

Original Research Article

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تحليل ساختار فرمی و زیباشناختی قالی «للیان و ریحان»

A Study on the Formal and Aesthetic Structure of «Lilian and Reyhan» Carpets

Abstract

Problem Definition: The Lilian carpet is one of the important carpet brands of Iran in general, and Khomeyn in particular, dating back to the Qajar era, about which there has been little research to date. Actually, no trace of the popular Lilian carpets can be found in the domestic markets of Iran, and the popular Reyhan design is woven in a limited number in Khomeyn. With this in mind, this study sought to investigate the two Lilian and Reyhan carpets from Khomeyn, Iran. The research question is: «What are the technical and aesthetic dimensions (structure, design, and color) of Lilian and Reyhan carpets?»

Objective: This study aims to analyze Lilian and Reyhan designs in terms of technical indicators and aesthetic features for better identification of these carpets.

Research Method: This is a qualitative, developmental, and descriptive-analytical study. Data were collected using the desk-based method as well as through searches on reliable websites.

Results: The findings of this study demonstrate that Lilian carpets are often woven without medallions and corners with a unique structure comprising flowers and bushes, altar- and crescent-shaped wreaths as well as symmetrical and upside-down vases, and usually a wreath or a flower bush has replaced the space of the corner. Medallion-corner and In-and-Out-Fish designs are also seen in these carpets. Lilian carpets contain plant motifs but they have no animal (bird and non-bird) and human motifs. However, the Band-e Reyhan (Reyhan Dam) design is one design of Reyhan village with two important motifs, namely the important motif of the dam (pool) and the ibex motif, which reflects the ibex motifs found in the ancient petroglyphs of Teymareh region.

Keywords

Lilian, Reyhan, Carpet, Design, Color

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Introduction

Markazi Province, known as the land of sunshine, is one of the oldest carpet centers and schools in Iran, and Khomeyn is one of the major southern centers of this province in carpet weaving. This county has many villages, engaged in carpet weaving from the 19th century onwards with the growth of carpet weaving in the Qajar era, having important products such as Lilian and Reyhan carpets. These two designs, derived from the names of two villages, are considered to be the most popular carpet designs in Khomeyn County. The non-continuity of Lilian designs due to the emigration of Armenian residents, the lack of related research even at low levels, the fame of the carpet designs of these two villages, and the need to introduce and document these designs to the audience are among the reasons why the researcher sought to conduct this study. Lilian carpets have unique designs specific to the region, which differ from the designs of other parts of Khomeyn and Markazi Province. It is rooted in Armenian-Christian designs and beliefs. These designs were woven in the past, but this village is currently empty of Armenian residents and weavers. Lilian carpets are often small carpets with content motifs of plant type, including various types of flowers, bushes, and wreaths. The Reyhan carpet also has a design specific to the village of Reyhan, known as the Reyhan design. It shows the artistic and cultural identity of that village and has a long-standing history among the common designs of the province. Reyhan carpets are still found in a limited number and with little creativity in the marginal space in this village and the workshops of Khomeyn city. The research question is: «What are the technical dimensions, features, and formal and aesthetic structure of Lilian and Reyhan carpets?» Identifying and finding Lilian designs from reliable sources (which are not found in Iran), and analyzing their technical and aesthetic aspects (design, motifs, and color) are among the goals of this study.

Research Method

This is a qualitative and developmental study conducted using the descriptive-analytical research method. The required data were collected using the desk-based method, and the images were searched from reliable databases and websites. A total of 30 different Lilian carpets surviving from the past two centuries have been introduced and analyzed. These samples do not exist in Iran and domestic markets, and they were selected from among the 70 found samples of Lilian carpets, leaving aside the identical designs and focusing on unique designs. The analysis is based on two technical and artistic dimensions. This study was carried out in a situation where there was no source related to the previously woven Lilian carpets. Therefore, only their images found on reliable websites were used for the description and analysis processes.

Research Background

There has been no research on the carpets of Markazi Province in general and Lilian designs in particular. However, some sources related to Armenian- and Armenian-woven carpets of Iran as well as carpet weaving in Khomeyn and Kamareh District have referred briefly to the famous Armenian-settled village of Lilian, which are described below. «Soltani Nejad, Farahmand Borojeni, and Jooleh» (2010) conducted a study entitled «Armenian and Irano-Armenian Carpets: A Comparative Study», in which they evaluated and compared Armenian carpets with those woven by Armenians living in Iran from technical and aesthetic perspectives. In addition, «Edwards» (1989), in the ninth chapter of the book entitled «The Persian Carpet», and «Jooleh» (2011), in «A Research on Persian Carpet», in the section related to Markazi Province briefly mentioned carpet weaving in Khomeyn, the

Armenian District of Kamareh and particularly Lilian carpets. A paper has recently been published in this regard about Markazi Province and Sarouk, which is similar to the present study in terms of method and topic: In «Analyzing the Structural and Aesthetic Elements of the Sarouk Carpets of the Claremont Collection», «Afrough» (2022) studied and examined the surviving antique carpets of Sarouk. While introducing and examining the Band-e Reyhan carpet, the current study is the first work to deal in detail with the technical and aesthetic dimensions of Lilian carpets in the past and before the migration.

