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FEMALE HEADED BIRDS IN MINIATURE ART MİNYATÜR SANATI'NDA KADIN BAŞLI KUŞLAR

ABSTRACT

Hybrid characters, formed with the combination of two forms that we can describe as fantastic, appear as a form that is repeated many times, both with the symbolic meanings they carry and with visually different techniques and materials. There are beliefs that hybrid figures have supernatural powers. The aim of this study is to examine the miniature examples of this type of hybrid figure with a bird body and a female head, which are called "Siren". Siren figures are found in miniatures in manuscripts of Hariri's Makamat, Semek-i Ayyâr, Falnâme, Kıssa-i Şehr-i Şatran, Acâ'ibü'l-Mahlûkât and Surnâme-i Hümayun, which were examined in this context. The origins of the siren figure go back to Central Asia, and it is used as an iconographic element in the works of art of many cultures, such as Byzantine and Seljuk in Anatolia, Greek, and Turkish mythology. In the research, the miniatures with siren figures are tried to be determined by using the archive scanning method. As a result, it is determined that the siren figure is used quite frequently in different fields of art as an iconographic expression tool and there are also miniature works among these examples.

Keywords: Siren, Miniature, Hybrid, Iconography.

ÖZET

Fantastik olarak nitelendirebileceğimiz iki türün birleşiminden meydana gelmiş melez karakterler hem taşıdıkları sembolik anlamlardan hem de görsel olarak farklı teknik ve malzemelerle pek çok kez yinelenen bir form olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Melez figürlerin doğüstü güçlere sahip olduğuna dair inanışlar bulunmaktadır. Araştırmanın amacı; bu tür melezlik içeren ve "Siren" olarak isimlendirilen gövdesi kuş, başı ise kadın olan figürlerin bulunduğu minyatür örneklerinin incelenmesidir. Bu kapsamda incelenen Hariri'nin Makamâtı, Semek-i Ayyâr, Falnâme, Kıssa-i Şehr-i Şatran, Acâ'ibü'l-Mahlûkât ve Surnâme-i Hümayun'daki yazmalardaki minyatürlerde siren figürlerine rastlanmaktadır. Siren figürünün kökenleri Orta Asya'ya kadar uzanmakta, Anadolu'da Bizans ve Selçuklu'da, Yunan ve Türk mitolojisinde ve daha pek çok kültürün sanat eserlerinde ikonografik bir unsur olarak kullanılmaktadır. Araştırmada arşiv tarama yöntemi kullanılarak siren figürlerinin yer aldığı minyatürler tespit edilmeye çalışılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak ise siren figürünün ikonografik bir ifade aracı olarak sanatın farklı alanlarında oldukça sık kullanıldığı ve bu örnekler içerisinde minyatürlü eserlerin de olduğu tespit edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siren, Minyatür, Melez, İkonografi.

1. INTRODUCTION

There have always been supernatural forms that carry symbolic expressions and ascribe different meanings in every field of art. Among these interesting forms, there are figures embodied by the merging and intertwining of two different species, which are expressed as hybrids, that is, by accepting each other (Tokgöz Gün, 2021a). In such hybrid figures, there are many supernatural forms such as combining the body of various animals with the head of a different animal, such as a bird head with a snake body, a human head with a lion body, a human head with a bird body, or various animal figures with a human body. One of the most striking examples among hybrid forms is the fantastic figures shaped by adding a human head to the animal body. One of these figures is the bird-bodied human-headed 'Siren' figure, and it appears as a form frequently used in works of art. From cave paintings to the present day, supernatural subjects and figures, which we can

describe as strange in different fields of art, are the subject. Especially legendary characters continue to be interpreted by using different techniques and materials (Tokgöz Gün, 2021b).

Symbolic expressions form the basic beliefs of primitive societies, these expressions spread in Greek and Roman mythologies and are expressed with similar symbols in monotheistic religions. The use of the bird figure is one of them. Birds have been the representation of the concept and spirit that we can call divinity and independence. In almost every society, it is accepted that after death, the soul will leave the body and fly to the sky with the lightness of a bird (Ersoy, 2007: 285).

Although it is known that the bird figure has different iconographic meanings in different cultures, it is also seen that it has similar meanings. First of all, in almost all of the samples examined, the bird is identified with the woman. In general terms, bird figures represent death and it is claimed that they accompany the soul of the deceased. Birds of prey are believed to represent sovereignty and enlightenment. In shaman culture, it is sometimes seen as a companion and sometimes as a symbol of wisdom (Erginsoy, 1978: 129).

