



## THE PLACE AND THE IMPORTANCE IN TEXTILE ART OF SHELTER TENTS IN TURKISH ARCHITECTURE

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### SUMMARY

Tents as a Nomadic life style has always been one of the most important way of life in turkish tribe culture. In order to offer immediacy, tents have been the first choice in different civilisations keeping warm during summers, warm during winters as well as easily being assembled and transferred. As a result of the practicality it offered tents have been customised in various ways depending on the culture they were used in as well as providing a historical source reflecting customs and culture. The materials used as textiles and frames of the construction and isolation mirrored the circumstances of the era. The textile materials forming the space by themselves created a strong bond with the architecture itself.

This study aims to observe the relationship between the Tuskish tent culture with the choice and usage of textile materials providing a timeline of the nomadic culture transforming into a modern society as well as prodividing an orientation on how the nomadic tent culture influenced modern day architecture and textile art interaction.

### INTRODUCTION

It is believed that the word ‘tent’ originates from two roots. The first one derives from Turkish originated word çat- which means to bind meanwhile the second root derives from Persian originated Word çatur which means blanket. Another opinion is that it originates from the sanskrit word ‘çhattra’ which means umbrella or shelter (Bozkurt, 1993: 158).

BahaeddinÖgel has focused the prelude of the word ‘çadır’ from Soğd or Tajik influence stressing on Persian roots (Ögel, 1984: 304,309). There is an assumption the it derived from Turkish ‘çat’ word in reference to structure and meaning (Eren,1999: 75; Onuk, 2005: 13).

In nomadic civilisations the life style is based on animal husbandry having an effect on daily life and social life as well as the way of thinking. The harsh conditions of moor life has pushed the nomads into a struggle in order for them to survive (Bozkurt, 1993: 158). Life is always on the move and active in the nomadic culture. In search of a reasonable way to survive between the summer and winter pastures, the nomadic tribes have consequently tried to meet their needs and necessities. At this point the the nomadic tribes have had the need to find a reasonable solution as shelter which could be transported and assembled with ease. Tents being more than natural shelters providing protection from the elements are also structures protecting the traditions, beliefs, economy, admiration, decoration and art of the cultures they are used in (Erden, 1979, s.73-82). As mentioned by Erden, to further the discussion it can be said that tents are more than just shelters for nomadic tribes.

The colors, size, materials, decorations and interior layouts of the tents provide information regarding the social life styles and cultural values. Carpets, rugs and felts used inside tents on walls or floors reflect the understanding of art in the society.

The development of textile design has begun by the artisanal applications of trial and error historically speaking (Bayazit, 2004: 173).

Handicrafts being one of the most prominent styles of art is the trade of expressing creativity, pleasure and capability focusing on tactile senses. These kind of artistic approaches fundamentally harbour individual abilities born initially from daily needs transforming into adornment and decorations in time aiding people to make their livings (Çoruh & Çaparlar, 2012: 5). As mentioned by Çoruh & Çaparlar textile design based on handicrafts has been shaped in time in order to provide solutions of the need for shelter by the effort of various cultures. This study observes the relation between the tent culture in a living space oriented on textiles.

### **The Connection Between Space And Textile**

The Notion of 'space' has been defined in various ways in many disciplines. As defined by Hasol, space is the entity in which defines and separates individuals from the surroundings (Hasol, 1990: 25). İzgi defines space as the identification, localisation, confinement, isolation, conditioning and organising a physical space in order to serve an essential function or functions Meanwhile creating a 3d artificial space to be able to achieve the targeted goal or mission (İzgi, 1991). People need space to be able to realise own actions. Main actions concerning people are the need for shelter, security and protection that require a space.

From abstract to tangible entities, design and creativity allows individuals to observe, perceive, Project, sensate, criticise, outpour and evaluatesentiments and thoughts processing all mental forms created. The root of the 'Design' (Tasarım) is based on the word –tasar which signifies the act of rendering sketches into reality (Harmanakaya, Yılmaz, Çetin, Ercan, 2014: 192).

Textile design is a field of design aiming to serve aesthetic purposes fed by creativity. Textile design is constantly fueled up by advancing technology merged with other branches of design especially with architecture. Architecture and textile design cooperation produced a large vareity of surfaces and structures with the use of weaving and folding techniques.

Ever since the 20. Century 3 d textiles, sculptures and free style textiles have been exposed in museums, galleries and other spaces focused on art. In this context it is possible to classify textile and space integration as 4 sub categories which are as follows; textiles having an impact in space, textiles affected by space, textiles designing spaces and textile exhibition in spaces.

Consequently it is possible to include the textile art efforts as a classification in relevance to the interaction properties based on space and structure it relates to as wave, approach and implementation (Tok Dereci, 2014).

As mentioned by Tok Dereci, textile formed the space itself in different cultures in order to provide protection, shelter and security. In this context mostly the usage of felt material and various fabrics led to the functioning of tents which defined the space itself visually and structurally.



