

THE VALUE OF DESIGN RESEARCH

CRAFT AND FAITH IN TRANSFORMATION

11TH EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF
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ABSTRACT

Craft often operates as an agent that sacralize an item which is strongly linked with faith. In Turkey, the provinces particular for faith also used to host a craft guild within the dervish lodges. For example, the first stone guild is said to be founded in Hacibektas lodge, while Konya Mevlana lodge hosted a felt guild within it. These craft guilds were generally in charge of the production of items particular for religious practice. As craft production has gone through a process of mechanization and change, industry emerged as the major means of production. As a result, there appeared a resolution between craft and faith.

The rigid character of faith is structured around certain sacred practices supported with certain elements of material culture. However the materiality of the practice, which is inescapably in contact with the material world and production sector, operates as a factor that ruins and transforms the rigidity of the religious practice. Today, craft is generally crossed and supported with industrial production which breeds faith items as souvenirs or items for use in religious practice.

The study aims to investigate the relationship between the solid character of faith, the transforming character of craft and mass production with reference to craft based items for faith. In order to investigate the issue, three regions in Turkey are selected in contemplation of the scale of production of faith oriented significance: Hacibektas, Konya, and Isparta. As Hacibektas appears to be the small-scale faith-based center for craft, Konya supports both craft-based and mass production with its significance in faith while Isparta is known to be the center of rose cultivation and industry, which has references to religious practice.

Keywords: craft, faith, design, production

1 INTRODUCTION

Traditional crafts depending on native resources are used to be a part of the belief system and reflect local identity at the same time. Since craft operates as an agent to sanctify an item, craft guilds were used to be founded in dervish lodges in Anatolia. These lodges were generally in charge of producing certain parts of the dervish attire or other items particular for religious practice by using indigenous resources. By time, the production act is observed to either crossed with mechanization or totally vanished leaving its place to industrial production.

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The religious practice is supported with certain elements of material culture. However the rigidity of the faith is inevitably affected by the mobility of culture it is surrounded with. The items particular for religious practice are inescapably in contact with new materials, modes of production and visual qualities brought by them.

The study aims to investigate the relationship between the solid character of faith, the transforming character of craft and mass production. In order to do so, the design and production of faith based items with common origin of craft, three regions in Turkey are chosen: Hacibektaş, Konya and Isparta. Hacibektaş and Konya are two centers particular for faith tourism depending on the dervish lodges located. Hacibektaş is the center of Bektashi sect and the lodge of Haci Bektas Veli while Konya is known to host Mewlevi lodge founded by Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi. Although both of the lodges host a craft guild within, these two faith centers reflect differences in scale of production and business networking. While Hacibektaş is a town where the main source of income is agriculture, Konya appears as an industrial city whose business connections stretches abroad. However in both of the provinces, craft preserves its place as faith based source of income. The third region, Isparta, is not a faith center, but appears as a city which is known for rose plantation and chemical industry processing rose. Since rose has religious references, the chemical industry is involved with transferring this meaning to certain artefacts such as prayer beads or prayer rugs participating in religious practice by applying rose scent.

These three regions, in turn, reflect a gradual differentiation between craft and industrial production (figure 1). While, in Hacibektaş, craft appears as the sole mode of production and the level of industrial methods are just elaborated at the level of mechanization of craft, in Konya manufacturing appears in both craft and industrial means. Moreover, in Konya craftwork varies from feltmaking to pottery and reed flute making. In order to make a distinction, craft traditions which used to have a guild within the lodges were chosen as the focus of the study. Therefore, stone masters in Hacibektaş and a felt master in Konya are interviewed within the framework of the study. Apart from these two faith-specific centers, Isparta appears to carry out the production act by just industrial methods. To provide the link between craft tradition, industrial manufacturing and local innovative potential; a manufacturer known for applying rose scent on craft oriented items such as prayer rugs and prayer beads is selected and interviewed.

