

ICONOGRAPHICAL, SYMBOLICAL, AND TECHNICAL FEATURES OF COVER-CURTAINS WITH CENTRAL ROUND MEDALLIONS EXECUTED IN MARASH EMBROIDERY

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This article observed cover-curtains with round central medallions executed in Marash "secret stitch embroidery". Most iconographic and symbolic details of the ornaments and their manner of execution and expressions are compared and discussed. Close observations related to the fabrics, threads and their color solutions, used to make these cover-curtains, are discussed as well. These covers or rug-like textiles preserved the ancient symbolic decorative elements that had existed in the Armenian Highlands for millennia. With their unique iconography and symbology, these covers developed throughout the Middle Ages and became an inseparable and important part of other art forms known in Armenian culture. As rugs, these covers were displayed in the Armenian home as a blessing and an evil preventing charm for the entire family.

Key words: concentric circular decoration, hand embroidered rug, ornamental and color complexes, multi-circle pictorial decorative structure, rosette, symbolic unit, canonical ornamental expressiveness.

Introduction

The study aims to observe cover-curtains with round central medallions executed in the "secret stitch embroidery" of the Marash region. These items are kept and available to us in Armenia, Los Angeles and elsewhere. A number of iconographic and symbolic details of ornaments and the manner of their execution will be compared. Several observations, related to the fabrics, threads and their color solutions used to make these cover-curtains, will be discussed, too.

A unique large size (180x182cm) example of this type of cover¹, executed in the same stitch, previously belonged to the Los Angeles resident Nazelie Elmassian's family collection. Currently, this piece is owned by the "Ararat" museum of Mission Hills, California (Fig. 1). This cover is a hand embroidered piece with a large single central medallion. The medallion is composed of a number of circles with a common center. The background of the cover consists of continuous square-shaped designed linear ornaments.

Several years ago, 97-year-old Nazelie donated most of her rich collection of clothing, textiles and more to the "Ararat" Museum in Mission Hills, California. She is a granddaughter of a well-known merchant from Kesaria, Karapet Telfeyan [1,

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¹ The other variation of the Marash stitch is satin stitch.

p. 2200-2203]². The cover-curtain in question became known during the Telfeyan/Timourian collection's transfer to the museum. It was severely damaged; therefore, it did not receive necessary attention at that time. The story, preserved in the family, tells that Nazelie's brother Aram, who was fatally ill with cancer, used to rest on the sofa covered with this piece in the living room during the day. Nazelie says that after months of battling his illness, Aram passed away on that sofa. Due to this extended wear and tear, the cover was badly damaged.

In February, 2022, by the initiative of the "Ararat" Museum and the "Armenian Dress and Textile Project", a scientific conference and related large exhibition was dedicated to the culture of Kesaria. During the preparation process, we reviewed and examined the extent of the damage to the cover. It became clear that it was an exceptional example of Marash braided stitch embroidery and should be secured and preserved. The masterful execution and high quality of the embroidery, the artistic solid ornamental structure, the color solutions, unique iconography, symbolic details and their relationships convinced us that it was necessary to refer the cover in a separate study.

The Technique of the Embroidery, Fabrics and Threads

This type of Marash embroidery is extremely unique and original in its execution technique called "secret stitch", or "**Irka**" [35, p. 25], [15, p. 6]³, because during the embroidering process the working thread creates only dots on the reverse side of the fabric, mostly staying on the surface, where, by strict sequence, it passes through each line four times going back and forth. Eventually it creates braided decorations, looking similar to relief sculptures found on "khachkars", or cross-stones. As a result, cross-based ornaments are formed, because the first two back-and-forth rows of the embroidery are Cross, or Catchstitches. The two first rows are

² Karapet Telfeyan was the older brother of Movses Telfeyan. They both were the sons of a famous Kesarian merchant Sargis Telfeyan. Karapet Telfeyan's older daughter Nazen was married to Sedrak Timourian who was a famous Kesarian merchant as well. Their daughter Galenik, after moving to the United States, married a lawyer from Kharpert named Astor Elmassian. During her lifetime, Galenik kept and conveyed the Telfeyan/Timourian families' wonderful collection to her daughter Nazelie. Timourian was a knowledgeable and educated merchant who dealt with rugs and other antique merchandise. His collection included historic clothing, rugs, cushions, furniture, a large copper plate bearing an Armenian inscription, items made of silver and gold, etc. This rich collection travelled with the family from Kesaria to Constantinople, New York, Fresno, and finally to Los Angeles. **Timourian S.**, Unpublished Memoirs, "Ararat" Museum, Mission Hills, California, 34.

³ The second type of Marash embroidery, the Satin stitch is called **Zeytun** stitch or **kotasegh** (local people also called it **atlaslama**), with which every element of the decorated ornament is covered. As a result, the working thread creates a similar image on the opposite side of the piece.

filled with two more woven or braiding rows resulting in braided looking crosses, or cross based ornaments⁴:

In the embroidery of all the discussed covers, along with the Marash stitch, Chain, Basting and Back stitches were also used as supporting or additional techniques [16, p. 65]⁵. The Chain stitch creates a bold line because of its continuous chain-link structure. It is used to outline and emphasize larger and smaller decorations, making them more accentuated and visible. This stitch is present on most of the covers besides that in Fig. 11.

The Basting stitch was also employed on most of the covers, running parallel to, or enveloping some of the design elements, such as circles, arches, and other decorative details. With its interrupted linear structure, it also performs a framing function, giving an appearance of movement and visual lightness to those ornaments. This stitch is present on all the covers besides that in Fig. 11. Backstitch, as another stitch that creates a continuous line, was used only in one of the covers (Fig. 11).

The cover in question and most of the chosen covers that are used for comparison are likely 100-150 years old. An examination of the canvas fabrics used for them shows that they are all cotton, non-uniform, plain weave, narrow pieces (64-66cm). For this reason, multiple layers of fabric were used to build large size covers. Those narrow strips are connected together with a simple Basting stitch to ensure the desired width for the covers (2mx2m). The embroiderers used two layers of fabric for both rectangular covers (Fig. 9, 10).

The triple-layered fabric, used for the cover in question (Fig. 1), corresponds to the above mentioned description. One of the three pieces is discolored, indicating that it was dyed in a separate from the other two dye bath, where the dye did not set and bond properly. The mentioned descriptions indicate that similar, indelicate textiles are the result of local cottage industry production [35, p. 26-27]⁶. These textiles were woven and dyed by local production units such as small workshops organized in orphanages, individual dyehouses, or by individual weavers and dyers. As a result of these types of cottage industry productions, the thread was spun by hand and then woven on narrow looms. The result was a woven cloth that was neither too wide nor too uniform. In such cases, sometimes problems with the dye were very much possible [8, p. 28-30]⁷.

