

Some records about seraser fabrics in the Ottoman

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Abstract

All states in the world have tried to classify their historical correspondence according to their type and importance and keep them as archive documents. Written paper has always been considered important by the Turks and efforts have been made to preserve it carefully. In the Ottoman Empire, which lasted approximately 600 years before the Republic of Turkey, care was taken to preserve official documents. Today, the Presidential Ottoman Archives is an important archive center where a large amount of documents are preserved.

Turks brought with them traditional cultures from the geography of Turkestan to Anatolia and the Balkans. Within this culture, there are important textile products that have been introduced to world civilization, from floor mats such as carpets and rugs to precious fabrics. One of the very important and valuable fabrics of the Ottoman period is seraser. There are many documents related to seraser fabric from the Presidential Ottoman Archives.

Keywords

Ottoman, archive, textile, weaving, fabric.

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Несколько замечаний о тканях из серасера в Османской империи

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Аннотация

Все государства мира стараются изучать и систематизировать весь корпус источников, связанных с их историей, классифицировать ее в соответствии с типом и важностью информации, дискутируется вопрос о новых возможностях ее сохранения. Турки всегда придавали большое значение этому важному источнику и предпринимают усилия по его бережному хранению. В Османской империи, которая существовала за 600 лет до образования Турецкой Республики, также заботились о сохранении официальных документов. Сегодня Президентский архив Османской империи является важным архивным центром, где хранится большое количество документов. Традиционные культуры, бытовавшие на территории средневековой Турции, были широко распространены от Туркестана до Анатолии и Балкан. Одним из важных элементов ее материальной культуры являются текстильные изделия, которые стали достоянием мировой цивилизации, от ковров для пола до драгоценных тканей. Серазер – одна из самых важных и ценных тканей османского периода. В Президентском архиве Османской империи хранится множество документов, связанных с тканью серазер. В статье представлен анализ данного источника.

Ключевые слова

Оттоманская империя, архив, текстиль, ткачество, ткань.

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Introduction

Archive documents belonging to states are very important. Documents that become archives as a result of the preservation of government correspondence and the classification of accumulated documents must be carefully protected. Nations can look to the future with confidence as long as they can preserve the periods and values that came before them. Of course, keeping the national memory alive can be achieved by preserving all kinds of documents and classifying them as archival materials.

Archives and archiving are indispensable for those who do research on sociological, economic, historical and cultural issues or those who seek le-

gal rights [Aren T., 1976. S. 13]. Archives are a kind of memory of nations. Because the past of societies is revealed in a healthy way with the documents stored here [Göyünç, 1973. S. 306]. They document the rights and international relations of states and nations [Binark I., 1994. S. III].

A seemingly insignificant document can shed light on an issue in the nation's history. Archives and the documents they contain are important in order to strengthen the awareness of protecting one's history and past and to reveal past issues objectively. The archive consists of correspondence resulting from daily routine transactions in government institutions. However, these correspondences are not actually archives. Later, the documents separated as a result of classification by experts in the field become archival materials. It is generally accepted as a general rule that 30 years have passed for a document to be considered archival material [Aytaç A., 2014. S. 1].

The history of archiving and librarianship in Turks dates back to Central Asia. It is understood from written documents that in the cities of the Uyghur Turks [Binark I., 1994. S. 2], one of the most civilized nations of the Middle Ages, there were rich libraries, notaries, customs organizations, courts, official offices and archives where official correspondence was stored in these places [Aytaç A., 2014. S. 2].

Due to the respect for written paper in the Turkish-Islamic tradition, all correspondence regarding state transactions, including drafts, have been meticulously preserved [Uzunçarşılı İ., 1984. S. 76]. It is understood from the millions of documents that have survived to the present day that the idea of archives has been present since the earliest times and that archives were given importance, as a tradition from the Anatolian Seljuks [Binark I., 1994. S. 2] and other Turkish states in the Ottoman Empire. It is also known that in 1785, orders were issued in the Ottoman Empire on issues such as the purposes of using documents, their procedures, how and by whom they should be preserved, and the protection of archives [<http://www.egm.gov.tr/arsiv/arsivcilikhakkinda.htm>, 12.09.2008].

