Transformations of the Turkish Headscarf: An Exploration of the Political Meaning, Socio-Economic Impact, Cultural Influence, and the Art and Craft of the Hijab

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Transformations of the Turkish Headscarf: 
An Exploration of the Political Meaning, Socio-Economic Impact, 
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ABSTRACT

The wearing of hijab by Muslim women is a divisive issue around the world. The history of veiling by Turkish women is important because it is so controversial and because of its global relevance in contexts of economics, politics, and culture. The headscarf, as a form of art and power, has significant influence on the freedoms of women. The goal of this research project is to elevate Western understanding of Turkish women’s headscarf veiling as it is located in economic, political, cultural, and socio-historical contexts and as it intersects with artistic influence and design. This research on the contradictions and debates surrounding the headscarf provides a better understanding of the diversity of thought among women in the Republic of Turkey.

This shared history and complexity is embedded in the art and culture of Turkey and is a unifying force around a divisive issue. The story of hijab and the headscarf begins during the 600 years of Ottoman rule, sees huge changes in the Kemalist era, and continues in popular debates today. This project focuses on the history of the headscarf as a form of artistic and political voice in Turkey. It examines the relationship between the headscarf and other forms of Turkish art and their influences are introduced. It also serves as a foundation for the author's production and presentation of related scarf designs, woodcut panels, acrylic panels, digitally-manipulated papercut designs on wood, and public art installations. This paper and the related artistic productions explore the unifying power of art in complex cultural and political environments.
INTRODUCTION

Across Muslim communities, headscarves are symbols of religious devotion and feminine modesty. The wearing of hijab by Muslim women has become a more divisive issue across the globe. Both in predominantly Muslim nations and in those where the Muslim population is a minority, there are increasing debates about the wearing of hijab in the public sphere. These debates have global and national implications, and the controversies around the headscarf are especially profound and complex in the Republic of Turkey, dating back to its Ottoman history.

Understanding the history of the headscarf in Turkey provides a window into the very complex worlds of politics, economics, social values, and religious beliefs as they impact women across the Middle East and the world. This rich history is interwoven with the cultural values of society as they are reflected in the art and traditions of its people.

The headscarf is not only a religious symbol, but it is also a tool of liberation for some and a representation of oppression for others. Wearing the headscarf has created opportunities for some women and, at the same time, has created barriers for others. Researching these contradictions and providing the background of the debates offers a better understanding of the diversity of thought among women, in this case among women in the Republic of Turkey. This shared history and complexity is embedded in the art and culture and is a unifying force around a divisive issue. This story of hijab and the headscarf begins within the 600 years of the Ottoman rule, sees huge changes in the Kemalist era, and continues to be popular debates today. The research and art presented in this paper hope to provide a deeper understanding of the value of the headscarf as a social, religious, and political symbol, while also demonstrating its cultural and artistic connection to other forms of Turkish and Ottoman art. The goal of this research
project is to create an opportunity for Western audiences to better understand the history of the headscarf and to appreciate its influence through new art applications. This research project introduces the headscarf controversy in a global context, provides a history of the Ottoman/Turkish headscarf, details the artistic connection between the headscarf and other forms of Ottoman/Turkish Art, and closes with the creation of new art objects that celebrate and value of the headscarf.
LITERATURE REVIEW

THE HIJAB CONTROVERSY ACROSS THE WORLD

The Islamic headscarf has been at the center of controversy around women’s rights, religious freedom, and secularism. The wearing of the headscarf has been a part of debates within nations where Muslims are the religious majority and in countries where immigration has created an Islamic religious minority. Most of this research paper narrows that debate to the Ottoman and Turkish struggle around veiling, hijab, and the headscarf. That story alone is a struggle between secularization and religious freedom and the continuous redefinition of women’s rights in an always-developing political, social, and religious system. The headscarf is not the only garment to incite controversy. The fez, for instance, was banned for men under the Turkish Hat Law of 1923 and is on the long list of clothes that were exploited by rulers and governments to construct identities around “gender, class, occupation, age, religious affiliation and rank” (Nereid 2011, p. 707).

In order to understand the controversies around the headscarf, it is important to understand its symbolic value in the debate between modernization and religious values. That conflict, which has been taken up in countries with a majority of its population practicing Islam, include the debate in Turkey, where the headscarf has been banned in certain public settings until recently and in Iran, where the headscarf and loose fitting attire are obligatory. Arguments surrounding the headscarf have also been strong in countries where the Muslim population is a minority. Belgium, France, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, and Latvia have had debates leading to the ban on some forms of religious attire, especially focusing on the elimination of garments that cover the face. Government focus on secularization or on increased
integration of religion has led to a greater emphasis on women’s religious attire, specifically granting prominence to the symbolism of Muslim women’s religious attire.

**Western Feminist Approaches**

A strong narrative tied to the Islamic headscarf is the application and criticism of Western Feminist approaches. In one version of this approach, Muslim women who wear the hijab are seen as facing oppression and patriarchal subjugation, and the headscarf is seen as a barrier to gender equity, religious freedom, and political access (Fredette 2015, pp.48-50, Byng 2010, pp.109-111, Sloan 2011, pp. 218-231, Abdurraqib 2006, pp. 55-56, Ruby 2005, pp.54-56, Brung and Fleischmann 2015, pp. 20-24). The headscarf is a symbol of women’s oppression and the arguments banning hijab are tied to this interpretation of feminism in a number of European countries, including France, Belgium, and the Netherlands (Fredette 2015, pp. 48-50, Brung and Fleischmann, pp. 20-24, Wayland 1997, pp.545 and 554-556).