⁴ During embroidery, all the threads move in a strict order and if a mistake is made at any point, then the entire work must be undone and fixed, so that in the end a flawless braided ornament is obtained.

⁵ Serik Davtyan states that all of these three stitches are ancient techniques.

⁶ There are reports that, unlike local production, the imported cloths were of higher quality and therefore the local cloths were mostly sold out in the villages.

⁷ Such textiles were popular and used in other regions of Armenia as well, where women embroidered designs or symbols commonly seen on rugs employing different embroidery types on them. Bazeyan states that such textiles, as rugs or wall hangings, were used in towns and villages when more expensive piled rugs were not available.

Marash city and its surroundings is known to have been one of the centers of cotton cultivation, cloth production and textile dyeing. The fabric used for embroidery was from the local cotton and another name for it was **Epenazer**⁸. However, it is also known that a large amount of cloth was imported as well. As is known, from the Middle Ages, the favorite colors for textiles in Marash were red, blue (lajvarde), etc. Presumably, this tradition was valid until the beginning of the 20th century, the 40s-50s [35, p. 27]. Since the covers selected for this study are in red, dark blue, greenish, black, so most probably they were made around this time.

As for the needlework or threads used to join the pieces together, they are also the result of homemaking or cottage industry. Our detailed examination of the threads used for embroidery on the covers, especially on the worn areas, confirms this fact. The threads are thin, well twisted, yet their thickness and twist, like the cloth, are not uniform. This is yet another hint that the threads used for embroidery are also the result of local production⁹. The main colors of threads used for embroidery are white, red, green, light blue, yellow, black, gray. Only one of the pieces has pink on it (Fig. 11), [35, p. 92]¹⁰. This piece was a gift to the "Ararat" Museum. According to the preserved information, it was made in the 20s-30s of the XX century¹¹, most probably, never used, hence looks quite new.

Artistic Design of the Covers and Their Comparative Analysis

The main feature of the ornamental compositional structures of the cover in question (Fig. 1) and the selected similar pieces is the presence of a central medallion with concentric circles. It should be mentioned that in Fig. 11, the shape and structure of the circles are different from all the others. For instance, at the center of the cover in Fig. 1, there are four consecutive bands, three of which are relatively narrow and one is wider. All those bands are filled with various archaic symbolical ornaments, which remind of the ornaments surrounding the carpet mid-fields depicted on a variety of Armenian carpets. Extending from the central round medallion are the square based, linear continuous strong ornamental structures of two different design decorations, resembling an architectural structure. They extend to the four edges of the cloth. Such background is absent in Fig. 11.

The design structure of the cover belonging to the Armenian Ethnographical Museum (Fig. 2) is similar to the cover in Fig. 1. The central circular ornament of

⁸ One of the seven orphanages operating in Marash, Epenazer, where in the late 19th and early 20th century, the scotswoman Agnes Salmond founded a cloth production of interest to us, which turned into a small workshop. It employed about forty workers. In the name of the Orphanage, the produced cloth was given the name **Epenazer**.

⁹ The filler threads for the embroidery are a little thicker but again uneven.

¹⁰ A single cover of light gray color embroidered in the 1900s has lots of white, light green, maroon colors, the combination of which is far from traditional Armenian color solutions. It is possible that such covers were made for the European market.

¹¹ Covers embroidered in the 50s of the XX century are also known.

the cover preserved in Washington (Fig. 3) is composed of four narrow and two wide bands, consisting of two or three smaller concentric circles. The centerpiece of the cover in Fig. 4 also consists of four concentric circles, one of which is wide.

In all the mentioned covers, on the four sides of the inner field of the broad strips of the medallions, four small circles are placed in a criss-cross arrangement. If connected, they will also present square shapes. (Such circles are absent only on the covers in Fig. 3 and Fig. 7). On some of these covers, there are also four crosses enclosed within small arches placed between these four circles. In their criss-cross arrangement, arch covered crosses alternate with four smaller circles, again presenting a square shape. In their criss-cross base arrangement, these two decorations pictorially make an overall octagonal composition, or a star with 8 points because of the combination or overlapping of two squares. To make such a compositional interpretation more visible, the accentuating light color threads, used for embroidering the arches or stars, are white, yellow, light blue and light green. In this regard, Fig. 3 and Fig. 7 are exceptions. In the inner narrow band of these two covers, eight arches are depicted, under which, instead of crosses, there are star flowers, embroidered with white threads on both covers to make them more visible. The design compositions of these two covers are similar, most probably designed in the same workshop or by the same drafter [35, p. 27]¹². The elements of artistic design placed on both covers are expressed in sharper geometrical shapes.

One of the covers, adorned with a homocentric circular decoration, which was probably used as a wall decoration and/or a pillowcase (Fig. 9), has a rectangular shape and is smaller than the previous covers¹³. The corners of this cover, similar to some other Armenian carpets/rugs [19, Ill. 503, 522, 491]¹⁴, are filled with ¼-circle designs containing four large, blossomed crosses surrounded by various symbolic ornaments, curvy decorations, and stars. The inner field of this piece is framed with a narrow decorative strip filled with wavy floral designs, similar to the ones found on rugs. This piece, like the ones observed before, has a central medallion with concentric circles that remind of the circle designs of the previous examples. Here, too, there are four inner circles and crosses with covering arches. However, the design of the background outside the medallion differs from the design found on the rest of the covers. Eight cross-pointed stars in a checkerboard pattern, light-colored ornaments with a square base, having wavy niches with crosses at the

¹² The draftsman was usually a separate person and was paid separately. Draftswomen were also embroiderers. They sometimes used special molds made of wood or metal, the use of which made possible the use of old ornaments, their repetition, and preservation.

¹³ The reason this example was selected to be included in this observation is the presence of a circular design medallion at the center of the piece and double cross designs covered with arches.

¹⁴ The design of this cover is greatly influenced by medieval rug design where there is one or two central medallions with similar corner designs, and there is a great number of such rugs.

corners, are embroidered here. The iconography of this rug is similar to the compositional iconography of traditional carpets.

Fig. 10 with its construction is also different from the rest of the covers. Like Fig. 9, it has a longitudinal design and was probably used as a wall hanging next to the bed, but with its iconographical design it is special and unique compared to the others. Instead of one, three large circle medallions cover the entire surface of this piece. In their iconography, they have much in common with the concentric design-decorations of the other covers. That is the main reason why it was included in this study. However, with its other design-details, it stands separate from all the others. The three circles are separated from each other by opposite Trees of Life that are stretching upward and downward. Single birds are placed between the trees and on the tip of each of the branches, reminiscent of the bird-adorned trees depicted in the Armenian medieval miniature paintings [17, pic. 63]. The embroidery is so rich and dense that the fabric underneath is almost invisible.

