

НАСЛЕДСТВОТО НА ТРАДИЦИОННИТЕ ТЕКСТИЛНИ ДЕСЕНИ В ЖИВОПИСТА

Неше САРАЧ
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TRADITIONAL TEXTILE PATTERN HERITAGE IN PAINTING

Neş'e SARAÇ
MA, Fine Arts; MSc & BSc, Economics.
GESAM (Member of Turkish Fine Art Work Owners Professional Association),
Ankara, TÜRKİYE

Abstract:

The Turkish textile heritage is rich with patterns and motifs that reflect cultural identity across centuries. Painting, especially the works of Osman Hamdi Bey, took on the mission of documenting and conveying this heritage to the future by depicting fragile cultural elements like textiles with almost photographic meticulousness. The reinterpretation of traditional motifs (such as the tulip, carnation, çintemani) in modern art and design prevents cultural identity from being lost, acting as a manifesto of cultural survival that keeps the heritage dynamic and vibrant.

Fabric and Pattern as the Carrier of Cultural Identity

Textiles have historically been a primary cultural vehicle, reflecting not only a nation's economic power but also its aesthetic understanding, societal values, beliefs, and rituals. The patterns, motifs, and colors used in Turkish textile production for centuries bear witness to the country's collective memory and heritage. This is a universal truth; for every nation, patterns and motifs, whether on a piece of fabric or in a painting, carry the tradition, customs, and cultural heritage of the past.

Traces of Centuries in Modernizing Compositions

Although the fabric motifs of the modernizing world are produced with new techniques, they harbor the traces of centuries in their depths, containing the identities and cultures to which they belong. In this context, the reshaping of traditional motifs by modernizing art demonstrates the value and meaning of art rooted in cultural heritage.

1. Documentation of Art and Cultural Heritage

Artistic cultural heritage is documented in its most concrete form through artworks and is passed down from generation to generation. Painting, at this point, serves as a unique archive due to its permanence, offering a visual anthropology of more fragile cultural elements, such as textiles.

During the Westernization process of the Ottoman Empire, painting undertook the mission of recording traditional lifestyles and clothing codes. One of the most important representatives of this mission, who carried Turkish motifs into the future with his paintings, is Osman Hamdi Bey.

1.1. Osman Hamdi Bey

Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910) was a multi-faceted Turkish intellectual, painter, archaeologist, and museologist who lived in Istanbul. He was the founder of the Istanbul Archaeology Museums and the founder of the institution known today as Mimar

Sinan Fine Arts University. It is believed that the artist's passion for the East grew during his student years in Paris. While his work shows influences from Western Orientalist artists, i.e., Jean-Léon Gérôme, Rudolf Ernst, and Ludwig Deutsch, the cultural life and spirituality of the East prevail over the Western painting style in his pieces.

- Osman Hamdi Bey is one of the artists in Turkish painting who gave the most space to fabric patterns and textile details in his works.

- Thanks to his Western education, especially the influence of Jean-Léon Gérôme, Hamdi Bey depicted patterns, colors, and fabric textures with almost photographic meticulousness. This attention to detail transforms his works into first-hand documents concerning the cultural life and fashion of his era.

- For Osman Hamdi Bey, clothing and patterns are powerful tools that both convey the aesthetic heritage of the past to the future and materialize the cultural transformation within the modernizing Ottoman society.

- The patterns and ornaments he chose for the dresses painted by Osman Hamdi Bey generally reflect the richness of Ottoman and traditional Turkish art, while also containing influences of Westernization.

The fabric, carpet, and clothing patterns in Osman Hamdi 'Bey's paintings are not just decorative elements; they are a language that documents the cultural identity of an era and narrates the East-West synthesis during the modernization process. This language has left us a unique artistic and cultural heritage.

Within the scope of this textile conference, four paintings (Figures 1-4) by Osman Hamdi Bey was analyzed, highlighting the textile elements: Motif, Motif's Heritage History, Fabric Characteristics, and Regional Identity of the Garment's Fabric (Table 1). Table 2 defines the fabric properties and local identity.



