

The Genuine Persian Rug

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The Distinction of Oriental and Persian Rugs

Three main groups of Oriental rugs can be distinguished:

1. The Nomad rug.
2. The Persian rug.
3. Turkish—or Smyrna Rugs.

To be able to determine the origin of rugs one must study those which have been made before the middle of the 19th century, as the present names are often completely unfounded. Every one of the three types has its individual characteristics. The expert will never take a Nomad rug for an Anatolian—or an Anatolian rug for a Persian, but will recognize its origin from typical attributes.

(a) *The Nomad rug.*

These rugs are produced by nomadic tribes in Central Asiatic countries as Afghanistan, Belutschistan, Buchara, Turkestan and the southern slopes of the Caucasus, Kurdistan and Luristan and the South of Persia. In design these rugs resemble more the Turkish than the Persian rugs, being of primitive nature with purely geometrical figures and simply styled trees and animals. Warp, filling and pile are mostly wool; sometimes the warp consists of silk. Cotton is rarely used by nomads as they are not settled and, therefore, do not grow this plant. The rugs are mostly of small size with a rather short pile.

(b) *The Persian rug.*

These rugs have been described in detail in a previous paragraph*, the rugs from the various provinces will be dealt with later.

(c) *Turkish-, Smyrna or Anatolian rugs.*

Distinctive for the Turkish rug is the long and shaggy pile. The pattern is mostly geometrical or strictly styled vegetable ornamentation without roundings, while figures of animals are very rarely used. The home industry produces only small devotional rugs with a Mihrab of several parts. Anatolian rugs are made by home industry in the following districts: Kirshihir, Kula, Ladik, Mudjur, Melas, Nidge, Jakshibeidjir, Megri, Pergamo, Tuzla and Yuruk. Depending upon quality these rugs contain 5400 to 11000 knots per square foot.

* See Nov. issue, pp. 666, 667.

The following types of rugs are made in Anatolia on factory scale: Hereke, Uschak, Yaprak, Chiordes and Dimirdshi.

These factories are mainly located in the coast district and operated by European concerns. Here rugs in sizes ranging from 6 x 9 to 13 x 16 feet are manufactured in all colors and patterns which meet the European and American demand. The Smyrna rugs are made from coarse yarns, which gives them a tough appearance with a shaggy nap. They cannot be regarded as rugs of luxury like the Persians, but as rugs for ordinary use.

I—Rugs from Azerbeidshan

This province produces the Tabriz, Heris, Joraghan and Karadagh rugs. Tabriz, the capital of Azerbeidshan, is the second largest city of Persia and the main trading place for Persian rugs. Formerly it has been the market for Turkmenian rugs too, but since the war Tiflis on the Southern slope of the Caucasus became the main trading point for that district. From Tabriz the rugs are shipped to Constantinople.

(a) *Tabriz rugs.*

The raw material for these rugs is the Coi-Maku wool from the Northwestern Azerbeidshan. These wools—belonging to the best wools of Persia—have an extremely mild silky luster, are supple, medium soft and rather light in weight. The fleece consists of a coarser straight and long upper hair of C to D fineness and a shorter, finer downy hair of B to C fineness, the wool represents a kind of Donskoi.

The color of the Maku-wool is generally pure white, which in the southern part of the Coi district changes to a creamy white. Brown and mingled wools are rare. Only in the Southern Coi district the wool contains a few percent of stichels of white color. The Maku-Coi wool exceeds in whiteness and staple the Choras-san-Meshed wool. In the whole district the downy wool contains some very light scales.

The scouring of this wool is done almost everywhere right after the clipping. The wool is packed into large square wooden boxes with partly perforated bottom, river water is poured over it abundantly and then the wool is worked by barefoot men standing on the wool in the boxes. After scouring, the wool is squeezed out and dried by the sun on the sandy ground. As the

wool is spread on the sand already before the scouring a part of the greasy dirt is loosened by the sand which eases its removal by the water, so that the scoured wool looks fairly clean. By this handling the wool takes up from 18 to 22% of dusty sand.