The central ornament depicted on the cover in the “Ararat” Museum (Fig. 11) is significantly different from the central ornaments found on all the other pieces. Here, the ornamental thinking undergoes a drastic change, where there are only echoes of traditional ornamental compositional structures, to which various approaches, absent from the other covers, are added. The central small ornament is an octagonal star, which gradually, as it grows, transforms into triangle shapes. The continuing triangles, in a criss-cross arrangement, form eight stylized Trees of Life in two different types. They are enclosed in a wavy frame that adapts to their shapes. It is followed by a wide strip of central decoration, featuring stylized figures of eight Trees of Life or pomegranate trees. They are completely different from the motifs depicted in the corresponding areas of all the other covers. On the branches of these trees, lifelike flower buds, star-shaped flowers and birds are depicted. This paradisiacal image is followed by a narrower band with a succession of blossomed crucifixes and cross-centered star flowers. Outside of the decorative circle, the corners of the cover are decorated with accentuated fleurs-de-lis with cross-centered octagonal star-decorations at the center. The petals of lily decorations carry Trees of Life in them. They are surrounded by a variety of octagonal and triangular decorations, bouquets in vases and other plant designs. This accomplished paradise image is surrounded by a border of undulating flower-decorated branches on all four sides, in the corners of which, images of blossomed crosses are placed. We need to mention that such outer frame is missing on the previously presented covers. Also, the ornaments depicted in Fig. 11, in contrast to all the other covers, are more flexible and widespread, and do not have the ornamental density of the others. In terms of colors used on this cover, there are noticeable differences as well. Light colors prevail here: pink, light blue, light yellow, off-white, etc.

As is known, in Marash, some women were engaged in designing ornaments for embroidery and were called “drafters” [15, p. 8]. They used a cane pen with a beveled tip

and/or specially carved wooden blocks to draw or to print the design they chose with blue paint or starch on the cloth, for the artisan embroiderers then to do the needlework [35, 27-28]¹⁵ [16, p. 47, 101].

Most probably, molds (or special wooden stencils) were used, because in stamping or printing with wooden blocks it was possible to quickly place the main decorations in their traditional places and then fill in the empty spaces with a pen. In another type of fabric decoration technique, the use of wooden blocks carved from solid wood was very common in Marash or surrounding areas; due to their durability, they were used for a long time [15, p. 43]. Presumably, designing with the use of this method also contributed to the perpetuation of archaic forms of ornamentation, since the master printing block makers, along with the professional skills, passed down from father to son the accepted and traditional forms of design. This confirms the existence of similar ornaments on different covers and the stable tradition of presenting them in similar ways.

Cultural and Iconographic Parallels Between Covers and Other Branches of Folk Arts in Armenian Culture

Before discussing the symbolic meanings of the adornment on the covers, one more question should be addressed. Unlike S. Davtyan, H. Tokmajian thinks that the cover examples made by Marash secret stitch decorated with archaic designs were made in Malatya, not in Marash, and that there are also small differences in the ways of stitching¹⁶. According to Tokmajian, only the covers with flexible decorative motifs, like the one we discussed in Fig. 11, and the rectangular covers with narrow outlining frames were made in Marash. In the course of our study and comparisons, a number of differences also surfaced, which confirm Tokmajian's opinion. For instance, in Fig. 11, Chain stitch was not used. The only one used was Backstitch. As for the color, they used pink for embroidery, which is absent on the other covers. The one in Fig. 11 has an outer encircling band that is absent on the other big covers;

¹⁵ Tokmajian does not agree with Serik Davtyan that the Marash embroidery masters used print blocks, because he found almost none among the Marash masters living in Aleppo. However, it should be mentioned that wood block printing as a textile decoration technique was developed in Marash. The masters themselves prepared the necessary paints, print blocks and the craft was passed down from generation to generation. It is also known that there were embroidered curtains and rugs. The sizes of the ornaments on each cover are the same. In any case, even for an experienced draftswoman, it is difficult to draw so evenly with a pen on large-sized pieces. Given the existence of blocks, those used for print making including, it is difficult to imagine why their use should be rejected if they made the work faster and more accurate. While working in Fig. 1, our observations showed that small elements were added to some of the open areas of the cover, probably after printing the major elements with blocks.

¹⁶ Serik Davtyan was the first researcher to call this stitch "Marash". The entire generations of artisans were educated with that information in modern Armenia. We need to be confident in the opposite opinion before we refute it.

the “S” motifs are used singularly; the square-based background trellis is missing altogether; the central medallions are significantly different, etc. It should also be mentioned that in the XII-XIII centuries, most of the population in Malatya were Armenians [7, 145]¹⁷. Spinning and weaving was widely spread there, therefore, most probably, it was an important center of embroidery. However, in order to give a final answer to this question, it is necessary to address it with a separate study.

The unique iconography of the discussed large covers is not common among the examples of Armenian embroidery, but it is widespread in khachkars, or cross-stones, made in various regions of Armenia from the X century [3, p. 90, 110, 126, 132]. On these cross-stones, at the base of the crosses, large rosettes with braided designs are carved. Adjacent to them, square-based ornate and continuous ornaments are present. The general iconography of the preserved metal double book covers, made in the territory of Armenia proper and in the diaspora during the XV-XVIII centuries and presently kept in St. Echmiadzin and in the Matenadaran Manuscript Library, is very close to the iconography of the covers under discussion [25, fig. 7, 13, 21, 50, 51]¹⁸ [29, p. 198-199].

Similar to the covers, such book designs have a round or oval central medallion with more than one circles. Certain ornamented fields surrounded by a narrow rim around those medallions are present. Like in the iconography of the covers, in the iconography of the book double covers, too, ancient motifs are replaced or merged with Christian symbolic motifs. For instance, the geometrical symbolic forms of the central medallions of the covers, such as octagonal decorations, arch covered crosses and curvilinear motifs are replaced with images of scenes of Christ's life. On the front side of the book covers, mostly the Crucifixion is depicted, while on the reverse side, the Virgin Mary with the Baby Jesus in her arms, or the Burial scene with the Ascension scene are presented.

If we take the designs of round, multi-circle medallions as a separate decorative/symbolic unit, similar decoration forms are extant in many other cultures. However, in Armenian culture, ornaments with such an iconographic structure are extant everywhere: on ancient pottery, on cups, shields of the kings of Van, medieval big trays [24, III.]¹⁹, on the tops of men's and women's caps, in the Armenian national costume [16, III.]²⁰, on protective charms or on women's aprons, belts and the like [20, p. 18, 19]. On cross-stones and architectural structures, there are also many such rosettes as a symbol of the sun. Armenian round needle lace is a concentric multi-circle structure with its design and iconography as well [14, III.].

¹⁷ The city of Malatia is mentioned in Hittite, Assyrian, Urartian sources.

¹⁸ According to Mnatsakanyan, the four small circles depicted in the circular motifs found in Ani symbolize the four elements. He believes that such images are very old.

