

THE SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE OF TURKISH MOTIFS AND ITS PLACE IN GRAPHIC DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

Since Turkish art has a very long history and different geographical interactions, it contains several different contents. For societies that have been tied to the same land for a long time, a short title may be sufficient, however it is necessary to explore and comprehend Turkish art and their interactions in three main periods with three main titles, namely Uyghur, Seljuk and Ottoman arts.

Almost all of the supernatural creatures and animal figures that we can see from the 5th century BC have left their place to the floral motifs.

The nomads were urbanized, polytheistic beliefs and idols were also replaced by monotheistic beliefs, and the shamans turned into folk poets playing qopuz and saz.

The Seljuk society carried the symbols of previous beliefs in its memory for a long time. Until the end of the 14th century, influence of Asian originated themes in Seljuk art continued in decorations. We can see that different and even opposing themes which do not turn into one another stand together in the same place, they want to protect their identity, and sometimes they touch each other.

Throughout history, Turkish art, which has common fields with both Asian culture and Islamic culture, also interacted with other sub-elements. It has gradually changed and differentiated from time to time with the contributions of Buddhism, Totemism, Medieval sects, and some local cultures.

While sometimes wall paintings of the Uyghur period or carpets and rugs, which are the products of the hunter nomadic culture are very important, sometimes architecture and tile art and book arts have come to the forefront and world-famous pieces of art have been produced. It is difficult to explore and learn the common denominators of Turkish motifs and ornaments in such a variety, however, it is also very important and essential since we have a valuable source.

Keywords: Symbol, motif, ornament, graphic design

1. INTRODUCTION

As we investigate Turkish patterns and motifs, we see that the sources have changed from time to time according to their lifestyles and belief systems. The transition of Turkish society from nomadic life to settled life, the acceptance of the religion of Islam, and living together with different societies led to the multi-directional development of Turkish motifs. Turkish patterns and motifs have undergone thousands of years of development process from common legends to common belief systems in common geography and climate conditions.

Humanity has transferred tens of thousands of years of knowledge from generation to generation without writing, spread it all over the world until the invention of the writing, preserved and protected its keys in iconographies, thus thousands of years of Asian iconography survived until today thanks to Seljuk work of arts.

When we look at the symbols and motifs that have survived, our research leads us to question the origin of these motifs. Because the motifs bear a meaning of thousands of years, moreover, they cannot be solved by predicating on only one period.

It is understood that this meaning cannot be solved only by examining a period, and the admiration we feel as we investigate encourages us to learn more.

2. MOTIFS, SYMBOLS and SYMBOLISM

2.1. Motif

It means each of the shapes that repeat or form a group separately on their own in the works of art and decoration. Motif is the smallest unit in a narrative order. It does not contain a meaning alone. One idea, one place, one object could be a motif.

The main idea of any work of art and the tune collection used by composers in musical pieces are also called by this name.

In the field of fine arts, the repetition and continuation of a form, a group, usually the theme of a landscape is possible with the knowledge of motifs. Drawing the different aspects of a whole creates the motifs of that whole in the art of painting and ornamentation. By combining these motifs in different styles and directions, the whole of work that is intended to be drawn is shaped.

The art of motif, which has existed in this way since the first centuries, combined with ornamentation in the Ottoman period and reached its peak (Guide Encyclopedia).

In the Turkish Dictionary published by the Turkish Language Association publications, the word motif is described as follows: 1) It is the name given to each of the items that come together and form an embellishment and are united on their own, and is also called a pattern. For example: carpet motif, lace motifs. 2) The ornamental element that is frequently repeated in a work of art is called a motif. 3) A specific small unit that provides a part of a composition unity in terms of various aspects is called a motif. For example: Tune motif (Turkish Dictionary: 844).

2.2. Symbol

It means letter, word, plant, and shape, which express a purpose, an idea, and have a common meaning. Letter communities, accepted for the purpose of briefly introducing the elements in chemistry with letters used to indicate some entities in mathematic science, are also called "symbols". Symbol also means sign, abbreviation, realm, example and exemplification. All kinds of visible things, which bring to mind some things that are difficult for people to understand through their sensory organs, are also used in this meaning. Such as remembering the homeland when we see the flag and the mosque when we see the minaret.

