



# İRAN GABBEH CARPETS

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## ÖZ

Gabbeh halıları; Farsça Gabbeh kelimesi ham veya doğal, kesilmemiş veya “kaba” anlamına gelir. Gabbeh, dünyanın en iyi bilinen kaba İran dokumacılığıdır. Orta Güney Zagros’un dağlarında ve ovalarında dokunan halı ve kilimler yüzyıllardır Gabbeh aşireti için dokunmaktadır. Gabbeh halılarının en belirgin özelliği de nispeten daha az düğüm sıklığı ile dokunan kaba halılar olmalarıdır. Tasarımlar tipik olarak şekilli, tarz olarak geometrik ve semboliktir. En yaygın Gabbeh duvar halıları, dokumacının “masal” parçalarını tasvir eden sayılar ve sembollerle asimetrik olarak bir hikaye anlatmak için dokunan türleridir.

Gabbeh halıları dönemin en iyi halıları olan İran ve İran halılarının aksine kaba, katları uzun ve düğüm sayısı diğer halılara göre çok daha azdır. Tüm kusurlarına rağmen 1970’li yıllarda popüler olmaya başlayan Gabbeh halıları, 1974 yılında Avrupa ve Amerika’da tanıtılarak tüm dünyaya hızla yayılmıştır.

Bu çalışmada İran’da göçebe halk tarafından dokunan, Zagros Dağları ve ovalarında üretilen ve T.C. Antalya 4. İcra Hukuk Mahkemesi’nin 2015/274 sayılı dosyasıyla tutanak altına alınan 10 adet Gabbeh halısı teknik, desen ve renk açısından ele alınmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Gabbeh, Halı, İran, Zagros, Dokuma.*

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## ABSTRACT

### IRAN GABBEH CARPETS

Gabbeh carpets; The Persian (Iranian) word Gabbeh means something raw or natural, uncut or “rough”. Gabbeh is the world’s best known coarse Iranian weaving. Carpets and rugs woven in the mountains and plains of central south Zagros have been woven for the Gabbeh tribe for centuries. Another feature of Gabbeh carpets is the coarse carpets woven with relatively low knot density. The designs are typically geometric and symbolic in shape and style. The most common Gabbeh tapestries are types woven to tell a story, asymmetrically, with numbers and symbols depicting “tale” pieces of the weaver.

Gabbeh carpets, unlike the Persian and Persian carpets, which are the best carpets of the period, are coarse, the layers are long and the number of knots is much less than other carpets. Despite all their flaws, Gabbeh carpets started to become popular in the 1970s, and in 1974, they were promoted in Europe and America and spread rapidly all over the world.

In this study, woven by the nomadic people in Iran, produced in the Zagros Mountains and plains and T.C. 10 Gabbeh carpets, which were seized and taken into custody with the file numbered 2015/274 of the Antalya 4th Enforcement Law Court, will be discussed in terms of technique, pattern and color.

**Keywords:** *Gabbeh, Carpet, Iran, Zagros, Weaving.*

## INTRODUCTION

Gabbeh Carpets; the Persian (Iranian) word Gabbeh means something raw or natural, uncut or “rough”. Gabbeh is the world’s best known large Iranian fabric. Carpet rugs woven in the mountains and plains of central south Zagros have been woven for the Gabbeh tribe for centuries. Traditionally, knotting and weaving nomadic carpets is a woman’s field and specialty. Nomadic rugs such as the Gabbeh are knotted almost exclusively for personal use and are often quite evident in these personal interpretations of the life of the woman’s spirit and natural craft art.

Gabbeh carpets are much thicker and coarser than other Persian rugs; sometimes it is as large as an inch in depth.

Gabbeh patterns are a very basic kind of decorative, mostly animal-like, only a limited number of mostly rectangular objects. Gabbeh carpets often use bright colors alongside yellow and red. Although large areas of monochrome are used in Gabbeh designs, the color (color changes throughout the carpet) becomes variegated.

Gabbeh is made of natural wool yarn and all colors of the carpet are easy to produce (less delicate patterns, fewer knots per square centimeter, etc.) thanks to natural plant dyes. Gabbeh carpets are cheaper than other Persian carpets.

Another feature of Gabbeh carpets is the coarse carpet woven with relatively low knot density. The designs are typically geometric and symbolic in shape and style. Gabbeh weavers may depict a landscape or scene that tells a story, or even reflect an emotion. The most common Gabbeh tapestries are asymmetrical and woven to tell a story, with numbers and symbols depicting the weavers’ “tale” pieces. A real Gabbeh generally is different from other Persian rugs and completely unique from many other types of weaving or knotting art which is a subjective and random process.

