



Schematic of the visitor experience at Boncuklu

(1) Environmental change. To illustrate how different the local environment was 10,500 years ago, an interpreted garden will be developed adjacent to the Centre. Wetland environments will host the sorts of plants found during the excavations.

(2) Neolithic landscape context. Regional connections will be demonstrated through annotated regional/local maps showing the relative location of raw materials and other resources in the Neolithic landscape which have been found during excavations.

(3) Visual connection between Boncuklu and the Centre. To convey a sense of what the site may have looked like in the Neolithic and because there is little in the way of easy-to-observe upstanding remains, a scale model will be constructed within the Centre and a look-through image will be printed onto film and adhered to a window that overlooks the site.

(4) Scientific study. A significant feature of the research work at Boncuklu is the detailed processing and analysis of all finds, providing much of our new understandings about the Neolithic lifestyle. For instance, we understand the local environment and the diet of the Boncuklu residents better by studying phytoliths (silicon plant skeletons), and carbon and nitrogen isotope signatures in excavated bone fragments. In the new centre, a scientific interactive exhibit is planned to enable visitors to take part in the discovery process.

In implementing the interpretation plan, we are very fortunate to have secured funding from Hedef Alliance which will enable the Visitor Centre building to be constructed. Additional funding is currently being raised to deliver the fit-out of the centre, the garden and further phases. For more information about the project or to get involved, please contact Dr Douglas Baird at dbaird@liverpool.ac.uk.

Islamic fashion, economy and morality in modern Turkey

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This report presents an on-going anthropological research project on Islamic fashion and the articulation of economy and morality in contemporary Turkey. A first stage of fieldwork was carried out in Istanbul between March and June 2012, while I was the Post-doctoral Research Fellow of the British Institute at Ankara.

Since it first burst onto the scene, Islamic fashion has traversed different stages, stylistically and institutionally. Nevertheless, it has remained a controversial domain, nourishing anxieties among seculars and Islamists alike. In the 1980s, after decades in which the secular regime denounced veiling as 'backwards' and 'uncivilised', the Islamic revival movement brought it centre stage. However, Islamic women donned a stylistically unprecedented form of veiling, consisting of a large pinned headscarf, that completely covered the hair, neck and shoulders, and a long loose-fitting overcoat. In response to the increasing public visibility of this political style of veiling, the secular public vehemently voiced its fears that the modernisation of Turkish society would be reversed. The state banned the wearing of the headscarf in public institutions. The headscarf, fashionable or not, remains a highly charged political issue.

Fashion incorporated this politicised style of veiling and softened it, offering more colourful garments, smaller headscarves and ever more form-fitting overcoats. Although the requirement to cover the head and the neck completely remains a constant preoccupation for designers and manufacturers of *tesettür* garments, how this further translates into particular styles of dress is highly variable. And whether and to what extent the resulting styles and their marketing reflect Islamic values and virtues is a topic of on-going debate among seculars and Islamists alike.

Moreover, with the empowerment of an Islamic bourgeoisie that keenly embraces consumerism, wearing a certain style of veiling does not necessarily signify political affiliation and personal piety, but becomes a performance of distinction, in terms of class, taste, urbanity and gender. The wearers of fashionable Islamic outfits are often accused of moral weakness by seculars and Islamists alike, their clothing decisions thought to reflect consumer and aesthetic choices rather than political and religious convictions.

Today, Islamic fashion is a mature sector, with an ever increasing number of companies and designers offering a profusion of styles and marketing them through fashion shows, advertising, fashion magazines and specialist boutiques. This fashion is both high-profile and mass-produced, and it is incorporated into mainstream fashion cycles. In addition, this is a relatively normalised sector (i.e. not overtly ideological). While Tekbir (God is great), the leading company in this sector, has maintained over the years that its mission is to use fashion

as an instrument for the Islamicisation of society, many other companies prefer to emphasise the fashionability of their products and the modernity of their customers. However, accusations of ‘selling Islam’ are often voiced in relation to this thriving sector by secularists and Islamists alike.

