

QUALIFYING A CARPET FOUND IN DIVRIGI AS A TIMURID WORK

TANJU CANTAY

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After taking rule of Khorasan, North India and Iran, Timur (1360-1405) started a tradition with the architectural works he built and the patronage he gave to the arts, a tradition which became more established during the periods of his sons and grandsons, who followed his example. A very progressive notion of city planning, spectacular constructions of grand scales, and a profound love for book arts, which especially made miniature, the most important art of the period, were observed throughout the 15th century across all Timurid territories and the lands over which it extended. Arts of architectural ceramic decoration, wood and metal, together with others, were also on this rise owing to the skills displayed and works created. Carpets, decorating the buildings, must be considered within this development. The fact that our knowledge concerning Timurid carpets, is limited should not be interpreted as a mediocre activity in this field. It can doubtlessly be said that there are very valuable examples of the Timurid carpets, among the carpets that have come to date. Comparative studies will bring these into light through accurate and reliable observations.

Within this context, it will be proper to describe as a Timurid work a carpet of the Great Mosque of Divrigi, now in the Vakıflar Halı Müzesi, Istanbul, which studies have not been able to definitely attach to any particular locality or period.

Mrs. Belkıs Balpınar, who have first published this carpet,

describes it, presumably, as one woven in Eastern Anatolia, classifying it as a Turkoman (Akkoyunlu - Karakoyunlu) or Timurid work⁽¹⁾. Professor Şerare Yetkin, ascribes the border to 15th century and notes that the carpet may have been made in Eastern Anatolia⁽²⁾. The carpet is described in the museum, as a Turkoman carpet of Anatolian origin, from 16th-17th centuries.

This carpet, which was brought in 1978 from the Great Mosque of Divrigi to the Vakıflar Halı Müzesi, Istanbul, has appeared in studies, categorized differently from its real design and described as one with eight-pointed star motif or rhombic surface layout⁽³⁾. Mrs. Belkıs Balpınar's comparison of this carpet with a miniature of the Herat school (Zafarnameh, Herat, c. 1490, f. 449b, John Garrett Collection, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University of Baltimore)⁽⁴⁾, does not seem to be an appropriate one. The carpet in the miniature appear with a different design.

The design of the carpet found in Divrigi, consists of dark-blue lined squares with beige corner fillings on a turquoise ground, arranged horizontally and vertically, connected with small lozenges with four-section white fillings. In the centre of the squares there are red fillings made up of double rods. The initial two-row lozenge pattern, not only suggests that it belongs to the mosaic faience decoration of the period, but also that this might be a wall carpet, with a lower section.

The mosaic faience layout with small square patches, characteristic of the Timurid architectural decoration, covers the surface with a notion of endlessness, while the turquoise ground and the patterns consisting of dark-blue and white square patches that make up the prevailing scheme reflect the underlying idea in the design of this precious

carpet, namely, establishing a parallelism with contemporary mosaic faience decoration.

The ornament of Gawhar Shad Mosque (1418) in Mashhad, base of the dome, with the corner fillings of the squares and the Turbeh of Shad-i Mulk Aqa (1371), Shah-i Zindeh, in Samarqand, with small lozenges, are the precious examples of this resemblance. For the lower section of the carpet, the mosaic faience decoration of Timur's palace Aq Saray (beginning of 15th century) in Shehr-i Sebz, the portal and Bibi Khanım Mosque (1405) in Samarqand, façade of the main eyvan, can be specified⁽⁵⁾. As a reflection of the mosaic faience decoration in the art of carpet, this carpet represents the skill of carrying an ornamentation covering a wide surface down to a carpet scale.

The fact that no similar carpet has been included in the Timurid carpets with geometric patterns, published from miniatures by Amy Briggs⁽⁶⁾, may be due to the case that this piece is a rarely sample.

The turquoise floor tiles, wall carpets and the silkware with patterns of tiles, referred to by the Spanish ambassador Clavijo, who passing from Mashhad, was in Samarqand in 1404, can be regarded as data related to this carpet⁽⁷⁾.

