Oriental Rugs From Persia, Afghanistan, Turkey ...

- **Turkmen Rugs**
- **Geography**
- West Turkestan is an area of some 700,000 square kilometres with the Caspian Sea to the west, the Mangyshlak Peninsula to the northeast and the Kapet-Dagh Mountains and the outskirts of the Hindukush forming a semicircle to the south. West of what since 1924 has been the border of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Turkmenistan are Afghanistan and the Iranian province of Khorassan. At the eastern side is the huge Chinese province of Xinjiang (Sinkiang). Usually referred to in the context of weaving literature as East Turkestan. Thus viewed in simple geographic terms, it is easier to understand the nature of this Eurasian basin, part of the ancient world's dry belt.
- To the western side of the region is the Karakum desert and to the east, between the Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya rivers, is the Kyzylkum desert. To the south, that there was earlier the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan, now this independent state, are the important trading centres of Bukhara and Samarkand. The latter having been a major post along the ancient Silk Road, which ran from China through East Turkestan and on westwards, via Tashkent in Uzbekistan, Mary (Merv) in Turkmenistan and Khorasan. Many different ethnic groups have occupied this region for millennia and among those associated with weaving, in addition to the Turkmen's themselves, are the Uzbeks, Karakalpaks and Kirgiz.
- **Historical Research**
- Serious research into the weaving culture of the Turkmen's must, of course, encompass more than aesthetic appreciation. The beauty of such weavings has unquestionably been the most important factor both for historians and collectors but it is the starting point, the motivation for a greater curiosity. The history, genealogy, beliefs and way of life of the Turkmen steppe peoples are all of great importance to their art. Turkmen rugs, therefore, with their distinctive palettes, motifs and compositions, are not merely examples of a strange and exotic 'folk' art but represent a highly complex and historically continuous culture. This strong historical continuity was made possible by the innate conservatism of Western and Central Asian tribal cultures and, most importantly, by their nomadic, or semi-nomadic, way of life. The Turkmen's (who belong to a Western Turkic language group - unlike any other Central Asian peoples) have thus been able to maintain and develop their own special culture.
  Because the majority were nomads or semi-nomads, hardly any written sources exist to indicate the origins of the Turkmen's hut it is clear that they are descended from the Oghuz tribe, whose genealogies list a few names still found in the 19th century. Other descendants of the Oghuz were the Seljuk's and Ottomans, who built great empires from the 11th century onwards, their power and territorial expansion creating a Turkic-based culture into eastern Europe, North Africa and Spain. Within this historical context, Therefore, it is not difficult to see the importance of the Oghuz and their descendants; and the history of the Oghuz. With all its later political and geographical ramifications, is crucial to a proper understanding of Turkmen weaving, as will become clear.

- **Way of Life**
- The earliest researchers into the Turkmen's and their weaving culture started from the assumption that the Turkmen had always been nomads and therefore the historical roots of their weaving were to he found in nomadic traditions. That the art of knotting grew out of the practical necessities of a nomadic way of life appears to he a convincing hypothesis. Mobility was an important requirement of this lifestyle and all the nomad's personal property had to he, as far as possible. Light, easily transportable and made from readily available raw materials, the most important of which was the wool from their own flocks of sheep. Piled carpets provided protection from the cold underfoot - in these climates, freezing temperatures seep up

from the ground at night - and could also he used as covers and blankets.
However, the general opinion today is that although nomads unquestionably played an important part in the development of pile weaving, they may not actually have invented it. In the nomadic environment, it was easier to make felts and fiat-weaves. Felting, indeed, is probably among the oldest of textile techniques. No loom is needed and items can he made in a comparatively short time. By contrast, the production of a knotted carpet can take several months, and thus it is hardly a technique suitable for a nomadic way of life. Whenever carpets are depicted in early art, whether Eastern or Western, they are associated with power and wealth, both religious and secular. From such evidence, it would seem that for a long time pile weavings were the preserve of the upper echelons of the societies, which made or imported them. It is therefore more likely that they were produced by settled communities rather than by semi-nomadic ones. The manufacture of rugs by knotting woollen threads on to a net-like ground structure was probably derived from flat-weave techniques. The development from a continuous flat-weave such as sumak, through such loose pileping as the loop-pile technique to the final refinement of 'knotting' seems logical. It was not only geography and climate, which forced many of the inhabitants of Central Asia into a nomadic way of life. There was also the constant plundering and pillaging which went on between neighbouring groups, the fight for good grazing lands at different times of the year, the struggle to secure access to water supplies and the constant internecine battles between the Turkmen's themselves. The origins and development of equestrianism among the steppe nomads, starting with the Scythians around 700 B.C., are also of considerable importance when discussing the history of this region.
The Turkmen's were divided into tribes, the number of which it is now hard to estimate; the tribes themselves were further sub-divided into various kinship groups and individual families, much like the large tribal confederations in Iran, many of which are also wholly or in part of Turkic origin. The Turkmen family lived in a distinctive tent, called a yurt, which could be erected and dismantled within a few hours. The base of a yurt was a lattice-like construction made of willow with a domed roof and covered in felt.
Horses were the key to a tribe's power, and served as their major status symbol. The principal source of its wealth was its sheep which provided wool, milk and, on festive occasions, meat. The task of hooking after the flocks, as well as weaving, fell to women. Other raw materials for weaving, although to a much lesser extent, were obtained from camels and goats.

Tribal Rugs Identification

While any pile rugs will upgrade the appearance of any room, tribal rugs with their unique colours and designs, lend a special warmth that cannot be achieved otherwise. The tribal rugs is essentially a one-off work of tribal art usually created by nomadic or semi-nomadic people living in small villages or on the open plains where the raw materials for the rugs come from their own animals from or bought from shops along their routes of travel. It can take several months for one person to make even a small prayer rug, and larger carpets may require the daily work of several persons for more than a year. The value of the tribal rug is therefore directly related to the time and effort made to create it. The quality of the materials and complexity of design affect the time required to create these carpets and these factors also affect the value. An important factor in determining a carpets value is the source of the carpet- i.e.: where was it made and by what tribal group? Carpets of generally similar design, size, materials and workmanship can be made in widely different geographical areas. For example, a Tekke Turkmen rug made by the Tekke tribes in northern Afghanistan and in the former USSR is usually more valuable than a similar quality carpet made in the sweatshops of Pakistan. Today, extremely high quality imitations of Persian silk rugs are now being made in China. Caucasian tribal rugs designs are being copied in Iran and Pakistan, etc.
The serious carpet collector must therefore be armed with sufficient knowledge to study a carpet and with reasonable accuracy, identify some key features about the carpets design, construction and origin. While an amateur collector may never be able to "smell the wool" and tell what village the sheep came

from, there is considerable enjoyment and satisfaction in successfully researching a carpet to confirm its origin.
This clause will outline many of the variables in carpet identification and will provide some general guidelines to follow in assessing your future purchases. It is not to be confused as a definitive reference document, and should be used only in context with other carpet books and your own experiences.

Elements To Consider In Rug Identification

There are a multitude of elements which are regularly employed to identify and categorize carpets. The most important element is EXPERIENCE - but this is gained through long term contact with the carpet trade such as a dealer would have. These dealers often have a family history of carpet trading with skills passed from generation to generation - experience the average collector can never hope to achieve. Luckily there are volumes of research available in the forms of books and films, but the collector still must learn certain basic skills of how to study and feel out a carpet he is considering purchasing. The basic elements of rug identification identified in this paper include:
a) Nature of the Rug: What is it - a rug made of pile knotted into a textile backing (knotted pile carpets), or a pile less flat woven fabric which are embroidered or brocaded (kilims), or a simple flat weave. All rugs discussed in this paper will be pile carpets.
b) Design: This is possibly the least dependable element in carpet identification, but a general knowledge of the characteristics of designs used in carpets can help somewhat to focus on the geographic areas where such carpets are normally made and provide a good starting point.
c) Materials Used: What material is the Warp and Weft threads made of. Is it wool, silk, cotton, artificial silk? What is the pile made of- goat wool, sheep wool, silk, camel hair, etc. The kind of materials used often provides important clues as to a carpets origin.
d) Structure: The manner a weaver arranges the three elements of a rug, the warp, the weft and the pile leaves a distinctive handwriting. This is perhaps the most significant element in carpet identification. The type of knots, the layout of warp and weft and the "feel" of the resulting carpet are learnable skills.
e) The Selvage: This is the manner of finishing the edge of the knotted carpet.
f) The Fringe: Pile carpets are fined off at the end by a fringe usually made of the warp threads. Other decorations are often used- which account for another element in the weaver's signature.
g) Size and Shape: Carpets from certain tribal groups are made consistently one size or several standard sizes. This knowledge can help to differentiate an original from a reproduction of a similar design.
h) Colour: The final colours of a tribal rug are determined by the dyestuffs used, the kinds of materials used, the method of initial washing done, and the age of the piece. Dealers place much emphasis on "vegetable dyes" in tribal rugs, indicating that this is an indication of age (and greater value). What is usually not realized by the new collector is the fact that chemical dyes have been around since the 19th century, and that many modern carpets (especially tribal’s) are still often made with vegetable dyestuffs (or a combination of both). Unfortunately, colour identification is a skill necessitating substantial professional experience, but some basic tricks can be learned by the amateur.

Tribal Carpets of Afghanistan

To write effectively and intelligently about afghan carpets from the tribal areas of Afghanistan and the former central Asian States of the USSR would require many years of experience and personal knowledge of these carpet making regions. Unfortunately, we don't qualify in any of these areas, but I do have a number of reference books written by experts in the field- and the following is a compilation of observations from these volumes.
This clause will only serve to help put the background of the carpet making areas in central Asia in some perspective, and to help identify some of the more recognizable afghan rug designs and characteristics of carpets from these areas. When one considers the source of carpets from Afghanistan

and the Former States of the USSR one must realize that the tribal peoples of the mountains really don't comprehend or honour modern geopolitical borders. Specific tribes exist on both sides and across the modern borders as if they didn't exist. The Baluchi tribes for example, extend from Eastern Iran through Western Afghanistan and into Pakistan. Similarly, the Turkoman tribes extend all across the northern borders.
Herat, in the Western part of Afghanistan, has a history of over two thousand five hundred years and was once occupied by Alexander the Great, and subsequently invaded by Mongols led by Genghis Khan and then Tamerlan in the 13th century. Herat was considered part of the Persian Empire, and the Persian influence in carpet making in Herat is still seen.

Types Of Afghan Carpets

There are many names for the type of weavings found in Afghanistan and Central Asia. For example, in Herat and the Northern Turkmen tribes an ensi (or engsi) is a rug designed to serve as an internal tent door. This same design is called a Hatchli (or Hatchlu) in Iran, and a purdah (or purdhu) in other parts of Afghanistan - all of them referring to a door curtain or closure.
A young tribal girl who has been taught the art of carpet weaving from a young age would probably have the following carpets and weavings in her dowry:
One Main Carpet (ghali) 9ft.10in. x 7ft.
Two small rugs (dip ghali) 6ft. x 3ft.
One engsi
One decoration for over the engsi (kapunuk)
12 small personal belonging bags 2ft.x1.5ft. and 4ft.x 1.5 ft. (mafrash & torba)
two large bedding bags (chuval or Juwal) always made in pairs
three decorated tent-bands (aq yup) 50 ft long and 2 " to 1 ft wide

Materials: The material used for making tribal rugs are basically what these nomads have at their immediate disposal: wool from their sheep which is used in the warp and weft as well as the pile. Some tribes use goat hair for overbidding the sides (selvedge's) or rugs. Camel hair is especially prized for the field areas of prayer carpets. When possible the sheep are driven into streams to wash them prior to shearing. The wool is then sorted by colour and quality and then combed and spun. The wool is then dyed one person can generally can generally spin one kilo per day.
Dyes: Natural dyes are still used, but since the 1950s pre-dyed wool yarn (using synthetic dyes) readily found in the towns and villages are often substituted for or combined with the natural dyes. The wild colours (some almost iridescent) often found in many afghan rugs are surely synthetics. In natural dying, the yarn is pre-soaked in a fixing bath of alum, copper sulphate, ferrous sulphate, tin or urine. The yarn is then transferred to a dye bath and soaked until the desired colour is obtained. The yarn is then washed and hung out to dry. Dying was usually done by the men. Natural dyes fade beautifully and often show as uneven colouring (abrash). Abrash (meaning speckled or marbled) is commonly the result of a weaver running out of wool and having to dye another lot or buying a similar colour from elsewhere. Abrash in no way detracts from the value of a tribal carpet, but is a desirable characteristic of a tribal weaving. Naturally dyed wool will fade right through whereas synthetic dyes will fade only on the tips where the light hits it. A newer tribal carpet can be "mellowed" by placing it in the direct sun for several days.
Natural dyes originate from the following materials:
Reds: Madder - Root of Madder Plant - (ranges from reds to orange and purple)
Cochineal: produced from the female shield louse (Blue /red tone)
Lac Deep purple: from the excretions of a scale insect native to India Kermes. From an insect which breeds on the Kermes oak
Blues: Indigo plant (Dyers Wood)
Black: Can be achieved by using a very dark blue or by use of a bath of tannic acid, acorn cups, pomegranate skin, oak galls, and then adding to a bath iron sulphate to make the color fast. This can

produce a weakness in the black wool which in carpets 50 to 100 years old can be seen as worn black areas where the remaining pile is still OK.
Yellow: Many sources including; Dyers weed; Saffron; wild chamomile; tanners sumac; buckthorn; pomegranate tree; isperek (a flowering larkspur)
Green: Obtained from walnuts and olive leaves? Or by blending blue and yellow agents
Brown: Can be natural undyed wool or by dying with fresh or dried pods of the walnut, oak guls or acorn cups.
Looms: Tribal carpets are almost always done on the horizontal or ground loom. This is due to the fact that the nomads rarely remain in one location for more than two months. The horizontal loom can be easily dismantled and packed on an animal to the new location and then staked out on the ground again. A Turkoman woman will usually take at least six months to finish a carpet 6ft.6in. by 4ft. The loom therefore can be set up and taken down four to six times before a carpet or Kelim is finished. This often results in different tensions in the warp threads and is the reason why tribal rugs often have an irregular shape. While this irregularity is part of the charm of a tribal rug, carpets which do not lie flat should be avoided.

Tribal Rugs & Carpets of Persia (Iran)

Background:

The primary tribal rugs weaving areas of Iran (Persia) are mostly known by the city names from where the typical rich and beautiful wool and silk rugs with curvilinear floral designs are made. These cities include Isfahan; Nain; Qum; Tabriz, Mashhad, etc. The woven products of this territory have characteristics that are similar to one another and are strikingly different than other weaving areas. The city Persian Carpet are distinctly floral, representing leaf, bud and flower and show a tendency to naturalistic drawing with graceful and often intricate lines. Their colour schemes of delicate tones are not only beautiful, but are in perfect harmony. The similarity of Persian Rugs is partly due to past influence political, as well as the common ties of race and religion. All of this territory - including what is now western Afghanistan - was repeatedly under one central dominant power. The peoples of Iran, with the exception of a few Parsees who cling to the Zoroastrian faith, all are Mohammedans, who frequently make pilgrimages to the same shrines, and thus have an opportunity for an active interchange of ideas and materials.

City Persian Carpets

The fields of old Persian pieces are lavishly covered with intricate designs of buds and blossoms supported by vines and tendril, and frequently encircled by arabesques that interlace so as to form a harmonious whole. Modern pieces frequently have a solid colour field with central medallions and triangular corners defined by graceful lines. The field is often covered by realistically drawn or conventionalized floral designs that are arranged with studied precision. Surrounding the fields are several borders containing undulating vines with pendant flowers or palmettos coordinated in design and colour with the main pattern. It is in, however, the colours, which are delicate yet rich, subdued yet lustrous, that these Iranian rugs surpass all others. Their most distinctive tones are blues, reds, browns, and greens so arranged that the ground colours of border and field generally contrast, yet remain in near perfect harmony. On some city Persian carpets a central motif or medallion is sometimes omitted and instead an all-over design of repetitive floral icons is adopted. To attain the fine and beautiful curvilinear designs common to Persian rugs, the intensity of knots must be increased. Where a tribal rug may have 80-100 knots per square "(KPSI), a Persian City carpet could have 200-300 KPSI, allowing the closely spaced knots to create a visually curved line. Tribal carpets, on the other hand, usually use geometric designs which are easier to achieve with wider spaced knots.

