

## **CARPETS WITH HUMAN AND ANIMAL FIGURES IN ANATOLIA AND AZERBAIJAN**

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Gagauz Turks have lived in Anatolia and Azerbaijan for nearly 1000 years. At the beginning, the people living in these regions shared the same culture as well as the same state, Grand Seljukian State.

Turks are a nation that has dealt with making carpets for thousands of years. The oldest Turkish carpet (1) known today is the Hun Carpet, which was found by a Russian archeologist, Rudenko, in the fifth tomb at Pazyryk (2) (Picture1). Even today, in the regions where Turkish communities live, the tradition of making carpets maintains. (In Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Uzbakistan...)

Not only Turks but also other nations made carpets and still carry on manufacturing them. Except the woven materials similar to carpets, each having different kind of weaving techniques (3), it is known that while weaving genuine carpets two kinds of knots are made; one of them is Turkish knot (gordes) and the other is Iranian knot (sine) (4) (Picture 2).

Apart from some exceptions such as Ottoman palace carpets, including Huns, Turkish carpets have been woven with Turkish knots and this tradition is still widespread in Turkish regions on the whole.

In Turkish carpets, as knots are made with colored wool thread under and over two of longer vertical wrapping threads on a loom, the carpets woven

in this way are more durable and easier to embroider geometric patterns on. This is the most distinctive characteristic of Turkish carpets that makes them different from other nations' carpets.

In this article, We will not mainly deal with how the Azerbaijani and Anotolian carpets changed in the course of time, or the characteristics of the carpets made in different parts of these two regions. We will just point out how human and animal patterns were embroidered on Anatolian carpets, and how human figures were embroidered on Azarbaijani carpets.

## **HUMAN AND ANIMAL FIGURES ON ANATOLIAN CARPETS**

### **1- Carpets with Human Figures:**

It's almost impossible to find human figures in a realistic style on Anatolian carpets. On a nineteenth century Hakkari carpet, which is now in Ethnography Museum, Ankara, there are human figures in naive characters (Picture 3).

It is possible to think that the carpet was woven in Azerbaijan and then taken to Hakkari, or the weaver of the carpet moved to Hakkari from Azerbaijan and settled there, or it was woven similar to those of Azerbaijani carpets just because the weavers were affected by the carpets woven in Azerbaijan.

### **2- Carpets with Animal Figures:**

Carpets of this kind are rare among the Anatolian carpets. Animal motives on these carpets, are stylized and put into geometric forms: fifteenth century west Anatolian carpets (Picture 4), (Picture 5), which describe the fight between a dragon and a phoenix, or U\_ak carpet with motives of birds made in the fifteenth century are examples of them (Picture 6).

Carpets with animal figures are rare in Anatolia, and the animal motives on them were always stylized.

### **3- Carpets with Abstract Motives:**

Most of the carpets woven in Anatolia have abstracted motives. Every symbolized motive has a different meaning. Most of them are related with the totems before Islam(5).

When Turks accepted Islam as their religion, they gave up some of their traditions and beliefs regarding their previous religions, and maintained some of them with some slight changes, and continued some as they were.

It is known that, throughout the history, in various Turkish states, different techniques were used to make human and animal figures as well as other figures on different materials.

Although, unlike the Pentateuch, the Koran does not have any direct order banning figures of living creatures, Muslims avoided drawing pictures of living creatures that have the ability to move (i.e. human, animal) ever since they became Muslim (6). It must be due to this reason that Turks avoided making figures of human as well as realistic figures of animals on the carpets they made in order to use in their houses or tents; instead, they either abstracted or stylized all the motives they used.

The carpets with abstracted motives have figures of human or animal separately, or both without any part (organ) missing, or only parts of their bodies. All the above mentioned motives are abstracted. However, to be able to notice and understand them, one should both know how to work out

the meanings of figures and have the knowledge to help him perceive the origin of the figures (Picture7), (Picture 8).

### **AZERBAIJANI CARPETS WITH HUMAN FIGURES**

Apart from the ones with human figures, Azerbaijani carpets are similar to Turkish carpets in Anatolia in terms of general characteristics, motive, color and weaving techniques. In all regions of Azerbaijan that are near Anatolia, similar motives attract attention: for example, twentieth century Kazakh carpets, Azerbaijan (Picture 9), and nineteenth century Kars carpets, Anatolia (Picture 10), (Picture 11) have similar characteristics.

