

Symbology of Animal Motifs in the Verneh Textures of Shahsevan Tribe

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Abstract: *Most of the nomads of East Azerbaijan province belong to the tribes of Arasbaran and Shahsevan, nine independent tribes in the Yaylak period, and seven independent tribes in the Qishlaq period. Shahsevan nomads are composed of different tribes, such as Ajirlu, Moghanlu, Giglu, Qaralar Meshgini etc. Verneh, as a type of carpet, Maffrash or means of carrying household furniture, were mainly woven by nomads and some villagers in the settlement of Shahsevan nomads in Azerbaijan and some surrounding areas, such as Pars Abad, Germi and Meshgin Shahr counties of Ardabil province, and Ahar and Kaleybar counties of East Azerbaijan province. This handicraft has both the simplicity of the rug (Kilim) style and the elegance and beauty of the carpet. The lack of sufficient information in this field has led to a close study of some of these motifs related to Verneh. Therefore, one of the most important objectives of the research is to introduce motifs, concepts and animal symbols hidden in Verneh, in order to expand knowledge about the artistic products of this region and examine the impact of nomadic life conditions on the nature of their products in these areas. The research method is applied in terms of nature and purpose and its findings were first done as field research. Then, the samples from the studies were matched with the general information and eventually examined. The results of this study show that the animal motifs created in verneh tell the truth about the material and social life of weavers and show a valuable collection in their life. Verneh's paintings and motifs depict the nomadic way of life, the animal-dependent life in direct connection with nature, the adherence to the customs of the ancestors and the beliefs of these people. Animal motifs are a symbol of nomadic life, related to nomadic livestock.*

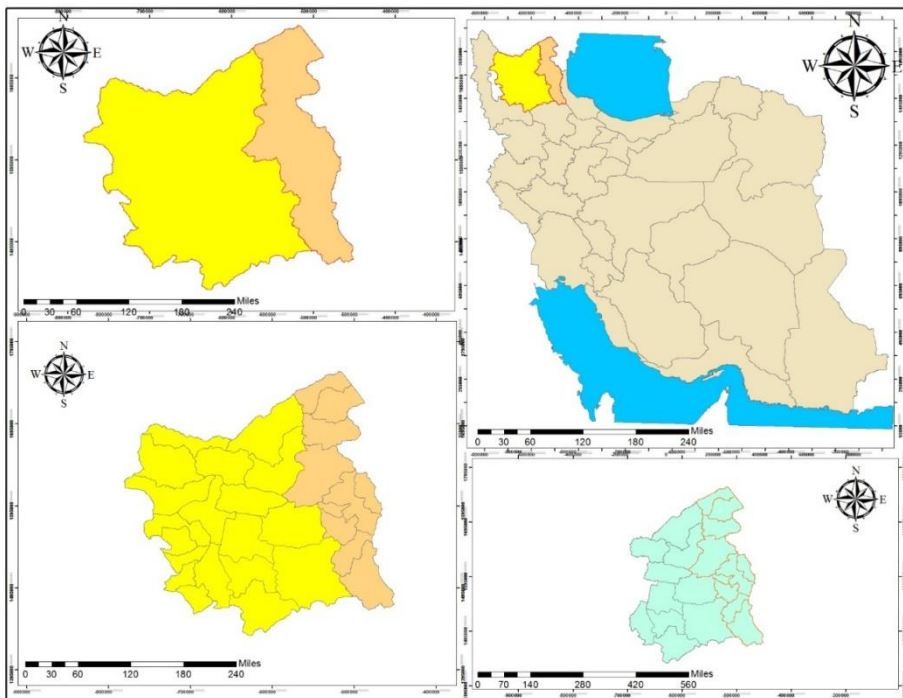
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Introduction

Based on technical and artistic classifications, carpets are twofold: flat woven and knotted-pile. Flat Woven carpets are older than knotted-pile and also have different weaving methods that lead to the production of different products, such as Palas, Jajim, Zili, Verneh and Kilim. These types of handmades, which are often decorated with innovative patterns, hold a special place among handicraft products. Their quality and quantity depend on the culture of the region, beliefs and faiths, desire and people's living conditions, which are unique in every region. The production of handmade carpets by Shahsevan and Arasbaran tribes of East Azarbaijan nomads is very common (Map 1).