Persian Tribal Rugs

The names of tribal weaving areas in Iran are usually tied to a nearby city and/or to a tribal name. The Baluch, for example, are found throughout southern Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Kurds are found

in many areas in Northwest Iran, while in other weaving areas, tribal people with Caucasian and Turkoman origins are found. The tribal rugs are usually made with natural materials - including dyes.

Here provide additional details on some of the predominant tribal rugs areas of Persia.

Some Basic Facts about Caucasian Rugs

1. All Caucasian Rugs are made with the Turkish or Giordes knot
2. "Kazak" carpets are not from Kazakhstan (which is on the other side of the Caspian Sea) - but are from an area in what is now Armenia.
3. The colours of older Caucasian Rugs are mostly made from natural materials found in the respective tribal regions.
4. Most older Caucasian rugs are "all wool" - not only the knotted pile, but the warp and weft threads are usually made from hand spun woollen yarn or goat hair However, one can sometimes find older carpets (and more frequently in some newer examples) with cotton warps and wefts
5. Warp threads can be made of undyed light yarn in one area, and dark or mixed in another. Goat hair is also seen for the warp threads, but never for the pile.
6. Weft threads can be different colours: rusty red/brown, blue or white.
7. The number and colours of selvages often can be an identifier to the area of origin

Types of Caucasian Rugs

Akstafa Rugs

Located in the North-western part of Azerbaijan and today is a major source of new rugs with neo-Caucasian patterns. The true Akstafa rugs are also related to the Shirvan and are often called Shirvan-Akstafa. A typical feature of the Akstafa design is the bird like creatures with a long neck and a peacock's tail and a bottom like the teeth of a handsaw. Sometimes the bird has widely spaced legs. The same bird also shows up in Shirvan designs. Older Akstafa rugs are usually proportionally long, roughly knotted and have a repeating design of crude cocks and polygonal medallions longitudinally. There are usually 3 warp threads - light gray or brown.

Armenian Rugs

Armenian rugs are usually defined by the names of sub-regional rug making areas such as the Sevan, Kazak Erivan and Karabakh groups (defined later).

Avar Rugs

The Avars are one of the largest of the Dagestan tribes and make a rug with a characteristic design of repeating rows of stepped polygons - without hooks. The main borders are usually made up of diagonal stripes. The warp and weft threads are light or mingled with light brown yarn. Usually has a double selvage with the outermost of a white colour.

Baku-Chila Rugs

Baku is the capital of Azerbaijan and came under Russian protection in 1723 under Alexander II. Usually has single or multiples of stepped octagons often surrounded by a field of Botehs or sometimes in Kuba rugs, carnations.

Bidjov Rugs

Often has a cross and a crescent depicted in an abstract geometric pattern. Usually has a running dog border and triple dark blue selvages.

Bordjalou or Borchalo Rugs

Bordjalou is the northernmost town associated with production of Kazak rugs. Caucasian rugs from this area often incorporate octagons with latch-hook edges. Borders used include the running dog, the T-Meander, and a unique reciprocal arrow border design. The warp is usually light colour and alternating high and low due to varying weft tension (results in longitudinal ridges on back) Weft threads are rusty red. Quadruple selvages- wrapped two brown and two red. Often a cross motif is seen.

Cheleberd Rugs

The most typical design is often erroneously referred to as an "Eagle Claw Kazak" or "Sunburst Kazak". In fact, the figure is really a flaming cross - giving a clue to the Christian history of the Armenians who make them. The faded red dye is made from the madder root, a tint found only in the Karabagh district. The fishbone motif and the crab garlands in the border are typical. Long rugs of this type are rarer. They often have small animal and human figures worked into the field and dated- sometimes indicating that the rug was a wedding gift. Design influence from Northwest Persia.

Chondoresk Rugs

Often called a "Cloud Kazak" with octagon including a figure which looks like a Chinese cloud design, but which is a highly stylized Greek Omega figure left by Alexander the Great! The rugs are especially colourful.

Dagestan Rugs

Dagestan is located in the North-eastern corner of the Caucasus, and the many tribes including Kuba, Shirvan, Kuba, etc. are mostly Muslim. The specific districts are described separately.

Gendje Rugs

Gendje was the name of the Khanate of the same name, but was converted eventually to Elisavetpol and then to Kirovabad. Armenians were the rug makers, and these rugs are often referred to as "Genje-Kazak". Some were typically narrow and long and used for hall runners and for stairs. Border ornaments can be running dogs, crosses, leaves, meanders, etc. The field were characteristically diagonal stripes of varying colours filled with almost any kind of figure - except rarely the boteh.

Georgian Rugs

Georgian Rugs borrow designs from the various Kazak groups. One can sometimes find an old prayer rug, with a Georgian cross in the niche! Warps are undyed light wool weft threads light brown and are 2 to 4 in number. Double or triple selvages and the fringes are sometimes plaited.

Karabagh Rugs

A Karabagh rug in the 19th and 20th century was influenced by design requirements from Europe including the "Gul Franki" design. The cross is a common ornament and is often found on Muslim prayer rugs! The quality of Karabagh rugs can vary wildly from super fine to really rough. The designs, dyestuffs, wool types and knotting techniques vary according to the specific tribal area.

Karachoph Rugs

Characteristic design includes an octagonal medallion surrounded by four rectangles with star figures inside. Borders highly decorative. The warp is usually undyed gray yarn and wefts are triple and rusty brown selvages single

Karagashli Rugs

Usually bright colours on dark fields with mystical animals and sometimes crosses. Usually densely knotted and highly prized by collectors.

Konangulkent or Konagkend Rugs

Located in the Kuba district, Konangulkent rugs bear an Armenian hallmark and often include artistic crosses. The design in the borders often show S-s with a line through them making them into D-s standing for Dios=God. One sometimes find "rocket ships" spaced along the edge of the field with stylized "blast" coming out of the base. Minor borders of carnations are common.

Kuba Rugs

Kuba rugs come in many qualities, but non-are sub-standard. Patterns can repeat themes from neighboring Perpedil, Konagkend, and Seichur, but a Kuba usually has a border with a variant of the "Running Dog", stars, carnations, and/or flowers. The field is usually a dark indigo. Warps are light or light brown, wefts are double and light, selvages double and light.

Lenkoran Rugs

Lenkoran is located on the Caspian on the southeast corner of Azerbaijan. The Lenkoran rug characteristically has a series of "tortoise" figures. The ground or field colour is usually dark. The warp is dark or brownish, with double weft threads of brown or rusty red. Persian Malayer rugs using the same tortoise figure use single wefts and the wefts are visible.

Lori Pambak Rugs

From Georgia. Warp light yarn; two brown weft threads

Marasali Rugs

Unusually fine prayer rugs with distinctive Botehs each with zigzag edges. Border designs vary widely. Very fine quality and clipped thin. Warps can be light yarn and of varying colours wefts and double selvages are always white.

Perepedil Rugs

One design is found consisting of: rams horn in field; horizontal crosses along inner guard band with ends of shorter part of cross bent like coat hanger; animal figure with 6 legs; and many other motifs dispersed through field. Quality can vary from super fine to very rough. The warp, thin weft threads and selvages are of light undyed woollen yarn. Copies are sometimes made in Persia using silk warps.

Seichur Rugs

Seichur rugs are from the northern part of the Kuba area 30 Km from Dagestan. Their rugs are often distinguished by repetitive "St. Andrews" cross motifs. The running dog border is also a common characteristic of a Seichur rug. These Caucasian rugs are usually specially fine with a high knot count. The employ wool warps and sometimes cotton wefts. Older Seichur tend to be elongated. Seichur rugs were also made with all-over flower "Gul Franki" motifs to please the European trade in the 19th century.

Sevan or Sewan Rugs

The Sevan rugs have very distinctive design- usually with a large stylized cruciform medallion, with butterfly wings (sometimes called a Shield or Butterfly Kazak). The centre part of the medallion is usually a rectangular figure with hooks and decoration. In each corner is usually a tree figure or some other motif. The field is often filled with animal figures, "S" shapes, rosettes, flowers, stars etc.

Shirvan Rugs

Shirvan is one of the principal weaving areas of the Caucasus stretching from the central east coast some 400 km inland and encompassing towns which produce particular design variations common to the Shirvan group. These include Bidjov, Marasali, Khila, Surahani, Baku and Saliani. The Shirvan rugs are noted as being some of the finest rugs from Caucasian. They are usually thin and densely knotted. The warp threads are usually light and undyed brown sheep's wool spun together. The wefts are light and thin, and selvages are usually white over double or triple threads. Cotton wefts are also seen, as are silk wefts

Soumak or Sumak Rugs

When one talks about a flat woven Kelim- one almost always hears mention of the kilims from Soumak. They are distinguishable by the fact that the pattern is visible only from one side- with the reverse often having threads of yarn 2 to 4 cm long left hanging on the back. The Soumak kilims are heavy and stiff and make a great floor rug. They are found in bag faces, animal covers and have been used as curtains and bed covers. Designs are almost always bold and colourful and employ many of the design patterns of the knotted Caucasian rugs.

Talish Rugs

Talish borders on Persian Azerbaijan and encompasses Lenkoran and Moghan rug areas. These rugs are noted for their elongated shape- often in the form of a runner. A common motif is the St Andrew's cross, separated by octagonal medallions. Occasionally the Lenkoran Tortoise motif replaces the St Andrews cross. Warps are a mixture of undyed beige and Brown wool, wefts are usually 2 strands of gray cotton.

Carpets and Rugs from China

Many aspects of Chinese rugs make them stand out against the vast stylistic panorama of Oriental carpets. In fact, Chinese carpets are immediately identifiable because of these singular aspects, beginning with their decorative motifs, which appear suspended on the field, unattached to one another and without strong outlines. The palette is restricted and neither lively nor contrasting; it is limited to six basic tints and all their various shadings, and these colours are used in accordance with a singular sensitivity directed at creating harmonious and delicate arrangements dominated by yellow and blue. Finally, the style employed does not show the usual and insurmountable discrimination between the geometric language and the floral but lives in a happy medley of the two. The designs are of both the geometric-abstract and the naturalistic type, but they are distinguished by their symbolic character. The most common layouts are the central medallion, the "four-and-one" Medallion, various kinds of grids, and those with motifs arranged more or less symmetrically. The borders, conceived as frames for the carpet, bear a wide variety of motifs, prominent among them peonies and other floral decorations various symbols, frets, swastikas, and T designs.
The technical characteristics of Chinese carpets also set them apart from other Oriental carpets. They are knotted with the asymmetrical knot with a particularly low density of coarse knots. To hide the roughness of the cotton foundation, the wool pile is trimmed somewhat high. At the beginning of the 20th century the practice began of cutting the pile to make the designs stand out further. Special shears designed for the purpose are used to cut around the outlines of the figures, and this cutting sometimes goes farther and involves trimming the pile to different heights, leaving the areas of the decorations higher than the ground areas. Antique carpets tend to be squarish (75 x 100 " on average), while more recent examples are of varying forms and are sometimes quite large (115 x 150 " on average).

The carpet and official Chinese art

Carpet making was not accepted as one of the great courtly arts in China until around the second half of the 17th century, much later than in any of the other areas of Oriental carpet making. The late date can be partially explained by the limited availability of wool in China, but it is primarily a result of the specific characteristics of knotting, which do not permit the full translation of China's aesthetic canons, which tend to favour the rendering of fine detail and calligraphic perfection. This was not a matter of introducing a new product from abroad, as had happened in India, but of raising to a higher level a product known and used for centuries, by at least part of the Chinese population. In fact, the technique of knotting was probably introduced in China during ancient times by the central Asian peoples who invaded the north-western provinces. The tradition of Chinese carpet making was developed in those north-western provinces, and even when the official culture began to take an interest in carpets, the production of carpets continued to be circumscribed within the north-eastern regions, where it was practiced in private workshops. Although not developed in specialized court workshops, the art of the

Chinese carpet progressed, always following the general aesthetic canons of Chinese art and the wishes of the ruling class.

The style of Chinese carpets

The style of Chinese carpets is very different from that of carpets made in Islamic countries, and this difference begins with the general concept of the composition. In China, the space of the carpet is not conceived as an empty area that must be completely filled with decorations joined one to another, but is understood instead as a simple support for traditional designs that exist independently from one another, with no ornamental ties and no horror vacui. In Chinese thinking every art form represents only another vehicle for expressing universal concepts using codified symbolic motifs, and these motifs always maintain their individual meaning, regardless of their context or relationship to other symbols. In this way the field is conceived as a flexible space in which the various traditional designs are suspended individually.

Even so, the designs are always regulated by a compositional layout, even when there are so few of them that there almost seems to be no layout. The Chinese decorative language, which seeks calligraphic perfection, is expressed in carpets using both the geometric and floral styles. The two styles are combined with such refined skill that they create not a hybrid or confused language but one that is balanced and elegant, composed of rigidly geometric motifs and others that are softly curvilinear. The layouts used most often are the central medallion accompanied by four corner medallions and the "four-and-one" medallion. The medallion is conceived in a singular way, however, and has no definite form and is not completed by pendants; rather, it is composed of the assembly of several elements, such as mythical animals, flowers, or geometric figures, all grouped together usually in a circle, and often without any enclosing line to contain them with precision. The grid layout, a typically Chinese form, is used a great deal in antique examples. It involves a geometric grid spread across the entire field; the grid is composed of various shapes, such as swastikas, "round parentheses," or the special "grain of rice" motifs, which are composed of small oblique segments, arranged to point in all four directions. There are also full-field decorations using naturalistic floral motifs, in particular the often used classic peony and lotus flower. Another popular layout is distinguished by the presence on the field of various symbolic figures.

Column carpets, so-called because they were made to be tied around the columns in Buddhist temples in place of paintings, constitute an absolutely original genre. They were made so that when fixed in place around a column their decoration would progress in a continuous way, with dragons twisting around the column accompanied by other important religious and philosophical symbolic elements, all of them widely spaced.

Unlike the Islamic border, the Chinese border is not understood as a fundamental element to complete the field but simply as an unimportant frame to be filled with floral or geometric motifs, often in harmonic contrast with the design in the field. Among the designs most often used in main borders are various frets, often presented with three-dimensional effects; swastikas; T motifs; and floral motifs, such as peonies or lotus flowers, rendered in a naturalistic manner. One of the characteristic decorations of the minor borders is known as the "pearl" motif and is composed of small white disks that usually appear on a blue ground. Also noteworthy is the use Man outer guard, which is brown in the oldest examples and blue in later ones, datable to the beginning of the 19th century onward.

The palette of Chinese carpets is markedly different from that of Islamic carpets, for it is not based on variety, vivacity, or contrast, and knows nothing of the marked predominance of red found in Islamic works. Chinese taste is based on several basic tints, including yellow, blue, white, light red, black, and brown, making capable use of the possible shadings, so as to obtain harmonious and elegant effects, such as light yellow on gilded yellow or apricot pink on salmon red. The predominant colours are yellow and blue, symbols, respectively, of the earth and the sky. In carpets from before the second half of the 19th century, the ground of the field is almost exclusively yellow, while it is usually a deep blue in later carpets.

Old Chinese carpets & Rugs

After its period of greatest splendour, attested to by the surviving examples datable to between the 18th and early 19th century, the Chinese carpet began a slow process of decline. The carpets made after 1860-1870 show the signs of enslavement to Western taste: the motifs are less pure, less refined, and more affected; and the colours are in a wide range of pastel tones, thanks to the introduction of chemical dyes. The field is either too empty or is overfilled; the borders are enlarged and complicated; the grounds are almost all blue, and the knotting, while more refined, is less traditional. During the second half of the 19th century the imperial factories, such as that of Peking, and the many other factories directed by Western entrepreneurs began to replace the small provincial workshops. The efforts to meet increasing commercial demands gradually led to the decadence and finally the death of the traditional Chinese carpet. The final expiration of the true Chinese carpet occurred around 1920. At that time landscapes and human figures were first introduced to the decoration of carpets, but even more important was the preference shown a hybrid genre, an imitation of the 17th-century floral French carpets produced in the factories of Savonnerie and Aubusson. Several technical stratagems were involved in the creation of this hybrid genre, such as the differentiated trimming of the pile (higher for the decorative motifs) and cutting around the outlines of the designs, both systems introduced to make the decorations stand out against the ground.

Major production areas

Because of the general stylistic homogeneity of Chinese carpets, determining the provenance of a carpet based on design alone is not at all easy; however, chromatic and technical differences, along with some stylistic variations, have permitted the identification of several similar groups that can be attributed-albeit amid a thousand uncertainties-to specific production areas. Most of these few production areas are located in the northwest, the area traditionally associated with the production of carpets.