**Figure 1. Tent examples from various Turkish tribes**

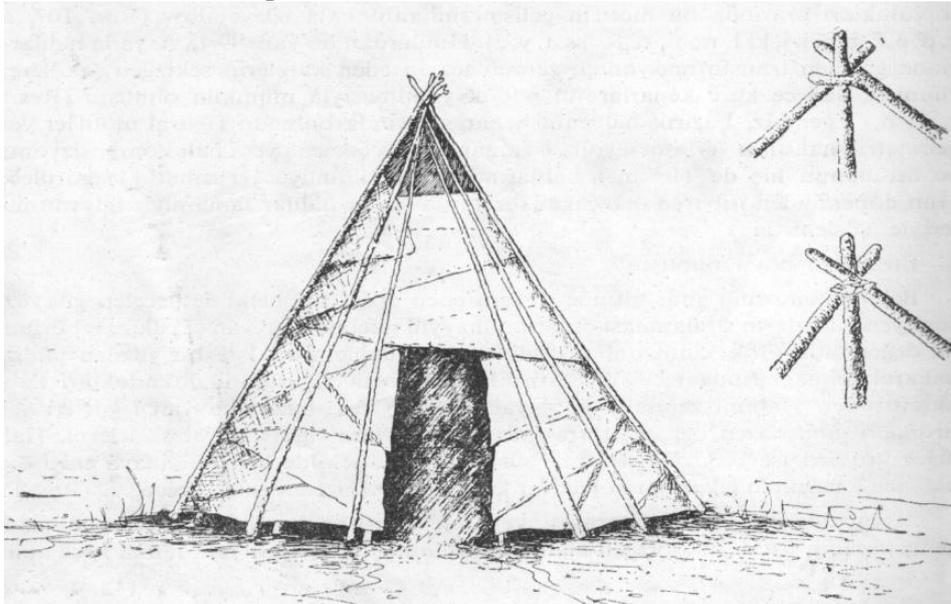
Printing techniques, fabric folding methods and weaving structures provided great service for architecture both as visibility and functionality. The ease that weaving, braiding and knitting brought to human lives as folding, stacking and adaptability to different circumstances helped resolve many dilemmas regarding the aesthetic and functional issues on architecture. As a result of architecture, structure, textures and form notions have been commonly used (Harmankaya vd. 2014: 198).

### **The Place of Tents in Architecture and Textile Art**

Tents are the oldest structures of housing that carry an important place in lives of Turkish culture all through history. Tents have been palaces to kings, housing for the commons, towns for great empires formed from numerous tents all in one place (Atasoy, 2002, s.15).

Köse emphasizes that tents carry the primary properties of the Turk house (Köse, 2005, s.161). This is why tents are the most prominent elements of Turkish civilisation as they proved to be an essentiality in providing a great deal of practicality for the nomadic life styles partially un abandoned even after settlements have been formed. Structurally, significantly and functionally tents have proven to have supported the advancement of Turkish architecture.

The main structure of the tent is constructed from a cone construct formed from a combination of poles even though it varies from each other in material, size or form. The cone form tent frame has 10-14 poles assembled into a traversed circle with the tips forming an intersection at the top (Radloff, 1956: 278).



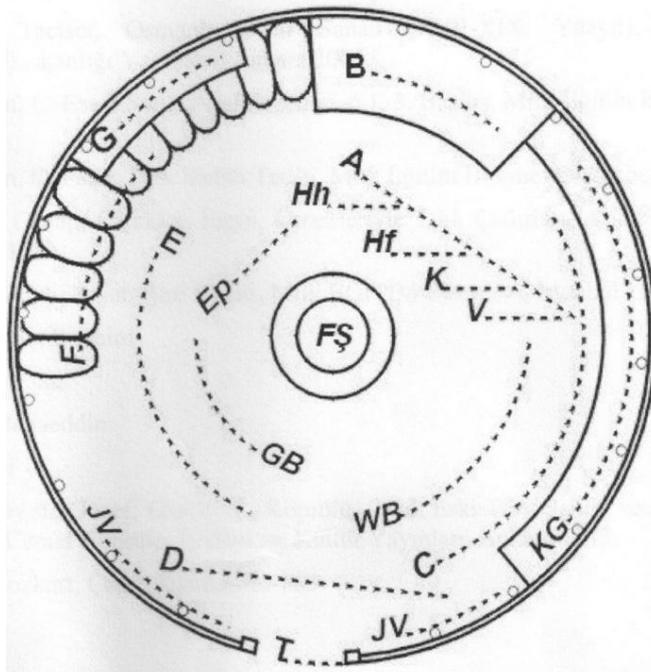
**Figure 2: Tent example made from tree bark (Diyarbakirli, 1972: 144).**

As Diyarbekirli and Bozkurt quotes from Radloff, the tree bark used to cover the tents has a higher value of practicality compared to felt but as the transportation of tree bark is more laborious compared to tree bark, nomadic tribes tend to choose to latter one more frequently. In time felt fabric fixed with woolen ropes and strings has been the primary choice as tent covering material(Radloff, 1956: 278, 280; Diyarbekirli, 1972: 42; Bozkurt, 1993: 160).

