

A View on Consumption History of Turkey during the Period of Modernization

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Consumption history of Turkey for a period of about 80 years is analyzed through two novels which are from the beginning of this 80 years period (1890s), and from 1970s. "The Love of Automobile" and "Noontime in Yenisehir" are the novels which are analyzed, and the authors are Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem and Sevgi Soysal, respectively. Content analysis has conducted in terms of themes which were determined before the research procedure. Themes are goods, shopping environments, entertainment environments, and some reflections of consumption. There are also some sub-categories under general themes of consumption. As a consequence, we can say that the modernization thought of Turkish society has no change during the period analyzed. Consumption which takes place in various forms is a very meaningful reflection of that modernization idea.

The purpose of the study is to trace the consumption in Turkish Society for the late period of 19th century to 20th century. Study has taken the consumption in a broader perspective through which different aspects of it may be criticized such as using or consuming goods or services in daily life, leisure, fashion and clothing, manners which could not be separated from the ritual nature of consumption. Besides, environments of shopping, consuming or entertaining in which different types of consumption may be witnessed have taken into account as a part of consumption.

Modernization movement in Turkey, which has been accepted as being Westernization in particular, dates back about two centuries. After Ottoman Empire's dominance to its historical rivals had changed to the disadvantage of it, the administration of the Empire began to search for ways to capture the superiority of Modern Europe (Karpas 2006). Besides, the influences of Europe might be witnessed in some parts of the society in terms of their daily lives. During that transformation period, particularly some classes that had the opportunity to be in touch with the West followed it. They began to wear clothes, spend their time and consume in the western style (Özer 2006). That change was highly restricted during the Ottoman era as ordinary people of Ottoman Empire living in Anatolia was totally far from breathing the change. However, the new Turkish Republic made that change spreading across the country

through formal revolutions. Putting it shortly, the modernization project which began more than two centuries ago keeps going.

RESEARCH

The first part of the research, which has been conducted through Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem's novel "The Love of Automobile", makes it possible to make interpretations related to the consumption at the end of 19th century. At the second part, Sevgi Soysal's novel which was authored at the beginning of 1970s has given us some clues related to the consumption at the time. We have studied both novels by content analysis which conducted through the themes which were determined before the procedure. These themes were chosen deliberately as they display the consumption extensively and some other marketing related topics were chosen as well, since we got some information supporting our interpretations about the consumption by these marketing related topics. Comparing the results about these two periods, we have made interpretations related to the consumption for the periods of novels and the change of consumption from the end of 19th century to the 1970s in Turkish society.

At the last quarter of the 19th Century, at the Fall of the Ottoman Empire Turkish society was experiencing an early modernization period, for the most part who could interact with Western values (Meriç 2007). Particularly Istanbul was the main scene of this experience since it was the capital of the Empire and the people who had the chance to undergo this period deeply were the residents of the city. During this period particularly in Istanbul, some part of the society who was mostly high executives of the state or minorities began to live like Europeans. Consumption in the broad sense may give remarkable clues about this period and these people who had great desire to live like bourgeoisie. They began to use or consume products or services which were imported from European countries and to entertain like Europeans. Shortly put, pioneers of the consumption in the Ottoman Empire might be classified as people from the palace and generals, diplomats and bureaucrats, people with bourgeoisie affectation and

minorities and merchants, students and intellectuals, some people who inherited a fortune (Orçan 2004, 81).

The first novel we examined named *Araba Sevdası* (The Love of Automobile) was written by Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem who is accepted by literature authorities as one of the leading Turkish novelists of his time (Bakircioglu 2004, 40). Probably the most important characteristic of the novel is its realistic style, which is also the first Turkish novel written in this style. The events took place in 1870s and the main character is a young man called Bihruz and his behaviors reflected the characteristics mentioned above. Bihruz is the son of an Ottoman general and educated insufficiently by private teachers at home. Choosing branded products and clothes and being eager to show these belongings to people around him are manifestations of his conspicuous consumption pattern. Riding his landau (a four-wheeled, two-seated carriage) and showing off around especially at expensive entertainment places gives him so much pleasure. Furthermore, he tries to speak French in order to show the people around him how cultivated he is (Ekrem 2003). Actually, Rezaizade Mahmud Ekrem criticizes behaviors of his main character Bihruz in a sarcastic way. The author expresses his main character's behaviors without adding any advice just in their natural occurrence in order to reflect the general pattern of behavior of the social class which is represented by his main character. As the author has no concern such as guiding the society, he only ascertains the phenomenon which is the effort of westernization that takes place in the wrong way. Besides, the main character is a representative of pioneers of consumption as a young man inherited a fortune from his deceased father and thanks to this fortune he may live without working.

