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The Historical Relationship between the Shawls of Gürün and Iran

Abstract

About a thousand years ago, Turks settled in Anatolia. Along the way, while migrating from Central Asia, they established a common concept of culture and arts in every country they claimed to be under Turkish sovereignty. For this reason it is possible to find the same motifs in the arts of Anatolia and Central Asia. When Turkmen (Oguzlar) who had once settled in Turkestan (Horasan and Kirman areas) moved westward, they formed the foundation of the relationship between Iran and Anatolia. This is why much artwork found along this migration route has common Turkish and Iranian features. An example in point are the shawls woven in Sivas-Gürün in Turkey in the nineteenth century that share common features with shawls made in the Kesan and Kirman regions of Iran from the same period.

Keywords: Turk migration—Turkey-Iran cultural relations—shawls—Gürün—weaving patterns—culture and art

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TURKS, THE CUSTODIANS and bearers of Central Asian culture before the advent of Islam, played an important role in this culture's movement from east to west. They upheld their sovereignty for a long time as they invaded country after country from Harezmi to Maverunnehir, from Afghanistan to east Turkestan and Iran, and from Anatolia further to the west. In some places they established permanent settlements. In all areas where they settled, they naturally intermingled with the local population without claiming special status while assuming the names of the region; for that reason they were Iranian in Iran, Indian in India (Penjabi), and Slav (Bulgarian) in the Balkans. However, Kuban claims that throughout this migration until today they retained their original identity stemming from the geographical region from where they had moved initially (KUBAN 1993, 21–22).

The Turks living in the plains (*bozkır*) of Central Asia were initially the bearers of a nomadic culture. When they conquered India, Iran, and Anatolia, they brought with them both their relationships and experiences. These, together with Turkish sovereignty, formed the ground for common concepts and motifs, especially in the fields of art and culture from Central Asia to Anatolia (KUBAN 1993, 22–23). They established a balance between their newly created Turkish culture and art and the geographical environment they lived in. According to Sözen, these are developments unmatched in the history of any other nation (SÖZEN 2003, 346). When we examine in detail the nomadic culture of Central Asia, Sözen claims, it can be seen that among the other ethnic groups, Turks made extraordinary contributions especially towards the creation and integration of a new Central Asian culture. In particular the contribution of the Turks who had settled along the Silk Road that connects the Western and Eastern worlds have made to the art developed in this region cannot be denied (SÖZEN 2003, 347).

Furthermore, in Anatolia as well the art and culture brought from the east mixed with the local traditions, resulting in new combinations. The role played in the establishment of an Anatolian Turkish art by cultures east of modern Anatolia, especially during the Great Seljuki era in Iran, is significant. The universal cultural impact achieved by the Great Seljukis was substantial over a long

period, and it re-emerged during the era of the Anatolian Seljukis and Ottomans. The Ottomans became the bearers of Turkish culture and art in the diverse parts of the world that came under their sovereignty (MERÇİL 1997, 34–41).

By accepting Islam in the tenth century, the Turks reached a significant turning point in their history. The Turks who gained military and political dominance a short time after they converted to Islam established successive Muslim-Turkish states like Karahanlıs, Gaznelis, Great Seljukis, and the states formed under the Great Seljukis such as Kirmans, and those of Syria, and Iraq (figure 1). The Turks who founded the Anatolian Seljuki and Ottoman state as extensions of Anatolia came out of Iran. These tribes are known as Oguz Turks, as well as Turcoman or Turcomen.

The Turkish states established in the Middle East were concentrated mainly in Iran. Therefore, the role of Iranian history and culture is very important for the Turks. It can be traced back to the sixth century when Turkish-Iranian cultural relations started in the era of the Göktürks. Although relations worsened by the time of the conquest of Iran by the Arabs in the seventh century, they nevertheless continued until the establishment of Arab dominance in the tenth century (GÜLER, AKGÜL, ŞİMŞEK 2001, 74).

From the tenth century Iran entered an era of continuous Turkish dominance. The Turkish states established under the names Great Seljukis, Harzemis, İlhanlıs, Karakoyunlus, Akkoyunlus, Gaznelis were large enough to include Iran within their area of dominance, although Iran was not at their center. For example, the borders of the Gazneli era state expanded to include Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, the north of India, and Pakistan. The political center of this state, which originally was Gazne, was moved to Lahore following the expansion of the state's borders into India (GÜLER, AKGÜL, ŞİMŞEK 2001, 81; MERÇİL 1997, 34–41).

