

“HILYE” AS A WAY OF EXPRESSION IN TERMS OF PHILOSOPHY OF ART

SANAT FELSEFESİ AÇISINDAN BİR YAŞAM BİÇİMİ OLARAK “HILYE”

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ÖZET

Hilye, Hz. Peygamber'den sonra yaşayan ancak onu görme şansını yakalayamamış insanlara Hz. Peygamberi daha iyi tanıtabilmek amacıyla oluşturulmuş kitap, şiir ve tablolarından oluşan sanat eserlerinin genel adıdır. Hilyenin hat formatı sadece Türklere has görsel bir anlatım olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu tür eser veren ilk hattat 17. yy da yaşamış olan Hafız Osman (1642-1698) olmuştur. Hilyenin “göbek” adı verilen bölümü ile “etek” bölümü arasında kalan alanda, Enbiya suresinin 107. Ayeti yer alır. “Biz seni ancak âlemlere rahmet olarak gönderdik.” Hz. Peygamberin fiziksel özellikleri hilyenin “göbek” bölümünde ortaya konurken, Hz. Peygamberin ahlaksal özellikleri de “etek” bölümünde yer alır. Hz. Peygamberin bu özelliklerini okuyan her sanatsever, o anki psikolojik durumu çerçevesinde farklı bir manevi duygu seli içinde kalır. Bu çalışmada Hilyenin insan üzerindeki bu etkisi ele alınacaktır. Bu makale Hafız Osman'ın sanat eserine dönüşmüş hilye tablosundan hareketle yazılmıştır. Edebiyatta hilyeler bu makalenin konusu değildir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hilye, Peygamber, Hafız Osman, Estetik Beğeni, Güzellik.

ABSTRACT

The hilyah is the general works of art, which include books, poetry, and plates produced to introduce the Prophet to those who lived after him and did not have a chance to see him. the calligraphic form of the hilyah appeared as a visual description unique to the Turks. The first calligrapher that produced such a work was Hattat Hafız Osman (1642-1698), who lived in the 17th century. In the area between the sections of the etek (“skirt” or lower part) and göbek (“belly”), the 107th verse of the chapter Anbiya is placed. “And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.” While the physical characteristics of the Prophet are mentioned in the göbek (“belly”), his virtues are written in the etek (“skirt” or lower part) section. Every art lover who reads these characteristics of the Prophet experiences a flood of spiritual emotions. In this study, will be discussed the effect of Hilye on human. Hilyahs in literature is not the subject of this article.

Keywords: Hilye, Prophet, Hafız Osman, Aesthetic Appreciation, Beauty.

1. INTRODUCTION

Art, that is as old as the history of humanity, can be described “*in broad terms, as the methods, knowledge, and rules related to the execution of an event or a task*” (Bozkurt, 2000: 15).

On the other hand, when considered in terms of written sources, humankind maybe learned how to draw before learning how to write. From this perspective, art and artistic activities are as old as the history of humankind.

The distinction between art and craft emerged as a result of art being diverse depending on the needs of individuals and becoming a source of income and making a living over time. This distinction resulted in the prominence of art when considered from a philosophical standpoint.

As a matter of fact, after Kant's distinction of beauty and good, the distinction of art and craft was clearly identified because Kant stated that only artistic activities that are purified from benefits such as benefiting from an art piece in terms of getting knowledge, profit, and advantages, and that are created

for art lovers only for aesthetic admiration and enjoyment should be considered as beautiful when considered in terms of criteria revealed in the definition of aesthetic. With this thought, craft was completely distinguished from art.

When this topic is considered from the perspective of aesthetics of Islam or understanding of beauty, it can be said that such a rooted distinction is not present. The reason for this is, when the Qur'an, the main source, is considered, beauty is not expressed just in a cognitive sense but also as a way of life in the daily life. Particularly the Nahl surah is a great example:

“He has created livestock; in them is warmth and benefits for you, and from them you eat. There is beauty in them for you when you bring them in the evening and send them in the morning. And they carry your loads to a land you could not have reached except with difficulty to yourselves. Indeed, your Lord is kind and merciful. And He created horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and as adornment. And He creates that which you do not know. (Nahl 16/5-8).

When the surah is evaluated, it is seen that the Qur'an used the words beneficial, useful, and good with the word beauty in the same meaning from an aesthetics perspective. In consideration from this perspective, it rejects all the understandings of aesthetics that were developed after Kant to exclude the metaphysical world and that were based on the truth that everything is in the physical world, and it reveals a new understanding of aesthetics within its own world.

