

16th Century Turkish Woman's *Kaftan*

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Note to the Reader:

The Estrella War XX Treaty did not specify the citation method preferred. For this project, the American Psychological Association (APA) standard has been used to cite resources and bibliographic structure.

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Introduction:

This Turkish woman's *kaftan* (coat) is one of many layered outer garments. Per the aesthetics of the period, a red, green and tan ogival (arched oval) fabric is lined with yellow cotton and faced with green silk. A wealthy woman of the 16th century would wear a similar short-sleeved garment as the third or fourth layer of clothing. The foundation layer would be a lightweight *gömlek* (shirt) and *şalwar* (pants). On top of this foundation would be a long-sleeved *entari* (inner coat). The *kaftan*'s short sleeves allow the long sleeves of the *entari* to be displayed underneath. (Scarce, 2003)

The *Kaftan* in the 16th Century:

The vast majority of surviving Turkish garments from the 16th Century are for men. These garments were worn by the Sultans and carefully stored in the treasury at the Topkapi Palace in Turkey. In period art, male and female garments look to be very similar in appearance. In Figure A1, circa 1575, the illustrated manuscript depicts two women standing and a man sitting (Titley, 1983, p. 138). Both sexes wear multiple-layered garments in (by modern Western standards, at least) wildly contrasting fabrics. By extrapolating from existing art of the time, surviving male garments can be analyzed and carefully modified to fit a woman's form.

From those garments, a vast variety of styles exist. The torso may be closely fitted or fairly loose. The garment may be quilted or not, made of a solid fabric or a multicolored pattern. The garment may or may not have buttons. The *kaftan* may be of different lengths to accommodate different activities and be slit up from the hem on the sides for either movement or decorative purposes. The sleeves may be short, wrist-length, ankle-length or detachable. (Rogers, 1980)

From extant garments, several design elements can be determined. The construction is mostly rectangular. The shoulder seam is moved down the arm slightly. Instead of using a gusset under the arm, there is a slightly curved seam, cut on the bias for elasticity, ease of movement and fit. While the central front overlapping gores may have the fabric motif closely matched, other pieces may not be as closely matched. According to Esin Atil, using extra material for extensive matching was indicative of a royal *kaftan*, since the cost of the garment increased by the amount of fabric used (1987). An example can be seen in Figure A2, a short-sleeved short male *kaftan*, circa 1481-1512 (Rogers, 1980). The sleeve attaches to the shoulder and the pattern does not quite match. The

garment in Figure A3 has been depicted in several texts. This garment is a short-sleeved quilted man's *kaftan* with cotton lining of "crimson rucked brocaded satin" circa 1512-1520 (Rogers, 1980, p. 47).

However, one garment, originally mistaken for a male garment, was actually tailored for a "stout" woman. Figure A4 is an extant short-sleeved *kaftan* from circa 1574-1595. This kaftan is comprised of "dull-blue rucked silk, with triple-spot motifs printed in silver, lined with white satin and red silk printed with silver spots" (Rogers, 1980, p. 153). The neckline of this garment is different from those other garments. The neckline is relatively oval and the front neckline very similar to the ogival shape that is common in period textiles. The jutting gore at the hip is much more perpendicular to the torso than a masculine *kaftan*, presumably due to the more rounded shape of a woman. The short sleeves have the expected slight cutout on the front of the sleeve to allow ease of movement.

Pattern Design:

Primarily the garments depicted in Figures A3 and A4 were used to design this garment. The basic front pattern shape is shown in Figure 1. The fine lines represent seam lines. The garment opens along the center front. Two triangular gores in the center front overlap. The sleeve front has a circular cutout to allow for arm movement.

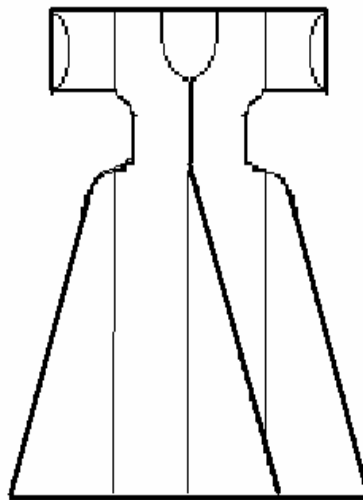


Figure 1. Basic woman's *kaftan* pattern front.

To fit the torso closely, the area between the underarm curve and the waist is cut in at an angle to fit. The difference between the shoulder width and the waist

width, as well as the underarm angle, can vary by bust size. To fit this properly to the wearer, the initial shoulder-to-floor lengths were cut, both front and back, from an inexpensive fabric. The shoulder was sewn together. Then the garment was draped on the body and pinned to fit under the bust line to the waist. The excess material was removed, with a ½ -inch seam allowance. This *kaftan* has roughly a 45-degree angle under the arm between the torso and the sleeve. An additional benefit from this construction is that moderate support for an average sized bust is possible.

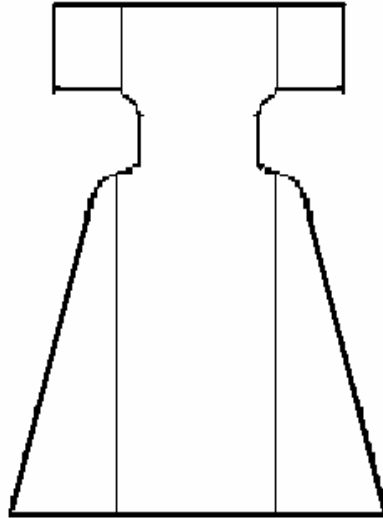


Figure 2. Basic woman's *kaftan* pattern back.