The Safevi Turkish state, which was established with Iran as its center, continued until the withdrawal of the Kaçar tribe from the throne of Iran in 1925 (GÜLER, AKGÜL, ŞİMŞEK 2001, 128). Turks already lived in the Iranian world as an elite class, as military leaders or governors, and constituted a power separate both from the already existing military force and influences coming from the north (MERÇİL 1997, 34–41). Naturally, it was therefore relatively easy for the Turks to establish a state in the region (figure 2).

During the Safevi era Iran became a country where the Turkish element was experienced more intensively than in previous eras. Migrations, which initially started as a result of the defeat of the İlhanlı Turkish state by the Mongolians in 1336, continued during the establishment of the Safevi state in the form of migrations from Turkey to Iran. From the fourteenth century, migration from Turkey to Iran intensified as a consequence of increased political interactions between the two countries. This wave of migration continued until the eighteenth cen-

ture. The fact that the official records mention that many of the Turkish tribes living in Iran came from Turkey in the nineteenth century shows that migration continued in that century (SÜMER 1992, 4).

After the establishment of the Safevi state, it was supported from Anatolia for a long time in the form of manpower. Turks were responsible for the Safevi state, and they could rely on a strong culture of their own. The Safevi state is a Turkish state founded by the Oguz Turkish tribes and its lands were centered in Iran and expanded to include the eastern part of Anatolia. Shah İsmail, the founder of the Safevi state, came from a Oguz Turkish tribe. When the center of the Safevi state was moved to İsfahan, Turkish remained the official language of the palace. Shah İsmail wrote poems in Turkish rather than in Persian because his mother tongue was Turkish. This intense traffic of migration, which lasted with the movement between two countries during the Ottoman period in Anatolia and during the period when the Safevis lived in Iran, did not eradicate enmities and disputes between the two countries, but neither did it seriously endanger their cultural relations (SÜMER 1992, 6).

Turcomen who migrated to Iran from Turkey constituted the most important element of the Turkish state. They played particularly significant roles in the establishment of the Safevi state in Iran (GÜLER, AKGÜL, ŞİMŞEK 2001, 126). Some of these tribes, among them the Rumulus, Ustacalus, Şamlus, Kaçars, and Afşars lived both in Iran and in Sivas in Anatolia and its surroundings (SÜMER 1992, 143). Considered from a wider perspective, it appears that a large number of these tribes had already been living in the Turkish state that was established before Safevis migrated to Anatolia. Therefore, it is no surprise that the art and culture as reflected in what these populations produced were transmitted by means of migration from the east to the west, and from west to east, and that many samples of them are found in these regions, both in Iran and Anatolia. That is why there are similarities in the artistic motifs, concepts, and forms as well as products that were transmitted from Central Asia to Anatolia, and even to the Balkans.

Today we can demonstrate this by tracing the similarities in design between the Gürün shawls woven in Gürün town of Sivas (figure 3) and the shawls woven in Iran-Kerman. This is the point I am going to develop below. Some of the best samples of Gürün shawls can be found in the Sivas Museum and some private collections. The fact that some of the shawl designs named Halep, Şam, and İsmailiye, or Horasan, Kashmir, and Lahore, indicates clearly the existence of historical ties that were formed among these regions centuries ago. It also points to the existence of a common lifestyle and production among these countries that was reflected in their art products. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the countries and regions where the shawls were woven from this perspective.

SHAWL CLOTHS OF GÜRÜN AND THEIR TYPES

Shawls have been used in Turkish culture as a multipurpose clothing accessory for both males and females from ancient times (MUSAHIBOĞLU 1992). Known as “Şal” in Turkish, a shawl is a pure woolen cloth with designs that men wrap around their waist and women around their shoulders. In Persian it is known as “Shalat” and in India as “Shawl” (TEZCAN 1993, 25).

The shawls that became the symbol of the “Closed Bazaar” traders in the 1480s used to be a feature by which to distinguish the Turkish from the foreign businessmen. *Kapalı Carsi*, the “Closed Bazaar,” was a shopping center dating back to the fifteenth century where all kinds of valuable cloths, jewellery, guns and antique goods were sold by specialist traders. It is a historic building that continues to be used as a shopping center today. In the past, the most important piece of clothing of the traders were the belts made of Gürün shawls. Turkish traders used red belts, whereas Jewish and Greek traders preferred yellow belts. The shawl belts also functioned as a kind of waist bag. As such, they were used, for example, by the Janissaries to store tobacco and even pencils, in addition to many other small objects. Furthermore, the pure wool shawls were used as health aids because they could cover internal body organs around the waist region, thus protecting them from the cold. Therefore, they were a piece of clothing indispensable even to Sultans (KUŞOĞLU 1986, 33; 1994, 68–72) (figure 6).