Where the headscarf is mandatory, such as in Iran, this approach may have stronger standing. However, in national settings where wearing the Islamic headscarf is a choice, the approach may have less merit (Abdurraqib 2006, p. 55). The fact that the use of this argument is strongest in European countries with large numbers of Muslim immigrants suggests that is may be more assimilationist then diversity seeking and supporting. A more multicultural approach instead of a state feminist agenda is recommended (Siim and Skjeie 2008, p. 323).

The arguments for religious freedom are set aside as religiosity is seen as a cultural artifact and as not American or European (Abdurraqib 2006, p.57). According to Robert Carle, hijab, more than any other symbol, “forces on Westerners the otherness of Islam” and “veiling makes women’s bodies a political force in the resistance to egalitarian forces of Western
modernity (Carle 2004, p. 63). Veiling creates a powerful identity for women, which makes a “political statement against Western modernism” (Carle 2004, p. 63). The fear or discomfort around the Islamic headscarf is built around narratives that carry ethnocentric messages and, while seeking to protect women’s rights and freedoms, may be limiting because of their nationalistic and secularist leanings. The myths around hijab may, in fact, be a new form of Orientalism, objectifying women as exotic and oppressed and building on Islamophobia (Afshar 2008, p. 411-413, Ahmad 2008, pp. 99-101).

Interestingly, the religious complexities around the practice of covering or not covering by Muslim women are not integrated into the approach. Among women practicing Islam, the debates around interpretations of Islamic attire are somewhat ambiguous in that the type of covering and the application of the practices to both men and women is not universally agreed upon (Ali 2005, pp. 517-519). By reducing the debate to “Western” values and ignoring the cultural and religious values of women practicing Islam, this approach seeks to protect the rights of a group of women, while paying less attention to individual voices and differences (Rahmath, Chambers, Wakewich 2016, p. 34).

**Muslim Women’s Agency**

Another approach to the headscarf debate is the focus on women’s agency and adoption of a form of Islamic feminism (Amjad 2011, pp. 2-4, Jasperse, Ward, and Jose 2012, pp. 250-254, Fleischmann and Phalet 2016, pp.448-451, Rahmath, Chambers, and Wakewich 2016, pp. 34-36, Wayland 1997, pp. 554-558). In this approach, Muslim women are seen to exercise their own choice, and therefore their full rights, in wearing or not wearing the headscarf. Choice or agency in decision making is seen as the key to empowering women in the political, economic, and social spheres.
This narrative highlights the increasing number of younger Muslim women who are choosing to wear the headscarf (Ali 2005, pp. 515-525). As women in their late teens and early twenties choose to wear religious attire, even when older generations in their family do not, they readopt an identity from which they have been separated. The wearing of headscarves by Turkish college students and by second-generation immigrants to the USA are examples of this practice (Ali 2005, p. 515). The embracing of hijab is largely motivated by ethnic identity and its value as a social construct for immigrants who may be distanced from their national and religious heritage (Ali 2005, p. 516). Women choosing the wear the headscarf may, in fact, see it as empowering and a strong part of their cultural and religious identity (Rahmath, Chambers, and Wakewich 2016, pp.34-36, Bekmann Al-Wazni 2015, pp. 325-327, Dunand Zimmerman 2015, pp. 146-147). The adoption of hijab may be an act of metamorphosis for the wearer and act as a tool for agency and visibility (Tarlo 2007, p. 131).

**Racism and Discrimination**

Culture, faith, and gender play a significant role in the “leadership and responses to racism” by minority Muslim communities (Ho and Dreher 2009, p. 114). The bans on hijab in European countries have served to silence the voice of Muslim women and have removed them from the debates on gender, race, and religion (Ho and Dreher 2009, p. 114). The myths around hijab and the narratives around perceived oppression of veiling may themselves contribute to racism and discrimination for Muslims (Ho and Dreher 2009, p. 116). Those Muslims who report experiencing discrimination were more likely to commit to their religious and ethnic identities while at the same time separating from their new country and city (Fleischman and Phalet 2016, pp. 447-448). Racism and discrimination are themselves barriers to developing a deeper understanding of the Islamic headscarf and its symbolic meanings.
Western representations of Muslim women and their experiences on veiling often do not reflect their lived experiences (Al-Saji 2010, p. 877). The intricacies of veiling decisions are often not well articulated in these descriptions and may, in fact, be a reflection of patriarchal and discriminatory western narratives (Al-Saji 2010, p. 877-888). The political, social, and cultural symbolism of the Islamic headscarf within and outside of the religion require insight into the complexities of Islam and into the various public and private uses of veiling (Landorf and Pagan 2005, p.171). Veiling and hijab have many meanings in an array of contexts (Dunand Zimmerman 2015, p.145-147). The challenge of understanding the symbolism and the value of the headscarf in its political, social, economic, and cultural contexts is to embrace its complexities. This project attempts to view the headscarf through these numerous lenses, using the history of hijab in Turkey as an anchor. It is hoped that the project will provide Western audiences with a deeper understanding of the headscarf and an increased awareness of the messages it represents in art, culture, and society.

THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE HEADSCARF IN TURKEY

As the Ottoman Empire came to an end, the role of women in Muslim communities under the new Republic of Turkey changed significantly. Although wearing of hijab, or religious garments by women was not prohibited in the private sphere, they became increasingly discouraged in the public sphere. The types of religious attire worn by both men and women after the founding of the republic has also shifted over time. In Turkey, the headscarf symbolizes the clash between secularism and religiosity. It represents the struggle of the nation to socially, politically, and economically integrate women into the homogenous secular society that the Kemalist Modernization Project endorsed. The veil, the headscarf, and the carsaf; all forms of
hijab, serve as the symbols of women’s transition from home and the private space to the public space of work, political access, and full participation.

