

Sample of German embroidery from the hand embroidery applications in the city of Kahramanmaras

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Abstract

Forming one of the most important branches of our culture and traditional arts, embroidery was born by sewing in a decorative way and it is worth mentioning that it is as early as humanity. Embroidered clothing on the sculptures excavated and the narration that the daughter of Noah in Hebrew history wears an embroidered belt shows that this branch of art goes back to earlier times. Hand embroidery, which is the products of intelligence, skill and subtle wit, has reached the current time by preserving its value. Out of a great many embroidery techniques reaching large public masses, a technique called 'German Embroidery' was encountered in the researches carried out in the city of Kahramanmaras and its towns in the years 2013–2014. According to the information obtained from the source people in the research carried out in the city of Kahramanmaras, German Embroidery dating back to earlier times is not produced today; however, we are likely to find pillows, clothes and dresses embroidered with German Embroidery in houses. In the current paper, embroidery samples were determined in order to unveil this technique that was embroidered on any kind of cloth with a plain surface and it was aimed to make the embroidery alive and to promote it by analysing the way of embroidering.

Keywords: Embroidery, ornament, technique, traditional.

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1. Introduction

Traditional arts are of great importance in Turkish culture. Works of art are the most valuable documents unveiling the tracks of the past with a rich variety and caring for them to date. Having a task of a mirror and reflecting mostly the inner world of human beings, art products are significant transmitters setting a light to many centuries later. Art products, which are as important as written sources in conveying the cultural heritage formed by the nations having lived in the past, have always been a good tool of communication.

While preparing the thing which will benefit him, an individual creates the handicraft art in a way that reflects the colour, design, style, harmony, his personal talent and regional character. Throughout history, the lifestyle, taste, climatic conditions and sense of art of the community were combined with the talent and skills of people and have carried Turkish handicraft art to its highest level. One of the most important branches of handicraft arts with the high artistic value, embroidery found a place of application in an intensive way in the city of Kahramanmaras.

Kahramanmaras, which is one of the important cities of the Mediterranean region, was a developed city in terms of population and economy in the Ottoman period, and the economic structure of the city mostly developed depending on agriculture, animal husbandry and small handicraft arts after the Republican period (Yilmazoglu, 2013, p. 20).

In Turkey, which has a rich past in the field of handicraft arts, embroidery varies from one region to another in line with the taste and needs of the people in that region. The techniques that people learn in communication with different cultures around them have found a field of application in a widespread manner up until now (Baykasoglu, 1993, p. 10). The embroidery known as German embroidery (Alman Nakisi) in the city of Kahramanmaras is a type of embroidery which is similar to the basic embroidery techniques in terms of its production, but the wrong side of it is just a stitch and all the embroidery is made on the right side.

Almost no information, except for its name German embroidery, is encountered in Turkish sources, which is trying to be revived in the city of Kahramanmaras today. For that reason, we aimed to investigate the German embroidery technique of decorating the trousseaus and homes in Kahramanmaras.

In the current study, the scanning method was used. An intense investigation was carried out in the city centre and towns with regard to the project of 'Kahramanmaras Handicraft Arts' that was organised by Gazi University the Centre of Turkish Handicraft Arts Research and Application and Kahramanmaras Municipality in the years 2013–2014. In this study, 14 German embroidery designs with different motives and usages were determined at the homes and in foreign sources studied.