Shawl cloths, which were estimated to have been woven around the same periods in the fifteenth century in the city of Kashmir in India, in the Kerman, Keşan, and Horasan regions of Iran, and in the town of Gürün of Sivas in Anatolia, were woven until the second half of the nineteenth century in the cities of Kerman and Keşan of Iran. Further research is needed in order to establish in which century weaving ceased or whether it is still being continued in some of these regions today (WEARDEN 2003, 87). As far as the Gürün region is concerned, residents say that the Sivas-Gürün shawls were woven until the 1920s. Iranian shawls, which had similar designs, were woven up to the same period.

The main material for shawls of India, Iran, and Anatolia, which consist of long, shiny, and soft fibres, comes from the hair of Ankara mohair goats, which are the same as Tibetan goats. Shawls are often thought of as being made of wool. In Anatolia, apart from Bursa shawls, Ankara shawls, and Gürün shawls, which were made from one hundred percent mohair, there were also silk shawls. In addition to these, there were shawls produced with silk in the warp, wool thread in the weft, or cotton thread in the weft. We find in records from the eighteenth century that shawls were woven for various purposes and served as prayer rugs, table cloths, door covers, and turbans. In the past, the Janissary corps and a majority of ordinary citizens wore shawls on their heads and tied them around their waists. In the traditional way of dressing, every man wore a shawl cloth



FIGURE 4: A trader with belt (KUŞOĞLU 1994, 70).



FIGURE 5: A civil servant with belt (KUŞOĞLU 1994, 70).

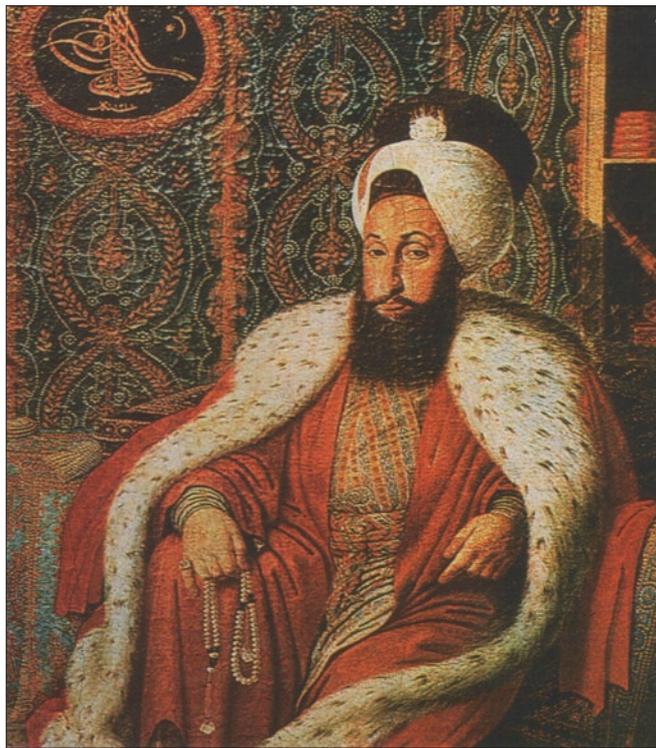


FIGURE 6: Selim with Lahori belt (KUŞOĞLU 1986, 33).

FIGURE 7: Woven wool shawl from Kerman, Southeast Iran, 1876, 59x289 cm. (Courtesy of V&A Images/ Victoria and Albert Museum, Image number 893-1877).



FIGURE 8: Woven wool shawl from Sivas/Gürün, nineteenth/twentieth century, 90x109 cm. (Sivas Museum, inventory number 1090. Photo by author, 2005).

FIGURE 9: Woven wool shawl from Sivas/Gürün, nineteenth/twentieth century, 89x100 cm. (Sivas Museum, inventory number 93/32. Photo by author, 2005).



