

The difference between Tansuğ and Guggenheim

Friday 27 July 2007, by [Gila Benmayor](#)

Sabiha Tansuğ is one of the most important ethnologists and researchers raised in Turkey. Author of “Sümbülname and Love of Flower Among Turks” and of “Türkmen Clothing”, which was translated into English, Ms. Tansuğ writes articles for Turkish Air Lines’ “Skylife” magazine. Her articles are about folkloric clothing, accessories and about their place in daily lives of the past.

She owes her accumulation to her years of experience in the villages of Anatolia.

Think of a young woman who hit the road 40 years ago to explore places starting from the Aegean to the east and southeast of Anatolia.

There were no planes and not much of train service at that time.

Trips that were hundred times more difficult than today, Tansuğ made them in order to collect local clothing.

From rawhide sandals to caps, to skirts, sometimes she worked like a detective for months in order to complete the clothing of the past.

In villages she visited, Tansuğ did not hesitate to search hope chests.

She succeeded to garner pieces in an unprecedented collection in 40 years.

Her entire collection consisting of about 3,000 pieces including masks, golden and silver coins, caps, belts and 60 local dress sets from the Shamanism period are on display at the Turk-Islam Artifacts Museum.

I met her about six years ago and spent an unforgettable time at her little summerhouse in the Aegean town of Mordoğan. She is amusing.

Despite her age, Tansuğ is still a beautiful woman.

She has innumerable stories about Turkish Mythology.

Tansuğ’s portrait depicting her in folklore costume appeared on the 50 kuruş coin.

Her eyes smile at similarities between the Goddess Artemis and a Türkmen bride.

She runs the Pierre Loti Café

Tansuğ is a courageous woman.

Aside from her trips to Anatolia 40 years ago, Tansuğ reached out to the famous Pierre Loti Café in Istanbul, which was in poor condition in the 1960s.

She ran the café and turned it into a meeting point for the famous.

With the money she earned from the café, Tansuğ continued to collect pieces from Anatolia to add to her collection.

If the Pierre Loti Café, today, is famous among foreign tourists, it owes its popularity to Tansuğ.

However, our topic is not the Pierre Loti Café; it is the unique collection Tansuğ exhibits in the museums of the Ministry of Culture.

The reason why she kept her collection at home is that no one from the Culture Ministry so far asked her permission to have the collection.

Is it not amazing that the Ministry of Culture or local administrations or institutions have never made an offer until now for Tansuğ’s collection, which has been exhibited abroad and many Europeans showed interest in purchasing it?

Let alone official institutions, but for instance, prominent businessmen or textile manufacturers could have perfectly established a small museum for such a precious collection.

A one-of-a-kind collection

Consequently, do you know what happened to the unclaimed cultural heritage accumulated in 40 years? While she was vacationing in Mordođan, burglars stole 300 pieces of her collection. A golden headpiece belonging to İsfendiyarođulları, a crucial part of the collection from the 1500-1900 periods was among the items stolen.

Now Tansuđ worries if these stolen pieces have been shipped abroad.

You may be curious about why I chose the title of my article as, "The difference between Tansuđ and Guggenheim."

Recently, I had a chance to pay a visit to the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice and to get information about this extraordinary woman who claimed 'modernization'. Most of her life, Guggenheim collected pieces of art from painters, famous or not. Guggenheim accumulated these pieces at her 'palazzo' in Venice.

After Guggenheim's death, her house was turned into a museum.

Authorities ignore Tansuđ who deserved the establishment of a museum named after her.

Sources

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