

A CURRENT EVALUATION OF THE TRADITIONAL IZNIK TILES AND CERAMICS

In the Scope of the Development Process and Techniques of Turkish Tiles and Ceramics

Secil SATIR

Assoc. Prof. Dr.-Istanbul Technical University- Faculty of Architecture-Department of Industrial Product Design

The art of ceramic, which dates back to ancient periods and has multifarious types, took on a lively and colorful note when it took the name of Iznik tiles and ceramics, and became known worldwide in its peak in the 16th century. The authentic glazed type of ceramic started with the Assyrians and it reached to its perfection going through Central Asia, Great Seljuks, Anatolian Seljuks and Ottoman periods in the hands of the Turks until its maturity in Iznik. Iznik tiles are commonly made with under-glaze and above-glaze techniques, along with trials of other techniques; the art received much external influence, but was mainly nourished by the rich sources in its essence. Providing sustainability to Iznik tiles, which have an important place in Turkish culture, should be the assignment of ceramic experts as well as of the design perspective. It is essential to sustain the essence with quality while preventing degeneration.

Keywords: *Iznik tiles-ceramics, traditionalism, transference to the current*

Introduction

Ceramic, which has a story of thousands of years, was put into use in almost every region of the world and it has characteristics that conform to the soil structure in every country of its presence. The differences in the content of its material, its historicity, the standards of judgment of the people and the way people use it evolved the objects of use, and objects of decoration, etc. It can be produced by hand and on potter's wheel thanks to its easily shapeable character. Today it is produced on potter's wheel or by casting into a plaster mold. It is an important material and object of production, which saw improvements in every period. Generally, ceramic can be defined as objects made of clay. Clay existed as a material since prehistoric ages due to its plastic, moldable, and easily shapeable character. This makes one think that it will exist forever. Clay, which submits to the will of the artist as it is being shaped, resists while

being kilned; cracks and breaks. Clay has quartz in it, which prevents breaks. Ceramic clay, which is made by clay, quartz, and feldspar as their binder, may be classified as rough or hard ceramic according to its ingredients. In the definitions of experts, unglazed clay baked in primitive methods is called earthenware bowls and pots. On the other hand, the glazed products which are baked in lower temperatures are called ceramic, while either glazed or unglazed; those kilned in very high temperatures are called porcelain. This article will consider glazed tiles and ceramics which find decorative and daily use in our lives.

Historical approach

“Earliest known examples of pottery were made around 6000 B.C. (*Neolithic period*) in Çatalhöyük, in Anatolia. Most of them carry great, red, bold geometrical patterns on a cream colored undercoat. The undercoat and paint are glazed so

as to render a slight glitter on the surface.”¹ Neolithic period also saw the first production of bricks. Among Aegean and Anatolian civilizations, ceramics that belong to Hittites, Assyrian colonies, Phrygians, Urartus, Lydians, Hellenistic and Roman civilizations are notable; to this many other civilizations can be added. In American cultures, Mayan, Incan, and Aztecan ceramics are worth mentioning. Resources show that glazed ceramic is an eastern art which dates back to Assyrians.

“According to dates in official records, it is known that before Christ, Assyrians decorated their monuments with tiles... Ancient Egyptians, Sumerians, and Assyrians covered the façade of their buildings with polished bricks... Though some European enthusiasts of history attributed this art to Iranians, since there they had found ancient polished earthenware, the production of polished earthenware was a much advanced art in China in those days. Their type and quality was different, but they were of glazed clay... Renowned historian, Yakup Çelebi of the 13th century reported that Turks of Central Asia used tiles in their buildings and these marvelous tiles were produced in Kâşan (Seljuk period)... Tiling was born in the east, and in the hands of Turks, it became an enchanting art.”²

Sources indicate that the earliest found examples of pottery production which started at the end of Neolithic period in Eastern China date back between 206 B.C and 220 A.D. Following these dates, Chinese ceramics include “Yue Ceramics” with celadon (*olive green*) and brown glazed parts and this is followed by “Northern Celadons” with gray clay and bright green glaze, and “Jun Ceramics” with purple or dark red stain or spots on a chatoyant light blue, light purplish glaze... “Ru Ceramics” with a cracked turquoise glaze, which were specially made for the palace, and “Cizhou

