

## Chapter 38

# The Trial of Traditional Turkish Culture With the Auto-Orientalist Cultural Industry

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Traditional Turkish culture has archaic, unique, universal, diverse, dynamic, competitive, and distinctive contents (traditional knowledge and practices, cultural codes, canonical images, motifs, structural patterns, etc.) that can be valued in different ways in cultural creative industries. However, this cultural capital cannot be utilized sufficiently to meet Turkey's sustainable economic development goals from the past to the present. One of the main reasons why the potential inherent in traditional culture cannot be effectively, creatively, and innovatively actualized is the predominance of auto-orientalist discourse in the Turkish cultural industry. Here, in this text, the trial of traditional culture with auto-orientalist Turkish cultural industry will be analyzed from historical, sociological, and economic aspects.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The paradigm (established by the Frankfurt School), which interprets the relationship between the economic and ideological dimension of culture and capitalist entrepreneurship in a pessimistic and pejorative framework, has been effective enough to shape the social, cultural, economic and political areas of daily life for a long time. However, especially from the middle of the 20th century, there has been a growing awareness that the commercialization and industrialization of culture does not always and inevitably carry an ideological function and does not cause cultural degeneration. The new perspectives (pioneered by the UNESCO) brought by this awareness have paved the way for the evaluation of culture as one of the main elements of sustainable economic development strategies since the 1970's. After the re-content of the concept of 'cultural and creative industries' (developed by DCMS) in the middle 90's, new visions, strategies and policies were developed for national cultural industries and economies. In the early 2000's, the international organizations such as OECD, World Bank and UNESCO officially

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mark the culture in general and cultural heritage in particular as a driver and enabler of national, regional and local sustainable development and the source of creative industries and economies (Thorsby, 2001). After this development, many countries have again undergone drastic changes in their cultural policies in order to develop a creative industry and economy based on cultural heritage. And so, today's major cultural industries and economies which rise in traditional culture that is the source of authenticity, originality, creativity, sustainability and innovation (Özdemir, 2012) emerged.

The main characteristic of the 21st century cultural industry and the economies that have reached brand identity is that it uses ongoing interactions, mutuality and dynamics between the traditional culture contents and popular culture channels in a way that generates added value. This strategy, based on the intense interactions between contexts, mediums and cultures produced by communication and interaction, has become the dominant mode of content production of our time, was defined by Jenkins (2006) the notion of *convergence*. Many folklorists, who have begun to notice this culture of convergence since the middle of the 20th century, have made significant studies about how folklore is adapted to the field of popular culture. For example, as Koven (2008) pointed out, as early as 1946, Stith Thompson considered cinema not only an excellent transmission channel for the transmission of traditional fairy tales, but also as a kind of storytelling event in which creations of folk imagination can be externalized. Degh (1994) also analyzed how the cultural industry interacts with folklore in the sampling of television commercials. Zipes (2008) argues that every character in sitcoms has a familiar features of fairy tales and that the plot of these productions unfolds exactly as in fairy tales. Given the intense interactions between the two cultural spheres, Bird (1996) found that popular culture can only succeed if it acts like folklore and performs functions similar to its own. Mutlu (2004) takes this determination one step further and says that popular culture is actually the common folk culture of late capitalism.

Traditional Turkish culture has archaic, unique, universal, diverse, dynamic, competitive and distinctive content that can be capitalized in various ways from advertising to postmodern architecture, from television to modern craftsmanship, from design to fashion, from the film and video industry to interactive digital media, from music to performing arts, from broadcasting to software, from sports to tourism. However, this cultural capital cannot be utilized sufficiently to achieve Turkey's sustainable economic development goal, from the past to the present. One of the main reasons why the potential inherent in traditional culture cannot be effectively, creatively and innovatively actualized is the predominance of auto-orientalist discourse in the Turkish cultural industry. The basis of the problematic relationship between the Turkish cultural industry and traditional culture is the efficiency of the auto-orientalist discourse rooted in the Tanzimat period and institutionalized in the Republic period in this field.

In this text, the trial of Turkish traditional culture with auto-orientalist cultural industry will be discussed with its historical, sociological and economic dimensions in a conceptual and theoretical framework that will be formed by the relations established between Said's orientalism thesis and Adornoian culture criticism. In this context, firstly, the conditions, the operating logic and processes of auto-orientalism as a discourse will be emphasized. Later, the significance and function of auto-orientalist discourse in Turkish modernization will be explained in relation to Adorno's concept of "culture industry" and Althusser's 'ideological apparatus of the state'. It will also be discussed how traditional culture is used by the auto-orientalist cultural industry as a frame of reference and raw material in delivering mainstream ideologies to the public in the Turkish modernization process. Then, why and how the auto-orientalist cultural industry still exists in 21st century Turkey will be explained by its cultural economic dimensions. Finally, the effects of the auto-orientalist cultural industry on traditional Turkish culture will be tempted to be revealed with various analyses to be done in the sample of the Turkish television series.

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