¹⁹ In the collection belonging to the Timurean family living in Los Angeles, there is a large copper tray with Armenian inscription, the iconography of which is closely related to the iconography of the circular ornaments made on the covers discussed.

²⁰ Caps from Sasun or even decorated socks from Vaspurakan.

There are many known lace rosettes with similar decorations. In other words, similar, or one might say canonical, ornaments have a continuous and parallel development in many other branches of Armenian culture. All those art forms were widespread and well developed not in Greater Armenia alone, but also in Marash and its surrounding areas [15, 5-6]²¹.

In Marash embroidery, iconographically, the overall design on these covers is unique and not found in other types of needle crafted types, nor is it found on smaller examples of the same type of Marash embroidery. However, iconographically, structurally, and symbolically or philosophically, there are close parallels between the existing woodcut examples and the covers in discussion. For instance, the rectangular tray from Lori, kept in the State History Museum of Armenia, and one of the discussed covers (Fig. 10) are very similar with just small differences. Or some other exhibits in the same museum: pastry (gata) decorating blocks, spoon holders, wooden charms, the door of the St. Stepanos Nakhavka monastery and other wooden objects also have close connections to the decorative pictorial solutions of the discussed covers [16, III.]²² and necessarily possess similar ritual and symbolic significance.

It is clear that the ornaments used in the above-mentioned various cultural spheres are endowed with deep philosophical, ritual-worship values. They express ancient ideas and the ancestors' worldview about the creation of the world, about God, religion, and therefore have a blessing value and/or act as a charm, or talisman. In this regard, the discussed covers are not an exception, because the ornaments depicted on them, and the compositions built with them contain all the above-mentioned values. In addition to their aesthetic quality and beauty, those covers also blessed and protected the house, the hearth and home, because, according to the popular saying, "a home is also a church".

It is hard to say much about the formation and development of Marash secret embroidery. It is also difficult to assert how these decorations with such archaic structures appeared on the discussed covers. However, we witness a phenomenon that, as a result of the creators' "amazing traditionalism", these symbols and decorations have preserved and crystallized in folk artistic thinking in Armenia over the millennia. Later, they mixed and assimilated into the artistic expressions of Christian philosophy and developed together during the Middle Ages [16, p. 17]²³ along with other arts. These symbols and decorations reached the beginning of the XX century

²¹ Davtyan believes that there are close connections between various branches of Armenian applied arts, which are expressed in their similar color solutions and content of ornaments.

²² Such examples are countless in artistic processing of wood.

²³ These transitions took place during the population migrations in Middle Ages, when large groups of people moved from Armenia to Cilicia due to various historical events. It is known that many craftsmen from various regions of Armenia: Van, Karin, Syunik, Ararat, moved and worked in Cilicia, where high-quality and world-renowned textiles were produced.

outside of Armenia proper, in Cilicia, and after the Genocide – in various Armenian communities all over the world [35, p. 23-25]. For this reason, the iconography and symbolism of the covers are closely related to the iconographic approaches of various forms of Armenian culture, for instance, altar designs known in Cilician miniature painting, where there is a medallion with concentric circles, whose central ornament is mainly the crucifix [18, fig. 29]²⁴.

It is possible that the women who made these covers at the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, did not comprehend the actual meaning and symbology of all these mystical elements, however, due to the strong traditional influences and their deep reverence for national art, these ornaments passed down from generation to generation and reached modern times [15, p. 8]²⁵.

The Iconography and Symbology of Main Decorations Found on the Covers

In the iconography on all the eight above-mentioned covers, unified symbolic elements with minor differences are extant and beautifully presented. Their structure and meanings are consistent with the iconography present in other branches of Armenian folk art and culture, such as architecture, cross-stones [6, p. 96, 97, 98], wood carving [20, p. 186]²⁶, ceramics [3, III-XI], rugs [5, p. 67, 70], needle lace, printed textile, metalwork (including silver, copper and bronze), etc. [16, III.]. Symbolic solutions similar to cross and square-based ornaments are numerous. In such ornaments, the center of the concentric circle is usually a flower, star, or cross. The four-layered concentric circles follow each other bearing a cross or four and eight-based symbolic motifs as a single solid circle structure. From the circle at the center, square-based designs start immediately, stretch and end at the edge of the cover/fabric.

We need to observe the iconography of these covers, as well as discuss the structures and decorations that were most frequent on them. Finally, we need to discuss the various manifestations, expressions, and the development of the forms of these symbols, dwelling on the meaning and significance of some noteworthy ornaments.

At first glance, the covers shown in Figures 1-8, in their general composition and iconography, represent a unique mandala. In several Eastern cultures, a

²⁴ The altar ornament of the Gospel created in the second half of the 12th century in Hromkla is extremely close to the iconography of the covers under discussion, and the main letter decoration of the name page with its braided structure seems to be decorated with Marash stitch.

²⁵ The Marash people and Armenians of Malatya were consistent in preserving the natural-traditional forms of ornaments. They were mainly people who lived on cottage industry. The older women of the family taught the younger girls, their grandchildren.

²⁶ The design of the door of the Apostolic Church of St. Apostles, kept in the State History Museum of Armenia, with many iconographic canonical decorative elements, with some differences, is consistent with the symbolic details and iconography of the discussed covers.

mandala is a picture, or image of the universe. The center of a mandala is a sacred space, shrine, or temple. A lotus placed in the center of the shrine symbolizes God's presence, implying that He is the center of everything. Along with many other mystical meanings, a mandala serves as a visual medium for guiding, defining the stages of spiritual development, etc. [12, p. 632-633] This is why the floor plan layouts in many temples and churches are in the form of a mandala [19, p. 40]²⁷.

It should be mentioned that the mandala-like ornaments have been present in Armenian culture since the times of the Van Kingdom. One such example is a mural in the Small Hall of the palace in the Erebuni Fortress. It shows sacred flower-decorated circles surrounded by embellished squares flanked with lions facing each other between kneeling, or worshipping bulls. These are unique mandala symbols with sixteen-leaf circles embeded in concave square shapes [21, pic. 8, 9, 10]. Though it is unknown to us exactly what kind of interpretation and ritual significance those mandala symbols had in the Armenian Highlands, it is obvious that two and a half thousand years ago, this ornamental image was extremely important in the mystical iconography of the ritualistic culture of the time. The lion was the characteristic symbol of the head god of the pantheon, Khaldi, and the bull was the symbol of the deity of war, Teysheba.

To decipher the symbolic meaning of mandala-like ornaments on these covers executed in Marash stitch, let us try to simplify or split it up into simple geometric shapes: a square and a circle, since each of these is endowed with own symbology. The square is the most widely used geometric shape-symbol in cultures around the world. It symbolizes the planet Earth and the created universe. The conjunction or simultaneity of the square and the circle symbolizes the connection between the Earth and Heaven, as is expressed in architectural structures or mandalas. However, unlike the dynamic circle, the square, with its fixed four sides, represents a static, or still state, and even in its perfection it can sometimes become solid, stagnant or show a pause. Therefore, it basically symbolizes the "Divine Perfection". The expression of another dynamic shape or sign is the cross in the center of the square; the cross-symbol is a movement with "redemptive" power and value directed from the stationary center of the square in the direction of the four wings to the four cardinal points of the universe [12, p. 912-915].

