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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOME OF ROMAN AND HEBREW INFLUENCES IN OTTOMAN CULTURE

Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa

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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.

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Introduction:-

The policy of Ottoman dynasty to Roman and Hebrew communities:-

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

About its people: The Ottoman people are various, including Turk, Arabian, Kurd, Berber and Mameluke. Also, people from Bosnia, Albani, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungaria, Slavo, Rumani, Armenia, Georgia, and Egypt are also counted as habitats of Ottoman empire. Among those peoples, Hebrew people are those contributing to the variety of Ottoman residential community. It is estimated that Hebrew people are numbered approximately at 50 million in population. About the government: Sultan is the most powerful ruling person. Ottoman empire applies Islam laws, and Sheri, Koran and Hadith in its regulating the society, moral principles, religion, and economy for all of its peoples. In the beginning, Sheri law is applied for Muslim people in the Arabian. For those issues not demonstrated in Sheri law, Ottoman Sultans call for Canon law, which is approved by Muslim scholars, or ulema communities.

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

Corresponding Author:- Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa

Ottoman policy toward Roman community:-

Ottoman empire is an Islam state, with the ruling of Muslim Sultan. Muslim people of the Ottoman empire are free to participate in legislation, education and religion procedures and entities. However, the Ottoman army recruits mostly Roman slaves. The slaves are recruited, trained, and promoted in the army forces, which protect Ottoman empire and its sultans. The slaves go through a careful investigation and classification procedure right after they are recruited to the army. 90% of them will be deployed to Minor Asia to serve land lords. They learn Turkish language, war skills and are converted to Muslims. Sooner or later, they will be deployed Constantinople and join the army in Constantinople. The rest of 10% of them are those with striking appearance and skill will be trained to be commanders for the empire. Ottoman empire opens a dynasty school to train military and administration skills for these elite 10% force. After graduation, they will be appointed to managing posts at provinces, from where they will be promoted to the highest ranking of the dynasty.

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

Ottoman sultans often send talented slaves to rule faraway provinces, both in administration and military. When wars come, these slaves are commanders and generals, representing the local military to bring forces to support sultans and discuss with sultans about war plans. When there is no war, these slaves rule the lands for sultan. They have no salary from the dynasty but they will have profit from the lands that they are given by sultans. The profit is counted only in period that they serve sultans. It is concluded that a strong Ottoman empire is powered by a strong force of Roman slaves who are converted to Islam. From 1453 to 1623, among 47 chancellors, 5 are Turk, 11 are Albanian, 11 Slavo, 6 Greek, 1 Italian, and 10 from non Muslim lands.

It is noted that inside Ottoman empire, Roman and Hebrew habitats are allowed to practice their religions. This policy is a part of Ottoman policy to extend its territory. Also, it is in the law of Islam that Hebrew and Roman are children of Allah. However, Roman and Hebrew communities should have their own residential areas, and with their own rulers. The Hebrew and Roman residents are subject to a special tax and they are prepared to hand over their sons to the government when needed. Therefore, during 5 centuries of Turk ruling in Ottoman empire, Balkan people maintain their legacy. Since then, the Greek people have applied their law of religion freedom and their autonomous government under Ottoman ruling. All Ottoman sultans choose a peaceful political approach to Roman communities. When Constantinople is captured by Mehmet II, he announced that he will protect the church. And he soon commands that no Roman is executed. And he soon offers the same privilege of the previous government for the new priest. Gennadios, the first priest of the Ottoman dynasty is granted with his stamp, 1000 gold coins, and a horse with glamorous royal harness. The priest is not only responsible for religious issues in his parish, but also head of a committee to make decisions for civil issues in his parish, involving fines, prison sentences.

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

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

Hebrew people are well known for their business goodness, as well as their craft skills, which will contribute in a good way to Ottoman empire. Explosive chemical, firing powder, and cannon production by Hebrew men are very famous. Blacksmithing and crafting, cloth, glassware and metal production by Hebrew are so developed that they have their own industry communities. In 1493, David and Samuel Ibn Nahmias, two Hebrew businessmen open a printing house to serve the Ottoman government. Ottoman sultans employ Hebrew people to serve the government at all levels, even in the royal palace and diplomatic authorities. This will pave the way to some notable Hebrew men to reach the highest level in the management posts. Hekim Yakup Pasa, a Hebrew man, is in charge of the

national budget. Is'hak Pasha, a Hebrew doctor, is sooner the doctor of the royal family. Abraham de Castro, a Hebrew noble man, is responsible for budget for Egyptian land. In century 16, Joseph Nasi, a Hebrew man, is promoted to Sanjak bey, provincial governor of Naxos. In 1324, the first synagogue of Hebrews constructed in Bursa and currently the praying location of the local Hebrew people. In Istanbul, Hebrew synagogue Bet Yakoov is now a famous religious practicing location of Hebrew community in Turkey. Synagogue Bet Yakoov is constructed in 1878 when Ottoman dynasty reaches its peak of prosperity.