Art and skill of carpet weaving in the Armenian community of Iran

Carpet weaving has been one of the oldest practical professions in the Caucasus region in general and in Armenia in particular. As an instance of local arts, it has always been considered an important part of the activities of Armenian carpet-weaving women. However, the migration of Armenians to Iran from the Safavid era (10th and 11th centuries A.H.) onwards opened a new chapter in the history, culture, and art of this nation, which led to cultural and civilizational ties between the two nations. The indigenous art of carpet weaving was one of the most important artistic crafts used by Armenians in Iran. While preserving the original Armenian style of weaving and patterning, they benefited from the weaving traditions and aesthetic themes of Persian carpets in the production of various types of rural and local carpets. Armenians settled in many different regions of Iran, such as Tabriz, Qazvin, Isfahan, Faridan and Fereydunshahr, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Arak, and especially in Khomeyn County, including in Kamareh district and its villages such as Lilian, Farajabad, etc. They developed the art of carpet weaving in these regions, particularly during the Qajar and early Pahlavi eras (19th and early 20th centuries A.D.).

Geographical, historical, and cultural location of Lilian and Reyhan

Kamareh is one of the two districts of Khomeyn County, in the south of Arak and Markazi Province. According to «A Dictionary of Iranian Geography», Lilian is a hamlet in Dalai village, eight kilometers from the west of Khomeyn City. It is located in a green plain with a population of 1674. Its inhabitants are Muslim and Christian and they speak Persian and Armenian languages. It has a variety of products, including grains, sugar beets, cotton, and almonds. Its inhabitants are engaged in agriculture and carpet weaving» (Razmara, 1989,198). «This village had a population of about 911 people, according to the census commissioned by the Armenian Church of Arak and conducted in 1939. In the general population census conducted in 1966, the population of the village was 900 people» (Farhadi, 1990 quoted from Shirzad & Badaghi, 2016, 155). Most Armenians had settled in this district and its villages. «The most important Armenian-settled villages are located in Kamareh District, where Lilian is considered the most prominent village» (Edwards, 1989, 163). In Khomeyn in general, and this district in particular, are a significant number of Armenian-settled villages, including Lilian, Kajarestan, Nasrabad, Asadabad, Derreshoor [Darreshooy], Mazra, Danian, Hajiabad, Mirza Hossein, Davoudabad, Ghourchibashi, Kandeheha [Saki], and Chahartagh, the people of which are engaged in carpet weaving. The largest and most important village in this district, which is indeed the center of carpet weaving, is Lilian. This village is located in Kamareh District of Khomeyn County in the south of Arak, and is one of the important centers of weaving in Iran and Markazi Province, particularly from the middle of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. American carpet traders and lovers are familiar with this name, while it is less known to European people. It is the largest of the seven Armenian-settled villages with a population of 2,500, which are located close to each other in a fertile valley a few miles from the northwest of

PAYKAREH

Journal of Art Faculty, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

A Study on the Formal and Aesthetic Structure of «Lilian and Reyhan» Carpets

Volume 12 Issue 33 Autumn 2023 Pages 18-35

21

Khomeyn city (Edwards, 1989, 163). It has a very rich cultural, economic, industrial, and social history. A total of 450 families used to live in this Armenian-settled village. It had wide streets and alleys. Several people coming from foreign countries, including France, for the Lakan Mine, said that the streets of this village were similar to those of French cities. Hunanian School was established in this village in 1902, in which Persian, English, and Armenian languages, along with other courses, were taught. Many people from the surrounding villages used to go to this village to study. In the first year of the establishment of Alborz High School in Tehran, «Armenak Der Petrosyan», «Khanbaba Ghazarian», «Norayr Der Hovhannisyan», «Manavaz Ghazaryan» and «Hovasap Hovasapyan» who were students of «Hovnanian» School in this village, attended this high school and served their community as physicians, engineers, and pilots¹. However, this village is currently devoid of Armenians due to the migration of the original residents to Tehran, the U.S.A., and Europe (Fig 1). The village of Reyhan in the southwest of Khomeyn is another historical and touristic village of this county, where carpet weaving has a long-standing history. This village has become famous for the special design of Reyhan (Fig 2).



Fig 1. A view of Lilian Village. Source: Shirzad and Badaghi, 2016.