2. AESTHETIC OBJECT AND SUBJECT RELATIONSHIP

Human being has the ability to acquire new knowledge by putting the knowledge he receives from what is happening around him and what he reads in a new format in his inner world. Due to this characteristic, human being takes up his own position as an aesthetic subject against the information he receives from his surrounding. This position that an aesthetic subject takes up on against an aesthetic object or art piece is defined as an *aesthetic position*. In other words, aesthetic position is the spiritual bond created between an aesthetic subject and aesthetic object. The creation of this bond, according to the concept of aesthetics developed after Kant, is a position emerged when considered from a perspective of pure aesthetic that is purified from characteristics such as receiving benefits or information. However, when considered from an Islamic aesthetics, departing from the Nahl surah verses 5-8, a position can be taken up both without being concerned, with the purpose of receiving benefit and information and with a concern of aesthetics. Because a Muslim who is concerned for aesthetics is to think about the consequences not only from a physical world standpoint but also from a metaphysical standpoint. In other words, a Muslim should consider the life after death when taking up an aesthetic position.

On the other hand, an aesthetic object or art piece should be evaluated as the embodiment of the interpretation that an aesthetic subject puts together the aesthetic senses that he receives from his surrounding in his inner world. From this perspective, when we mention aesthetic subject, we refer to a subjective artistic event. This subjectivity in aesthetic subject is shaped through the combination of aesthetic sense it brings along since birth, his education level, the society he lives in, family, religious beliefs and aesthetic preparedness. Beyond any doubt, aesthetic subjectivity is relevant in all aesthetic object or art piece created by the subject. Therefore, each society has a different sense of art. This difference is so clear that it is seen in society's sense of humor.

Right here, the question “why does human being create an art piece?” rises. In other words, why does human being feel the need to create an art piece?

The answer to this question can be given in three phases. The first phases is that an artist tries to catch the sense of immortality. In this context, every artist wants to be immortal. The artist, just like everybody else, knows that it is not possible to achieve this sense materially. However, artists want to taste this sense with the art pieces they create. Being remembered by their work and remainin in the agenda has the meaning of immortality for artists.

The second phase of creating an art piece is the message that an artist wants to convey to the society he lives in. Every artist has a message to convey to art-lovers. While this message is sometimes revealed openly, sometimes it is hidden in the art piece. The open or hidden message is perceived by the art-lovers. However, the message that is wanted to be perceived may not always be the way that the artist

wants because it is possible for art-lovers to make the sense that's revealed in their own world more prominent than the artist's message. In this case, the message the artist wants to convey does not have a meaning.

The last purpose of creating an art piece for an artist is the wish to be known. Maybe this wish has a place before the other two purposes because understanding of an artist triggers the effort to put forward his own art and the motivation to create new pieces.

When the art of hilye is considered with these three purposes, it is possible to see an artist peaking in terms of the sense immortality, the motivation to convey a message and the motivation to create art.

On the other hand, in addition to these purposes stated in the writing of hilye, purposes such as the Muslim artist's fear of idolizing the Prophet Mohammed, and expressing the love for the Prophet Mohammed can also be included. (Derman, 2000; 617).

3. LIVELINESS, EXPRESSION AND HILYE

Hilye which has a dictionary definition of "ornament, embellishment, necklace" also has a metaphorical definition of "creation, image, and good qualities" (Uzun, 1998, 18/44; Akyüz, 2016, 78-90). However, the real meaning of hilye should be understood as the name given to an art piece decorated with calligraphy and illumination obtained by placing the hadiths describing Prophet Mohammed's image or characteristics in terms of body as well as his behaviors in a book or one single painting. Additionally, there are hilyes created about the four khalifeds, with the announced companions of Prophet Mohammed, and about the elders of certain religions and sects. However, these hilyes were not created as paintings but remained as poems or proses. (Uzun, 1998; 18/44).

Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) considers beauty together with expression by replacing the concept of "beauty" with the concept of "expression." According to him, the best way to express emotions is *language*. (Tunali, 1984; 2).

The painting form of hilye is unique to Ottomans.(Derman, 1998; 18/47). However, there are many hilyes written as poems and proses before and during the Ottoman period.

"Liveliness" does not refer to the mobility in terms of biological means. Liveliness in the philosophy of art refers to the spiritual liveliness that emerges in a creature's attitudes and behaviors. In other words, it is the ultimate competence that species can reach to within its own species and to be able to express that confidence. For example, when we say a horse is more lively than a donkey, it means that the spiritual side of horses' movements have more expressive power. From this point of view, the liveliness and the power of expression in humans is more than other creatures. At the same time, differences in power of expression emerge in proportion to the increase or decrease in the spiritual liveliness in humans (Tunali, 1996; 205-206). With this purpose, the power of expression of Prophets become prominent within humans in terms of spiritual actions. On the other hand, the spiritual liveliness of Prophet Mohammed and the power of expression revealed in this liveliness is at the highest level among other prophets. When hilye is considered from this perspective, it is very important in terms of expression of Prophet Mohammed's spiritual liveliness.