Ceramics” from the same region characterized by scraping technique and with thin grayish clay, and colored ceramics with black-brown smooth brush strokes, with which larger items such as “wine bowls, storing jars and washbowls” were produced in the same region.³

Further, the development of many different kinds of ceramics that shows marked differences between regions in China led to trials of porcelain production in the Tang Period. Porcelains of the Tang Period made great advancements in the 9th century and were influential in the development of Islamic ceramics. Notable ones are; the ‘Jian Pots’ of the Song Period, which were glazed in brown or black and made in Fujian; “Longquan Celadons” with a bright light turquoise glaze; ‘Kuan Pots’ which were made of dark gray clay and with a grayish blue, green, ashen, purplish gray celadon-like glaze and were produced in the palace after the capital was moved to Hongzhou in 1127; blue-white ‘Gingbai ceramics’ which were made in Jiangxi. The production of ‘Longquan’ and ‘Gingbai’ ceramics continued under the reign of ‘Yang Dynasty’. In this period, ‘Shufu’ porcelains emerged as a variation of ‘Gingbai’ ceramics and within time, their production went beyond the production of colored pots and celadons...The ceramic trade with India and Near East that started under the reign of ‘Yuan Dynasty’ (1260-1368), made it possible for the Turkish Emperor, Yavuz Sultan Selim to bring the renowned ‘Longquan Celadons’ with him along with artists and scientists from Tabriz.

Seljuk Period ceramics can be classified under three groups. The first group is known as ‘White Pots’. This group of ceramics, which were inspired by ‘Ting Pots’ of the Chinese ‘Song’ period, look like porcelain since they are of thin, hard, and white clay, and they were embellished with vegetal motifs with the scraping technique. The second group of ceramics of the Seljuk Period are the

monochrome tin-glazed and embossed ceramics with vegetal and bird motifs in turquoise, blue, green, eggplant purple, light purple, and dark brown. In another group of ceramics of the Seljuk Period made in Kâşan with 'lakabi technique' (*a technique in which the pattern is drawn and colored in yellow, turquoise, cobalt blue, dark purple, etc. and 'koperta', a very thin film of bright and transparent glaze, is applied before the ceramics are kilned*), the silhouette technique is applied on black 'slip'. Slip, the undercoat, "is painted on tiles and ceramics, which have the hardness of leather, through immersion, spraying and brushing. After drying they are kilned in a biscuit oven."⁴ It is important in the slip technique that the white undercoat called the slip should be applied on the red ceramic clay with a pattern. It is kilned after the application of red, green, or turquoise glaze. With this technique, mainly ceramics with bird designs, especially "peacock" motifs framed with rope braids or plants were produced; in the technique the surface is covered with turquoise or ivory "crackle" glaze.⁵

During Seljuk Period, glazed bricks used in masjids, large tombs, mosques and other structures show the prevalent use of ceramics. A typical, and also the first example of this can be seen on the minaret of 'Damgan Masjid Cuma', which was decorated with tiles in 1058.

After the collapse of Fatimites in Egypt, the master potters that immigrated from Mesopotamia and Iran brought with them the 'luster' (*British English: lustre*) technique and they employed it both in the designs and in the background, so the technique became widespread. The third group of ceramics of the Seljuk period, is the ceramics with the 'luster' technique. The technique is used prevalently in wall tiles as well as in plates and pots and in other objects of use. 'Luster' technique, also called sheen technique, is applied upon glaze. After the tablet or pot is glazed and

kilned, the design is applied with a material called sheen or 'luster' and baked again in a smoky, low temperature kiln. Following the second baking process, the tablet or object gains a metallic shine. Although it looks like a complex issue with the variety of ceramic techniques, each with different variations, Seljuks had used techniques employed under and above the glaze, and the 'luster' technique, which is also a technique employed above the glaze, but developed under a different name.

Thousands of years before the Ottoman Period, "it can be said that Turks' yearning for green in the steppes of Central Asia is concretized in the turquoise of the tiles."... "before conversion to Islam, Uygurs had created a monumental Turkish art. Following Islam, this time with Karakhanids, Ghaznevids and eventually with Great Seljukian Art, Turkish arts rooted in eastern Islamic lands. After Seljuk Turks settled in Iran and established their state, they created superior works both in architecture and in other forms of art."... although "tile technique found concurrent use in both Anatolia and Iran,"... "the development of mosaic tiles in architectural decoration was quick and sudden."⁶

Following the improvements from the 9th to the 13th centuries, the main improvement in this art was made in Great Seljuk Period in Iran. The tile and ceramic art of the Seljuks of Anatolia descended from that of Great Seljuks.

