

Some of Roman and Hebrew influences in Ottoman culture.

Abstract

When mentioning about Ottoman culture, people would believe that it is the Turk product, with intercultural traces of Greek, Syrian, and Egyptian. It is also believed that the Ottoman culture has also been enriched by legacies of Arabian and Persian heritages. The most common belief is that the Ottoman culture has been added with Arabian culture values. The author has consulted a variety of materials and admitted that the Ottoman culture is also benefited from Roman and Hebrew culture legacies. This comes from the Turk policies toward Roman and Hebrew communities, which brings about impressive outcomes in architecture, urban civilization and crafting industry.

Key words: Ottoman culture, Arabian, Roman, Hebrew, architecture, urban civilization, crafting

1. The policy of Ottoman dynasty to Roman and Hebrew communities

1.1. Some features of Ottoman empire

About Ottoman empire history: Ottoman empire is an Islam empire constructed by Turk people, lasting for approximate 500 years, from century 15 to century 20.

About Ottoman boundary: Ottoman empire extends its borders to three continents. In Europe, it runs from Balkan peninsula to Danube river, cover most of current territories of Hungary, a part of current Poland, and the whole North of Black. In Asia, Ottoman empire covers Minor Asia, current Armenia land, a big part of Caucasus range, the valley of Tigris and Euphrate rivers, the Persia gulf and the whole land of East of Middle East,

26 also a land stretching from the Arabian peninsula to Eden gulf. In Africa, Ottoman
27 empire covers land of current Egypt, Tripoli, Tunisia and Algeria. Ottoman empire also
28 extends its territory to Crete, Cyprus and islands of Aegean Sea.

29 About its people: The Ottoman people are various, including Turk, Arabian, Kurd, Berber
30 and Mameluke. Also, people from Bosnia, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Slavo,
31 Rumanian, Armenia, Georgia, and Egypt are also counted as inhabitants of Ottoman empire.
32 Among those peoples, Hebrew people are those contributing to the variety of Ottoman
33 residential community. It is estimated that Hebrew people are numbered approximately at
34 50 million in population.

35 About the government: Sultan is the most powerful ruling person. Ottoman empire
36 applies Islam laws, and Shari, Koran and Hadith in its regulating the society, moral
37 principles, religion, and economy for all of its peoples.

38 In the beginning, Shari law is applied for Muslim people in the Arabian. For those issues
39 not demonstrated in Shari law, Ottoman Sultans call for Canon law, which is approved by
40 Muslim scholars, or ulama communities.

41 A significant feature of Ottoman empire is that it employ an impressive number of slaves,
42 mostly from war prisoners. The employment of slaves is the unique feature of Ottoman
43 empire, which is not ever witnessed in any other Islamic states.

44 ***1.2. Ottoman policy toward Roman community***

45 Ottoman empire is an Islamic state, with the ruling of Muslim Sultan. Muslim people of the
46 Ottoman empire are free to participate in legislation, education and religion procedures
47 and entities.

48 However, the Ottoman army recruits mostly Roman slaves. The slaves are recruited,
49 trained, and promoted in the army forces, which protect Ottoman empire and its sultans.

50 The slaves go through a careful investigation and classification procedure right after they
51 are recruited to the army. 90% of them will be deployed to Minor Asia to serve land
52 lords. They learn Turkish language, war skills and are converted to Muslims. Sooner or

53 later, they will be deployed Constantinople and join the army in Constantinople. The rest
54 of 10% of them are those with striking appearance and skill will be trained to be
55 commanders for the empire. Ottoman empire opens a dynasty school to train military and
56 administration skills for these elite 10% force. After graduation, they will be appointed to
57 managing posts at provinces, from where they will be promoted to the highest ranking of
58 the dynasty.

59 The common understanding is that slaves will be traded at markets, or taken away from
60 their families, or imprisoned in wars, and they are destined to serve like slaves for
61 winners. However, in Ottoman empire, slavery is not that in Medieval West. The Ottoman
62 empire gives no care to skin color of slaves. Moreover, the relationship between slave
63 owners and slaves reflects the generous giving and utmost faithful serving. Meanwhile,
64 the slave owner is expected to free his slave after a period of serving time. And a slave who
65 is promoted to the highest ranking can have a chance of marrying the owner's daughter.
66 Slaves in Ottoman empire are not counted as underprivileged and they can go to the
67 management posts of the dynasty.

68 Ottoman sultans often send talented slaves to rule faraway provinces, both in
69 administration and military. When wars come, these slaves are commanders and generals,
70 representing the local military to bring forces to support sultans and discuss with sultans
71 about war plans. When there is no war, these slaves rule the lands for sultan. They have
72 no salary from the dynasty but they will have profit from the lands that they are given by
73 sultans. The profit is counted only in period that they serve sultans.