Expression from the perspective of philosophy of art is product resulting from selection of human impressions done by mind through categorizing. This artistic product referred as expression is integrated with aesthetic pleasure and transferred to language. This transfer is an art piece finding voice or transforming into expression. (Turgut, 1993; 42-43). So, Hilye is the highest point of this expression because hilye is perceived as an art piece due to its external appearance but it reveals its actual artistic side through the meaning and expression it gains.

From this perspective, the expression revealed by hilye should be considered from two standpoints. Hilye comes to existence first in the mind and soul of an artist and then turns into expression. This is the first expression. The second way of expression is becoming expression by affecting the soul of the art-lover. Both expressions have different meanings because both the artist and the art-lovers carry the emotions of the moment they are in. In other words, every person who reads hilye has a different muse and meaning that they get from it. In fact, the same person can read the same hilye at different times and attribute different meanings to it by interpreting within his own psychology. This is a known fact that

Prophet Mohammed gave different answers to the same question according to the person's psychology. (Canan, 1998; 478-492). Hilye, when considered from this perspective, functions in accordance with Prophet Mohammed's behavioral mood.

Every individual has different understandings of values and moral. Due to this difference, two people facing the same event would highlight different aspects of the incident within their own emotions and thoughts. Departing from this reality, art-lovers reading or looking at hilye would evaluate Prophet Mohammed's characteristics based on their own perspectives.

For example, an art-lover who's in trade business would consider Prophet Mohammed's honesty in terms of commercial while an art-lover who is a teacher would evaluate the same aspect and derive meaning from an educational standpoint.

From an art theories perspective, an artist who creates Hilye faces the reality of the impossibility of re-writing a Hilye which is already written. This is considered as the creation and reflection theory in philosophy of art. According to this theory, an artist can create his art once. It is not possible to do same art for a second time because it is not possible to have the same emotions and thoughts of the artist when creating his art for the second time, and it is impossible to catch the time frame of when the art is produced. Therefore, it is not possible to bring back the timeframe and re-live it when the art piece is produced initially. Within the scope of this understanding, every art piece is one and it is never possible to create the same art piece again. Even if the same art piece is done again in terms of appearance, it is still not the same as the first one because the time is different and the emotions of the artist has changed. From this perspective, an art piece gains value with the artist's emotions and thoughts. (Turgut, 1993; 43). This perspective that emerges when considered from an artist point of view can be perceived as originality. An art piece should also be considered from the perspective of art-lovers which is an important detail in terms of creating the main purpose of an art piece. When these two perspectives - both the artist's and the art-lovers' - come together in an art piece, the art piece gains its real meaning. If we consider hilye from this point of view, each hilye is one and unique, and it's not possible to re-write the hilye in terms of both the artist's emotions and thoughts, and the time-frame. When considered from an art-lover standpoint, the same hilye painting can't be observed the second time with the same emotions because both the time and the art-lover's emotions and thoughts have changed. It is not possible to re-live these two differences. As Heraclitus (540-480 BC) stated, "no man ever steps in the same river twice" (Aster, 1999; 46). However, what is different in hilye from Heraclitus' quote is that it's repeated in terms of increasing the functionality of the art piece to convey the message of Prophet Mohammed to other people. Because every person who reads the hilye would understand a different aspect of the prophet. From this perspective, a hilye shows that men can step in the same river twice. However, in terms of the emotions and thoughts experienced when observing a hilye, it's not possible to step in the same river twice due to the experienced emotions. Hilye is differentiated from other art types with this aspect and it is a great example of how art can be done for people. Therefore, it is possible to consider hilye as an art style that is done for society. (Mutluel, 2013; 885)

A hilye artist loses consciousness when writing hilye. He disconnects himself from the outer world and focuses completely on the art piece he works on. He would be so happy within this time frame. Artists would have been free of all his troubles and walks in the world of art. This concept is defined as game theory in art. Like children whose worlds change when playing and enter the world of the game, the artist loses himself in the world of art. (Göz, Mutluel, 1996; 217). In other terms, both art and game extract people out of the stresses, fears and pressures of daily lives without having to pursue personal benefits. This is also liberalization of an artist. (Arslan, 1996; 217). However, in writing hilye, the artist moves beyond this happiness and liberalization which is to introduce Prophet Mohammed and help people to benefit from his good behaviors. The biggest quality that distinguishes hilye artist from other artists lies underneath this concept. During the timeframe of a hilye's existence, good deeds that will come from each person who reads it and benefits from it will also conduce to the artist who wrote the hilye. And this is source of happiness for the hilye artist. As this is a situation emerging from the meaning expressed by the hilye, it is an important distinction from other visual arts. Fundamentally this benefit exists in all calligraphy arts because all writing plaques consist of beautiful words and sentences that has an advise component. However, as Hilye describes the Prophet Mohammed and his figure and

morals, it has a different beauty which strengthens the positive impact it creates on people. (Mutluel, 2013; 886-887).