Under Ottoman rule, both women and men’s dress held important messages about social and economic roles. A woman’s style of dress was parallel to her male relatives and was based on the rank held by the family. The type of cloth, the color of the material, and the design of the outfit was all based on prescribed social expectations that evolved overtime, but held clear messages about the wearer (Lytle Courtier 1989, p. 71). Because women’s social access outside of the home was only through other women, there were different expectations for private dress and public dress. In the seclusion of the home, or harem, women wore elaborate dresses and headwear with embroidery, colorful textiles, and jewels, and in the public settings they wore various forms of the veil, which were purposefully plain (Lytle Courtier. 73, 76). When women entered the public sphere, where males who were non-family members might be present, they were expected to fully cover their faces and wear loose overcoats as a sign of modesty and religious devotion (Sancar 2007, pp. 59, 64). The veil and ferace, a loose, long tunic, was one example, and was usually black in color, and worn in lilac or pink silk by the well to do (Lytle Courtier, 1989, p. 76). (Table 1).

As Ottoman women were exposed to European fashion and textiles over different periods of time, they adopted styles, cloths, and colors that were brighter and often less modest (Boyar and Fleet 2010, pp.292-301). Periodically, statements by religious and political authorities were made about the modesty dress in public settings, especially as influences from the West crept in. For instance, women were prohibited from wearing increasingly form fitting outer clothing, or carsaf, in favor of looser fitting designs (Kavakci Islam 2010, p. 20, Zilfi 2011, p. 87). Punishment of violations of dress codes tied to modesty, social class identification, gender, and
religion included severe fines, expulsion from the country, beatings, and drownings for the violator potentially for their family members (Zilfi 2011, pp. 87-93).

**Table 1: Examples of Ottoman and Turkish Religious Attire**

The New Turkish Republic and the Influence of Secularism

The first major change to women’s accepted dress in public followed the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Societal acceptance of secularism rose with the formation of the new republic under the leadership of Turkey’s first President, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The context of the headscarf in Turkey had followed 600 years of Ottoman Seriat rule. It suddenly shifted with the Turkish Revolution and the end of World War I, wherein Ataturk and his leadership team focused on what they saw as a more modern society based on Western social and economic values (Perres 2016, p. xi). In the Kemalist ideal, women needed to enter the public sphere and contribute to the economic wealth of the new nation. In order to make this transition, they needed to move away from their traditional roles in their private spaces and participate more fully in public endeavors such as work and politics. One of the components of this transition was
to abandon traditional dress that separated them from the public sphere. Under Ataturk’s
direction, many related changes to Turkish society occurred, as he pushed for the secularism of
the state and culture.

Some of these changes included the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code as a replacement of
Islamic Law, the adoption of the Western calendar and Latin alphabet, and the introduction of a
family surname in 1924. A number of these primary points in modern Turkish history are
presented in Table 2. The most impactful transformations took place in the religious sectors, as
Ataturk abolished religious schools and established the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which
was created as a control of religion by the state. He also called for the replacement of the
religious fez with a hat for men and placed prohibitions on religious attire for men and women.
Religious dress was limited largely to mosques. Most significantly, Ataturk also strived for the
liberation of women in Turkey by encouraging women to enter the workforce, drive, and
eventually to vote (Perres 2012, p. 15).
The positive gender-based transformations led to greater economic and social access for women, but for some women hindered by Ataturk’s disapproval of religious attire. The *carsaf*, a black cloak or chador, and the face veil were no longer accepted as public attire for women except in specific religious settings. Women with traditional beliefs about public behavior were no longer comfortable exiting the home to participate in activities such as shopping. The change about expectations had come very quickly. The debate around hijab was liberating for some women, who preferred modern dress and a restriction on others, who preferred traditional dress. Eventually, the headscarf was banned by law in public employment and schools, further complicating access for women in this transitional period. Interestingly, when Ataturk and his wife Hatife Hanım were married, she wore a headscarf and *carsaf*. By the end of their marriage, which lasted two years, she wore no headscarf or *carsaf* and transitioned to more modern attire as a symbol of the new Kemalist ideology (Kavaci Islam, 2010, p. 20).
Living with the Bans: 1940s to the 1980s

New issues in the republic began to arise in the 1940s, as low-income members of the population including peasants and workers, who were the vast majority, began to grow dissatisfied with the government. This dissatisfaction stemmed from the lack of economic resources which resulted in low standards of living. For example, only “25 percent of Turkey’s 40,000 villages had electricity” — only 100 in 40,000 villages (Perres 2012, p. 17). The lack of resources and economic frustration fueled the debate over secularism throughout the 1950s and resulted in the first military coup in 1960.

During the 1970s there were two primary political parties: the liberal CHP or the Republican People’s Party and the conservative AP or Justice Party. Both parties were unable to secure political, social, and economic stability due to high levels of unemployment, uncontrollable inflation, and recurrent economic rises (Nevra Seggie 2011, p. 36). Such strains led to a rise in political violence. One of the most horrific politically inspired attacks occurred on May 1, 1977 when several gunmen open fired on protestors in Taksim Square in Istanbul. In total, approximately 1500 individuals died by 1979 due to political violence and during the entire 1970s, 5,000 individuals died, which led to yet another military coup (Perres 2010, p. 25). Secularism was increasingly challenged by the unequal distribution of and access to resources across Turkey. A number of political parties have drawn their power from disenfranchised lower income populations and protest continues to be a problem in a nation divided by inequality and debate around the application of secularist values.

Other forms of protest against secularism arose in the 1980s when some university students started wearing veils and long coats to show loyalty to Islam. Despite this, cultural pressure to not wear the carsaf, veil, or headscarf in public places, was solidified into law with
the institution of the 1981 decree banning headscarves for students by the National Security Council. This was further backed by the enactment of a headscarf ban in 1982 through Article 657 of the Federal Employees Law (Kavakci Islam 2010, p. 51). This meant that women were discouraged from wearing headscarves and prohibited from wearing them in public spheres such as universities, government organizations, and elected office. It also limited citizenship rights for basortulu kadinlar or “women who wear the headscarf” (Kavaci Islam 2010, p. 7).