The Ottoman Empire lasted approximately 600 years and covered a geography the size of almost 3 continents. Naturally, the importance of archive documents in presenting this period objectively in the light of scientific data is clearly understood. The archive documents of the Republic of Turkey have a richness that is not available in many nations in the world, in terms of the number and quality of more than one hundred million documents. These documents, which concern many nations that remained within the Ottoman geography and are now separate states, are of international importance. During the Ottoman Period, the importance of archives in the administration of the country was realized and archive management was established directly under the command of the Grand Vizier. Archives

created by increasing bureaucratic procedures as a result of expanding geography and state structure were kept in the palace. In 1846, it was transformed into a ministry status under the name "Treasury-i Evrak Nezareti". Preserving and operating the archives at the highest level in this way has enabled the state's records and documents to be meticulously created for centuries, archived regularly and easily made available when needed [Baş I., 2019. S. 40].

On the other hand, Traditional Turkish handicrafts have created a rich mosaic by combining their own balance with the cultural heritage of various civilizations from thousands of years of Anatolia's history [Karakelle A., 2019. S. 669].

When we look at the historical process, weaving appears to be one of the important businesses and arts that is almost as old as humanity. «This art was born as a result of people's need to protect themselves from the cold, to cover themselves and to be adorned [Gürsu N., 1988. S. 17]» Before the invention of weaving, people used leaves [Yağan S., 1978. S. 10], reeds, leaves and grasses combined with fish bones, branches, bones and tree thorns as clothing. People living in cold climates used the skins of the animals they hunted. After the discovery of the knotting technique, it became possible to obtain clothes by knotting the ends of the materials used as fibers and adding them together [Aytaç A., 1997. S. 5]. However, after a short time, it was understood that very few plants had the necessary softness and strength and were useful. Thus, the first steps were taken towards planting the plants



Fig. 1. Seraser fabrics (By: Yardimci Gürcan, Kevser, «Osmanlı Dönemi Dokuma Sanatı Ürünlerinden Örnekler», *International Journal of Cultural and Social Studies*, Volume: 2, August 2016, s. 235.).

they deemed useful and processing them rather than using them as they were obtained [Sarica A., 2012. S. 5].

It is also known that the Turks, who have led the world in textile arts throughout history, have provided excellent examples of textile art for centuries in a wide geography extending from Turkestan to Anatolia and even the Balkans.



Fig. 2. Seraser fabric caftan, Topkapı Palace (by: https://smokethorn.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/image_124122_v2_m56577569831249250.jpg.02.04.2024.18.09).

Fabric art, which is known to have a very old place in Turkish art, was used as the basic material of clothing and interior decoration, especially in sample fabrics from the Central Asian, Seljuk and Ottoman periods, and was shaped and used by master hands. The Ottoman sultans' fondness for magnificent fabrics, based on the Central Asian and Seljuk State rulers, contributed to the development of the textile field [Engin Alpat F., 2010. S. 27–28]. It is known that the Ottoman Empire has been very successful in fabric production since the 15th century, and that it reached its peak in terms of art in the 16th and 17th centuries, and still produces fabrics

of irreplaceable quality. Fabrics called «seraser» have a special place and importance in the textile production of the Ottoman period, which had a wide variety of fabrics.

Seraser is woven with gold and silver wire and is the most valuable of its types. Seraser is a weft-faced silk fabric. It is embroidered all over with gold and silver wires. The pattern consists of reinforcing wefts attached to the warp wires straight from the bottom. During the pattern formation, the gold alloy wire is wrapped and woven with ivory colored silk. These precious threads are used only in the pattern part, alternately, to avoid wastage of metal. The difference between seraser, which is a very expensive fabric, and kemha, is that it is woven with gold or silver wire instead of klaptan, and the patterns are very different [Sergin S., ÖnlüN., 1994. S. 49].

In the 1640 narh, seraser occupies a large place and the types of silk and the amounts of gold and silver wire are written in detail; one square meter contains 59.986631 grams of gold, 89.979946 grams of silver, 189.38636 grams of Iranian silk and 46.275401 grams of Bursa silk has [Kütükoğlu S., 1983. S. 62–63]. It is also known that at that time, for example, in Bursa, silk weaving masters were paid on a piece-rate basis. In 1584, a weaver who produced velvet, called Çatma or Dolma, was paid 100 Akçe for a piece worth 1000 Akçe [Dolsar F., 1960].