Gabbeh is often woven on horizontal looms that can be quickly and easily installed - a necessity for these nomadic people in southern Iran. Gabbeh is made out of local sheep’s wool and herbal dyes.

Women in the region usually spin and comb long-staple wool by hand. The dyes are derived from natural plants and roots found in the Zagros Mountains and formulated traditional recipes that have been developed over the centuries. Pomegranate skin, walnut shell, madder root and indigo are a few examples of raw materials used. Gabbeh is organic in color composition and appearance. Not the result of dye and wool, but pure color irregularities, Gabbeh enlivens with its rich texture, and similar hues create a collage effect, emphasizing their clear nomadic origin spirit.

### **The History of Gabbeh**

No one knows exactly where the name Gabbeh comes from, what its origin is, and why it is called by that name. Some linguists and writers believe that this word means coarse, thick, hard and so on. It is said that the Gabbeh carpet called by this name. These carpets were woven by nomads for personal use. Gabbeh was produced to prevent the cold of the earth from entering inside and to protect the nomadic family from the cold.

For the first time in Iranian history, the word Gabbeh is mentioned in a report describing Shah Tahmasap Safavid's meeting with the Indian King Shah Humayun, who had to flee to Iran for political reasons, and the conspiracies and betrayals of the Iranian. Safavid Shah Tahmasab gives sanctuary to Shah Humayun and orders to greet him with a unique and lively welcome, therefore, in the halls of two-bedroom golden woven carpets, the directors of the reception headed by Muhammad Khan Ashraf Son, a fluffy piece of Atlas oyster, Gabbeh and twelve cubits spread the felt of the carpet <sup>1</sup>.

Gabbeh is a type of knotted carpet with very long pile - at least one centimeter long - and multiple wefts - three to eight wefts in each row - and generally coarse-textured, with the exception of special and exceptional cases (such as photo 1). If the number of wefts in each row does not exceed three and the pile is shorter, the hand-woven carpet is called Qali-Gabbeh (photos 2 and 3).

Gabbeh, like rugs and jejims, is woven primarily for consumption by family members and to cover the floors of tents and houses—not for sale to others. Therefore, in gabbeh weaving, the weaver has fewer restrictions and responsibilities, and so the school of gabbeh designing, patterning and even dyeing is separate from carpets and rugs and is subject to separate rules and traditions.

Since the gabbeh weaver weaves the carpet for himself in most cases, his hand is even more open than the carpet weaver and in the final analysis he weaves whatever he wants<sup>2</sup>, and therefore the classification of Gabbeh patterns is not only more difficult, but perhaps impossible. Of course, we can count dozens of different patterns of Gabbeh, and we can divide them into the “four seasons” (3), “tree” (4) and “lion” (5-7) groups, etc. but this work is more or less inefficient because the number of samples that cannot be separated and classified will always exceed the number of those that are grouped.

Other than that, our classification will be limited for a short time to a maximum of a hundred years, because cheap coarse wool made just to be trampled on and run over on cannot last much longer.

Three stand out more out of these few examples. Gabbeh No. 1 is a completely special and exceptional hand-woven fabric with at least ten wefts in each row, and in some places up to fourteen wefts. The design and color of this handloom is also unique and referred to as “modern” and its equivalent can only be found in the contemporary arts of the West. Also, from the needle-weaving rugs at the top and bottom of the rug and the roots and rows of ornamental wefts, the like of which has rarely been seen in the Kashgai tribe. The Ardekpan weave is most likely woven, as weavers of the Ardakpan tribe of the Ameleh tribe weave some of the best gabbehs in the Persian province and their knotting style is

1 *Ayande*, 1981, Sayı 3, sayfa: 290

2 Ömer Zaimoğlu, Antalya 4. İcra Hukuk Mahkemesinin 2015/274 Esas Sayılı Dosyası ile Haczedilip Muhafaza Altına Alınan Halı Raporu, 2015



symmetrical, and this elegant Gabbeh is knotted with a number 3 symmetrical knot Gabbeh No.8 is a fascinating example of the “simple floor” group and one of the most innovative, as it also includes cores and corners.