The first symbolic signs were seen in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamians who lived BC. The world of Rome also included a lot of symbolic signs. Roman symbols have been even the subject of debate in history. Some historians have stated that the symbols were used mostly in ornamentation in the past. Today, the main idea of ornamentation is based on the symbol.

Symbolic signs have manifested more than language in some sciences. For example, this is the case in chemistry science. The transactions are explained completely by letter symbols. It is like remembering "water" when H₂O is seen. 3

The symbol-sign word in the Turkish Dictionary, published by the Turkish Language Association publications, is described as follows: 1) The concrete object or sign, which was given a certain meaning by a particular community of people coming to an agreement, is called a symbol. For example: the letters TC is the symbol of the Republic of Turkey. 2) Symbol means a concrete object or sign indicating an idea, an abstract concept. For example: Pigeon is the symbol of peace. 3) Samples that collect a feature entirely on itself are called symbols. For example: Dikmen Star (movie) is the symbol of love, attachment, woman and earth. 4) They are letter or letters that are accepted to indicate an element shortly. For example: Symbol of Gold is Au (Turkish Dictionary, Turkish Language Association, 1983: 1060)

In the main Britannica Encyclopedia, the symbol is described as follows: A communication element that represents or replaces a particular person, object, group or thought, or a combination of them. The symbols can be graphic (e.g.: the symbol of Christianity, the Cross, the symbol of the aid organizations of the Muslim and Christian countries, the Red Crescent and the Red Cross), representation (e.g. human figures such as Marianne, John Bull and Uncle Sam as the symbols of France, Britain and the United States, respectively), and alphabetically (e.g. the symbol of the potassium element is K). There is no similarity or connotation bond between some symbols and symbolized.

The symbol of the US Dollar is \$). In various philosophical systems, especially in semiotics, which is a branch of metamantics, very fine distinctions have been made between the symbol and the sign (Main Britannica Encyclopedia, 2004: 128).

2.3. Symbolism

Generally, it is the use of various symbols which mean differently or symbolize different elements. Symbolism is found in art, especially in the fields of painting, music and literature. It aims to explain the emotional life of the individual in an implicit language loaded with symbols instead of a direct expression.

The word symbolism-sign in the Turkish Dictionary published by the Turkish Language Association publications is described as follows: 1) Symbolism means using symbols to express thoughts. 2) Symbolicism is the literacy and art movement which sees the value of the work of art not only in the transfer of the truth as it is, but in the arrangement of emotions and thoughts, images and forms in harmony, and suggests that even the most inexpressible distinction of emotions can be implicated based on the music and image value of words. 3) Symbolism is the philosophical view that suggests that human mind is nothing more than symbols (Turkish Dictionary, Turkish Language Association: p. 1060-1061).

2.4. Transition of the Form into a Symbol

The history of symbolism indicated that everything, natural objects (stones, plants, animals, humans, mountains, sun and moon, wind, water and fire) or human-made objects (houses or cars), even abstract forms (numbers or triangles, squares and circles) can become symbolic. In fact, all objects in the universe have the potential to turn into symbols.

Human with their symbolization ability, unconsciously transform objects and forms into symbols (at the same time, they place them with great psychological importance), and express them both in the form of worship (religion) and in visual arts. The comparative history of religion and art, when it dates back to prehistoric times, is evidence that our ancestors left meaningful symbols for them. Even today, as contemporary painting and sculpture showed, the interaction of religion and art is still alive (Jung, 2002:232).

2.5. Language of Motifs and Symbols

The symbol combines both the sign (mark) and the hidden powers (potentials) of the image, and practises this in the context of communication. According to Gombrich, the history of art is the history of ever-changing human needs and the changing mind structures starting from the first human. In essence, mythologies and symbols are always mentioned together as they have an intricate appearance, thus myths and symbols are tried to be grouped in certain frames. While A.H. Krappe divides myths and symbols into two as the first are called the heavenly ones and as the second the ones are called as belonging to the earth, for Bachelard symbolic appearances play an intermediary role between the objective world and the intellectual world, and the sources of the symbolic world are classified on the basis of these four elements. Earth-Fire, Water-Air etc (Ateş, 1996:15).