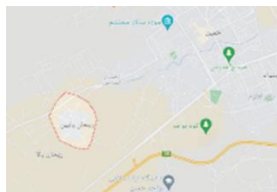


Fig 2. A view of Reyhan Village. Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/place>

Carpet weaving in Lilian

As mentioned earlier, Lilian is famous for carpet weaving and export to the U.S.A. The oldest and indeed the only reliable source for the description of Armenian-woven carpets is "The Persian Carpet" by Cecil Edwards, who himself visited this village in the first quarter of the 20th century and described the Armenian carpets of Kamareh and Lilian as follows: "The most important Armenian-settled villages are located in Kamareh District, where Lilian Village is considered the most prominent village. American carpet traders and lovers are quite familiar with this name. Lilian is the largest of the seven Armenian-settled villages located close to each other in a fertile valley in the northwest of Khomeyn City. All the people of these seven villages are engaged in carpet weaving, most of whom weave carpets and carpets of 9 × 12 feet (each foot equals 30.48 cm) which are very similar in design and color. The carpets are usually known as Lilian Carpets, named after Lilian, the largest village in this district. The people of these villages weave single-wefed densely knotted carpets so skillfully that the carpets have a velvety and soft surface". According to the description of this English producer and researcher about Lilian carpets and his mentions of the two words «soft» and «velvety», we can state that the carpets woven in the Armenian-settled regions, especially Lilian, had an acceptable and considerable quality. He added: "In this industry, the villagers use the wool of their sheep, and they perform the spinning and

dyeing processes themselves. They use the doughi (a color mostly used in the carpet weaving industry for a pale blue variety) red color in the texture of the carpets" (Edwards, 1989, 163) (Fig 3). As Armenians migrated to the southern regions of Iran, especially its central regions, many of them settled in the suburbs of Arak, Khomeyn, and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari. However, Lilian village gained worldwide fame among all these regions thanks to the production of special carpets known as Lilian. This village and several neighboring villages were among the first centers where Armenian immigrants settled, and carpet weaving, which was one of their handicrafts, boomed quickly in the suburbs of Khomeyn. However, none of the designs became as famous as Lilian. This village was completely inhabited by Armenians until 1946, but it was gradually emptied of them about 25 years ago (Jooleh, 2011, 193). Edwards also had a description of some designs of Lillian Carpet, most probably for the lower-quality, duplicated products. He wrote: «The designs they use are not beautiful and interesting and therefore do not match the quality of the carpets they produce. The people of Lilian, like thousands of Sarouk carpet weavers, think that the American people purchase only one design, which is why they have been using the same design in their textiles for many years, a design that can never be called a Persian design» (Edwards, 1989, 163). This design is most likely the Lilian «Shakh Bozi» (Ibex Horn) Design (Fig 3), which is not an indigenous design of the region and Iran. It has a doughi color, and a fixed and strange structure (a type of design and composition with the use of dome-shaped flowers as well as a Medallion cross-shaped form) which has never been seen in the Persian carpet design tradition.



Fig 3. Ibex Horn Design in antique Lilian carpets. Source: <http://derteppich.com/alt-orientteppiche-lilian-persien4>.

The style and type of texture as well as the coloring of Armenian carpets are rustic and coarsely woven and are close to the style of rural carpets of Hamadan, which is why «Yassavoli» considers them to resemble Hamadan carpets. In Lilian village of Kamareh District, which comprises seven Armenian-settled villages in [southern] Arak, the carpets woven seem to resemble those woven in Hamadan (Nasiri, 1996 quoted from Yassavoli, 1996, 383) (Fig 4). This similarity, which is clear in the coloring and structure of the design as well as in the composition of motifs, is obviously because of the carpet trade relations in the 19th and early 20th century when Lilian Carpet was at the peak of fame. The weavers of Lilian are currently engaged in weaving bedcovers and small-size carpets with a crab pattern known as Jumble (Herati) Fish Design (Fig 5). (Nasiri, 1996 quoted from Yassavoli, 2000)

PAYKAREH

Journal of Art Faculty, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

A Study on the Formal and Aesthetic Structure of «Lilian and Reyhan» Carpets

Volume 12 Issue 33 Autumn 2023 Pages 18-35

23



Fig 4. Samples of Lilian carpets with the Medallion-Corn Design. Source: <http://derteppich.com/alt-orientteppich-lilian-persien>



Fig 5. A carpet with a Jumble (Herati) Fish Design woven in Lilian. Source: <https://naintrading.co.uk/oriental-carpets>