The transformation of dress among women was primarily led by the elite, specifically the wives of upper-class men. However, although the ruling elite was satisfied with the changes to the Turkish Republic, many women rejected secularism or laiklile in Turkey. In fact, women resisted the movement to Western dress more than men at the onset, as men gave up the fez easily but many women did not adopt many of the changes that were encouraged of them. Consequently, this meant that women who continued to wear the headscarf remained out of the nation building process and remained mostly in the home, outside the public sphere (Kavaci Islam 2010, p. 7).

Furthermore, this also meant that women’s lives, bodies, and dress became symbolic of secularism in a way that men’s dress did not. It also led to the manifestation of the Turkish Republic’s modernization process as more about “appearance than content” (Kavaci Islam 2010, p. 38), due to the lack of emphasis on human rights, rule of law, democratization, and free market economics (Kavaci Islam 2010, p. 38).

The wearing of the headscarf in Turkey became reliant on gaps in class and status, and not necessarily on religious identity. Women wearing the headscarf were branded as traditional, “family girls” and were often rejected from participating in the public sphere where the most lucrative jobs are (Sayan-Cengiz2016, p. 6). Thus, overtime the hijab brought more economic
disparity and inequality than economic access and success for some. Because women who wore the headscarf were not allowed to have jobs in the public sector they did not have full political and economic voices. Additionally, they faced the threat of being fired, of criminal prosecution, or revocation of their Turkish citizenship if they did not adhere to headscarf bans.

**Hatice Babacan and the Impacts of Headscarf Bans on Higher Education**

The first major example of limited access in higher education due to the headscarf bans occurred in 1968. A young woman, named Hatice Babacan was the first woman to be expelled from a Turkish university for veiling. Her actions amassed a great deal of media attention. According to Richard Peres, her expulsion from Ankara University Faculty of Divinity in the March of 1968 "set an important precedent for universities' policies in dealing with veiled students" (Peres 2012, p. 20).

This type negative reaction to those wearing the headscarf in public spheres persisted for the next twenty years. The secular stance supported by the Kemalist party in the media further isolated the more traditional facets of the Muslim community and led to public protests. In the case of Babacan, a two-month media battle incited and over fifty students, "including ten headscarved students from the school and dozens of male students" (Peres 2012, p. 20) participated in protests and hunger strikes supporting her cause. She ultimately lost her arbitration and her expulsion was made permanent.

**Merve Safa Kavakci and Impacts of the Headscarf Bans on Political Access**

One of the most significant examples of the impact of the ban on scarves occurred in May of 1999. Merve Safa Kavakci, a newly elected Parliamentarian, entered Turkey’s Grand National Assembly wearing the headscarf. Even though she had worn her headscarf throughout the election process, Kavakci immediately faced the protests of 100 Parliamentarians. She saw her
action as an act of democracy and as empowerment of women wearing the headscarf, but many Turks, specifically secularist Turks, opposed her point of view. Her actions were seen as a form of provocation and defiance of the ideology tied to the Turkish Republic in 1923 and even against Turkish identity and national values by some. Kavakci was eventually stripped of her Turkish citizenship, ejected from her position in Parliament, lost the ability to participate in Turkish political life in the future, and permanently lost the support of her party (Peres 2012, p. 1).

For women working in the private sectors, circumstances were also difficult. Women who wore headscarves were regularly paid lower wages and even fired because they were not viewed as desirable employees. Not only were they excluded from the public sphere, but women with headscarves were also “excluded from employment in chain stores selling globally or nationally reputable brands” which meant that they were forced to work in family-run establishments or small-scale retail stores (Sayan-Cengiz 2016, p. 6). Women wearing headscarves were and continue to be limited to working in settings with little upward mobility or professional advancement.

Moving Away From Secularism

More recently, expectations surrounding the headscarf in Turkey have undergone another transformation. In 2010, the headscarf ban in universities was lifted following a successful abolition campaign led by the Justice and Development Party or AKP in Turkish. The abolition campaign was an active political effort to lift the existing bans on the headscarf. In 2013, the headscarf ban was lifted in the public sector and as of 2014, the headscarf is allowed in secondary education and high school (Sayan-Cengiz 2016, p. 11).
The current President of Turkey, Reccep Tayyip Erdogan is a member of the Islamist Leaning Justice and Development Party. As former prime minister and mayor of Istanbul, Erdogan has held increasing power in Turkey since the mid-1990s. A powerful leader like Ataturk has pushed for a less secularist society. His wife Emine and his adult daughters wear headscarves in public. Because of the headscarf ban’s abolition and the recent push away from secularism, a surge of what Gole calls “new-veilers” has begun. New-Veilers “claim to redefine modernity by engaging in a language of transformation. According to this portrayal, they are not only resisting the exclusionary aspects of the secular and Westernized public sphere to become more inclusive by asserting their religious and/or Islamist identity” (Sayan-Cengiz, 2016, p. 8). The recent shift in the debate around hijab in Turkey has added to the split between Kemalists and Islamists and added another layer of complication to the politics of the region.

