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Elaborated Sacks (=Alaçıval) Weaving among the Anatolian Nomads

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Abstract:

“The nomadic sacks” as a special kind of weaving is used generally by the nomads in their nomadic areas or by nomads who have settled insome villages and towns. People in the cities were not familiar with these kinds of weavings. These sacks are used to store clothes, foods and sleeping necessities. But “alaçıvals” (elaborated sacks) are specific for storing precious clothes and jewelries, which is the reason why they are usually very well patterned and colored. In order to be able to fix it up on the animals who carry them, they are usually woven as a couple. From the past and as a part of the nomadic culture, girls would weave at least a couple of them before getting married, as their dowry. Every tribe has its own unique patterns, colors and weaving techniques style. The pattern, color, techniques, materials and looms of the Anatolian sacks are similar to carpets, kilims and other equivalent weaves. However, the particularity of the design composition is remarkable. In regard to the technique, soumaktechnique is used, in Anatolia this technique is named in different names: sırtmaç, oyulgama, olgama, urgama, ilme, kirtin, kaydırma, çelme, çalma, halı kapakh, körtegel, kayak, denleme.

Keywords : Sacks, Anatolia, pattern, color, technique, nomad, Anatolian alaçıvals

1. Introduction

Weaving is one of the most precious and common arts of Turks of the world. The Turks are preserving this tradition everywhere. The essential substance of the sacks is wool, therefor it is so dependent on the sheep fosterer community. On the other hand, the regions where carpets, *kilims* and sacks are woven are 30 and 45 degrees of northern latitudes in central Asia. This zone is sheep fosterer and is called the carpet belt (Yetkin 1991: 1). In Anatolia *alaçıval* is a kind of weaving that is specific to nomadic society. Among weaves in which beating comb is used *alaçıvals* were not produced for commercial purpose, hence their patterns, colors and techniques were not affected by the other places as the carpets and *kilims* were. Among Anatolian tribes' different sacks, *alaçıvals* are richer in term of design.

2. Alaçıval Definition

Nomads spend several months of the year in migration. In spring seasons, they leave winter pasture and head for summer pasture, this migration might take more than one month. They stay three -four months in the summer pasture, at the end of summer, they start going back to the less high places where they were through the same way. During migration, they load their stuffs on animals. During migration, they needstorage items to put in their foods, cloths, utensil and other materials. Among all nomadic weaving products (carpets, *kilims*, tent, *cicim* etc.), sacks are take an important position. Sacks as storage items have a significant role in the nomadic life. We can find them in all nomadic societies as a necessity. On the other hand, after the sacks the saddlebags are coming in the second position as a transportation means. This is why it was a necessity for all girls to have a couple of *alaçıval* in their dowry and it was called “*geliñıvalı*”(= bride sack) (Öztürk 2012: 107).

The existence of more than a couple of *alaçıval* expresses the social statues of the family (richness or poverty) or shows that it is a part of the heritage. Some women after getting married they weave *alaçıvalas* much as they need of. The sacks are an inseparable part of the nomadic lifestyle in Anatolia. As well as that it is important during the movement¹ (fig. 1), it issignificant in the tents too, where it can be fixed side by side opposite to entrance on the wall to protect the people inside from the cold weather and also for the people to rely on it (fig. 2), and sometime they can be positioned at two sides of the mast of tent that is situated in the middle of the tent and divide tent to different parts (Kademoğlu1973: 26, 27). It can be used as decorative elements as putting couples of sacks together reflects their features. Even those who have left the nomadic life pursue this weaving culture because they use it in their houses (Wertime 1998: 15).

The sacks are used not justby migrating nomadsbutalso they are used by nomads who have settled in villages and towns. They align them along one long wall of the storeroom of their house (fig. 3), repeating the arrangement used in the black tent (Powell 2007:

15). They store all their possessions, such as blankets, rugs, *kilims* and so on in them. Among the nomads who left the nomadic life families are found who love their traditions and preserve them and in spite of passing decades keep using the sacks for storage. Some other families were deceived by the antique dealers and exchanged it in return of machinery products and carpets. Because settled people do not use the sacks as they used in the nomadic lifestyle. The sacks are used in the crops and fields to carry the productions and tools. Some of them open the swing and use it at the entrance of their houses.