Map1. Location of the studied area

Verneh is mainly woven by nomads and some villagers in Moghan regions, such as Germe, Bileh Savar, Aslan duz, Pars-Abad, Arshaq in Meshgin Shahr and also Qaradagh regions, like Ahar, Kaleybar. However, the main origin of this industry is represented by the Shahsevan nomads from Azerbaijan. The theoretical framework for creating an artwork does not seem very logical just because of its artistic value in the difficult life of nomads. The deep dependence of the nomadic culture on the conditions and way of life has caused them to portray everything in their own handicrafts that have

played a role in their lives. In this way, these products are full of motifs that have been given them an artistic aspect. The analysis of meaningful forms can provide the basis for the analysis of tribes' social actions, because these forms explain in general aspects their history, identity and their beliefs. Encoding meaning, representing culture and constructing special meanings in the process of producing works of art and the final product is possible¹.

As a conclusion, one of the features of the Verneh of Shahsevan is its decorative motif, which can easily illustrate the tradition and beliefs of its weavers. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient information in this field has led to the study of some of them related to Verneh in order to determine the type of motifs and their symbolic concepts.

Research questions:

The main question is: what motifs and titles are common in Verneh of Shahsevan and what are the meaning and concepts of their animal motifs? Another question is that if various different motifs are used in a Verneh, are these motifs semantically related to each other or are they independent of each other?

Objectives and research methods:

The main purpose of our study is to identify the original and widely used animal motifs in Verneh of the Shahsevan from Moghan region. Another goal of the present study is the classification of functional motifs in terms of appearance, dividing them into groups and subgroups to facilitate the research, and investigation of the mysterious and symbolic meanings of each classified motif. Therefore, the first field research has been done and then, samples from surveys have been matched with official information and eventually reviewed.

Symbol meanings in artworks:

Pierre Bourdieu believes that understanding an artistic work cannot just be defined in terms of physical access, because artworks only make sense to those who have the right tools to understand them. According to Bourdieu, understanding requires decoding. But the decoding of artworks is not a natural and universal ability, as understanding artworks is entirely dependent on having codes, on the basis of which the work is encrypted. These codes and skills are neither natural and innate nor distributed universally. He calls such a skill a linguistic talent and he considers it as a form of cultural capital. Bourdieu's relational view argues that on one hand, a cultural work must be analysed in accordance with all environmental factors and on the other hand, in relation to the character structure of the producer².

¹ Ziapour, Jalil, *A brief history of Iranian and world art*, Tehran: Jihad Daneshgani of Art Publications, 1999, p. 91.

² Rezaei, Mohammad, *Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Production Area*, Social Science Month Book, No. 78, 2005, p. 53.

As artistic activities express, arise from common patterns, and to be learned from behaviors, beliefs and feelings, they belong to the fields of culture. The materials used to produce the artwork, the methods used and the natural elements that the artist chooses to represent, all vary from community to community and reveal the connection between society and art with the environment.

In the article entitled “*Art as a cultural system*”, Clifford Geertz considers art as a conscious production that affects the sense of beauty referring to the manner of arranging colours, shapes, movements, sounds and other elements. Howard Murphy also believes that works with semantic and aesthetic features are used to represent goals and representations³.

Franz Boas believes that wherever decorative designs have been used by primitive man, there are no pure aesthetic purposes, but these designs evoke certain principles instead⁴. He also argues that symbolic decorations are guided by symbolic principles. Thus, the motifs of animals are placed in proportion to decorative patterns. By studying shapes, he concludes that there are special pure artistic elements used in symbolic representations. In response to the question of whether the totemic dimension of social life was the main stimulus for the development of art or the artistic stimuli developed totemic life, he states that totemic ideas were a mediation among symbolic artistic manifestations.

The conception of symbolic motifs used in handicrafts by Shahsevan tribes

A symbol is a sign that represents thoughts and ideas. In other words, it is something that stands for something else (usually by convention or association), especially a material object used to represent an abstract concept. Symbols are codes that play an important role in transmitting the civilization and culture of any ethnic group from the past to the future. One of the artistic fields that has such a capability is the art of Kilim weaving. Looking at the past motifs in Kilim, we can notice their presence in weaves from the contemporary period. Besides, the same symbolic meanings and concepts belonging to the past can be found.

It is worth noting that some of these motifs are abstract and others are explicit. In this way, in weaves such as twisting weave, which is possible to use horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines, abstract motifs that are quite similar to the intended design and do not require to be identified, such as the motifs of rooster, goat horn and hoof, four, six and eight leaf flowers, apple blossoms and leaves, can be used.