2 SELECTED CENTERS

As a typical central Anatolian town, Hacibektaş has a population of 11.700. The main of source of income is agriculture and stockbreeding. The province is known for the Bektashi lodge founded by Haji Bektash-i Veli, whose doctrine is regarded to adapt the Shamanic Turkic belief system to Islam with certain respect to nature. Today the lodge the founded by him at the town center appears as a touristic destination which attracts about 450.000 tourists a year. The town is also known for the mining of the onyx stone which is linked with Bektashi mythology. The first stone guild in the province is said to be founded in Bektashi lodge. Stonework appears to be the traditional craft which is generally carried out at the town center of 5000 population

Konya used to be the capital of Anatolian Seljuk state between 1076-1277 and hosts Mewlevi lodge founded by Mewlana Jalaleddin Rumi, who died in Konya in 1273 and made a remarkable reputation as a person of knowledge and wisdom (Efe, 2013). Every year, the lodge attracts about 2.000.000 visitors. Today, Konya appears as a significant industrial zone besides agricultural and stockbreeding activities. The city has the largest survey area in Turkey. Similar

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to Bektashi lodge, Mewlevi lodge hosted a felt guild.

Located in south western Anatolia, Isparta has a population about 418.000 at the city center. Unlike the above mentioned centers, the city does not host a lodge and is not a destination for faith tourism. However the chemical industry is involved with the production of craft based items for religious practice at considerable amount. The province is known for rose cultivation and the city is the leading rose oil producer in the world. As rose scent has reference to Islamic beliefs, the chemical industry in the city is involved with scented items particular for faith.

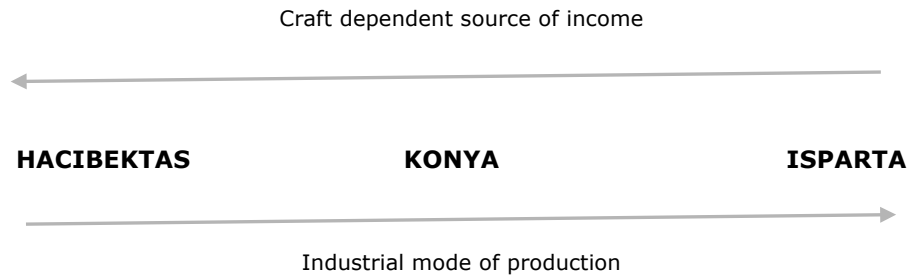


Figure 1 –Transition of modes of production in three centres.

3 THE REFERENCE TO FAITH

The faith content in products particular for the selected centers is either linked with the material or the production act. The material is generally a natural resource; the onyx stone in Hacibektas and the felt made of lambswool in Konya. In both of the centers, craftsmanship, as well, reflects a spiritual attachment to the faith since the first craft guilds are founded within the dervish lodges. On the other hand, in Isparta, the faith content is provided with the outcome of the chemical industry, namely the rose scent. While in Hacibektas and in Konya craft appears to be one of the major modes of production, in Isparta the craft oriented items such as prayer rugs and beads are redesigned for industrial production in order to apply rose scent.

The onyx stone refers to Shamanic Turkish mythology as well as the Bektashi faith. As an extension of the mountain cult in shaman-Turkish mythology, stone is regarded to be sacred and is transformed into a symbol of the homeland. At the same time, and as a part of the feminine asset of the Turkic-shaman mountain cult, it became the symbol of fertility. The mountain, as the axis guarding the balance of the world, and the place nearest to God, was believed to engulf the sun every evening and give birth to it again on every morning. The ageless mythological asset called Babal, the possessor of the stones, is regarded to be another component of the stone cult. Babal is believed to reserve a weightless and invisible stone for each newborn to hang around its neck. As the infant grows up and dies, the stone falls from his neck. Anyone who finds this stone is believed to live long and know everything (Bayat, 2007). As an extension of such a belief, the Bektashi dervishes used to carry a necklace called "surrender stone", and a belt called "kanberiyye" out of onyx in order to reveal their submission to Bektashi faith (figures 2, 3, 4).