The Concepts and Techniques of Tile and Ceramic

Turks improved the art of ceramic; Karakhanids applied ceramics on the facades of buildings, Great Seljuks made variations in the techniques and Seljuks of Anatolia made gave originality and continued that art. Until the 18th century, Turkish ceramic art and its products were

called 'evani', meaning pottery, and 'Kâşi', a word of Persian origin, meaning 'of Kâşan', of the city that developed as the heart of ceramics during the period of Great Seljuks. Turkish Emperor Yavuz Sultan Selim (*Selim I.*) brought with him Chinese ceramic products from a military campaign in Iran. Since the Chinese porcelain was renowned and Chinese ceramics had an influence on Turkish ceramics, they were called 'Çini', meaning 'of China'.

Today ceramics of various geometric shapes that decorate the interior and exterior facades of buildings are called çini (*tile*), while objects of use are called ceramics. Tiles and ceramics that were developed and used during the Anatolian Seljuks and Ottoman Periods were made with various techniques and in different types.

The matter is originally in the scope of glazed tiles and ceramics. But there also exist unglazed group of ceramics (*baked earthenware*) which, before Anatolia, were used in the Near East, Mesopotamia, Iran, and Syria, in the Great Seljuks period and by Artukians in Southeast Anatolia. These are made of soft clay and surface patterns are made either by pressing on a mold or by the scraping technique. This group consists of large water jugs, earthenware jars, washbowls, and receptacles used to store food.

Turkish tile art can be considered to have started with the glazed brick, which, since Uygurs, has been used in architectural structures such as mosques, madrasas (*theological schools attached to a mosque*), tombs, Turkish baths, palaces, and caravanserais, and best examples of which can be seen in Anatolia. Other surface tiles were developed on this prototype. After the red or gray-yellow brick clay with high tiny-grained silica content is shaped in the mold and baked, its narrowest surface is covered with a glaze of turquoise, dark blue, eggplant purple, etc. and

baked again. The glaze made for the brick is generally applied directly without an undercoat. Powdered glaze is mixed with water and metal oxides matching the desired color, and applied on the surface of the brick. After baking, a glass-like polished and colored surface of glaze is obtained.

To classify according to techniques the glazed tiles and ceramics other than glazed bricks:

- "Monochrome glazed, non patterned and gilded tiles and ceramics,
- Tiles and ceramics with under-glaze and "slip technique"⁷
- Tiles with above-glaze and 'luster' techniques,
- Embossed tiles and ceramics,
- Mosaic tiles,
- Minai ('enameled' in Persian) tiles,
- 'Cuerda Seca' (dry thread) tiles with colored glaze technique,
- "Sgraffito" (scraping technique) ceramics⁸
- Streaming color ceramics"⁹.

Making use of the resources in this classification, under-glaze and above-glaze techniques, which have slight differences, were brought together.

- Although the glazing of monochrome, irregular and gilded ceramics is similar to that of the glazed brick, the tile and ceramic clay of this type is harder and of higher quality than brick clay. Its silica content is higher. From the Seljuk Period onwards till late Ottoman Period, the ceramic clay turned from a yellowish ashen color to a reddish tint and in the later period to a faded white. The clay used in ceramic objects is thinner than the one used in tiles. This type was usually without an undercoat. An undercoat was applied to it with the water spraying or immersion technique, and the layer thus formed is called 'engobe'. Tiles glazed with or without undercoats were glazed with lead in the Seljuk period, and without lead in the Ottoman period.

Monochrome glazed gilded tiles, as with the other monochrome-glazed irregular tiles, were glazed by obtaining the dark blue glaze from cobalt, the turquoise from copper oxide, the eggplant purple from manganate, the black from the mixture of manganese and copper oxide, the yellow from antimony (*a non-iron metal used to harden metals such as tin and lead*), and the white from tin oxide. Gilded tiles are generally made by painting the glazed tiles with gild or covering them with gold leaf before baking in a very low temperature.