A comparison of the Armenian-woven carpets from different regions and Lilian products shows that there are many similarities in the formal structure and content. Besides Hamadan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, and Mohajeran in the west of Arak are two well-known Armenian-weaving centers. You can notice this similarity in the figures. Figure 6 displays a Baba Heydar carpet woven in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, which is very similar to the Armenian-woven designs of this province in terms of the design and patterning style, of which there is not much left. Like Lilian carpets, they have motifs of symmetrical vases with altar-like wreaths, as well as micro-patterns and filling and connected patterns, i.e. features abundantly seen in the Lilian carpets as well. This resemblance can be seen even in the filling micropatterns and decorative patterns. Figures 7 and 8 also show Baba Heydar and Lilian carpets with cross-shaped medallions that are very similar to each other. Additionally, the presence of the cross-shaped motif in Fig 9, which is a Bakhtiari carpet, together with the margin pattern found in Bakhtiari nomadic handwovens, show the presence, modeling, and resemblance of Armenian motifs in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari carpets. Figure 11, which is a Lilian Armenian-woven carpet in Khomeyn, shows that many Armenian carpet designs were most probably the same in different regions (Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and Khomeyn). A point to note in this image is the cross (†) micro-patterns among the wreaths near the base of the vase. These features, together with an interwoven network of flowers (especially four-petaled flowers), stems, medallions, and rhombus frames, symmetrically and upside-down, show the common treasures of Armenian weavers who were settled in different regions and, under the influence of the weaving system of those regions, used their creativity and innovation to make differences in the Armenian weaving tradition. The next images show five carpets woven in Mohajeran (Figs 13 & 12), settled by Armenians who wove products on par with those woven in Sarouk and Farahan. These designs and other designs in Mohajeran are very similar to Lilian designs in terms of the design style, form and content structure, framing, motif, symmetrical and altar-like wreaths and vases, cross-shaped medallions, coloring, and use of similar colors. Figure 10 shows Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari carpets which resemble Lilian carpets.

PAYKAREH

Journal of Art Faculty, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

A Study on the Formal and Aesthetic Structure of «Lilian and Reyhan» Carpets

Volume 12 Issue 33 Autumn 2023 Pages 18-35

24



Fig 6. A carpet with an upside-down vase design and details, Baba Heydar texture. Source: <https://naintrading.co.uk/oriental-carpets>.



Fig 7. A Baba Heydar carpet with cross-shaped medallions and details. Source: <https://naintrading.co.uk/oriental-carpets>.



Fig 8. A Lilian carpet with cross-shaped medallions. Source: <https://naintrading.co.uk/oriental-carpets>.



Fig 9. The cross-shaped motif in a Bakhtiari carpet, along with common nomadic motifs in the margin space. Source: <https://cpersia.com>



Fig 10. Samples of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari carpets similar to Lilian carpets. Source: [Wilborg, 2002, 59-64.](#)



Fig 11. Upside-down vases in Lilian carpet. source: <http://derteppich.com/alt-orientteppiche-lilian-persien>

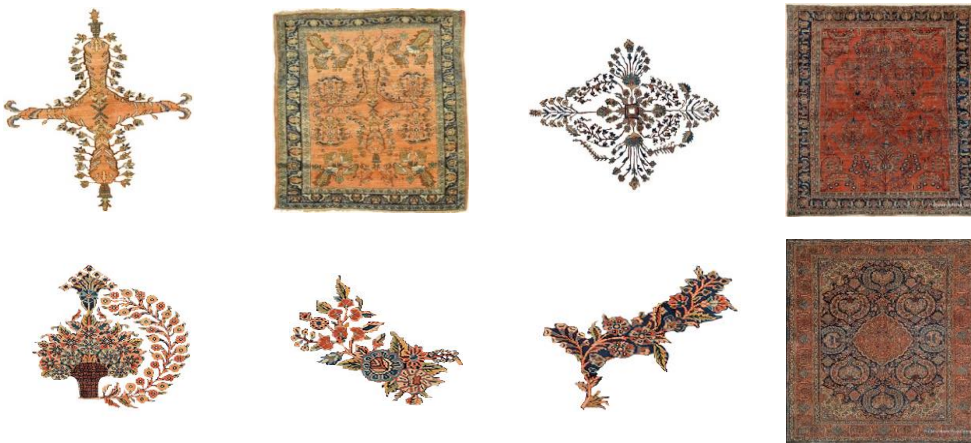


Fig 12. A carpet woven in Mohajeran with a structure similar to Lilian Carpet with details of upside-down and symmetrical vases and wreaths. Source: Author's Photo Archive.



Fig 13. Samples of carpets woven in Mohajeran with a structure similar to Lilian Carpet with details of upside-down and symmetrical vases and wreaths. Source: Author's Photo Archive.

«Sabahi», a carpet researcher, wrote about Lilian-settled Armenians and carpets of this region: «In the 17th century A.H., Shah Abbas made as many as 250000 Armenians migrate from Yerevan to Iran and settle in various regions. They were settled in Jolfa, Isfahan, and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, while some others were settled in Arak, Mohajeran, and Lilian

in the northwest of Khomeyn. Lilian Armenian-woven carpets are known as Lilian». He described Lilian carpets as follows: «Lilian carpets had a special technical feature making them different from other carpets woven in the region [Khomeyn]. In fact, the warps in these carpets were made of cotton thread and there was only one weft after each wate, in which an asymmetric knot was used. Lilian carpets were very similar to Sarouk carpets in many respects. They had a blended design of simplified flowers and were successfully exported to the U.S.A for a long time» (Sabahi, 2014, 381). These carpets were not much different from Sarouk carpets in terms of color, although the doughi pink color was preferred over other colors. The wool used in these carpets was obtained from a breed of sheep raised in the Armenian-settled region and had a low price and value. Kamareh and Reyhan were two other villages in Lilian, with popular weaving productions. Their residents were Muslims. Their woven carpets have a special design comprising plain white leaves on a red background. The carpets woven in Lilian of Khomeyn and Golpayegan were similar to American Sarouk carpets, although they used happier colors (Sabahi, 2014, 381).