Islamic fashion, in Turkey or elsewhere, has only recently become a topic of academic interest. Some studies discuss pious consumption as a project of subjectification, presenting Muslim women’s responses to accusations of insincerity, frivolity and vanity and their considerations about modesty, beauty and fashion. These are laudable efforts to correct a widespread assumption that Islamic dress oppresses Muslim women through denial of freedom through fashion. In contrast, there is a profusion of studies on the politics and politicisation of the headscarf.

This research project focuses on a less-explored component of Islamic fashion, that is, on the design and production of commodified forms of religious appearance, and addresses the relationships between religion, economics and materiality that these activities, and their presentation and legitimation, might reveal. Therefore, the project represents an attempt to go beyond a tendency to consider ‘the way of God’ and ‘the way of money’ as mutually exclusive and searches for sites where the practical and discursive articulations might become visible.

My fieldwork is carried out in Istanbul and involves ethnographic observation in spaces of retail and consumption, internet research (personal fashion blogs, on-line discussions of styles and the requirements of *tesettür*, websites and Facebook pages of Islamic fashion designers and companies) and semi-structured interviews with designers and producers, with special attention to ways of legitimating their presence in this market, and semi-structured interviews with consumers, with special attention given to the Islamic fashion styles and commodities they consider religiously appropriate. In addition, sites of ‘excess’ have been identified as potentially useful for understanding the articulation of religion and commerce, that is, fake branded headscarves and glossy Islamic fashion magazines, both engendering accusations of generating ‘easy money’. The following snapshots illustrate the type of research material that it is currently collected as part of this fieldwork.

Snapshot 1: Colourful satin scarves hang at the front of a booth that faces the main entrance to the Eyüp Sultan Mosque. The wind pushes them backwards and forwards, their colours blended one into the other, their brand names reduced to letters. For branded they are. Versace, Valentino,



Gucci, Fendi, Dior, Chanel, Burberry. More precisely, fake branded scarves. The seller, an elderly woman, wearing a modest headscarf tied under the chin, murmurs her prayers while waiting for the occasional customer (field note).



Snapshot 2: The glossy magazine *Âlâ* (*The Most Beautiful*) was launched in the summer of 2011, as a ‘magazine for a beautiful lifestyle’. The Turkish secular media nicknamed it ‘the *Vogue* of the conservative woman’. The founders of this magazine are strongly criticised both by secular and Islamist commentators for trying to hide a crass capitalistic enterprise under a religious face and for advertising expensive garments and accessories, and, consequently, stimulating ‘consumption as usual’, a form of enchantment and frivolous self-decoration. In turn, *Âlâ*’s founders legitimise their business by emphasising their Muslim identity, drawing parallels between Islamic banks and their business, pointing out their role in guiding the production of clothes and the assemblage of outfits that conform to *tesettür*, and stressing the high moral/Islamic standards of the lifestyle that their magazine promotes. In the spring of 2012, *Âlâ* was presented as a ‘magazine for ladies’. In the autumn of 2012, a covered woman became the fashion editor and an uncovered woman the style editor (field note).

Snapshot 3: A seller of fake branded scarves seems not to understand my question about the morality of this trade. I reformulate it. A branded scarf is a piously-coded object, which was produced by a Muslim for a Muslim. A fake branded scarf objectifies a theft. He is also a Muslim. Can a Muslim do this to another Muslim? The seller tells me that the Muslim I have in mind and he, a Muslim indeed, do the same thing. They do business. The Muslim I have in mind entered this sector with one thing in mind, that is, to earn money. He is guilty for turning the pious *tesettür* dress into fashion and for encouraging women to think they need to show their religiosity through the consumption of their highly decorated, increasingly expensive and attention-grabbing garments. The Muslim I have in mind might declare that his business is grounded in virtuous intention. The seller points out that this is rarely the case. It is business as usual, motivated by a desire to make profit and not to serve God (a seller of fake branded garments, conversation with the author).