The pattern back, seen in Figure 2, mirrors the curved hip and underarm from the pattern front.

Textiles:

In Turkish culture, wealth was displayed in the quality of the textiles worn—not necessarily the style of the garment. Turks would buy the most expensive cloth possible (Scarce, 2003). Most garments preserved in the Topkapi Saray Museum are solid colors and very simply cut (Atil, 1980).

For this project, the outer textile is a cotton/polyester blend with a repeating ogival pattern in red, green and tan. In period, this fabric would be silk. For this re-creation, a cotton/polyester blend was used due to cost considerations. The ogival pattern is strikingly similar to a late 16th Century Turkish brocaded silk fragment shown in Figure A5 (Atil, 1987, p. 209).

The main lining textile is yellow 100% cotton. Cotton was widely available and often used as a lining during this time period in Turkey (Atil, 1980). The facing material is 100% silk satin in green which contrasts with both the main cotton lining as well as the outer garment. By the 16th century, Turkey's silk industry was well established and produced high quality silk brocades, velvets and satins (Atil, 1980). In Figure A2, the extant *kaftan*'s yellow lining is faced with green silk.

In period, linen or silk thread would be used for construction. All the thread was chosen due to cost and accessibility for this project. Coats and Clark All Purpose Thread was used for the main body construction. Coats and Clark Button Thread was used to sew the braid and buttons onto the *kaftan*. DMC cotton embroidery floss was used for the braid and the woven buttons. Oval wooden craft beads served as the button base.

Construction Techniques:

For this recreation, the interior seams were machine sewn and pressed flat due to time constraints. The outer layer and the lining were constructed separately. The braid and buttons were sewn on by hand via backstitch before the lining was attached to hide the stitching. The green silk facing was basted by hand with a running stitch onto the outside edge of the yellow cotton lining and treated as one piece when attached to the red exterior layer. The lining was attached to the main garment by hand, alternatively both a running stitch and an overcast stitch with the fabric folded into edges (where turning the fabric was impossible). This construction method has been known since Pharaonic Egypt (Jones, 2001). The interior edge of the green silk facing was hemmed, a method that had been used in Pharaonic Egypt and medieval Europe (Jones, 2001). The garment was not bound, as the pictures of exterior garments did not show a separate contrasting bound edge. This can be seen in the close-up shot, in Figure A6.

Embellishment:

Hand-made Trim:

According to some sources, decorative braid is not appropriate on female garment. However, some period depictions of women do show decorative braid on the front of the coat. An example of this decoration is in the 16th century manuscript, Figure A1. The woman to the left wearing the red *kaftan* has yellow trim arranged in rows on the front center torso.

In many surviving extant pieces, there is decorative trim woven in polychrome silks matching the fabric of the garment such as in Figure A6, a close-up of the garment in Figure A3. This trim appears to be woven in one piece. The buttons were fastened via an additional corded loop.

For this recreation, the trim for this garment was created by 5-stand finger-loop flat braid in 4 colors: 2 strands of medium green, 1 strand of red, 1 strand of yellow and 1 strand of light brown. The resulting braid is quite thin. Yet when the braid is doubled, stitched together and knotted on the ends, the trim closely resembles that on extant garments. Also, by leaving one side's trim slightly open at the edge of the garment, it eliminates the need to add an additional corded loop to fasten the buttons. These braids were then hand-sewn onto the outer fabric. The loop section of the braid was wrapped with an additional length of thread for reinforcement. This technique was popular in medieval London, but I could not find evidence of it being used in Ottoman Turkey (Crowfoot *et al.*, 1992). The overall impression, however, closely resembles the decoration in Figure A6.

Buttons:

From extant garments from the 16th Century, some buttons appeared to be oval with polychrome woven covering. In Figure A6, the oval buttons are wrapped with red, gold and ivory.

For this recreation, oval wooden beads were wrapped with 2-ply cotton embroidery floss. The woven threads match the colors of the decorative braid on the front of the coat.

To make the buttons, two colors green and yellow were wrapped in parallel to the bead hole. (See Figure A7a.) Next, the red thread was wrapped to spiral around the circumference, woven under the green thread, but woven over the yellow thread. (See Figure A7b.) The light brown thread is then wrapped around the circumference of the bead in between the red spiral, woven under the yellow thread and over the green thread as displayed in Figure A7c.

Naturally, the closer the threads are together, the tighter the weave is. The threads must be close enough together to cover the wooden bead. The buttons were then sewn on to the garment.

Conclusion:

While some liberties have been taken with the construction of this *kaftan*, the overall impression of the garment closely resembles a 16th century Turkish woman's *kaftan*.

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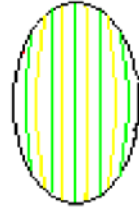


Figure A7a

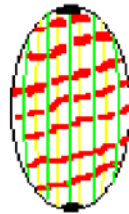


Figure A7b

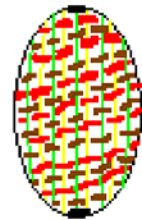


Figure A7c