Figure 1: The loaded camels await departure, South Anatolia (Powell 2007: 17)

Figure 2: Kurdişalaçovals in the tent, Kahramanmaraş, South East Anatolia (Powell 2007: 14)

Figure 3: Using alaçovals in the room, Northwest Anatolia (Atlıhan 1993: 79)

Alaçovals are vary in size from 50 to 95 cm wide, and 60 to 135 cm high. In some cases the back side is longer than front side and the excessive part of the back side will be folded on the front side and works as a lid for it. Compared to other sacks are more colorful and attractive. They are rich from the color and design points of views. Hence, it is known as “*alaçoval*” among people. In different regions of Anatolia it is named differently. Some tribes name it based on its patterns, but some others based on its application, the materials it is made of, techniques are woven, or based on the materials put in it. In Antalya’s environs it is named “*kırkbudak*(= forty fresh), *züülüflü* (= with lovelock), according to patterns and based on color is named as *göklü*(= with blue), *karagöz*(= black eye), *alyanak*(= reddish cheek)” (Eren 1976: 28; Pekin 1975), “among nomads of Isparta in Anamas Summer pastures it is called *Küflençoval*(= load sack), *karaburunçoval*(= black nose sack), *göklüçoval*(= with blue sack), *kırkbudak*, *kürtçovalı*(= Kurdish sack)” (Kademoğlu 1973: 26, 27), during my field research I have determined that among Silifke nomads it is called as *alaçoval*, *esvabçovalı*(= garment sack), *çamaşırcıovalı*(= sack for storing cloth), *yünalaçoval*(= sack designed with multicolor weft), *kızılalaçoval*(= red designed sack). Reinhard formerly reported that it is named “*oturğançoval*(= stable sack), *altıntaşçoval*(= gold stone sack), *sındıkulpuçoval*(= scissors handle sack), *karagözçoval*, *fardaçoval*(=sack is woven in kilim technique)” (Reinhard 1977: 241-250). In “Ayvacak’s (Çanakkale) environs it is called *güzüngüçoval*(no meaning), *dolaşıkasmalıçoval*(= entwined hanging sack), *aklıkıvrımlıçoval*(=sack with white hook), *alaçoval*, *çakmaknakışlıçoval*(= star designed sack), *eğrinakışlıçoval*(= curved designed sack)” (Atlıhan 1990: 58; Deniz 2000), “among nomads from Aydın and Söke is known as *alaçoval*, *sırtçovalı*(= back sack), *pusadçovalı*(= sack for storing cloth), in İzmir environs it is named as *alaçoval*, *dimi- oturgunçoval*(= stable sack)” (Deniz 2008: 124), “*Kemkeçoval*, *devedengi* (= loads sack for camel), *kızılalaçoval*” (Powell 1998: 641) and among Erdemli nomads it is called as “*harda*” (Çakmakoğlu 1986: 179).

Different types of sacks in Anatolia

Flour Sack: it is used for flour storage. In these kinds of sacks, the warp and the weft are of wool. Generally is woven in *cicim*(overlay-underlay brocading) techniques.

Sacks woven from Hair: both the warp and the weft are of hair, it is used to store and carry wheat, hay and other animal fodder. Because it is woven from goat hair, it protects from humidity. Among İçel nomads the big types is called “*harar*” (= a large woolen) (Dulkadir 1989: 193), or rather, in many parts of Anatolia, it is called “*harar*”.

Topluçoval (= small medallion designed sack): “also it is called *aykırıçoval* among nomads from Aydın. Applied technique is *cicim* technique. In these sacks they put oil, cheese, and other foods” (Pekin 1977: 214). The writer of this sentence just mentioned this sentence and did not explain regarding the method of putting and how they put foods in it.