The other novel which we examine named *Yenişehir 'de Bir Öğle Vakti* (Noontime in Yenişehir) was written by Sevgi Soysal who was the author of realistic novels about societal problems and she won Orhan Kemal Novel Award (a prestigious novel award given to a novel which was published in previous year) in 1974 by this novel. There are different characters in the novel who are the representatives of different layers of the society. These different people from different socio-cultural parts of the society exhibits different lifestyles in general and different consumption patterns in particular. One of these characters with whom we encounter at the beginning of the novel named Ahmet is working as a salesclerk in a drapery store. Behaviors and attitudes of customers and their communication practices with Ahmet during their buying instances give us valuable hints to make inferences and interpretations about the consumers and consumption patterns of the time (Soysal 2007). Ahmet as a youngman from the lower income level of the society is also being illustrated during the beginning part of the novel. He has so enthusiastic about having luxury goods, and particularly through what he wears we may understand that. During the following parts of the novel we see some other important characters who may

give us valuable insights related to those different layers of the society. To put them by their names in the sequence of the novel; Ahmet (male), Hatice (female), Necip (male), Mehtap (female), Güngör (male), Prof. Salih (male), Mevhibe (female), Doğan (male), Ali (male), Olcay (female), Necmi the shoeshiner (male) and Aysel (female) are the other characters of the novel. The author let us know them by telling their stories. Actually most part of the events take place around some people who are friends or members of a family. Doğan and Olcay are the children of Prof. Salih and Mevhibe. Ali is a close friend of Doğan and from a totally different social class which is lower compared with the class which Doğan is a member of. As a matter of fact, author questions the society through these two young men's distinctions. Doğan as a member of highly educated, upper class becomes entangled in contradictions especially getting closer and closer with Ali. On the other hand, his sister Olcay experiences the same difficulties and questioning her socio-cultural class in terms of values which derived during the modernization period. Both Doğan and Olcay are in quite an awkward position since they notice most of these values do not fit in with what they see in the outer world which is barely similar to that of their isolated, hygienic world. Put it simply, author criticizes the society by revealing the situation of the time and most importantly she makes these critiques by manifestations of these three young people. Looking at the other people listed above, other important characters who complete the general picture are coming from different layers of the society, and some sort of difficulties which they go through make them realistic, opportunist and corrupted. Their families, friends, jobs, backgrounds, goals and other material which give hints related to their lives and personalities make it possible to draw inferences about different layers of the society. A salesclerk at the store (Ahmet), a retired teacher (Hatice) who exhibits the classical symptoms of generation gap through her unending critiques about young people, an old man (Necip) who inherited a considerable fortune from his father and with many similarities to Bihruz of "Love of Automobile", a young female (Mehtap) bank clerk from a low income working family, a rich and corrupted commercial man (Güngör), a scholar (Prof. Salih) who is a son of a slum quarter grocer, Prof. Salih's wife (Mevhibe) who is the safekeeper of the isolated and hygienic world mentioned above, a gypsy man (Necmi the shoeshiner) who observes this world from the outside like a stranger, and a young prostitute (Aysel) with a poignant life story are other important parts of the entire picture. Late 60's and early 70's are important times to make interpretations on, since there was a great political and economic chaos and instability in Turkey. The author sheds light on the period through examining the different layers of the society. She gives us the opportunity to witness the time by observing the lives of characters from those different social classes. Shortly put, we may understand how all those people go

through that wearing change which is a testimony to the modernization of nation.

As we mentioned before, our purpose is to infer conclusions about how the consumption changes during the modernization. All we have told about these two novels at the previous part of the paper let us know circumstances in which the consumption activity occurs. As the people themselves shape their personal consumption patterns by being influenced by the society, it requires to understand different layers of it in order to draw conclusions for the society in general. Different social classes of the society have their own consumption patterns which are both unique and in interaction with those of other social classes. We may see that uniqueness and interaction in some parts of both novels.