- Under-glaze and ‘slip’ technique: In the Anatolian tile art, likewise in Islamic tile art, under-glaze technique is quite common. The technique may differ in terms of pattern and color in different periods. Although generally applied with an undercoat, it was applied without an undercoat in the Seljuk period. Both the tiles of square and other geometric shapes and ceramic pots are formed and baked, then, their patterns are applied during or after coating and kilned in low temperature. Frequently turquoise or transparent glaze may be applied. The colors of the pattern which remains under the glaze are generally dark blue, purple, turquoise and black. Red, purple and green shades were used in the Ottoman period.

‘Slip’ technique is an under-glaze technique. However, according to researches by Aslanapa, Yetkin, Altun and Öney, ‘slip’ is actually an undercoat which is applied onto red ceramic clay. While a thick coat is applied, the patterns can be embossed. Sometimes it can be given colors. A thick ‘slip’ gives an embossed look to the patterns. After the application of the patterns with the ‘slip’ technique, the tile or ceramic is glazed with or without color, and kilned.



Picture 1: Glazed brick detail from the minaret of Konya İnce Minareli Medrese¹⁰

Picture 2: Tiles of Kubad-Abad Palace in Konya-Beyşehir, made with the luster technique: Resources state that besides various patterns, they contain human figures involved in different activities and servants concluding game parties and in preparation of banquets: The decorative motifs in Seljuk tiles, especially those with figures, receive their essence from the tradition of painting which dates back to Uygurs; The figure holds the elixir of life, which symbolizes heaven and immortality, in one hand and a pomegranate in the other. Picture: ¹¹

- Tiles with above-glaze and ‘luster’ technique: Prevalently employed in the Great Seljuk Period and employed in architectural structures in Anatolian Seljuks period, the ‘luster’ technique is an above-glaze technique. The mixture (*luster*), also called sheen, which is obtained by mixing metal oxides, silver and copper dust, is applied onto the patterned and kilned tile or ceramic of dull white. It is kilned again under low temperature. Baked metal oxide forms a film on the surface, which is thinner compared to the pattern. The glazes are, as usual, in turquoise, cobalt blue, green, and eggplant purple. The tiles of Kubad-Abad Palace (*Konya-Beyşehir*) are made with the ‘luster’ technique. Technically, although ‘monochromatic gilded ceramics’ can be defined in the scope of the above-glaze technique, monochromatic tiles form a different group and are considered in that group.

- Embossed tile and ceramics: Employed in few structures and sarcophagi in Anatolia, this technique is based on shaping the tile while the clay is soft and forming patterns and inscriptions

thereon. The technique may or may not involve an undercoat; yellowish white is also used in this technique along with turquoise, dark blue, purple, and green. It is mostly seen in inscriptions in the Seljuk and Principality periods.

- Tile mosaic technique, which is known to be invented by Anatolian Seljuks, is generally used in the interior. Mainly used in narrow surfaces, the technique was chiefly employed in architectural structures such as domes, dome passages, rims, vaults, and arches; in connecting sections or in bumpy and bent surfaces. The main color is turquoise. Also used are dark blue, eggplant purple and black. The patterns are worked in a geometrical order in this technique which developed depending on the architecture, and surfaces multiplied with the complex effect of polygons that lie inside the other gain a mosaic character. Every single segment on the pattern is worked on separately; the pattern is completed by bringing together with inlay work on the plaster and by casting plaster from their backs. Tile mosaic technique was employed in some parts of Bursa Yeşil Cami (*Mosque*) and Türbe (*Tomb*).

- Minai tiles: In ‘minai’ tiles, meaning enameled in Persian, a grayish yellow and fine-grained, hard tile clay is used. Minai technique takes a long procedure to employ and uses both the under-glaze and the above-glaze techniques. Since it is a difficult technique, examples are scarce. They are encountered in Konya Alaeddin Palace in Anatolian Seljuks Period.

- ‘Cuerda Seca’ (*means dry thread in Spanish*) technique, seen in wall tiles in Anatolia from 15th to mid-16th centuries, is the application of either wax and vegetable oil or pasting dry threads, as made in Spain (*the art of ceramic reached Spain during Arab invasion and was improved there*), to prevent different colors of glaze from getting mixed during baking. During baking the threads burn, oil and wax melt and burn and the boundaries of colored glaze remain intact. In

Anatolia, colored glaze was used in Bursa and in Istanbul.

