

The Figure and Motif of the Cow in Kerman Pateh Needlework: Examination and Analysis

Abstract

Shawl weaving and patch embroidery are perceived to be among the more traditional techniques and occupations largely associated with the Kerman province, which have since become of great significance to the local art given its reliance on tools and materials that are highly exclusive to the surrounding environment and the climatic conditions of the region.

As such, Patch embroidery has been deemed a manifestation of the religious and cultural beliefs of the Kerman region while seeking to preserve the artistic and symbolic values of the region. The female Kerman-based artists are claimed to have unique skills that enable them to weave shawls, highly manifesting their needs, ideals, and desires rooted in their beliefs. Patch comes in a variety of shapes and forms. Kerman patch embroidery has long been one of the important pillars of production, providing the locals with a source of income to fulfill their daily needs. Nevertheless, it has gone through various tumultuous periods over its course of relevance. Today, many artists from other regions than Kerman, even far other countries, are dedicating their craftsmanship to patch embroidery, the number, and accessibility of which is growing daily. It has been propelled to the global stage by its perceived aesthetics and diversity in the role, color, and material. As such, the purpose of this research was to examine the patterns of needlework in patch, including those of vegetables, animals, and geometric and abstract forms, the aim of which would be to gain an insight into the patterns of animals, especially that of the cow in Kerman patch embroidery, using a comparative method.

This research seeks to examine and categorize the role of cows using field, library, and historical methods. To this end, interviews with experts are conducted to shed more light on its role and the viability of its revival.

Keywords: Patch, design, shawl, Ariz, needlework, symbol, cow, handicrafts, myth

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Introduction

Store

Asatir, plural for *Ostoreh*, is an Arabic term that made its way to the Persian language. It is the Arabicized form of the Greek word *historian*. Moein Encyclopedic Dictionary has defined it as “false legends, fictions and tales that are mostly disordered and disorganized (Moein, 1992, p. 267). Colloquially, it is now used to refer to superstitious or semi-superstitious stories about supernatural powers, gods, or heroes narrated throughout generations.

Comparative study of cows in different mythologies:

Cow in ancient Iranian mythology

The hymn to the Yasht 9 is *Drvaspa*, which is pronounced *Gavash* in Avestan and *Geush* in Persian. *Drvasp* Yasht is in praise of *Drvaspa*, the guardian of the horses. The term *Geush* had wider literal applications than what is common in Persian today, and it is applied to all useful four-legged animals. It has been a prefix to the names of some animals, such as *Gav-Mish* (buffalo), *Gav-Gavazn* (elk), *Gav-Goraz* (hog), and *Gav-Mahi* (Gobiidae).

It is cited in *Vendidad*, Chapter 21, which is mainly in praise of bulls, that “Salutations to you, holy cow (*Geospant*). Later, *Gospant* was used to denote rather smaller four-legged animals (Pur-David, 1998, p. 372).

Since the name of Fereydon's ancestors is often combined with that of the cow, some researchers call the cow a totem of Fereydon's family.

It is stated in the folk legends that the earth rests on the horn of the divine cow, itself standing on the back of a big fish, and whenever the cow gets tired, it throws the earth from one horn to the other, causing earthquakes. The winged cow can only be seen in Persepolis and geographically near carvings. Evidence suggests that these carvings might be influenced by the mythologies of Mesopotamia and Assyria, in which the cow symbolizes the moon and the earth while the lion symbolizes the sun (Hinels, 2004, 458).

Names of sacred cows and their stories in Iranian Mythology

1. *Sar-Sivak* or *Iyudat* is a cow that, according to Iranian mythology, was created by Ahura Mazda in the fifth stage of creation (Afifi, 1995, 599)
2. When *Drvaspa* dies out of the demonicity, the devil, its soul (*Geush Urvan*), leaves its body and is known as one of the mythological cows. The ancient Iranians believed that the moon was pulled by a bull of light with two golden horns and ten silver legs. This cycle reaches its climax for one hour on the night of January 6th. Anyone who sees it will get whatever he/she desires.