Economic Impacts and the Headscarf

In order to understand the full impact of the headscarf on Turkish women, it is important to discuss related economic outcomes and issues. Historically, caring labor and economic access are key factors for Turkish women. Caring labor is voluntary and unpaid labor, usually completed by women in households or in specific industries such as child care, children’s education, nursing, and cleaning (Folbre 2001, p. 8). Unpaid caring labor, voluntary labor and paid household labor outside of them home have important positive impacts on the economic wellbeing of families, but these types of labor are often unrecorded and undervalued (Leuenberger 2005, pp. 401-403). Low income women in Turkey were able to contribute to the household budget because paid household labor was not considered work (White 1994, pp. 74, 121-122). The economic contribution of low-income women to the household was even important in the Ottoman period. For Muslim women, any work completed required that they not
have contact with males outside of their family. Home-based work, therefore, was a key source of income for women. Women could continue to provide household labor, including child care, while earning outside income for the family. This work took many forms, but was predominantly centered on the creation and the design of textiles, rugs, and knitting (Berik 1987, p. 87). This included the production of headscarves. The production of these headscarves, which were later sold in open markets by male middlemen, gave Turkish women access to some economic independence. The practice also allowed the preservation of informal networks of care and work that held the community together in extended family-like systems (White 1994, pp. 99, 132).

The headscarf has provided economic opportunity for women by becoming a form of home-based labor supporting families and households. At the same time, wearing the headscarf has limited access to public positions and elected offices until recent history. The Kemalist Movement, which planned to create more economic and political opportunities for women, did partially accomplish its goal, with more women attending college and holding employment outside of the home. That opportunity, however, has not been distributed equally, with more traditional women from poorer, rural communities facing limitations from bans. As current leadership supports a more Islamist approach, the challenges around wearing or not wearing the headscarf will continue. In fact, the population of Turkey may become more polarized.

Regardless of this difficult history, the headscarf is a valuable symbol of tradition and of change in Turkey. When coupled with its connection to art and art history, it may be one of the most important symbols for women in the region. Given that the headscarf is the most political of garments in Turkey, investigating the artistic history of the headscarf provides for a more comprehensive understanding of its power and value as a cultural, social, religious, and political symbol.
ARTISTIC HISTORY AND THE HEADSCARF

Women’s labor in the creation of the headscarf and in the handicraft of textiles, rugs, and knit items, has positively contributed to the art and the economics of Turkey, although those influences have been largely undocumented (White 1994, p. 149). Handicrafts made in the home not only increase the financial wellbeing of the family, but have impacts on design and fashion. The floral and geometric designs in the scarves worn by Turkish women are influenced by and borrowed from the Islamic art in the region, where depictions of animals and people are discouraged. The clothing designs and styles of women in the Ottoman Empire and in the Turkish Republic reflect their socio-economic ranks, personal tastes, and artistic preferences and serve as important symbols within and outside of their communities (Lytle Courtier 1989, pp. 71-79). In fact, women’s public and private attire communicate implicit and explicit messages to those they encounter (Lytle Courtier 1989, pp. 78-79).

The history of fashion and textile in Turkey is interwoven not only with politics and economic, but with the artistic history of the region as a whole. That history is influenced by Islam, by the natural environment, and by the numerous cultural identifies within the Ottoman Empire. History was also influenced by societies conquered by the Ottoman’s such as the Byzantines and by the cultures that engaged in trade in Eastern Asia, in what is known as China today (Denny 1982, pp. 121-122).

Textiles as Turkish and Ottoman Art

Textile production in the Ottoman Empire was both politically and economically motivated but artistically based and focused. This is true as the administrative system of the empire was “charged with levying taxes, protecting costumers, and overseeing labour
organizations" (Denny 1982, p. 121). They also oversaw the complex system of trade that had sustained itself from before the 15th century to throughout the 19th century. This system had extended throughout Europe and the Ottoman Empire as a core of both economic and artistic production. In Bursa and Istanbul, the two most significant centers of textile production, fabrics made of linen, cotton, and animal fiber and three main groups of light-weight silk weavings called *kadife*, *kemba*, and *tafta* or *atlas*, were highly popular. These silk textiles required the shipment of silkworm cocoons from Iran to produce up until the late 15th century when cocoons began growing in Bursa (Denny 1982, p. 122). Plain fabrics called *sof*, *burumcuk*, and *cuha* were also commonly used, as well as more luxurious such as *kemha*, *catma* (velvet), and *seraser* (gold threaded fabric) (Turkouglu 1993, pp. 53-54).

Similar kinds of cultural exchange between Europe, Central Asia, East Asia, and throughout the empire was present in design trends as well. The first examples of Ottoman textiles often had striped designs, *benekli* or "ball-like forms"), *chintamani*, which is a "design of three balls or spots," or groups of three wavy lines that were derived from China (Denny 1982, p. 126). Other popular patterns that developed over time were *ogival* patterns that had *kemba*, or "brocaded silk" and stylized flowers, including the Turk's favorite tulip motifs (Denny 1982, p. 128). It is also important to keep in mind that because most textile samples that remain today did not have an indication of the date of production on the fabric itself, the chronology and sources of these patterns are usually understood by studying miniature paintings and ceramic tiles, specifically Iznik tiles.

**Tilework and Earthenware and Preservation of Design**

Cultural interaction between societies of the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia, and Europe predominantly occurs due to the trading of antiquities; ceramics being the most significant.
Ceramic tiles and vessels are especially important to the history of Turkish art because they preserve designs that have been lost in other mediums. By understanding the flow of artistic inspiration in regards to earthen works, one is able to get a glimpse of the fashions and trends, as well as the floral and Islamic designs that make up the breadth of Ottoman and Turkish art. Longevity is unique to earthenware as mediums as textiles decompose over time.

Geometric patterns are the most distinguishable aspects of Islamic and Turkish designs. Due to the complex nature of pattern design in Turkey, this research mainly focuses on the Islamic and Iznik pattern and tile creations. These two facets of design overlap quite frequently, usually in a religious context and particularly in mosques. Often, the central domes of a mosque are ornately decorated in Islamic radial and rectilinear patterns, while Iznik floral tiling will line the walls of the lower levels. This combination creates a juxtaposition of organic and geometric repetition (Yenisehirlioglu, 2004 p. 373).