- Since sgraffito technique is a kind of scraping technique, the pattern is made with or without an undercoat by scraping on the ceramic with a sharp pointed tool. It was widely used. In Anatolia, it was a technique used only on ceramics in Anatolian Seljuks period.

- In the streaming color technique which is an above-glaze technique, a mixture of copper, manganese and cobalt oxide dusts are applied on kilned, coated and glazed ceramics. In this technique, generally colors such as yellow, brown, eggplant violet, blue, and green are obtained from leaking colors resulting from dusts that melt during baking.

Traditional Iznik Tile and Ceramic Art

When it comes to Anatolian Ottoman period tiles, Iznik and Kütahya tiles are worth mentioning. After its conquest by Orhan Gazi in 1331, Iznik became the Ottoman center of ceramic production. Until its brightest period in the 16th century, hundreds of tile and ceramic ateliers were developed. The city met the tile needs of Ottoman Palace, and in terms of ceramics, many ceramic ateliers, large and small produced and even exported many types of dishes and pots. At its highest point, especially the patterns made with an embossed coral red Iznik tile and ceramic art became known worldwide, and gained a fair reputation. It is doubtless that “masters in Kütahya were assigned with the provision of tiles to the palace, too, likewise, those of Iznik.. The Godman ewer, an obvious product of metal art bearing the date of 1510 and signature of Abraham of Kütahya, shows that a lighter shade of blue was used at the time instead of dark blue”.¹² “The ewer by Abraham of Kütahya is an example of the non-Muslim art patronage outside the palace.”¹³

The second period of archaeological excavations by Aslanapa, Yetkin, and Altun between 1981 and 1988 on Iznik tile kilns, and the first excavations in 1963-64 show that the first ceramics made by the Ottomans in Iznik were made of red clay and bore a monochromatic glaze. Following a preliminary kilning, the preparation of lightly embossed patterns (*slip*) with a white undercoat and a colored glaze and kilning again is typical of Iznik tiles and ceramics. In fact, this technique had been used by Seljukian masters of ceramic since well before the 13th century, but it gave its most beautiful examples with Ottomans, with developments made especially in Iznik.



Picture 3a and b: Leaf rimmed plate in “Rumi-Hatayî” style (Baba Nakkaş (‘dervish Who embroiders the decors’) style: in the early period of Iznik production. The ceramic made around 1480 was influenced by Ottoman metal art.¹⁴

Before the Ottoman period Iznik tiles and ceramics were decorated with curled branches, stylized flowers, and Rumî patterns (as an extension of the term ‘Rumî Seljuks’ after the Seljuks settled in Anatolia, the general name for the patterns brought by the Turks from the Central Asia, such as patterns showing animals and animals in combat, examples of Anatolian Turkish art such as lotus and palmette motifs) in blue, green, dark and light brown. These are on the one hand linked with Seljukian ceramics, and on the other hand they reflect early Ottoman ceramics, the center and distribution point of which is Iznik. Their relation with the Seljukian ceramic is that they had black decoration under turquoise glaze.

On the other hand, the bird figures on Iznik ceramics are quite similar to those of Kubad-Abad tiles in Beyşehir. A unique characteristic of Iznik tiles is no two tiles or ceramics are alike. The patterns, in addition to those inspired by metal art, consist of simplified plants, stalks, leaves, and seeds of wild flowers. Also quite noticeable are traditional patterns such as ferns, fan-shaped leaves, rosettes, lilies, clusters, simplified bird and fish patterns, even human face figures, and rosette decorations, which were formed by threads circling around a thick pattern in the center and were obviously inspired by metal art.