From Ottoman Empire to Republic of Turkey, differentiation of consumption is the main subject of our research which conducted from the viewpoint of two novels from different periods. While doing the research, we have made a content analysis of these two novels at the same time in terms of consumption criterion. Consumption activities have been studied by content analysis of novels in terms of consumption patterns, products or services being consumed or used. In our study, we have made a material culture analysis to some extent which would give us the opportunity to understand the relations among characters and their material belongings. We will also be making an ethnographic research and our ethnographers are the authors of novels who reach to some critical and interpretive conclusions about the society through their realistic observations, as well. Material culture analysis will give us the information for the interpretation of consumption patterns of characters in novels. Through comparisons of these interpretations which will be derived from novels, we will be able to draw conclusions about the change in consumption from Ottoman Empire to Republic of Turkey. Differentiation in consumption occurring in the modernization period will probably be revealed through consumption themed data which will be gathered from novels. Considering these two novels as significant witnesses of their times, important clues about consumption dimension of Turkish Modernization will probably be obtained through the tool of document study. Novels are important sources to understand the society and the time (Finn 2003, Çayır 2008).

Themes of consumption through which content analysis has been conducted are goods, shopping environments, entertainment environments, some reflections of consumption. Under the general category of goods; we examined household furnitures and other appliances, all sorts of perishable consumption products including food and drink, clothes, transportation vehicles including private or public ones. Brands and fashion are also taken into consideration under the category of goods. Under the general category of entertainment environments; we examined restaurants, bars, theaters, promenades, and

cafes. Under the general category of shopping environments we have examined shops and particular ones which are mentioned by their names in novels, and other sorts of shopping environments or barbershop and tailor's shop. Under the general category of some reflections of consumption we examined media and advertising, novel and etiquette.

Particularly, some parts of novels give a great deal of material in terms of categories. On the other hand, all along some parts of novels it is too difficult to find any material to use in reaching conclusions in terms of consumption. Anyway, examining these two books in a broader perspective, it is possible to find out some material at least in indirect connection with the consumption. The themes we mentioned at the preceding paragraph are our guides to trace the consumption even in too difficult cases.

First, we describe some important places in which most of the events take place and characters spend their time. Çamlıca Garden at the Anatolian bank of Istanbul is described at the beginning of "The Love of Automobile" almost in all details, in which most of the important events of the novel will take place. The garden is one of the most preferable promenades with various entertaining or dining places, and landscaping practices such as artificial lakes and bridges in it. It is highly preferable among the people in Istanbul from different social classes of the time. Particularly some people from upper social class with their phaetons go there to stroll, such as Bihruz does. The garden is also a remarkable place for those people from upper class to act upon the etiquette of Modern West. To put it briefly, Çamlıca Garden is an extremely appropriate place to demonstrate the degree of being Western or Modern for the people such as Bihruz.

At the beginning of "Noontime in Yenişehir" a store called Tezkan which caters to a clientele mostly from upper social class is described by the author in details in terms of merchandise, salesclerks and managers of the store, and customers. The interaction among those workers and customers which is actually a highly complicated negotiation is illustrated along the first part. The environment of store in which the unending negotiation procedures and even sometimes considerable controversies occur is an exactly appropriate place to see how ambitious a modern consumer could be. In the continuing part of the first chapter of the novel some other shopping environments which are totally different from the store mentioned first are described. Actually the environment is the street and street vendors are the people who try to sell goods of inferior quality to the people from lower social classes. Although the quality of environment and goods is different, what goes on in both environments is exactly the same phenomenon. Different people with different life stories act in the similar way in order to have some belongings which are extremely questionable in terms of their actual necessities.

After these important, places we should mention the horse-carriage landau of Bihruz. He attaches so much importance to the landau, and when he loses it his psychology is extremely negative. The car has a symbolic meaning for Bihruz as an indicator of being modern and classy. Actually this thought is exactly like the thought of Güngör who is a character in "Noontime in Yenişehir".

Looking at the household furniture, we first examine the mansion in which Bihruz and his family live. It is a richly decorated house with a quite big, separated, private part for Bihruz, with his working office in it. Furniture in the house is in the western style, but the traditional Turkish style which separates women and men during most of their daily lives in the house is protected. Simply put, Bihruz has his private part of the house as being the male individual. Besides, there is a library in the house and another one in the basement. Bihruz and his family have two houses, one of which is for summers and the other one is for winters. This is a widespread practice among the people of the upper social class in Istanbul at the time.

The houses in which characters of "Noontime in Yenişehir" live are not as luxurious as the house of the main character of the first novel. Necip's house with valuable and classical furniture, and Güngör's house with imported material from Italy might be exceptions to this. Prof. Salih and Mevhibe live in a modest apartment house with their son and daughter. Ali's family lives in a house with low-priced and simple household furniture, which is in a slum area. However, all those characters live in different neighborhoods of Ankara which reflected their social class.

