

TURKISH CARPETS

Carpets are among the best known art forms produced by the Turks. There are environmental, sociological, economic, and religious reasons for the widespread art of carpet weaving among the Turkish people.

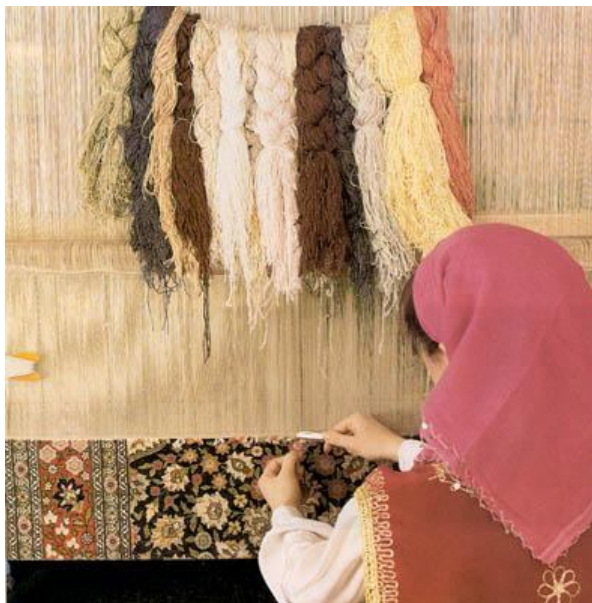
In the regions where the Turks have lived, temperatures changed greatly between day and night, summer and winter. Turks, whether nomadic or farming, have protected themselves from the extremes of the cold weather with carpets. The carpets are almost always handmade of wool, but sometimes cotton is added.

In the traditional households, women and girls take up carpet weaving as a hobby as well as a means of earning money. Even as factory-made carpets became easier and cost less they cannot reduce the popularity of carpets in homes.

Turkish carpets are among the most sought after household items all over the world. Their rich colors, warm tones, and extraordinary patterns with traditional motifs have contributed to the status that Turkish carpets have maintained since the 13th century.

Turkish carpets in the 15th and 16th centuries are best known through European paintings. In the 17th century, when the Netherlands became a powerful trading country, Turkish carpets were displayed in many homes there.

No two carpets are the same; each one is a creation from anew. Because traditionally women have woven the carpets, this is one art form that is rarely appreciated as being the work of a known or a specific artist.



Ladik Carpets

Throughout the ages, the people of Anatolia have reflected their handwork, their labours, and their assiduity as cultural and artistic sensitivity and love in the form of carpets, kilims, pillows, and tapestries.

The people of Anatolia have successfully imbued these hand-woven works with the unique qualities of the region in which they live, and with the strength of their art, their taste, their world view, their longings, and their love they have managed proudly to present these within a philosophy of existentialism to future ages.

18th century Ladik carpet with ewer and tulip motifs.

The most important of the carpet centres consisting of Usak, Gordes and Kula reaching back into the ages past of Anatolia is Ladik. Ladik carpets, woven for trousseaus or prayer are one Turkish carpet which is eagerly sought by museums and collectors everywhere in the world.

In Ladik carpets there exists an image and spirit, a richness of form and design, and a harmony of colour of the utmost brightness and liveliness. In general, ladies and young girls weave rugs and carpets in Anatolia. When we examine Ladik carpets we understand that the young girls are not weaving them for the purpose of selling them and earning money. Nor is that the purpose of their mothers or fathers. As a form of education and as a preparation for motherhood, during the preparation of the marriage items which we refer to as the trousseau and while readying their embroideries, their tablecloths, their stockings, and their embroidered headdresses they direct their daughters towards the weaving of carpets which require more patience, more time, and more proficiency -that is more skill-than these. And the daughters do it willingly. It is a fact that Ladik is a region which is rich in agricultural resources. For this reason, the people of Ladik have not tended towards commercially inspired carpet making. They have adopted only the weaving of carpets and pillows as trousseaus, gifts, and as an artistic force. From the Sixteenth Century down to the last fifty years, they have presented their most beautiful examples of this.