Area of Ningxia. The carpets produced in this area are considered the classic Chinese carpets, the most antique and thus the best; they are distinguished by motifs rendered in a pure style, by yellow or at the most pink grounds, and by prevalently blue designs. The term Ningxia has been much abused, to the point that all Chinese carpets are divided into those from Ningxia and those made later, datable to the early 20th century; the term is used commercially as a definition of quality. Technically, these carpets are distinguished by the density of their knots, which is very low with respect to all other Chinese carpets, and for their somewhat soft- foundations. The decorative motifs used include all the characteristic types common to Chinese carpets.

Area of Gansu. Carpets from this area have livery colours and decorations that resemble those of eastern Turkestan, as is indicated in the widespread use of the superimposed-medallions layout using three medallions shaped like roundish octagons. Typical of the area is the bulo motif, which is composed of tiny red, white, and blue disks spread across the field. In general, the designs in bright red or orange.

Area Baotau. Made only at the end of the 19th century, these carpets are distinguished by their dense workmanship, small sizes, and decoration. This decoration was initially based primarily on stylized designs and then later was based on realistic motifs, such as landscapes and human figures. The grounds are usually red.

Peking. This carpet factory was set up around 1860 and made a vast number of carpets. These carpets, somewhat large and thick, usually have blue, beige, or ivory grounds decorated with bunches of naturalistic flowers, various symbols, and central medallions, often composed of landscape elements.

Eastern Turkestan Rugs: Khotan, Kashgar and Yarkand, Samarkand rugs

The stylistic elements that help to identify rugs from eastern Turkestan are the relatively small number of decorative motifs, the somewhat elementary geometric language (both abstract and stylized), and the decidedly livery colours, based primarily on red, blue, and yellow in all their tonalities. Although influenced by China, western Turkestan, Persia, and India, this production area succeeded over the centuries in keeping unchanged its own tradition, which is connected to pre-Islamic cultures, primarily

Buddhist but also shamanistic. The layouts used most often are the superimposed-medallions, with three medallions, full-field guls, saph (or "multiple-niche") carpets & rugs, and finally a local pomegranate-tree variety. The border decorations are extremely various, but the dominant motifs are the local trefoil, frets, and the T elements. Typical of these rugs is a brick-red strip that runs around outside the borders. The spirit of these carpets & rugs is simple and elementary but at the same time robust and livery, secure in its solid tradition handed down over centuries. In examples made since the end of the 19th century, however, this joyfulness seems clouded by new colours in pastel tints.
The knotting system is asymmetrical, with a medium-low density of knots. Cotton is usually used for the foundation, while both wool and silk are used for the pile, and metallic threads are sometimes used together with the silk. The pile is usually trimmed medium-low. The shapes are very elongated: as a general rule, the length is nearly twice that of the width.

Major Style Types In East Turkestan Carpets & Rugs.

Situated between western Turkestan and Mongolia, eastern Turkestan is today for the most part situated within the Chinese region of Xinjiang. Carpets & rugs from this region are conventionally called Samarkand rugs, from the name of the Uzbek city located on the old silk route to China that was once a major centre for the gathering of rugs that were sold or exported, mostly to the West. Because of its location, Xinjiang was passed through by many people's moving east or west and suffered many invasions by over the course of history, all of which influenced its local art without, however, damaging its fidelity to the original geometric style and to the decorations descended from pre-Islamic culture.

Rugs of this area stem from an ancient tradition datable to as early as the 3rd century A.D. The earliest examples that have survived date to the end of the 18th century and were made in specialized workshops on both vertical and horizontal looms. These rugs present singular stylistic types.

The most traditional, although not the most common, is the pomegranate tree type, perhaps based on an ancient local design and believed to be symbolic of fertility, since those plants have abundant fruit and seeds. The field of these rugs is blue or light blue and covered by one or two intense red trees that grow from a small vase and extend upward geometric branches full of leaves and fruit. In many cases, the trees extend to the middle of field and are then repeated secularly, transforming the layout from directional to bi-directional.

The most common compositional layout, however, is that of three medallions, for this arrangement is more closely connected to the local geometric taste and was probably influenced by Buddhist symbolism. These examples, usually with red ground, are characterized by a row of three large roundish octagonal medallions, usually colored blue and bearing interior decoration of small stars, rosettes, stylized floral elements, or other geometric motifs.

Much less frequent are layouts with central medallions or repeated medallions, but the medallions are always characterized by roundish octagonal forms.

Somewhat widespread in eastern Turkestan is the saph, or "multiple-niche", layout, which probably represents an encounter between the local pre-Islamic iconographic tradition and the true Islamic tradition, since no single-niche prayer rugs have been found from this area. The niches appear in odd numbers and bear as interior decoration a stylized three of life, pomegranates, floral decorations, or the geometric "herringbone" motif.

There are also carpet types that show the influence of motifs derived from other cultural contexts, such as herati (transformed into the typical "five-bud" motif) and floral elements from Persia, cloud bands and curvilinear grids from China, bunches of stylized flowers from India, full fields guls from western Turkestan. These guls are transformed, however, following local taste, from octagonal medallions into round rosettes with hooked edges.

All the carpet types are completed by various kinds of borders that do not necessarily have any relationship to the primary motifs of the rugs. There are main borders with bicolour trefoil "wave"

motifs, octagonal rosettes, stylized vines, or bunches of three geometric flowers arranged in rows with alternating bunches pointing in different directions. The minor borders are most often formed by geometric-abstract frets, swastikas, and T motifs.

Symbols in Chinese carpets

The ancient motifs found on Chinese carpets are decorative in only a small way, since by nature they are fundamentally symbolic. In China, the artistic language is composed primarily of symbols common to all the artistic genres and techniques. Their meaning has remained unchanged over the centuries, but interpreting them successfully is not at all easy, in part because they are a great many of them. Some have been drawn from the natural world, other from ancient local myths, and yet others from the Buddhist and Taoist religions: a small number are composed of more or less complicated abstract designs. The most common symbols are the dragon (union of the earthly and celestial forces and the emperor), the phoenix (immortality and the empress), the Fo-dog (protection from evil), lotus flower (purity and summer), the peony (respect and wealth), the stag and stork (longevity), the cloud (divine power), the mountain and water (stability on a stormy sea), the bat (fortune, since its name phonetically resembles anfu, "fortune"), the swastika (cosmic rotation), and the ideograms Shou and Fu (fortune). Typical of column carpets are the eight Buddhist symbols: the canopy (royalty), the lotus (prosperity), the umbrella) authority, good government), the shell (victory), the wheel (the route to salvation), the vase (harmony) two fish (happiness and utility), and the endless knot (longevity and destiny). There are also eight Taoist symbols: the sword (victory), the staff and gourd (healing), the fan (immortality), the basket of flowers (magic), castanets (soothing music), the flute (miracles), the lotus (prosperity), and bamboo and staffs (foresight and fortune).

Old carpets & rugs from Eastern Turkestan.

Around 1870 two important phenomena brought about a major stylistic change in the carpets of eastern Turkestan: aniline dyes were introduced, and the rugs met with a favourable response when introduced to the great commercial market directed to the West. Results of these two factory included rigidity and confusion amount the traditional designs and a transformation of the palette, which went from being lively and contrasting to being muted and harmonious. For this reason, rugs from the end of the 19th century are usually characterized by pastel tints, such as pale yellow, gray, violet, pale green, and pink. False "antiqcarpets, made in the 19th century but know as "18th century Samarkand", occasionally appear on the market. These are distinguished by pastel colours that have been artificially faded to simulate age and fool inexpert buyers. Of course, the colours of real 18th century Xinjiang carpets & rugs are bright with sharp contracts.

Major production areas

Carpets from eastern Turkestan referred to collectively as Samarkand’s, are usually divided into three basic groups named for important oases: Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan. Given the general uniformity of designs from one area to another, close examination of structural characteristics is almost always necessary to determine a carpets & rugs provenance.

Kashgar carpets & rugs.

Kashgar Rugs are usually of refined quality and are generally datable to the period between the end of the 18th century and the middle of the 19th.Their styles reveal Persian and Chinese influences, and their colours are more delicate than those from the other two production areas.

Yarkand carpets & rugs.

Yarkband Rugs can be identified by their weft strands, which are colored blue or light blue. They often have pomegranate-tree design, but there are also medallion layouts, carpets & rugs with guls, and saph. The colours show sharp contrasts, as in the use of light yellow for the designs against red grounds.

Khotan carpets & rugs.

Khotan Rugs are the most recent (datable to the end of the 19th century) and also the most various and numerous. There are examples of every design type, although the most common layouts use three medallions or a central medallion. The palette tends toward brick red or blue for grounds, and yellow, sky blue, or various shades of red for the designs. Khotans can also be identified by their weft stands, which are colored brown and by their knotting, which is less dense than that on rugs from the other production areas. In the international market they also I have name Samarkand Carpets though it is not absolutely clear why; they only there were on sale on the big market, but never there were made.

Size in Eastern Turkestan carpets & rugs.

Aside from their designs and colours, the rugs of eastern Turkestan are characterized by their spilee; uchich is long and narrow (usually almost twice as long as wide), with size more or less fixed at 40 x 80 ". This shape was imposed by a precise practical necessity tied to daily life. Since earliest times, the main room in homes in Xinjiang has been a wide rectangular hall covered for almost its entire length by a wooden platform nearly a yard high on the house took place, on which family members slept, and where meetings were held. To make this platform as comfortable as possible, it was covered with one or two rugs, whose shapes had to be suitable to cover the shape of the platform. Rugs with squarer shapes have also been made in the production areas of eastern Turkestan. These carpets were made at the beginning of the 20th century to meet the powerful demand for rugs from the West. Thus their sizes were made to fit different-shaped rooms of European and American homes, reaching on average 80-100 x 120-140 ".

Indian Rugs

The primary aspect that characterizes Indian rugs is their singular, intense palette, based on yellow, pink, light blue, and green and best displayed in the typical bluish red known as lace red, used only for the grounds of fields. The designs, although indebted to the Persian style, are distinguished by their asymmetry and strong sense of the pictorial, with close attention to reality and detail. The decoration shows a preference for naturalistic floral designs and figural scenes arranged on directional layouts, and the compositions are not elaborate; the most common layouts involve full-field distributions using rows or grids, in-and-out palmettos, and prayer rugs. Because of this naturalistic taste, Indian rugs lack characteristic decorative motifs, aside from those few borrowed from Persia or other production areas, such as Herat botch, and cloud bands. The general character that informs these carpets is thus very rich, aristocratic, and refined, though without the ideal or abstract elegance common to the Persian manner, and seeming instead concrete and exuberant, with a sensibility that verges on the carnal. All Indian oriental rugs are made using the asymmetrical knot and stand apart technically because of their particularly dense knotting, well suited to rendering realistic figural details. The foundation is usually of cotton and the pile wool; in northern regions the soft and shiny wool of Kashmir is used. Sometimes silk is used both in the foundation and for the pile. The pile is usually trimmed low. The carpets are usually medium or large in size, reaching as much as 150 x 240 ".

Birth of the Indian Rug

Probably because of the region's warm climate, which does not require protection from cold, the knotted carpet was unknown in India until the 16th century. Indeed, the knotted carpet exists in India not because of an age-old tradition but because of an act of importation, carried out by the emperor Akbar (reigned 1556-1605).
Akbar, the greatest ruler of the Mogul dynasty (1526/27-1858), was an admirer of Safavid art and had artists and artisans sent from the Persian court to set up specialized workshops in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, the two capitals of his empire, as well as in Lahore, in modern-day Pakistan. Therefore in India the knotted carpet originated as a product made exclusively for the court and conceived of as a precious object of furnishing designed to beautify the palaces of the Mogul court. Because of this close connection to the Mogul court, the knotted carpet was inevitably destined to decline when that court declined, which it began to do toward the end of the 18th century.
The Indian rug came into being to serve the same purposes as the "classic" Persian carpet and, in fact, imitated both Persian technique and style: asymmetrical knots with fine knotting; use of precious

materials, such as the highest-quality wool from Kashmir and sometimes even silk and gold and silver threads; production based on cartoons furnished by court miniaturists; curvilinear style; and designs of the floral and figural character. Given the lack of intact examples from the 16th century, the most important existing records of this direct dependence on the art of Persia is offered by the so-called Indo-Isfahan or Indo-Persian carpets, datable to the 17th and 18th centuries and characterized by Safavid designs composed of in-and-out palmettos, herati, and sometimes cloud bands in orderly full-field arrangements. Initially attributed to Persia, and more precisely to Herat, these carpets were later divided into two groups based on their palettes and levels of calligraphic sense: those with the most intense colours, with lac-red grounds and designs with pale outlines or no outlines at all, were taken to show Indian sensibility, and the others were said to show Persian taste. Since these are such minor differences, the recent tendency has been to leave provenance undecided and to see these carpets as proof of the close relationship between the Safavid and Mogul courts and attribute them to a common Indo-Persian style.

The Mogul style

Over the course of the 17th century, as local miniaturists and artists slowly replaced the Persian artists and artisans in the great workshops, a more specifically Indian character began to develop in the Indian rug, rendering it less dependent on Persia and better suited to representing the taste and needs of the region. The Mogul style was influenced by the passion for botany of Akbar's son, the emperor Jahangir (reigned 1605-1627). Under his rule all the arts tended toward representations of a floral character, which were rendered with such naturalism and presented such a variety of species that they competed with Western herbals. Under the reign of Jahangirs son and successor, Shah Jahan (reigned 1628-1658), this style reached full expressive maturity, evident in the perfect realism of its renderings and close attention to detail.
Indian dyers, who were capable of obtaining, usually by means of repeated dyeings, singular shades and colours so intense they seem enameled. Typical rugs from India is lac red, with its characteristic bluish reflections, obtained from an insect of the cochineal family known as lac and used in grounds; against this colour stand out designs coloured light yellow, mustard yellow, light led, pink, light blue, midnight blue, light green, emerald green, orange, black, and brown.
Another particularity of these carpets is the way colours are combined, for this is done without outlines, even when two different tones of the same tint are used side by side, such as red and pink or blue and light blue. The borders are characterized by a dark ground, rendered using a strong green-blue, suitable for making contrasts with the lac red of the field.

Antique Indian Rugs

Almost all existing antique Indian rugs are held in major collections or museums; datable to the 16th to 17th centuries, they can be grouped into decorative types that show varying degrees of debt to central or eastern Persia. Given their stylistic uniformity, the areas where they were made cannot be established with certainty.

Floral Rugs

Floral carpets are the most common type, and most are attributed to Lahore. The flowering plants, often of many different species, are arranged full field within a grid, the shape of which varies, or are arranged in the more typically Mogul style of horizontal rows. In one 18th-century layout, the flowers are made small and presented in dense arrangements, each flower joined to another by extensions of its stem, a scheme directly reminiscent of Persian floral carpets. Also included in this type are the Indo-Isfahan Carpets and certain rare examples with trees, which are often presented with flowering foliage. The subjects of figural carpets sometimes reproduce episodes from Indian epics but more often present hunting scenes. These carpets have greater vitality than Persian figural carpets in part because of the asymmetrical distribution of their elements but primarily because of the size and pictorial importance given the figures with respect to the floral ground. Furthermore, the figures are usually shown in movement. Typically Indian is the presence of an elephant, and characteristic of these carpets is the

design of the border, often curiously enlivened by grotesque masks. Included within this group are examples decorated with the waqwaq tree.

Prayer rugs

The Mogul interpretation of the prayer rugs, a type foreign to Indian religious life, shows the traits characteristic of Mogul style. Although clearly influenced by Persia, Mogul prayer rugs are composed of a highly articulated mihrab, the interior field of which is coloured lac red and bears Mogul flowering plants, shown in large size to indicate the realistic transformation of the symbolic tree of life. In the so-called millefleurs prayer rugs, datable to the 18th century, the field is instead thickly covered by myriad tiny flowers of diverse species and always growing from a single plant; the niche of these prayer rugs is often flanked by two typical cypresses.

Portuguese carpets

The so-called Portuguese carpets, discussed among the types of Persian carpets, are variously attributed to northern or southern Persia or to the Portuguese colony in Goa, India. Aside from the people in European dress that appear on these carpets, the Indian provenance hypothesis is supported by the particularly intense and brilliant colours. In the absence of certain proof, however, the production area for these carpets remains obscure.

