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HISTORICAL ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY TURKISH GRAPHIC DESIGN

The roots of contemporary Turkish Graphic Design, illustration, typography and graphic signs are investigated in this work. Turkish history is very long, wide and related with many cultures. Empires of Central Asia, Seljuk Empire and Ottoman Empire are the past of contemporary Turks. Miniatures for illustrations, old alphabets and calligraphic examples for typographic designs, old signs and ottoman period tugras became contemporary graphic signs, thus they are considered to be the roots of Modern Turkish Graphic Design. In this article, relations of contemporary Turkish Graphic Design with historical examples will be discussed to retrace the evidence of original roots existence.

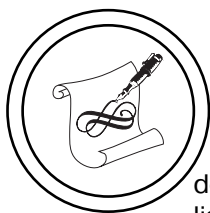**Keywords: Turkish Graphic Design; miniature; tamga; calligraphy; tugra.**

Introduction

Turkish Art History has an eclectic and complex structure due to the fact that the Turks established many different states in history and had nomadic life style. Although 16 different Turkish states were established in the past, there are still many states of Turkish ethnic origin with different names. Therefore, Turkish Art History is associated and explained with many different cultures in a wide geography. According to general approach of Turkish art historians, History of Turkish Art originated from Central Asia artifacts [1, P. 1]. Turkish Art was influenced by culture of Central Asia, China, India, Northern Europe and also by Roman-Byzantine and Arab culture. Nowadays spread of communication networks caused the impact of distant countries such as the United States of America.

The History of Turkish Graphic Design has similar characteristics with Turkish Art History. The first examples that can be used as a source for contemporary Turkish graphic designers can be found in nomadic tents in Central Asia, caravanserais in the Middle East and manuscripts in Anatolia. Throughout the ages, graphic abstractions used by Turks such as alphabets, signs and emblems, pennants and flags etc. provides a large visual archive for today's graphic designers.

If contemporary Turkish graphic designers have sufficient intellectual background they can reflect this historical experience in their

designs. Especially after the establishment of the Turkish Republic formal graphic design education was developed and much more designers began to use historical background.

The aim of the research

In this article relations of contemporary Turkish Graphic Design and historical examples will be discussed to retrace the evidence of original roots existence.

The results of the research conducted

Comparative Descriptions for Design Roots

When historical background is examined, it is not possible to find design works that have exactly the same content as today's definitions, but design aims and techniques make some visual artworks as roots for graphic design. Therefore, definitions of graphic terminology are important to show similarity between historical examples and today's graphic design works. Today some terms related to graphic design are as follows.

Symbol: Letter or sign designed to represent an activity, idea or object. Symbols can be pictorial or abstract and can be utilized within a cultural, social, political or commercial context [2, P. 187].

Emblem: Icons created with abstract or objective images or letters to provide identity to organizations, producing products or services... [3, P. 194].

Logotype: Letters or word formed into distinctive and unified form; can often provide the basis for a company TRADEMARK, brand or CORPORATE IDENTITY; often abbreviated to 'logo' [2, P. 124].

Trademark: Identification device, in the form of a SYMBOL or LOGOTYPE, used to identify and/or unify the product/services provided by a particular manufacturer or supplier [2, P. 192].

Typographer: (a) In UK, a designer who specializes in the use of TYPE for visual communication purposes, highly skilled in TYPEFACE selection and specification. (b) In US, more often applied to the skilled operator who sets type using a type composition system (a 'compositor' in the UK) [2, P. 196].

Now let's look at some terms related to the subject used in Turkish Art History.

Tamga: 1. The tool for printing an image on something, 2. The image printed with this tool... [4, P. 11].