³ Izadi Jeyran, Asghar, *Anthropology of the Art of Rural Kilims, analysis of the shape and style of designs*, Anthropological Journal, No. 10, p. 10.

⁴ Boas, Franz *Primitive Art*, In the Anthropology of Art, Howard Morphy & Morean Perkins (eds). Oxford: Blackwell. 2005, p. 396.

In this study, because artists have used these names for such motifs for many years, their concepts are defined on the basis of their names, and it is possible that these concepts, such as motifs like tulips, camel neck and fireplace, were not intended for kilim weavers throughout the history.

It is necessary to state that the type of texture involved in creating these ornaments, because the cracked texture in which step-like mode was used instead of vertical lines, influenced the motif texture. By this method, the patterns cannot be shown in a natural state.

In general, the motifs used in Kilim rugs are divided into three groups. The first group is related to those that refer to the weavers' linguistic awareness. They weave what they see beautiful in the environment and try to show this beauty in their weaves. The second group is related to the motif of animals and functional accessories that are used in everyday life and are considered a part of their lives. The third group deals with the symbolic elements rooted in the ethnic and tribal beliefs of individuals. The purpose of their texture is to conquer nature and its forces and use some motifs as a talisman to repel evil forces and to attain desires and aspirations, such as achieving power and courage, endurance, fertility, rain, life and prosperity, longevity and evolution. These beliefs are embedded in the ethnic and tribal beliefs of each region and most of them have been preserved from the past to this day⁵.

Motifs used in Shahsevan's weaves

Most of the nomads of East Azerbaijan province belong to the two tribes of Arasbaran and Elson (Shahsevan), nine independent tribes in the Yaylak period, and seven independent tribes in the Qishlaq period. Handicrafts are very important among these tribes. All kinds of Kilims, Jajims, saddlebags, horse blankets are among the most important handmades of the tribes in this region⁶.

The Shahsevans, like other Turkic tribes, have long-standing traditions of weaving. Today, the art of integrated production is still among the indigenous art of women. Until a few decades ago, traders and researchers did not recognize Shahsoon weavings. But now, these weaves have regained their lost identity in the collection of sellers.

The design was more naturalistic. But with the advent of Islam and prohibition of displaying human and animal shapes, the motifs became more decorative. One of the consequences of the prohibition is the creation of geometric shapes. Indigenous weavers have become more receptive to simple geometric designs. Thus, the motif of sun, moon, birds and animals were

⁵ Sadegh Poori, Elham, *Appearance and conceptual study of common marginal motifs in kilims of the Ardabil province*. Two Scientific Quarterly on the Promotion of Art Research, sixth year, No. 12, 2017, p. 6.

⁶ Izadi Jeyran, Asghar, *Anthropology of the Art of Rural Kilims, analysis of the shape and style of designs*, Anthropological Journal, No. 10, p. 32.

woven in a conventional way. Despite the fact that the Shahsevan belong to different races, their weaves can be easily distinguished from other tribes. Another feature of weaves is the induction of a sense of movement in the designs. This quality is created by the interaction of positive and negative space in the creation of motifs. In many cases, negative space is created by mirroring positive space. But in some samples, these two categories are different. The meaning and concept of many motifs have been forgotten. Birds, plants, rivers, mountains, sun, moon and star, all have their own legends⁷. Most of the motifs used in the Verneh of the Shahsevan tribes are animal motifs. (Fig. 1). One of the most famous Verneh designs, which is one of the most important handmade designs of this tribe at the same time, is the frame or brick design. On the other hand, rooster design is the most common design in this area.



Fig. 1. Using different motifs throughout the Verneh's texture

Verneh

Perhaps verneh can be seen as the most important and beautiful handicrafts of Shahsevan's tribe. Many experts have considered the verneh's weaving method to be the middle limit between kilim and carpet and sometimes it is called the home of the evolution of kilims into carpets. At the same time, most experts consider it as a type of kilim due to the lack of use of knots in the weave. Verneh is sometimes a combination of silk and wool and it is woven by nomadic women and girls vertically on the loom without motifs. Verneh is mostly produced during the Qishlaq season of the tribe because nomads have enough opportunities to rest.

⁷ Hall, Alastair; Nicholas, Barnard, *Iranian kilims*, translated by Keramatollah Afsar, Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 2001, p. 39.

In the past, the nomads of "Moghan Plain", "Garamduz", and "Arasbaran" spun wool from their livestock with ordinary spindles and painted it in a basic way, preparing it for Verneh texture⁸.