Today's intellectual culture is interested in everything from Freud to Zen-Buddhism. One of these is the interest in art history. We want to throw ourselves into the happy garden of art history due to the fatigue created by the city life and the intimidation caused by the crowd. There seems to be more 'willingness to cure with busyness' in this interest. In an environment where the weak is always defeated, one occasionally stops to look at a work of art that does not provide him with much material interest. This is the moment when we hug art with hope. Even if one cannot show great creativity in art, he goes to a painting exhibition and visits museums to keep him out of crowds that he does not like. It is sensed to have a very delighted tendency having a pleasant time, getting away from the problems, having fun in this behavior.

However, this is neither art nor art history.

It is not possible to accept art only as a reflection of beautiful feelings in human. First of all, let us point out that the reflection of human life, which is knitted with various complex multifunctional thought parameters, to the art also appears in a complex way.

Wars, which sometimes erupt with beliefs and passions, and sometimes with economic strains, tend to turn into a game of brutality. Struggle, advance, retreat and challenge are the natural preconditions for staying alive. This behavior, which is repeated with countless actions in the world of living creatures, is explained by reasons such as hunger, sexual instinct, etc. However, we still interpret the tendency of human beings to fight like an unnatural behavior, we are very shameful for war, which is one of the most natural functions of staying alive. We prefer to deal with the decoration, color and size features of this item, in short, to examine the weapons by disconnecting them from their function, rather than thinking about what the weapons or armors that fill museums and collections are for.

The phenomenon of war is surprisingly related to art. However, the alienation of ethical and aesthetic values makes it harder for us to ground our war-arts connection. While all branches of art as cinema, painting, and literature process an anti-war culture today, wars still continue.

Although basically it is a positive value, ignorance, indulgence, tolerance cannot be fully explained by neither aesthetics nor human relations. The important thing is to catch the optimum in the relationships. For example, there is an authority suppressing the human spirit as well as being magnificent in large pieces of art, especially in architecture. The feeling of liking is somewhat mild in the face of the greatness or nobility of the pyramids, the Roman temples and Selimiye.

When it comes to the topic of decoration, it is an area that does not directly explain the human drama and looks more innocent and lovable than other fields of art history. A structure of symbolism or mystical signs does not tell the true story of human and concrete events in a known manner. This feature is also valid for Medieval Anatolian Turkish Art.

All cultures and civilizations had the desire to change their environment by decorating their environment in whatever time and conditions. In both daily speech and art history writings, the word “decoration” tells the only truth; applying various elements to an object or surface that make it beautiful and meaningful. The ornament, which we sometimes find beautiful and sometimes meaningful, is an enriching supplement applied to an item. The ornament covers the item and gives it a different face compared to its initial condition.

The beautifying of people also carries a similar function. In order to get along with the souls or to be more fortunate, they carried necklaces, bracelets, chains, seashells and animal teeth on their bodies or tattooed. The adornment of contemporary people and the concept of fashion are also substantially related to prehistoric habits. People beautify themselves and sometimes even wear a mask in order to look whatever they like.

Adornment begins with birth. The vast majority of people do not want to wander completely unclothed. The reason for this is not only to cover for protection, but also to create forms of clothing - jewellery that will give them new status. As we look to the old ages, it is seen that the ornaments and equipment for special days are different. This tendency carries people to different spiritual environments accompanied by music and dance, and goes out of the current environment in terms of shape and spirit. What distinguishes this behavior from contemporary adornment; not to look different, but to believe that it can really be different.

Ornaments which we sometimes find beautiful and sometimes meaningful; have close meanings with the terms derived from decorating/decoration from the Arabic “adornment” (an indicator of wealth) and the roots of “ornatus” and “decorato” in Latin.

Why did human make ornaments, what does the shapes they drew on the pots and pans or on the walls of their houses mean? Is this a game or entertainment? Or is it a much more serious task?

The symbolist perspective exploring the answers to the questions above follows a rather rational explanation. Accordingly, every shape we see is connected with something magical. This power or meaning is very different from the way it looks. This difference is in the content

What we are trying to understand is what powers those people, who use these shapes persistently in certain places, get from those shapes. Which talismans call for which beliefs against which dangers, and why do these worries sometimes emerge in the form of deer, and another time turn into geometrical forms? 10

Since the function of the motifs and the compositions they create is to add their symbolism to the object on which they are located and to give it spiritual depth and essence, the ornament process is to give that item identification.