From the 14th until the mid-15th century, Iznik ceramics, which met the needs of the domestic market and were exported, portray a different creative work in each piece that bears the mark of their master’s free brushstrokes. After the conquest of Istanbul, until the end of 15th century and in the 16th century, Iznik ceramics and tiles represented a very advanced style with one and two-colored patterns and a simple technique. This was because the Ottoman Palace encouraged domestic ceramic production which will take place of Chinese porcelains, and a blue-white period started in the production of Iznik tiles. The clay of blue-white ceramics, which resemble porcelain, was very hard. These ceramics evolved much under the reign of Murat II. Significant examples are the tile works in Bursa and Edirne Muradiye Mosques, window pediments of the court of Edirne Üç Şerefeli Cami (Mosque), and the blue-white Iznik plate with a predominant blue, dated late 15th century in Çinili Köşk (Tiled Manor). The prototypes with wavy rims were inspired by Ming porcelains. As Aslanapa states, in the first excavations of Iznik ceramic kilns in 1963, many Iznik tiles were unearthed in blue-white decoration some of which have rabbit and fish patterns.

The decoration style of the Seljuk period, that is the thin black spiral branches drawn under a

turquoise glaze, forms a separate group in the style of the blue-white period. Whereas the decanter with a broken neck dated 1529 in Godman collection is decorated with thin spiral branches and in light blue shades, which Godman named 'Kütahya', before this date Iznik ceramics saw the addition of turquoise to the thin spiral branched blue-white group, sometimes the color is also used with other blue-white motifs. In a plate dated 1525-1540 and where turquoise is used besides blue, patterns of tulips, hyacinths, and carnations were observed. This decoration was predominant in the following development.



Picture 4 : Designed with under-glaze technique, the plate has Chinese grape cluster patterns on the borders, the blue-white centre of the plate changed to lively flower colors. Dated 1560-80 the central pattern of the plate contains roses, carnations with curled stalks along with a lotus bunch added a green and embossed red vivaciousness to the plate that is distant from Chinese influence. Victoria & Albert Museum.

Picture 5 :The stemmed washtub dated 1535-60 is characterized by intertwined blue and turquoise colors. The pattern resembles the pattern of the mosque lamp by Musli dated 1549. British Museum.

Picture 6 :The plate is dated 1570-90. It is an example made with red "slip" among renowned Iznik tiles.

Blue-white colors diminished; embossed red is the predominant color on the plate. In addition light and dark purple, emerald green are used. Victoria & Albert Museum. (Pictures 4, 5, 6 : photo: S.Satir)

In a fragment of a broad blue-white plate unearthed in the excavations of a ceramic kiln in Iznik, little spots of red were witnessed for the first time. This is a trial piece on which an embossed pale and dull red was applied. A piece which shows the addition of other colors to the blue-whites is the lamp dated 1549 in the British Museum. It was donated by Kanuni Sultan Süleyman to Kubbet-ül Sahra in Jerusalem. The lamp bears not only the date but also the name of the master, Musli, who made it.



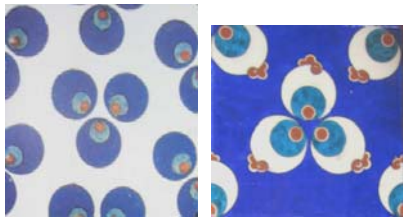
Picture 7: The explanation under the lamp dated 1549 in British Museum: It was a lamp hung under the dome, there were passages from the Koran and sayings (hadith) of Prophet Mohammad: "Believers in the mosque are like fish living in water, false believers in the mosque are just like birds in the cage." The lamp was signed by "Musli" and dedicated to the patron of its maker, "Eşrefzade Rumi".¹⁵

Picture 8: Dipper decorated with patterns of cypress, hyacinth, and carnation. A typical decoration of 16th century Iznik tiles.

Picture 9: Flowery border made in the second part of the 16th century. Blue-white, green and especially great amount of embossed coral red were used. (Pictures: 7, 8, and 9 British Museum; photo: S.Satir)

Simpler than on other lamps the *rumî* and flowery decorations are in blue, turquoise and black. Made in Iznik kilns, this lamp signals the transition to Iznik ceramics, which were mistakenly grouped under Damascus group due to the existence of similar tiles in monuments there. The period when Iznik ceramics are considered to be in their peak is from the beginning of the 16th to the end of 17th centuries. A very special coral red is the most significant character of this period. It was first used in mid-16th century and disappeared after being used for about fifty years. The color was not encountered in any ceramic save in Iznik tiles and ceramics.

A significant ceramic group of the period is decorated with embossed colors, dominantly white, on a background of pink, brown, gray, and sometimes dark green.