Presidential Ottoman archive

It is understood from the series of notebooks that have survived from the Ottoman Empire period to the present day, with 95 million documents and around 400 thousand in the archive alone, both from the way the documents were arranged, that they were preserved with great precision, and from the orders or regulations regarding the correspondence at all levels of the bureaucracy to be recorded in the notebook, that the Ottoman Empire has existed since its foundation. Since then, it has attached great importance to preserving official documents [Anonim, 2017. S. 3].

The archive documents that are the subject of the research are from İbnülemin Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ali Emiri Sultan IV. It was selected within the documents of Mehmed and Topkapı Palace Archive Museum.

İbnülemin's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Document:

The classification committee, established under the chairmanship of İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal, has classified the documents according to their subjects since 1921. İbnülemin's Classification is grouped under 23 main sections, and each topic follows a rough chronological order within its own section [Anonim, 2017. S. 419].



Fig. 3. Presidential Ottoman Archive, Kağıthane-İstanbul (by: AYTAÇ, Ahmet, «Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivleri'nde Hatay (Antakya) İpekçiliği İle Alakalı Bazı Belgeler», *Uluslararası Zanaattan Sanata Kongre ve Jürili Karma Sergisi*, 14-16 Aralık 2021, Uşak-Türkiye, s. 284).

Ali Emiri Sultan IV. Mehmed Document:

II. It begins after the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy and especially after the appointment of Abdurrahman Şeref Bey to the position of chronicler and the establishment of the Ottoman History Committee. A committee established under the leadership of the council and under the chairmanship of Ali Emiri Efendi continued the classification work between 1918 and 1921. In this classification, called "Ali Emiri Classification", the documents are separated according to the order of the sultans, and the documents belonging to the sultans from Osman I to the reign of Abdülmecid are listed in a chronological order. The classification, in which 180,700 documents are recorded, has fifty-three catalogs written in Arabic letters [<https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/basbakanlik-osmanli-arsivi>.08.03.2024.13.56.].

Topkapı Palace Archive Museum Documents:

Topkapı Palace, whose construction was completed in 1478, was the main palace of the Ottoman Empire until the use of Dolmabahçe during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid. The Palace, which was an extremely important administrative center for the Ottoman Empire for 400 years, is also one of the most important centers where many documents were produced in the Ottoman Empire and passed down to the present day. There are more

than 200 thousand documents in this archive, the oldest of which dates back to the time of Orhan Gazi. These documents were digitized in the early 2000s, and a summary of the documents began to be produced since 2010 [https://kod-a.com/blog/turkiyedeki-onemli-arsivler/30.01.2024.14.26.].

Some document examples related to seraser fabric

First document:

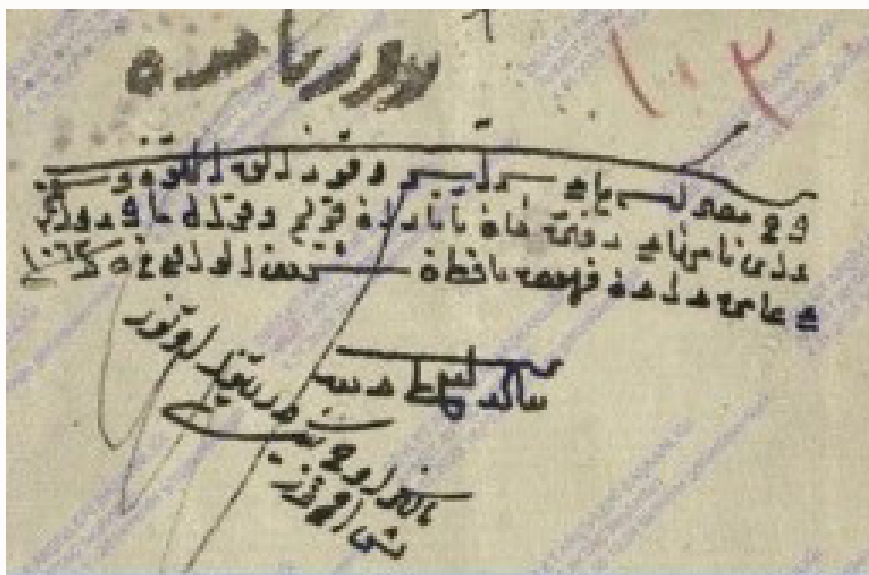


Fig. 4. First document

İbnülemin's Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents, 1 file, document numbered 103 shirts, dated 07.11.1062 (10 October 1652) «Purchase of seraser fabric envelopes and candle holders, gold and silver to place the names and books to be sent to the Crimean Khans and the Hungarian King» receipt for the funds given for.

Second document:

Ali Emiri Sultan IV. Mehmed document, file number 59, shirt number 6930, dated 15.12.1087 (February 18, 1677) is about «the reimbursement from the Imperial Treasury of the expense of three rolls of seraser fabric

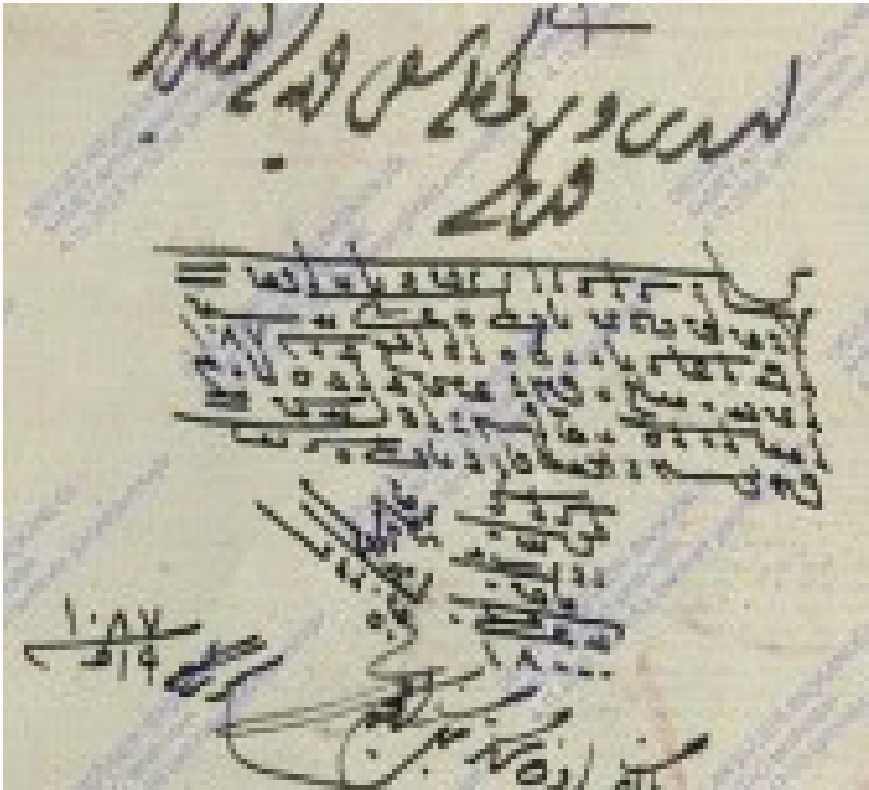


Fig. 5. Second document

purchased as room door curtains for the seven-room woman of Bazergan Ahmed Agha».

Third document:

Topkapı Palace Archive Museum documents, 800 files, numbered 4 shirts, dated 18.07.1058 (08 August 1648) contain the following: «Human lines on white, written in his own handwriting by Sultan İbrahim to the Grand Vizier and various persons regarding state affairs,, III. There is information such as the marriage of Murad's daughter Fahriye Sultan,, sending a name to the Sheriff of Mecca and the preparation of two seraser hilat (caftan made of fur and precious fabric) from the fabrics in the inner treasury, ... ».