Figural carpets

The subjects of figural carpets sometimes reproduce episodes from Indian epics but more often present hunting scenes. These carpets have greater vitality than Persian figural carpets in part because of the asymmetrical distribution of their elements but primarily because of the size and pictorial importance given the figures with respect to the floral ground. Furthermore, the figures are usually shown in movement. Typically Indian is the presence of an elephant, and characteristic of these carpets is the design of the border, often curiously enlivened by grotesque masks. Included within this group are examples decorated with the waq-waq thee.

The 19th century

Having entered a crisis at the end of the 18th century, Indian oriental rugs making suffered during the 19th century from the usual changes involved in meeting market demands, which in India meant the tired repetition of Mogul models or their betrayal in favour of European subjects or, more often, the imitation of classic Persian motifs that had already become established on the Western market. In addition, during this same period the local carpet workshops were taken over and directed by English or European companies. Even so, Indian rugs maintained their high technical levels until 1860-1870, when the introduction of chemical dyes made even the renowned Indian colours begin to lose their intensity. Since the region does not have an ancient tradition of carpet making, and since carpets were not made at any level there until the 16th century, India can boast of no nomad or village carpets. All the "old" examples that have survived until today were made in city workshops, but given their general stylistic homogeneity, production areas cannot be established with any accuracy. Referred to commercially and conventionally as Agra carpets, from the name of the city, Indian rugs can be broadly divided into geographical regions on the basis of the quality of their wool: if it is soft and shiny, the carpet probably comes from a northern region; if the wool is rough and opaque, it probably comes from a southern region. The leading workshops of the many that were active during the 19th century include the northern ones of Lahore, Srinagar, and the regions of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, with Agra; the central ones of Poona; and finally the southern ones in the area of Masulipatam.

The Hidden Legacy of the Kazakhs

Central Asia's textile traditions are well chronicled. Turkmen Carpets, Uzbek embroideries and Kirghiz felts have each found a devout following among scholars and collectors. Yet the textiles of Kazakhstan have largely been ignored. Most commonly blamed for this neglect is a lack of antique weavings from the Kazakhs. However, the great quantity of 20th century Kazakh rugs implies a carpet weaving

tradition and raises the inevitable question: Why have no old pieces survived? I suggest that many have been attributed to the Kirghiz instead.

There is a long history of confusing all things Kazakh and Kirghiz. Until the 1930s, Russians and Westerners officially used the name "Kirghiz" to describe the Kazakh people, and the term "Kara Kirghiz" (Black Kirghiz) to refer to the actual Kirghiz. While the difference between the two may seem apparent to us today, it is easy to understand the initial confusion. The relationship between the Kazakhs and the Kirghiz is best compared with that between the Germans and the Austrians - they share a language, common roots, and many customs. It is difficult for an outsider to distinguish between their dialects or to tell them apart by their looks. Despite having developed as separate peoples for more than 500 years, the Kazakhs' and the Kirghiz' common origins are still evident today in the overlap of many tribal names - Kangli, Kipchak, and Naiman to name a few. The semantic confusion of past centuries created a wake of wrongly attributed pieces which to this day has not been rectified. For example, ethnographic photographs taken at the turn of the 19th century by Dudin and Prokudin-Gorski still carry their original "Kirghiz" title despite obvious clues that the subject matter is actually Kazakh. One therefore wonders to what degree the same misnomers apply to carpets and textiles.

Western understanding of "Kirghiz" carpets has so far heavily relied on a handful of Soviet publications that all fall back on the carpet collections of Andrei Bogolyubov and Samuil Dudin for historical reference. Generally considered the pioneers of Central Asian rug studies, Bogolyubov and Dudin compiled their carpets independent of each other between 1899 and 1902. Neither labelled any of their pieces "Kazakh", probably due to the fact that the official name for the Kazakhs was still "Kirghiz" at the time. Bogolyubov, like most rug collectors today, did not purchase his carpets at the places of their production but rather in the bazaars of Central Asian cities. A carpet sold to him in Samarkand as a "Kirghiz from the Kangli tribe" could, therefore, be either the product of the Kangli of the Ichkilik group (a Kirghiz tribe living 400 kilometres east of Samarkand) or the Kangli of the Great Horde (a Kazakh tribe living 400 kilometres to the north). Similarly, a "Kipchak felt" could be attributed to either the Kirghiz Kipchak of the Ichkilik, or the Kazakh Kipchak of the Middle Horde, both of whom produce comparable felt rugs to this day. In the case of Dudin, the absence of Kazakh textiles from his records is even more suspect. Unlike Bogolyubov, he had made it his policy to collect not only pieces he liked but also such that were representative of each region he travelled to. Since we know that Dudin visited Kazakhstan at least twice it seems unlikely that his collection contained no Kazakh pieces.

In addition to Bogolyubov and Dudin, Soviet publications all draw from the works of pre-revolutionary Russian researchers Semyonov and Felkerzam. Although both Semyonov and Felkerzam recorded "Kirghiz carpet weaving" in the Syr Darya and Jeti Su regions (Kazakhstan) as well as in the Fergana valley (Kirghizstan), Soviet scholars chose to ignore the references to the Kazakhs and to concentrate their efforts solely on the Kirghiz. In part this is only illustrates how Kazakhstan has always held less allure as a field of study for 20th century Russian scholars than the rest of Central Asia (probably for being "too close to home"). A recent visit to the State Library in Moscow, for instance, revealed that not even a Kazakh-Russian dictionary was held there (for every other Central Asian language and even dialect at least two different editions were held). In this context it is perhaps less surprising that none of the rug authorities from Moscow and St Petersburg ever conducted field research in Kazakhstan, let alone wrote about Kazakh textiles. The only published research that exists is the work of two Kazakh ethnographers, Mukanov and Margulan, written in Russian in the 1970s and 1980s and never published outside of Kazakhstan . Since their books were targeted at the general public and covered the whole spectrum of applied arts, discussions of textiles are rather generic and contain no information on the actual weavers, their tribes or their customs.

The Kazakhs emerged in the mid-15th century from an alliance between various Mongol and Turkic tribes that joined in rebellion against the powerful Uzbek khanate which ruled Central Asia at the time. What was initially a military confederation of tribes, rather than a nation, soon came to control most of the present-day Kazakh territories (an area the size of Western Europe) where a rival Kazakh khanate

was set up. In the early 16th century the Kazakhs split into their three distinctive hordes in accordance with the three natural geographic areas of their land. The tribes of the Great Horde conducted their migration in the south of Kazakhstan, those of the Middle Horde in central and eastern Kazakhstan, and those of the Small Horde in western Kazakhstan. To this day there are eleven main tribes in the Great Horde (Dulat, Kangli, Alban, Suan, Jalair, Ysty, Sregli, Shanishkli, Shoprashti, Oshakti), six in the Middle Horde (Argyn, Naiman, Kipchak, Kerei, Uak, Tarakt) and three in the Small Horde (Alimuli, Baiuli, Jetiru).

Due to their close proximity to Russia, the Kazakhs became the first Central Asians to fall to Russian expansion in the mid-18th century (more than a hundred years before the Russian takeover of Turkmen and Uzbek territories). Russian imperial policy in the Kazakh steppe, unlike that pursued in the rest of Central Asia, was marked by relocating three million Russian farmers into a society of five million Kazakh nomads . The resulting shortage of pasture land for the Kazakhs was subsequently solved by the Soviets through forced settlement. The nomadic life style, and with it the production of certain textiles necessitated by a life on the road, almost ceased to exist under Soviet rule.

Kazakh Pile Carpets

Pile carpets, called tukti kilem among the Kazakhs, were woven exclusively by the tribes of the Great Horde. Their annual migration rarely exceeded 300 kilometres (unlike the 700 - 1,000 kilometres covered by the Middle and Small Hordes) and left them with adequate spare time for pile weaving. The Great Horde lives in southern Kazakhstan along the upper reaches of the Syr Darya river, in the Alatau mountains, and the Jeti Su river valleys. Some 30,000 Kazakhs of the Great Horde also live in northern Afghanistan and their carpets have been casually noted in rug literature since the 1970s.

All Kazakh Carpets share several characteristics. Compared to other Central Asian weavings they tend to have a relatively "archaic" look, that is, individual designs are larger and more generously spaced out. The background colour is always a warm shade of red, with patterns executed in earthy shades of blue, yellow, ivory, brown, green and black. Broadly speaking, the Kazakh colour palette is brighter than that of the Turkmen but not as bold as the Uzbeks'.

Apart from standard floor rugs the Kazakhs made a few small, finely woven kali kilem which were intended for the wall and traditionally presented to a girl's parents as part of the bride prize. Especially large and ornate carpets were called orda kilem in reference to the khan's quarter, orda, for which they were historically woven. Occasionally, ceremonial covers for the bridal camel (asmaldyk), saddle bags (khorjin), yurt entrance covers (esik japkish), and diverse storage bags (chabadan, dobra, kerme) were also made in pile weave, however, the majority of these articles was made from felt.

Pile rugs were woven on standard ground looms, although some tribes living in the Taraz region are said to have used vertical looms. Wool from the spring sheering was used for both warp and weft and was often mixed with goat hair in Kazakhstan, and yak hair in Afghanistan. Margulan notes that camel hair was sometimes added to the pile for extra softness and sheen. Because of a widespread Kazakh superstition that camel hair should not be stepped on I assume this practice was reserved for special occasion pieces not intended for the floor - like the kali kilem or asmaldyk mentioned earlier. A common characteristic of Kazakh and Kirghiz carpets is their heaviness, a result of rather thick warp and weft yarns as well as high piles of up to 11mm. Mukanov states that both symmetrical and asymmetrical knots were common among the Kazakhs. While this seems to hold true for those carpets woven in Afghanistan, virtually all pieces found within Kazakhstan today show symmetrical knots only.

Unlike the Turkmen, the Kazakhs have no concept of tribal guls. Many of their designs are shared with the Kirghiz and Karakalpak, and to some extent with the Uzbek. By far the most popular Kazakh motif is the ram's horn (khoshkhar muiz) in all its variations - single, double, cross-shaped or broken. It can make up the entire centre field design of a carpet, adorn borders, or simply supplement another design. As a main design, the ram's horn appears most often in its large cross-shaped version, tort muiz, which is also very common among the Kirghiz who call it kaikalak. Other popular main designs include the

reed screen (shi) and spider (shayan) patterns. Mukanov mentions an ancient Kazakh design he calls "square" (sharshi): "two or three rows of squares, each adorned with ram's horns at their centres and around their edges." His description seems to point to a group of carpets currently labelled Kirghiz. For example, Seyfullah Turkkan in Hali 123 showed a 19th century carpet from the Flynn collection which he called a sanduk nuska. Turkkan stated that very little was known about the origin and distribution of this type of carpet, and the answer might well be that they are Kazakh.

Borders show very little variation in their use of designs and are therefore a reliable source of identifying Kazakh carpets. Apart from single and double ram's horns (synar muiz and khos muiz), they practically always consist of either amulets (tumarsha), yurt walls (kerege), yurt roofs (shanirakh), apple blossoms (alma gul) or dog tails (it khurikh). More stylised versions of the dog tail are often called camel neck (bota moyin) or crutch (baldakh).

Old weavers, ethnologists and the general public in Kazakhstan have all stressed the importance of symbolism to me. I should point out that superstitious beliefs, a remnant of the Kazakh's ancient shamanistic traditions, still permeate every aspect of modern Kazakh life to a much greater extent than is the case in the rest of Central Asia, where a more orthodox version of Islam is practised. In carpet design, symbols can be broken down into those hoped to bestow good fortunes onto a household and those intended to protect it from bad ones. The ram's horn and water motifs are considered life bringing symbols of prosperity, while the forty horns and virtually all flower designs symbolize abundance and fertility. Protective symbols, usually found in the border, include amulets, yurt roofs and yurt walls. Sometimes an evil spirit, symbolized by the spider, would be portrayed directly on a carpet to protect its owner from the real thing.

Carpets from the Soviet period predominantly feature the star design (juldis) and the likeness-of-the-moon (aishik) stepped medallion pattern. The majority of these rugs were woven in the Turkistan and Chimkent regions, strongholds of the Kangli and Dulat tribes, and were dyed with synthetic colours. Carpets from the 1950s onward often carry a woven-in date and name inscription. Rather than representing the weaver's signature this name was a dedication to someone, most often a child relation of the weaver. A literary analogy would be the dedications writers include at the beginning of their books. Production stopped in the late 1970s for yet unclear reasons but has seen a tentative revival over the last few years under the sponsorship of Almaty dealers catering to the expatriate community.

Kazakh Flat woven Carpets

Although mentioned by both Margulan and Mukanov, flatwoven rugs (takhta kilem) are very rare. It appears they were only made by the tribes of the Small Horde. These tribes now live in the north-western parts of Kazakhstan but, as nomads, their migration paths extended south along the Caspian Sea shore where they shared pastures with the Ikdir, Abdal and Yomut Turkmen . It is said they used vertical looms for their kilems, the colours and designs of which resembled those found in pile rugs (although there was greater variation in the background colour with blue and white in addition to the standard red).

Kazakh Tent Bands

Tent bands were such an integral part of yurt life and easy enough to produce that they were woven by all Kazakh tribes. Essentially, there were two types - one functional and one decorative. The up to 50 centimetre wide baskur were wound around the yurt to hold its felt walling in place, while the much narrower bau were used to decorate the inside of the yurt and often had tassels running along the bottom. Tribes of the Small Horde made some tent bands entirely in pile weave, while the Middle and Great Hordes wove mainly flat and combination-technique bands. Tent bands were woven on a special narrow loom which was also employed to weave a number of narrow strips that would then be sewn together to create so called alasha rugs. To achieve the dynamic look of a carpet, alasha were either made from strips of different colours or with designs and pile reliefs.

Kazakh Felts

Most of the references to the Kazakhs in rug literature allude to their Felts. Less time consuming in their production, decorative felts always provided a great practical alternative to carpets. Four different methods were employed for the production of felt - rolling-in, mosaic, applique, and embroidery. Which technique was used depended on a felt's ultimate function.

Most floor felts were made using the rolling-in technique. In this process wool of one colour was laid in patterns on a foundation of wool of another colour, rolled up together like a cinnamon roll and felted in the usual way. Felts produced this way were called tekemet and used as a basic floor covering hidden from public view by the more precious carpets and decorative felts piled on top of them. It is difficult to distinguish the tekemet of different tribes because they all share the ram's horn as their sole decorative motif (with the exception of those from the Jeti Su region which feature a local antler design - tarmakhty muiz or bugy muiz). A better indicator of origin is colour combinations. As a rule of thumb, the Middle and Small Hordes used mainly natural, undyed wools - white, brown and black - for their tekemet while the Great Horde also experimented with dyed wools.

Precious decorative floor felts (i.e. such used in place of carpets) were created using the more labour intensive mosaic technique. Here two finished felts of different colours were laid on top of one another and a pattern was cut through both layers, cookie-cutter style. The resulting shapes were exchanged and fitted into the cut-out of the other felt, creating two mirror-images of opposing colours. These jigsaw felts were then each stitched onto a backing of plain felt and the seams around their designs overstitched with coloured cord. The mosaic technique was a specialty of the Middle Horde who used it to create elaborate felts called sirmakh.

Smaller everyday items like storage and saddle bags were made using the applique and embroidery methods in which finished felts were either embellished with thin shapes of dyed felt (in the 20th century replaced with velvet or silk) or embroidered in coloured wools. White was always favoured as a background colour because it symbolised happiness, and white felts were often treated with chalk to maintain their original colour. Some very intricate applique and embroidery work can be found on yurt entrance covers (kiyiz esik) and on small wall hangings called tus kiyiz. While entrance covers stopped being produced with the move from yurts to apartment blocks, the tus kiyiz wall felts, which were traditionally positioned above the yurt's place of honour, are still widely made today to adorn modern homes.

CONCLUSION

After much neglect, Kazakh textiles are waiting to engage collectors' attention. Many old Kazakh carpets might have already found their way into Western private collections, albeit hidden behind a Kirghiz label. For the modern collector it is important to keep in mind that many Kazakh and Kirghiz carpets, like the people who made them, bear a strong resemblance. The fact that most of the older pieces left the places of their production a long time ago has left them with no clear paternity and will make a re-classification more difficult. Further field research needs to be conducted not only in Kazakhstan but also in those countries with significant numbers of ethnic Kazakhs - China, Mongolia, and Afghanistan.

Kyrgyz Culture Overview

Since olden limes the Kyrgyz people have led the life of nomadic herdsmen. A complementary source of livelihood was hunting. The nomadic way of life required portable dwellings - felt yurts - as well as loose-styled clothing practical for riding, and domestic articles made mainly of wood and leather. A substantial part of the Kyrgyz daily life was occupied by-home crafts, particularly those connected with processing of livestock breeding products (wool, leather, rawhide, bone, gut string. horn, hoof, etc,).