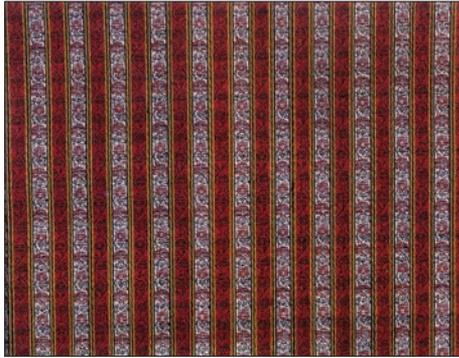


FIGURE 10: Silk Shawl from Kashan, 1876, 59x289 cm, detail. White and red stripes with multicolored flowers. (Courtesy of V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, Image number 884-1876).

FIGURE 11: Silk and kılbadan shawl, 124x86 cm, cream and orange stripes with floral designs (TEZCAN 1993, 240).

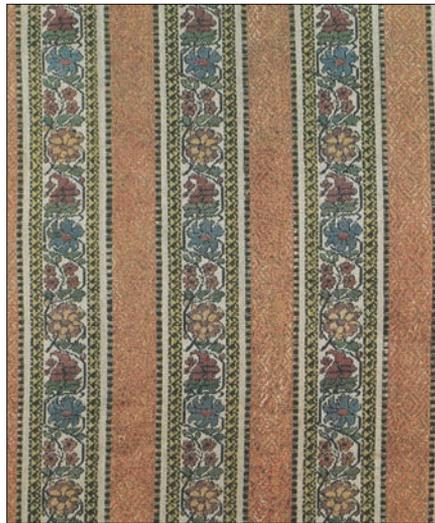


FIGURE 12: Shawl from Kerman in Southeast Iran. Woolen twill covered with woolen embroidery, 1876, 59x289 cm. (Courtesy of V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum/Jennifer Wearden, image 874a-1877).

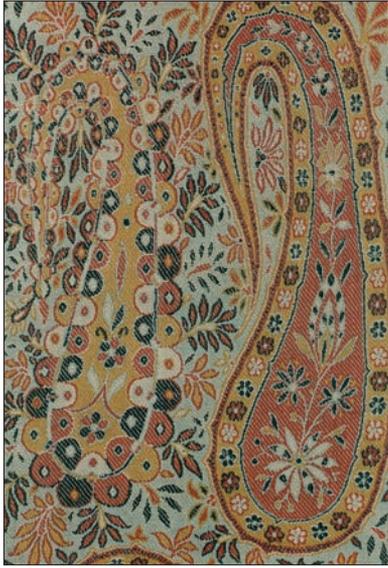


FIGURE 13: Woven wool shawl, 12x20 cm. Red and yellow almond motifs on a light blue background (TEZCAN 1993, 157).

FIGURE 14: Woven wool shawl with hook motif from Gürün, nineteenth/ twentieth century, 100x72 cm. (Sivas Museum inventory number 1324. Photo by author, 2005).



FIGURE 15: Woven wool carpet with hook motifs from Zara, eighteenth century (KAYIPMAZ 1994, 60).



FIGURE 16: Shawl with hook motifs known as İsmailiye, woven in Gaziantep. (Photo by author, 2005).



FIGURE 17: Woven wool shawl with Lahori motif from Gürün, nineteenth/twentieth century, 70x103 cm. (Sivas Museum, inventory number 77/405. Photo by author, 2005).

FIGURE 19: Woven wool shawl with Lahori motif from Gaziantep, still woven today. (Photo by author, 2005).



FIGURE 18: Woven wool shawl with Lahori motif from Gürün, nineteenth/twentieth century, 105x90 cm. (Sivas Museum, inventory number 76/178. Photo by author, 2005).



tied around the waist and every woman wore a shawl on her shoulders and back—this tradition remained in Anatolia until the 1820s. Waist cloths made from the shawls of Gürün were among the most admired and famous (ÖZBEL 1949, 4) (figures 4–5).

Shawl cloths became well-known under the name of the locality where they were woven. For example, in Anatolia, shawls woven in Bursa and Istanbul and not in Gürün were known as Bursa shawls or Istanbul shawls. Those produced outside of Anatolia were named after the country of their origin, such as Indian or Iranian shawls. The most famous shawl woven in Anatolia was the Gürün shawl. Shawls produced in centers like Iran's Kashmir, Kirman, or Horasan, or even in India were known by the names of these areas. In addition, these shawls also had specific designs characteristic to the region where they were woven (UĞURLU 1994, 3–6).

In a quality shawl cloth, the colors used and their arrangement order were as important as the cloth's material, pattern, and technical features. The more commonly used threads were red, blue, yellow, and green, but in some designs black and white colors were also used, as in the example of the belt design with almonds shown in figure 9. The yarn for the shawl cloth used to be dyed completely by natural methods, and materials for natural dyes were obtained from local plants, animals, and minerals (UĞURLU 1994, 6).

