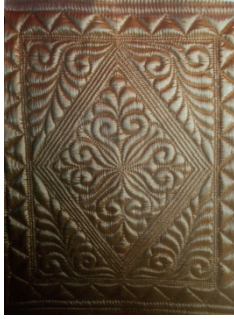


Figure 2a: Kilim



b: Sini Motif



c: Kuyruklu Yıldız

The plain line seen in one or two rows at the edges of quilts forms a path to cover the quilt with sheet smoothly as well as it is factor for embracing the patterns. Such details made with thin sewing technique enable the quilt to be used easily. Of object figures used in quilt patterns, the motives with *Kilim (Rug)*, *Sini (Tray)* and *Kuyruklu Yıldız (Comets)* are still-produced models (fig. 2a,b and c). In all three samples, the main motive is placed at the center of the quilt and is complemented with plant and geometric motives. Pink and dore are preferred as colors.

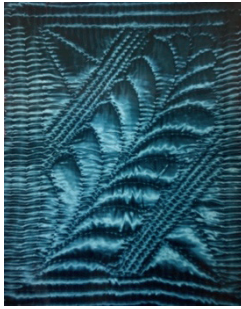
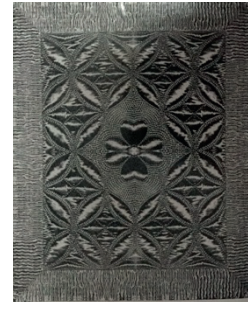


Figure 3a: Selvi Motifi



b: Lale Motif



c: Menekşe Motifi

In figure 3, there are motives with plant patterns. In the first example named *Selvi* by Çırpar, the leaf of cypress tree entirely covered the face of the quilt and thin sewing technique and embossing were used at the edges. This model preferred mostly by adults measures 180x220 cm, with quilt cover made by green satin fabric, lining from calico and

filling material from cotton. In the second example made on dowry order by Dağdöven, tulip motive frequently used in traditional Turkish patterns was sewn on pink fabric with a symmetric form; geometrical shapes were used in the center and at the edges. In the third example sewn by Akaydın, there is only one violet in the center of the quilt embraced with leaves at the edges.

In the work named *Gelin Tacı (Tiara)* by Dağdöven (fig.4a), the main motive in the form of tiara was applied on the whole cover repeatedly. At the edges of the quilt prepared for dowry, a path was made with double sews. It is a double quilt with pink crystal sire used on the fabric. The edges of the symmetrically prepared quilt named *Yelpazeli Limon Çekirdeği (Lemon Seeds)* (4b) were applied to orange satin fabric with plain sewing technique. The frame of this quilt by Çırpar is designed with geometric forms. In the last example of Çırpar again, at the center of this pink colored quilt prepared for a baby girl in 100x130cm there exists the name, and around the name there are objects and plant motives depending on the master's taste (fig.4c). Çırpar stated that there has recently been demand for these quilts on which names are written for new born babies or circumcision feasts. In the selection of quilt patterns, plant, figure, object and geometric motives are preferred today as in the past. Just as a single motive can be used in designs, there exist compositions of some motive types. In some of them the quilt sewing is made with very thin basting technique and very closely.



Figure 4a: *Gelin Tacı*



b: *Yelpazeli Limon Çekirdeği*



c: *İsimli Model*

Although embossing motives are dealt with as the main patterns, bas-motives (helping motives) also partly attract attention. In all of the

examined quilts, the center and four corners are prominent. Quilt masters make reductions in quilt patterns and make changes in embracing sewing for less handiwork and for time saving (since clients want to buy quilts at a cheaper price). This situation unfortunately decreases quilting and affects the quality. There is no doubt that quilting included in Tire craftsmen groups for a long time has the traces of a rooted culture although it does not have the same fame as in the past. Handicraft can provide cultural codes of the society from which it is derived when the motives on it are examined together. That the motives seen in quilt examples made in Tire have similar ones in Turkish cultural memory is of proving character to this.

Conclusion

In Tire district, which is the sample study in which we dealt with the present condition of quilting occupation, this handicraft preserves its traditional social aspect and traditional usage purpose despite the hard economic conditions and ready-quilts in the sector. In the district protecting its customs and traditions as well as being open to novelties, it has been determined that there remain only four quilt masters dealing with quilting handicraft. These masters are going on quilting on their own and they cannot find apprentices to carry this occupation to the future. Because there are not any apprentices for sewing of quilt models which are hard to make, all load is on the master. Because of the great demand for *mitil* (simple) quilts in recent times, many quilt designs have either been removed from catalogues or are sewn on the order with new arrangements. In the quilt samples examined, dore, hone foam, pinkish orange, pink and green tones are commonly used colors. Standard quilt size is determined to be made 1.85 cm -2.00 cm wide and 2.15cm-2.25 cm long for double quilts and 1.60cm wide 2.20cm long for single quilts and to be made 90cm wide 1.00cm long or 100 cm. wide 1.50 cm long for child quilts. It is thought that the prices for quilt sewing being parallel to ready quilts cause the quilting handicraft to lessen as well as the increase in the quilts made of fibril, silicone fibril and goose feather. Therefore, it is necessary to take urgent precautions in order to update this handicraft by gaining it new dimensions and to prevent it from just being a sleep cover. In this content, the suggestions to disappearance problem of quilting handicraft are as follows;

- Making the quilt a product with logical cost by benefitting from new technologies,

- Increasing the awareness at local, national and international levels in the preservation of non-concrete cultural heritage,
- Providing short and long run commercial support for craftsmen who perform quilting that has cultural and artistic value,
- Encouraging apprentice and master training (financial source, insurance)
- Enabling public institutes, universities, local governments and nongovernmental organizations to take active parts coordinately by arranging macro plans and strategies,
- Applying traditional patterns and carrying them into the future,
- Contributing to culture tourism by making it a souvenir commodity for markets abroad,
- Finding proper ateliers for quilting masters where they can create new patterns and re-interpret old patterns and reveal new usage fields. These will partly solve the problems on this issue.

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