The square along with the circle, its center, and the cross, is one of the four cardinal symbols of perfection. In a number of ancient religious systems, the cross was the symbol of the Creator, also symbolizing the four cardinal points of the world. In Christian philosophy, the cross corresponds to and symbolizes Christ, because "Christ-the-Son is in the Creator (according to the Gospel), and the Creator is in Jesus Christ". Moreover, Jesus was crucified "on the cross symbolizing the Creator" [32, p. 69].

²⁷ The floor plans of the Etchmiadzin Cathedral, Zvartnots, and other churches also represent mandalas.

“S”-Shape Decorations and Their Symbolic Meaning

picture a



picture b



picture c

The iconography and symbolism is the same in Armenian cross-stones, although the cross is usually placed in the upper part of the circle-shield. Good examples of such iconography are the two cross-stones carved by Poghos and installed in Goshavank in 1291. Moreover, these cross-stones with their braided decorations and lace-like structures are very similar to the discussed covers, both in terms of iconography and symbolism [98, 102].

Let us observe some symbolic ornaments in the circles, which, with minor differences, are present on almost every cover. As separate mystical units, there are letter “S” shapes [19, p. 36-37]²⁸ or its variations, which are part of the rich and symbolic ornamental structure of the wide rim of the circle (Fig. 1, 2, 8). They are also found in the narrow rims (Fig. 7) and sometimes in the background. The letter “S” has been interpreted by many researchers as a symbol of dragon, which has close connections with water, fertility, wisdom and other ideas [20]. In addition to the meaning of dragon or snake, Gantzhorn considers the letter “S” to be a symbol of God, meaning “Lord” [19, 193-195], [30, p. 336]. “S” is an ancient mystical unit that is portrayed in ancient rock carvings [27, p. 72] next to a god, a ram and a cross. Both opinions are probably correct, for the dragon was the symbol of the mighty ancient god. He was the lord of the waters, the guardian of the Tree of Life, and was sometimes depicted as Aries-lightning. In Christian philosophical understanding, it was identified with the meaning of God the Father. Millennia later, the dragon, as a powerful and mystical entity, is present in many branches of Armenian culture, including the iconography of these covers. For this very reason, the presence of the letter “S” on these covers endowed them with deep venerating or religious meanings and, as a blessing, gave them a protective function/value. With all these important merits, these covers decorated the interior of the Armenian house. It is also owing to these textiles that the “S” ornament-symbol has survived to date.

²⁸ The letter “S” reads as letter “T” in Armenian and the word “Ter” means “master”, “God” or “Lord”. It also symbolizes the wise ancient god-dragon, who was the lord of the waters everywhere in the universe.

Let's discuss the “S” letter-ornament free of other decorations (pic. a). As mentioned before, it is sometimes depicted inside the wide rims of circles (Figs. 1, 8) or outside of them, in the narrow strips of circles (Fig. 7) and elsewhere. “S” is an ancient symbol of the dragon-god known from rock carvings that are plenty in the mountains of Armenia. However, the letter “S” also appears on many covers accompanied by additional small ornaments, such as a branch, a seed, or a small flower-rosette, which are presumably a later addition (pic. b and c). Such ornamental additions are usually placed in the central part of the letter (Fig. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9), thus transforming it into an ornament. In medieval Armenian miniature painting, letters are often transformed into floral ornaments²⁹. In the core of the central rosette, which has the symbol of a seed, there is a sprout or small branch, obviously symbolizing fruitfulness, like the fruit in the womb³⁰ (pic. c). The presence of this small element in the center of the letter “S” once again confirms the close mystical associations of the letter with the dragon-god which, in addition to being the lord of the waters, was also the patron of fertility.

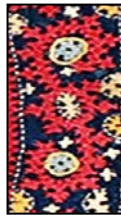
On some covers, the square-lattice ornaments in the entire background area, extending outside of the circle, are composed of continuous ornamental lines of this same motif. They are depicted in opposite positions, and between them, a star-flower, the symbol of the sun, is installed (Fig. 3, 4). The checkered pattern with squares is an old traditional symbol, which is missing on the cover in Fig. 11³¹.

It can be assumed that the iconographic development of “S” on the discussed covers took place in the presented order. In the third version, the small branch – the Tree of Life, placed in a small rosette in the center of the above-mentioned letter, is also endowed with the idea of creation, whose master, guardian, or creator is the dragon “S”. In Christian tradition, the master of the Tree is also the Creator-God [35, 42]³².

Symbolic Meaning of Dots



picture d



picture e



picture f

²⁹ The name list of the gospels usually opened with big letters decorated with floral or geometric embellishments. Sometimes such letters appear in the middle of a text or in the margins.

³⁰ In the Armenian language, another name for the fetus is also “fruit”.

³¹ However, we have seen other similar covers belonging to H. Tokmajian, where in the four corners of the central parts there are letter “S” shapes.

³² The semantics of this ornament are also addressed by H. Tokmajian.

All the three types of “S” letters, the crowns of arch-covered crosses (pic. d, e, and f), and the square decorations in the backgrounds are adorned with dots. The structure of a dot ornament represents a simple cross, due to the criss-cross structure of Marash embroidery. In order to get a dot decoration from the cross shape and to emphasize them even more, the embroiderers circled the cross with a Chain stitch, for which they used light colored threads: white or yellow. The use of dots in such a way seems canonical because they are spread over the entire surface of the covers, the structures of the recesses, individual ornaments, and the ornaments in different layers of the circles. This phenomenon is common in the iconography of the majority of the covers discussed.

The fact that the dots are used on all the three types of the letter “S” (pic. a, b, and c) in the same way suggests that the dots, in addition to enriching decorative designs, also have a mystical meaning: the meaning of “Lord”, combined with the meaning of divine presence. The same tradition is also present in Armenian medieval miniature paintings, where many objects in Lordly images are decorated with dots [22]³³.