**Islamic Pottery and Tilework in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey**

For the past 10,000 years, the development of earthenware techniques, present predominantly in pottery and tilework, has directly impacted the advancement and maturity of both Islamic and Iznik pattern design. According to John Carswell, the former Director of the Islamic Department at Sotheby’s, elaborate decorative earthenware qualities can be found as far back as the seventh millennium BC. In excavations by James Mallaart at Catal Hutuk that took place near Konya revealed that pottery, visually expressive sculptures and painted interiors of their possessed specific decorative tastes (Carswell 2006, p. 13). The presence of such characteristics have persisted throughout time, but the cementation of geometric patterns as a trademark of Islamic art occurred with the acceptance of Islam into Turkish culture. This conversion gave the Ottomans access to new streams of economic and cultural resources and
illuminated their greatest achievement which “was to weld together all the different ethnic factions under one single centralized system, where minorities could be largely self-governing but still subservient to the ultimate power of the sultan” (Carswell 2006, p. 14). The increase in inputs from various ethnic groups deepened the pool of artistic inspiration from which craftsman could work.

This centralized system depended on craftsman to help shape a religiously based empire. Their work began with the establishment of the capital Bursa in 1326. Much of the tilework there consists of *cuerda seca* tiles, in which thin bands of waxy resist are used to maintain color separation between glazes during firing, but leave behind "dry cords" of unglazed tile” (Metropolitan 2017). Examples of *cuerda seca* tiles can be found in the Yesi Cami or Green Mosque, which was constructed starting in 1419, under the watch of Medmeh I (Rae 2015, p. 66). The tiles are blue, turquoise, and deep green and hexagonal in shape, with rows of turquoise triangles for separation. Also present are arabesques, geometric friezes, *kufic* calligraphy, and lunette panels carved out of marble.

The style of the Yesi Cami appears traditionally Ottoman but hints of the underlying Timurid decorative style can be found in the “inscription in the Sultan’s gallery, which records that the decoration was completed in AD 1424 by Ali ibn Ilyas, or Nakkas Ali…who was a native of Bursa, (who was) carried off by Timur in 1402, where as a master craftsman he was exposed first hand to the Timurid style (Carswell 2006, p. 15). This finding demonstrates the influence Central Asian art had on the craftsman working in the Ottoman Empire, as the Timurid dynasty expanded over much of present-day Iraq, Iran, parts of southern Russia, and India (Yalman 2002, pg. 1).
Moving forward in time, we come to the second major capital of the Ottoman Empire, Edirne, which was established by Sultan Murad I in 1369. There, in the Murad II Cami., which was built around 1435, a new technique arose in which the “carved elements (of the tiles) are decorated in underglaze blue on a white ground” (Carswell 2006, p. 20). This style of earthenware is also heavily influenced by Asian ceramic design, specifically Chinese ceramic design from the Yuan and early Ming dynasty. The blue and white color palette of these works is the most recognizable similarity between Turkish and Chinese ceramics but other elements like peonies, lotuses, and striped borders are also indicative of Chinese design (Carswell 2006, p. 21).

The tiles of the Murad II Cami also illustrate a connection to Persian earthenware, due to the off-white clay used, instead of the red clay of Bursa. The off-white clay, which antecedes the clay used in Iznik pottery, communicates that art work from Persia and China must have been at least somewhat present in the workshops of the Ottoman Empire (Carswell 2006, p. 24). However, the uniqueness of Turkish patterning stems from the combination of Asian and Islamic influences, creating a design that is both geometric and repetitive while maintaining varied organic motifs.

**Iznik Pottery**

The first record of Iznik pottery comes from a palace kitchen register from around 1489 (Carswell 2006, p. 28). The rise of Iznik pottery can be attributed to the increased demand for tile fabrication inspired by the construction of imperial palaces and other ornate buildings after Mehmed II established Istanbul as the capital ten years prior (Rubin 2010 p. 2). It was here that the style *saz* was created by Persian artists who fled to Istanbul after Safavid rulers fell to the Ottoman Army in the Battle of Caldron in 1514. *Saz* is “style composed of flower arranged on delicate tendrils burgeoning with long serrated leave (that is) traced on paper and transferred to
textiles and ceramics” (Rubin 2010, p. 2). Further advancements to Iznik patterns came during the mid-1500s, when turquoise was added to the color-palette in 1530, when purple, mauve, green, and yellow were added in 1540, and “Iznik Red” was introduced in 1557 (Rubin 2010 p. 2).

The color palette that developed in the 1500s in Iznik would become an integral part of Ottoman design for the next 500 years. Overtime, these patterns and techniques expanded beyond ceramic studios and were found on textiles, wood paneling, and carpets. They also stretched beyond the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, across the Mediterranean, as European societies accepted these designs into their cultures and homes through imitated ceramic works.

**ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION FOR SCARF DESIGNS**

As a part of the research project, I created scarves influenced by Turkish Islamic art. These influences included textiles, Iznik tiles and pottery, architectural decorations and designs, and scarf decorations. All of these were used to design nine scarves printed on satin (Table 6). Designs were created using Adobe Illustrator and printed using automated modern textile production methods.

**Handcrafted Scarves**

Reviewing scarf design since the founding of the Republic of Turkey, a dominant type of scarf production is the handmade scarf. There are two primary types of handmade scarves, the oya scarf and yazma scarf. These are often made in homebased workshops in which women produce items for sale.

The traditional Turkish scarf is often hemmed by intricate, colorful, hand tatted laces and beading. The lace is usually in the shape of flowers and/or geometric designs. This cotton, linen,
or silk scarf with lace edging is called an *oya* scarf and may or may not have a printed textile design.