3. In *Bandhashtan*, *Tishtar* is mentioned as an assistant of the holy wisdom, one whose face was a bull named *Drvaspa*, which made clouds rain relentlessly for ten days and nights.
4. The *Sharishuk* cow is a symbol of water, rain, and storm. An ancient Iranian spiritual hymn is mentioned as the source of abundance and cause of all goodness (Dadvar and Mobini, 2010, 116).
5. The *Marzyab* (lit. demarcation) cow is also one of the mythical cows. According to *Zadisparam*, Ahura Mazda created a big cow to end the war, on the back of which the resting border of Iran and Turan was depicted (Safa, 1954, 504).
6. In the story of the Cow and Hajerga, the Royal Fereydon was growing the root of a reed by the sea of Varuksh. Faranak's father, Hajerga, did the trick to hand royalty to his generation. For three years, he made the cow drink the water that oozed from the reed stem. As a result of this trick, the royalty of Fereydon entered the cow's body, and Hajerga fed the cow's milk to his three sons, but to no avail; the royalty would soon be bestowed upon his daughter Faranak.
7. According to the quotes of *Zadisparam*, the cow "Hadayoush" is a cow that will be killed during *Frashokereti* in the ceremony of Saoshyant and his companions, from the meat of which the meal of eternity is cooked, making all the people immortal in the process (Afifi, 1995, 602).

Cow in Egyptian mythology

The aesthetics of Egypt is attributed to the temples, pyramids and cultural and ancient monuments erected therein. They are remnants of a hierarchy of beliefs that dominated the Nile Valley for thousands of years. Egyptian mythology best manifests the efforts sought to maintain the king's authority. In ancient Egypt, animals were the embodiment of the spirit of various deities, rendering the former sacred and hence of paramount importance. Among the Egyptian gods, the names of several sacred cows are seen, which are:

1. 1. Mut: In Egypt, Mut was considered the wife of Amun-Ra (the sun god), while the Greeks considered her to be the wife of Zeus.
2. Buchis was the deification of the God Montu as a sacred bull worshipped in the region of Hermonthis. The hair on the back of this bull changed color every hour and grew in the opposite direction of that of normal animals.
3. Hathor was a major goddess in ancient Egyptian religion who played various roles. She was often depicted as a cow, symbolizing her maternal and celestial aspects. During the new kingdom, Hathor made way for Isis and was hence portrayed wearing

Hathor's headdress, a sun disk between the horns of a cow.

4. Apish was another deity of fertility. She was often consulted about upcoming events as she was considered to have prophetic abilities.

Cow in Chinese mythology

Comprehensively addressing the mythology of a vast nation like China, with a written history of more than three thousand years and a deep and inexorable culture, is a challenge of extremes, further fueled by its extensive range of different climatic conditions. It is nevertheless brimming with animals that are of paramount significance to the culture, mythology, and folklore of this region. Many Chinese stories depict the relationship between humans and animals, and each animal has a story linking it to the realm of humans. Often, folk tales do not pay attention to cosmology and the quality of the world structure. Paying attention to the origins of the phenomena in these legends is aimed at issues that are useful in practical life; otherwise, cosmology is influenced by the culture of the country.

Sumerian mythology

Throughout the lands of ancient Sumer, Enlil was worshiped as the God associated with wind, air, earth, and storms. Through his power, water came into form and fields became green, and all plants grew, even thought to be bestowing life to the man himself. For about three thousand years, the Sumerians worshiped Enlil with attractive prayers as a father, a powerful and honorable god, the lord of life, and the powerful leader of the gods. The kings wore a horned headdress, which was a symbol of their appointment and heavenly power.

Greek and Roman mythology

On the island of Crete, *Drvaspa* was primarily associated with the sun and fertility, and Crete was the first land that popularized the War of *Drvaspa* as a ritual.