Technological aspects of Lilian Carpet

The technological part of Lilian products includes a variety of components such as spinning, dyeing, looms and weaving tools, warp winding, lineage, knots, and dimensions, some of which were removed from or were not originally in the carpet production process, such as spinning and dyeing of piles and looms and tools that were readily presented to weavers in Arak or Khomeyn. Carpet looms used to be wooden and vertical, and local wool as well as European yarns were used, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when finer twisted and spun yarns entered Iran. Furthermore, the lineage of the carpets of this village ranged from 20 to 35 knots, specifically 30 knots. Warp winding and the type of knot from the past until the presence of Armenians and the present time have been symmetrical (Turkish) and a thick weft has been used as the wefting method. The carpets woven in Lilian village lacked considerable variety. Most of them had dimensions of one and a half cubits or two cubits, back, and in exceptional cases, they had large carpets (six- and nine-meter carpets). The most common dimensions of Lilian carpets often had one and a half cubits and more specific dimensions (122 to 130 cm × 68 to 75 cm), two square cubits (1×1, 1.5×1.5 meters), and side and back (90× 60 cm).

Lilian carpet designs and colors

Lilian carpet has a fixed and distinct identity in terms of design, motif, and color. Therefore, it does not have as much variety as do Farahan and Sarouk carpets. Although it lacks diversity in the modern sense of it, designers (who can be the weavers) have been able to change and diversify the texture and background through creativity and innovation. They have used the common motifs and designs in that period in the composition of the designs, thereby, creating such a noticeable variety that over 70 types of designs have survived in prestigious collections across the world. Although the number of Lilian carpets exceeds this number, we could identify and observe only this number of them. Despite the diversity in the number, composition, and arrangement of motifs in the background, the overall structure and identity of the designs are relatively the same and all of them are referred to as Lilian carpets. Therefore, to analyze the form and content of the designs, we tried to select diverse and different samples and remove those with identical designs. A limited and relatively fixed number of colors have been used in the Lilian carpet, including the range of lacquer (alzarine, cherry red), purple, blue (dark and light, turquoise), navy blue, pale (dusty), golden and strong yellow (mustard)), doughi (pink), onion skin (copper), brown and white.

It is important to note that the doughi color is one of the important aesthetic markers of the Lilian carpet. Besides this color, the onion skin (copper) and strong red colors gradually became fixed background colors.

Ibex Horn Design: The most prominent design of Lilian carpets

Among the various designs of Lilian is a special design locally known as the «Ibex Horn Design». Considering the structure and composition of this design, it may have been the main foundation of other diverse designs of Lilian. The background structure of the Ibex Horn designs includes a quiet background free of filler micro-patterns, a structure, and a central medallion (a four-petaled motif comprising dome-like and crescent-shaped wreaths as a cross and vertical symmetry), which is surrounded by long and curved leaves in the upper and lower petals. The space of corners also includes decorative long wreaths or bushes. The presence of such features in the Ibex Horn Design confirms the idea that this design has been the basis of other subsequent designs of Lilian. Figure 14 shows two primary designs of Lilian where, thanks to the designer's creativity, the secluded background gradually turns into a crowded space replete with leaves and flower bushes in a complex structure, an example of which is shown in Fig. 15. Another point to note in the Ibex Horn Design is its design and texture in the dimensions of 90 × 120 cm - with a narrow white margin of continuous and small flowers and bushes. This large and cross-shaped medallion-centered motif, along with symmetric petals on the four sides of the medallion and altar-shaped wreaths in different positions of the background, has been used in a crescent shape or upside-down.



Fig 14. The primary Ibex Horn designs, Mohajerani Collection. Source: Author.



Fig 15. Ibex Horn Design with a change in the background structure. Nazari Collection, Arak Bazaar. Source: Author.

Overall structure of Lilian carpet and the analysis of selected samples

The samples surviving from the antique Lilian carpets indicate they lack variety, except in exceptional cases, in the structure and form of their overall pattern, although they have variety, or say transformation, in motifs and decorative patterns. In fact, these carpets often have a general and, of course, diverse design in their background and motifs. If we leave aside the exceptional and limited designs, such as Crosses, Medallions, and In-and-Out-Fish designs, the Lilian carpet generally has similar and common features in their corner-free background structure, composition, cross-shaped medallion, the form of the motifs surrounding the medallion and the margin content. In fact, instead of creating unique designs, the designer has tried to use changes creatively in the form, placement, and space of motifs. Hence, we rarely see fundamental creativity and significant changes in the background and margins of these carpets, and as mentioned earlier, it seems that the basis and foundation of all these designs is the four-petaled cross-like crescent- and altar-shaped wreaths with four large leaves on the sides and in a plain background that has undergone changes over time through the designer's creativity, and the plain and secluded background