The scarf, when hand printed, is called a *yazma* scarf. *Yazma* scarves are hand dyed and painted using brushes and intricately carved wooden blocks. The blocks are used to stamps an outline on the cloth, which is then painted in. A variation is the use of a pre-drawn outline on a paper, over which the cloth is stretched. The pen is then used to outline the template (Akbostanci and Eren, pg. 1). Floral and geometric designs also dominate the style choices of the artists producing this type of work. The scarves in Table 3 are all both *oya* and *yazma* scarves.

**Table 3: Samples of Handcrafted Turkish Yazma Scarves with Oya (Lace)**

Another type of handcrafted design, most often produced on silk, is the *ebru* scarf. The *ebru* methods used natural pigments which float on water, somewhat like oil on water, using bile and chemical treatments. There are a number of modern and traditional styles that often incorporate floral designs. The method is demonstrated below, using paper instead of silk in (Table 4)
Table 4: Ebru Design by Kelsey Leuenberger (Turkish Cultural Center Boston)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design 1</th>
<th>Final Print of Design 2 on Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Design 1 Image 1" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Final Print Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Design 1 Image 2" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Design 1 Image 3" /></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design 2</th>
<th>Final Print of Design 2 on Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Design 2 Image 1" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Final Print Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Design 2 Image 2" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Design 2 Image 3" /></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Design 2 Image 4" /></td>
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Modern Designs and VAKKO

More recently, Turkish scarf production has included more modern printed processes. Modern printing techniques are used to continue the geometric and floral design traditions. These scarves are also often produced on silk, satin, polyester, and cotton. The country’s most famous luxury scarf producer is VAKKO, a company who has brought many of the designs concepts forward, but has added new modern updates to designs. Table 5 demonstrates examples of VAKKO scarf designs.

Table 5: Samples of Modern Turkish Scarves from Vakko.com 2016
Turkish and Ottoman Islamic architecture has had a profound influence on the history of art. The architecture and the architectural decorations preserved in the mosques (camii) and palaces (sarayi) influence pottery, textiles, and tilework today. The buildings of Istanbul and Turkey as a whole provide inspiration for both artists and historians (Rae 2015, p. 7). Many of the buildings in the Ottoman era are designed or influenced by Koca Mimar Sinan, an architect during the rule of Suleyman the Magnificent, but build on the architecture of the Byzantines and the Seljuks (Rae 2015, p. 136, Curatola 2010, p. 21). For this project, several architectural monuments were used as inspiration (see Table 6). Brief descriptions of each of these buildings is provided below. These inspirations were also the source for a number of other art objects using technology and history to create forms with paper, acrylic, wood, photography, and light.

Table 6 Scarf Designs by Kelsey Leuenberger with Architectural Inspirations
Alaeddin Mosque or Alaeddin Camii

Alaeddin Camii, in Konya, Turkey, was completed in 1220 and is the oldest known Seljuk mosque in Turkey. The mosque interns all of the Seljuk sultans after 1156 with the exception of Izzeddin Keykavus. There were several important lost carpets discovered under newer carpets at the mosque, adding to the history of Ottoman carpet weaving (Hattstein and Delius 2015, p. 531).
Blue Mosque or Sultanahmet Camii

Located in Istanbul, Turkey, this mosque was built between 1609 and 1616 during the reign of Ahmed I. Using Ottoman and Byzantine influences, the mosque is filled with over 20,000 handmade Iznik tiles with blues and reds on a white background. There are over 50 different tulip designs. The Iznik tiles in the mosque create a bright interior and reflect light. The mosque was designed by apprentices to Sinan, Davud Aga and Mehmed Aga (Rae 2015 pp. 136-141).
Çoban Mustafa Pasa Mosque

Commissioned by Coban Mustafa Pasa, the complex is in Gebze, Turkey. The mosque is decorated in white, gold, and light turquoise and integrates a sixfold star pattern in some of its designs (Brouce 2016, p.121).
Eyup Mosque

This complex, in Istanbul, Turkey, marks the supposed burial place of Ebu Eyüp el-Ensari, a friend of the Prophet Muhammed, who fell in battle outside the walls of Constantinople while carrying the banner of Islam during the Arab assault and siege of the city in AD 674 to 678 (Rae 2015, pp. 82-85). It is the place where the Ottoman princes came for the Turkish equivalent of a coronation ceremony: girding the Sword of Osman to signify their power and their title as padişah (king of kings) or sultan. In 1766 Mehmet's building was levelled by an earthquake and new mosque was built on the site by Sultan Selim III in 1800. The interior of the mosque is lined with a stunning white background with intricate gold, blue, and red geometric designs.
Hagia Sophia Mosque

In Istanbul, Turkey, the Hagia Sophia was rebuilt by the orders of Emperor Justinian in 537 (Rae 2015, pp. 10-19). For 900 years it was at the center of Orthodox Christianity. In 1453, when Istanbul was conquered by the Ottomans, it was transformed into a mosque, when city was concurred by Ottomans. The Hagia Sophia’s interior is dominated by calligraphy and geometric designs in golds and dark blues. In 1935, Hagia Sophia was converted into a museum of Turkish Republic by the orders of Ataturk.
Karatay Madrasa or Büyük Karatay Medresesi

Built in Konya, Turkey in 1251, this madrasa uses alternating dark and light stones of Syrian influence. Its portal copies that of the nearby Alaeddin Mosque. The transition from the square room to the round dome is accomplished by way of Turkish triangles intricately decorated in black, white, and turquoise tiles (Rae 2015, pp. 30-31). Today it serves as a tile museum.
Kocatepe Mosque

The Kocatepe Mosque is a newer mosque built in the capital city of Ankara. The mosque was built between 1967 and 1987. The bright white interior is highlighted with red and turquoise designs.
Süleymaniye Mosque