Although the Kyrgyz practiced bailer and trade with neighboring peoples, their economy was basically communal subsistence. Kyrgyz decorative-applied arts were tied to the processing of animal husbandry products, gathering food and medicinal herbs, raising livestock, and milking metals. A closed subsistence system was a characteristic feature of making home crafts: a family gathered raw materials that they manufactured into products that were then consumed by the extended family or traded in bazaars. Any member of the family could participate in this process or use the products manufactured by the group.
While producing their handiwork the Kyrgyz people were not only striving for the satisfaction of their daily living needs but for the fulfillment of their spiritual ones as well. Love for beauty was conveyed in the decor of articles, in their artistic designs, and in their functionality. Traditional Kyrgyz ornamentation is a particular sphere of culture, a specifically figurative language with a highly practical value.

The nomadic tenor of life put limits on Kyrgyz craftsmen. Nevertheless, any articles handled by them were sealed with the marks of creative work. The exterior and interior decoration of the yurt, the clothing and furnishings, women's adornments, and equestrian trappings bear the signs of a nomadic culture and of high aesthetic values - Kyrgyz utensils convert into pieces of art and serve to integrate life. The main motifs, themes and designs of Kyrgyz ornaments arc in direct correlation lo the world of spirits and objects - animals, plants, natural and spiritual phenomena that surround and inspire a human being. Inside the national consciousness applied arts are inseparable from daily rhythms of beauty and usefulness.

Main varieties of Kyrgyz decorative arts:

1. Patterned thick felt carpets and domestic appliances.
2. Patterned weaving.
3. Woollen carpets with pile.
4. Wicker ware of patterned chiy reed.
5. Embroidery.
6. Leather products.
7. Wood carvings.
8. Ornamental metalworking.
9. Funerary arts - the decorative ornamentation of mausoleums, called gumbez, including figured bricklaying, ornaments decorated with designs, bone carvings, clay modeling, and architectural monuments.

The sources of the Kyrgyz arts have a four millennia history that began in the Minusinskaya Depression in the ancient motherland of the Kyrgyz people - the Yenisei River Valley of Siberia. Petroglyphic art and geometrical designs on utensils and weapons dating back to the Bronze Age represent the first attempts of ancient artists to render the nature and daily life of a human being. More than a millennium ago the Kyrgyz people migrated from the Siberian steppes lo the Tien Shan Mountains and since that time have participated in the historic development of the land now known as Kyrgyzstan.
Although they were mounted nomads in the heritage of Huns, Turks, and Mongols, the Kyrgyz claimed the Celestial Mountains as their own and developed a unique pastoral transhumance that has given the land of the Kyrgyz a spirit of ageless, creative human courage in the face of great trials, 'flint spirit is embodied in the mythic hero of the eponymous epic "Manas."
While remaining nomads, the Kyrgyz traded with neighboring sedentary village peoples. Like actors on a historic stage performing their entrances and exits, the Kyrgyz people recorded in their national memory and preserved in their folkloric art the cultural influenzas of their past. Many cultures came into contact with the Kyrgyz throughout their long history. The ancient stales of the Scythians. Sakas,

Sarmatians and I 'suns may have disappeared; the flourishing Karakhanid and Uyghur urban cultures may have turned into mighty stone monuments and ruined mud walls; the Great Silk Road may have become a dirt goat track through disuse; hundreds of great cities may have fallen to Mongols and Timurids; and dozens of forgotten ethnic groups may have drowned in rivers of their own blood; but the bearers of the ancient Kyrgyz Tien Shan culture remained and recorded these influences in their ornamental arts.
Much was imprinted from these cultures into Kyrgyz ornamentation. The motifs of the shyrdack and tushkiiz patterns reveal zoomorphic styles of the ancient Sakas and Usuns. Images of the Sogdian sacred bird, the pheasant, date from the VI-VII centuries. The Seasoned ornamental circles of VII-VIII century provenance, the Karla's' geometrical lines from the VIII-X centuries, the Arachnids' whirligig rosette of the XI-XII centuries, the timeless Chinese symbol of prosperity, the Bronze Age ancient artists' representation of sheep horns, and many other designs can all be found in Kyrgyz folk art. Employed in quotidian routines the decorative-applied arts interpenetrate the whole life and history of Kyrgyz nomads.

Enter the nomadic dwelling of a livestock breeder; from afar his yurt meets you with painted patterns of decorative ribbons and the ornaments of a carved or felt door - eshik tysh. Inside the yurt every detail of decoration on every article of clothing and everyday use fuse and complement each other with picturesque designs, forming that unique ensemble that amazes you with its variety of tinctures and voices, intrinsic to everything handmade by Kyrgyz craftsmen.
The variegated designs of shyrdacks and alakiizes flow across the floor, the patterns mutating in flowery ornaments of tushkiizes and sleeping mats, which then morph into the lines of ashkhana chiy and tekche - suspended shelves made of cloth and reed. Patterned ribbons - terme, kadjars and besh keshte - coil round a yurt, binding the wooden joints of the dwelling.
Opposite the entrance visitors are met with a chest, the sund.uk, proudly bearing the symbol of the family's prosperity. Open the chest and appreciate the wife's dowry, the possessions she brought to the marriage, treasures made by the women of her family. Packed inside the sunduk are quilts - tushuks and kuraks - designed with patterns of multicolored cloth patches; and pillows - djazdyk and chavadans - sacks for clothing woven with woolen yarn.
Braided strips and tassels - djel boo and tegerich - hang from the domed ceiling of the yurt, dangling down from the arched vault of the tunduk, the cross beams that open the yurt to the heavens above. Stamped patterns adorn the utensils for drinking: the leather pialas (drinking cups without handles) and the vessels for kumyz - the koinoks and kerkers.

Designs are also embroidered on clothing, carved on wooden dishes and poles (ala-bakans). These all create the unique world of a nomad. This universe, wherein every ordinary thing turns into a symbol, is intimately and deeply connected to the high traditions of antiquity. The nomad's world is filled with poetry and beauty, elements sorely lacking in our own every day, disconnected and disassociated modem life.
This clause seeks to explore the magical world of the Kyrgyz nomad by describing the main kinds of Kyrgyz applied arts and the sources of ancient Kyrgyz ornamentation. Beyond the catalogue of artifacts is a hidden world of centuries-old wisdom and deep, creative beauty that must lived to be properly understood.

Kyrgyz Thick Felt

Articles made of thick felt-carpets, bags, sacks for storing domestic articles; clothing for the ever changing mountain climate, and the "skin" of a yurt- formed the most important part of a nomad's routine life. Felt is made of pressed sheep, goat or camel wool, although only a very rich person could ever afford camel wool felt. Kyrgyz felts were always valued due to the high quality of the time-tested tradition of felt manufacturing.
Once the felt rolls arc compressed they are spread out and designed with ancient techniques, such as the sewing together of cut-out patterns (mosaic), the in-filling of colored patterns (appliqué), and fancy

thread stitching.
Kyrgyz felt products are richly decorated with designs; their patterns reflecting the environment, plants and animals, and cosmological and religious concept ions. The names of the patterns themselves reveal their connections to the natural realm. A hornlike design is named kochkor muyiiz(ram' shorn), a trident-karga tyrmak(raven claws), a fork-strick is acha bakan (a pole used to remove the felt covering, koshma, from the smoke -hole of the yurt); and an almond-shaped pattern is called a badam (almond).
To produce felt the wool is washed, dried and then whipped by of long willow sticks on an outspread hide. The beaten wool is then laid out in flattened layers on a mat woven of chiy reeds. The wool is sprinkled with hot water and folded into a roll along with the reed mat; the roll is then tied round with ropes (arkans} and dragged along by hand, by foot, or behind a horse for about an hour, while two or three persons repeatedly step on the roll to compress the wool. The roll is then unfolded, re-sprinkled with hot water, folded and dragged again. The process is repeated several times until the fell attains the desired thickness and the wool fibers are tightly compacted to become waterproof.

In some places of Kyrgyzstan, mainly in the south, after an hour of preparatory dragging by foot, the thick felt is loosed from the mat and continues to be pressed by hand. Often the roll is compressed with the help of two ropes: one of them unwinds while the other winds up the roll of chiy. Sometimes a donkey or horse is used in this process, while the Kyrgyz people of the Chinese Xinjiang Kyzyl-Suu region use a yak.

Alakiiz

A pattern of colored stripes is transferred onto the wool by spreading dyed strips out on the mat before the roll is folded. The design is imprinted into the felt to form blurry-edged "lye-dyed" images, giving the carpet a wild and colourful look.

The method of manufacturing these large ornamental carpets is conventionally called "mosaic". The pattern is transferred onto two layers of felt of contrasting, vivid colours and then the outline is cut out. The felt is divided into layers and afterwards is sewn together so that some pieces form the pattern and others the background or field. A twisted woollen double braid is sewed between the contrasting pieces. The braid differs in colour from both the pattern and the field and makes the design expressive by providing a three-dimensional relief. The carpet composition consists of the central field and the outer skirting with a colour range that varies across the different regions of Kyrgyzstan.
Usually Kyrgyz carpets have two dominate colours: red and blue, brown and blue, brown and orange, red and yellow, or brown and white. Usually colour combinations of the skirting do not complement the colours and tints of the central field, but rather contrast and sometimes even clash according to western tastes. Carpets and floor coverings made according to the mosaic technique of pattern and field form a "psychedelic" composition where the field and the pattern vibrate with the intensity of the contrasting colours. At other times the colours vary only in hue and one can hardly differentiate the pattern from the background.

Kyrgyz Patterned Weaving

From ancient times the Kyrgyz, people have preserved the secrets of processing wool (taar) for outer garments and everyday life items. Thick, coarse yarn was used to make household sacks (kap), saddlebags (kurjun) and floor carpets.
More delicate yarns were manufactured for table-cloths (dastarkhan), usually striped or plaid. Strips of embroidered undyed wool cloth (eshik tysh) veiled the entrance to the ynrt. Hand-colored pieces were used to manufacture outer garments.
Kadjary cloth strips are used in the same way as terme cloth: the narrow ones fasten the wooden parts of a yurt's framework to the overlayed pieces of felt, whereas the wide ones are used to decorate the yurt (tegiritch). Strips are also used to sew various articles such as carpets (shaltcha), saddle-bags

(kurdjun), bags for smaller articles (bashtyk), horse-cloth (at djabuu) and other everyday articles. Kyrgyz crafts women produce three kinds of patterned wool cloth: terme, kadjary and besh keshte that differ in technique, ornament and color range. Kyrgyz people call patterned cloth strips, boo. The width of a strip (from 4 up to 70 cm) is determined by its practical application. The narrowest strips (tizgitch boo) fasten dome poles and the edges of the lattice walls of the yurt (kerege). Wider strips (djel boo) weave through the sustaining poles of the yurt itself. Tuurduck boo and eshik boo fasten felt blankets (koshmas) that cover the movable dwelling. Wide strips (kerege tanguu) decorate the yurt from the outside. Strips are also sewn together to make rugs (shaltcha).
For clothing, the northern Kyrgyz generally used sheep and camel wool, while in southern Kyrgyzstan cotton and silk were also used.
Washed and carded wool was stretched into tight twisted plaits and spun into a yarn ball with a spindle (iyik). After dyeing, the yarn was woven on a wooden frame loom (ermek). The main parts of the loom include a sword-shaped wooden shuttle (kylych) used to pull the weft and beat each row up against the previously woven row: a frame harness (kuzuk): a plank (takta) acting as a second harness, and a "dilator" preventing the warp threads from getting entangled. Weaving is usually carried out on warm days, placing the loom outside the yurt in the open air.
Work at such a loom is very laborious. Usually two women work to weave the weft yarn through the warp threads.

A weaver calculates the width of patterned strips, and the number and colors of the warp threads, according to a planned design. In order to obtain patterned cloth that can serve to decorate the dwelling, women work for hours, eventually stopping at the end of the day without a break.

Kyrgyz Terme

This kind of kyrgyz design weaving is the most laborious. Terme means "assembled" or "prefabricated." reflecting the main technique used in the cloth manufacturing. Thicker and coarser yarns than those used for kadjara or besh keshte are taken for the warp. Warp threads, forming the pattern, are gathered together by twos on a stick (tergitch). While the cloth strip is woven the ornamental threads are kept aside until they enter the process to form the design. Usually a one-sided patterned cloth is manufactured, although double-faced strips (eki djiuzduu) are used to form bands (djel boo) that decorate the yurt and hang down from the domed ceiling.
The terme pattern is formed by the combination of two colours: red and blue, orange and brown, red and brown, blue and orange, etc. Terme composition always comprises one or two borders. The ornamental elements used to decorate the cloth are: tai taman (track of a foal), tailak taman (track of a colt), djolbors tynnak (tiger's claws), kara kash (black eyebrows), koshkor muiuz (sheep's horn), chychkan izi (track of a mouse), etc.

This method differs from ferine cloth in that kadjary used thinner yarn. The cloth decoration necessarily includes either wide, single-colored strips interlaced with narrow ornamented ones, or wide patterned strips divided by narrow, single-colored ones.

The ornament is formed by the alternation of one or several patterns, the edges laced with two or three narrow strips of some other colour. The main colours are red, blue, orange, white and brown. The field is usually red and bears patterns of blue or white colours. Sometimes the field is brown and bears ornamental designs of red or blue colours.
Large patterns are used: kochkor muiuz (sheep's horn), kyial (fantasy), it kuiruk (dog's tail), badam (almond), as well as elongated geometrical figures -diamond, square, triangle, rectangle, etc. Such patterns as tarak (comb) and tumartcha (amulet) are widely used.

Kyrgyz Besh-keshte

This third kind of design weaving refers to a specific style of embroidery in a satin-stitch on a white or yellow-brown background. The Kyrgyz craftswomen explain the name of the cloth (five embroideries) to refer to the five necessary patterns (terk, tegerek, kochkorok or kaikalak, it taman, and chuurtma), or for the five primary colours used (red and blue are basic, while yellow, green and brown are complementary).
The composition of the cloth pattern is intricate, comprising either a continuous and uninterrupted pattern, or groups of smaller and larger patterns divided by transversal patterned stripes. The field is formed of undyed light woollen or cotton threads.
This cloth is mainly used in the Osh and Talas provinces to sew sacks for storing articles (chavadan), saddle-bags (kurdjun) suspended bags (bashtyk), rugs (djuk djabuu), yurt decoration strips (boa, tegiritch, kerege tangu) and floor carpets (shalcha). Floor carpets, sewn of alternate strips of besh keshte and kadjary, and sometimes terme, are highly valued.

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Mats woven out of the stalks of this prairie plant arc known by all peoples of Central Asia. Kyrgyz people use them primarily to line the latticed framework (called kerege) that forms the circular walls of the yurt. A long patterned mat (chymyrgan or kanat chiy), with dominating scarlet and blue colours, fences and separates the wooden parts of the yurt from the felt covering (koshma - tuurduk). Sometimes the mat is 8 meters long while the height is 150-160 centimeters. Depending on the diameter, several mats are used to encircle the yurt.

The patterns are mainly geometrical: diamonds, squares, octagons, triangles, zigzags, and crosses, to

name the simple ones. Patterns are widely used - they are it kuiruk (dog's tail), kochkor muiuz (sheep's horn), karga tyrmak (raven claws), karkyra (flight of cranes), djagalmat (bird). Many patterns arc the symbols of daily utensils and articles: tabak oyu (a round dish), kazan kulak (a cauldron handle), ooz komuz til (a mouth harp's tongue), kerege kez (an eye hole in the wall of a yurt), ala monchok (variegated beads) omurtka (spinal bone), etc.
Patterned mats produced by-Kazakh masters are also similar to Kyrgyz ones. There is a saying that Kazakh and Kyrgyz arc kin with the difference that the Kazakhs are nomads who traverse the steppes horizontally, while the Kyrgyz are nomads who move vertically from valley to mountaintop. Their traditions and language (Qipchaq Turkic) are so close that Russian settlers in the region originally referred to the Kazakhs as Kyrgyz and the Kyrgyz were called Kara-Kyrgyz (Black Kyrgyz).
A special loom is used to weave chiy mats. It consists of two vertical poles with forks at the ends, where a cross pole is placed. Woollen yarn is thrown over the cross pole while the ends are coiled over stone weights. In the course of manufacturing a plain mat (ak chiy) reed stalks are placed in an alternating series of heads and tails laid out in opposite directions. Threads from both sides are thrown over to the opposite sides to secure the stalks. Some stalks are twined round with a thread to make the mat more durable. Every stalk in a patterned mat is threaded round with wool of different colours in order to create a certain pattern.
The chiy reed is also used in manufacturing the thick felt and as a "ground cloth," or under layer for felt carpets, insulating the yurt from the damp ground. Patterned mats (ashkhana chiy) serve as a folding screen inside the dwelling, separating the housewife's comer. They are also used to form the backing of the felt curtain at the entrance to the yurt.