Traditional tents which have an opening at the top release smoke and allow sun light,the upper part of the frame in time of necessities can be covered. As poles provide difficulty to transfer they are locally renewed on each location meanwhile felt coverings have been regularly carried all along the way(Radloff, 1956: 279- 280).

In times of vast cold weather the number of felt covers can be increased and supported with soil or snow creating a more rigid structure offering protection. During summers feld covers can be folded upwards allowing air flow and supported with straws. This way the structure can adapt to summer or winter conditions with ease supporting accomodation all season long.The opening of the tent allowing smoke to escape can ben covered with a light felt fabric called ‘tünlük’ in case of storm or rain and at nights(Radloff, 1956: 279, 286; Diyarbekirli, 1972: 49- 51; Esin, 2003:127).

Finally all tribesman living in the tents marks their personal symbols on the visible side of the tents so that others can get a clear idea about the inhabitants living inside(Arseven, 1975: 3). All tents have a common layout regarding interior layout as shown in the figure below.



**Figure 3. Layout of an Altay tent.**

On the left side of the entrance male habitants area can be found meanwhile right side is reserved for the use of females. The opposite area of the entrance is called ‘Tör’ reserved for the elder respected an revered above other. Seat of honor is generally reserved for the use of guests decorated by felt braided quilts named as ‘koşma’ and carpets named as ‘ocakçı’ providing value to the area. Common male guests take place on the left corner of the entrance and every individual of the family and guesta all have a pre decided place to sit. The hosts sit at the back towards the right side with all the family and relatives. The frontal right side has

been reserved for the female guests. The poor and servants sit beside the door showing their minor stations (Radloff, 1956: 281; Diyarbekirli, 1972: 53; Arseven, 1975: 20- 30).

Hierarchy and religions have had a great influence on the interior layout of the tent (Roux, 2006: 50- 51).

The definitive placement of objects are also pre defined just as been done for the family members and guests. This certainty on layout has allowed the possibility to house multiple individuals and offer a relatively spacious accommodation (Onuk, 2005: 27).

The place of the bed in a tent is behind the family, In times of necessity the privacy needs can be immediately provided by a large cloth extended above the bed. Just beside the bed on metal or silver rod guns and clothing can be placed meanwhile on the left, crates, felt fardels, bags of grain, chests and satchels are placed forming the fortune of the host.

Rugs placed of these soft objects form the seats for the inhabitants to sit on transforming them to couches, divans and sofas. Symbols are placed on the upper parts of the tent to protect against bad omen and bring welfare and fortune to the inhabitants. Cookware and bakeware are placed inside embroidered mats filled with kımız and water flasks. Saddles and harness equipment are placed on the left side of the door which signifies that some objects are placed on the floor meanwhile some are hanging from poles and walls in order to offer more space providing space saving (Radloff, 1956: 282- 283; Diyarbekirli, 1972: 52- 53; Küçükerman, 1985: 29).

Turkish tents as interior layout or physical aspectwise make the best of the materials such as wood, felt, loom by the high quality craftsmanship of the nomadic cultures converting necessity into art in their everyday lives. In Turkish culture the main source of income depending on animal husbandry has led to the finding of various creative solutions focusing on loom based on the animals they tended to. At this point the interior of the tent composed of valuable carpets, rugs and looms offer a rich life style. The ground covered by a rug or felt apart from the area reserved for the furnace used for heat and cooking. The felts hanging from the walls of the tents are made by the females of the clan show that difficulty and the hardship nomadic life offers can be eased through the creative approaches Ögel, 2010: 166).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The nomadic life style has touched all mankind until settlements have arisen to give way to a brand new way of living. All through the globe nomadic ways have had the need of certain conditions such the need for shelter, security and cover as for mankind to settle, flourish and prosper. Especially focusing on Turk based cultures the nomadic life style initially has been the only way in order to survive, spread and influence. The accommodation quality tents have offered heavily dependent on the methods of production as well as the materials selected in order to provide a more comfortable life. Even though a long lasting culture can only strive through settlements, the origins of every civilisation seeds from a nomadic way of living.

The reflection of certain traditions and rituals into the life in a tent has created the possibility to spread the culture in a nomadic fashion. This is the reason why traditional tent culture is still existent respecting the materials and the ways of the old especially in nomadic Turkish tribes.

Despite technology the structural basis of the tent that does not change much in the Turkish nomadic tribal life allows the use of local textile based applications and art. This reality is and always will be the creativity that thousands of years of tradition brings to modern reality.

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**Resim 2**

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**Resim 3**

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