Picture 10a: "Plate with chintamani motif, ca. 1580-1585. Diam.: 34.5 cm (13 ½ in.). Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon"¹⁶

P. 10b: Chintamani motif, new (S. Satir)

These multi-colored ceramics which resemble an orchard bear naturalist patterns including carnations, tulips, daisies, hyacinths, roses, violets, lilies, pomegranate flowers, plum flowers, vines, artichokes, and pomegranates. In addition, a pattern called 'çintemani', which is made of patterns defined as tiger lines and leopard spots (*It is a Buda symbol in China and Japan called 'Tama', it has the appearance of two rows of clouds over a triangle of three eccentric circles brought tangentially together*), bulrush leaves, cloud and fish scale motifs, flowery lockets,

braided ribbons, sailboats, symbols between flowers are among frequently observed patterns.

Ceramic objects of use that were produced include bottle-like long necked jugs, decanters, bowls with or without lids, plates with or without pedestals, handled cups that look like beer tankards, dippers, cups, carafes, ewers, trays, jars, inkstands, wide bowls, washtubs with pedestals, candlesticks, mosque lamps, hung balls, coffee tables, tilework Chimneypieces. In addition, animal and bird motifs and scenes that show animals in combat were borrowed from Turkish miniature and metal art to provide a richness of pattern.

Pieces from this most prevalent period of Iznik ceramics were mistakenly labeled as from 'Rhodes':

"Ottoman ceramic became the most expensive collection piece when Europe was obsessed with antiques in the second part of 19th century. The significance of European interest here is that ignorant European scientists of the last century bequeathed us a confusion"... "Purchase by Musée de Cluny in Paris of a collection containing 532 ceramics, all of which contain an embossed red color scheme, turned attentions to Rhodes. These ceramics were collected by the French Consul, Salzman in Rhodes"... "There does not exist a published evidence showing the production of frit (a vitreous glaze containing silica) in Rhodes in the 16th or the 17th century."¹⁷

Development and the spreading of ceramic production at the beginning of the 16th century and nationwide spreading of ceramic production under the reign of Yavuz Sultan Selim made development of smaller pots possible. In this context, a group of ceramics, known by the name of 'Baba Nakkaş', and best examples of which were given under the reign of Beyazıt, were intended for Ottoman courtiers, but gave signs of a nationwide marketing in the future. In but a score

of years, in addition to orders from the palace, Iznik ceramics opened to a greater market. Accordingly even neat compositions in ‘Rumî-Hatayi’ style (*decoration consisting of Rumî patterns along with stylized leaf and flower motifs from Far East*) which is dominant in ‘Baba Nakkaş’ work left their place to freer compositions. The tendency to market Iznik tiles to public lead to the development of some ceramics designed for the low-income group. These receptacles were mainly rounded dippers, decanters and little pots. While former bud patterns turned to blooms in the hands of Kara Memi, chief muralist of the palace in the 19th century, the patterns of publicized decanters were simpler. But serving to a larger market led to harder work by the producers, and apprentices doing pattern work. Kilns were full and this led to more economical production. This development led to an increase in the income of tile and ceramic ateliers, while to a slow but steady decrease in the high level ceramic art.

A Contemporary Evaluation of Traditional Iznik Ceramics from the Point of View of Industrial Product Design

Iznik ceramics is a significant Turkish handcraft. Instead of letting them rest in museums or letting them be labeled as if they are of Rhodes, Damascus or Iran origin, it is significant to provide sustainability to them. With this viewpoint, ‘Iznik Tiles and Ceramics Foundation’ has undertaken this important task. The foundation continues its researches and develops the matter in terms of production by setting up businesses. What’s more, Iznik Ceramics and patterns are taught and reinterpreted at departments of traditional handcrafts in faculties of fine arts.

Iznik Ceramics were taught in a semester in the scope of ‘Fashion and Home Accessories Design’ course, an elective on clothing and home