The Arch-Covered Cross Symbol

One of the frequently repeated decorations on most of the covers is the cross enclosed under an arch. On different covers, this symbol is presented as part of other symbolic units or standing on its own, covered with one or two layered arches. Both parts of this symbolic unit, the arch and the cross, are ancient symbols and stand together as an individual mystical unit. In Christian philosophy, the arch symbolizes the altar of the church, with the meaning of “sky” (pic. g and h), and the cross is under the altar, where the axis mundi is located [5, p. 17-21], which implies that the cross is the axis mundi. The center of the cross is certainly a symbol of the Sun-Jesus. Cross-stones, or “khachkars” with this design are known in Armenian culture from the IX century or earlier. One example is the khachkar in Lower Talin [6, Fig. 9, 10, 11]. The cross under the altar is everywhere in Armenian religious culture: in the architectural design of churches, book covers, miniature paintings, rugs and elsewhere. This symbolic unit-ornament symbolizes the sun-cross under the altar-sky. Sometimes those crosses are encircled with blue zigzag shape arches (pic. h). This will be discussed later. On the covers, some crosses are portrayed with a long, and some with a short stem (pic. h) (pic. g). The reason for this is the availability of space or demands of proportionality in the particular design. However, the design is canonical and common to almost all the covers except the cover shown in Fig. 11.

³³ Dotted patterns are everywhere in the lordly images of Armenian medieval miniatures. They appear on the halos of Jesus, the mother of God, the Evangelists, the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, and other scenes. In some scenes (e.g.: Epiphany, Visit to the Tomb, Tyarendaraj) the interior of the painting - the curtains, the altar ornaments - are decorated with dot patterns, symbolizing the Divine presence.



picture g



picture h

Opposite Crosses with the Seed and Water Symbols



picture i



picture j



picture k

Sometimes the arch-covered cross is combined with its mirroring counterpart, connected at their stems and stretching in opposite directions, fashioning a new ornament (pic. i and j). At the junction point there is an oval-framed rosette with a small branch in it, as a symbol of the Tree of Life. The iconographic expression of this symbol is remarkably similar to the ornament found on the letter “S” (pic. c)³⁴. The sprout enclosed in the circle or oval shape in the central part of the double-sided cross has the meaning of seed-sprout-tree, symbolizing fertility and creation. It means the big red tree grows, in whose womb a new offspring seed-sprout tree grows under the protection of the owner of the Tree of Life.

Sometimes the cross with a blue zigzag arch ornament stands as a separate unit that is present on the cover of Fig. 8 in pic. k. They are usually executed in light blue and outlined with yellow Chain stitch. This treatment gives them a zigzag shape. The blue zigzag arch imparts this ornament the meaning, or symbol of water (Fig. 8, 9, 10). Sometimes such treatment is applied on an individual cross that appears as part of another complete ornament unit (Fig. 10), or blue arches surround the wings of a large corner cross.

The blue zigzag arch, as a symbol of water, therefore the symbol of dragon, always appears in combination with the cross. If the cross stands as the Tree of Life, then the dragon is its guardian. The blue arch with the cross motif is the visible

³⁴ This vividly presents the symbolic connection between the ancient God's symbol-the letter “S” as the owner of the Tree of Life with the main symbol of Christianity.

mystical symbol of this idea. This is another vivid display of symbolic conjunction of the ancient and Christian.



picture 1

The theme of water is not limited to this. It is spread throughout the background surface of the cover in Fig. 10, where the square base motifs create a checkerboard arrangement with octagonal star flowers or rosettes. The decoration on this particular cover is an expressive example of smooth blending of the ancient mystical motifs with Christian motifs. On this cover, there is also a detail, very specific to rugs: this motif is used in the frame, which is typical of various carpets belonging to various schools, and is filled with a zigzag pattern of flowers, leaves, and buds. It is a symbol of fertility and continuity of generations. Note that the covers in Fig. 1-8 are frameless.

The blue zigzag arch is also present in the frame of the cover in Fig. 10. This one is also very different in structure from all the other covers with concentric circles. The embroidered arch shapes on this cover are similar to the previous ones, but all of them point towards the central star-flower (pic. j), and they are outlined with a Back stitch or Chain stitch. However, in this case, the ornament with its four connections creates square shapes in a checkerboard-like positioning. As mentioned above, these zigzag blue shapes symbolize the ancient god who ruled the waters all across the universe. In this case, this symbol is very smoothly assimilated with a very important Christian philosophical unit, the arch, which in turn symbolizes heaven. Under the water-arch-sky, red crosses are enclosed, which are undoubtedly the symbols of Jesus. In the center, there is a white flower-star-sun, which, as a dot-nucleus-circle, is also very archaic, symbolizing the sun and the world, found in rock carvings³⁵.

Marash's braided secret stitch, with its interesting mesh and relief form, visually brings the ornaments close to khachkars and technically turns every line or element into a cross. In other words, preserving the archaic forms of mystical elements, this embroidery contributes to the extremely smooth process of

³⁵ Such symbolic units are pic. r and s.

“Christianization” of all the ancient ornaments, where the old and the new are harmoniously assimilated.



picture m

The four corners of the rectangular cover in Fig. 9, in contrast to the accepted iconography of the rest of the covers, are decorated with large and ornate crosses. They stand out from the general background of the cover with curvy, linear decorations (pic. q). From those decorations, at equal distances, hooks or staple protrusions come out, which are also decorated with dots.

These traditional ornamental motifs are present in many forms of Armenian folk arts in a variety of regions in the country. For instance, on the carpets belonging to the Syunik school, many decorative shields are extant with such embellishments [20, p. 125]. Carpets decorated with Armenian crucifixes also have a similar decorative approach; the shields are decorated with the exact same hooks and most likely have the same symbology or meaning. The border design of the mentioned rug also carries similar designs. It seems like the designer of this cover used a rug pattern as inspiration. Continuing this idea, it is worth noting that the types of carpets with shields surrounded by hook-like decorations have a rich variety in Armenian carpet art, where the hooks can represent stylized images. Carpets with similar shields had the value of charms, providing and protecting the welfare of the family [20, p. 40].

Crown Decorations and their Symbology

In contrast to other arch-covered crosses, extant on various parts of the covers, the ones found on the wide strips of circle medallions (pic. l, m, n) are surrounded by hook-shaped protrusions, forming a crown around them. These crowns are of different shapes, which can also be often found in the iconography of Armenian rugs or carpets. Such ornaments were widespread in the carpet art of Armenia Minor and Cappadocia. They were the proof of deep antiquity of those carpets, with the meaning and symbology of blessing and protection [20, p. 35]. Within the broad bands of the circles, these hook-shaped protrusions that decorate four arched crosses become peculiar wreaths for them (pic. l, m, n), sometimes representing a bull (Fig. 5, 8), (pic. n and p) or a ram (Fig. 5) (pic. o), or a sun (Fig. 1, 2, 3, 6), presented as curvilinear decoration motifs. All these decorations have an ancient

origin and symbolize the ancient gods or their different attributes³⁶. The deity, who was the lord of waters and fertility, was also the dying and rising godhead, whose attributes were adopted into Christianity. These decorative motifs are present in Armenian culture – in ancient rock carvings (Martirosyan, 1971. tables), dragon stones [11, 8-29], on ancient pottery [7, p. 275-278], in church architecture, and in many other branches of Armenian culture. The combination of these ornaments and the crucifixes on the discussed covers are vivid examples of combination of the ancient, traditional, and mystical ornaments, and the main symbol of Christianity – the Cross. Just as the Cross has a blessing-preserving meaning and significance [20, p. 62]³⁷, so do these ancient symbols, harmoniously presented together. The presence of identical mystical ornaments, used on covers and Armenian rugs, confirms that the covers in question, displayed on the walls of the room, also carried out a mystical function [16, p. 68]³⁸.



picture n



picture o



picture p

The multiple square or diamond-shaped decorations, which are present on the outlining frame of the cover in Fig. 10, have a value equivalent to the concentric circles, because there are multiple squares enclosed in one another. Since the square and circle are equivalent as geometric units, their powerful mystical values are equivalent as well; their symbology we have already discussed above.