Patterned mat weaving (ala chiy, chymyrgan chiy) is a very laborious art which is why relatives and neighbours are needed to assist a craftswoman (chyrmaktchy).

Kyrgyz Embroidery

Embroidery art in Kyrgyzstan has ancient roots. Kyrgyz embroidery (sayma) is stitched with woollen and cotton threads onto felt (koshma), leather, velvet, and woollen or cotton fabrics. Embroiderers (saimatchy) use a square wooden frame (kergich) as an embroidery hoop to stretch out the cloth.
In the decoration of many embroideries of the XIX and beginning of the XX centuries a dark-red colour on a black field prevails with insertions of white, yellow, and sometimes blue and green colors. Many ornamental motifs in the embroidery of fabrics, though having much in common with other kinds of Kyrgyz decorative-applied arts, actually look different from those on felt or in carvings. Later samples reveal a strong influence of Russian and Ukrainian motifs.
Embroidery decorates a lot of articles used in everyday life and for some solemn occasions. These are mostly articles that decorate the yurt: djabyk bash (decoration strips), eshik tysh (the outer side of the entrance curtain), tekche (suspended shelf-cloth), ayak koitchu (suspended shelf), ayak kap (clothes bag), kuzgu kap (mirror strap), kaitchy kap (scissors strap), tabak kap (dish strap), kashyk kap (spoon strap), chainek kap (kettle strap), ashkhana bashy (the top side of the ashkhana chiy); keptchuk (horse tackle, a saddle blanket); beldemchi (a lady's skirt), chach kep or kep takyia (a lady's cap); duriya (a kerchief); men's trousers, etc.

Every yurt was proud of its embroidered wall carpets - tuskiiz - whose decor brightly reveals the originality of Kyrgyz embroidery - sayma. Generally, embroidery ornamentation is more varied than other kinds of Kyrgyz applied arts, and often contains realistic figures of animals.

Splendid Suzani

Suzani comes from the Persian word for "needle," and the word refers to embroidered hangings or fabric coverings, generally a meter and a half wide (4-5') but sometimes much more. The birthplace of suzani is in what is now Uzbekistan, the area along the Silk Roads that interconnected the cultures of Europe, Turkey and China with the Muslim world. Islam came to this area in the eighth century, and over time splendid cities arose there: among them Bukhara, Samarkand, Shakhrisabz and Khiva.

Central Asia has always been a land of textiles. The lives of nomads and settled peoples alike have always been hard, and the landscape is often bleak, but women have long decorated every object they could-prayer rugs, saddlecloths, cradle covers, mirror cases, yurt bands, tent flaps, salt bags and gift wraps-with weaving, embroidery and appliqué in wool, silk, cotton or felt.

As children, nomad and village girls alike began putting together dowries to show the community their skill and industriousness, and throughout their lives their textiles were a principal means of expression and of control of their immediate environment, be it a house, a tent or a yurt. The textiles were also, if needed, an economic resource, for fine pieces could be sold, and city people often commissioned work from the village women.

Homes became veritable cocoons of splendid textiles that were not only functional and beautiful, but also served as status symbols and links to history. Many patterns that are now largely abstract, or so stylized as to seem abstract, have very old roots, for they can be seen on finds in the tombs of Pazyryk, in the permafrost of the High Altai, which date back to the first millennium BC.

Throughout Central Asia, individual regions developed their distinctive designs, for this part of the world is a human as well as a topographical patchwork: Khazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Turkoman, Lakai and Arabs live there and, within those groups, each tribe had its gol, or crest, with colours and motifs that were recognizable at a marketplace or on pilgrimage. Client tribes placed the gol of their protector more prominently than their own and, as with western heraldry, in these crests could be read the past history and the present "pecking order" of the steppe.

Most of the Suzani surviving today, however, are village or urban works, and though scholars often divide them into "eastern" and "western" on the basis of design and colour, less is known about Suzani than about other textiles from the region. Except at a few museums, Suzani have been little studied because, traditionally, they were made in the home for personal use and thus rarely appeared in the written records of merchants or travellers.

The oldest surviving Suzani are from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but it seems likely that they were in use long before that. Writing at the beginning of the 15th century, the Spanish ambassador to the court of Timur (Tamerlane) left detailed descriptions of the royal tents, with their hangings and embroideries, that agree precisely with the scenes depicted in miniature paintings of the period. (See "The Ambassador's Report," page 10.) Some of the textiles the envoy saw were surely the forerunners of the suzani, particularly the densely worked pieces from Bukhara and Shakhrisabz, some of which have much to say to the medallion carpets of the Timurid period that are associated with Herat, to the south in Afghanistan.

It is interesting that in the 1780's, the time of the first surviving suzani, Haji Murad, the emir of Bukhara, decided to revive the silk industry by planting mulberry trees north of the city and bringing in skilled workers from the Merv oasis to the west. This may well have resulted in renewed suzani production and given rise to the pieces known to museums and textile historians today.

The motifs on the suzani go back much further, however, and they are linked to trade. The wealthy families of the cities of the Silk Roads and of the Khanates of Bukhara and Khokand had long had contact with the textiles of India, China and Persia, as well as decorative motifs from the West. Since the time of Alexander, Hellenic influences have reached well into Central Asia, and from there, Hellenic motifs moved along the Silk Roads to appear in embroidered hangings found in many oasis towns and, finally, in the ceramics of Ming China. The vine pattern that, highly stylized, meanders along the border of so many suzani was quite likely inspired by the scrolls of grapes found across the Hellenic world on stone, ceramics and textiles. Equally old and well-travelled is the palmetto, a fan-shaped, stylized botanical motif from the Mediterranean that may also have been introduced in the wake of Alexander's conquests in India and Afghanistan.

The boteh motif, shaped like a teardrop and perhaps a version of the "tree of life" design, reached this area from Persia as early as the fifth century BC. Other flowers that appear on suzani, including tulips and wild hyacinths, are not unlike those on Iznik plates, suggesting a Turkic origin. Sometimes there is

a frilly flower often called a carnation, but it is more probably a pomegranate blossom, or a much-stylized lotus whose meaning as a Buddhist symbol has been forgotten in the centuries since the conversion of Central Asia to Islam.

These motifs are common among the western group of suzani, which often show the influence of textiles imported from Mughal India through Kashmir. Curiously enough, some of these patterns were also exported westward in the 17th century, where they became the basis for English Jacobean embroideries.

Although each Central Asian town had its own style, the place of manufacture of many suzani cannot be identified with certainty, simply because not enough is known. For example, Shakhrisabz, Timur's own city, is famous for the lushness of its vegetation and reflects this characteristic in the embroidered flowers and rich color range of its textiles-but similar pieces were made elsewhere. And the stitch known as kanda khayol, a slanted couching stitch, is most frequently found in Shakhrisabz embroideries-but is not unique to them.

Typical suzani from the small town of Nurata have a star in the center and scattered sprays of flowers, or sometimes botah, on the main field, which is usually naturally colored cotton or linen. The embroidery is generally in delicate shades, often muted indigos and rust. One Nurata nim suzani (a half-size suzani) has the classic sprays of flowers and a central star and then another motif, common in the region, that may represent either two little coffee pots or two ewers for rose water-in either case, symbols of hospitality, prosperity and joy.

Samarkand had been one of the largest towns in the world in 1400, but by the early 19th century its population had shrunk to some 8000 inhabitants. It is therefore not surprising that its embroideries are less sophisticated and-perhaps because it is close to the eastern area of suzani designs-bolder in their patterns. They are not infrequently worked on yellow, pink or purple backgrounds and often embroidered in a limited range of colors. The designs are almost abstract, as they are also in the Jizak area to the northeast, on the edge of the steppe.

Eastern suzani are much closer to the traditional nomad designs of the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, who in pre-Islamic times worshiped the sun, the moon and the stars. These are bold designs, with an archaic symbolism centred on a circular motif, whose exact meaning is debated by specialists: Does it represent the sun, the moon, the heavens, a flower-or an open pomegranate, a symbol of fertility from the Mediterranean to China? It is clearly a positive image of continuity and survival, and it appears over and over again in the life of the region: It is painted or incised on the walls of houses, stamped onto bread, sewn into other embroideries used for everyday tableware, and even echoed in the brickwork of the domes of mosques and madrasas (religious schools). It often employs powerful contrasts, as if to distinguish dark and light, good and evil, life and death, and strong colors such as red for blood, brown for the earth and blue-black for the sky.

This symbolism is most clear in the suzani of the Tashkent, Pskent and Fergana Valley regions. They are hallmarked by a particular central roundel, known as the palak, which is so distinctive that the word itself is used at Tashkent instead of suzani to refer to these embroideries. A palak is a heavenly orb, and it can also appear as the oi-palak, "moon-sky," occasionally with a star, and is often stylized to look like giant red flowers. This flower-and-sun palak appears again and again, not only among the Central Asian nomads, but also in the embroideries of Rajasthan and Gujarat, in Kashmir and in Turkish-influenced pieces from the Balkans, and in all of these places it is a symbol of power and fertility.

The term palak likely comes from the Arabic falak, the celestial sphere, and the root in turn probably goes back to the Sumerian word for a spindle whorl, which of course rotates. The roundels on the suzani often contain six dots, sometimes with a seventh in the middle, and it has been suggested that these represent the seven planets, or perhaps the seven layers of the sky, an idea that has come down to our own day in the expression "seventh heaven."

Palak sometimes have a triangular motif in the corners, often called a "comb" or "earring," but close examination shows that it more probably represents an amulet case used to carry a written verse of the Qur'an. Although almost unrecognizable, birds are sometimes found in older pieces, probably intended to be the cock, the bringer of light and dispeller of darkness and a very important creature in Central Asian symbolism from earliest times. There is also a motif that looks like a scorpion-surely used prophylactically, to ward off these creatures. These are two of the few non-botanical motifs in eastern suzani.

In making a suzani, it was rarely the embroiderer herself who sketched the design. Most commonly, when a girl's dowry was being prepared, fabric would be taken to a kalamkash, an older woman who acted as the local designer. A similar system still obtains in the towns of northern India today, where there are often one or two elderly men in the cloth bazaars to whom women will bring lengths or panels of cloth. After much discussion of design elements and price, the pattern-sometimes very elaborate-is penned directly onto the fabric. As the silk wears away on a suzani, it is often possible to see these outlines.

suzani are characteristically worked on four to six narrow strips of cotton, linen or silk, which before 1900 were generally home-woven. After the design is drawn, the strips are divided up to be worked by different members of the family. As a result, the patterns of the suzani can appear slightly misaligned or asymmetrical, and it is not uncommon for the shades of color to vary from one strip to the next, for no two batches of natural dye come out exactly the same. Although this is less common in suzani from the 20th century that use aniline dyes, some women nonetheless embroidered personal touches that ignored the "official" color scheme, adding charm and personality to the work.

The stitches used for suzani are simple. There are two kinds of couching, basma and the slanting kanda khayol for filling; and a chain stitch (tambur) and a kind of double buttonhole stitch (ilmok) to work the outlines. The thread is normally silk, or sometimes cotton, and very rarely wool. In the older pieces, of course, natural dyes were used: indigo from India for blue, cochineal and madder for red, saffron from the wild crocus for yellow, pomegranate skins or pistachio galls with iron for black.

The background color of the earliest and finest pieces tends to be the natural cotton or linen; the use of colored grounds-yellow, pink, red or sometimes violet-seems to be a later development. Silk backgrounds are associated with certain nomad groups such as the Lakai and with the brilliantly colored, 20th-century embroideries still made in Afghanistan.

suzani are still made today, and recently they have become a commercially produced textile and less frequently a domestic one. Some background on the region's history sheds light on how this change came about.

As Timurid Central Asia was in its long decline, following the centuries that had seen the rise of the magnificent cities, the region caught the attention of Russia's Peter the Great in the late 17th century. Over the next 150 years, as local rulers battled each other, the Russian Empire and the nomads, the region also experienced a revival of Central Asian culture, especially at Bukhara, Khokand and Khiva. In the 19th century, the Russians were again looking east, and this time they took control of those khanates.

With Russian annexation and the industrial revolution, the already increasing pressure on agricultural land intensified. Many nomads settled, and in settling they began to lose and change their traditional skills. Others left for Afghanistan, Iran or the foothills of the Himalayas.

The Russians liked Central Asian textiles-carpets, gold embroidery and silks-and set up workshops to produce them for export. The resulting carpets, like those mass-produced for export today, tended, unsurprisingly, to be standardized and somewhat dull: The work was no longer a matter of pride, no longer something to be admired by the whole community and enjoyed for the rest of one's life, but only a way to make a bare living. suzani, however, were made at home, not in workshops, so they suffered less than other crafts.

Dyeing, too, is a difficult and highly skilled trade, and in Central Asia it was a craft much practiced by Jews, who were beginning to leave under Russian rule. By the last quarter of the 19th century, as all over the East, brilliant but unstable and harsh artificial dyes were pouring out of tins and packets, and the associated drop in the quality of textile production was almost instantaneous. It is therefore easy to date suzani as being made before or after the introduction of modern dyes.

The Russian revolution of 1917 again threw Central Asia into turmoil. Under the Bolsheviks, textile production was further "rationalized," and more efforts were made to settle the nomads; meanwhile, many city people fled. Dowries were discouraged and lifestyles changed."Women were now more likely to embroider a chair cover than a saddlecloth. Patterns that for millennia had been deeply charged with meaning suddenly became mere design elements, ornamental, pretty or simply out-of-date. Yet embroidery continued, both as a government-organized craft and for the decoration of one's environment, for self-expression and for money.

Gradually, however, the new order affected even this. Education was compulsory, and now little girls had other things to do than needlework. Women were freer to work and express themselves in other ways. The generation of grandmothers for whom "every stitch was prayer" began to die out, and needlework became just one more element in a more complicated life, no longer a central one.

Despite this, a surprising number of suzani are still produced in independent Uzbekistan today, where they decorate homes, workplaces, teahouses and public buildings, and are still used at weddings and on festive occasions. They are for sale everywhere, bought by locals as well as visitors. Scraps of old ones may serve as a saddlecloth for one of the few remaining donkeys or as a tablecloth for a workman's lunch. Some are hand-embroidered, but others are machine-made. The colors may be influenced by imported textiles, and the current fashion in designs may not be as bold as in the past, but in this very recent form, the tradition of the suzani lives on.

Gold Embroidery Art of Bukhara

Bukhara gold embroidery is a miracle of art which holds a particular place among the numerous forms of art in Uzbekistan: delicate carving and painting on ganch and wood, tile-facing of monumental edifices, skilfully-worked metal and leather, carpets and decorative fabrics, and ceramics of consummate mastery.

From time immemorial things that make life more beautiful have brought joy to people. The aesthetic value of embroidery in gold has always been greater than the age-long and pitiful value of the materials used, although it is primarily their price that converts the articles into a national treasure. The skill of the master who created things of aesthetic and material value is retained in them forever. That is why the significance of perfectly made articles of this kind is intransigent.

Gold embroidery in Bukhara has a style of its own, and its best specimens came into being where the great masters found patterns which were logic in composition, figurative in needlework and masterly performed.

Works of art of this kind stand out and create a school of popular applied art - a school which all creators of things of beauty have striven to compete with and which should be an example for them in future.

Despite the antiquity of gold embroidery in Bukhara, nearly all the specimens found are believed to date from XIX and early XX centuries. No earlier articles have been found to date. There are no more than about one thousand specimens of Bukhara gold embroidery in Soviet museums, while the number of oriental robes of the XIX and early XX centuries which are of particular artistic value, does not exceed 300.

One might mention that the USSR Is not the only custodian of pieces of gold embroidery made in Bukhara.

The entire collection of gold embroidery came into possession of Soviet museums after the Great October Socialist Revolution (1920's-1930s) as a result of nationalization of the property of the Russian and Bukhara rulers. In later years the collections were replenished by the museums' scientific workers.

The greater part of the gold embroidery of Bukhara can be found in the museums of Uzbekistan. The Tashkent State Museum of Fine Arts possesses a rich and closely-studied collection of it, as well as a fine inventory which was scientifically prepared in 1940 by P. A. Goncharova - a connoisseur in this "art.