4. HILYE AS A PORTRAIT OF A PROPHET

Considering hilyes as portraits not only has a cognitive aspect but also an aspect that reveals a lifestyle. This is a main characteristic of the Islamic art. Because any art piece, for example the “*el-Kasibu Habibullah*” plaque that is hung in the Suleymaniye Mosque in a way that people can see as they’re leaving the mosque, represents two meanings during the time it’s hung on the wall. The first writing’s placement is an art object revealed by the illumination of the surrounding, and the embellishments while the second one is the content of the meaning that the sentence expresses. The first expression style reveals a cognitive understanding of art which is emphasized by Kant and philosophers after him, while the second expression style teaches *commercial honesty* which is a vital moral rule. (Mutluel, 2017; 95). This is a distinguishing character present in all Islamic arts and differentiates Islamic art from other understandings of art.

When we evaluate Hilye within this understanding of art, first we need to consider it as an aesthetic admiration. Aesthetic admiration is the pleasure and liking as a result of the value gained by an aesthetic subjects’ approach to an aesthetic object with an aesthetic attitude. (Cevizci, 1999; 318). On the other hand, aesthetic admiration is an aesthetic emotion emerging in individuals as personal and societal. Within this context, aesthetic admiration of individuals is shaped by the upbringing, education, geographical and racial factors, and beliefs. Thus, as each family’s admiration attitude is revealed differently, each society, race, and faith has differences in terms of aesthetic admiration. For example, an aesthetic subject which is admired by a person, family or society could not be admired by another family or society. If we had a photograph of Prophet Mohammed, the aesthetic admiration of that period and the Arab race would be prominent. Maybe the picture would not be admired due to differences between societies in terms of aesthetic admiration. However, a person reading a hilye brings Prophet Mohammed’s physical structure and his moral structure together and turn it into an aesthetic painting in his mind and consider it as the person that he admires the most in his own world. This means that the more the people read hilye, the more different prophet portrait will be created. So, each individual would draw the most beautiful prophet portrait in his own world of thought. At the same time, the danger of idolization which is present in paintings would be eliminated.

Another aspect of hilye which stands out in terms of philosophy of art is the placement of the verse “*And we have not sent you, except as a mercy to the worlds*” (*Embiya 21/19*). between the *belly* and the *skirt (lower part)* in designing the hilye. I believe the crucial piece of hilye is in this verse. Qur’an expressed the prominent characteristics of other prophets such as for Prophet David, it reads “*David was an excellent servant; indeed, he was one repeatedly turning back to Allah.*”(Sad 38/30). Considering this, what kind of characteristics would Prophet Mohammed have that for him Qur’an read, “*he was sent as a mercy to the worlds.*” Considering hilye, the answer to this question lies in the *belly* and *skirt* parts of the hilye. While Prophet Mohammed’s material beauty is revealed in the belly section, his moral beauty is revealed in the skirt section. Integration of these two beauties reveals the answer to the question on Prophet Mohammed being mercy to the worlds.

5. CONCLUSION

The tradition of Hilye first started with Prophet Mohammed’s figure and appearance in hadith books and continued to develop for many years. It took its final shape by Hafiz Osman tabulizing it as a tableau and became an art object in terms of shape and writing.

Hilye painting created by Hafiz Osman is an artistic activity unique to only Turkish calligraphists.

As in the general character of Islamic art, the most important aspect to consider in hilye art as well is that hilye is not just an art object but also a philosophy of life.

When considered from a perspective of art philosophy, the art of hilye is more powerful compared to other calligraphy arts in terms of liveliness and expression. The main factor that reveals this liveliness is that it represents Prophet Mohammed’s shape and moral life.

From the aspect of hilye, the characteristic of being a mercy stated in the verse in the Qur'an that reads "we sent you as a mercy to the worlds" (Anbiya, 21/107), lies in the expression of Prophet Mohammed's physical beauty in the *belly* section and his moral beauty in the *skirt* section together.

Aesthetic admiration is shaped by a person's education, beliefs, family background, the admiration of the society he grew up in, racial characteristics and the geography he lives in. Departing from this point, it is possible for an art-lover to be disappointed when seeing a picture of Prophet Mohammed. However, the shape and appearance of Prophet Mohammed emerged in the story would take shape within the frame of the art-lover's own admiration, he will consider the prophet as the most beautiful person in his own mind. This would also support the art-lover in terms of his faith.

Each hilye is one and only in terms of both the artist and the art-lover. As it is not possible to re-create the same hilye, it is also not possible to observe it with the same emotions. That's why each look at a hilye is another emotional intensity.

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