In Ladik carpets we witness to the full the taking form of repose, affluence, and happiness. The richness of colour as well demonstrates their optimism, the fact of their kind words and smiling face. A carpet weaving girl from Ladik most beautifully reflects the feelings inside herself in a work she weaves as if she were preparing a painting, whose wool she has clipped from the sheep of her own parents flocks, whose dyes she has boiled from plants from her own pastures, and whose yarn she has spun and dyed. Within a wealth of nature and the utmost in prosperity and sensitivity, a carpet weaving girl from Ladik infuses her maidenhood longings into these carpets with each and every knot. In Ladik carpets, each colour speaks a different language. Yellow expresses passionate love, yellowing and fading away. Green, as is usual, is one's goal. Blue is hope. White is cleanliness and happiness. Black expresses sorrow, while pink expresses innocence. In Anatolian rugs and carpets, colours also have their own forms of expression, their own things to say. The special quality of each region finds its most beautiful form in its rugs, carpets, and kilims.

What we refer to as root dyes, the dyes employed in rugs, are obtained from the leaves of various plants, from their roots, and from their fruits. Red is obtained from the bark of the red pine and from the leaves of the hazelnut tree; yellow and its varying tones from broom and from the flowers, stems and roots of plants such as sumac, spurge, and saffron; brown from the bark of gall oak and black oak, black oat root, leaves of the walnut tree and walnuts; green from wild mint; black from sumac and soot; blue from jute. Every region in which carpet weaving is carried out possesses pasturage where the dyes used for dying wool may be obtained. Such pasturage is called boyalik (literally; "dye pot"). The plants used for obtaining dye growing in these pastures are specially raised, and these formulas have over the centuries entered the daily lives of carpet weavers, and thus Anatolian carpet making has always characteristics. Designs have the same quality. These designs are virtually the mirrors of the latitude and longitude of the people of the region. Among Anatolian carpet weaving, Ladik carpets generously present to all viewing them their wealth of design and form in the form of a magnificent composition. A Ladik carpet is like a book. No matter what side you look at it from, you may read it with pleasure. It is like a letter, sometimes bringing good news. Sometimes in the complementary intertwining of red and blues it gives voice to a joy of living with its sweet colours. The brown tending towards copper infuses a feeling of confidence. The nested geometric design in the form of rectangles is a symbol of the garden of the heart. The young girl of Ladik embellishes this garden of the heart with symbols and signs of all the possessions she wants. A carnation is an indication of desire. Flowers and stars are happy looks at the future.

In Ladik carpets, the colours and designs are the most lively expressions of a national tradition. Every line speaks a different tongue. The stylised animal figures in motif form are the form of ancient Turkish totems reflected in carpets. The symbols of luck and prosperity in the form of hooks, the health charms, the snakes and dragons, the convolutions, the birds, stars, flowers of paradise, and such symbols of articles as combs, rakes, ewers etc. bespeak all the beliefs, the whole spiritual world of the people of Ladik. Among other Anatolian motifs are also included figures of the stylised dragon referred to popularly as tilsim (charm) which is a symbol of health and happiness, the peacock known as the bird of paradise the mythical simurg (the Emerald Phoenix) which symbolises charity towards people and help for the needy, the double headed eagle, rooster etc. known to have been a totem among ancient Turks and representing the ruler and his authority. In carpet, the spike of grain expresses prosperity; the rose, tulip, carnation and other flowers represent the gardens of paradise; the branching flowers represent the infinity of life (the Tree of Life); the cypress tree represents eternity (reincarnation) owing to its permanent verdure as opposed to the ephemerality of life. The pomegranate and its flower is the fruit of paradise. In Anatolia it is considered sacred.

Ladik carpets generally have a mihrab on them, which shows that the love of worship and pious belief is widespread in Ladik. Various forms of the mihrab are visible in Ladik carpets. The stepped arches of the mihrab, the lanterns hung from it, the varieties of their chains, the candlesticks placed at either side, the ewers for performing ablutions are all characteristic of these carpets. The ewer is a symbol of belief in the need to perform the ritual ablution and for cleanliness. An ewer containing a flower, sometimes takes the shape of a vase, and is beyond colour, letters, and voices. The candelabra and the lanterns swinging like pendulums right in the middle of Ladik carpets spread the good news of an endless and boundless light.

Priceless examples of Ladik carpets woven for two hundred fifty years by the hennaed fingers of the women of Ladik adorn museums. Whether in Karapınar in the vicinity of Konya, in Kavak, Karaman, Kızıllar, İnluce, or Sille, the colours of the rugs, their designs, their borders, and their motifs continue on and on with a habitually which undergoes little change. The principle designs and compositions are part of a whole. The carpets of Ladik must be held separate from this view. A variety of colours, ranging from pale pink to copper red, pearl white, and Seljuk indigo, with a variety of models and motifs smile at us from various Ladik carpets in the softness of their wool. The great majority of Ladik carpets are woven as prayer rugs. For this reason, when one thinks of Ladik carpets the mihrab comes to mind, as do a variety of mihrab compositions. When you look at one Ladik carpet, the mihrab is as wide as possible, lacking a single mark on it. One might race a horse on this field of Ladik red. On another mihrab its four corners are decorated with flowers like a garden of one's heart's desire, and one's eyes find not a place in which to take a step. Another carpet is wholly washed in a state of snow-white sacred belief. Or you might look and see that our carpet weaving girl from Ladik has woven on the loom of her heart a carpet which, with its three great carnations and powder pink involutes gives us a "good morning!" look, extending its hands in supplication.