3. Design

In traditional weaves in addition to color, one of the most important elements is design. Among Anatolian weaves, nomadic *alaçoval* is kept away from commercial purposes so, original design composition have not been destroyed and have continued up to now. Front side of the *alaçovals* colorful and various designs are bedecked while in the back side simple horizontal lines are woven. *Alaçovals* placed in the tent such that the front and back sides can be seen at load. This is a sign that represents that sack belongs to the west or the east (EvTekstil 2007: 69). Also during migration, when it is carried by animals, the back side stays beneath and designed front side situates at the top part and this represents the logo of the tribe. At the same time it also shows the woman's dexterity. “Most of the border designs are common among all Anatolian nomad groups, although some groups have additional borders of their own” (Powell 2007: 16). According to the size of this storage sacks these additions are many or less. Many varieties from the horizontal

panel are seen at a 135 cm size storage sack. In addition to main wide panels other narrow panels also located in these sacks. Patterns are completely geometric. Hexagons, diamonds, lozenges, ram's horn, and hooks, are continuously used motifs. According to researchers, roots of these designs are two groups:

1. Common motifs in Turkish society: for the first time has been introduced by Turks as a new custom, since they came to Anatolia (after the Melazgirdbattle which happened in 1071 AD) this tradition continues and multiplies in the next periods (Görgünay Kırzioğlu 1994: 42-44).
2. According to some views after settling in Anatolia the effects of the old culture of Anatolia in designs are indicated (Acar 1975: 9). Every weaving type has some specific design composition and these composition gives the weaving new features. Design compositions of *alaçuvals* are two groups generally:
 - i. *Alaçuvals* with horizontal panels: weavers of this group are tribes that settled in Anatolia about 100 years ago, or whose migration distance from winter pasture to summer pasture was short (Powell 1998: 647). In this group of *alaçuval*, panels in the front side of *alaçuval* start from two and proportional to the size of *alaçuval*, some other panels will be woven one after another in the width and motifs are placed within these panels (fig. 4, 4a). But the back side is made of thin and plain panels without any design (4b). In order to provide balance, weaver tries to place color and motifs symmetrically. Sometimes there is no similarity between the wide main panels in the front side and motifs of narrow panels, but in spite of difference, they will be balanced by placement. In *alaçuval* horizontal panels are two kinds:
 - a. Wide panels: motifs within these panels are known as the main motif and generally made of one or two motifs, and is repeated two-five times in the width of sack. The panels are supported by thin panels called *su* (= river) and in this way, they are lined off. The name of the sacks design is taken from the name of main panel of the motif. (see the *alaçuval* introduction section)
 - b. Narrow panels: one or more of these kind of panels are located at the lower and upper part of the wide panels. Width at most is up to seven cm. motifs in these panels may not be always symmetrical.



Figure 4: Alaçuval with horizontal panels, Silifke region

4a. Design of alaçuval with wide and narrow bands

4b. The back of Alaçuval

- ii. *Alaçuvals* with Vertical panels: “among the tribes which wove vertical panels, most had recently migrated long distances” (Powell 1998: 647). *alaçuvals* with vertical panels are formed of just two panels and between these panels about five cm is woven in kilim technique and in this place bands are sewn. One of these patterned panels locates at the front side and another at the back side of *alaçuval*. Generally patterned area is about 1/3 or 1/4 of the sack's area (Eren 1976: 30). Other parts of sack have various color stripes in weft-faced plain weave. In these types of storage sacks, in the patterned part, generally thin panels at the outside of main panels or sometimes at the both sides of main panels are found (see fig. 5a, 5b). Like another group of sacks motifs of main panels repeat at most five times in the length of sack. Designs and patterns of this group of sacks are larger and its measure is longer and thin comparing to sacks with horizontal panels. Storage sacks with vertical panel, are woven by three groups of tribes: these tribes are found in every regions of Anatolia except black sea region. These tribes are Saçıkara, Turkmen and Kurds. Maybe these tribes had communications in the past. Some of them settled in 1980s and some others have continued their nomadic life. They weave storage sacks with vertical panels (Powell 1998: 19). (spreading nomad groups in Anatolia region see fig. 6) The designs and motifs of storage sacks are seen in the other weaves of nomads.