Pictures are used in the text, corner and medallion of the carpet. Inside the beautiful medallion of the carpet is a strange motif; it could be a lotus or “sun lady” or a combination of these two motifs from the past. The gabbeh, woven in 1377 AH, may be a sign of the weaver’s attempt to visualize the reflection on the water surface, especially since the contrast of the blue medallion color and the earth-coloured background is as if there were a pond in the heart of dry sand. Because, according to the design style and especially the role of the borders, this rug may have been woven by the hands of Turkish weavers, a group of which has long settled in Shiraz.

One of the most popular motifs of Kashgai gabbeh weavers is the lion motif, which has inspired a wide variety of original and unique gabbehs. The abundance of lions in Persian carpets - which is more common among the Lors and Qashqais - in addition to the ancient importance of the lion in Iranian culture and especially the special allegorical relationship established between this symbol of courage and valor with Amir al-Mominin Ali (a.s.). The abundance of this animal is related in the Kamfirouz region and the Arjan Plain of Fars, where its descendants remained until the beginning of the last century. No. 5-7 and 9 show completely different ways of characterizing the thousands of lion images in the Kaskayi carpet weaving culture.

Unlike other types of illustrated carpets, silk carpets are very common among the Kashkays and almost all the weaving families of the Kashkayi clan have used this manifestation of nobility and chivalry in a unique way. Example 5 is the Ardekapan weave, but the color of the weavers of examples 6 and 7 cannot be distinguished. The last two hand-woven examples are completely different from the wide variety of drawings of signs, lions and suns in Gebe Kashgai’s completely abstract and simplified style. Probably a Kashkuli, the Gabbeh 5-8 has three distinctive features: a domesticated lion and a collar on the neck that looks more like a dog. A beautiful knit with the eight-pointed star, the sign and successor of the sun, and the ancient pattern of the chicken and the tree.<sup>3</sup>

Gabbeh generally falls into one of the following categories:

1		<p>The basic Gabbeh has a few knots per inch and a rather coarse weave with a pile of thick, plush wool. They often have little in the way of design elements, with large open spaces, simple geometric shapes, bold, bright colors, and tribal drawings of people and animals.</p>
2		<p>Amalehbaft Gabbeh has a medium weave in terms of coarseness and knots per inch. Overall, these are probably basic Gabbeh plain-design. Because of their tight weave, short pile and simple pattern, these beautiful rugs are a great way to add color to a room without the distraction of many design elements.</p>

3		Kashkoli Gabbeh has fine mesh and rather short, soft piles. Like Amalehbaft and basic Gabbeh, Kashkoli has very sparse, simple, colorful geometric designs. Knitting tension and wool quality give this wonderful collection rug a shine that must be seen to believe it.
4		Gabbeh Sumak carpets are more finely woven than other Gabbeh carpets.

### TRADE AND EXPORT OF GABBEH CARPETS

Gabbeh exports to America and Europe for the last hundred years have raised some questions about the first buyers of this type of carpet. Nothing is known about the first gabbeh exported to America a hundred years ago. Mumford mentioned them briefly. The gabbeh is very similar to the one described by Mumford a hundred years ago, although it has a minimal geometric pattern in the middle. Characteristics of the two such as size, edges, area, weft-faced plain weave and decoration completely match Mumford's description. In addition, its shabby appearance probably indicates that it was used underfoot for a long time. This gabbeh in Edwin M. Zimmerman's collection once belonged to the American collector Ralph Yohe. Except that this piece was in his 1983 collection, there is no information about where he got it.

Two other gabbes in America were exported to America in the 1900s when Mumford published his first book. Both belonged to the collection of George Hewitt Myers, which he later donated to the Textile Museum in Washington. Fortunately, more is known about these gabbes. Myers bought one in 1940 and the other in 1957. The first one measures 258 by 129 cm and has a triple diamond pattern. The second is 195 by 123 cm in size and has small lozenges and unadorned motifs on the four corners. Other than these three, nothing is known about the other gabbes, although the number of exported gabbes is higher, according to Mumford.

Less is known about other gabbes exported to Europe. We could say that gabbeh is a new phenomenon in Europe if it were not for the gabbeh exhibited at the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest.