Looking at the Medieval Turkish ornament arts, it is seen that the form analysis should be handled with the meaning dimension. These figures are part of a communication system and are similar to dictionary items or meaningful syllables. Unless sources, designs, conversions, or displacements of the shapes are compared with their counterparts in different regions, a meaningful whole will not emerge. The most important gaps in this issue will be filled to some extent with the publication of excavation reports on Medieval archeology in Anatolia, especially with the results of Asian research.

One of the primary problems of the researcher is to determine the beliefs pursuing the social power that activates the process of change of shapes, in other words, to examine the problem of meaning and the meaning behind it (Mülayim, 1999:10-19).

People have tried to reflect their favorite powers as objects. Iconography is a language of symbols. The symbol is used to represent a thought in its own period. In other words, when interpreting a symbol,

it is necessary to consider it in its own period. On the contrary, the symbol may have changed meaning (Çoruhlu, 1995:10-11)

Any motif, whether abstract, naturalist, geometric or organic, is interpreted in whatever perspective, has a place in the general shape repertoire. Accordingly, we can collect the motifs of Turkish art, that appear in various time periods and seem to be unlimited, in a system without any confusion. In fact, we can create a table by considering the integration of these motifs. If it is considered very briefly, the themes that we can classify in 7 items are as follows:

- 1) Writing and its types
- 2) Geometric shapes
- 3) Floral motifs
- 4) Figures
- 5) Daily item motifs
- 6) Architectural forms and muqarnas
- 7) Symbolic and cosmic forms

The human's comprehension of his environment deeper, wisdom development, cooperation between hand and brain, increased technical skills, led to the emergence of very simple lines firstly, then animal shapes and plant forms, and finally the human figure. It is noteworthy that human has moved slowly at drawing himself. However, once he drew it, he could not give it up, and that is why the biggest fight between ecclesiastics and artists broke off. It is suggested that two opposing styles, as geometric and organic, continued throughout the entire history of ornament (Mülayim, 1999:80).

We can count the factors that determine the art style of a region, as well as the leading styles in that region, as the other determinants such as climate, surface shapes, mines (sources of raw material), hayvan (fauna) and vegetation (flora), human and social structure, ecological balance, geopolitical location. Apart from sudden and unexpected changes such as wars and migration, it is accepted that they can gain a style by themselves because of the location (genius loci) of each region.

Geographical structure, climate, streams and roughness may be important in human creativity. Especially the sources that give raw materials to plastic arts can give important explanation ways in determining the material and technique of the art in the region (Mülayim, 1999: 58).

In today's perception, it is easily understood that these enigmatic shapes, which we call the symbol located at the point where the reality meets the dream, are not imaginary, inanimate and meaningless lines, since they are always constructed with the same graphics and always in the same ways and they were predetermined lines. In addition, despite all the complexity of these images, which seem to be the product of a vast subjectivity, it is not overlooked that they adhere to certain cultural rules and foundations. The symbols reflect the socio-cultural elements of the age of art that the individual initiated with the blessing of nature and the social life in these periods and their indicators, and these shapes that were carved in stone, shaped in mud, touching the wool, convey the cultural realities of the era they were formed. The only key we can use as a tool to read them is cultural resources. In this position, it seems possible to determine that there is a going from symbols through mythological essence, the presence of communication networks coming from mythologies to symbols and their intricate structures (Ateş, 1996:13).

Since the primitive sources of symbolics are products of the past, its roots must be searched in the past. These lines, as dated and old as human beings, have carried the traces of prehistoric puzzles and mysteries with them on their long historical journeys, and an example of Aysberg, whose secrets have been in the invisible desolate depths of the seas, and their visible shapes are finally visible for thousands of years (metal, wood carving, carpet, rug or commercial materials) on the continents. In this position, the symbols appear as the legacy of the products of feelings and thoughts and the intellectual past shaped in the long historical process. According to M. Eliade, only the interpretation of the symbols remained after the assumed truth in mythology disappeared and mixed with the past.