2. Features of German embroidery

The city of Kahramanmaras has a very rich structure in terms of handicraft arts. In particular, it is rich in technique, motive and product variety with regard to embroidery, knitting (laces) and carving (wooden). As a result of our study carried out in the region in the years 2013–2014 on embroidery, it was found that Maras work (dival work), Maras filesi (Maras net), suzeni (kantan), canvas, white work, sarma-susma and German embroidery were made in the region (Akpınarlı, Baykasoglu, Kurt, Yilmazoglu & Yildiz, 2014, p. 49). The art of embroidery has a special place in the handicraft arts in Kahramanmaras. The embroidery that has been made for centuries is applied with different techniques by means of a needle and similar tools, with colourful threads and golden and silver wires on fabrics such as cotton, linen, satin, velvet, baize and on felt and leather using an embroidery frame, embroidery hoop or culde (Barista, 2005, p. 9; Yetim, 2014, pp. 332–333). There are different views over the reasons as to why embroidery is so rich in the city of Kahramanmaras. The efforts of the Byzantium Empire to weaken Armenia resulted in the deportation of thousands of Armenians, situating them out of Armenia to Cilicia, which is a partly mountainous region. After the decline of

Artsrunies (1021) and Bagratunies (1045), a new surge of immigrants reached Cilicia. In the town of Cilicia, Armenia, Maras (Guermanic) is famous for its art of embroidery. Large groups coming from different towns of the Great Haik brought their special traditions and style of thought together. Possibly, it is the reason for the abundant variety in the design of Maras embroidery, namely German embroidery (Tokmajian, 2010, p. 5). As a result of cultural interaction, the embroidery produced by the Turkish people living in the region and those immigrating to the region formed a synthesis. For that reason, the embroidery known as German embroidery in the region of Kahramanmaras is also called as Maras embroidery in some foreign sources.

In the source called Nakis (embroidery), Korkusuz (1992) mentioned that local embroidery which developed in 19th century was applied to various goods wherein one of them was a German needle or a plain needle. In the research carried out on German embroidery in the region, a plethora of information was obtained. It was found in the field of study that this embroidery is known in the region for a long time and it is traditional embroidery, but the reason why it is called German embroidery is not known by the source people. It was striking that one of the authors encountered the decorations on throw pillows, clothes and on the collars of dresses made with German embroidery in almost all houses when he visited the city of Kahramanmaras in 1968. It was told that this embroidery is difficult to make and some embroiderers made it so well and that he saw some ladies producing this embroidery. When we wanted to determine this embroidery that was encountered in another region and in the books with a project that we conducted in the year 2013, we encountered very few samples and the people making it. We also found that it was not taught to the present generation (Akpınarli, 2019).

German embroidery is preferred because of its easiness in application and it is a type of embroidery wherein the appearance of the right and wrong sides is completely different. While a stitch is formed on the wrong side, the floor is formed with bottom and top transitions with the intensity to fill the inside of the design drawn on the right side. German embroidery is embroidered by tenting it on the frame if its size is large and it is embroidered on the hoop in the small-sized products.

German embroidery is divided into two groups. The first one is the plain stitch, which is popularly known as atlasloma in other cities as well. The second one is the secret stitch [twisted stitch known as irka (Tokmajian, 2010, p. 5)].



Figure 1. The stages of German embroidery and its right and wrong sides

Table 1. German embroidered products chosen as samples

Product information	Product picture	Product detail
<p>Type of product: Clothing decoration Production year: 20th century Sizes: 190 × 90 cm Fabric used: Cotton Thread used: Cotton Source: Gulten (2018)</p>		
<p>Type of product: Pillowcase Production year: 1950 Sizes: 47 × 47 cm Fabric used: Woollen Thread used: Cotton Source: Tokmajian (2010, p. 108)</p>		
<p>Type of product: Cloth Production year: 1940 Sizes: 57 × 100 cm Fabric used: Cotton Thread used: Cotton Source: Tokmajian (2010, p. 194)</p>		
<p>Type of product : Pillowcase Production year : 1970 Sizes : 50 × 50 cm Fabric used : Velvet Thread used: Cotton Source: Tokmajian (2010, p. 361)</p>		

Type of product: Cloth
Production year: 20.yy
Sizes: 100 × 80 cm
Fabric used: Cotton
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Leman Yasar