The similarities between the carpets from these two different regions did not disappear no matter how far the distance between them was. It is observed that nineteenth century *Ä\_rakl\_* carpet (Picture 12) which belongs to Gyanja group, Azerbaijan resembles eighteenth century *Ni\_de* carpet, Kemerhisar (Picture 13). Although they belong to different regions, similar features can be observed even on the carpets with animal motives. Of course, these are similar only in terms of general characteristics, which is quite natural. Since every carpet was woven by different people, the result was to be different.

The main difference between the carpets from these two regions is that the carpets woven in Azerbaijan since the sixteenth century have human figures whereas Anatolian carpets do not.

The difference might have resulted mainly from different political formations, which appeared in the sixteenth century, between these two regions and their influence on religious inclinations.

The oldest Azerbaijani carpet with human figures known today is the one woven in the sixteenth century in Kashan, Azerbaijan. The carpet describing

meeting of Leili and Madjnun is in a private collection now (Picture 14). On that carpet, the description was introduced through Seljukian style.

Court Feast is the subject of another carpet woven in the Tabriz province of Azerbaijan in the sixteenth century which is now in the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest. The most interesting aspects of the carpet woven with a view of the Azarbaijanian miniature at that time is that some animal motives and figures depicting battles of animals resemble the Eurasian animal style to some extent (Picture 15).

On another carpet woven in Shirvan region, Azerbaijan, in 1600, which is in a private collection now, and whose subject is hunting, the view is not in miniature style; it reflects the characteristics of a carpet (Picture 16). The motives on the carpet are in geometric patterns. And human figures are either extremely diagramatized or of naive characters as in human descriptions in the center of the carpet.

On some types of Azerbaijani carpets with human and animal description, it was observed that all the figures were depicted by using more and more geometric figures, and this tradition was improved and maintained throughout the following years. On a carpet made in the nineteenth or eighteenth century (7) in Shirvan, of which subject was also hunting, it is observed that some unnecessary details were removed and the figures were given much more geometric shapes (Picture 17).

On the other hand, it is also observed that the tradition of making carpets with human figures, most of which were in miniature, was maintained: the carpet which was made in Tabriz in the nineteenth century, is now in the Nizami Museum of Azerbaijani Literature, and it describes Farkhad's death (Picture 18). Another carpet describing "Four Season" (Picture 19), which was made in the same century in Tabriz, is now in the

R. Mustafayev State Museum of Art, Baku. Both of these carpets are good examples of the above mentioned carpets; that is carpets with human figures in miniature. Some of the twentieth century carpets also have similar characteristics.

The carpet describing "Khusrav and Shirin meet while hunting" (Picture 20), which was made in early twentieth century in Tabriz, and the one depicting "Bakhram Gur and Fitne while hunting" (picture 21), which was made in 1930 in Tabriz, reflect an exact view of miniature. The fact that, on both of these carpets, the event is described on a plain surface, that on them are Chinese clouds in the sky, and that on the upper part of the latter are some writings as in miniatures, and that they include descriptions of hills, which are peculiar to miniatures, show that the people who made them or who prepared the design had a good deal of knowledge about miniatures.

Another carpet woven in Kashan in 1930 depicts Bakhram Gur and Fitne while hunting. This carpet has naive characteristics as well as human figures with thick touching eyebrows. When the style of the crowns of the two figures on horses and the human figures with thick touching eyebrows on the same carpet are considered together, it could be inferred that the carpet carries the traces of the influence of Iranian style (Picture 22). The colors of this carpet, the relation between the objects, and the fact that, in terms of appearance in general, it does not have the same aesthetic values with the carpet woven in the early twentieth century in Tabriz, which describe Husrav and Shirin while hunting (Picture 20), is the indicator of the fact that they were woven by different people skilled in weaving carpets.

In south Azerbaijan, the present Republic of Azerbaijan, besides the Azerbaijani carpets with human figures, another type of carpets with human

figures began to appear since 1939. Either the people who knew how to weave a carpet and had the education of art designed and wove these carpets or they just supervised the weavers of these carpets during the process of weaving.

In such kind of Azerbaijani carpets, which were designed by artists, a harmonious mixture of miniature characteristics and European renaissance type attract attention. The subject of these carpets, as that of the old carpets with human figures, were taken from literature. This tradition was maintained in the following years, but, besides the carpets whose subjects were connected with literature, the portraits of the people who held a high position in the management of the state were also made.

Some samples of the carpets designed by artists in 1939.

Lyatif Kerimov and Gazanfar Knhalylov designed the carpet, which is now in Nizami Museum of Azerbaijani literature, Baku, and the subject of which is "Shirin visits Farkhad at mount Bisutun". The subject was depicted in a rectangle, which covered a large space in the middle of the carpet (Picture 23).