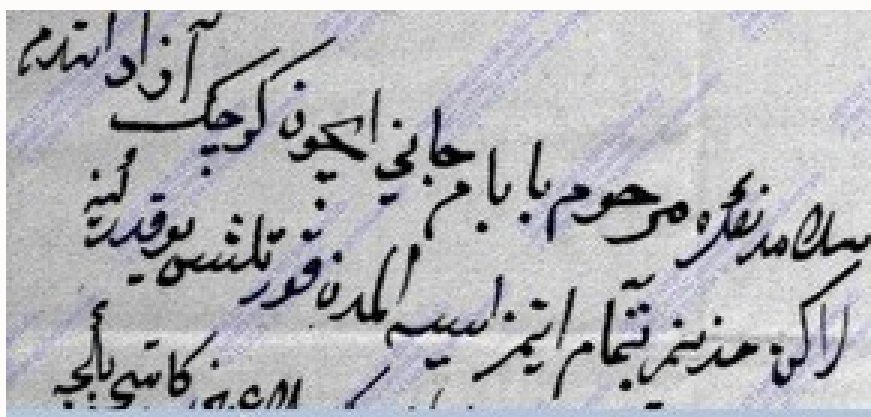


Fig. 6. Third document

Fourth document:

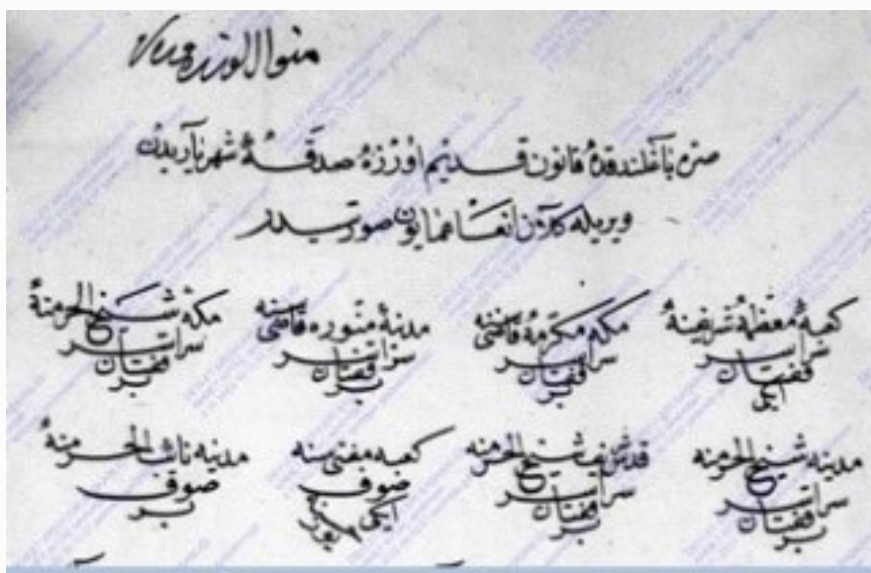


Fig. 7. Fourth document

In the Harc-1 Hassa notebook, file number 2352, dated 21.06.1075 (09 January 1665), in the Topkapı Palace Archive Museum documents, there is information about «the seraser caftans, sofs, fabrics and their prices and five hundred gold coins given for Surre».

Fifth document:

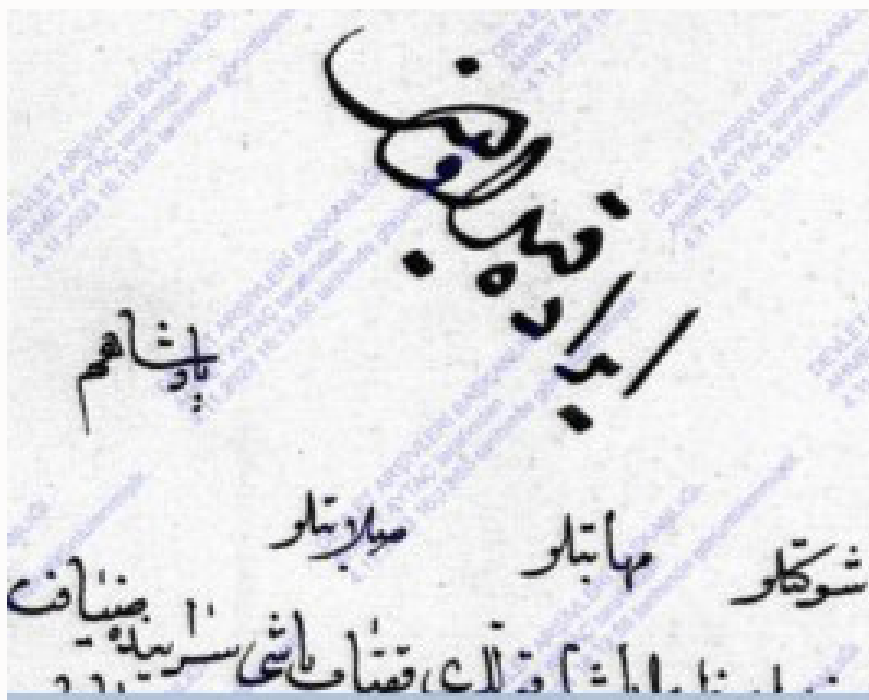


Fig. 8. Fifth document

The Topkapı Palace Archive Museum document, file number 2352, dated 01.07.1120 (16 September 1708), is about "the will record of the murassa wreath (engagement adorned with precious stones), seraser pillows and fabrics given as a gift by Grand Vizier Ali Pasha at the banquet he gave."

Sixth document:

Topkapı Palace Archive Museum document, file number 2344, dated 29.09.1077 (25 March 1677), is about «the serasers processed as traps for the Sultan and fur covering for the Sultans during the Ramadan of 1077 (1677), the furs purchased, and the fabrics purchased for the dresses of the princes for the Eid».

Conclusion

The documents separated as archive materials as a result of classification are now more than ordinary written papers, they are now official documents

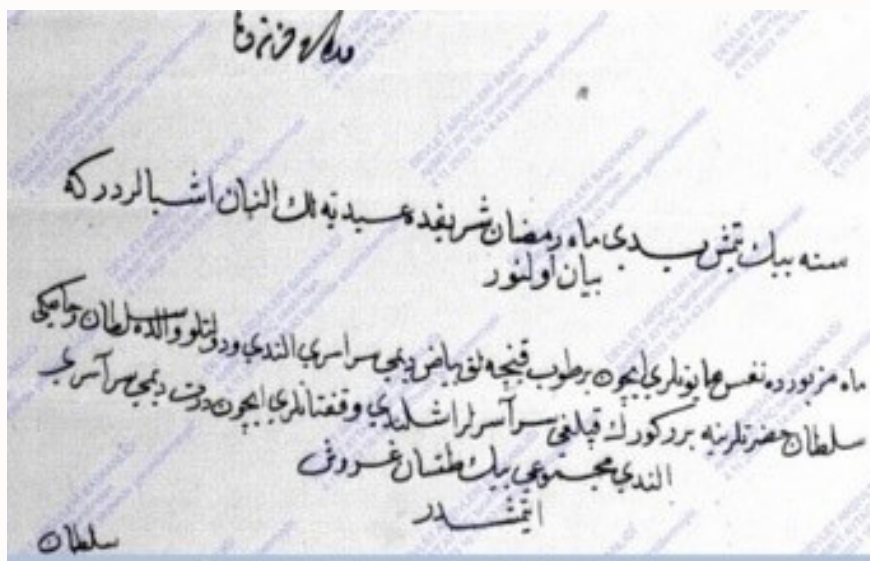


Fig. 9. Sixth document

containing important recorded information and must be preserved and protected in their current form. Of course, archive documents have social, cultural, economic and legal or official importance. Throughout history, Turks have been sensitive about archiving and over time, they have taken precautions regarding archiving, developed methods and established institutions and organizations related to the subject.

The Ottoman Empire also respected written paper in this sense. All kinds of official documents have been carefully preserved. It is known that the Turks pioneered the world civilization in many areas of textile, from carpets to clothing fabrics, within the weaving culture they brought from Turkestan geography to Anatolia and the Balkans. One of the most important fabric types during the Ottoman period was the fabric called seraser. Archival documents also prove that this fabric had a special importance, especially within the palace, at that time.

It is understood that a very valuable fabric such as Seraser was used even in the covering of gift boxes or bundles to be sent to foreign heads of state, highlighting the wealth of the state, and was even used on the door curtains of the palace. Archival documents also prove that hilats were sewn from seraser fabric, pillow cases were prepared, and even the clothes of female sultans were made from seraser fabric.

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