As the second part of goods we examine food and drink. In both cases, it is obvious that food or drink is also considered as a symbol of modernization at least by some parts of the society. For example Bihruz drinks French coffee when he goes to Beyoğlu and goes to a restaurant named Bastiyano (he prefers to go to this restaurant because of its foreign name) for dinner, or salesclerk Ahmet and his girlfriend eat a sandwich which is considered as a sort of societal manifestation to the life.

Clothes of characters give us worthwhile information related to their lifestyle, social class and consumption patterns. Bihruz of "The Love of Automobile" attaches importance to his attire in an exaggeratingly high level. That attitude actually stems from why Bihruz wears these elegant clothes. He wears them in a conspicuous manner to attract the attention of people around. He follows the fashion of Europe and wears clothes made by famous tailors of Beyoğlu (a region in Istanbul). In spite of the fact that he has many clothes in his wardrobe, he goes to tailors for new suits or some other sorts of clothes on all occasions without any hesitation. He always prefers the branded clothes or other stuff complementing his clothing.

At the beginning of "Noontime in Yenişehir" we see Ahmet the salesclerk as a young man who considers clothing so crucial. As he thinks that it is a sort of investment to be in clothes which are chic, he spends

almost all his money for clothes which could never be bought by someone in his social class actually (Soysal 2007, 22). It is also possible to see that Ahmet wears those clothes in a conspicuous manner like Bihruz. He shows those expensive clothes to people in his neighborhood. There is also another man in the same novel which is in a quite similar attitude to Ahmet's. Necip wears plus-fours with valuable buttons from Scotland (Soysal 2007, 49). One of his buttons is dropped down and broken. On the other hand Ali wears very simple and low-priced clothes which are the indicators of his social class at the same time. Necmi the shoeshiner is a remarkable person to be observed in terms of clothing (Soysal 2007, 222). He always wears colorful, silk shirts and shoes shining like mirror. Güngör the corrupted commercial guy always wears clothes which reflected his image as a businessman. (Soysal 2007, 87) He thinks that suits made from British fabric make him look like a diplomat. The main purpose of that sort of attire is to sell something to his customers by the image of trust. Putting all these people's relationship with the clothing shortly, we may say that clothes are not just pieces of fabrics and have deep social and symbolic meanings. All of the people we have mentioned use their clothes as status symbols or wear them in a conspicuous manner. Besides, we must take into consideration brands and stores with the clothes. Mostly the places from where we buy our clothes are significant and generally we let the people around us know from which store we have bought clothes that we wear. Brands are important status symbols through which we convey messages about us. Fashion is another important point related to the consumption. Bihruz of "Love of Automobile" follows the French style like many other individuals from his social class as it was an inclination to follow French style among the people who saw particularly France as the Modern West. Living like a European was some sort of Westernization perception among the people from upper social class of the time in Ottoman Empire. In order to implement that they arranged their daily lives in the Western style, they used European goods, they spoke in a language semi-Ottoman and semi-French which actually made no sense. Therefore, Bihruz, as we have told his characteristics, is an exact stereotype of this class with admiration to Europe. Since the characters in "Noontime in Yenişehir" are from different layers of the society, their point of views to the fashion would be various. Some are from lower-class of the society and that reality may restrict their behavior to follow the fashion. However, the social class or the environment may influence the attitude in the opposite way like in the example of the salesclerk Ahmet's behaviors. He follows the current trends and finds the way to have those items of the latest fashion. As the actors like Alain Delon are role models in his mind, he has to be careful about his attire, even though his father says clothes have little importance. One of his favorite activities for spare times is window-shopping. He wanders down the street and chooses shoes, jackets, shirts, coats. During this

continual pleasure walks he eliminates some of these clothes and put some others in place of these. Then he makes plans to buy those items by his limited wage.