accessories, at Industrial Product Design Department (IPDD), ITU. As part of the education, collaboration was made with the industry. In this context, we worked in collaboration with Iznik Tile and Ceramic Enterprise (IT&CE), the manufacturing enterprise of ‘Iznik Tiles and Ceramics Foundation’. The directly resembling, facsimile copies made by IT&CE and newer examples that were improved with small nuances were inspected. Experts in the enterprise were interviewed. While the experts could approve of their own designs developed with but little nuances, they disapproved works with many improvements and for daily use in which patterns were quite simplified. They believed these fairly improved works would eventually deform Iznik ceramics. Their thoughts were reasonable. At any rate, improving traditional Iznik ceramics with little nuances should not be the task of product designers but that of the professionals of the field and of the graduates from ‘traditional handcrafts departments’. Nevertheless, working in collaboration resulted in softening the often over-prudent conduct of experts and researching new ideas. Thus venturing a few steps beyond the suggestions by the experts of the enterprise, modern ceramics of everyday use were produced inspired by Iznik ceramics. These works could be the products which makes one think that they are Turkish designs and sold in current domestic and international markets without doing any harm to the traditional character of Iznik ceramics.

Conclusion

Iznik tiles and ceramics are among the most marvelous specimens of Turkish traditional art and will remain so. In order to preserve and keep them alive:

1. With methodical researches, exact copies of existing Iznik tiles and ceramics may be

produced as rare pieces. The pieces in museums may be improved as works of this era and new pieces may be kept in modern museums and provided sustenance.

- Existing ceramics may be improved with little nuances and reinterpretations without changing the essence. They can be sold in domestic and international markets, thus Turkish traditional art can be promoted by distribution and usage.



Picture 11: Tile ceramic dipper developed, produced and sold by Iznik Tile and Ceramic Enterprise, 2006. The enterprise manufactures ceramic floor tiles, wall panels, plates, bowls, vases, ceramic trinkets etc.¹⁸

Picture 12: Rosette Plate; the project consists of circles made by sailboat motifs in opposite directions. Design: Ali Topbaş-I.T.U.

Picture 13: Çintemani Salt and Pepper Shaker: It is a four-piece set consisting of salt and pepper containers and top and bottom napkin holders. Upon many trials, we resolved on a simple use of the spot motifs of çintemani pattern. Design: Sıla Yiğit-I.T.U.

Picture 14: Plate with Carnations: Cardboard model at project level shows that the red colored plate is for salads, appetizers, etc. Design: Gülşen Sızıyık-I.T.U.

Picture 15: Tulip Vase was designed with an advanced level of simplification. Experts thought this work has strayed from the subject. But in terms of product design it is important that it made reference to tulip. [Could tulip petals be worked on it as if it was a giant tulip? Or could it be decorated only with Iznik tulip patterns? Does not working with similar questions require a product designer's viewpoint?] Design: Çiğdem Kaya-I.T.U.

- As experimented at IPDD, ITU, it is believed that typical air and characteristics of Iznik tiles may be adapted to new products with a new understanding and interpretation. Designing through such reinterpretation and transference of characteristics may not sound right. But it is not an idea to brush aside when it is considered as a measure against degenerate products in the market. As can be seen with a market research, there exist ceramics in the market, which are degenerate or tending to degenerate and not produced by a master and resemble the products from other countries. These products aim profit in a short time and they do not improve but spoil the tradition.

Designs to be made for modern daily use under the guidance of experts should not be contested with original products, but they should sustain the identity of a traditional character that makes people think about their originals.

Endnotes

- [1] Cooper, 1978, p: 6
- [2] Yatman, 1942, p: 9,10
- [3] Eczacıbaşı, 1997, p: 1636
- [4] Şahin, 1983, p: 9

- [5] Eczacıbaşı , 1997, p:1637
- [6] Yetkin, 1986, p: 12, 14
- [7] Aslanapa,Yetkin, Altun, 1989, p: 25-28
- [8] Aslanapa,Yetkin, Altun, 1989 p:25-27
- [9] Öney, (no date), p: 9-12
- [10] Öney, 1978, p: 79
- [11] Arık, 2000, p: 139
- [12] Aslanapa, Yetkin, Altun, 1989, p:26
- [13] Atasoy, Raby, 1989, p: 98
- [14] Atasoy, Raby, 1989, p: 78, pictures: 58, 273
- [15] Atasoy, Raby, 1989, p: 135, 138
- [16] Denny, 2004, p: 141, 142
- [17] Atasoy, Raby, 1989 , p: 69
- [18] Production of 'İznik Tiles and Ceramics Corporation'

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- Photograph of the dipper was taken with permission from its producer, 'Iznik Tiles and Ceramics Corporation', an enterprise of Iznik Tiles and Ceramics Foundation.
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