

**A Handsewn  
Tibyani Nafi (Kaftan)**

Queen's Prize entry for 1998

## Tibyani Nafi: Kaftan

by Jacquelyne Swanson

Kaftans held a significant role in Ottoman society. They were not only functional outer garments, but could display one's rank and status in Turkish society. Kaftans were worn over layers to provide for warmth. The quilted kaftan not only provided for this, but was also worn over armor for extra protection in battle.

The fabric used in construction displayed status. High-grade fabrics such as silk, brocades, and velvets were used only by kings and princes. Notable people would wear wools, satin, and lower quality silk. Those of low status would wear cottons and ordinary silks. These garments were also given to people by the Sultan to show favor. If someone was in high standing with the Sultan, these fabric casts may be ignored and the person in question may be awarded a higher quality garment.

Kaftans have many different styles (Picture 1). A kaftan means an upper gown with long sleeves that is often an honorific garment. One kind is Tibyani Nafi. This is a quilted garment lined with wool or silk (Picture 2). It seems to most often have sleeves that reach to the elbow. Another special form is called Ahmet Rasim. This is described as a four sleeved robe with yellow silk stripes made of silk or cotton. The four sleeves are difficult to identify. I believe this is referring to kaftans with removable sleeves (Picture 3). Many paintings show what seems to be sleeveless kaftans that follow the same lines as existing kaftans with removable sleeves (Picture 4). Other kaftan styles include unquilted ones with elbow length sleeves, and long sleeved kaftans without removable sleeves.

The Topkapi Saray Museum has an extensive collection of kaftans. The clothing of deceased sultans has been carefully preserved according to custom in the treasury of the Saray. This allows close examination of actual garment construction. Photographs of the garments often clearly show seam lines. Unfortunately, the photographs often do not show the inner construction. One picture that does may be found in the book Turkish Textiles and Velvets by Tahsin Oz (Picture 5). Janet Arnold was allowed to examine a Tibyani Nafi from

the Topkapi Saray Museum (Picture 6). She offers a very detailed written description of the inner construction.