Figure 2 –Bektashi dervish attire

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Figure 3 –Surrender stone

Figure 4 –Kanberiyye

Figure 5 –Mewlevi dervish attire

Figure 6 –The making of felt caps

Felt refers to nomadic Turkish tradition as well and has a certain place in Mewlevi philosophy. Similar to Bektashi tradition, felt caps are indispensable components of Mewlevi dervish attire (figure 5,6). According to Celalettin Berberoğlu, the felt master and the whirling dervish, felt, is a reflection of the Mewlevi understanding of the human being:

"... wool and the human being are both going through a process of purification. The wool must be lambswool, not the sheep's, and it should meet with a piece of water in order to become felt. The master kneads that wool in a straw mat. Then, the master flattens the wool under his feet with the same rhythmic breathing and pronouncing the sound "huh". Actually, hu is the manifestation of God, and what is being stamped on is the ego of the human being, everything that we are not but we think we are; status, money, fame, everything. The master is the mentor and he knows the state of the wool in the mat without seeing it. And when the mat is opened, we meet with a texture that shrunken. The shrunken element becomes firmer, the one behaving modestly, grows... " (2014)

Rose is known to be the symbol of the prophet in Islam. According to Koran, rose first appeared during Miraj. As Mohammed ascended to heaven, some of his sweat was said to have fallen to earth and from it sprang white roses (Stoddart, 1990). Observing this, the prophet said "whoever would smell my scent, let him smell the rose." (Stoddart, 1990, p.150). He is known to use rose scent especially during his meetings, which is supposed to provide evaporative cooling. As an extension of such an attitude, rosewater is abundantly used in Islamic rituals.

4 THE TRANSFORMATION OF CRAFT

In general, craft tradition descends from father to son and is based on repetition of regular forms of objects which meet their users in the near surroundings. Consequently, the craftsmen generally experience tension between creative self-expression and the need to conform to societal demands and financial realism (Ranson, 1989). Both of the craft traditions are observed to go through such tensions which force the craftsmen to shift to other sources of income or other

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forms for better self-expression. On the other hand, today any craft cannot be taken apart from new materials, new modes of production and business networks. As a result, even faith based crafts are going through a process of transformation.

4.1 MARKET CONDITIONS AND SCALE OF OPERATION

The interviewed masters are found to be involved with the production of traditional items at the beginning of their career. Today, these masters appear not to follow classical patterns of production due to the changing market conditions. Since the common classical items that used to be produced are generally of no use today, the masters turn such items into faith specific souvenirs or search for new forms.

Until 1990's stonework was one of the main sources of income in Hacibektas. However, the production costs were increased, and the mining of the source was stopped after this date and the masters were observed to spread to other occupations. Today, few remaining masters are generally involved with tombstone and workbench production (figure 7). Souvenir production remains as a seasonal side occupation. During the annual fairs held in July, such small souvenir items are produced by families involved with the craft. The onyx processed in the region come from distinct cities of Turkey. Moreover, there appear items from Pakistan. The craft is carried out in big scale tombstone and workbench production, and small scale souvenir production. Souvenir production is held in two sub-branches as handcraft and lathe production. Both of the branches require masters specialized in cutting and polishing (Akbulut, 2013).

Figure 7 –Stone master Deniz Ulutaş

Felt is traditionally used as sofa cover, shepherd's garment or shakedown. Like in Hacibektas, the felt master in Konya was involved with the production of these regular items until 1990's. After 1990, he searched for alternative ways of using the fabric and began to make scarves, pendants, decorative wall panels. Today, he also runs a workshop atelier where he conducts a training program (figure 8).

Figure 8 –Felt master Celalettin Berberoğlu

4.2 MECHANIZATION AND MATERIAL

No handicraft today is totally divorced from mechanization (Vyas, 1991). The smooth transition from the traditional craft skills to machine skills resulted in the utilization of crafts within machine production. Despite the flux between these two modes of manufacturing, craft production still sustains its own channels of marketing and distribution (Vyas, 1991).

Among the selected craft centers, mechanization and material appear as crucial elements for stonework in Hacibektas. The mechanization of the craft is said to begin in 1946 with the impact of the eminent figure Tahir Ulutaş, who tried to adopt blacksmith machinery to stonework in Ankara. In general, mechanization of the craft is regarded to increase production but decrease craft value.