Embroidery in gold is presented fully enough at the Bukhara Museum of Local Lore, Museum of the History of the Peoples of Uzbekistan after M. T. Aibek in Tashkent, and at the Museum of the History and Arts of the Peoples of Uzbekistan in Samarkand.

The Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan possesses a rich and unique collection of modern embroidery in gold. Its articles permit us to trace the creative search of the masters and make us familiar with new forms of this fine art. All of these works were done by the masters of the Bukhara Gold-Embroidery Factory after "The 40th Anniversary of the October Revolution".

The collections of gold embroidery at the Leningrad Hermitage, Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography after Miklukho-Maklai, and Museum of Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR - are mainly clothes and splendid harness adornments embroidered in gold, which were gifts of Bukhara emirs to Russian czars and nobility.

The Moscow Museum of Art of the Peoples of the Orient has a collection of articles embroidered in gold, which were presented by the Emir to the Czar of Russia and members of his family.

All these collections are of great artistic value. The finest works of this rare form of decorative-applied art are the outcome of laborious work, gift and taste for art on the part of many generations of gold-embroiderers.

Historical literature and finds of archeologists testify to the fact that embroidery in gold was known to the inhabitants of rural areas of Central Asia in ancient times. The old masters still remind us of a legend which has it that gold embroidery was known before silk: first it was done on leather, karbos and wool, later - on silk and velvet.

An archeological expedition headed by M. E. Vorontsov found traces of gold embroidery on women's garments in the Tashkent Region, which date back to the I - II centuries A. D. "Threads of pure gold were found scattered at the waist and on the chest. Among them were fragments of patterns done in the form of volutions which adorned some part of the clothes".

Sources, elucidating the conquest of Sogd by the Arabs, note the abundance of gold embroidery on the garments of the war elite in Sogd as far back as the VIII century. In the X - XVI centuries numerous historical data such as written sources and miniatures testify to the great progress reached in decorative weaving and gold embroidery in Samarkand, Bukhara and Herat. By the XVII century gold-embroidery was done on an organised basis. The historian Melikho imparted that there was a whole block of houses with gold embroiderer in Samarkand.

In later times this form of art in Uzbekistan was continuously connected with Bukhara which became the capital of the Sheibanids as far back as XVI century.

Bukhara was inhabited by splendid popular masters of ganch-carving and metal chasing, famous jewellers, ceramists, book-binders and illustrators. The hand-made works of art, created by the artisans, were taken to the towns and cities of the Middle East and Europe. Bukhara became the abode of many popular masters who erected amazing architectural monuments thanks to which Bukhara is rightfully cabled a museum-town of national architecture.

The art of embroidery in gold has won worldwide fame. One of the great masters of this form of art was Fitrat Zar-dus (1664-1721) who was known as a poet, a witty and modest person.

Those, who were engaged in gold-embroidery as well as other forms of Central-Asian decorative handicraft, were united in guilds. In the main this was a form of art in which only men were engaged. However, it is known that many masters shared their knowledge and skill with their wives and daughters. They apparently mastered decorative stitching with perfection and were gifted workers, helping their husbands with rush orders. All the same they were unknown at the workshops, being spoken of as somebody's wife or daughter.

The process of training embroiderers in gold was a traditional one. Chiefly boys of relatives, and sons of the masters themselves, rarely strangers, were the ones who were taken on. The apprenticeship often lasted years. Having mastered the trade and received the title master - "usto", some of the apprentices became wage workers (khalfa), others set up workshops of their own.

Developing in feudal conditions, the art of gold embroidery in Bukhara assumed a privileged position, but it was done with the hands of diligent popular masters who were full of creative imagination. Practically all the articles made in the workshops were used as adornments for the Emir, the nobility of the court, and for their wives, and only very few articles were embroidered to order for the prosperous.

Embroidery in gold extensively developed in Bukhara in the 1? century. The magnificent household articles of the mir's court, and the custom of presenting robes of great value - led to orders being placed on a large scale. All this was an incentive for the development of this art. In the reign of Muzafar-khan (1860-1885) a big court-workshop was set up in Ark - the Emir's residence. It was located on the premises of the kushbegi and filled the Emir's most responsible orders. About 20 masters worked in the shop, some of whom had a court rank. All of them were paid for their work.

During the reign of Abdulakhatkban (1885-1911) the number of workshops rose to three. One of them was in Ark (at kushbegi) and two were in Khauzi-Murdustum where all the other embroiderers in gold lived and worked. At the time when Alim-khan (1911-1920) yielded power all the major orders were filled by a workshop which was in charge of the "Zakatchi-kolon" and more than 20 big private workshops. The biggest of them was that of Kori-Khasan in which such experienced masters as usto Mirza, usto Yusuf, Khodja Asror, Ochildi, Baidjon, Abdusalim, Mirza Akram and Barot worked.

In the XIX and early XX centuries gold embroidery in Bukhara was mainly done on velvet, chamois leather and wool, seldom on silk. The velvet was of high quality and of the finest dressing. In XIX century it was brought into the counry from Persia, Turkey, India, Syria and France. "Bakhmal-makhmal" - a kind of velvet made in Bukhara - was also used. More desirable were green, red, violet and blue velvet. The finest-spun muslim (doka) was used in embroidering turbans in gold for the ishans and even for the Emir himself.

The masters of Bukhara used different (depending on the way they were made) gold and silver threads (drawn and spun) known as "kalebatun". In the XIX century gold and silver threads were brought in from Russia. The "sim" plane-drawn thread, which was either made in Bukhara or brought from India and Persia in early and mid XIX century, is believed to be the oldest. All the metal threads used in embroidering in gold were fastened with the help of "pechak" cotton thread of the same colour as the embroidery.

In Bukhara articles embroidered in gold were ornamented with precious and semi-precious stones: diamonds, emerald, pearl and sapphire. Jewelry was widely used: silver, gold and gilded plates of various forms - round, multiangular and diamond-shaped, ornamented with chasing, filigree and stamping. The most popular were little round metal "kubba" domes made of silver with gild, and spangles-"pulyakchi" small circles with a hole in the middle, into which the fastening thread was run through).

Judging by the gold embroidery of the XIX and early XX centuries in the possession of museums, the masters of Bukhara basically made use of two methods of sewing: "zarduzi-za-minduzi" - entirely covering the fabric - and "zarduzi-gul-duzi" - sewing flower designs to a cut-out pattern.

While using the "zaminduzi" method, the entire surface is embroidered. This creates the impression that the master has made a lavishly designed texture of fabric, and not a decorative pattern. The fastening stitches form diverse patterns whose names are given to the stitches.

There are scores of various decorative stitches which originate from ancient times. Skilful use of stitches produces a wonderful effect on embroidery in gold. They show up the aesthetic property of the ornament and its plasticity.

A study of existing articles of XIX century Bukhara embroidery in gold revealed that all the patterned stitches used in that period have become classical, and in them reflected are the traditions, artistic culture and skill of the zarduz.

The qualities of the embroideries in gold, just as any work of applied art, from the artistic standpoint, are determined by three traits - compositions - methods of spreading the design over the article, the nature of the ornament and way of executing it, and merit of the colouring. Naturally, the decorative means (composition, ornamentation1 and colouring) were used with due regard for the semblance and purpose of the article.

Three main types of compositions of embroidery in gold, known as "daukur", "butador" and "darkham", became historically established by the XIX century.

An ornamented fringe embroidered in gold formed the basis of the "daukur" composition ("davrikur" means circular). It differed in width, being wide and magnificent, or narrow, but with less decorative design. The ornament was particularly decorative when the entire fringe (or separate elements of it) was arranged with decorative stitches of gold and silver threads, coloured silk, appliquees, and precious stones. The composition of the design on the back of the "Tauk" robe - a medallion embroidered in gold - is very imposing. Sometimes precious stones were used for ornamenting the medallion.

With the exception of army full-dress coats on nearly all the oriental robes with the "daukur" composition the design of the fringe corresponded to the pattern of the medallion on the back of the robe, though enlarged in proportion and made up of elements included In the composition of the fringe. This peculiar arrangement was not typical of the masters of Bukhara. Such "kalyuchi" robes (army full-dress coats) were only presented by the Emir to officers of the highest rank.

The "Butador" composition arranged the design over the entire surface of the velvet article with separate motifs, which were not interconnected. The main decorative motifs were vegetable designs, geometric patterns being less frequent. Bushes and bunches of flowers were evenly distributed over the entire velvet surface and played a considerable role in the decoration, while the "kur" fringe united the design into a single-whole. Articles with the "butador" composition were embroidered with the use of "gulduzi" technique, which was done on a design cut out of cardboard, or combined "gulduzi-zaminduzi" method, in which the entire background harmonized with the design.

Articles with a "butador" composition were very expressive and smart. The flowers on bushes were executed m bright appliques; the emerald-green leaves were sewn with the "shirozi" stitch, which brought on amazing iridescence.

At times different "nishon" decorations were used in the "butador" composition as an alternative to "chilyolyak" vegetable designs. They were evenly distributed over the whole surface similar to the bushes. They were sewn with the "gulduzi-zaminduzi" technique, and occasionally in coloured silk in combination with motifs executed in gold with the "zarduzi-birishimduzi" method.

The "darkham" (which means "interlacing") composition was used in making magnificent and rich attire, which was embroidered in gold throughout. The intricate interlacing of the ornament formed a splendid surface in relief.

While using the "darkham" composition in the embroidery of apparel in gold, the masters of Bukhara primarily strove to produce an intricate design and make the gaudy gold and silver texture stand out. With that end in view they enlisted all the rich store of decorative motifs and subtle techniques. Great

skill, experience and talent, as well as individuality of the masters, are fully apparent in the robes, horse-cloth and other articles of the "darkham" type. This kind of work was only executed by the most experienced masters.

"Darkham" was a compositional form destined for designing the attire of the emirs of Bukhara and their spouses.

Fem rodes with the "darkham" composition are in existence today. However, they testify to the incredulous beauty and splendour of the articles, which are typical of the old Bukhara school of embroidery in gold.

In designs done with the "darkham" method vegetable compositions prevailed; sometimes linear-geometrical compositions with a diamond-shaped laying out of the entire surface were used.

Every article embroidered in gold was executed with a different composition and method, and had a semblance and peculiarity of its own, but possessed invariable beauty.

Research of articles embroidered in gold by unknown masters of remarkable skill has led so the conclusion that their creators had founded an independent school of this fine branch of applied art.

The Great October Socialist Revolution opened a new chapter in the history of gold embroidery in Bukhara. The destiny of popular decorative domestic craft changed radically. A new customer appeared which conditioned an entire change in the gold-embroiderers, system of work.

In the initial years of Soviet power the demand for articles with embroidery in gold sharply dropped. There were no raw materials. Only a few masters occasionally worked to order, using low-standard substitutes. From time to time in Bukhara there appeared alterations done in old articles with embroideries in gold. In the 1930s gold-embroidery shops were set up in the "Krasnaya Zhenshchina", "Mikhnatkash" "Krasny Shveinik" small producers' artels and in those named after Stalin and Akhunbabayev. In 1939 all the separate shops were amalgamated into the "40th Anniversary of the October Revolution" artel. In the 1940s there were already over 70 masters working in the specialized artel as against 13 most of them were women. The teachers of the new generation of embroiderers in gold were men, XIX century masters - Nugman Aminov, Rakhmat Mirzayev, Saifutdin Sagdul-layev, who readily shared their rich experience in art with women. At factory apprenticeship schools boys and girls learnt their mastership from Abdurasul Vasiyev and Gulyarn Mukhamedov.

In 1960 the "40th Anniversary of the October Revolution" artel was reorganized into the Bukhara Gild-embroidery Factory with more than 400 masters working, nearly, all of whom were women.

In Soviet times the nature of embroidery in gold has changed radically. The usual kind of court-attire with embroidery in gold, together with those who wore it, has become a thing of the past. The former lucidity of historically formed compositions and their social discrimination have also disappeared. It was necessary to search for new forms and solutions for the art of embroidery in gold so as to embody them with both tradition and the present. This search was not an easy one, which can be witnessed by the embroideries in gold, created in the last 30 years.

The creative team-work of professional artists and masters of embroidery in gold has led to a new decorative trend in Bukhara gold-embroidery as to form and purpose, which is reflected in "stately-form" pieces with a massive arrangement - unique multi-metre thematic and decorative panels. Many of them have become part of the most valuable collections of Soviet decorative-applied art, and are national property. They adorn the expositions of Soviet museums, and are a success at all exhibitions and reviews of items of this kind. Some of them are in the custody of museums in India, Indonesia, China and Sri Lanka. In recent years they have created beautiful designs for skull-caps, and embroidered vests, girdles and fancy-bags.

The latest achievements in science and technology have brought new materials to life. All this sets one thinking and creating in a new way.

A difficult but lofty task has been set before the gold-embroiderers of Bukhara today - to retain the rare and precious beauty of their art so that many generations of descendants would be able to revel in the creations of man.

Sarouk Rugs and the American Sarouk

Sarouk is in Markazi State, in Iran which is highlighted in the map. Sarouk is also spelled Sarough, Sarouq, Saruk, Saruq and Saroogh

In the second half of the 19th century, a huge market was created for Persian carpets in Europe and in the US. Many merchants bought the old and antique Persian rugs from all over Iran and exported them to other countries. They used the city of **Tabriz** in northwest Iran to export these antiques to Europe via **Arzerum** in Turkey. Some merchants also used the southern ports on the Persian Gulf to export Persian rugs to the US by ship. By the later decades of the nineteenth century, probably around 1880, the supply of these fine antique rugs from Persia was on the low side. Therefore, many of the merchants from Tabriz decided to establish workshops in **Sultanabad** to produce rugs based on the western demand. This region had a fine carpet weaving tradition and was a perfect place to set up looms and rug workshops. Sarouk is a village located 30 miles north of the city of Sultanabad (today called **Arak**). Sarouk is famous for weaving very heavy body carpets.

To meet the rising demand in the west for Persian rugs, the British-Switzerland company of "**Ziegler & Co**." opened its office in Tabriz in 1878 and in Sultanabad in 1883. The first World Oriental Carpet Exhibition of 1891 in Vien and another one London in 1892, created a rising demand for Persian rugs in the west and other foreign companies such as British-Italian "Nearco Castelli Brothers" in Tabriz, and "Eastern Rug Trading Company of New York" established their branches in 1909 in Tabriz and later in **Kerman**. Atiyeh Brothers of Oregon, USA also established their weaving facilities in Kerman after the turn of the century.

Of these cities, Sultanabad and surrounding towns and villages such as Sarouk, **Farahan**, Lilian and few others were the most famous in the US. After establishing the offices and branches of foreign companies, the designs were created based on the customer's tastes and demand and a new types or Persian rugs were produces. The kind of rugs today called **Ziegler**, or **Sultanabad** were produced from early years of the 20th century with the designs and colour combination that Americans liked. There are many of them which are called the American Sarouk. Their colours look kind of dark or dirty pink. They have overall designs with no medallion or a very small floral medallion. Typical

American Sarouk, courtesy of spongobongo.com

Varni Kilim

The city of Ardabil (also called Ardebil. It's ancient name was Artavil) is the capital of Ardabil Province in north-eastern Iran with an area of 18,011 square kilo meters, bordering on the (former Soviet) Republic of Azarbaijan to the north and north east, Guilan province to the east and south east, East Azarbaijan to the west, Zanjan province to the south, a little inland from the shores of the Caspian Sea, and 588 km to the northwest of Tehran, Ardabil can be reached both by the road and air. It is located in an altitude of 1,300 m above sea level and is 210-km northwest of Bandar-e Anzali and 70 km from Astara on good asphalt, twisting Scenic Mountain road. The town is a market center for a fertile agricultural region; handmade carpets and kilims (gilim) are being produced there.