The ornament shown in pic. t presents a variation of the Tree of Life and is also very old, consisting of a triangle base and a circle, a sun, and a flower crown. Both parts have multiple layered cores, reminding of seeds. The upper white flower is enclosed by a red arch decorated with crosses. This ornament is a symbol of fertility, too, and has a blessing value.

³⁶ The ram was one of the attributes of the ancient god Enky, who was the owner of the waters and the god of fertility. The ram or goat symbol is everywhere in mountain carvings in the Armenian highlands. The bull was the main symbol-attribute of the war god Teysheba in the pantheon of the Van Kingdom.

³⁷ There is an opinion that the process of converting the ancient decorative signs into Christian ones took place during the 17th century.

³⁸ Davtyan also talks about embroidered rugs that held a religious content.

Round and Square Motifs and their Symbology



picture q



picture r

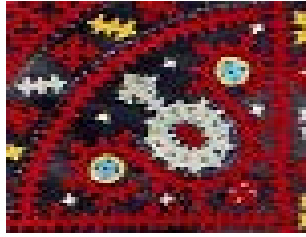


picture s

Tree of Life Decoration Variations



picture t



picture u



picture v

In the decorative iconography of Marash embroidery, the lyre-shaped ornament is a popular and well-liked symbolic decoration. In the few examples, known to us, three line-like simple branches radiate out from the opening of the lyre. This highly stylized motif is present in the Urfa and/or other schools of embroidery, in whose iconography the lyre-shaped ornament appears as a vase full of flowers. In Armenian medieval miniatures, vases full of flowers are one of the frequently presented motifs in manuscript page margins, symbolizing the Tree of Life [17, Pic. 55]³⁹. In contrast to the above-mentioned lyre-decorative forms, from the lyre motifs of the covers, instead of flowers or branches, accentuated light-colored crosses come out. In the presented motif (pic. u), at the base of the cross, there is a white seed ornament with a red core in the womb of the lyre. A cross is also depicted on the lyre's tail, and in the outwardly curled wings there are two white-yellow accentuated dots. The cross grows like a flower from a seed that emerged from the lyre-womb as a Tree of Life. The flower, which in this case is the cross, represents Jesus, and the dots symbolize God's presence.

In pic. v, the lyre in the shape of a flower vase is displayed clearly; realistic flower buds, star flowers and crosses protrude from the lyre-vase. Two 8-pointed stars flank the flower bunch, confirming the mystical content of the decoration. There is a

³⁹ This example is situated on top of the title page of the Gospel, where two lyre-shape leaves are scooping the flowerpot with flowers in it. The Title Page of Mark's Gospel, XII cent. Gospel of Sebastia, manuscript 311, t. 83a., Cilicia.

significant difference in the artistic expression between the two lyre decorations, but symbolically they are identical.

Color Symbols

Color solutions of fabrics and threads also carry a symbolic significance in the selection and use of the covers. The fabrics used are mostly black and dark blue. Of the covers, only the one in Fig. 11 is red. However, since the thread colors of the rest of the covers are mostly red and the ornaments are very dense, those covers are viewed as red, too. Because the decorations on the cover in Fig. 11 are sparse compared to the other covers, and they are executed in few threads of light colors, the red color of the fabric comes through clearly.

The black color of the threads appears in the decorative color systems of the fabric along with red and white. According to popular folk interpretation, black is evil, dangerous and means death. Whereas white is light and pure and means heavenly justice. The red color is beautiful, good and symbolizes life and health. Like white, red was also considered a ritually pure color, while black was considered impure.

These three colors symbolized a vertical system, where black was the lower world, red was the middle, and white was the upper world [33, p. 33-35, 37, 38]. Red was also considered a happy color – that of women and children. It is believed that when looking at the color red, the pupils of human eyes dilate, while black makes them shrink [16]. In Armenian culture, it is believed that the color red disrupts evil because it is the color of blood, the color of life. It also represents happiness, longevity, male activity and fertility. The unity of the red, green and white threads is an ancient mysticism and signifies a married couple, where the groom is white and the bride is red. Since together they will create the next generation, it also symbolizes creation. Red and white were seen as “pure” colors and symbolized light and joy (33, 31-33, 37).

Purple is the color symbolizing a ruler – king or emperor. It also symbolizes truth, justice, science, religious dedication, sobriety, humanity... Above all else, violet is a mixture of red and blue, a mixture of opposites that creates balance. Red's passion is balanced by blue's judgment, that is, love – by wisdom, or earth – by heaven. Purple is the last color in the rainbow, symbolizing the final union of opposites into one whole. It represents the end of the known and the beginning of the unknown, and therefore, it has a royal value [31, p. 654]. The presence of covers in the house, not only through their ornaments, but through the mere presence of colors delivered the semantics of life and joy, the blessing and value of a protector, a powerful and preventive measure safeguarding the house and its inhabitants.

Conclusion

We are not certain about how and when this amazing stitchery emerged and evolved. It developed and survived throughout centuries outside of the borders of

Greater Armenia, mainly in Marash, Cilician Armenia, or in Malatya. Nor are we certain as to when these remarkable covers, with a single round medallion, developed into such a unique artistic phenomenon. It can be assumed that due to the complexity of its technique and density of embroidery, observed on most of the covers, this art form remained localized specifically to the Armenian women of Marash and Malatya.

These covers, with their harmonious color combinations, mystical iconographic signs and symbols, powerful ritualistic value, were used in the same way as piled or unpiled carpets, which were considered as more expensive and valued types of textile. Like rugs, the covers were placed in the most visible place in Armenian homes as a blessing and an evil preventing charm for the entire family. Once used as a bedspread, curtain, or bedside wall hanging, their blessing spread to the entire bedroom. The smaller counterparts of these textiles were also used as cushion covers and decorated the couches and the area around the table, where the entire family gathered for meals.