When this field of interpretation is analyzed

as the expression of the psychological world formed in the person who perceives the objective world, it is necessary to evaluate the content of the symbols, as a reflection of problematics of the socio-cultural life periods of human, and the life style (nomadic or settled) of these periods, and expectations of happiness (material and spiritual elements). However, when we set out from this point of view, we understand from these formal traces that human beings knead the ages for thousands of years, so a symbol has different meanings in different time periods.

In terms of usefulness, there is no distinction between the construction of a hut and the production of an image. While huts protect them from rain, wind and sun, images protect them against other forces that are as real as natural forces (Ateş, 1996:15).

As human who developed ideas such as asking for help from lines, doing some kind of magic, embodying the relationship between painting and belief, and seeking help from the powers he believed superior to himself, the realistic pictures they drew for magic as time unrevealed the secrets of the unknown, however these old unknowns and concepts related to fears have settled in their memories as superstitions, although belief has disappeared in the process, their symbolic images remained.

For this reason, it is expressed that different meanings have been placed in an image in every time and space period, and the mythological secrets of millennia have been carried within these symbols, and that some intellectual phenomena have existed in certain periods of history and that

life has been lived within the framework of these elements. From this point of view, symbols are the transformed indicators of mythologies and the carrier tools of these thoughts. Therefore, they are a kind of primitive writing, since they take on the task of transferring the known and socially accepted subjects to everyone in the shortest way again and aiming to convey the intellectual elements of the society back to the society and to reinforce the social memory. In other words, it is possible to define that it is the philosophical writing of cultural ideas that dominate the society in a way. As it is known, thoughts of birth, life and death are in constant connotation with each other in the human mind. It is the whole of the symbols that are formed around the idea of birth-life-death and the rebirth that develops accordingly and which are drawn on some objects or represented in the shapes that time has carried the mysteries of all these symbols to the present without hurting even the most primitive forms of these symbols. In this symbolic world, including the secrets of different life forms existed in such a broad time period, it can be clearly seen that how much of a single image can be understood and explained. Moreover, some of them do not accept the determination of time and space. These universal symbols have existed everywhere and at all times, and have entered the intellectual worlds of people with humanity. The question of which of these formal indicators, where and when was born, has different meanings at different levels of evolution in the climate and history of each society remains unanswered. What concerns us more in this infinite complexity is what they can express (Ateş, 1996:16-17).

Generally, they use the expression dominated by life energy and controlled as means by loading symbolic values to different creatures and different objects in nature, show the rings of the rotating energy circle, and the philosophical focal points of this energy circle (birth-life-death or the soul's journey from the body to the unknown realm) pass through the triple circles.

Nomadism is a long-lasting form of social organization of humanity. Undoubtedly, this social structure was formed within the framework of certain rules and the most prominent value concepts of these societies developed within the framework of the concepts of holiness, fertility and fertility, as in established societies. Reaching abundance is also the basic task of the nomad.

Since the nomadic people met reindeer (because both for consumption reasons due to its flesh and for carrying the sleds, and for being a means of production due to its use value), they have ensured all its vital needs and have maintained its perfect life for thousands of years.

Birds describe the flight of the deceased soul. It was developed in the last paleotic period.

The bird nests in high places and burns itself, creating a new emerald Phoenix. Mythological content appears as a symbol of life that is continuously re-formed.

In the settled agricultural societies, beliefs about agricultural indicators as well as the image of agricultural production and wheat ears come to the forefront, while deer and horse as an important animal of the nomadic life naturally come to the forefront in nomadic societies. Related mythologies will derive and determine the cultural characteristics of the society. As a result, it seems to have been like this (Ateş, 1996:35)

It seems that the content of the symbolics can only be understood as long as the reason and why they were born, as well as the concept of the reason why it can express this or that can only be understood as long as the location and problems of the real life experienced by the society that produced them. As a result, it is obvious that when we isolate societies from their real lives, the subject will turn towards certain mystical interpretations, since it is necessary to observe the humanity in its nature in order to examine the issue of symbolism.

Regardless of where and when the apparent formal sources of symbolism belong, intellectual sources are manifested in the same way, and shaped in the concepts of holiness-productivity-fertility, which were derived from the human mind.

The triple function takes place in the natural life of human in the axis of Sacredness-Warfare-Productivity, and relationships such as holiness, sanctuary and worship-magic constitute the dominant points of the symbolic potential.