Verneh looks like a carpet without a pile. Each weave consists of four parts: side, chain, margin and texture. In Verneh of nomads, it is possible that the chain is woven before and after the margin. According to some methods used, Verneh is woven in different dimensions, as follows: 60 90, 100 150, 120 200, 200 300, 250 350, 300 400, 400 600 and 500 800 cm. We should also mention that Verneh is exported to European and American countries.

Verneh in nomadic life is such an important aspect, that in some areas, when its weaving is finished, the first and the elder in a family goes to the verneh's loom and rewards its weavers, then women remove the verneh from the loom and deliver it to her.

As a matter of fact, verneh is one of the most basic dowries for girls in the region, and the bride should participate in weaving them. Even in the past, women belonging to a family who were looking for suitable girls to marry often asked about her weaving art and the quality of her Verneh⁹.

History of Verneh

Verneh is woven by some villagers and nomads in the Qaradagh regions in counties like Ahar, kaleybar and in Moghan regions in the counties of Germe, Bileh-Savar, Pars-Abad and Meshghin shahr (formerly Khiav). The main origin of this industry was the nomadic region of Azerbaijan, which has spread to other regions starting from there.

One-sided kilim or Verneh is called Sumak or Sumeh in the Republic of Azerbaijan and Northeast Turkey. The main place of production was in the mountainous region of Qarabagh, upstream of Aras. Due to cultural-tribal relations and traffic on the banks of the Aras River, Verneh production gradually became common first in the Arasbaran region and then among the tribes and nomads of Moghan plain. Currently, the production of Verneh is unique to Iran and it only exists in the above mentioned regions of Iran. The feature of production, the process of adaptation or simulation, like many other rugs, such as carpets, kilims, etc., makes it difficult and even impossible in other parts of Iran and the world. Verneh carpets produced in Azerbaijan are usually found in colours of lacquer, dark-blue, cream, white, onion and light blue with the motif of animals in the middle and margin. Verneh, as a type of carpet, Maffrash or means of carrying household furniture, has been developed in the area of migration and nomadic settlement of Shahsevan in Moghan region of Azerbaijan and some

⁸ Tabibi, Heshmatullah, *Sociology of tribes and nomads*. Tehran: University of Tehran Publications, 2008, p. 128.

⁹ Izadi Jeyran, Asghar, *Anthropology of the Art of Rural Kilims, analysis of the shape and style of designs*, Anthropological Journal, No. 10, p. 38.

surrounding areas related to the population and communities settled in this region¹⁰.

The marginal motifs of Shahsevan's kilim weavers

The margin woven in Verneh is in the form of a small margin with a small width and a large margin with large width. Margins are called “Yilan” in local terms. Yilan means *snake* in Turkish language and the reason for this naming is the shape of the margins woven like a snake around it. Most of the motifs used in this case are specific to margins, and a few of them are sometimes woven into the texture. Marginal motifs are generally divided into two groups: disconnected marginal motifs and connected marginal motifs.

Disconnected marginal motifs

Disconnected marginal motifs refer to margins with separate motifs at a distance from each other, which are used in both small and large house margins. In addition to the margins, some of these motifs may be used in the texture. Most of these motifs are used in the texture of striped Verneh due to the design of these Verneh rugs. Because strips similar to marginal strip are used in the texture of the striped Verneh (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2. striped Verneh

¹⁰ Ghasemi, Ahad, *Moghan Negine Azerbaijan*, Volume II, Tehran: Publications of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 1999, p. 59.

Sometimes, the motifs are placed in the Verneh texture with the same sizes used in the margins, which may be included in the frame designs and fill the entire texture, or fill the blanks as a small motif. (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Framed Verneh

Connected marginal motifs

These motifs are connected and interconnected, which have a chain shape. For this reason they are also called chains. Some of them come from the connection of separate marginal motifs (Fig. 4). Some have a going mode (Fig. 5) and others have going and returning mode (Fig. 6) and often take a positive and negative colours on themselves (Fig. 7). For this reason they are called male and female terms. The motifs are often used marginally, but sometimes they are also seen in the texture strips of verneh. Most of the motifs are used in small margins, whereas sometimes they are also used in large margins.