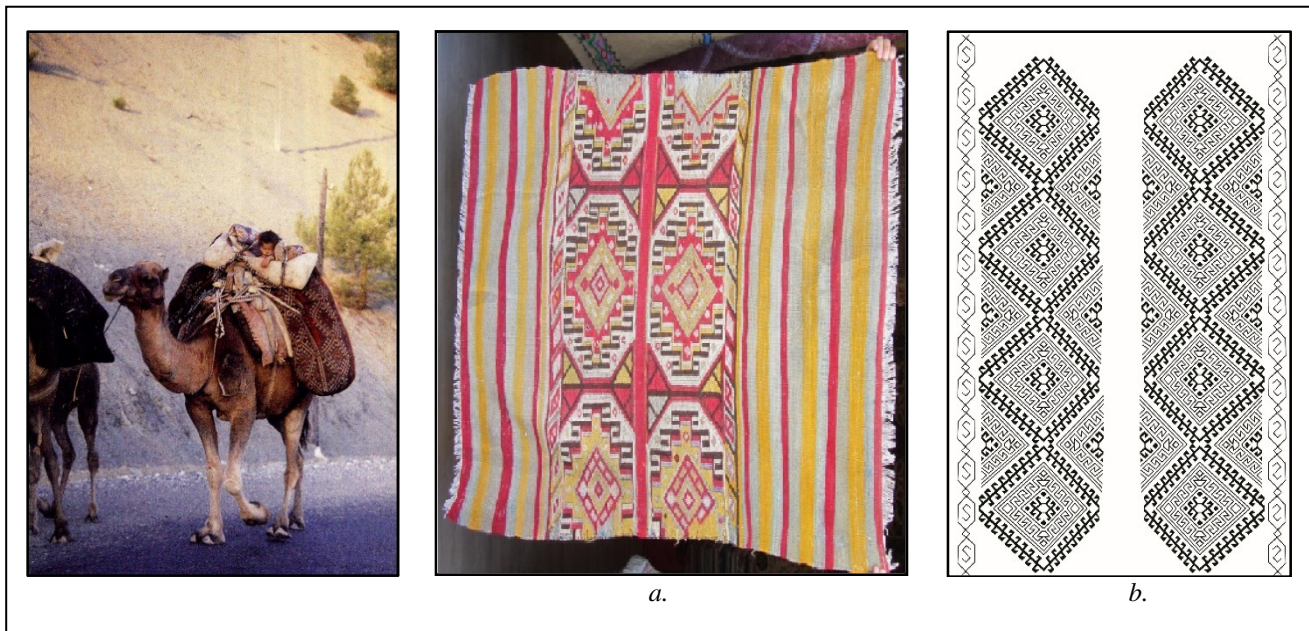


Figure 5: Nomadic camel caravan with paired alaçuval, Kahramanmaraş
 5a. Alaçuval with vertical panel before sewing, Southeast Anatolia,
 5b. Design of vertical panels



Figure 6: Nomads distribution throughout Anatolia (T: Turkmen, Y: Yörük, K: Kurd) (Böhmer 2008: 48)

4. Materials and Method

Materials are obtained from wool and hair of sheep and goats that fostered by own people. In some old weaves, yarns made of camel wool are used (Öztürk 2012: 107). In the cases that belong to nearer dates it is seen that cotton yarns are used in warps. In a loom vertically stretched yarns are generally called warp *çözgü*, *çezgi*, *eriş*, *arış*, and yarn that are putted from the side along are named: *weftatki*, *geçki*, *arageçki*, *argaç*. Among nomads who have lived in Mut's and Silifke's environs from the past, warp is obtained from a mix of hair and wool of goat and sheep. Today, among Taurus Mountains regions most preferred warp yarns are yarns obtained from goat hair. These kinds of sacks ground weaves (warp and weft) are from hair and patterns are from wool. For white patterns, sometimes cotton is used instead of wool. But all materials were woven from wool in the past.