There are opinions that siren comes from “sireng”, which means “thirty colors” etymologically. The body of this mythical creature is described with large birds such as pigeon, rook, falcon, vulture, etc. The upper part of the neck is drawn as the head of a beautiful woman with a round full face and a crown on the head (Önder, 1968: 7).

The human-headed, bird-bodied siren figure has been the subject of various studies and it is among the motifs that are frequently used iconographically in different works of art. It is seen that this fantastic creature, which appears in different materials and techniques such as in architectural decoration, tiles, ceramics, stone, plaster, metal, wood, textile, etc., is also used in miniatures. The body of the siren figures drawn in the profile is in the form of a bird, with wings, tails, and claws, and the head is depicted as a human head. This fantastic creature is believed to have magical, powerful, protective, and supernatural powers.

In a different interpretation, the head part of the siren is in the form of a woman, and the lower part is in the form of a fish, almost reminiscent of a mermaid. These sirens are hidden among the rocks at the entrance of the strait between the islands of Sicily or Capri. Sirens have beautiful sounds and sailors are also affected by this sound, causing them to crash into rocks. There are rumors that Odysseus covered the fishermen's ears with wax as a precaution. According to a different rumor, Orpheus used his own voice to suppress the voices of the Argonauts in order to save them from the fascinating sound of the sirens (Alsan, 2005: 96-97).

Sirens are believed to be angels who lead the deceased to the gods in Greek mythology. They also warn the sailors against the dangers and warn the danger beforehand by chirping bitterly. For this reason, the whistles of the ferries that warn of danger are called “siren whistles” (Önder, 1968: 7). The figure of the siren appears in the examples of architecture and handicrafts in Byzantine and Seljuk art in Anatolia. It is accepted that these figures, which are portrayed as fantastic creatures, have power, strength, and protective features. In addition to being a symbol of kindness and help in Anatolian Seljuk art, it is thought to represent the justice of the sultan in the siren reliefs in Konya Castle. In Christian art, the figure of the siren has been seen in sculptures since the XII century, and in ceramics in XIII and XIV centuries with its power, strength, and protective feature. There are examples in Central Asia, Chinese art, Uighurs and Karakhanids (Özdemir, 2021: 125-131-134-135).

Central Asian beliefs also explain the symbolism of sirens used in tombs. According to the shaman's belief, it is interpreted that the guardian spirits accompanying the shaman on underground and sky journeys are also mythical creatures. In this context, it is thought that the siren protects the soul of the dead and accompanies him (Öney, 1967: 151). The crown on the heads of the sirens is reminiscent of the crown of the Seljuk sultans. This crown perhaps has a symbolic meaning (Yetkin, 1972: 161).

2. SIREN FIGURES IN DIFFERENT EXAMPLES

Within the scope of the study, many examples of the siren figure were found, among them, there are the samples of terracotta siren figurines dated 500-550 BC, Seljuk ceramic figurines of XII-XIII centuries, siren relief on stone in Konya İnce Minaret Madrasa Museum of the 13th century, Siren relief on stone in Seljuk tradition in Niğde Hüdavent Hatun Tomb dated 1312, Kubadabad Palace tiles dated 1220-1237. In addition, it is seen that the siren figure is used in many works that we cannot share here. The siren figure, which is the subject of different types of artworks, is found also in manuscripts with miniature examples; Hariri's Makamat, Semek-i Ayyâr, Falnâme, Kıssa-i Şehr-i Şatran, Acâ'ibü'l-Mahlûkât and Surname-i Hümayun.



Visual 1. Siren terracotta statue. **Source:** URL 1

It is thought that this statue, dated 500-550 BC, may have been a votive offering. Sirens are thought to be mythical creatures famous in antiquity for their songs that lure sailors to their death. The body of the siren is given from the profile and the head is from the front. It is seen that the female figure on the head of the body, which almost resembles the full breast of a pigeon, is interpreted quite realistically. Smiling lip expression and high cheekbones add expression to the figure. In addition, eyebrows, eyes, nose, and ears are prominent. Earrings in the form of a rosette are also placed in the middle of the hair on the head. The figure has curly hair that stretches down from its shoulders.