Fig 4. A sample of a camel neck design



Fig 5. Running water



Fig 6. The birds



Fig 7: The tulip

According to the findings of studies, the most marginal motifs in Shahsevan kilims are specific to the limited marginal space and are rarely used in the texture. Therefore, the limitation of the marginal dimensions is involved in the formation of its motifs. Also, the motifs used in a margin are not diverse and usually a repetition of a motif is obvious. The only difference between them can be repetitive in the colour mixture of motifs. The usage of two different motifs in a margin was observed only in the connected margins in the form of two flowers and leaves that were combined with each other (Fig. 8)



Fig 8. A sample of an apple flower

Types of animal designs used in Verneh

Rooster design

Due to their importance in the tribe, some animals are used as a prime motif in Verneh. The rooster is one of these animals (Fig. 9). This motif is widely used in the texture and margins of Shahsevan kilims in Moghan and is less used in Ardabil itself and other areas of this province

(Fig. 10). Generally, the rooster is a sign of pride and this feature can be clearly understood in the behavior of this animal. It is also a symbol of the sun all over the world because its roaring heralds the rising of the sun¹¹.



Fig 9. A sample of rooster design



Fig 10. The Rooster

In Avesta, due to the roaring of this animal by observing the rays of the sun, it has been called roaring, which is known in Persian as the rooster¹². It is the symbol of caring and guarding, defiance, perseverance and manhood¹³. It is also considered a manifestation of beauty and lust. This animal has always been present in rural and nomadic life.

¹¹ Maljaei, Zahra; Akbari, Fatemeh, *Investigation of symbolic carriers and structures of Verneh designs of Arasbaran's tribe*, Scientific-Research Quarterly of Motif Visual Arts, Fifth Year, No. 13, 2013, p. 47.

¹² Bahmani, Pardis, *The Evolution of Motif and Symbol in Iranian Traditional Arts*, Tehran: Payame Noor University, 2011, P. 80.

¹³ Yavari, Hossein, *Recognition of kilims and Iranian kilims-like (second edition.)* Tehran: Simaye Danesh, 2014, P. 153.

Owl design

The owl is another animal that has an important position in some tribes. One design has been assigned to it with the same name. The owl is a bird that was known for its wisdom and good fortune in ancient Iran. In this design, the abstract motif of owl has been used in the texture and margins (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. A sample of owl design

Snake design

What gives the snake symbolic power is peeling, having life again, and going back to nature and because it has always been the guardian of treasure in springs and ponds. In this design, the margin forms are repeated in rows in the texture. Yilan means snake and the Verneh texture has been filled with colourful snakes (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12. A sample of snake design

If the size of this motif is large and has hands, feet and tentacles, it is called a dragon, which even uses small shapes on its body. They can be the spangles of the dragon's body, and to be considered as a small snake and dragon inside the body of a larger dragon. The motif of the complete dragon has been widely used in the Caucasus weaves. The motif of S, in addition to being the symbol of the snake, is also a symbol of running water. This is due to the twist seen in running water, which is similar to the twisting of a snake's body. This animal is considered as a symbol of happiness and joy, time¹⁴ and a sign of inner change¹⁵.

Perhaps such an impression is due to the moulting of this animal. What has given the snake a symbolic power is its moulting, living again and returning to nature. Because of its moulting and regeneration, the snake is considered a symbol of fertility¹⁶, life and resurrection¹⁷. Snake weavers consider it as a treasure protector and a deterrent to demonic forces. They engrave it in the margins to protect what is in the texture. This margin is also very useful in the texture of the bread table, because it protects the bread, as their treasure. In addition to the motif of the snake used in kilims, the word also refers to the margins. As mentioned before, the margins are called *Yilan*, which is the Turkish equivalent of the word *snake*. This name is due to the flower design in margins, which is twisted around the weave like a snake and is responsible for protection. There is a well-known type of margin among the Shahsevans called "*Ala Yilan*", which is towards the colourful snake. Several spongy motifs are placed on each colour and are designed similar to the body of a snake (Fig. 13).



Fig. 13. A sample of snake design

Combined designs

In these designs, designs from other handicrafts such as carpets or from other countries are usually combined with tribal designs. One of the

¹⁴ Hall, Alastair; Vivoska, José Logic, *Kilim*, translated by Shirin Homayounfar and Niloufar Ulfat Shayan, first edition, Tehran: Karang, 1999, p. 79.

¹⁵ Chevalier, Jean; Graben, Allan, *Culture of Symbols*, translated by Soodabeh Fazaili, Volume One, Second Edition, Tehran: Jeyhun, 2006, p. 85.

¹⁶ Maljaei, Zahra; Akbari, Fatemeh, *Investigation of symbolic carriers and structures of Verneh designs of Arasbaran's tribe*, Scientific-Research Quarterly of Motif Visual Arts, Fifth Year, No. 13, 2013, p. 51.

