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INDUSTRY



# CARPETS AND KILIMS



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# **TURKISH CARPETS AND KILIMS**

## **HAND MADE CARPETS**

### **The Oriental Carpets and the Turks**

The carpet is a gift from the Turkish people to world civilization. The knotted rug, the earliest samples of which have been found in Central Asia where the Turks used to live, is an art form discovered, developed and presented to the world by the Turks.

In order to protect themselves from the cold of the Central Asian steppes where they used to live, the Turks invented the carpet using lamb's wool which was abundant, and finds from the Central Asia prove this fact. Turks have taken this art form with them and spread it wherever they have traveled.

In the 1940s, when the Russian archaeologist Rudenko was excavating burial mounds at Pazyryk in the foothills of the Altai Mountains in Siberia where Turkish people used to live, he discovered the earliest surviving carpet in the world in the fifth of the mounds. Dating from between the 3rd and 2nd Centuries BC, this carpet was woven using the Turkish knot and it is generally accepted that this carpet is attributed to the Asian Khuns.

### **Hand-Made Carpets and Kilims**

The carpet is a woven textile which is produced by knotting colored threads on the warp, compressed by the weft. Two types of knots are used in producing carpets: The Turkish (Gördessymmetrical) knot is wrapped around two warps and the Persian (Sineasymmetric) knot around a single warp. The Gördes knot makes a carpet stronger, firmer and more durable, while the Sine knot allows the weaving of different patterns. The tighter the knots, the finer and stronger is the carpet.

Turkish carpets and kilims are in the most valuable collections of museums and collectors in the world. Today, world museums exhibit the carpets woven in Anatolia as their most important and valuable works of art, beginning from the Seljuk period and continuing with the Ottoman Empire.

Turkish carpets have had a vast influence on an extensive zone ranging from Central Asia to Europe. From the middle of the 15th century, carpets exported from Turkey were highly appreciated in Europe and Turkish carpets played an essential role in the social life of Europe. These carpets are widely reflected in the paintings of the time and they are illustrated precisely. This interest, which grew and continued in the 16th and 17th centuries, especially during Renaissance period, is shown the existence of at least one or more Anatolian carpets in portraits of aristocrats, religious figures or other illustrations. Turkish carpets were so highly prized in Europe that they often graced the table than the floor. Because Turkish carpets were highly esteemed, possession of a Turkish carpet was regarded as a status symbol. Hans Holbein, Lorenzo Lotto, Carlo Crivelli, Hans Memling, and Gentile Bellini are some of painters who used Turkish carpets in their paintings.

Anatolian carpets and kilims with their lively colors, motifs, patterns and superior quality have a universal reputation. Natural dyes are used, and many families have kept their knowledge of which leaves, flowers, roots and vegetables would yield the most radiant colors.

## What Is A Kilim?

Rugs are flat (pileless), unknotted handwoven textiles used as floor and wall coverings. In this context, knotted textiles are called carpets, and as is known, they may be handwoven or machinemade.

Kilim, a word of Turkish origin, is often applied in common usage both in Turkey and the world to all flatwoven (pileless) rugs, but actually it denotes only those flatwoven rugs which are made by a technique peculiar to kilims. In other words, rugs are classified according to their weaving technique and in Turkey they are called as kilims, cicim, sumak, zili or sili, palaz and others. Unlike carpets, rugs are woven on a loom using vertical warps and horizontal wefts to weave the threads together much as any handmade fabric is woven. Nevertheless, throughout the brochure, the word “kilim (kelim)” is used to denote all rugs.

Usually the warp (the length of kilim) is made of wool, and the weft (the width of kilim) of wool or cotton. The colored threads are completely woven into the kilim like a basket, making it reversible. Although the face may be distinguished from the reverse, the difference is so slight that either side may be used.

## The Language of Motifs

Carpets and kilims since their beginning were not created just for meeting man's physical needs but also for his psychological wishes. Religious beliefs and ritual life enrich and develop philosophical thoughts and the soul of man. This influences both the artist and his work in various ways. Just looking at the motifs and compositions in the carpets and kilims makes this evident.

Turkish carpets and kilims are a unique product carrying valuable traditional messages from the depths of history to the present, from Central Asia to Anatolia. In other words, Turkish carpets and kilims did have role as a “communication device” in its modern meaning. Thus, every single Turkish carpet and kilim has general and rich messages that it carries through meaningful and colorful patterns.

The meanings of the motives in Turkish carpets are different depending on the region. However, generally the motives symbolize religious beliefs, nobility, power and the other themes described below briefly. The language of carpets and kilims not only indicates the skill of the weaver but also (whether they are understood or not) transmits their messages.