The influences of Roman and Hebrew legacy in Ottoman culture: Architecture, urban civilization, and craftsmen:-

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

About architecture:-

Ottoman culture is famous with mosques, citadels, palaces. Sinan Pasha is a remarkable architect of Ottoman dynasty. He is born in a stone carving Greek family in 1589. He is converted to Islam, and soon is promoted for his talent of ship and bridge building. He builds mosques and palaces. He is the chief constructor of the royal family during periods of Sultan Suleiman, Selim II and Murad III. He builds 343 works, including 81 mosques, 55 hospitals, 34 palaces, 33 bath house. His students Mehmet Isa Efendi and Mehmet Ismail Efendi build Taj Mahal in India. And his student Sedefkar Mehmed Agha builds mosque Sultan Ahmed in Istanbul.

About urban civilization:-

An Ottoman urban city is typical with a mosque, markets, public bath houses and military buildings in the downtown. A palace can be constructed in the centre of the city. Each district is called haras. Important Ottoman cities are Istanbul, Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo, Izmir, Edirne, Thesaloniki. They are located on the route linking Europe and Asia.

A typical Ottoman city is combined Roman, Hebrew and Arabian features:-

All Ottoman urban cities grow from previous cities. Once a city is captured, the existing church in the downtown is converted into a mosque. Around that mosque are residents, and outside is a bazaar. And outer that city is the city wall. A citadel will be added in the central city to house the government and their family. The mosque is not only for Muslim but it is only a military spot. Bazaar, and all architecture works are located on the route leading to the outer gate of the city wall House with wooden sloping covers, mosque with domes, and narrow stone streets running to the city wall gates, bazaars, quiet resident areas, and busy commercial locations are main characters of Ottoman cities. Bazaars are basically two circles. While the inner circle is for stores, the outer circle is for manufacturing glassware, blacksmithing, gold, silver, carpet craftsmen.

About craftsmen:-

Ottoman culture is famous with craftsmen, artisans and artists are the same in Ottoman culture. Among crafting products, carpets are the most famous. Carpets are not only for flooring, but pieces of art. Carpets express social status and wealth of their owner. Carpets are used for halls, praying places, mosques, palaces and courts. Carpets are used outdoors and cover corridors. Royal carpets are masterpieces of art, with luxurious quality and fine gorgeous designs. Also, most of Ottoman royal carpets are made by Hebrew crafting artisans. Most of these Hebrew artisans are immigrants from Spain. Nowadays, in Islam museum in Berlin, there is a carpet made by Hebrew artisans in Spain in early century 14, this carpet pictures Ark of the Covenant.

Hebrew people in Spain are traders of cloth, silk and carpet. They also produce carpets. They live near rivers Salonica and Safed so that they can do dyeing, producing cloth and carpets. Moses Galante, a Hebrew rich man, owns large manufacturers of cloth and carpets. Moses Berab, Menachem Habavli and Reuben are famous Hebrew owners of large dyeing manufacturers sò hũ. The dominant style of Ottoman carpets are tulips, roses, carnations, hyacinths and long leaves, and waves. Ottoman carpets usually show lanterns, mosques in middle and with edges showing palm leaves, flowers, and columns. Columns are typical of Hebrew art. In century 17, an Arabian author named Mustafa Abdalla Hadshi Halfra writes that Hebrew artisans create the best carpets in the world.

In museum of University George Washington University and Museum of Textile in Washington, America, we can find a carpet made by Hebrew artisans in century 17. This carpet is found in Cairo, a province of Ottoman empire. It

is made from wool, and on it, there is a sentence from the Old Testament in Hebrew language. It has floral designs of Arabian art and column design typical of Hebrew culture. Apart from carpets, Hebrew artisans are famous with ceramics, lights, household decorations, and jewelry. Hebrew artisans are the best jewelry makers of Ottoman culture. They are located in land of current Eastern Turkey. For Ottoman royal family, jewelry is considered as savings, dowry, or treasure or wealth display. The Ottoman dynasty has a chancellor who is head of a workshop which designs and create jewelry, which has around 80 artisans, mostly Greek or Hebrew. One of the clearest influences of Hebrew culture in Ottoman jewelry is devil eye. Hebrew people believe that jewelry with devil eye will protect its owner from bad luck. Stamps of king David, stars of King Solomon are popular designs by Hebrew artisans on pieces of jewelry.

Conclusion:-

For 500 years, the Ottoman culture built its own characteristic legacy from different people groups. The legacy of Ottoman architecture, urban civilization and artisan craftsmen is enriched with a very clear impact of Roman and Hebrew legacies.

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