¹⁷ Bahmani, Pardis, *The Evolution of Motif and Symbol in Iranian Traditional Arts*, Tehran: Payame Noor University, 2011, p. 109.

types of such designs is Kian (Fig. 14), which is known as the royal design due to the use of Caucasian designs.



Fig. 14. A sample of Caucasian design

Adapted designs

These designs are usually adapted from the carpet design. The perfect example of this group is Azan eye design (Fig. 15), a complete adaptation of the carpet, and the animals used in it have been taken out of abstraction and moved towards realism, and it is considered a new design.



Fig. 15. A sample of animals design

Butterfly

Butterflies are a symbol of pure love and sometimes a symbol of stupidity¹⁸. This motif is one of the new patterns and is not seen in old weaves. The role of the butterfly is rarely used, and the only place where this motif is used is in the Moghan region (Fig. 16). In addition to the above figure, another type of butterfly is rarely used in the contemporary period. It accurately shows the anatomy of the body of a butterfly, but is not one of the original and traditional motifs.



Fig. 16. A sample of butterfly design

The legendary two-headed animal

Two-headed animals are used as birds and quadruped animals at the margins of woven kilims. Being two headed can be a symbol of Sufi thoughts, a mirror-like and reciprocal world¹⁹. It can also be a symbol of double strength and pairing. The two-headed bird is the most used design in the margins. (Fig. 17). Some two-headed animals look exactly like a natural animal that have one body and two heads, but in some cases, such as the picture above, it is considered similar to the general shape of an animal.



Fig 17. A sample of two-headed animal design

Part of the animal body

Each animal is a symbol of a thought. When some of the components of these animals are used in the weave, it can express the symbol of that animal and the thoughts of humans about it. In some cases, the motif may be unrelated to the animal and only resemble a part of the animal's body. There

¹⁸ Reza Sarfi, Mohammad, *Symbol of Birds in Masnavi*, Literary Research Quarterly, Fifth Year (18), 2008, p. 71.

¹⁹ Hall, Alastair; Vivoska, José Logic, *Kilim*, translated by Shirin Homayounfar and Niloufar Ulfat Shayan, first edition, Tehran: Karang, 1999, p. 77.

are several types of such margins in Ardabil's Kilims that will be mentioned in our essay.

Head of bird

This motif, which can be seen in great abundance in the margins and around bergamot orange, is symbolized by the image of clouds and rain, as it shows the connection between clouds and rain from prehistoric times. If this motif is placed around the bergamot orange or pond, it evokes the concept of rain. Marginal heads of birds are usually shown as male and female in contrasting colors, which have long been used in both carpet weaving and kilim textures.



Fig. 18. A sample of birds head design

Eagle paw

In mythological and ethnic beliefs, the eagle is considered the king of birds. It is a symbol of the sun, maybe that's why the eagle is the only bird that can stare at the sun. The flying eagle can keep all the creatures on earth under its control, which is a sign of its superiority²⁰. It is also a symbol of vision²¹, freedom and not being trapped in chains²². The eagle's paw, known in Turkish as *Qinakh* and *Qarmakh*, is very powerful and eagles use it to break their prey (Fig. 19.) This motif has been widely used in kilims as a mark of the mentioned powers and as a talisman for increasing strength and

²⁰ Dadvar, Abolghasem; Mansouri, Elham, *Introduction to the myths and symbols of Iran and India in ancient times* (first edition) Tehran: Kalhor, 2007, p. 111.

²¹ Hall, Alastair; Nicholas, Barnard, *Iranian kilims*, translated by Keramatollah Afsar, Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 2001, p. 69.

²² Reza Sarfi, Mohammad, *Symbol of Birds in Masnavi*, Literary Research Quarterly, Fifth Year (18), 2008.

courage²³. In addition to the margins, the motif of the eagle itself is abundantly found in the twisting texture of the Shahsevan.



Fig. 19. A sample of eagle paw design



Figure 20. Eagle paw

Goat hoof

In ethnic and mythological beliefs, the goat is mainly male and a sign of productive power. It is also considered the lord of the moon²⁴. By weaving

²³ Shirani, Razieh, *A symbolic and visual approach to Iranian talisman. Two quarterly motifs*. Second Year, (3), 2010, p. 22.