Ongun: 1. Any natural object or event, totem, such as an animal, tree or wind which is regarded as sacred in primitive societies. 2. Arma/Armorial Bearings [5, P. 1687]. Sacrificed animals or totems depicting horses, deer, mountain goats, bulls, tigers, wolves, waterfowl, birds of prey were motifs for onguns. Sometimes, because of the religious beliefs of nomads, zoomorphic motifs, mythical face, imaginary, various organ creatures appeared as a result of heraldic or totemic meanings given to some motifs, they could be pictograms or phonograms with stature or individual stamps, or even as in Orkhon Inscriptions [4, P. 15].

Hat/Calligraphy: It means line, writing, decree, writing of sultans and fundamental rules. Also Hattat in Arabic is a person who has very good handwritting; good calligraph or a person who is skillful in writing [6, P. 13].
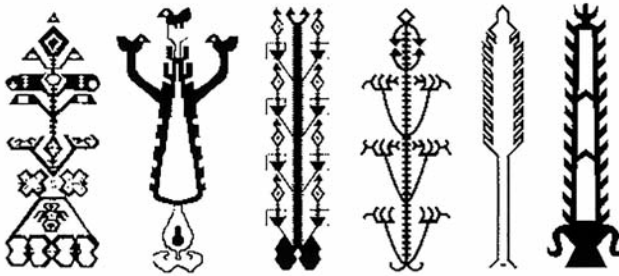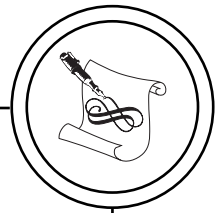
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Fig. 1. Tree of life figures in traditional Turkish fabrics

Tuğra: These are used by Ottoman sultans as a kind of signature, arranged in a specific form of emblem or written signs. They are known to be used before the adoption of Islam [7, P. 1824].

If we think according to these terms, Tamga, Ongun and Tuğra are very similar with symbol, emblem and logotype. There are Turkish graphic designers who have realized this relationship and used it in their work today. The following example shows how the figure called 'Tree of Life' is used in Central Asia and Anatolia. 'Tree of Life' figure is interpreted and transformed by graphic designer Mengü Ertel in 1989 into the logo of Ministry of Culture in Turkey (fig. 1–3).

Another example in this context is the use of Makıli calligraphy, which is a kind of Arabic alphabet used by the Turks in today's designs. Makıli were interpreted by famous Turkish designer Emin Barın in the 1970s in various designs. One of the newest examples is the work of designer Bülent Erkmen for the Frankfurt Book Fair logo in 2008 (fig. 4–6).

Fig. 2. Tree of life relief at the marble crown gate of Sivas Gökmedrese

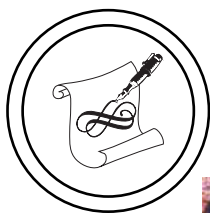Fig. 3. Tree of life is in the center of the logo of Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey

Fig. 4. Fountain inscription of Eyyubid Period. Sultan Süleyman Mosque in Hasankeyf (A. D. 1407)

Fig. 5. Four times 'Allah' in Latin script performed by Emin Barın

There is another relationship between illustration and miniature. Miniatures can be thought as book illustrations of the past. The definitions are as follows.

Illustration: 1. Explanation with examples, pictures. 2. Painting; a picture written in a book or presented with things spoken by a speaker [8, P. 737].

Nakış/Miniature: Miniature is the name given to illustrative pictures of the text of the manuscript books. The person who makes these pictures is called nakkaş [9, P. 78].
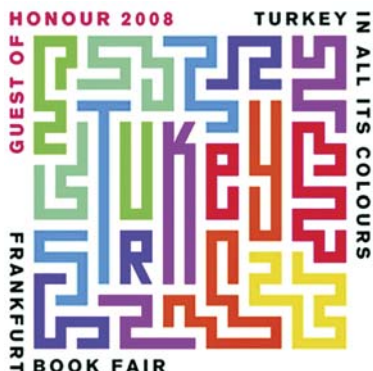
There is no difference between miniature and illustration in terms of function and purpose. Today, Turkish illustrators are able to use the miniature effect appropriately in some of their works (fig. 7–9).