Especially in the triangle of birth-life-death, we will try to go down to the primitive sources of the symbolic, in which women symbolizing the beginning of life and the natural feature of her fertility and birth elements.

The woman (mother), the main symbol of birth, will not leave the history scene for thousands of years, playing the leading role in the world of symbols.

As is known, the center of life is human existence. The continuity of human existence, reproduction, growth and continuity of the generation is the only and most important wish that human desire from God and material nature. Since birth and fertility is the beginning of life, it is also the beginning of the blessings (Ateş, 1996:19)

The clear analogy between the life-giving and nurturing forces of women and those of the world must have already been established between fertile femininity and motherhood of nature.

It should also be considered naturally to give the mother goddess the idea of her fertility spell turning into fertility, that is, the reproduction of the whole world, by giving her the goddess part in the title of "mother of earth" in the earth land where she lives on humans.

For this reason, the female image has become the common point of all kinds of birth and growth symbolism. The drawing of the uterus has been the symbol of the mother goddess, the fertile soul, for thousands of years in all kinds of objects and sacred places.

Understanding of the world as mother and burial as a return to the womb of the soil was accepted in ancient times (Ateş, 1996:31).

Although it is not known where the birthplace is, it is definitely known that some Asia, southern Russia and Don valleys and plains are the homeland of Venus, which is made of bones and ivory stones or seen in reliefs and generally maternity situation roughly exaggerated. For example, the goddess of Malta is dated to 20,000 BC. Wherever they are, these goddesses symbolized the continuity of the human lineage, became the chief goddess of matriarchal societies, symbolized reproduction, included the ideas of fertility, abundance and fertility in agricultural societies, and they named as Umay in Asia. Umay means uterus and it is not a coincidence that it looks like the name of month May. DMField stated that, Roman took the name of the month of May, which is the revival of the world, from Umay- the goddess of Asia, and these figurines showed the shoots of fertility and wheat ears in Anatolia. The image of the woman, who was originally seen as the first source of the mother goddess that goes all the way to the "first mother", is the natural mother of everything, the leader of the holy forces, the leader of the people living in heaven, who started the human generation all over the world. "The planets of the sky, all the winds of the seas, the sad silence of hell are governed by his will.

The belief in the resurrection after death seems to be related to the rising Moon. The Huns bowed or prostrated towards the Moon during the birth of the new Moon. The half-moon and full moon represent the complete renewal and rebirth of the Cosmos. In Asian mythologies related to the moon, the "Moon" is shown as a fertile tooth. In one of them, when Manas died, god ordered his angels to be put the beautiful girl named Golden-Moon to wait at the head of Manas. When they found Manas, Golden-Moon was waiting at his head in the grave.

In general, the birth of all living creatures such as human-plant-animal is represented in 2 circles or in-circle dot graphs, and the world lived with its drought and dangerous nature, as well as abundance, appears to be symbolized with + as if it is intended to be expressed in four parts of the world (Ateş, 1996: 87).

3. CONCLUSION

The shapes that were subjected to formal deformation or stylization in the transition processes were also transformed into “motifs” that diverged from their original meaning. While symbol the image expressing an idea exactly, motif emerges as a whole of compositions directed towards other forms in terms of content and form.

Symbols have been indicators of social developments and changes, since they were born and developed depending on the culture. The symbols that are the productions of certain social cultural structures have disappeared with the change of this structure. For example, in Turks, with the culture of Islam, the symbols related to the previous culture have gradually lost their content and meaning, but they have continued to exist even though they have decreased in social memories.

In contemporary art and design, and especially in Graphic Design, which is our field, it has great importance that we have absorbed and digested our art and culture in many respects, first and especially, while making designs suitable for contemporary tastes and needs. When the description of intuition can be explained as a whole of experiences, the new design is possible with the fact that those who glide from our savings are included in our works in accordance with contemporary perception and taste, and no new is actually new.

The work waiting for the artists and art historians on this subject is to determine the evolution step that explains the change process of shapes. When this is accomplished, this means that we have handled the history of ornaments, motifs and symbols together with the history of humanity, and we have been able to correctly understand the new entries and disappearances in the art, use and live them.

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