²⁴ Jobs, Gertrude, *Symbols, Book One: Animals*, Translated by Mohammad Reza Baghapour, First Edition. Tehran: Translator, 1992, 25.

this animal on the kilim, weavers are looking for a talisman for blessing, rain and fertility²⁵. (Fig. 21).



Fig. 21: Goat hoof

Camel neck

This animal itself is mostly used in the texture of kilims in a completely natural way. The motif of the camel neck, which does not resemble a camel neck in general, is used both in the texture and the margin (Fig 22). Camel, in addition to being a symbol of hard work and patience, is also known as a symbol of protection²⁶.



Fig. 22. A sample of camel neck design

²⁵ Afzal Tusi, Effat Al-Sadat , *Protective Kilim of the motif of Wild Goat* , Quarterly Journal of Nagreh, No 21, 2013, p. 66.

²⁶ Hall, Alastair; Vivoska, José Logic, *Kilim*, translated by Shirin Homayounfar and Niloufar Ulfat Shayan, first edition, Tehran: Karang, 1999, P. 75.

Animal horns

The horn is the image of supernatural power, divinity, kingship, strength, victory, abundance of flocks and crops, and fertility²⁷. In ancient times, the Iranians considered horned animals to have immortal power, and there was a strong possibility of a connection between the bowed horns and the crescent moon. The moon has long been associated with rain, so the horn was thought to be effective in reducing rainfall²⁸. One of the most widely used motifs of this group is the ram's horn (Fig. 22), whose eternal force is the manifestation of masculinity, male fertility, vigour and courage. The weaver, by drawing its motif of the neck, seeks to make his husband's force eternal and indestructible²⁹.



Fig. 23. A sample of animal horn design

²⁷ Cooper, Jean, *Illustrated Culture of Traditional Symbols*, Translated by Maliheh Karbasian, First Edition.) Tehran: Farshad, 2001, p. 218.

²⁸ Afzal Tusi, Effat Al-Sadat , *Protective Kilim of the motif of Wild Goat* , Quarterly Journal of Nagreh, No 21, 2013, p. 66.

²⁹ Hall, Alastair; Vivoska, José Logic, *Kilim*, translated by Shirin Homayounfar and Niloufar Ulfat Shayan, first edition, Tehran: Karang, 1999, p. 75.

Motif used in Verneh

The common feature of all nomadic handicrafts is the traditional motif-making developed over the years. Traditions are a part of the system of social values through which nomadic life can find meaning. For this reason, in weaving, like any other work of art, they can not be ignored.

Weavers' deep dependence on the natural environment, animals, plants and family system has made the Verneh texture to be related to the life of its producers. In addition to the decorative aspect, it is a practical application to reflect the feelings and desires of the weavers. Although this feature can be seen in most traditional art productions, in the case of women's handicrafts, this feature is so strong that it gives expressive language to decorated handicrafts³⁰.

Verneh is similar to carpet in design and appearance. All Vernehs have four parts including side, frame margin, chains and texture. Verneh texture is woven with different compositions. Sometimes the whole texture is divided into equal square parts. Inside each square, one or more motifs are engraved. Depending on the taste and mentality of the weaver, it/they may be repeated in another place with the same colour or not repeated at all. In other types, the texture is composed of different motifs without special division, which may be repeated along the length and width of the Verneh or woven without repetition. Another group of Verneh is woven mainly based on the execution of symmetrical motifs along the length and width of the Verneh. Such Vernehs often have special uses, such as preserving the tribal sign, gifts for other tribes, valuable dowry, a sign to carry the symbol of a tribe, the sign of good luck, the symbol of fertility, the symbol of loyalty, wealth and health. If Verneh is woven with any of these compositions, all its motifs will be in one direction. The beginning and the end of Verneh is clear. In other words, it is a carpet with a bottom. The motifs in Verneh have deep sensory and emotional meanings embedded in them. Motifs that are symbolically woven in Verneh are symbols that may have been forgotten, but still preserved by women weavers. Most of them are inspired by animals, plants and objects including gazelle, deer, wolf, dog, turkey, chicken, rooster, cat, snake, camel, fox and local birds. In addition to this motif, animals such as peacocks, lions, the Eurasian hoopoe and mythical creatures such as dragons are also used in verneh. Plant motifs are woven in a more abstract form than animal motifs and are and may be often found in the shape of hair leaves, cucumber leaves and trees³¹.

³⁰ Mahmoudi, Fataneh; Shayestehfar, Mahnaz, *Comparative study of hand-woven motifs of Shahsevan and Caucasus tribes*, Scientific Research Quarterly of Iranian Carpet Scientific Association, No. 11, 2009, p. 31.