74 It is concluded that a strong Ottoman empire is powered by a strong force of Roman
75 slaves who are converted to Islam. From 1453 to 1623, among 47 chancellors, 5 are Turk,
76 11 are Albanian, 11 Slav, 6 Greek, 1 Italian, and 10 from non Muslim lands.

77 It is noted that inside Ottoman empire, Roman and Hebrew habitats are allowed to
78 practice their religions. This policy is a part of Ottoman policy to extend its territory.
79 Also, it is in the law of Islam that Hebrew and Roman are children of Allah. However,
80 Roman and Hebrew communities should have their own residential areas, and with their

81 own rulers. The Hebrew and Roman residents are subject to a special tax and they are
82 prepared to hand over their sons to the government when needed.

83 Therefore, during 5 centuries of Turk ruling in Ottoman empire, Balkan people maintain
84 their legacy. Since then, the Greek people have applied their law of religion freedom and
85 their autonomous government under Ottoman ruling.

86 All Ottoman sultan choose a peaceful political approach to Roman communities. When
87 Contstantinople is captured by Mehmet II, he announced that he will protect the church.
88 And he soon commands that no Roman is executed. And he soon offers the same
89 privilege of the previous government for the new priest. Gennadios, the first priest of the
90 Ottoman dynasty is granted with his stamp, 1000 gold coins, and a horse with glamorous
91 royal harness. The priest is not only responsible for religious issues in his parish, but also
92 head of a committee to make decisions for civil issues in his parish, involving fines,
93 prison sentences.

94 In the beginning, Ottoman sultans offer tolerance treatment to Hebrew people. When
95 Constantinople is captured, Ottoman government assign a well known Hebrew noble
96 man, named Elijah Capsali to be Rabbi of the Hebrew community. Elijah Capsali enjoys
97 his privilege to stay at the same seat row with a Mufti, a Muslim head. All Hebrew
98 communities are autonomous, under the supervision of their own Rabbi. Hebrew
99 communities have their own schools, and their own courts. Marriages, divorces,
100 inheritance, and social issues are discussed and decided by their own Rabbi. In law,
101 Hebrew communities are subject to higher tax charge, and some limitation of costumes,
102 habitat location, slave ownership.

103 Ottoman government welcomes Hebrew people because of the following reasons:

104 Hebrew people are well known for their business goodness, as well as their craft skills,
105 which will contribute in a good way to Ottoman empire. Explosive chemical, firing
106 powder, and cannon production by Hebrew men are very famous. Blacksmithing and
107 crafting, cloth, glassware and metal production by Hebrew are so developed that they
108 have their own industry communities.

109 In 1493, David and Samuel Ibn Nahmias, two Hebrew businessmen open a printing house
110 to serve the Ottoman government.

111 Ottoman sultans employ Hebrew people to serve the government at all levels, even in the
112 royal palace and diplomatic authorities. This will pave the way to some notable Hebrew
113 men to reach the highest level in the management posts. Hekim Yakup Pasa, a Hebrew
114 man, is in charge of the national budget. Is'hak Pasha, a Hebrew doctor, is sooner the
115 doctor of the royal family. Abraham de Castro, a Hebrew noble man, is responsible for
116 budget for Egyptian land. In century 16, Joseph Nasi, a Hebrew man, is promoted to
117 Sanjak bey, provincial governor of Naxos.

118 In 1324, the first synagogue of Hebrews is constructed in Bursa and currently the praying
119 location of the local Hebrew people. In Istanbul, Hebrew synagogue Bet Yakoov is now a
120 famous religious practicing location of Hebrew community in Turkey. Synagogue Bet
121 Yakoov is constructed in 1878 when Ottoman dynasty reaches its peak of prosperity.

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123

124 **2. The influences of Roman and Hebrew legacy in Ottoman culture:** 125 **Architecture, urban civilization, and craftsmen**

126 Ottoman empire is vast in term of territory, and lands on three continents, and massive in
127 term of population, and various in religions, ethnic groups. Turk habitats make for
128 minority in Ottoman population. Wars, border extension, and people capture brings about
129 a special Ottoman culture, which is a product of intercultural communication of Roman,
130 Islam and local legacies.

131 **2.1. *About architecture***

132 Ottoman culture is famous with mosques, citadels, palaces. Sinan Pasha is a remarkable
133 architect of Ottoman dynasty. He is born in a stone carving Greek family in 1589. He is
134 converted to Islam, and soon is promoted for his talent of ship and bridge building. He
135 builds mosques and palaces. He is the chief constructor of the royal family during periods

136 of Sultan Suleiman, Selim II and Murad III. He builds 343 works, including 81 mosques,
137 55 hospitals, 34 palaces, 33 bath house. His students Mehmet Isa Efendi and Mehmet
138 Ismail Efendi build Taj Mahal in India. And his student Sedefkar Mehmed Agha builds
139 mosque Sultan Ahmed in Istanbul.