Figure1. The woman with mimosas



Figure 2. Istanbul lady



Figure3. Girl combing her hair



Figure4. Two musician girls

Table 1. Pattern, Motif, Color, Motif Characteristics Used In Fabrics

Figure	1. The Woman with Mimosas (1906)	2. Istanbul Lady (1881)	3. Girl Combing Her Hair (1889)	4. Two Musician Girls (1880)
Garment Color	Vivid yellow, red/pink, and purple/burgundy.	Dark red/burgundy, golden yellow/cream.	Light pink, white, blue/green.	Dominant: Burgundy/red, dark green, golden yellow, blue.
Pattern Motif	Predominantly Floral (stylized rose, carnation, tulip, <i>Hatayi</i>) typical of Classical Ottoman Art.	Floral and Geometric patterns (e.g., <i>Rûmî</i>) on vest/shawl.	Simple clothing; patterns mostly on background objects (tiles/carpet) - Geometric/Floral.	Rich Orientalist Patterns; Intense Geometric and stylized Floral (<i>Hatayi</i> , <i>Penç</i>) motifs on setting elements (carpet, cushions).
Key Fabric Names	Bindallı (traditional patterned velvet/silk), Atlas (shiny silk), Şal (cashmere/wool).	Embroidered velvet (Vest), Şal (silk/wool), Canfes (shiny silk).	Haseki (striped silk), Ferace (simpler outer garment).	Kemha (silk with gold/silver thread), Çatma (velvet weave), Divan Şalı.
Fabric Type (Nevi)	Silken or Velvet (heavy and showy), woolen.	Velvet (vest), Silk (shirt/shawl), cotton.	Cotton or silken (simple weaves), woolen.	Silk and Gold/Silver Thread weaves (very rich palace fabrics).
Motif Heritage	Roots in Seljuk (13th-14th c.) and Classical Ottoman Art (15th-16th c.) (Tulip, Carnation).	Based on Classical Ottoman (15th-16th c.) and Iranian Safavid influences; roots of <i>Rûmî</i> and <i>Hatayi</i> in Central Asia.	Geometric patterns date back to Early Islamic Art (8th-10th c.); Floral motifs are Classical.	Zenith of 16th-century Ottoman Palace Art (Classical Style) and Turkish-Islamic traditions from Central Asia.

Table 2. Fabric Properties and Local Identity

Painting	Garment Type	Fabric Name	Key Fabric Characteristic & Use
1. The Woman with Mimosas	Dress, Vest, and Shawl	Bindalli (Istanbul/Bursa/Thessaloniki), Atlas/Canfes	Heavy, showy fabric (velvet/silk) embroidered with rich floral motifs. Used for special occasions/wedding attire.
	Undershirt and Vest	Atlas/Canfes (Bursa), Velvet (Istanbul/Aleppo)	Atlas: Shiny, tightly woven 100% silk fabric. Velvet: Soft, piled surface; high-quality production in Istanbul/Aleppo.
3. Girl Combing Her Hair	Dress and Shawl/Headscarf	Kutnu (Gaziantep/Damascus), Haseki (Istanbul/Bursa)	Kutnu: Durable silk and cotton blend (striped/blocked pattern); Gaziantep center. Haseki: Simpler, striped silk mix for daily wear.
4. Two Musician Girls	Rich Garments and Cushion Covers	Kemha (Bursa/Palace Workshop), Çatma (Bursa)	Kemha: Expensive Palace fabric woven with gold/silver threads over silk; the showiest fabric. Çatma: Heavy patterned velvet used for cushion covers.

Luxury fabrics were preferred in the Ottoman palace for interior decoration and official ceremonies. Besides making kaftans, they were also used as decorative wall hangings, canopies, and tents. Fabric imports, especially from Venice, were quite common in the 15th and early 16th centuries. During the Byzantine period, the city of Bursa became the center for silk and velvet fabric weaving. It was also a central hub for the international silk trade. By the mid-16th century, the variety of motifs in Ottoman fabrics also increased. Various garden flowers, pomegranates, pine cones, crescents, and the three-dotted and/or wavy lines called *çintemani*, usually rendered in bold colors that enhance visibility even from afar, began to dominate Ottoman textiles by the mid-16th

century.