The trees, rocks and even human and animal figures which look like miniature were made in a different style: the perfect design of human and animal figures, Farkhad's large shoulders and fat arms, which emphasize his physical power, and the shape that his body takes while working is a way of description which is different from that of in miniatures. The tone of the colors of the horse whose head and neck are seen on the left, especially on the rocks, is the feature which has nothing to do with miniatures.

The carpet with similar features, which was made in the same year and kept in the same museum, and which depicts Bakhrām Gur and Fitne, was designed by Amir Gadzhiyev (Picture 24). The tones of the trunks and

leaves of the trees, and some geographical forms of the surface of the nature, presence of a strong realism and perspective in the appearances of animals on the carpet is the indicator which shows that the carpet does not reflect the characteristics of miniature.

Some of the carpets made in 1939 and kept in Nizami Museum are as follows: "Iskander and Nushaba" by Lyatif Kerimov and Mamed-Ali Shirinov (Picture 25), "Madjun among wild Animals" by Lyatif Kerimov (Picture 26), and "Nushiravan and Vizier chatting" by Lyatif Kerimov - Kjazim Kjazimzade (Picture 27).

These kinds of carpets were made in 1939 for the first time, and even today, the same kind of carpets or different versions of them are being made. The carpet taking its subject from literature and dealing with "Shabi-Hijran" (Picture 28), which was designed by E. Mikailov in 1983 is a different sample of the carpets designed by an artist. Different applications are observed in Nizami Ganjavi carpet made by Kamil Aliyev (1978) (Picture 29) and Nizami carpet made by Hasan \_smailli (1991) (Picture 30). As a result, it can be said that Anatolian and Azerbaijani carpets had similar motives until the sixteenth century, and these motives were abstracted and stylized parallel to the influence and understanding of Islamic religion. The fact that some carpets with human figures dating back to the sixteenth century, which were made in Azerbaijan for the first time, look like miniature in appearance, and that the others have naive characters, may bring about the idea that the skills and cultural levels of the weavers were different.

It may be due to the interests of some educated people in this field that carpets with human figures, which had perfect compositions, were woven in some regions of northern Azerbaijan since 1939.



1. About Pazyryk carpet, N.Diyarbakirli says that it is Hun (Turkish) carpet. See **Hun Sanatı** , M.E.B. Yay., İstanbul 1972, p. 134. However, E.D. Phillips, **The Royal Hordes Nomad Peoples of the Steppes**, London 1965, pp. 84-85 says that his carpet belongs to the Persian (Iranians). On the other hand, D.Kuban, in this book **Batı'ya Göçün Sanatsal Evreleri**, Cem Yay. İstanbul 1993. pp.49-50., proves that it does not belong to the Iranians, referring to the ideas of foreign researchers about this subject.
2. The word " Pazırık" might have come from the Turkish word " Pazarlı " or " Pazarcık". See C.Kerametli, "Divan Edebiyat Müzesinde 18. Yüzyıl İşlemeli Seccadeler", **Kültür ve Sanat Dergisi**, volume 5, K.B. Yay., (Ocak), İstanbul 1997, p. 98.
3. See B.Acar, **Kilim ve Düz Dokuma Yayımları**. Akbank yay., İstanbul 1975.
4. See G.Öney - Ü.Erginsoy, **Anadolu Selçuklu Mimari Süslemesi ve El Sanatları**, T.İ.B.K. Yay., Ankara 1988 (2), p. 127; N.Diyarbakirli, the book in question, p.132.
5. See M.Önder, " Anadoluda Halı Kilim Demek", **Kültür ve Sanat Dergisi**, volume I, K.B. Yay., (Haziran), İstanbul 1973, pp. 92-101.
6. See M.Ş.İpşiroğlu, **İslam'da Resim Yasağı ve Sonuçları**. T.İ.B.K. Yay., İstanbul 1973, p.9. "Although Muslims generally avoided drawing human figures except miniature (Book Pictures), this does not mean that they did not draw any figures of that kind. It is possible to see even nude figures in the khalifates' palaces" and it was never banned. See M.And, "Çıplak Resim İslam Halifelerinin Saraylarında da Yer Almış Ancak Hiçbir Zaman Yasaklanmamıştır", **Milliyet Sanat Dergisi**, volume: 109, (6 Aralık ), İstanbul 1974, p. 18-20.
7. L.Kerimov **Azerbeycan Halcası** , Baku 1985, p. 233. says that this carpet belongs to the twentieth century; R.Tağıyeva, **Nizami Obrazları Halcalarda**, Baku 1991. (no pagination), in picture III, says that it belongs to the nineteenth century.