Gürün shawls were woven on jacquard looms either with or without patterns. Some shawl cloths woven without patterns used to be embroidered with designs by women who stretched plain cloth over an embroidery frame. The value of shawl cloths with embroidery designs was relatively high. These embroidered shawls were used in women's dresses. The patterns formed by weaving generally consisted of vertical stripes, small flowers, and leaf-and-branch motifs placed between the stripes.

Among the very special designs of Gürün shawls was the so-called “shawl design,” which had scattered motifs like almonds or claws. Although different designs using the almond motif are found in the shawls of other countries (like those in the Iran-Kerman shawl shown in figure 12), this motif is a distinct characteristic of Gürün shawls (see figure 13). In Gürün shawls almond motifs were placed in a straight or tilted line and they were usually filled in with small colorful flowers and leaves (ÖZBEL 1949, 5–6).

The shawl motifs preferred most were those where the branch motifs were intermingled with z- or s- curves. Designs of this kind with motifs called “ivy or hooked *zencerek*” could not be found in either Iranian or Indian shawls. This *zencerek* or hooked motif, unique to Turks, which was used in Gürün shawls (figure 15), was also used in Zara carpets of the eighteenth century which were woven in Zara, another town of Sivas (KAYIPMAZ 1994, 59; ACUN 1993, 13; see

figure 14). It is still one of the favorite motifs used in Gaziantep hand weavings (figure 16).

Lahori is another remarkable design pattern in Gürün shawls. Lahori shawls, which were woven with z- and s- curves placed between vertical stripes (sometimes with a hook, as shown in figure 17, other times without, as shown in figure 18), are now woven in Gaziantep with the same pattern. These are still called Lahori shawls today (figure 19).

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN GÜRÜN SHAWLS AND IRAN SHAWLS

When we look at the samples of Iran shawls made around 1876, we can see that samples woven in Kashan and Kerman are not significantly different from Gürün shawls in terms of design patterns and motif arrangements. Yet, when compared with one another, slight differences both in the arrangement of motifs and the order of the vertical stripes can be identified. For example, the method of arranging the leaves in between stripes in the Kerman shawl of figure 7 is similar to the method of arrangement used for the Gürün shawls in figures 8 and 9. The flower pattern in between the stripes in the Kashan shawl in figure 10 and the almost identically shaped flowers in figure 11 are also found in Gürün shawls. The almond motif in the Kerman shawl in figure 12 is similar to the almond motif of the Gürün shawl in figure 13, the only difference being the arrangement of the motif.

Another important pattern of design is seen in the sample with the vertical zigzag motif on the shawl called Lahori. Although the *zencerek* motif placed in the vertical stripes is woven with another embodiment, it is clear that this shawl design is woven in a way similar to the shawl designs woven in Lahore. It can, therefore, be said that it is a shawl produced by a Turkish tribe coming from that region (figure 9).

DECLINE OF SHAWL PRODUCTION

Gürün shawls were both worn nationwide and sold to outside markets up until the nineteenth century. However, the manufacture of mohair products ceased with the collapse of the domestic mohair industry around the end of the nineteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the establishment of a mohair industry in England in 1839 and the yield from Ankara mohair goats smuggled out in 1836 from Ankara to South Africa increased British exports to Near Eastern countries. Thus, the increase of imported raw materials like cotton and wool in Anatolia, and at the same time, the dominance of the market by machine-manufactured cloths accelerated the collapse of the wool and cotton industry in Anatolia. This caused already unfavorable economic conditions to worsen. This situation affected Gürün shawls as well as many other handicraft

products, and after the 1920s, it was no longer possible to manufacture this valuable product. Moreover, the situation got worse, especially when the government imposed high taxation rates on the transportation of handicrafts (that is, a kind of custom tax for exports). Therefore producers were compelled to market locally. The result was that the producers could no longer trade their goods, and Anatolian small-scale enterprises, such as manufacturers of Gürün shawls, that could not leave their immediate environs started to shrink (BAYKARA 1969, 67–69; GİZ 1968, 15, 17; MANTRAN 1995).

Today, although the weaving of Gürün shawls has ceased completely, one of the few places where most examples of them can be found is the Sivas Museum. The Yapı Kredi Collection also contains a total of twenty-five pieces. Most of the figures in this article are reproductions of samples kept in the Sivas Museum.