The Suleymaniye Mosque was built in Istanbul, Turkey between 1550 and 1557. It sits on top of one of seven hills in Istanbul, overlooking the city and the Bosphorus (Rae 2015, pp. 108-111). Designed by Sinan for Suleyman the Magnificent, the complex includes a mosque, a madrasa, fountains, a mausoleum, a medical school, and a soup kitchen (Rae 2015, p. 108). The interior of the mosque centers on a gold dome with white and turquoise as other dominant colors. The dominant designs are geometric, with calligraphy present in much of the art.
Topkapi Palace

Topkapi Palace was built in Istanbul, Turkey between 1460 and 1478 and was updated with new sections and additions over time. The palace, which housed both public, government building and private spaces for the household of the sultans, originally was constructed as a summer palace (Turkogul 1994, pp. 7-9). The harem, or the household women and children, was among the private spaces. The harem moved permanently to the Topkapi Palace during the rule of Suleyman the Magnificent and his concubine and then wife, Hurrem Sultana. Key themes in the palace include florals and fruits in vases with yellow, white, blue, orange, and red, as well as geometrics and florals in turquoise, red, and white. Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Topkapi Palace was transformed into a museum on April 3th 1924 and it was also the first museum of the Republic of Turkey.
Table 7: Scarf Designs by Kelsey Leuenberger on Satin Cloth
Wood Laser Cut Panels

In addition to the textile designs, the Ottoman and Turkish artistic design influence is expanded to other art forms. The woodcut was not only used in printing on cloth and paper, but also adorned walls and doors of domestic and public architecture. The modern interpretation of the wood cut used the application of a laser cutting machine on walnut as demonstrated in Tables 8 and 9. The pattern and the methods used in the woodcut designs reflect those used in the creation of headscarves, tiles, and carpets.

Table 8. “Through the Eyes of Maral”- Walnut Wood Laser Cut Panel One – 12”x 24”

Table 9: “The Tulips of Maral”- Walnut Wood Laser Panel Two – 12”x 24”
Acrylic Laser Cut Panels

In order to explore the use of light experienced in the architecture of the Ottoman era, the scarf designs paid close attention to the use of windows and lighting in the selected mosques. There acrylic laser cut panels provide further exploration of the use of light and design approaches in Tables 10, 11, and 12.

Table 10: “The Sultana’s Yellow Window” - The Yellow Acrylic Laser Cut Panel 15”x 30”
Table 10: “The Sultana’s Blue Window” - Blue Acrylic Laser Cut Panel 15” x 30”

Table 11: “The Sultana’s Red Window” - Red Acrylic Laser Cut Panel 15” x 30”
Asphalt Public Art Installations

Ottoman art was meant to be permanent and was created to last for generations. The textiles and carpets from the period are less permanent and much of the knowledge about these forms are art and preserved in other art forms such as ceramic tiles. In order to provide a public space of this art, several textile or carpet-like designs were created in public spaces. The designs, which look like carpet or headscarf designs, are created with paint on asphalt. Examples are shown in Tables 12, 13, and 14.

**Table 12: “BSU Crosswalk” – Safety Paint on Asphalt 17’ X 20’**
Table 12: “The Golden Gate to My Art” – Spray Paint on Asphalt 4’ x 5’

Table 13: “Ottoman Jewel” – Spray Paint on Asphalt 6’ x 8’

In order to explore the geometric designs represented in the headscarves and architecture explored in this research project, paper laser cuts were used (Table 14). The designs were then manipulated digitally as represented in Tables 15 and 16.

Table 14: “Modern Manipulations” Studies – Paper Laser Cut on Wood

Table 15: “Modern Manipulations One” – Digitally Manipulated Paper Laser Cut on Wood
In a second exploration of light and the temporary nature of art forms, the artist created several temporary public light displays on the BSU campus. The studies for these light displays are shown in Table 17. The photographs of the light displays are in Tables 18, 19, 20, and 21.

**Table 17: Public Light Display Studies**
Table 18: “The President’s Column One”

Table 19: “The President’s Column Two”
Table 20: “The President’s Seeing Eye”

Table 21: “Blossom of BSU”
CONCLUSION

The wearing of hijab has been a controversial issue in countries where Muslims are the minority and where they are the majority. Symbolically, the headscarf is linked to women’s rights, religious freedom, political values, and to cultural preservation. Across the world, the hijab has been respected, feared, banned, and embraced, sometimes within the same national boundary. The cultural and symbolic value of the headscarf is tremendously powerful.

The political and cultural debate concerning the acceptance of certain pieces of attire is most definitely a central topic circulating throughout the Turkish Republic and has been so since Ottoman times. The influence of the Turkish headscarf, specifically, permeates nearly every facet of society, making it an integral part of the history, the politics, the economics, the art, and the culture of the region. By following the development of the headscarf and its artistic, political, and cultural transformations it is possible to construct a vivid portrayal of the diversity of thought, perspective, and values that guides such changes.

The art of the Ottoman Empire and of the Republic of Turkey is a knitting together of forms from textiles to woodcuts to ceramics to painting. The headscarf is a part of the artistic heritage of and is arguably the most important fashion artifact in Muslim communities. This paper demonstrates the magnitude of the impact of headscarf on political, culture, and art.

The goals of this project were to create a political, social, economic, cultural, and artistic history of the Turkish headscarf and to use this knowledge to inform the design of new art objects. The complex history of veiling and the rich history of art from the Ottoman era and the Republic of Turkey have influenced the designs presented.
REFERENCES


Rae, L. 2015. *Islamic art and architecture: Memories of Seljuk and Ottoman masterpieces.* Istanbul: Blue Dome Press.


The artist and researcher, Kelsey Gabrielle Leuenberger, in a laser cut dress using Ottoman geometric influences as inspiration.