1. Asterion: "The male God saw next to the great Aegean goddess." The Greeks seemed to inspire this deity from the West Asian religions, which sought to follow the great goddess. This Cretan deity was presumed to have a hybrid human-animal face.
2. *Drvaspa* was also paramount to the Cretan mythology and was a symbol of God, as in many Asian religions from ancient times; it was a symbol of the power and creative force of the Aegean land. It later became a symbol of the great God, leaving behind its significant trail impact on the legends of Crete, as it acquired a divine nature and was considered the wild beast of heaven and earth (Hamilton, 1997, 53-54).

Cow in Indian mythology

One of the religiously important animals for Hindus is the cow. The cow has historically been deemed the embodiment of several gods in India, and she was worshiped as a goddess. The

main reason was the creed that this harmless animal is of utmost utility to humans. The milk greatly provided the needs of the people and was frequently featured in the performance of religious ceremonies. It was their favorite animal, Krishna. It is also a symbol of Shiva, in the temples of which it is depicted as a crouching cow. The guardian of all four-legged animals. Jam, the great God of death, is shown riding a bull. The anger and impetuosity of the animal is a sign of the spirit of the God of death (Jalali Naini, 1996, 510)

Allegory of the slaughter of a cow in India and Mithraism

There is an allegorical legend in India and Roman Mithraic Mysteries called Tauroctony. After a long battle, the bull got tired and became exhausted. Mithras went to the cave on the back of the bull while holding its horns, but the bull managed to run away, given a window to do so. As such, the main purpose of the ceremony of the bull, which also marks the beginning of spring, is that the blood flow of the bull on the ground makes plants grow and animals appear. When Mithras kills the bull, the blood from the wound comes out as ears of wheat or as a cluster of grapes. The basic theme of the bull-killing in the Mithraic religion is deep mysticism, which denotes the liberation of a person from the carnal world through sacrifice and joining the truth or absolute and eternal light, which is the basis and foundation of mysticism and, to some extent Iranian Sufism.

Cow in modern art

Célestine explains that one day, Picasso began to paint a bull, resulting in a gigantic, round, perfect bull. I thought that the picture was the final, but Picasso had other thoughts, as he drew the second sketch, followed by the third sketch. The cow was still huge and perfect. Picasso continued to draw again and again, yet the new ones were no longer similar to the first cow. The cows gradually became thin, and their weight seemingly shed. On the same day, Henri Duchamp said that Picasso “is de-volumizing his work rather than volumizing.” At that time, Picasso was busy shedding parts from the body of the cow. After each change, we would print the new image. Picasso had noticed our amazement, joked about it, kept working, and finally drew another cow, removing more lines with each new image. Picasso sometimes looked at me and laughed (Célestine. 1365. p. 25)

The figure and motif of the cow in different historical periods of Iran

The figure of the cow on stone vessels of the Achaemenid period

Among the oldest wares in which the figure of a cow was carved out are the works retrieved from the Jemdet Nasr Period (3100 to 2900 BC). Protruding animal motifs with heads looking outwards were commonplace in this period. The more natural state of the animal's ears and head are among the major features of the potteries of this era. The Sumerian people, who

deeply believed in the underworld, carved figures on dishes and offered them to the gods in temples to keep themselves reminded of the cycle of life and death. Another assumption in this regard attributes the symbols of the lion and the cow to the goddess “In”. It relates each of them to a specific manifestation of this goddess, one side representing the goddess of war while the other represents the goddess of love. The purpose of this battle is the victory of love over war. This is also witnessed in the potteries of the New Elamite period (Majidzadeh, 2001). Among the silver vessels known as Kalmakre vessels, there is a silver vase on which two lions with protruding heads are carved on each of the works, which is very similar to the works of the Achaemenid period. Also, in the following centuries, the embossing of the cow motif is evident on the Achaemenid gold cups (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Achaemenid golden cup with the figure of a cow

The following are the results of the current study on prominent stone works with the image of a cow.