1.2. Transformation of Pattern and Identity: From Tradition to Modernization
Reshaping of Motifs:

In contemporary art and design, traditional motifs (tulip, carnation, *çintemani*) are being rediscovered through paintings and museum exhibitions and abstracted, then applied to modern textile products, digital patterns, or architectural applications. This prevents the heritage from being lost while keeping it dynamic and vibrant.

A silhouette of Istanbul, modernized with the *Çintemani* patterned kaftan, has been depicted in a painting. (Figure 5)



Figure 5. *Silhouette of Istanbul, modernized with the Çintemani patterned kaftan*
(Neşe Saraç, 2013, Istanbul)

Painting is a powerful bridge that carries the aesthetic and ethnographic value of patterns, motifs, and fabrics in the Turkish textile heritage into the future. Osman Hamdi Bey's works are proof of how meaningful and lasting steps taken toward modernization can be when their own cultural roots nourish them. To perceive this centuries-old heritage not solely as decorative elements but as the codes of our cultural identity, and to re-interpret these codes through modern art and design disciplines, will form the foundation of our cultural continuity and future artistic success.

We have important artists who carry this heritage into contemporary art, offering modern interpretations that draw on the motifs and rich patterns of traditional art. For example, traces of traditional motifs are evident in Jale Yılmazbaşı's works.

- **Tile and Ceramic Heritage:** Yılmazbaşı adapts the rich patterns and colors of Iznik tiles and Ottoman ceramic art, representing the most brilliant period of Turkish ceramic art, to contemporary ceramic forms. The floral motifs, such as tulip, carnation, pomegranate and the characteristic cobalt blue,

turquoise, and coral red color palette frequently seen in her works, are directly based on this heritage.

- **Stylization and Contemporary Form:** While using traditional motifs, she combines them with modern and abstract forms, with her own interpretation.

- **Painting and Surface Arrangement:** Besides her ceramic works, she also synthesizes local motifs with Western painting techniques by using the principles of surface arrangement and pattern repetition found in traditional arts in her paintings.

Jale 'Yılmazbaşı's 'Çini Rüyalara Serisi' (Figure 6) demonstrates how the 16th-century Iznik Tulip motif is brought to a dynamic and fragmented modern interpretation through contemporary ceramic techniques and abstract brushstrokes. This is a striking example showing that our cultural heritage is not only protected but also kept alive through creative transformation. The artist provides a powerful example of reshaping old motifs with a modern perspective.



Figure 6. *Jale Yılmazbaşı's 'Çini Rüyalara Serisi'*
(The Tile Dreams Series)

A textile motif or weaving pattern is not a simple decorative element, but a distilled cultural genetic code of a civilization spanning centuries. When these codes emerge from the surface of the fabric and settle onto the canvas of modern painting, the infinity of mosaics, or the permanent form of ceramics, this is not just a matter of reinterpretation, but a manifesto of cultural survival.

The preservation of identity is only possible with the awareness of this heritage. The continuation of traditional patterns in modern art is the strongest and most aesthetic demonstration of a nation's way of owning its past. As seen in Osman Hamdi Bey's works, when these pieces are sustained by being based on heritage, a deep meaning is attributed to the artwork. Every tulip motif, every geometric pattern inscribed on the painting, is more than a frozen moment of beauty—it becomes the unforgettable memory of the nation.

A solid future requires internalizing the values of the past. Artists, designers, and researchers serve as both guardians of this heritage and its essential communicators to future generations.

The core message remains: the reinterpretation and inclusion of traditional textile motifs and patterns in modern art directly reflects a country's centuries-old cultural genes. This process is the highest demonstration of owning the heritage and is vital for preventing the loss of identity. This cultural heritage, powerfully documented through art, constitutes the nation's strongest, most colorful and most permanent identity marker.

Conclusion

The reinterpretation of traditional textile motifs through modern art and design reflects a nation's ancient cultural genes and is the most aesthetic way to preserve its identity. This heritage, documented through art, is our strongest and most enduring identity.

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