Yurdaer Altıntaş, performer of Cazular illustration (Fig. 8), gave an interview entitled 'A Chat with

Fig. 6. A work of Bülent Erkmen for the Frankfurt Book Fair logo (2008)

Fig. 7. Sultan Ahmet III — A miniature performed by Levni (created around the 1st half of 18th century)
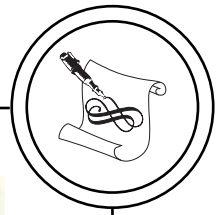
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Fig. 8. Cazular/Walpurgisnacht — An illustration performed by
Yurdaer Altıntaş (1970s)

Yurdaer Altıntaş' to Bülent Erkmen in 1987. It was published in Grafik Sanatı Magazine and Yurdaer Altıntaş explained his aproach in creation of illustrations: 'Publishing was the only way to keep something alive that had disappeared from the screen, and to make survive from one generation to the next. Like books, calenders, cards. {…} that is why I painted the figures, and tried to give them a different taste without destroying their authenticity. Some of my figures are really different from the originals, but you won't think them queer. I didn't leave it to change when I worked on them; I read every publication about the period. I studied the Karagöz figures in Ottoman miniatures and Hittite reliefs.' [10, P. 56].

Conclusions

The History of Turkish Graphic Design has a rich legacy spread over a long history and as a result of nomadic lifestyle its geography is huge. In this legacy there are many different parts such as alphabets used by the Turks (Göktürk, Uighur, Arab and Latin), state and sultan symbols and elaborate miniatures in manuscripts. These works may not be accepted by some design critics as example of graphic design. However, these works were primarily made for communication purposes rather than decoration.
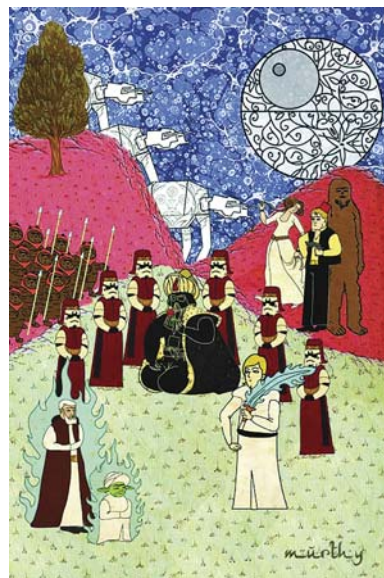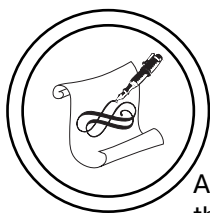

Fig. 9. Illustration for Star Wars movie by Murat Palta (2012)

According to definitions of terms, the priority of communication objectives puts that works into the field of graphic design.

Today's Turkish graphic designers make use of this legacy from time to time. It is important to note that the designer does not use these works directly and interprets them according to the age in which they lived. The most successful examples of historical legacy come from ideas of these intellectual designers. The more contemporary graphic designers increase their intellectual background, the more they are able to reach and interpret historical background.

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У роботі досліджуються витоки сучасного турецького графічного дизайну на прикладі ілюстрацій, типографіки та графічних знаків. Турецька історія дуже довга, багата і пов'язана з багатьма культурами. Імперії Середньої Азії, Сельджуків і Османської імперії — це минуле сучасних турків. Мініатюри для ілюстрацій, стара абетка та каліграфічні приклади для типографського дизайну, старі знаки, тугри османського періоду стали сучасними графічними знаками. Таким чином, вони вважаються першими прикладами сучасного турецького графічного дизайну. У статті розглянуто відносини сучасного турецького графічного дизайну з історичними прикладами з метою виявлення свідоцтва існування оригінальних коренів.

Ключові слова: турецький графічний дизайн; мініатюра; тамга; каліграфія; тугра.