140 **2.2. About urban civilization**

141 An Ottoman urban city is typical with a mosque, markets, public bath houses and military
142 buildings in the downtown. A palace can be constructed in the centre of the city. Each
143 district is called haras.

144 Important Ottoman cities are Istanbul, Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo, Izmir, Edirne,
145 Thesaloniki. They are located on the route linking Europe and Asia.

146 A typical Ottoman city is combined Roman, Hebrew and Arabian features.

147 All Ottoman urban cities grow from previous cities. Once a city is captured, the existing
148 church in the downtown is converted into a mosque. Around that mosque are residents,
149 and outside is a bazaar. And outer that city is the city wall. A citadel will be added in the
150 central city to house the government and their family. The mosque is not only for Muslim
151 but it is only a military spot.

152 Bazaar, and all architecture works are located on the route leading to the outer gate of the
153 city wall

154 House with wooden sloping covers, mosque with domes, and narrow stone streets
155 running to the city wall gates, bazaars, quiet resident areas, and busy commercial
156 locations are main characters of Ottoman cities.

157 Bazaars are basically two circles. While the inner circle is for stores, the outer circle is for
158 manufacturing glassware, blacksmithing, gold, silver, carpet craftsmen.

159 **2.3. About craftsmen**

160 Ottoman culture is famous with craftsmen, artisan and artist are the same in Ottoman
161 culture. Among crafting products, carpets are the most famous. Carpets are not only for
162 flooring but pieces of art. Carpets express social status and wealth of their owner. Carpets
163 are used for halls, praying places, mosques, palaces and courts. Carpets are used outdoors
164 and cover corridors.

165 Royal carpets are masterpieces of art, with luxurious quality and fine gorgeous designs.
166 Also, most of Ottoman royal carpets are made by Hebrew crafting artisans. Most of these
167 Hebrew artisans are immigrants from Spain. Nowadays, in Islam museum in Berlin, there
168 is a carpet made by Hebrew artisans in Spain in early century 14, this carpet pictures Ark
169 of the Covenant.

170 Hebrew people in Spain are traders of cloth, silk and carpet. They also produce carpets.
171 They live near rivers Salonica and Safed so that they can do dyeing, producing cloth and
172 carpets. Moses Galante, a Hebrew rich man, owns large manufacturers of cloth and
173 carpets. Moses Berab, Menachem Habavli and Reuben are famous Hebrew owners of
174 large dyeing manufacturers sở hữu.

175 The dominant style of Ottoman carpets are tulips, roses, carnations, hyacinths and long
176 leaves, and waves. Ottoman carpets usually show lanterns, mosques in middle and with
177 edges showing palm leaves, flowers, and columns. Columns are typical of Hebrew art
178 style Trong các hình trang trí của thảm thời kỳ văn hóa Ottoman , họa tiết hình cột chính
179 là sản phẩm văn hóa của người Hebrew. Ngoài họa tiết hình cột đặc trưng của người
180 Hebrew, màu sắc rực rỡ chính là đặc trưng Hebrew trong cách trang trí thảm Ottoman. In
181 century 17, an Arabian author named Mustafa Abdalla Hadshi Halfra writes that Hebrew
182 artisans create the best carpets in the world.

183 In museum of University George Washington University and Museum of Textile in
184 Washington, America, we can find a carpet made by Hebrew artisans in century 17. This
185 carpet is found in Cairo, a province of Ottoman empire. It is made from wool, and on it,
186 there is a sentence from the Old Testament in Hebrew language. It has flora design by
187 Arabian art and column design typical of Hebrew culture.

188 Apart from carpets, Hebrew artisans are famous with ceramics, lights, household
189 decorations, and jewelry. Hebrew artisans are the best jewelry makers of Ottoman
190 culture. They are located in land of current Eastern Turkey. For Ottoman royal family,
191 jewelry is considered as savings, dowry, or treasure or wealth display. The Ottoman
192 dynasty has a chancellor who is head of a workshop which design and create jewelry,
193 which has around 80 artisans, mostly Greek or Hebrew.

194 One of the clearest influence of Hebrew culture in Ottoman jewelry is devil eye. Hebrew
195 people believe that jewelry with devil eye will protect its owner from bad luck. Stamps of
196 King David, stars of King Solomon are popular designs by Hebrew artisans on pieces of
197 jewelry.

198

199 **CONCLUSION**

200 For 500 years, the Ottoman culture built its own characteristic legacy from different
201 people groups. The legacy of Ottoman architecture, urban civilization and artisan
202 craftsmen with very clear impact of Roman and Hebrew impacts.

203

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