Stone plate

The examinations of Achaemenid stone vessels revealed only one vessel decorated with the figure of a cow, which Persepolis discovered. The frontside of this artwork depicts the figure of a cow, which is drawn while sitting with its arms and legs folded under the body. It is noteworthy that only parts of the dish remain intact, and other parts, including the one depicting the figure of the cow, have only been partially restored.



Figure 2: simple plate with the figure of a cow on it, Persepolis Museum

Given that the figure of a cow with a protruding head can be witnessed on many dishes of the Jemdet Nasr Period and acknowledging the similarity between the dishes of this period and those found from the Achaemenid Empire, it seems that the practice of crafting potteries with the cow-shaped figure was highly influenced by the Art of the Mesopotamia. It is yet to be known whether Achaemenid artists only considered such motifs from an aesthetic point of view or whether their ritual load was also introduced to the local culture.

Pots and bowls that have the heads of other animals attached to them have been previously evidenced in Susa, some dating back to the end of the second millennium B.C., with the only difference being that this vessel is made of natural bitumen, and, instead of a lion, it takes the shape of a ram (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Shush bowl made of natural bitumen with a ram's head, National Museum

Another example of such vessels is that of the Ziwiye hoard, related to the first millennium AD. It is a bowl made of ivory with the figure of a cow in between, which is much bigger than the bowl itself. The cow holds the bowl and lowers its head as if eating or drinking something from it. There is also a hole in the cow's back, which is unclear what it was meant for (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Ziwiye bowl made of ivory with the figure of a cow, National Museum

William Callican argues that the Achaemenians were more inclined to the Urartian style in imitating animal figures, in which the animals are semi-recumbent or sitting on their hands and feet than to the style of Assyrian animal figures. Nevertheless, the latter has also maintained its limited influence over time (Gallican, 23).

Examples of sculptures and reliefs of cows in Iran



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9: Steel cow-shaped axe, 1970

Animal motifs in Kerman province

Animal motifs in the works of Jiroft civilization

Jiroft city is located in the south of Kerman province and is divided into two geographies of mountainous and lowland areas. It has highly welcoming features for agriculture. Carpets

and rugs are among the rather significant handicrafts of Jiroft, and their weaving is popular among tribal and nomadic settlements. Unique climatic and environmental features of the region, namely high mountains, and fertile plains, have led to the establishment of some of the most distinct cultural areas and important economic-industrial hubs of the ancient East, especially from the beginning of the third millennium BC onwards. Moreover, the prevailing civilization has been able to bring about important cultural and economic achievements to the culture and civilization of the ancient world as a result of sustained communication with the cultures and civilizations of Mesopotamia, Ilam, and the eastern regions of the Iranian plateau (Alidadi, 1999: 20).

Among the approximately one thousand items recovered, around three hundred items are stone vessels decorated with relief, some of them with carved motifs for inlays, the motif, and theme of decorative elements of which are certain types of animals, monstrous and legendary creatures, humans, and also various forms of plants and ramparts surrounding the cities. The discoveries are supplemented with various small objects made of lapis lazuli, such as a flat and cylindrical bead with human figures, a lion with a human head, an eagle, and geometric patterns with human and animal figures (Majidzadeh, 2004: 2-3). Almost all the eyes, whether human or animal, are stone-worked on the Jiroft vessels. It is fascinating to note that the eyes of wild and carnivorous animals (i.e., eagle, snake, leopard, and lion) are round. In contrast, the eyes of domesticated and herbivorous animals (mountain goats, cows, and humans) are oval. The stones representing the eyes are mostly marble, white limestone, or turquoise. In some cases, the sclera of the tiger's eyes is made of an ocher-colored stone, while the pupil is made of turquoise (ibid.). There is evidence suggesting that placing precious stones in some parts of the body or clothing and having a necklace with a turquoise pendant were intended for protective purposes rather than simply being decorative, as they were used as charms for taming and dominating snakes and overthrowing leopards, a practice still popular among the people of Jiroft region.