has turned into a dense and crowded space. In this section, 30 carpets of the 70 found samples of antique Lilian carpets are selected and analyzed (Figs 16 & 17). The selection process was based on diversity and prominent differences as well as the exclusion of the identical samples. In these samples, due to the use of various motifs through transformation and creativity or change of position and new arrangements of motifs and new composition, small changes in coloring, changes in the arrangement of colors, and generally the creation of a new design in the form and content of the inner body, the created samples had diversity and differences despite their similarities and commonalities. In the analysis process, initially, the background space, including the central space (medallion), the corner space, the margin, as well as the colors, will be analyzed. Except for the popular Ibex Horn Design, these carpets do not have a specific name or title, and it is impossible to assign precise terms to them due to their differences and strangeness². Eleven samples of them have the Medallion-Corner Design. A point to note is that, because of the diversity of motifs in the selected samples, we tried to select one or two different and unique motifs from each sample and show them in vector form for better viewing. Therefore, Figs 19 & 20 display the different motifs of these carpets, including flower bushes, altar- and crescent-shaped wreaths as well as various vases. However, alternative motifs in the space of corners and the central structure or cross-shaped medallions have been described and analyzed in their respective sections. In addition to the mentioned types of motifs, they contain other motifs such as Branched Arabesque (Dragon-Fire), mythological motifs such as Phoenix, In-and-Out-Fish, Paisley, Cypress, Weeping willow, geometric shapes, and sometimes inscriptions (Fig 18). A noteworthy point about the Lilian carpet is the presence of pure plant-made and abstract patterns and the absence of animal motifs.

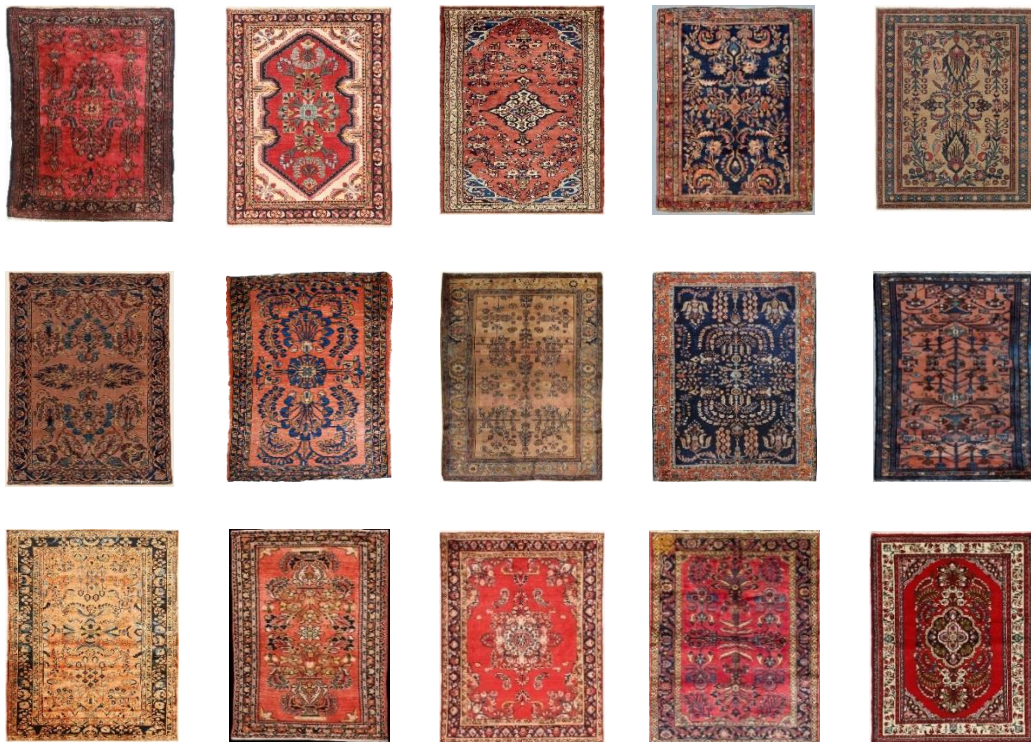


Fig 16. Selected samples of Lilian carpets. Source: Authors.

PAYKAREH

Journal of Art Faculty, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

A Study on the Formal and Aesthetic Structure of «Lilian and Reyhan» Carpets

Volume 12 Issue 33 Autumn 2023 Pages 18-35

29

Table 1. Special motifs of Persian carpets found in the Lilian carpet. Source: Authors.









In-and-Out-Fish	Arabesque		Weeping Willow
			
Paisley	Phoenix	Dragon	Cypress
			



Fig 17. Selected samples of the Lilian carpet. Source: Authors.



Fig 18. Types of motifs of flowers, bushes and wreaths in the Lilian carpet. Source: Authors.



Fig 20. Different types of crescent- and arch-shaped wreaths in the Lilian carpet. Source: Authors.