## The Major Motifs Used In Turkish Carpet & Kilims

**Amulet and Evil Eye (Muska ve Nazarlık):** It is believed that some people possess a power in their glance which causes harm, injury, misfortune and even death. Evil eyes are various objects that reduce the effect of the evil glance, thus protecting the ones who carry them. “Muska” is a written charm which is believed to have magical and religious power to protect the possessor from dangerous external factors.

**Bird (Kuş):** The bird motifs seen in Turkish carpets have various meanings. While birds like owls and ravens imply bad luck, doves, pigeons and nightingales are used to symbolize good luck. The bird is the symbol of happiness, joy and love. It stands for power and strength. It is the imperial symbol of various states founded in Anatolia. The birds also refer to divine messengers and long life. The Anka bird (Phoenix) fighting with the dragon refers to spring.

**Burdock (Pıtrak):** Burdock is a plant with burrs which sticks to the clothing of people and the hair of animals. It is believed to be capable of warding off the evil eye. On the other hand, as the term “like a burdock” means full of flowers, this motif is used on flour bags as a symbol of abundance.

**Chest (Sandık):** This motif in general symbolizes the trousseau chest of a young girl. Since the objects in this chest are to be used in the husband’s house, the expectations and hopes of the young girl are reflected in the pieces she has woven, knitted and embroidered.

**Cross and Hook (Çengel ve Haç):** In Turkish carpets, hooks and various cross types are used frequently to protect from danger.

**Dragon (Ejderha):** The Dragon is a mythological creature whose feet are like the lion’s, whose tail is like a snake and who has wings. The dragon is the master of the air and water. The flight of the dragon and the Phoenix is believed to bring fertile rains of spring. The Dragon, believed to be a great serpent, is the guardian of treasures and secret objects as well as the tree of life.

**Eagle (Kartal):** Eagle figures symbolizing such elements as power, might, amulets, government heraldry and charm originating from old religious traditions can be observed as totems in carpet-weaving.

**Earrings (Küpe):** are indispensable as a wedding present in Anatolia. A girl using this motif is trying to inform her family that she wants to get married.

**Eye (Göz):** It is believed that some people possess a power in their glance which causes harm, injury, misfortune and even death. The eye motifs were produced because of the belief that the human eye is the best protection against evil gazes. A triangle is the simplest example of the eye motif.

**Fertility (Bereket):** Hands on hips and ram's horn motifs used together denote a man and a woman. The fertility pattern is composed of two 'elibelinde' motifs indicating the female and two 'koçboynuzu' motifs indicating the male. The eye motif in the middle of composition is used to protect the family against the evil eye.

**Fetter (Bukağı):** It symbolizes the continuity of the family union, the devotion of the lovers and the hope that they should always stay together.

**Hand, Finger and Comb (El, Parmak ve Tarak):** Hand, finger comb motifs including five points and five lines represent the belief that fingers are protection from the evil eye. Hand motifs combining productivity and good fortune also are a holy motive because it symbolizes the hand of the prophet Mohammed's sister. The comb motif is largely related with marriage and birth. It is used to express the desire for getting married and to protect birth and marriage against the evil eye.

**Hands on hips (Elbelinde)** is the symbol of femininity, motherhood and fertility.

**Hair Band (Saçbağı)** motif indicates the desire to get married. If the woman uses some of her hair in weaving, she is trying to express her desire for immortality.

**Ram's Horn (Koçboynuzu)** represents productivity, heroism, power and masculinity in Turkish carpets. Moreover, it shows that the weaver is happy and it is the expression of this.

Running Water emphasizes the importance of water in human life.

**Scorpion (Akrep):** Due to their fear of its venom, people used to carry jewelry in the form of a scorpion or decorated with the tail of a scorpion in order to protect themselves against this animal. The scorpion motif is used for the same purpose.

**Star (Yıldız):** The star motif in Turkish carpets expresses productivity.

**Tree of Life (Hayat Ağacı):** It is the symbol of eternity. The life tree represents the search for immortality and the hope of life after death.

**Wolf's Mouth, Wolf's Track and Monster's Feet:** People use these motifs as a means of protection against wolves and monsters. Since ancient times, men have believed that they could control and protect themselves from dangerous animals by imitating them or creating a similar form. The purpose of using them in the carpets is also the same.

## Types of Carpets and Kilims in Turkey

The carpets derive their names from the localities in which they were produced, as well as from the techniques of their manufacture, the characteristic patterns of their ornamentation, the layout of their design, and their color scheme.