Visual 2. Seljuk ceramic siren statue with female head and bird body. **Source:** URL 2

The statue with a woman's head and a bird's body in Visual 2 belong to the XII-XIII centuries. It has a crown on its head, and its hair grows from the side of its cheek to its neck. The arc-shaped eyebrow line merges with the nose. The almond eyes, tiny mouth and nose of the figure are depicted in accordance with the Seljuk prototype. In addition, there are floral motifs on the chest, crown, and wing of the figure (Erdal, 2017: 126-127).



Visual 3. Siren relief, Konya Ince Minaret Madrasa Museum. **Source:** URL 3

The siren figure belonging to the XIII century and made with the high relief technique belonging to the 16th century is exhibited in Konya İnce Minaret Madrasa Museum and is included in Visual 3. Body, head, and feet are given in the profile. The tip of its hair, which extends to the neck of the siren, is curved outward. The large almond eyes of the figure draw attention. Its nose and mouth are small. Wing details are given linearly. It is seen that the siren has another wing that extends upwards and ends in the form of a volute. Its claws were also left massively and were roughly worked out without giving details (Özdemir, 2021: 127).



Visual 4. Symmetrical sirens, Niğde Hüdavent Hatun Tomb. **Source:** URL 4

Siren relief in Seljuk tradition in Niğde Hüdavent Hatun Tomb (1312) can be seen in Visual 4. Opposite the siren, there is a second symmetrical siren and three rosettes between them. Sirens have crowns on their heads. In addition, the three rosettes between the siren figures symbolize the sky and heaven. Based on this, sirens accompany the dead souls during their journey from the earth to the sky, and the paradise reached at the end of this journey also confirms the idea that they accompany the dead souls (Öney, 1992: 64-151).



Visual 5. From the tiles of the Karatay Madrasa Tile Works Museum, A, B, C. **Source:** Arik, 2000: 121.

Siren figure 'A' holds one wing adjacent to the body and the other wing in front of its chest, almost like an arm. The bulging chested body of the Siren figure 'B' is depicted in profile, and the head is depicted from the front. It has an oval full face, almond eyes, and a small mouth. It has a crown on the head, and its hair is curled inward on its shoulders. There are moles on the cheek of the figure. Siren figure 'C' on tile has a dove-like bulging body, a crown on its head, thick eyebrows on its oval face, and large slanting eyes. Its wings are attached to its body. There are symmetrical fish figures on both sides of the siren. It has a three-slice crown on its head, and its hair is curved outwards on its shoulders (Arik, 2000: 120).



Visual 6. From Kubadabad palace tiles, A, B, C. **Source:** Arık, 2000: 121.

It is seen that the figure of Siren 'A' has oval facial features. Its eyebrows are in the form of an arc, adjacent to each other. It also has slanted eyes and a small mouth. The hair that ends on the neck of the figure is parted in the middle. Its wings hang down. Its tail is long and sliced (Özdemir, 2021: 127). The wings of the Siren figure 'B' are imposingly spread out to the sides and the tips are curved. Like double-headed eagles, the tail is palmette-shaped. Its claws are drawn realistically strong and large. Its hair is falling from both sides on its white collar. The headdress form cannot be understood because the tiles are broken and spoiled exactly where it comes across (Arık, 2000: 123). The wingtips of the figure resemble double-headed eagles, curved downwards in a sliced manner or upwards as in waterfowl (Avşar, 2012: 6). There is a headdress on the head of the Siren figure 'C' and probably a precious stone in the middle of it. The hair is at nape level. It has an oval full face, tiny lips, and moles on its cheek. Its tail is erected in the air.

3. SIREN FIGURES IN MINIATURES



Visual 7. Semek-i Ayyâr, Bodleian Library, Ms. Ouseley 381, 134a. **Source:** URL 5

Semek-i Ayyâr is one of the most important books prepared in Khorasan in the XII century. One copy is in the Bodleian library in England (Deveci, 2015: 96). In Visual 7, there are two symmetrical siren figures on the tree in the composition. The face of the figure on the right is erased and cannot be seen clearly. The hair of the siren figure on the left is at ear level. It has a pointed cap on its head. The oval-faced figure has slanted eyes, a large nose, and a small mouth. Sliced feather details are given on the wings attached to its body. It has a long orange tail. It clings to the branch of the tree with its thin black claws. There are fine lines on the fluffy chest part. There is a state of watching what is happening below the top of the tree.