Under the general category of entertainment environments we examined restaurants, bars, theaters, promenades and cafes. Looking at the "The Love of Automobile", entertainment environments are remarkable places to understand the consumption and the society. Bihruz wastes most of his time at those places when he is out of his house. Çamlıca Garden, as we described before, is a noteworthy place to observe and understand the change that the society experiencing. The society with all its variations shows that change in terms of consumption patterns. Besides, there are some other places of entertainment which are typically similar to entertainment places in Europe; actually that is why Bihruz goes to those places. Restaurants or cafes in the quarter of Beyoğlu are other places Bihruz goes. Entertainment places in the Western style are notable examples of Ottoman modernization, as we may see the people from different layers of society in some of these places. In "The Noontime in Yenişehir" there are so many places to entertain for all the people from different parts of the society. Our characters go these places for the lunch, such as salesclerk Ahmet and his girlfriend or Güngör and his girlfriend. The place where Ahmet and his girlfriend go is a fast-food restaurant where they eat sandwiches (Soysal 2007, 25). It is just one of the fast-food restaurants which surround the entire Ankara. A theatre which is the place where Ali and Doğan have met first actually is the place where Doğan's fiasco of documentary film screening has taken place. This documentary film was intended to be the mirror for the misery of slum quarters of Ankara through showing the conditions of children. However, that movie-making activity is just a sort of game for Doğan who actually may not be able to understand those people and their situation through the viewpoint that shapes by his isolated and hygienic world. Young characters of the novel, namely Ali, Doğan, and Olcay criticize the world and the country, therefore the cinema particularly in the form of documentary is a useful tool to manifest that critique.

Shopping environments in "The Love of Automobile" are primarily the shops from which Bihruz buys some clothes and some other stuff complementing his clothes. He also goes to the tailor's shop, barbershop and bookstore which are in Beyoğlu and they are stores with the clientele of upper-class. These stores are apparently very-well known among the people of upper-class at the last quarter of 19th century. The most important shopping environment in "The Noontime in Yenişehir" novel is Tezkan Store which we described in details before. It is a drapery store. The novel begins with a quite general approach through which a place where many people gathers in. Actually this beginning is a general look at the society during one of its most ordinary activities which shows its strong connection to the Modernism. The store is full of various goods which

are mostly bought by women, and their relations with the salespeople during the shopping process are delineated. The necessity of shopping process is questioned at this part of the novel since most part of this process is spent by meaningless dialogues or selection routines. Another shopping place in "The Noontime in Yenişehir" is Big Store (Büyük Mağaza) which is supermarket. Hatice is there for the periodical shopping for daily needs. The store is described in details, and through this description it is apparent that the store is a typical supermarket. Besides, during her shopping process we may understand that Hatice is a highly conscious shopper.

Looking at the reflections of consumption, Bihruz of "The Love of Automobile" is very careful in exhibiting French style etiquette. Talking to people around him, eating and sitting at the table for dinner or lunch and some other daily routines give us hints about the European style manners of Bihruz. He also reads newspapers in French, despite the fact that he barely understands. Bihruz acts like all other people from his social class who import the physical appearance and etiquette of Europeans. We observe different people from different social classes in "Noontime in Yenişehir". So reflections of consumption in their lives will be different. In Ali's house it is impossible to say that there is an application of formal etiquette which is strictly put. On the other hand at Doğan and Olcay's house the application of etiquette is very significant and their mother is the controller of the practice.

CONCLUSIONS

In the study we have made content analyses of two novels from two periods. The first one is "The Love of Automobile" which aims to illustrate and criticize the Westernization process which occurs during the falling period of Ottoman Empire. The second one is "The Noontime in Yenişehir" is about some people from different social layers who are experiencing a period of social and political depression. The Modernization has taken some distance at the time of "The Noontime in Yenişehir".

The analyses of two novels show us there is no big difference between the period of the first novel and the second one. In other words, the societies of two different periods that are about 80 years far from each other perceive the Modernization in similar ways. Briefly, we may say that Turkish society considers the Modernization as Westernization and this change takes place in the form of adopting the material side of the West, in other words the image rather than the content. On the other hand, both novels give us the opportunity to see some critical approaches come from the inside of the society to this societal change. These critiques from the society are questioning and even conflicting. Through these two novels we may see these reactive approaches to the change, and novels also analyze these reactions. Probably these

conflicting and questioning approaches will make it possible for the society to arrive at a point which is very close to the ideal one.

As may be understood from analyses of these two novels, consumption pattern analyses may be conducted through novels by the help of consumption goods, places of consumption and entertainment, other places and relationships that mentioned in them. Despite the fact that these novels are fictional, they are material culture elements which may contribute to understand the phenomena, and are significant tools for ethnographic researches.

That sort of researches is crucial particularly for the history of marketing and consumption as these researches on the basis of Turkish Modernization are extremely limited.

In the future, by using various elements of material culture, analyses with more details may be made. In addition to increasing the number of novels analyzed, movies, tales and stories, belongings for daily use, and other researches analyzing social developments may be taken into consideration for making more meaningful analyses.

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