Cow and Bull

The cow has long been a symbol of power and reproduction. It has also been associated with the sun, gods, and the sky. It is an incarceration of the deities of fertility and creation (Hall, 2008: 85). Furthermore, the bull is the symbol of sacrifice and selflessness

Artists have historically employed cows, bulls, and some mammals to represent fertility, abundance, and blessing. The mystery that lies deep in the formation of plants and living beings was the very basis of appeal and attention to the

imagination for humans because every manifestation and emergence, including the germination, growth, and development of plants, the birth of creatures, and the falling of rain, were attributed by humans to some supernatural power within the same breadth. Hence, a deity for each phenomenon was devised. Some of the rather subjective gods, such as bulls, cows, and snakes, were the manifestations of these inner forces, and were deemed superior to other forces in giving birth, hence the notion of blessing and fertility (Kambakhsh Fard, 2001: 157). Among different tribes, horns were the symbol of strength and power, especially those of bulls, females, and rams (Hall, 2008: 57).

In some motifs, the image of a human with horns can be seen. These motifs, along with those of snakes like dragons on the potteries, show that the various motifs were used in the mythology of that era, and they were helpful to people and gods.



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18

The motifs of cows and horns in Kerman's weavings

***Chesh Gov* motif**

The pattern depicting *Chesh Gov*, the local language for bull's eye, can be witnessed in many Jiroft woven rugs. Some weavers refer to it as the "little almond."



Figure 19: Chesh Gov motif

The motif of horns

Ram's horn was generally used to denote the motif of ruminants

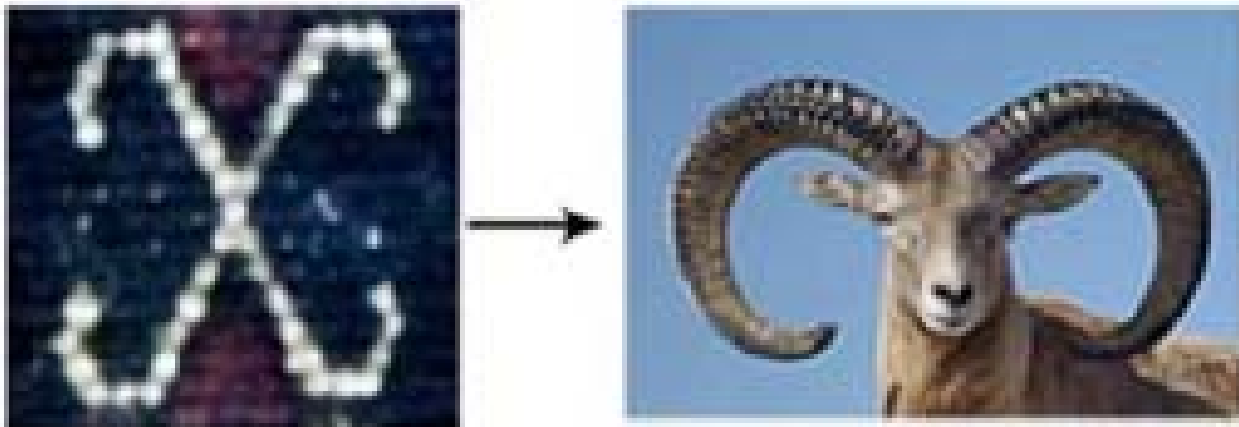


Figure 20: horn motif

Motifs of cows and bulls in Kerman rugs

Some of the Kerman path artists have sought to implement motifs taken from the nature of their surrounding region. They crafted what they observed in nature and around them in a complete, sometimes abstract, form, thereby introducing nature to people's homes.

The female artists of the region have also exhibited tremendous craftsmanship. They painted the Alvan gardens with the colors they got from nature and sewed the motifs on the shawls as beautifully as possible.