Visual 8. Harirî, Makamat, 5847, Bibliothèques Nationale, Paris. **Source:** URL 6

A copy of Harirî's Makamat, written in 1237 in Baghdad, is located in Paris, Bibliothèques Nationale today. Visual 8 depicts the island where the siren lives. In addition to many fairy tale animals, there is also a bird-shaped female-headed siren (Önder, 1968: 5-6). It has figural features which are very similar to Seljuk tiles. It has a fluffy breast like a pigeon and wings attached to its body. He has an oval face, shoulder-length hair, and thick eyebrows. By giving the lip line of the siren figure downwards, it is almost desired to add an expression to its face. It is as if it is worried about the events around it and is pouting.



Visual 9. Kalender Pasha, Prophet Süleyman and Belkıs, Falnâme, TSM H. 1703. y.8b. **Source:** And, 2002: 111.

In the miniature in Falnâme, birds and many land animals are depicted beside the human figures as shown in Visual 9. Among these figures, a hybrid figure draws attention. This is the siren, which is a bird with a human head. Its gaze is towards the place where Süleyman and Belkıs sit on the throne. Its stance is depicted in the profile, and its head is depicted in two-thirds of the profile. The feathers of the figure, whose body shows completely bird features, are in light brown tones, and the feathers on the tail and wings are mixed with white. Its claws are brown and like the claws of a bird of prey. Under the crown on its head, its black hair in the form of zuluf is visible.



Visual 10. Samek with two peacock-sized girls, Kısıa-i Şehr-i Şâtıran, İÜK, T9303. **Source:** And, 2007: 273.

In *Kissa-i Şehr-i Şâtiran*, 64 miniatures from the end of the XVI century contain a part of the story consisting of three parts of the Iranian literature book called *Samak-ı Ayyar*. In the work, there are events that developed after the abduction of *Gülbuy*, the daughter of *Keymanşah*, the future wife of *Ferruhruz*, the sons of *Hurşid Shah* and *Eban Duht*, by *Tutishah*, the king of *Kirmende*. In the story, there are the events that happened to *Ferruhruz* during his journey and the heroes who helped him. *Alem Efruz*, also known as *Samek*, is *Ferruhruz*'s most important assistant and one of the protagonists. In *Visual 10*, there is the scene of the meeting between *Samek* and the birds. Two human-headed bird figures stand next to the tree. These large birds with female heads have peacock-like tails and colorful wings. In front of the birds, *Samek*, who has a tufted turban on his head, is telling something with his arms directed toward the bird figures (*Mimiroğlu*, 2011: 1-28-66). The bird figures featured here differ from the siren figures in other miniatures because of their peacock feather tails, but they seem to share common features with similar body and facial expressions in general.



Visual 11. Siren. Source: URL 7

This Persian manuscript contains the text of *Farah*'s encyclopedia of nature, also known as *Ajayib al-dunya-Wonders of the World* and accompanying illustrations. The texts are illuminated with detailed multicolored drawings of animals, birds, plants, rocks, and people (www.loc.gov/resource). The siren figure in *Visual 11* is described in great detail. The face of the figure given from the profile is expressed with a realistic expression. As in other miniatures, its hair ends on the nape and the ends are curved outwards. On the top of its head, some of the hair is gathered by knotting. The figure with bow-like eyebrows has slanted eyes and a pointed nose. The figure has coral-colored choker-like feathers on its neck. It has a rather fluffy chest and wings attached to its body. Layered feather details on its wings attract attention. The siren has not a very long tail. Orange claws and pointed nails are given in detail.



Visual 12. Siren. Source: URL 8

Visual 12 is in the same manuscript as *Visual 11*. The head of the siren figure here has similar features. Unlike the other example, the figure has wide-opened colored wings.