The braided secret stitch, through the unique iconography of the covers or rug-like textiles under discussion, preserved the ancient mystical decorative elements that existed in the Armenian Highlands for millennia. They smoothly merged into the iconography representing the main tenets of Christian philosophy and symbology, where the old and the new harmoniously assimilated and crystallized. Through the powers of remarkable and passionate tradition, they have reached us quite intact. The merging process lasted through the Middle Ages. Developing in parallel with other branches of Armenian culture, these particular covers, with their unique iconography and symbology, have become an inseparable and important part of other art forms, solidifying in themselves the features and nature of various fields and branches of Armenian culture. The presented covers with their unique iconography and philosophical details are not only a distinct and unique value among the other rich schools of Armenian embroidery but also a powerful presence among the Armenian medieval architecture, khachkars, wood carving, miniature paintings and other types of folk arts.

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ՄԱՐԱՇԻ ԱՍԵՂՆԱԳՈՐԾՈՒԹՅԱՄԲ ԿԼՈՐ ԿԵՆՏՐՈՆԱԶԱՐԴԵՐՈՎ ԾԱԾԿՈՑ-ՎԱՐԱԳՈՒՅՐՆԵՐԻ ՊԱՏԿԵՐԱԳՐԱԿԱՆ, ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՔԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԵՎ ՏԵԽՆԻԿԱԿԱՆ ԱՌԱՋՆԱՀԱՏԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ

ՍՈՖԻ ԽԱՉՄԱՆՅԱՆ* (ԱՄՆ, Լոս Անջելես)

Հղման համար. Խաչմանյան, Սոֆի: «Մարաշի ասեղնագործությամբ կլոր կենտրոնական ծածկոց-վարագույրների պատկերագրական, խորհրդաբանական և տեխնիկական առանձնահատկությունները»: *Արվեստագիտական հանդես*, N 2 (2022): 189-214. DOI: 10.54503/2579-2830-2022.2(8)-189

Այս հոդվածում դիտարկվել են կլոր կենտրոնական մեդալիոններով ծածկոցներ, որոնք արված են Մարաշի «գաղտնի կար» ասեղնագործությամբ: Համեմատվում և քննարկվում են զարդանախշերի պատկերագրական և խորհրդաբանական մի քանի մանրամասներ և դրանց արտահայտման եղանակները: Քննարկվել են նաև գործվածքների, թելերի և դրանց գունային լուծումների հետ կապված մի քանի դիտարկումներ, որոնք օգտագործվել են այս ծածկոց-վարագույրները պատրաստելիս: Քննարկվող այս ծածկոցները կամ գորգանման գործվածքները պահպանել են հազարամյակներ շարունակ Հայկական լեռնաշխարհում գոյություն ունեցող հնագույն խորհրդաբանական դեկո-

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րատիվ տարրերը: Իրենց յուրահատուկ պատկերագրությամբ և խորհրդաբանությամբ միջնադարի ընթացքում այս ծածկոցները զարգացել և դարձել են հայ մշակույթի մեջ հայտնի արվեստի այլ ձևերի անբաժանելի և կարևոր մասը: Որպես գորգ, այս ծածկոցները զարդարել են հայոց տունը՝ որպես օրհնություն և չարխափան հմայակ ամբողջ ընտանիքի համար:

Բանալի բաներ^{*} համամեջ շրջանագարդ, ասեղնագործ գորգ, զարդանախշային և գունային համալիրներ, բազմաշրջան պատկերագրական զարդակառույց, վարդակազարդ, խորհրդաբանական միավոր, կանոնիկ զարդանախշային արտահայտչականություն:

ИКОНОГРАФИЧЕСКИЕ, СИМВОЛИЧЕСКИЕ И ТЕХНИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ВЫПОЛНЕННЫХ В ВЫШИВКЕ МАРАША ПОКРЫВАЛ-ЗАВЕС С КРУГЛЫМИ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫМИ МЕДАЛЬОНАМИ

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Для цитирования: Хачманян, Софи. “Иконографические, символические и технические особенности выполненных в вышивке Мараша покрывал-завес с круглыми центральными медальонами”, *Искусствоведческий журнал*, N 2 (2022). 189-214. DOI: 10.54503/2579-2830-2022.2(8)-189

В статье рассматриваются покрывала-завесы с центральными круглыми медальонами, выполненные «потайным швом» вышивки Мараша. Сравниваются и анализируются некоторые иконографические и символические детали орнаментов и способы их отображения. Внимание уделяется также выбору тканей, ниток и их цветового решения при создании этих покрывал-завес. Рассматриваемые покрывала, или *ковроподобные* вышивки сохранили тысячами существовавшие на Армянском нагорье символические декоративные элементы. Благодаря своей уникальной иконографии и символике, развивавшейся на протяжении Средних веков, покрывала стали неделимой и важнейшей составляющей других известных в армянской культуре видов искусства. Как и ковры, в армянском доме они всегда были на видном месте как символ благословения жилища и оберег, отводящий зло от очага и семьи.

Ключевые слова: концентрический круглый орнамент, вышитый коврики, орнаментальные и цветовые сочетания, иконографические композиции из множества кругов, розетка, символическая деталь, каноническая орнаментальная экспрессивность.

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Figure 1. Embroidered Cover from
“Ararat Eskijian” Museum collection

Figure 2. Marash cover from the Museum of
Ethnography of Armenia



Figure 3. Cover from Washington Museum collection

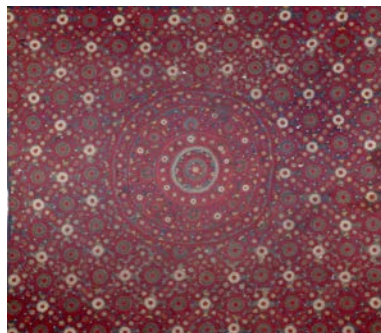


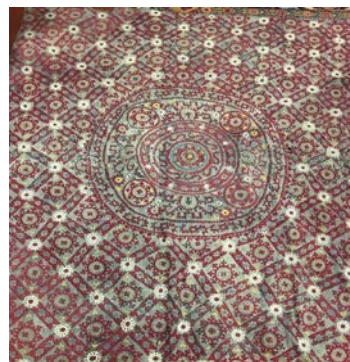
Figure 4. Cover from Hratch Kozibeyokian Collection



Figure 5. Cover from Hratch Kozibeyokian Collection



Figure 6. Marash Cover. The collection is unknown



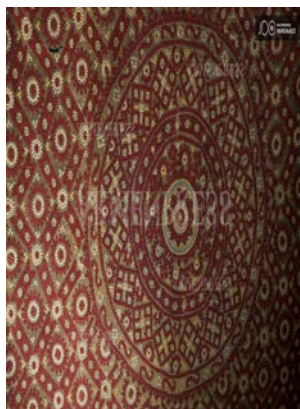


Figure 7. Cover published by the Armenpress. The owner is unknown

Figure 8. Cover from Berj's collection



Figure 9. Cover from Hratch Kozibeyokian collection



Figure 10. Cover from Hratch Kozibeyokian collection



Figure 11. Cover from the “Ararat” Eskijian Museum collection