Patch works generally follow patterns of flowers and plants, tree of life, roundels, rectangles, half bergamot, sun, half-sun, and borders of flowers, series, lilies, and birds such as peacocks, parrots, roosters, partridges, and sparrows, among other, as animal motifs are crafted with less prominence. Nevertheless, these animal motifs have been evidenced. As such, numerous observations have established a large body of motifs on patch works, animal motifs on Kerman copper dishes, potteries from the Halil civilization, clay dishes, and Kerman carpets. Examining the patterns sewn on old and contemporary patch works has revealed patterns that have been

more prevalent in examinations, and even a handful of animal patterns have been established. The first animal pattern that comes into mind while discussing the motifs is the noble, powerful and beautiful animal, the cow, whose image is seen in some of the motifs of numerous patch works.

To change the size of the shawl, the artist has no way but to implement more motifs taken from nature or abstract motifs, plant motifs, arabesque forms, bird motifs, and those of roundel, rectangle, sun, almond-shaped forms, tree of life, armbands, and lilies among others.

Among the animal motifs, the deer motif has been frequently drawn next to the tree of life, while the motifs of other animals are not evident in Kerman's works. Some needlework in other parts of Iran has emphasized animal motifs (animals, birds), as they have been presumed to be highly aesthetic and auspicious therein.



Figure 21: Kerman Rugs depicting two cows and their interaction with human



Figure 22: Kerman Rugs depicting two cows and their interaction with human

The image and motif of the cow and the bull in Kerman patch's works

It might be the case that there have been many animal motifs in the old needlework, which may have been destroyed owing to atmospheric factors, war, fire, and other events. Nevertheless, given that dishes are presumed to be more durable throughout time, their examination can lead to the discovery of various animal motifs in different eras.

Kerman patch is made of wool, sewn with Alvan threads on a woolen shawl or broadcloth. Maintaining it requires observing special conditions; otherwise, it will be destroyed over time due to atmospheric factors such as fire and corrosion. Although the exact age of this class needlework is yet to be fully known,

it is widely believed that it predates Islam, given that works with proven timestamps are few and far between. Before Islam, designers drew human and animal faces on needlework and pottery. With the advent of Islam, drawing pictures became forbidden; hence, artists turned to abstract pictures. For example, Nawi, one of the elders of the Shafi'i religion, considers the scope of *haram* to be very wide and argues that the fatwa for the followers of Shafi'i and other religious scholars is as such that drawing the face of an animal is unequivocally *haram* because it is the grounds for severe divine punishment per the narrations. It does not matter if this painting is drawn for original or decorative purposes, and it does not matter if the painting is on clothes, carpets, coins, cash, dishes, murals, etc., among others; it is *haram* because it is mirroring the God's creation, but painting a tree, a camel's back, and other things which are not living things, is not *haram*. Over time, painters and designers created new motifs, and owing to religious considerations, they were forced to use these abstract images in the form of animals, flowers, and plants.

As such, the images were gradually drawn and carved on dishes and needlework using a different approach. The author has not seen the images of animals and humans following the studies on many patch works in museums, exhibitions, and local houses. However, nowadays, the image of a mother and child of a deer is drawn next to the tree of life.

The author has carefully examined the images and motifs discovered and consulted experienced professors such as Dr. Shahin Ebrahimabadi Pezeshki, concluding that several motifs were taken from the images of some domestic animals around people's lives. At the same time, others represent symbolic forms, which can be discussed in later studies.

Studies have evidenced figures such as cow, deer, fish, and ram's head on various crafts in the vicinity of Kerman. However, the history of the symbolic designs and the textual patterns on the shawl remains elusive. Motifs of the animals on cedar trees sought to represent a tree of life can be seen on the heads of the mounted animals.