1. Medallion (central structure): The central space is usually the place of a medallion or pond in Persian carpets. In the Lilian carpet, this space hosts not only the various shapes and forms of rhombuses, ovals, and circles but also a variety of motifs with a cross-shaped structure. This feature is the most important identity element, making Lilian carpets different from other Persian carpets. The combined motifs, which are a cross-shaped blend of leaves, flowers, and various small and large wreaths, are a delineation of the central medallion. As mentioned earlier, the cross is a popular sign and religious symbol in Christianity and Armenian culture, which has had a prominent presence in all types of art, particularly in carpets. The weaver of Lilian carpets has implicitly reminded the viewers of it in the center of the background through various forms. In these carpets, apart from its decorative and symbolic function, this pattern has appeared in the central space of the background. In fact, the weaver has reminded the viewers of the decorative and symbolic aspect of the cross. The structure of most cross-shaped medallions comprises two or four wreaths (tulips) decorated as an altar. Figures 21 and 22 display different cross-shaped

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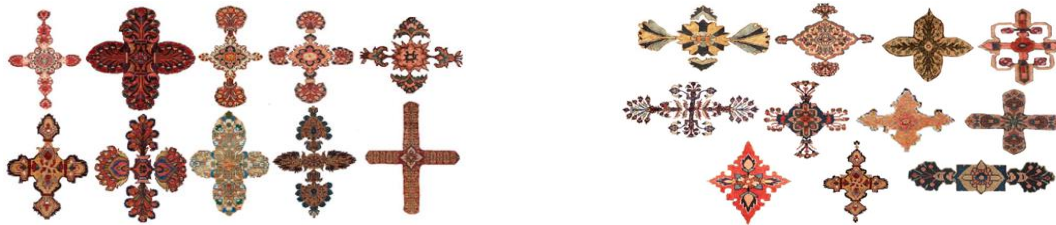
Journal of Art Faculty, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

A Study on the Formal and Aesthetic Structure of «Lilian and Reyhan» Carpets

Volume 12 Issue 33 Autumn 2023 Pages 18-35

31

medallions. The form of the cross is one of the important and prominent patterns used in Armenian carpets as well as Armenian-woven carpets in Iran, which has both a decorative aspect and a symbolic identity. «Each decorative motif can convey symbolic meanings as well. Hence, the cross or any other symbolic pattern should not and cannot be considered a purely decorative design. The decorative patterns of some remnants that have survived natural disasters and deliberate destruction in Armenian culture have all been constantly repeated in a single evolutionary trend in such a way that an original and ancient motif has reached maturity and perfection over time³» (Karapetian, 2012). Besides cross-shaped medallions, other common medallions that are abundantly found in Persian carpets are also found in the Lilian carpet, as can be seen in Fig 23.



Figs 20 & 21. Types of cruciform bergamots in Lilian's carpet. Source: Author



Fig 23. Different types of non-cross-shaped medallions in the Lilian carpet. Source: Authors.

2. Corners and alternative motifs: Corners fill another space of Lilian carpets, which are structurally and spatially different from the common and ordinary corners found in other carpets. Instead of the common and ordinary corners (with a triangular shape) which are found in the structure of Persian carpets, there is a motif comprising a flower and a bush. However, corners are found in some of these samples as well. A few others have neither a corner nor an alternative motif; rather, this space has been filled by the background pattern (Fig 24).





Fig 23. Elastic and non-elastic in selected samples. Source: Authors.

3. Margins: All works of art, particularly hand-woven carpets, contain a set of structures, elements, patterns, and colors that form their nature and essence. Although there is a unity between independent elements and patterns, they create a certain boundary, thereby, being separated from the surrounding environment and becoming independent. This boundary is called the margin or frame and is considered an important part of the carpet. As an integral part of Persian carpets, the margin is always considered a part of its structure and shape. Based on its nature, the margin separates the artistic boundary from the outer space and environment, thus making the work (carpet) independent (Afrough, 2022). In the Lilian carpets, the margin is found as an outer space in various forms and patterns. Some of them have five-line margins. Basically, the margins in these carpets are narrow and less wide than what is seen in the carpets woven in other regions of Iran because of their dimensions. The space of these margins includes not only small flowers and broken and branched abstract bushes but also geometric shapes and spiral lines and small arabesques, in-and-out-fish forms, Shah Abbasi flowers, lotus, and plane leaves. Figure 25 displays the margins of the selected samples.



Fig 24. Margins of the selected samples of Lilian carpet. Source: Authors.