Other towns of the province of Ardabil are Bileh Souar, Germi, Khalkhal, Meshkin Shahr, and Pars Abad. The province has a population of 1,165,025 deeply religious inhabitants. Because of being situated at the foothills of Mount Sabalan, 4, 860 meters above sea level, the town has a pleasant weather in different seasons, thus attracting huge number of visiting guests from all parts of Iran. Ardabil was probably founded in the 5th century AD. It became (10th century) the capital of Azarbaijan, but was soon superseded by Tabriz. In 1220 AD it was destroyed by the Mongols. Ardabil is best known as the birthplace of the eminent religious leader Sheik Safi of-Din (1251-1334) from whom the Safavid dynasty was descended. Sheikh Safi was the founder of a Sufi order and monastery in Ardabil, the prime mover of Iranian culture during the 15-16th century and the centre of the theocratic community of Dervish Brotherhood. Dervishes, after coming together under the same organizational structure, managed to attract and retain the attention of large masses in the towns and in the country. Ismail, a descendent of Sheikh Safi and who was later crowned as the Shah of Persia in Tabriz (1501), was himself a member of this order. The main objectives of Dervish Brotherhood were the elimination of the then rampant anarchy and the reorganization of a new state that could respond to the demands of the urban and the rural disinherited of Iran and satisfy the people's thirst for justice. Shi'ism began to spread through mosques, monasteries and Dervish centres, and very soon conquered the masses. Shah Ismail created an immense empire: he succeeded in subjecting the many principalities that had formed after the fall of Timurid state. In 1510 he defeated the Khan and conquered Baghdad. The decision to uphold Shi'ism might be interpreted as an extreme endeavour to prevent the Iranian nation from becoming absorbed by the west (Ottomans) and the east (Uzbeks). The town was occupied by the Turks in 1725 and the Russians in 1828. Its proficient library was taken to St. Petersburg by the Russians.

Mausoleum of Sheikh Safi

Sheik Safi's 14th –century tomb in the centre of the city of Ardabil often enlarged and restored in later centuries, can still be visited. It houses the mortal remains of Shah Ismail as well as his saintly ancestor, who is reputed to have foretold the future, spoken to the dead and rescued those in danger at sea. The tombs are unrounded by finely engraved wood panels with extraordinarily delicate ivory and precious metal inlays.

The complex of structures known, at present, as Sheikh Safi's Mausoleum, consists of a portal, a porch, Sheikh Safi's tomb-chamber, the Chini Khaneh (china hall), the Shahidgah (martyrdom site), the Khaneghah (dervish monastery), Qandil Khaneh (lantern hall), the Jannat Sara (heaven) Mosque, and others, and ranks among the finest historical achievement of Iranian art.

The burial place of Sheikh Safi od-Din Ardabili as well as other Safavid kings, such as Shah Ismail, comprises the tombs of a number of princes, notables and generals of the Safavid period, including the tomb attributed to Shah Ismail's mother, and those of Sheikh Sadr of-Din, Sheikh Junaid, Sultan Heidar and two generals, namely Sultan Ustajilu and Kurd Beig, the latter's tombstone bearing the 1542 AD date.

Apart from the above structures, the construction of the main portal of the mausoleum and three domes

decorated with exquisite faience tile and inscriptions in the Kuffic and Riqa' scripts, give considerable charm and splendour to this attractive historical monument. The decorative elements of the complex, both internal and external, consist of paintings, plaster mouldings, stuccos and gold-toned stalactite decorations.
The structure of the Qandil Khaneh stands out among the rest both from the architectural as well as the plaster points of view. Sheikh Safi's tomb-chamber is a cylindrical tower capped with a rather low dome, underneath which an exquisite carved box bearing an inscription in Riqa' script covers the actual burial ground. The box is one of the finest movable treasure pieces of the mausoleum.
The dome of Sheikh Ismail's tomb-chamber is lower than that of Sheikh Safi, and is decorated on the outside with colourful tiles and an inscription in Kuffic. Under the dome in the chamber a fine, costly box rests upon the tomb. The shrine on Sheikh Junaid's tomb together with three other boxes in the complex, are highly attractive on account of their superb carvings.

There is a large vaulted hall next to the mausoleum wherein Shah Abbas the Great stored the collection of jade and porcelain given to him by the Emperor of China. Each object was placed in a gold-plated niche cut to size. The gold has worn off and most of the objects (except about a dozen dishes and receptacles) are now in Tehran museums.
The oldest part of the complex belongs to the 15th century AD, the other parts having been gradually added, particularly under Shah Tahmasp I and Shah Abbas II, who spared no efforts to expand, beautify and repair the Safavid Kings' eternal resting place.
The most famous of Persian carpets, the so-called "Ardabil Carpet" (one of a pair) in the Victorian and Albert Museum, was presented to the mausoleum by Shah Tahmasp in 1539. It was actually made in Kashan.

Ardabil Museum
Originally called Chini Khaneh (Porcelain House), and part of Sheikh Safi Complex, it was inaugurated as a museum affiliated with the complex in early 1991. The architectural style of the edifice resembles that of Ali Qapu in Isfahan. It is an octagonal, domed room with four Shah Neshins (elevated recesses). The stalactite works in this structure are considered as fine specimens of the constructional and decorative devices of the Safavid period. The Chini Khaneh, with its beautiful plaster work, is one of the most artistic and valuable parts of the complex, which is also notable for a number of fine and expensive wooden and silver doors.

Varni Kilims
Varni, a flat weave and Kilim (gilim), a kind of rug and floor covering without pile and very decorative which is produced in the province of Ardabil is famous in the world. The designs are based on the motives of the surrounding environment mostly birds and animals depicted from the top of the head of the talented weavers of the region, all of whom are patient ladies who learn to weave Varni from their mothers. Many of the varnies are made with silk. They are completely made of natural silk or partly silk, so called “Kaf Abrisham”, meaning with silk background. The designs are divided into frames and small cubes (squares) or rectangles in which the motives of the birds and animals are woven. Based on a report put out by the Iran Handicrafts Organization, Ardabil Branch, there are 2,500 workshops in the province with 2,000 weavers along with 13,000 independent weavers which work in their homes and make 20,000 square meters (more than 210,000 square feet) of Varni per year. The local market price for the whole production amounts to $1,000.000.

Varni: A Kilim made in Ardabil, Iran

It is almost certain that the Turkish speaking groups which later formed the Qashqai Tribe migrated to Fars region in south west Iran some 600 years ago. The appearance of the Qashqai as a tribe happened in a later date at the end of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736) around 300 years ago, and prior to that there never was such a tribe. The migration of these groups did not happen at once. Several Turkish speaking clans and sub-clans united under the leadership of "Johnnie Agha Qashqai ", and formed the "Qashqai Tribe".

There are different theories about the origins of Qashqai's, none of which are certain, but the most probable one is that they migrated from different regions from the north and north west such as Turkmenistan, Caucasus, and Asia minor. This can be backed by the fact that many of the Qashqai's today have light skin, blond hair, and green/blue eyes. There are also some similarities between their dialects and those of the Shahsavans of the East Azerbaijan. There are also some similarities between the motives of their kilims and needle works. Qahqahi's have mixed with other Turkish and non-Turkish speaking groups such as Kurds and Lurs. There are also some elements of Turkmen, Caucasian, and Turkish rug weaving traditions and motives in Qashqai rugs and kilims.

Qashqai tribe is consisted of six clans, such as Shesh Boluki, Large Kashkuli, Darreh Shoori, Amaleh, Farsi Madan, and small Kashkuli. Some groups of Qashqai's were forced to move to Khorasan region in the north east of Iran neighbouring with Afghanistan. This was based on a decree issued by Nader Shah (ruled 1736-1747). During these twenty years or so, the Qashqai's
were affected by the weaving tradition of the region in which they resided. Herati or mahi (fish) design found its way to Qashqai weaving and this was a side effect of this migration. Some other groups of Qashqai's went to Kerman at a later date and they also took some of the designs and motives from Kerman rug weaving traditions with them to Fars region.

Qashqai's migrate in the summer to the north to the Zagros mountain and in the winter to the south by

the Persian Gulf in search of pasture for their cattle, mostly sheep and goats. The range of their migration is about 300 miles. They live in black tents (siah chador) made of goat hair which is greasy and serves almost as a waterproof material. These tents are easy to assemble and disassemble. The weavers also use horizontal looms which can be easily put on the horses when the summer or winter migration times come by.

Today, Qashqai ladies weave the most beautiful Gabbeh and tribal rugs of the world by hand spun local wool dyed with natural dye. The rug weaving is completely done by women, and men only help with the wool sheering from the sheep and the dyeing process. The Qashqai children go to school while their mothers weave rugs. Although we provide the yarn and give instructions to our Qashqai weavers, but they are free to use their imagination and add the motives they like to the original design.

Persian Gabbeh is a hand-knotted (handmade) thick Persian rug with long pile. It is made by the nomads of Fars province in south west Iran, of which the famous city of Shiraz is the capital. The most famous nomad group of this region is the Qashqai tribes. Although the existing few old pieces of Qashqai rugs are not more than 100 years old, but the existence of Persian Gabbeh was recorded in an order issued by Shah Tahmasp, the second monarch of the Safavid dynasty (1502-1736) to use Gabbeh among other rugs to welcome and honour King Homayun of India who took refuge to Iran. Tahmasp was only ten when he succeeded his brother Shah Ismail at 1519 and became the king of Persia. Shah Tahmasp ruled Iran for 53 years. He assisted Homayun to regain his power and throne. Shah Tahmasp himself knew how to do miniature painting and he had made few rug designs himself.

Gabbeh like many other types of Persian rugs is made with local hand spun wool and vegetable dye. The KPSI (knot per square inch) is around 50. The foundation of authentic Persian Gabbeh (the warp) is wool, so Gabbeh is a wool on wool rug. Since there are no chemicals and synthetics involved in its material and dye, it is fair to say that Gabbeh is a nature, weaver and user friendly rug. Natural dye and fine local wool with long fibers make the wool lustrous. The designs are simple and children like paintings which bring peace of mind to homes and offices which use Gabbeh as floor covering. Although tribal and rural, but the abstract and cubist designs of Persian Gabbeh look so modern and match the interiors of today's homes. Simplified human, animal, and tree motives are usually utilized by Gabbeh weavers who use their imaginations and the environment around them to weave such designs.

In the past, Gabbeh and other rugs made by the nomads were not for sale and they were made for domestic use at homes and tents. Therefore, the weavers were free to use the designs and motives they liked, since they did not have to take the customers' or the market's taste into account. It is difficult to classify the designs of Gabbehs, as there are many designs which do not follow any preset rules therefore do not fall into specific categories.

Zari Fabrics

“ZARI” (golden), is an attributive adjective, which is attributed to ZAR (gold). It means made of gold. Therefore, ZARI is brocade with gold weft".

About 1000 B.C. fabrics were woven in the form of two-weft, in East of Iran. In SASANID era (early 7th century), Iranian could weave the fabric with high durability and strength by the carefulness in the twisting the silken yarns.

Brocade is named of traditional fabric that all wefts are silver or gold and their warps are silk. Nowadays a large number of these fabrics belonging to the SASANID era (last dynasty of native rulers to reign in Persia before the Arab conquest in 640 A. C.) exist in royal treasure in Tehran or in famous churches in the Europe and Japan's museums. It is obvious that the king of SASANID donated these precious pieces to the imperial western court. The designs of SASANID are usually combination of hunting ground and birds. In regard of the remaining fabric from this age, we can say that the combination of these fabrics reached to the ultimate point of artistic creativity, harmony, design and colour.

The texture of *ZARI* was welcomed into the age of Safavi Dynasty (late 15th century). Provinces such as Kashan, Yazd, and Isfahan became major centres for creation of this art. The culmination of this art is seen during Safavi era in Iran. The motifs and designs of fabrics, like the design of rugs, were drawn beforehand. The difference is that the motifs are repeated throughout the fabrics.

This art flourished in the contemporary era. In the year 1929, with the attempt of Master "Hosein Taherzadeh Behzad Tabrizi", the first workshop of ZARI with attendance of "Habiballah Tarighi" began to work in Tehran. This workshop has continued it's work, and a few remaining artists, produce the unique brocades in limited quantity but high quality.

About Persian Nain Rugs

Nain city (also spelled Naein) with 35,000 sq. km. area, is located at 130 km. distance to the east of Isfahan city and 320 km. to the south east of Tehran. It is located in the central plateau of Iran, in

Isfahan Province. The climate of Nain is hot and dry. This city has many famous villages and wells.

The historical city of Nain has old antiquity and is a relic of pre-Islamic era. In geography books belonging to the 1st Islamic century, e.g., `Hodudol Alam` (372 AH.) there are some notes revealing the name with some characteristics and features of this city. The most important historical relic of Naein is `Narenj` or `Narin` castle. The native architecture as well as the way of living of this desert community is very interesting and astonishing.

The city of Nain is famous in the world for its magnificent rugs. The history of fine woollen men's cloak and cloth making dates back to centuries, but carpet making is relatively new and less than a century old. All the Nain rugs have asymmetrical (Persian) knots, wool pile and cotton warps. They are closely clipped for better look.
In some instances silk warps are used. In higher and finer knotted rugs, kurk (baby lamb wool) is used for pile. Using touch of silk around the flowers and arabesques is common. It is not unusual to see Nain rugs with more than 500 knots per square inch. Making very big Nain carpets especially for Arab customers is a common practice in Nain.

Master artist Habibian who died few years ago at the age of 90 was one of the pioneers of Nain rugs. His carpets had his signature and many producers now a day's use his signature on their carpets and this has become a controversy over Nain carpets in the past several years. Of course, when you want to buy a Persian Nain rugs, you should not be obsessed with the mere signature as the quality of the rug, the balance in the design, the consistency of the knots are few more important factors than the signature itself.

About Yazd Rugs

Yazd is an ancient city in central Iran between the famous cities of Isfahan and Kerman, surrounded by desert with an area of 72,000 km2. The population of Yazd was 327,000 in 1996. A large number of Zoroastrians' still live in Yazd.

The history of Yazd dates back to the time of Alexander the Great, one thousand years before the introduction of Islam. During the Sassanid Empire (AD 224-651),the city of Yazd was an important centre for silk production and silk textile throughout the 13th century. Marco Polo, the famous Italian traveller (1254-1324)

The Yazd rugs have asymmetrical (Persian) knots with three wefts. The number of knots in square inch is much lower than Isfahan rugs and Nain rugs, but the pile is softer and longer. The quality of the wool which is from the local is fine and the natural dye makes the rug look lustrous. In the desert surrounding the city of Yazd, madder is cultivated and its root is used for different shades of deep and light red.

Some of the designs look like Kashan with one big centred medallion. Other designs resemble Kashan rugs with open field background and floral borders derived from the book covers. There are some other geometrical as well as curvilinear designs which resemble none of Kashan or Kerman pattern such as "East London" design. It is common to make room-size carpets in Yazd.

Yazd is also the home for Zilo, a kind of cotton flat weave made for mosques and endowment to wholly shrines with only two colours of white and blue cotton yarns.

Abadeh Persian Rugs

Abadeh Rug Circa 1920

Abadeh is a market town half way between Isfahan and Shiraz on the main road. It is traditionally where the Qashqai in their north/south seasonal migration would cross the highway. Consequentially it was an important market town and one that most Qashqai were familiar with. The Pahlavi Shahs, Reza Shah and his son who was overthrown Mohammad Reza Shah feared the Qashqai since they represented a mobile armed Turkic speaking block that was not completely under the thumb of the Shah. To mitigate the risk the Pahlavi would periodically pressure the Qashqai to settle. Abadeh was an area that drew many settling Qashqai. They knew the town and besides twice a year they could see their cousins and other family who had not settled. In addition to the settling Qashqai there were also Lori and Afshari in the Abadeh area. To the left is a fine example of an old Lori Abadeh rug.

A small note on the Abadeh Rug to the right. Never Abadeh rugs often look rather like this example except the centre medallion is more of a diamond. These are called Heybatlu. This is interesting in that the Heybatlu are part of the Shesh Boluki tribe of the Qashqai.

Once settled the tribal woman were able to weave more of the year on larger and better looms making larger and better rugs. Sides were straighter and knot counts higher. with better looms they used cotton since to the weaver it makes a better rug. From this come the rugs that we know today as Abadeh.

- A blue cotton weft is typical in Abadeh rugs.

The Difference between a Shiraz rug and an Abadeh Rug

Shiraz rugs can look very similar but there are a few differences. Shiraz rugs are more likely to have a wool foundation and Abadeh rugs a cotton foundation. Shiraz rugs tend to be coarser while Abadeh rugs tend to be finer. Abadeh rugs are more likely to have blue cotton wefts.

When is an Abadeh rug not an Abadeh rug?

An Abadeh rug is and must be made in Iran. While surveying Abadeh rugs in the market place I noticed some deceptive advertising. One seller listed Abadeh rugs that were made of olefin. Real Abadeh rugs are never made of petroleum byproducts. Another sell listed a rug that looked like an Abadeh with this header, "Oriental Rug Persian Abadeh 6x9. Yayla Item number: 7312670206". Only in the details did they mention it was made in India. In my opinion that is a good example of deceptive advertising.