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As the mining of the resource was stopped with the increase in production costs, the material began to be provided from other provinces of Turkey, and even from abroad (Pakistan and Afghanistan). As a result, the faith specific onyx stone and craft hardly reveals its origin today.

5 FAITH, DESIGN AND CRAFTS THRINITY

The local craft person-entrepreneurs try to survive by producing commodities with minimal investment and without incurring much risk. These generally perform the craft at an intermediate stage between pre-capitalist and capitalist forms of production under preindustrial technological conditions (Waterbury, 1989). Such a production act reflects informal sector characteristics which facilitate local innovative and entrepreneurial talent. As in the case of Hacibektas, this talent depends on indigenous resources and labor intensive processes which do not require skills acquired within a formal school system. Today, the stonework souvenir market in Hacibektas reflects such kind of a semi-informal characteristic. Since the already existent craft masters shifted to other professions, the families involved with souvenir production gather together just before the commemorations in July. Unfortunately, the craft hardly breeds new designs. Besides the faith specific forms such as surrender stone (figure 9) or "kanberiyye" turned into onyx egg (figure 10), the souvenir market offers decorative items such as candle holders, vases, sugar bowls (figure 11). However these items hardly reflect formal variations.

Figure 9 -Examples of faith-based souvenir accessories

Figure 10 -Onyx eggs derived from "kanberiyye"

Figure 11 - Souvenir utensils

Although the craftwork is carried out by a particular set of masters, at minor level the decorations applied to the stone items can be taken as a sub-branch of the craft. Generally, these decorations are applied on the item with customer's demand right at purchase (figure 12). However, these decorations need to be elaborated as part of the craft work.

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Figure 12 –Faith-specific decorations applied

On the other hand, felt making in Konya can be regarded as a better example for the reflection of local craft-oriented entrepreneurial talent in breeding new designs. The felt master's effort in searching for other modes of use resulted in examples such as daily outfit, accessories and decorative items (figures 13, 14, 15). Moreover, the master succeeded in founding his own school. Meanwhile, the craft tradition in Konya is not limited to felt. Pottery is another craft tradition performed in the vicinity of the city. Today, the souvenir market in the city center offers ceramic items either imported from China, or made in local workshops owned by ceramic artists. While cheap Chinese examples reflect fake authenticity, the innovative talent is observed in local examples made by artists that have gone through formal art education (figure 16). The industry's scale of operation and closure to business networks are observed to breed good results in local crafts in Konya.

Figure 13 –Felt accessories

Figure 14 –Felt decorative items

Figure 15 –Felt outfit and covers

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Figure 16 –Artists’ ceramics in Konya

The local entrepreneurial talent is mostly observed in Isparta in the production of rose scented faith-specific items. The city is known as the major rose oil producer in the world. Even the university located in the city has a research and development center for rose cultivation and products. In transforming an agricultural outturn into a chemical product, the industry is capable of applying the scent on other items. As rose scent has reference to Islamic faith, and religion is emotive as well as cognitive, smell adds to the religious nature of the item to stimulate pious feelings of the user (McDannell, 1995). Traditional objects used in religious rituals are familiar to most people and their religious nature is obvious (Gorman, 2009). So the applied rose scent, provides an emotive value to the craft oriented prayer rugs (figure 17) or beads (figure 18). Craft often operates as an agent that sacralize an item (Belk, Wallendorf, Sherry, 1989). So the scent applied on craft oriented item reinforces the faith content for the second time. The local firm which produces such scented items spent considerable effort in research and development. First, the company tried to scent the thread and weave the rug with this scented thread. The scent of the rug lasted for more than a year; however the scented thread was three times heavier than the unscented one, so it required specific weaving machines supporting this heavy raw material. Then the company decided to bring the already woven rugs from other cities and apply scent on these textiles. Unfortunately the scent lasts for not more than 4 months but such a process was preferred since it did not need special machinery for weaving. Similarly, scented beads is another innovative product offered by the same company. Traditionally, beads are made of stone or glass. The same company produced rose scented beads by combining rose petals, marble chips and plastics. As in the case of scented rugs, the longevity of the scent on the beads were much more than the plastic scented ones.