Band-e Reyhan Design

Reyhan is one of the famous villages of Khomeyn with a long-standing history in the carpet industry. In addition to the designs and patterns commonly used in Khomeyn and Arak, such as different types of corners and Shah Abbasi medallions, this village has a pattern called «Band-e Reyhan», which is specific to this area and is considered its «identity». The Band-e Reyhan Design is geometric. There is no information about the background and genealogy of the title «Band-e Reyhan» for this pattern, but according to a popular and common narrative among the experts of Khomeyn carpet, the word «Band» means a dam (a place where water is collected, i.e. a pool) to be used by farmers in the irrigation of fields and the term «Reyhan» was also derived from the name of a vegetable plant growing in that area. It seems that the weavers have modeled the overall shape of the dams, and geometric and abstract motifs have been patterned through a network-like structure, in the middle space of which the motif of a fish (leaf) motif can be seen in a pair along with the ibex and paisley patterns (Fig 26). The presence of ibex motifs in the texture of this carpet is derived from ibex motifs in the ancient petroglyphs of Teymareh⁴ in Khomeyn (Fig 27). The background and margin of the Reyhan carpet are red and (sugar) white. The Band-e Reyhan Design is always mentally woven in the dimensions of one and a half cubits and the lineage of 25 to 30 knots. The types of colors used in this carpet are limited, comprising six to seven common colors such as red, blue, white, brown, mung bean green, pink, and navy blue. Additionally, the margin space in the Band-e Reyhan Design has a special composition and framing. The margin comprises the repetition of a connected and alternating hexagonal pattern, inside which there are micro-patterns of the eye (rhombus) and evil eye, along with fish motifs (saw-shaped leaves) on both sides of the eye, and motifs of a ram (ram's horn as a symbol of power) and a paisley on the sides (Fig 28). Nowadays, the margin of the Band-e Reyhan Design has been transformed sometimes according to the taste of the weaver, and the well-known local, rather complicated and crowded pattern has been replaced by a plain and secluded pattern, in which the abstract pattern of paisley has been patterned on a spiral dam (Fig 29).



Fig 25. Band-e Reyhan Design and petroglyphs pattern with details. Source: Authors' Photo Archive.



Fig 26. The ibex motif in the carpet's background and petroglyphs of Khomeyn Band-e Reyhan. Source: Authors.



Fig 27. The margin of the Band-e Reyhan carpet. Source: Authors.



Fig 28. A different margin in Band-e Reyhan carpet. Source: Authors.

Conclusion

This study introduced and analyzed the popular antique Lilian carpet based on the surviving selected samples, as well as the famous Band-e Reyhan Design in Khomeyn. A total of 30 carpets of unique designs, interior spaces, and technical dimensions were selected and analyzed. The noticeable point in these samples was the plain and secluded space as well as the presence of various types of plant motifs and the absence of animal or human motifs. Some of them contained several inscriptions (a few Armenian words or phrases) and geometric shapes. The central part was filled with cross-shaped medallions, which have no history in Persian carpets and are only specific to Lilian and the Armenian-settled area of Khomeyn and have their roots in Armenian and Christian culture. Moreover, the carpets have a relatively similar structure in patterning. This structure, which dominates most of Lilian's carpet designs and patterns, comprises all kinds of flowers and bushes, tulip and altar-shaped wreaths, and upside-down and symmetrical vases. These designs had no medallions and corners, and they were woven in the dimensions of one and a half cubits, two cubits, and finally in the dimensions of a curtain (160 x 260). Furthermore, a corner and medallion structure is found in various designs in a more limited number. Corner and medallion designs were woven in the dimensions of one and a half cubits, with long sides. The Plain Floor, Vase, and In-and-Out-Fish designs are among the well-known designs of the corner and medallion structures. The motifs of the Lilian carpet are of plant type with various unique forms, with no animal and human motifs seen in the carpet. Some of them contain one or two words in the Armenian language. A limited number of colors (6 to 7) were used in the carpets. The Band-e Reyhan Design is also one of the special and distinct designs of Khomeyn, mentally woven in Reyhan village in the distant past. This design encompasses abstract motifs derived from the dam and an ibex figure as a symbolic motif derived from the petroglyphs of the ancient region of Teymareh.

Appendix

1. Maryam Abdullahi's Interview (Alik [Wave] Newspaper) with Shavarsh Kazaryan, an Armenian living in Tehran, Source: <https://alikonline.ir/fa/news/social/item/>
2. The designs and motifs of Armenian-woven carpets in Iran are unique and different from those of other regions.
3. The original archetype of this category of Armenian motifs is very limited, considering its types and in contrast to the diversity observed in the motifs of Armenian carpets. Christian symbols are used, which are considered the «base of the design» or the primary design, combined with subsequent iterations to compose new and more complex designs. In general, the cross-shaped motifs are derived from a number of primary designs, all of which are structurally based on the extension of the star cross-shaped motif. The cross is a symbol of light [truth and the meaning of life] with a special symbolic value. This motif is a symbol of the appearance or resurrection of Christ and evokes heaven (Karapetian, 2011).
4. Teymareh is a region in Khomeyn County, Markazi Province. According to «Naserifard», a cultural heritage researcher, it has ancient petroglyphs dating back to over seven thousand years ago. It also hosts the largest stone panel in Iran with an area of 40 square meters, known as the Large Inscription, accommodating over 150 motifs. Source: <https://www.kojaro.com/attraction/23870-%D8%B3%D9%86%DA%AF->

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