According to residents, the fact that Gürün shawls became dependent on the woolen yarn imported from England rendered it impossible for the local industry to continue production. Although efforts were made after 1914 to revitalize this artform, they were ultimately unsuccessful. All the jacquard looms for the weaving of shawls in Gürün were dismantled and the production of this cloth ceased.

It is interesting to note parallels with similar developments in the production of the Iranian shawls that show very similar designs. Iran also experienced a period of decline in the manufacturing of its handicrafts during the second half of the eighteenth century. Robert Murdock, an official of the Royal Army of Britain, was dispatched to Iran in 1863 to install a telegraph system. In addition to his technical mission, Murdock was also assigned to collect brocar cloths with gold and silver embroidery and Kirman shawls and send them to the Victoria Albert Museum to be included in a section of Iranian art to complete its cloth collection. According to information provided by Murdock, Iran was living through a period of decline in the art of textiles (WEARDEN 2003, 83–84).

Although Iran exported opium, cotton, and raw silk until 1848, it reduced its silk exports because of a disease that affected silk around the end of the 1860s. On the other hand, developments in the European industry also affected the textile industry of Iran; therefore the Iranian handicraft production industry, under attack by foreign traders and imported textile products, could not resist this pressure. In 1858 sixty-six percent of the imports consisted of cotton, wool, and silken cloths imported from England. Therefore, both the increase of imports and the dominance of manufactured products in the market over handmade cloths resulted in the extinction of the handicrafts of Iran. In 1872 in Isfahan, half of the businesses printing fabrics were forced to close, and the workshops that produced brocar—cloth with gold and silver embroidery—turned to ruins. In the midst of all these developments Murdock began his collection of works so that these vanishing handcraft products would go into his country's muse-

ums. In 1876, having gained access to many valuable pieces by mediation of the Shah, Murdock collected exactly seventy-six pieces that were sent to museums in England. Twenty-three of them are among the items exhibited in the collection of the Victoria Albert Museum in London. The Kirman shawls were given to Murdock as a present by the Shah. These samples, being as thin and delicate as the shawls woven in Kashmir, are considered to be the last products of the declining textile industry in Iran. It is also said that the Kirman shawls woven in Iran are as beautiful as the Kashmir shawls that come from India because both kinds of shawls are woven with yarns made from the wool of the same kind of mohair goat that lives at a certain altitude. Kashan was famous at that time for its brocar cloths as well as its shawl cloths (WEARDEN 2003, 83–84).

CONCLUSION

There have been periods when the Turks shared their culture with different other cultural environments. At these periods various syntheses of art forms took place. Turks shared a common nomadic culture in the plains of Central Asia and later became the founders of a common cultural environment in Medieval Islam. Turks, the founders and only bearers of the Ottoman synthesis, crystallized their culture in Anatolia since the classical Ottoman period into what we can call a national culture. All of this shows us that this society of Central Asian origin sometimes shared its cultural values, sometimes established common values, and sometimes synthesized different cultural elements and reflected them up to the present day. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the samples of motifs that were found in a Kyrgyz tent can be found in Anatolia and can be traced back to a time before the Christian era, and that the Gürün shawls similarly show designs they have in common with the cloths woven in Kashmir, Keşan, and Kirman. In this study, we have attempted to put forward the historical connection in shawl production between Iran and Anatolia by highlighting the historical migrations to the west and the similarities in the design of shawls produced in Iran with those of shawls woven in Gürün.

Today, on the shawl looms which were dismantled in Gürün after the 1920s and brought to Gaziantep, cloths are produced with a thick cotton thread instead of a one-hundred-percent woolen thread for different purposes such as curtains and upholstery. The city of Gaziantep, famous for its traditional Kutni cloths (İMER 2001), is located in the southeast of Turkey. These cloths, which are produced with the design varieties once used for the manufacture of Gürün shawls are also given the names formerly used for the shawls, such as Lahori, İsmailiye, Kashmir, Horasanlı, and Bademli. Although the production technique is the same, the change in the economical and technological conditions seriously affected some of the traditional art products. The use of a different kind of

material changed the quality of these cloths and, related to it, their way of use. Therefore, Gaziantep shawls, which are woven rougher and thicker, do not have the qualities of a fine cloth to be wrapped around the waist nor of a shawl to be put over the shoulders. Their manufacture continues only for home consumption. Yet, also for these cloths woven in Gaziantep, the *zencerek* or hooked motif is gladly used as it had been used for the Gürün shawls.

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