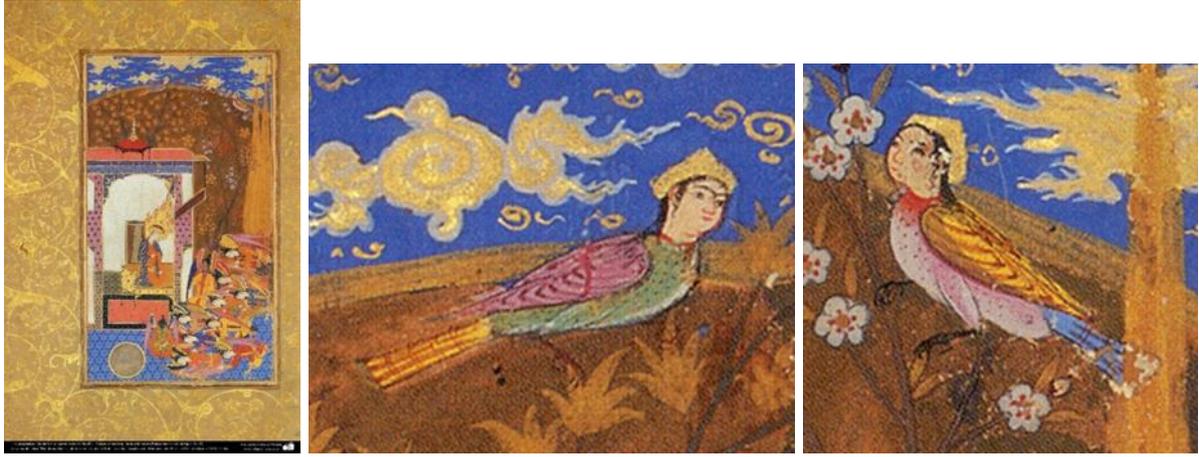
Visual 13. Siren. Source: URL 9

The miracles of the created things and the miraculous aspects of the existing things are given in *Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*. Among these, related celestial objects the moon, the sun, the stars, and the sky, and related terrestrial objects fire, air, water, mountains, rivers, animals, plants, and minerals are explained. In the miniature, in which eight constellations are the subject, there is a siren figure with a peacock tail in the middle. The figure given in profile in Visual 13 has a red hat on its head and stones on the rim. It is seen that the figure, whose gaze is directed to the side, is depicted smiling from the expression on its lips. It has a zuluḥ extending down from its left temple. Its yellow body is fluffy like a pigeon. Its wing, which is sliced and marked by lines, is attached to its body. On the tail feathers extending backward, there are many eye feathers as in peacocks. It also has long legs and claws in yellow. It is similar to the tail feathers of the two sirens in Visual 10.



Visual 14. Siren. Source: URL 10

In a different copy of *Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*, there is a bird with a human head and a peacock-tailed body, as in Visual 13. The head of the figure in Visual 14 is given in dark skin color. There are motifs on the three-slice crown on its head. The adjoining eyebrow also merges with the nose line. Its left ear is clearly drawn, and its hair falls over its shoulders. There are sloppy lines on its fluffy chest. It is given with its wing closed, and it extends its right leg forward. Its tail is similar to that of a peacock, as in Visuals 10 and 13. However, this figure's tail erected in the air is rather sloppy.



Visual 15. Prophet Adam and the prostrating angels, the sirens on the left and right sides of the tree. **Source:**

Anonymous, 2011: 187.

In the miniature of the XVI century, there are Prophet Adam sitting on the throne of the caliph and the angels prostrating. Behind the architectural structure, a large plane tree and blooming spring branches can be seen. Two human-headed birds stand out in the trees (Özaltın, 2021: 76). In Visual 15, the two figures placed opposite each other on the branches of the tree have a crown-shaped cap on their heads and hair loops hanging from the temples. Their bodies are colored differently, their wings are attached to their bodies, and they have long colored tails. When we look at the head parts, the two eyebrows of the figure on the left meet like a single line. Apart from that, two figures are seen to have tiny mouths and noses.



Visual 16. Rocket tradesmen parade, *Sûrnâme-i Hümayun*, TSM H. 1344. **Source:** URL 11

In the *Sûrnâme*, the circumcision wedding of Sultan Murad III's son Mehmet, which lasted 52 days, is told. All the shopkeepers of Istanbul perform their professions in turn in the festivities that turn into a show of the power and magnificence of the Ottoman Empire (Bağcı, Çağman, Renda & Tanındı, 2019: 147). In Visual 16, there is a siren figure in the rocket tradesmen's parade scene. The figure wears a pointed, three-slice headdress made of gold. Its hair, which ends on the back of its neck, is curled back. It also has zulufs hanging down from the temples. It has slanted eyebrows and eyes, and a tiny nose and mouth. On the neck of its body drawn from a profile, a golden collar is worn, almost like a necklace. Its body, wings, and paw are seen in red. In this siren, as in some miniature examples above, its blue tail, reminiscent of a peacock, stands out.