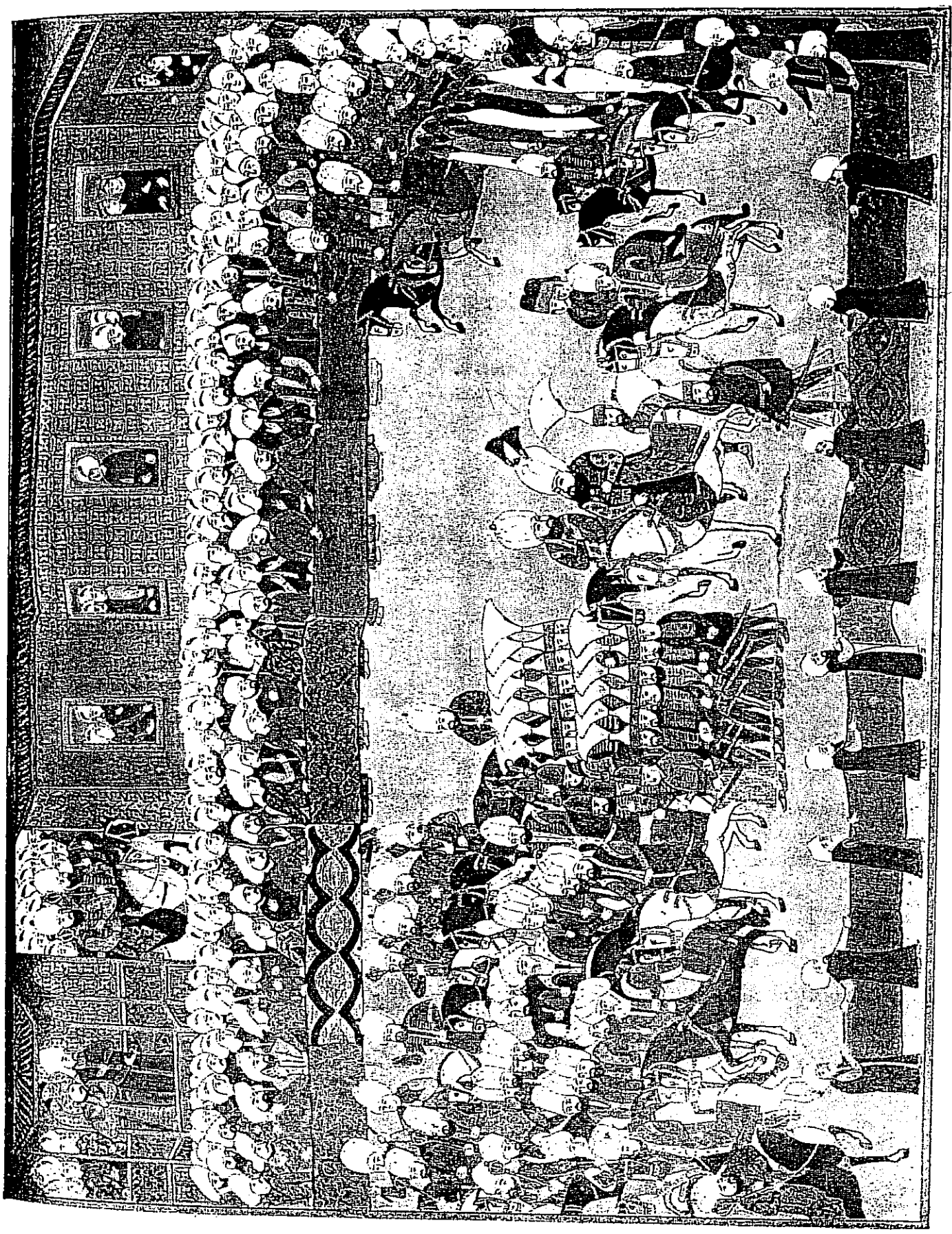
In order to draw a pattern, I carefully examined photographs of existing kaftans. Tahsin Oz states that these garments average 1.48 meters in length. This converts to about 59 inches. Using a ruler, I measured the dimensions of 10 kaftans pictured in his book. All of these kaftans had similar measurements even though they were worn by various people. The base width was about 1 foot narrower than the length. It was also consistently double that of the width of the chest. The widest piece of fabric used in the construction of the garment runs somewhere between 25 and 30 inches. Using this information along with visual cues, I developed the pattern included in the pictures to the rear of this document. The exterior is generally made from a high quality textile. It is lined with wool or silk. (If lined with silk, the garment is called a kazakend.) The interior is cotton with a silk edging. Janet Arnold stated that there are pockets on the sides. Many pictures show a split in the side skirts of the kaftan. This is also supported by miniature painting of the time. There are 15 sets of braiding on the front of these garments with loops and buttons to hold them shut. A mandarin style collar is also included at the neckline. The quilting also holds the layers together and the wool in place. This garment would have been ankle length unless it was honorary in which case it would have been floor length.

I found this project very difficult, but rewarding. I decided to completely hand sew this garment. This allowed for greater freedom in piecing the different layers together. I first sewed each layer individually, then pin basted them together. I decided to pin baste them, because unlike doing a flat quilt, I couldn't put the pieces into a frame to provide tension during quilting. After sewing the layers together, I quilted the exterior in vertical lines following the pattern of the fabric. For the closures, I substituted bone buttons for wooden toggles, and used a cotton yarn for the braiding. I had a difficult time finding suitable supplies for the braiding. I feel the bone colored yarn in combination with the bone toggles were as close as I could get to the silk cording and wooden toggles used in period. In order to save money, the garment is lined with cotton batting instead of wool. An acetate fabric was used as a substitute for silk on the border of the lining. I recognize that this fabric is not period, but I felt it provided an inexpensive alternative for the same visual effect. Before beginning this project, I put together a mock up of the pattern to try on different sized men. I found that it fit a six-foot man of average or thin build very well.

The Tibyani Nafi was sturdy and durable. It provided excellent protection as a covering for armor or from the elements. The fabric used would also make a statement about the wearer. Hopefully, by carefully studying photographs of existing garments, period art work, and first hand descriptions, I have been able to adequately recreate this garment.

## Bibliography

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