Artists have sought to draw motifs on Patch shawls that they observed around them or during their travels to other lands. For example, parrots, peacocks, and elephants mostly lived in India, while figures such as deer, deer, cats, foxes, cows, and scorpions, among others, are seen painted or carved on metal, clay, and ceramic dishes

Table 5: Motif and images of a cow in Kerman folk art

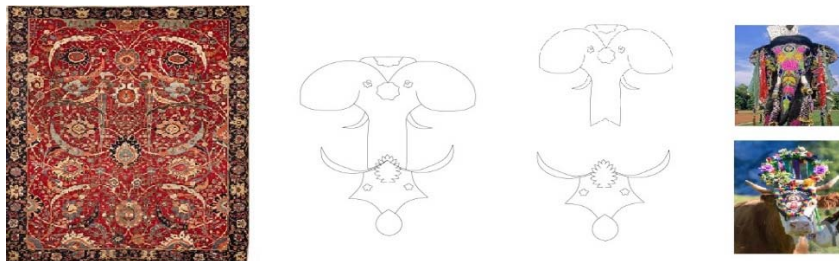
The cow or peanut eye is one of the abstract motifs used in the Jiroft rug



An example of the motif of cows in Halil civilization (Jiroft)



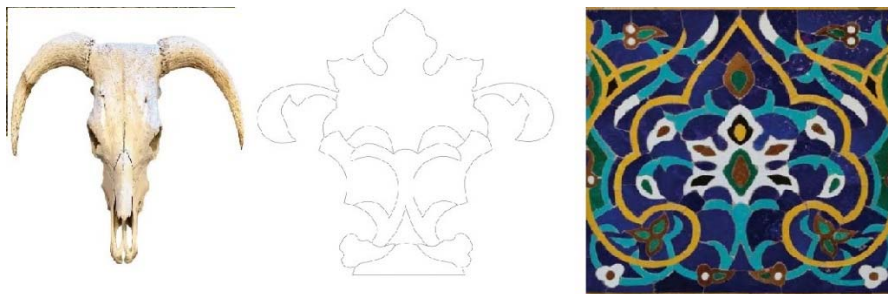
Elephant and cow motifs in Kerman carpet



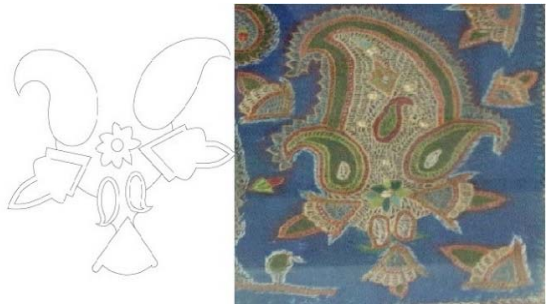




The image of a cow in a copper dish of the Safavid period



The motif of a cow in Safavid tiling



<p>The motif of the cow Kerman carpet of the Qajar period</p>		
<p>The motif of a cow in Kerman's patch of the Pahlavi period</p>		
<p>The motif of a cow in Kerman patch of the Islamic Republic period</p>		

Conclusion

The purpose of the current work was to comparatively examine motifs employed in patch needlework, including those of plants, animals, and geometric and abstract motifs, with a rather particular focus on the patterns of cows and bulls and their status in the Kerman patch needlework. Patch embroidery is one of the original and beautiful arts highly tuned by the artists and crafters of Kerman province. It is the art and practice of weaving fabrics on wool, which are called *ariz* or shawls, and sometimes it is also performed on broadcloth and silk. The prevalence of this art in Kerman has led to the creation of many works by artists. Patch embroidery works can be classified according to their motifs. The secret to its charm is using original, attractive designs and natural colors. The visual characteristics of patch include the pattern, color, and material of its fibers. The findings of the current study revealed that patch motifs include three categories, namely (1) plants, (2) animals, and (3) geometric and abstract. Most animal motifs are concealed in the context of plant, geometric, and abstract motifs. Like tiles, potteries, and carpets; patch works are also

packed with animal motifs. As such, this article sought to examine cow motifs in carpets, tiles, and in particular, patch works to gain an insight into the prevailing culture of Kerman province. Each of these motifs has its semantic load, taking on different meanings when combined.

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Conflict of interest

None.

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Ethics statement

None

Resources

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