One must admit one fact. Ladik carpets, which are made entirely of wool, are not knotted very tightly, in fact they are loose. This is somewhat due to the curly nature of the woollen carpeting yarn; unlike cotton thread, woollen yarn is not entirely straight. As both the warp and woof are of wool, a loose weave must have been chosen to prevent puckering or wrinkling.

Because of Ladik carpet making. Ladik carpets have for ages been the pride of Anatolian carpet making and have taken the leading place in museums, carpet books and catalogs. As for Ladik carpet making today, it is entirely divorced from its old tradition, and partly owing to economic reasons never goes beyond imitations of Sivas and Kayseri rugs, unfortunately. Though with regularisation and revival Ladik carpet making could earn much for the country's economy. This sacred duty we must perform in the shortest possible time. This we are obliged to do.

Hereke Carpets

Although the history of carpets can be traced back to ancient times that is to the Turks who lived in Central Asia, the knotted pile carpet spread with the rise of the Seljuk Turks of Anatolia in the 11th century. New motifs and techniques developed rapidly, producing a rich variety of rugs throughout the many Turkish carpet weaving regions. Apart from carpets peculiar to such regions as Usak and Bergama, and those representing different periods of Turkish history, there are still other types based on motif and technique. These include carpets bearing animal motifs, the Holbein-type rug (Turkish rugs which appear in the works of Flemish painters), and the Ottoman palace carpets. Hereke carpets belong to the last category.

The first Turkish weaving workshop was established in 1843. In Hereke, a small coastal town 60 kilometers from Istanbul on the bay of İzmit. It also supplied the royal palaces with silk brocades and other textiles. Known as the Hereke Imperial Factory, the mill was subsequently enlarged to include looms producing cotton fabric. Silk brocades and velvets for drapes and upholstery were manufactured at a workshop known as the "kamhane". In 1850 the cotton looms were moved to a factory in Bakırköy, west of Istanbul, and one hundred jacquard looms were installed in Hereke. Although in the early years the factory produced exclusively for the Ottoman palaces, as production increased the woven products were available in the Grand Bazaar in the second half of the 19th century. In 1878 a fire in the factory caused extensive damage, and it was not reopened until 1882. Carpet production began in Hereke in 1891 and expert carpet weavers were brought from the famous carpet weaving centers of Sivas, Manisa and Ladik. The carpets were all hand woven, and in the early years they were either made for the Ottoman palaces or as gifts for visiting statesmen. The number of looms steadily increased to meet the demand and, when Hereke carpets went on sale in Istanbul, their fame quickly spread to Europe. Soon the Hereke factory was receiving many commercial orders and business flourished.

Hereke carpets are known primarily for their fine weave. Silk thread or fine wool yarn and occasionally gold, silver and cotton thread are used in their production. Wool carpets produced for the palace had 60-65 knots per square centimeter, while silk carpets had 80-100 knots. The knots were of two main types: the "hekim" knot and the Turkish or Gördes knot. After each row is woven, a length of yarn is passed through it and this single-warp knot creates the denser knotting which permits finer and more intricate designs to be created. In some of the carpets, a relief effect is obtained by clipping the pile unevenly.

The oldest Hereke carpets, now exhibited in Topkapi and other palaces in Istanbul, contain a wide variety of colours and designs. The Typical "palace carpet" features intricate floral designs, including the tulip, daisy, carnation, crocus, rose, lilac, and hyacinth. It often has quarter medallions in the corners. The medallion composition used in rugs made in Usak, in western Turkey, since the 16th century was widely used at the Hereke factory. These medallions are curved on the horizontal axis and taper to points on the vertical axis. Hereke prayer rugs feature patterns of geometric motifs, tendrils and lamps as background designs within the representation of a mihrap (prayer niche). Once referring solely to carpets woven at Hereke, the term "Hereke carpet" now refers to any high quality carpet woven using similar techniques. Hereke carpets remain among the finest and most valuable examples of woven carpets in the world.