"Alaçuvals are types of flat weaves which are weft-faced weaves" (Atlıhan 1990: 61). In *alaçuvals*, *soumak*² technique or a combination of some techniques - *kilim* (weft-faced plain weave), *soumak* (fig. 7), *cicim* (fig. 8), *zili* (overlay brocading) (fig. 9) - are used. In the areas of my field research more than one technique are used. Mostly *kilim*, *sırtmaç* (*soumak*) and *olgama* *oroyulgama* (reciprocal brocading) (fig. 10) applied together. While in the front side varieties of techniques are applied in the back side just *kilim* or *cicim* is woven.

Another applied technique is reciprocal brocading. In this technique "two complementary pattern yarn rows are completed before a ground weft is inserted. In other words, each pattern yarn usually weaves over two warps and under two, then reverses direction to weave over and under the alternate warp pairs. The surface is covered with brocading yarns" (Mallet 1998: 93).

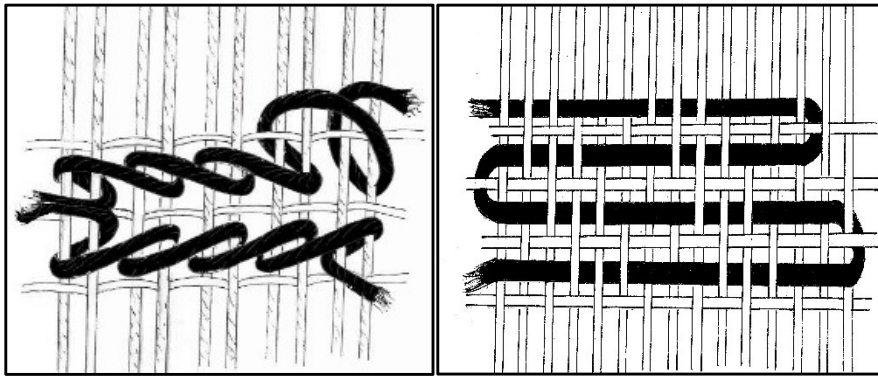


Figure 7: Countered soumak wrapping with a ratio of 4:2, with structural weft.

Figure 8: Cicimtechnique (overlay – underlay technique)

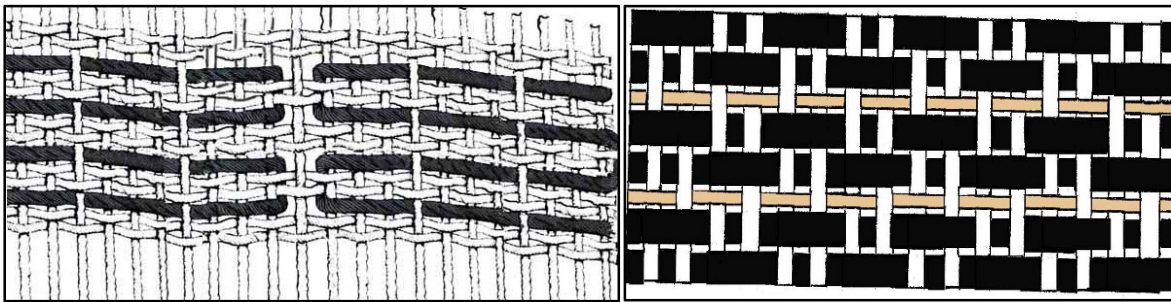


Figure 9: Zili technique (overlay technique)

Figure 10: Reciprocal technique

Alaçıval with vertical border: in these sacks, like flour sack and a group of “*topluçıval*”, designs are woven in the width of the sack, but during sewing of sack beginning and ending part of sack is sewn. One side of the sack which serves as the base and bottom of the sack also will be sewn. Another side of the sack will be open as the entrance part or mouth of the sack. In the case that sack is placed on its bottom, designs will be horizontal.

Alaçıval with horizontal border: in this group of storage sacks, designs are woven in the width too. From length to the bottom parts will be folded to two and sides of it will be sewn together. The beginning and ending parts of weave serve as the door or mouth of the storage sack.