**Anatolia** has a very rich weaving culture. Every single city, town and village is a weaving centre. An understanding of Turkish carpets and flat woven coverings can only be possible through a detailed research of those centers.

Anatolia is a synonym for that part of Turkey which is in Asia, traditionally called Asia Minor. In all carpets described as “ANATOLIAN” the Turkish or Gördes Knot is used.

**Bergama** is one of the most famous ancient carpet weaving centers. The colors black, red, green, blue, yellow and pink are dominant in Bergama carpets. The material used for Bergama carpets is wool as in all Anatolia. The wools are obtained and yarns are made through traditional ways. The motifs of Bergama carpets mostly have plantlike, herbal characteristics.

**Çanakkale:** Carpet making is widespread in small towns and villages in the vicinity of Çanakkale, Ezine, Ayvacık and Bayramiç. It has a very long history in this region. Originally, flatwoven weaving takes place. The main material is wool, with a 100% in most of the carpets, and all the carpets are produced in traditional dimensions. Green, red, blue and yellow are the main colors. Due to migrations from Caucasus, the carpets of Çanakkale region offer great similarities with the Caucasus carpets.

**Döşemealtı:** These carpets are knotted with naturally dyed 100% plateau wool yarn, by Döşemealtı nomads (Yörüks) living on the plateaus around Antalya. They produce the handmade carpets called Döşemealtı, by using the pure wool and vegetal dyes they themselves make. The design reflects the nomadic taste, which is expressed in geometric patterns and a color harmony of blue, dark green and red.

**Gördes** is a town in Western Turkey. It has been a center of weaving at least since the eighteenth century. Gördes prayer rugs are amongst the most sought of all oriental carpets and are distinctive in design. The prayer rugs of Gördes are noted not only for giving their name to the Turkish knot but also for being the group of rugs most influenced by the Ottoman palace carpets. In general, these rugs can be distinguished by the following characteristics; the high arch of the prayer niche is finely stepped and has undulating contours; they exhibit an extremely high quality of weaving, using shiny wool in tight knots; and they have a short pile. Vivid red with various shades of green, yellow, blue and cream are the colors most frequently used.

**Hakkari kilims**, which have peculiar designs and motifs, are produced of madder and wool. Hakkari kilims include thirty main motifs. Herki, Sumarkı, Şamarı, Halitbey, Gülhazar, Gülsarya, Gülgever and Sine are the most commonly used designs. Five main colors are used in Hakkari kilims: red or bordeaux, dark blue, brown, black and white.

**Hereke:** The most famous and finest pure silk carpets in the world are produced in the small town of Hereke, 60 km east of Istanbul. Hereke carpets are recognized by this name in the carpets literature and they have an extraordinary place among world carpets. These carpets which form a special group in our carpet weaving art and which are known by the name of "Palace carpets", were woven in workshops within the Royal Palace or belonging

to the court during Ottoman period and they were made for the Sultans and their close circles.

The dominant colors in Hereke carpets are dark blue, cream and cinnamon and occasionally yellow and green are used. The traditional floral designs are common and each design has its own name, such as: Seljuk Star, Seven Mountain Flowers, Ploneise, 101 Flowers, and Tulip. The flowers in the design and the harmony of colors add warmth to a home.

**Isparta:** The city of Isparta is located in southwest Turkey in an area also referred to as the "Region of Lakes". Today Isparta is considered one of the major rug producing centers of the country. Threads used for weft and warp are also manufactured in this city. The warp and weft on Isparta rugs are made of cotton, knots are wool, and both Gördes and Shena knots are used. Apart from general Turkish designs, floral designs are also used in Isparta carpets.

**Karabağ kilims** are colorful, generally produced in the Eastern Anatolia Region carrying the roses, leaves and boughs of nature, which is, in a way, the reflection of the spirit of eastern people yearning for those beauties to their weavings. These kilims with big flowers are influenced by Karabag kilims of Caucasus.

**Kars** is located near the Russian border of Turkey, produces carpets designed in the Caucasian style. Natural dyed wool is used with the dominant colors navy blue, red and cream. The extremely valuable handspun mountain wool is used in the hand weaving. The traditional patterns are large geometrical designs. The brown on Kars carpets is the natural color of the sheep fleece.