Figure 17 –Rose scented prayer rugs

Figure 18 –Rose scented prayer beads

The production act in the selected centers reflects an interaction between traditional forms and materials and new forms and materials. In the mentioned cases, either the traditional forms are produced with new materials or the traditional materials are used in the production of new forms. In faith specific

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centers, where craft tradition is based on local resources, the innovative approach in design is regarded as implementing new forms to traditional materials. However, in Hacibektaş, the economic bottleneck resulted in a break in craft tradition and mining of the resource. The province hardly reflects an innovative approach other than decorative applications of faith symbols to products. On the contrary, felt-making seem to overcome a probable bottleneck by inserting new forms in production. In fact, a decorative approach is observed in these new designs in Konya as well. On the other hand, in Isparta, innovation is made in material, which is implemented to traditional forms. So it can be claimed that the faith content of the region, and the local material as well, still preserves the concrete nature of belief, by reflecting small-scale of innovation in product form using traditional materials.

	HACIBEKTAS	KONYA	ISPARTA
<u>Population</u>	5000	1.186.000	418.000
<u>Mode of production</u>	craft	craft and industrial manufacturing	agriculture , industrial manufacturing
<u>Faith tourism</u>	yes	yes	none
<u>Level of transformation</u>	mechanization	none	implementation to industrial mode of production
<u>Reference to faith</u>	material and craft	material and craft	outcome of industry
<u>Institution</u>	none	university, private craft school	university

Table 1 – Three centres in comparison

6 CONCLUSION

In order to investigate the relationship between the solid character of faith, the transforming character of craft and mass production, three provinces, namely Hacibektaş, Konya and Isparta were selected. The production act in these provinces have certain references to craft-oriented faith-based designs. While Hacibektaş and Konya host a craft guild within the dervish lodges, Isparta appears to be the host town for chemical industry breeding faith specific items.

These three provinces reflect a gradual shift to industrial mode of production in turn. While production act in Hacibektaş depends on craft, Konya hosts both craft and industrial production, and the sole mode of production in Isparta is industrial. However, Isparta is particular for transferring industry and innovation to craft-oriented faith specific items (table 1).

Mainly the craft guilds in lodges combine the provinces' natural resources (stone or lambswool) with the mystic content of faith. For this reason, these items

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reflect a solid character that hardly change the formal attributes. Some faith specific forms are miniaturized or transformed into accessories in order to become touristic reminders. Inevitably, the production act adopts mechanical means and the source of the raw material and even craftsmanship shifts out of the province, even becomes of foreign origin.

With respect to Hacibektas, the craft tradition in Konya remains loyal to its origins; raw material and craftsmanship is not of foreign origin, and the new designs reflect correct aesthetics. As the city is an eminent industrial zone at the same time, craft remained as craft, without feeling the need to be crossed with industry and mechanization in order to survive. Moreover, institutionalization, such as the foundation of fine arts departments in the university and the private craft schools, helped to construct an innovative and aesthetic approach in crafts.

On the other hand, the market's contact with global entrepreneurs resulted in the existence of kitsch souvenirs, as in the case of figures of whirling dervishes with slanting eyes coming from China as well.

Craft generally appears to reach just the vicinity it is produced. However industrially produced items, as in the case of scented beads, appear in any faith specific market. Craft is generally limited to souvenir production if the province is a destination for faith tourism. Mainly the innovation for faith based design emerges in industry. While the solid character of faith hardly allows formal modifications in faith specific products, applying an intangible attribute like scent resulted in an innovative product for faith. On the other hand correct adoption of mechanization and supporting design with the production act, as in the case of rose scented items' production in Isparta, appears crucial for the emergence of correct aesthetics in such items. Craft oriented faith based items are observed to hardly change formal attributes. If such a design process in crafts is supported by professional designers, the local innovative talent can become an effective operation instrument.

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