For lifting and carrying the sacks, bands in two sides will be sewn. Width of the bands would be five-eight cm, and length of the bands will be two-three m and it would be woven as a type of narrow weave. The bands that sewn on the sides of sacks are woven from wool and hair. The bands are sewn in the sides of sacks *askulp* (handle). At the same time, they cover the sewing places in the sack and provide a nice appearance (GörgünayKırzıoğlu 1999: 89). About 80 cm of the ends that is braiding and used for tightening the mouth of the sack and connecting to camel's hump is left over.

5. Dye and Color

One of the most important elements in *alaçıval* is color. From earlier times vegetable dyes were exploited by nomads. But after the wide spreading of synthetic dyes vegetable dyes are getting forgotten. In Anatolia, almost in every places that *alaçıval* is woven, main colors are red and its spectrums, blue and yellow. Although, other colors vary based on different tribes, green, black, white, are secondary colors. All dyeing in blue color are accomplished by indigo or derivative of indigo, indigo sulphat acid (Enez 1987: 7). Red: according to all researches red colors almost always dyed by madder or insect dyes (Enez 1987: 10). In Anatolian storage sacks and other carpets generally botanical dyes are exploited.

Yellow and orange: yellow and orange colors are obtained from the different plants. onion, Sicilian sumac (dirty yellow and black), euphorbia, peel of pomegranate (dirty yellow, plain brown), indigo plant, nutgall (dirty yellow), thyme, Dyer's-weed or weld, Three-Leafed sage. Nomads in Turkey up to end of 1980s, for dyeing yellow color, mullein is used. For brown color, peel and leave of walnut, and for black color, Walloon Oak is used (Böhmer et al. 2002: 115-145; Karadag 2007: 40-102; Enez 1987).

6. Looms

In Anatolia for *alaçıval*, saddlebag, bag, other sacks and carpets generally three types of looms are used: vertical loom, half-horizontal loom, ground loom. Half-horizontal looms are inclined 45 degree. They are not fixed as vertical looms are. They are carriable from a place to another. Hence they are used by semi-nomads and settled people. Ground loom; also known as “three legs ground loom” among the people. It is used generally by nomads who go to summer pasture (Deniz 2000: 68-69). Generally east and southeast use ground loom.

Drop spindle and spindle: drop spindle and sometimes spindle are mostly used for spinning strings of storage sacks.

Spinning wheel: throughout Anatolia in order to twist and roll the yarns that are spun by drop spindle

Beating comb: it is used for pressing wefts that entered in warps. It is composed of a wood and metal and in the form of a comb. Combs to card the wool and goat hair: after shearing sheep and goat, cleaning up and washing wool and hair will be combed by this means. Made of wood and iron, the iron part is made of sharpened end, and thin iron bars that are arranged and fixed at a same line.

7. Conclusion

Briefly, different types of design and color are worked in a very ostentatious way on Anatolian *alaçuvuls*. The motif, design and colors are not just decorative elements but reflect senses, thoughts, and culture of people. For Anatolian migrating nomads storage sacks are indispensable woven property. Weavers who are faithful to their customs, hand in the art that they learned from their mothers to the next generation perfectly. Hence, if nomadic lifestyle changes and *alaçuvul* do not produce, scientists and researchers of traditional art must see it as their duty.

8. Note

1. "During migration *alaçuvuls* will be wrapped in the headmost camel in a line of camels, giving lots of importance to its patterns, it is not covered completely by the kilim that is put on it. Neighboring nomads could distinguish migrant tribe by seeing these sacks" (Atlıhan 1990: 58).

2. In Tarsus region, it is called "*ilme ve kirtin*" (Soysaldı 1998: 233); In Döşemealtı region, it is named "*çelme*" (Atlıhan 2011: 14); Amon Milas and Antalya nomads, it is called "*halı kapakhorhalı göreneği*" (Reinhard 1977: 247); In Şavaks, it is named "*körtegel*", In Ağrı environs, it is called "*kayak*", In Karayazı villages from Erzurum called "*denleme*", in Eskişehir and Uşak environs, it is named "*Çalma*" (Görgünay Kırzioğlu 1994: 34); "In Izmir environs, it is named "*oyma, urgama*" (Deniz 2000: 58); "In Ayvacık region, it is called *kayma*" (Atlıhan 1990: 61).

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