The technical features, the Turkish knot, the thickness of the knot strings and closeness in texture have also brought to the foreground what is characteristic of mosaic faience decoration.

This carpet, therefore, should be assessed as one woven in Tabriz region in the 15th century. The same locality and period should be considered for the carpets no. A. 19, E. 129, E. 130 of the same museum⁽⁸⁾ and for the early examples of the dragon carpets, known as Caucasian carpets⁽⁹⁾.

The craftsman who wove this carpet obviously followed the

example of a specific ornamental pattern of the mosaic faience decoration.

Translated from Turkish by Mr. Baydar Soytekin

Vakıflar Halı Müzesi, İstanbul, Inv. no. A. 85, size 1.62 x 2.10 m, warp Z₂S, wool, ivory ; weft Z, wool, light red, 4-6 shoots, wavy ; knots 2Z, Sy 1, v. 26 x 24 h., 624 knots/dm² . After Mrs. Belkıs Balpınar.

- (1) Belkıs Acar, "Divrigi Ulu Camii'ndeki Halı ve Kilimler", Divrigi Ulu Camii ve Darüşşifası, Ankara, 1978, p. 174. Belkıs Balpınar Udo Hirsch, Halı Müzesi Katalogu, Wesel, 1989, p. 26.
- (2) Şerare Yetkin, Historical Turkish Carpets, İstanbul, 1981, p. 129-130. Şerare Yetkin, Türk Halı Sanatı, Genişletilmiş 2. baskı, Ankara, 1991, p. 163.
- (3) Belkıs Acar, "Divrigi Ulu Camii'ndeki Halı ve Kilimler", p. 174. Belkıs Balpınar - Udo Hirsch, Carpets of the Vakıflar Museum İstanbul - Teppiche des Vakıflar-Museums İstanbul, Wesel, 1988, p.52. Belkıs Balpınar - Udo Hirsch, Halı Müzesi Katalogu, p. 25. Şerare Yetkin, Türk Halı Sanatı, p. 162.
- (4) Belkıs Acar, "Divrigi Ulu Camii'ndeki Halı ve Kilimler", p. 174. Belkıs Balpınar - Udo Hirsch, Carpets of the Vakıflar Museum İstanbul, p. 52. Belkıs Balpınar - Udo Hirsch, Halı Müzesi Katalogu, p. 25. For this manuscript and miniature see : Thomas W. Arnold, Bihzad and his Paintings in the Zafar-namah Ms., London, 1930.
- (5) On Timurid architectural decoration see : Ernst Cohn-Wiener, Turan - Islamische Baukunst in mittelasiien, Berlin, 1930. Derek Hill - Oleg Grabar, Islamic Architecture and its Decoration, Second edition with new material, London, 1967. Lisa Golombek - Donald Wilber, The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan, Princeton NJ, 1980.

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- (6) Amy Briggs, "Timurid Carpets - I. Geometric carpets", *Ars Islamica*, VII, Michigan, 1940, p. 20-54.
- (7) Clavijo, Embassy to Tamerlane 1403-1406, translated from Spanish by Guy Le Strange, London, 1928, p. 208, 227-228, 238, 241.
- (8) Belkıs Balpınar - Udo Hirsch, Carpets of the Vakıflar Museum Istanbul, p. 56, 99, 134 and 136.
- (9) Prof.Dr. Katharina Otto-Dorn, specify them as Timurid carpets. Katharina Otto-Dorn, *L'art de l'Islam*, translated from German by Jean-Pierre Simon, Paris, 1967, p. 187. For a precise study on dragon carpets see : Şerare Yetkin, *Early Caucasian Carpets in Turkey*, London, 1978.

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- 1^o The geometric design and lower section of the carpet designated as a Timurid work
 - 2^o A detail from the carpet
 - 3^o Mashhad Gawhar Shad Mosque (1418), base of the dome (D. Hill)
 - 4^o Samarqand, Shah-i Zindeh, Turbeh of Shad-i Mulk Aqa (1371), entrance (D. Hill)
 - 5^o Shehr-i Sebz Aq Saray (beg. 15th century), the portal, detail (E. Cohn-Wiener)