Snapshot 4: ‘What is the most difficult part of your work?’. ‘*Tesettür* is a thin line. We have to be very careful about the kind of garments we present in our magazine. This is why the selection of garments always takes time and it is the most difficult and demanding part of the work we do here. There are not so many companies that produce these kinds of garments. We therefore look for garments from other companies too. They might present the scarf around the neck. We put it on the head. We take long skirts and combine them with other garments that are religiously appropriate’ (the editor of *Âlâ*, in conversation with the author).

Snapshot 5: A warning on an on-line shopping website: ‘Questions from our customers: Can we buy Armine scarves for less than 50 TL? How can we be sure that the products we are buying are original? Let me try answer to such questions... The best thing our customers can do is to buy from known and trusted sites. They should think twice before buying an Armine scarf for 50 TL (http://www.akavm.com/asp/menu_items.asp?ID=79).

Snapshot 6: An uncovered woman flips through an issue of *Âlâ* I happen to be carrying with me. She keeps murmuring to herself: ‘frills, ribbons, ruffles, more frills, ribbons and ruffles’. She finally concludes: ‘oh, dear, they really want to turn these women into cute dolls’. A covered woman flips through the same issue and tells me she does not like the sort of ensembles promoted by this magazine. They are overly decorated. Beauty and modesty can and should be achieved through means other than frills, ribbons and ruffles (conversations with the author).



Memento and exhibition: consuming city, consuming character in Orhan Pamuk’s *The Museum of Innocence*

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In the autumn of 2012 I will make a short research trip to Istanbul, supported by a study grant from the British Institute at Ankara. As part of a PhD in creative writing in which I am writing a novel, with a supporting thesis in literary studies, my proposed research in Turkey will form the basis for a chapter of my critical thesis. My research project considers how cultural heritage and a shared identity and history are produced through the example of Orhan Pamuk’s combined novel (2008) and museum (April 2012) project, *The Museum of Innocence*. My study trip to Istanbul will therefore provide an excellent opportunity for primary research at the museum and surrounding Çukurcuma neighbourhood (which Pamuk envisages as being part of the exhibition) for my critical thesis on the novel as archive/catalogue.

My thesis aims to set Pamuk’s work in a wider debate around the relationship between museums and novels, and narratives of the individual and the nation. As Pamuk argues in his recent museum manifesto, ‘the measure of a museum’s success should not be its ability to represent a state, nation or company, or a particular history. It should be its capacity to reveal the humanity of individuals ... The future of museums is inside our own homes’ (Orhan Pamuk, ‘State museums are so antiquated’, *The Guardian*, 20 April 2012). Thus, both creative manifestations aim to document: to capture the detail and celebrate the things of ordinary, everyday experience. The novel also demonstrates how the privileging of object description can displace the reality or subjectivity of a character in a narrative. My main objective is to examine how Pamuk uses the obsessive, collecting/cataloguing impulse and ‘consolation of objects’ as a narrative and structural device to depict characters, to observe the behaviour of secularist bourgeois families and to comment on the Westernisation of Istanbul. I will focus on how the novel is in dialogue with the museum, with how the protagonist, Kemal, addresses the imagined museum visitor throughout, in a retrospective accounting of himself and his collection: ‘having become – with the passage of time – the anthropologist of my own experience’ (Pamuk 2008).

This research will complement work on my PhD novel, which experiments with the form of the archive/inventory novel and is similarly concerned with the nature of memory and loss, and with the desire to possess one’s own experience. As Pamuk encourages, ‘do your museum, and you will have power’. Set in Nova Scotia in the early 20th century, my novel questions notions of truth and fiction through the activity of record-keeping, in which clinical files and museum/archive catalogues are set against the immediacy of the protagonist’s narrative account.

I am very excited about making my first trip to Istanbul and my intention is to develop this work beyond my PhD project, from 2013, as a post-doctoral project.