**Kayseri:** The carpets woven in Kayseri and its surroundings make up the major part of Turkish carpet art. Kayseri carpets fall in two groups: Bünyan carpets and Yahyali carpets. The wrap of Bunyan carpets is cotton and the weaving thread is wool and floss silk. Commonly used colors are natural ones like white, black, grey and purple. The grounds are usually red, blue and deep blue. The most important feature that differentiates Yahyali carpets from Bunyan carpets is that both the wrap and weaving thread are wool. Another characteristic of Yahyali carpets is that they use geometric and flower motifs and that all the threads are colored in madder. The dominance of navy blue, red, brown and grey is very clearly seen on these carpets.

**Konya:** The tradition of carpet weaving in Konya, former capital of the Seljuks, goes back at least to the 13th century. Konya is a producer of carpets of pure wool including the famous Ladik carpets. The dominance of pastel colors in Konya carpets is noticeable. Red yellow and green are frequently seen.

**Kula:** Kula is the name of a town in Western Anatolia where these wool carpets are made. The village carpets of Kula are woven on a woolen warp and weft, and for the most part have strong geometric designs. The colors are rich but soft with earth tones of rust, green, gold, and blue being common; however, the dominant colors are pastel. They are mostly blended with pastel colors.

**Ladik:** In Ladik carpets there exists an image and spirit, a richness of form and design, and a harmony of color of the utmost brightness and liveliness. In Ladik carpets we witness the representation of repose, affluence, and happiness. The richness of color as well demonstrates their optimism, the fact of their kind words and smiling face. Ladik

carpets generally have a mihrab on them, which shows that the love of worship and pious belief is widespread in Ladik.

**Milas:** Milas is the centre of a weaving area in Western Turkey near Izmir. It gives its name to all the carpets produced in the region. Milas carpets are knotted with naturally dyes with 100% wool. These carpets are woven frequently in different shades of brown, gray, brick red and various other colors. The dominance of light brown and yellow is mostly used in Milas carpets. Geometric designs are dominant in the pattern.

**Sivas:** These carpets are made in and around the city of Sivas in central Turkey. The most important features of Sivas carpets are their wool, dense weaving and thick appearance. The thread is folded and thick. The carpets are mostly woven with the Persian knot. We can see the Iran and the Seljuk embroideries in Sivas carpets. Another feature is the choice of the colors. They do not use opposite colors. There are at least 12 colors and most of them are dark blue, red and its tones.

**Taşpınar:** Taspinar is a small town in the carpet weaving areas of Aksaray. Taspinar produces excellent carpets of a thick pile, knotted in high quality wool. They have a predominantly blue and red field enlivened by delicate motifs in lighter shades. The yarn is dyed with natural vegetable dyes by the Caucasian methods. In the old Taspinar carpets the Persian influence can be seen, in which plant figures and geometric designs are used simultaneously. However, the rich colors and beautifully proportioned somewhat formal design prevent this unusual mixture from displeasing the eye. New Taspinars are made in the same rich colors as old ones, but the designs are becoming more varied. They are woven with 100% pure wool yarn. The dominant colors are red and navy blue.

**Uşak** carpets were originally a sort of status symbol found only in homes of princes and rich merchants. Uşaks were frequently used in Christian cathedrals and churches in the west. Uşak carpets mark the commencement of the rise of a new and brilliant period in Turkish carpet weaving corresponding to the classical period in Ottoman architecture and other art, with an extraordinary diversity of floral motifs and compositions. Uşak carpets can be divided into two main types: those with medallions and those with a design of stars.

**Van Kilims:** Colors used on Van kilims are mainly dark blue, red black, natural brown and Van white (yellowish white). On the whole, we can describe the main features of the Van kilims by the shortness of loop stitches, dark colors, variety of motifs, single borders, the stylized flora and animal figures alongside with the geometrical and symmetrical patterns.

**Yağcıbedir:** The pure wool Yagci Bedir carpets produced in the mountain villages of the Balıkesir are some of the best quality of their kind. The dominant colors of these very soft carpets are dark blue and red. The deep blue of the Aegean gives the basic color. They are patterned with geometric forms, stylized birds and numerous stars of Solomon, and framed in a border of five or seven bands.

**Yuntdağı:** These carpets are knotted with 100% wool. The dominance of green and white can be clearly seen on these carpets. The colors are mainly pastel. These carpets are knotted mainly in mihrap and medallion designs, and there is a dominance of geometric figures.

Acquiring exact figures of production is very difficult since hand made carpets and kilims are produced in every part of Turkey especially in rural areas for noncommercial purposes. The estimated production of handmade carpets and kilims is estimated at 3.5 million



m2/year. The production is mainly concentrated in Antalya, Balıkesir, Bergama, Bünyan, Çanakkale, Erzurum, Eşme, Gördes, Hakkari, Hereke, Isparta, Kars, Kayseri, Konya, Kula, Ladik, Milas, Manisa, Sındırgı, Siirt, Sivas, Taşpınar, Niğde, Uşak, Van and Yuntdağı.