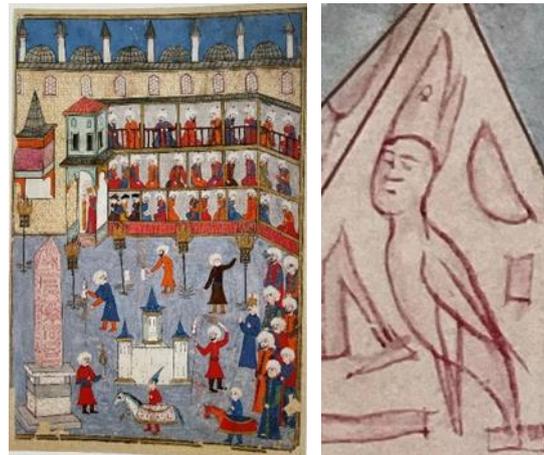


Visual 17. Sugar works, Sûrnâme-i Hümayun, TSM H. 1344, 24b. **Source:** Atasoy, 1997: 34.



Visual 18. Sugar works, Sûrnâme-i Hümayun, TSM H. 1344, 25a. **Source:** Atasoy, 1997: 35.

In Visuals 17 and 18, the confectioner tradesmen passing various animal figures made of sugar through the presence of the sultan in the festival of 1582 are depicted on two opposite pages. Among these sugar sculptures, which were large enough to be carried by a single person (And, 2020: 110), there is a bird-bodied and human-headed siren figure on pages 24b and 25a. There are three sliced golden crowns on the heads of the figures. The siren in 24b has very elegant facial features. It has a full breast like a pigeon. Both sirens are drawn in profile. The sugar sculpture in the shape of a siren in 25b is depicted with the hair tip curled outward, as in the stone relief exhibited in the Konya İnce Minaret Madrasa Museum.



Visual 19. Night shows, Sûrnâme-i Hümayun, TSMK H. 1344. **Source:** Anonymous, 2010: 84.



Visual 20. The looting of pots, Sünnâme-i Hümayun, TSMK H. 1344, 31a. **Source:** Anonymous, 2010: 105.

Horse Square and İbrahim Pasha Palace, as the area where the festivities take place, is a place that does not change in most of the paintings (Bağcı et al., 2019: 147). Among these miniatures in the Horse Square in Visuals 19 and 20, there is an obelisk from the monuments in the square in the scenes where night shows in Visual 19 and pot looting in Visual 20 take place. The obelisk is a monument from Egypt. In its original form, the monument placed in front of the Karnak Amon Ra Temple was made on behalf of pharaoh Tuthmosis III (Yıldırım, 2013: 102). It is noticed that the standing stone monument in these two miniatures has various figures on it, just like the real monument, and the figures on the top of it remind the siren figure. At the head of the siren figures, which are depicted with plain lines, there is a conical head. The wings of the figures given in profile are attached to their bodies and their tails are downwards. In Visual 19, the siren has no claws. The siren in Visual 20 has claws and its right foot is in the air. It also has linear details on its wings and body.

4. CONCLUSION

Within the scope of the study, siren figures are found in miniatures in Hariri's Makamat, Semek-i Ayyâr, Falnâme, Kıssa-i Şehr-i Şâtıran, Acâ'ibü'l-Mahlûkât and Sünnâme-i Hümayun. Apart from these, it should not be forgotten that there may be siren figures in different miniature examples, but the examples inaccessible sources are tried to be given. The figure of the siren, as a supernatural character with symbolic expressions and ascribed different meanings, is a figure that we encounter in almost all fields of art. Siren figures, believed to have supernatural powers with different mythical qualities in different cultures, are widely used in different kinds of works.

There are interpretations that sometimes single or sometimes two siren figures take place in the compositions on buildings, tombstones, sculptures, tile panels, miniatures, especially as an iconographic expression tool, helping people, being a protector, accompanying the spirit that comes out of the body after death, etc. This imaginary creature with a human head and a bird-shaped body are usually drawn in profile. It also has a crown-shaped cap on the head. It is seen that its hair is shoulder-length and curved outward. In fact, whether it is stone relief, sculpture, or tile decoration, it is seen that there are more similarities with almost minor differences in all of them. In the miniature examples that are discussed as a subject, it is determined that the figure is depicted with similar facial expressions and body type.

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