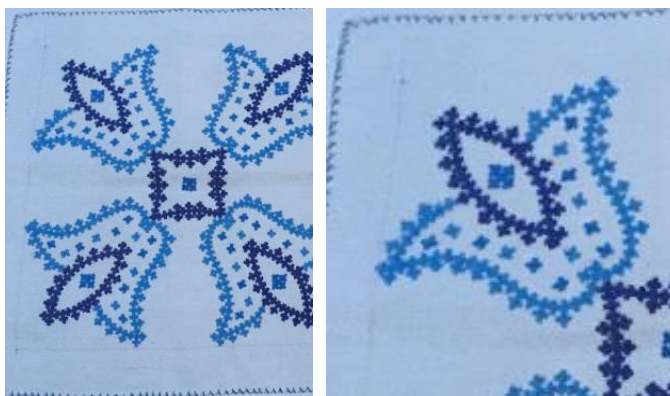
Type of product: Pan Holder
Production year: 2000
Sizes: 35 cm
Fabric used: Silk
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Tokmajian (2010)



Type of product: Pillowcase
Production year: 1968
Sizes: 120 × 90 cm
Fabric used: Cotton
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Mehtap (2014)



Type of product: Throw Pillow
Production year: 1930–1940
Sizes: 32 × 32.5 cm
Fabric used: Cotton
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Tokmajian (2010, p. 361)



Type of product: Pillowcase
Production year: 1940
Sizes: 40 × 40 cm
Fabric used: Cotton
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Sevinc (2015)



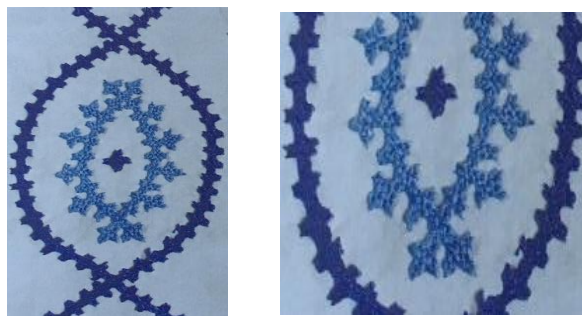
Type of product: Table cloth
Production year: 1945
Sizes: 50 × 50 cm
Fabric used: Cotton
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Sevinc (2015)



Type of product: Kitchen Apron
Production year: 1940
Sizes :-
Fabric used: Cotton
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Tokmajian (2010, p. 181)



Type of product: Umbilical cord cloth of a new-born baby.
Production year: 1943
Sizes: 94 × 13 cm
Fabric used: Cotton
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Tokmajian (2010)



Type of product: Table cloth
Production year: 1945
Sizes: 90 × 90 cm
Fabric used: Cotton
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Bedriye (2015)



Type of product: Cloth
Production year: -
Sizes: 100 × 90 cm
Fabric used: Cotton
Thread used: Cotton
Source: Gulden (2018)



Cotton fabric and cotton thread were preferred in all the 14 German embroidery products investigated. The types of products are mostly cloths, throw pillows, pillows, kitchen aprons and various features. Even though only one colour is common in embroidery, there are more colourful samples. Blue cotton thread on white fabric is the mostly preferred colour.

3. Conclusion

As it is clear in this paper, embroidery is an art and its techniques are mostly universal. It is the traditional values that make it special. Embroidery is also a tool of communication. It bares profound meanings inside. It is one of the styles through which a human being expresses himself and conveys his thoughts. Therefore, embroidery forms a visual language.

The living conditions and industrialisation process in the region affected the handicraft arts and artists; even so, an improvement was obtained in hand embroidery because of the tradition of trousseau. German embroidery in the production stages uses fewer colours and the original design feature is mostly embroidered by drawing double lines parallel to each other. Today, it is being revived in the region of Kahramanmaras and is taught in public education centres. In order to revive German Embroidery, it should be taught in formal education institutions as well. Exhibiting the works will contribute to the promotion of the products in both the country and foreign countries by working touristy and gift products with their new fields of usage.

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