Both private and public sector organizations produce hand woven carpets and kilims in Turkey. Apart from these, production cooperatives have an important role producing hand woven carpets and kilims. Production of carpets has been largely organized by Sumerhalı A.Ş., which is a public enterprise. It is estimated that 1.5 million people are working in this sector.

The total value of handmade carpets and kilims exported in 2011 was about US\$ 175 million. Turkish handmade carpets and kilims are exported to a wide range of countries in the world. Major export markets are the USA, Japan, France and Latvia. In addition to this, Turkish handmade carpet and kilim producers enjoy big sales to foreign tourists, the number of which were above 27 million in 2011. Almost every foreigner visiting Turkey has the idea of buying a kilim in his mind; most go back to their home country with one or more.

## **MACHINE MADE CARPETS**

Turkey not only has a strong position in the traditional Turkish handmade carpets but also in machine-made carpet production. Machine-made carpet production in Turkey is concentrated mainly in Gaziantep, Kayseri, and Istanbul. Machine-made carpets are produced both in workshops and industrial scale integrated manufacturing units. Raw materials used in the production of machine-made carpets are supplied both from Turkey and from abroad. Carpets and area rugs for both residential and commercial applications are produced from wool, acrylic and polypropylene fiber.

The total value of machine-made carpets exported in 2011 was about US\$ 1.4 billion. Major export markets are Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the USA and Germany.

Today, Turkey, with its strong competitiveness in quality, design technology, and production capacity, is among the most important machine-made carpet producers and suppliers in the world. Turkish machine-made carpet producers continuously introduce new trends, a large variety of different types of carpets, new designs and colors to the world markets. Aspects like durability, color fastness, anti-soiling finish, ease of cleaning and antibacterial features are the important characteristics of the Turkish machine-made carpets.

***Carpet Exports of Turkey (US\$ 1,000)***

HS	Product Name	2009	2010	2011	11/10 Change (%)	2011 Share (%)
5701	Carpets of textile materials, knotted, whether or not made up	115.411	139.326	166.335	19,4	USA(17,1), Japan (15,7), France (11,7), Latvia(9,4), Ist. AHL. (8,7)
570220	Kilims, schumacks, karamanie and similar handwoven rugs, whether or not made up	6.003	7.047	8.924	26,6	USA (17), France (13,4), Denmark(6,2), Sweden (5,9), Japan(5,4)
580500	Hand-woven and needle-worked tapestries	17	52	292	465,4	Russia (59,7), Kazakhstan (15,4), USA (13), India (7)
<b>Hand Made Carpets</b>		<b>121.432</b>	<b>146.425</b>	<b>175.552</b>	<b>19,9</b>	<b>USA (17,1), Japan (15,1), France (11,8), Latvia (9), Istanbul AHL. (8,4)</b>
570220-570299	Carpets and other textile floor coverings, woven, not tufted or flocked, whether or not made up, not incl. kilims, schumacks, karamanie and similar handwoven rugs	774.294	959.205	1.270.139	32,4	S. Arabia (18,2), Iraq(9,5), USA(8,2), Germany(7,2), Russia(3)
5703	Carpets and other textile floor coverings, tufted "needle punched", whether or not made up	151.964	139.760	139.038	-0,5	UK(12,6), USA(12,3), Iraq(9,6), S. Arabia(6,6), Italy(4,9)
5704	Carpets and other floor coverings, of felt, not tufted or flocked, whether or not made up	565	457	572	25,2	USA (24,6), Germany (15,3), Sweden (10,2), Russia(9,5)
5705	Carpets and other textile floor coverings, whether or not made up (excl. woven or tufted "needle punched")	17	21.035	16.975	465,4	S. Arabia (25), U.A.E. (12,4), Malaysia (7,5), Iraq (5,8)
<b>Machine Made Carpets</b>		<b>926.840</b>	<b>1.120.996</b>	<b>1.476.724</b>	<b>28,2</b>	<b>S. Arabia (17,2), Iraq (9,7), USA (8,2), Germany (6,8), UK (3,2)</b>

Source: Ministry of Economy

## USEFUL LINKS

- Aegean Exporters' Associations  
[www.egebirlilik.org.tr](http://www.egebirlilik.org.tr)
- Denizli Exporters' Association  
[www.denib.gov.tr](http://www.denib.gov.tr)
- Istanbul Textile and Apparel Exporters' Associations  
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