### CONCLUSION

Gabbes woven in the past were self-dyed, meaning they used sheep's wool without changing color and included black, white, and gray colors. Natural, brown, beige and gray colors of wool are used. In Anatolian Tülüs, it is generally woven in Konya Obruk and other regions in the villages and in the town of Karapınar in Central Anatolia. Another aim of this research to determine the reason for the importance of Gabbeh carpets today, their place in history and their connection with Tülü in our country. If the weaver has a good day, he uses white, and if he has a bad day, black color appears in hand weaving. Over time, weavers used herbal and natural dyes for their wool and combined their mental motifs with these colored wools. Later, these dyes were well received, and to speed up the work, chemical dyes were replaced by natural dyes, and the spinning machine replaced hand-spun wool. With the disappearance of the traditional and imaginary motifs, new designs and motifs appeared in Gabbeh.

When we look at the examples, Gabbeh weavers use lines in many different ways. They create different shapes with widening or narrowing lines, or they use lines crosswise or diagonally. Unlike many gabbeh patterns that have the same origin as other textile types, zigzags are unique to gabbehs and are rarely seen in other Iranian embroidery. There are two theories about this pattern: according to the first, the zigzags represent the waves on the sea and the water, and according to the other theory, these zigzags represent the tiger fur. Those who think that the pattern represents water waves say that it emphasizes the importance of water in the arid Iranian lands. Another pattern created by Gabbeh weavers with diagonal lines is the lozenge pattern. This group is similar to the square pattern, whose entire area is covered by units of the same size. This pattern is also seen as one of the branches of the zigzag pattern, as it consists of zigzags that are touching each other. A different color system is used in gabbehs with this pattern. Some consist of a single diamond pattern, while others consist of more than one nested diamond pattern. In other gabbeh carpets with animal figures, a different subject is handled; The lion was replaced by a bird and a horse head. Although horses and birds are frequently used in Moroccan carpets, gabbeh carpets are more different and unique in shape and color. Some gabbehs use only wide or narrow lines, while others combine both. Although these designs lack the originality of past designs, they have their own beauty. Although Gabbeh carpets had a good boom in the market due to some political policies, they soon fell out of prosperity for some reasons. Recently, it has started to be weaved for commercial purposes again.



*Picture 1:* Ardkapan, 19. century, 152x185



*Picture 2:* Safihani, 19. Century, 132 x 232 cm



*Picture 2:* Çahar dange, 19.century, 138 x 180 cm



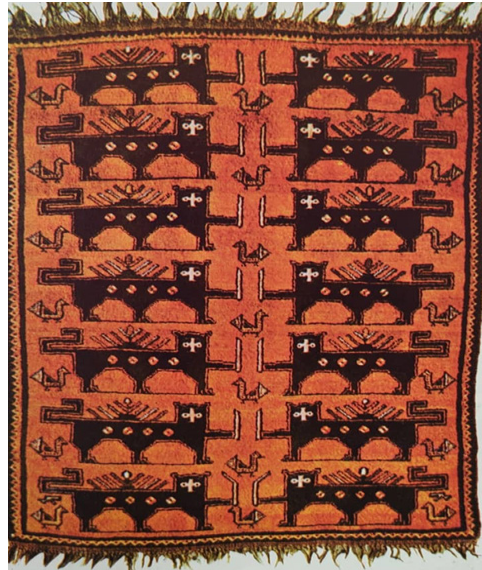
*Picture 4:* Kaşkayi, 19. century, 121 x 183 cm



*Picture 3:* Ardkapan, 19. century, 124 x 184 cm



*Picture 6:* Kaşkayi, 19. century, 155 x 225 cm



*Picture 7:* Kaşkayi, 19. century, 115 x 156 cm

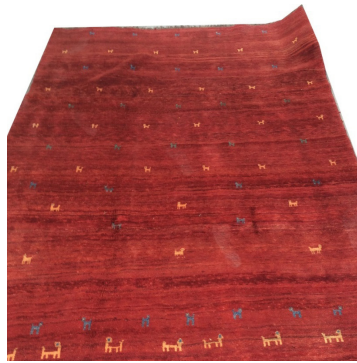




*Picture 7:* Kaşkayi, 19. century, 115 x 156 cm



*Picture 9:* Kaşkayi, Domesticated lion 100 x 110 cm



*Picture 10:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 215 x 298 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)



*Picture 11:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 260 x 196 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)



*Picture 12:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 282 x 194 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)



*Picture 14:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 322 x 217 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)



*Picture 15:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 291 x 209 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)



*Picture 16:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 286 x 204 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)



*Picture 17:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 321 x 209 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)



*Picture 18:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 291 x 216 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)



*Picture 19:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 207 x 286 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)



*Picture 20:* Iran Gabbeh Carpet 287 x 197 cm (Ö. Zaimoğlu)

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