³¹ Hajilu, Fataneh, Amir Ghasemi, Minoo (2013). Motifs of the life of the Arasbaran tribes in a shop called Verneh- Anthropology Research of Iran, Volume 2, Number 1, 2013, p. 163.

Animal motifs are varied in verneh and are used depending on the composition and design of the verneh. They can also stand for a symbol of a tribe or clan (Fig. 23). In verneh, a limited number of specific motifs are used and the main motif, which is the symbol of the tribe with its talisman, is woven larger in the verneh texture. Motifs have different types. In all cases, the side of the verneh consists of two parts, namely the chain and the margin. Chains are narrow striped margins that are often created by repeating connected motifs.

In most verneh samples, there are two rows of margins: the outer margin and the inner margin, which are placed between the three strands. In this case, the chains of the outer edge of the verneh and the chain next to the texture have the same shape and often narrower than the chain between the two margins. The width of the two rows of margins and their motifs are also different. Often, the inner margin is wider than the first and outermost margin. Motifs of inner margin are sometimes interconnected and sometimes disconnected. What is most evident in the varnish texture is the contrasting colour of the chains with the text and the border that defines the formatting of the whole work. In addition to the weaving method that leads to the creation of abstract designs, the natural environment in which the weaver lives and is inspired by it leads to the creation of motifs such as lake pets, flowers and trees, or wild animals and even imaginary creatures.

Abstract is basically a kind of art of visual symbolism that speaks to its audience with gestures and presents itself to the audience in familiar forms. The artist, using conservative secrecy and creating a vague collection, creates mental subjects by using symbolism and stays behind the secret house of thoughts³².

In general, animal motifs in verneh of East Azerbaijan tribes can be divided into groups listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Classification of animal motifs in verneh

Animals	The birds	The common cuckoo - pigeon- the Eurasian hoopoe - rooster- peacock- eagle
	Quadrupedalism	Horse- camel- ram- deer- goat- dog- cat- wolf- lion- fox

³² Ziapour, Jalil, *A brief history of Iranian and world art*, Tehran: Jihad Daneshgani of Art Publications, 1999.

	Insects	Spider- scorpion- tarantula- butterfly
	Other	Turtle- fish- snake

The texture of the motifs in Verneh is not done solely for the purpose of beautifying the final product. The extensive, diverse and scattered collection of motifs in verneh has a logical connection with each other, a connection that indicates the cultural relation of nomads with the surrounding environment. The internal logic and meaningful connection of the motifs reflect the integrated generality of the weavers' lives. The symbolic meaning hidden in the motifs is always discussed by researchers.

There's a fact that weaving a motif to express a wish, value and belief is definite and will not change the premise. These paintings carry many meanings of thoughts and beliefs. There are scenes from the lives of people whose written works are extremely simple motifs as appearance and extremely complex in meaning, which will remain forever in handmade textures.

Conclusion

The motifs woven in verneh represent the realities of the material and social life of weavers. A set of things that are important to them and that are the focus of their lives makes up the Verneh texture as a whole. Meanwhile, most of the Verneh's motifs are associated with animals, which are related to the nomadic lifestyle, life depending on direct livestock, adherence to the customs and beliefs of the ancestors and these people. A significant part of the collective memories of nomadic people has been presented in the form of stories and narratives in Verneh motifs and passed on from generation to generation. In this process, although a large part of the symbols lose their meaning over time, later generations will use the motifs in the verneh texture without conscious knowledge of their meanings. In fact, they are not inventors. Imitators can only repeat motifs without being fully connected to those concepts.

The concept of Verneh motifs can be found in the beliefs and traditions of its weavers, as they indicate the need and commitment of weavers to nature. The use of these motifs in the texture is not limited to decorative purposes, but believing in their hidden power is more than dealing with its intended beauty.

The animal motifs studied in this article are the most useful motifs used by weavers in verneh and each has a special symbol which is rooted in the beliefs of nomadic tribes. In fact, it can be said that everything has a

special place and value in the life of nomads. In their view, everything represents life and gives meaning to it. The reflection of this idea is manifested in verneh in such a way that they are presented together on a level beside each other. All of them are the component part of a tribe's life. The symbols that play the role of the weaver's heart language and emotions in verneh, in fact represent the existing and relevant realities in the current life of these people. All in all, the motifs that make up verneh are a part of the history of the tribes, which lies among the symbolic signs of their weaves.

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