The rugs from Tabriz belong to the finest and most expensive rugs of Persia. They are generally produced in large sizes, ranging from $7\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ to 13×16 feet, sometimes however in lengths of 20 to 33 feet. The pile of these rugs is very dense, ranging from 10000 to 22000 knots per square foot. They are of excellent durability and resilience. The pile is cut rather short and velvet-like. The design is almost exclusively naturalistic; large leaves and tendril-work and flower-ornaments mostly cover the whole surface, surrounding a rich medallion on blue, red, crème or light tan ground. Crème with black and red ornamentation predominates, giving old pieces a sparkling luster. The wide border consists of large leaf and straight lined figure-work and several parallel narrow edgings and a fine mosaic-like ornament. In Tabriz and vicinity thousands of women and children are engaged in the home industry, while the factories employ only men and boys.

(b) *Heris and Joraghan Rugs.*

The wool for these rugs comes from the vicinity of these towns. It is a wool of good, durable condition, fine in texture but somewhat coarser than the Tabriz wool. The luster is improved by the excellent water in the vicinity of Heris.

These rugs are principally made by home industry in Heris and near this town, some Heris rugs however, being manufactured in Tabriz workshops. The whole town of Heris is engaged in rug weaving. Rather crude and roughly made Heris-rugs are on the market under the name of Joraghan-rugs, while the fine kind of Heris rugs today is often traded as Peschme-Meshed or as Heris rugs. These latter rugs are made from finer wool and contain up to 12000 knots per square foot. The Joraghan is patterned in loud colors; the white effects of this rug give a restless and shiny impression. The old, genuine Heris is widely different from most of the Persian rugs. Its ornamentation is straight-lined, geometrical, similar to a Nomad rug, consisting of large corner pieces with a wide and very attractive border. The old pieces are generally made from an excellent wool, similar to Coi-Maku wool. Typical of these rugs is an unusual red, very deep and beautiful, which can be found only in Heris and is said to be depending upon the water of that region. This red in connection with brilliant blue and golden shades with black lines imparts to the rug a princely appearance. Delicate shades of pink, salmon, light yellow,

light blue and reseda are prevailing on modern Heris rugs.

(c) *Karadagh and Kalish Rugs.*

They originate in the mountain-district on the Southwest of the Caspian sea. This region produces a beautiful, white and lustrous wool of medium staple, uncrimped, straight and highly durable. The wool is very light, uniform in length and fineness ranging from C to D quality. The wool is free from stichels and other impurities.

These rugs, especially the older pieces show a beautiful, soft and rich sheen. The colors are deep red and dark blue with plenty of white effects; the ornamentation is geometrical with the tendency of using flowers in geometrical figures. The principal design is an oblong center piece on a plain red, blue or green ground with separated corner pieces. The border is unusually narrow and does not show up much. 5000 to 10000 knots are tied on a square foot; the very short pile is typical of these rugs.

II—Turkmenian Rugs of Northern Persia

These rugs come from the Northwest of Persia, Southeast of the Caspian sea, near Astrabad. Nomadic tribes furnish the raw material for these rugs, a light to dark-brown mingled wool with a rather high amount of stichels of reddish brown color. The hair has a high luster and is very durable and strong. These rugs are sold as Afghan, Buchara and Beshirs.

The basic color is a deep red of silky, fiery luster, typical of the Afghans. On this ground these rugs show several regular squares with rounded corners in red, blue or orange, filled with geometric stars, etc. Two opposite corners show always the same design and colors.

The Ardebil carpets are made from a similar, but inferior material in Masandra on the Southern shore of the Caspian sea.

III—Rugs from Northeast of Persia

These comprise the Chorasán-Meshed and the Turkbaff. The finest Chorasán rugs are marketed under the name of Meshed, the capital of the province. The heaviest qualities are known as Turkbaff which means "Turkish knot." The Chorasán is the softest of all Persian rugs. The wool in this province is the finest in Persia. Chorasán is a high land, consisting largely of deserts and many mountain ranges. The largest desert in the Southwest of the province is a salt desert called "Dasht-i-Kevir" with nomads and peasants living from raising sheep, goats and camels. The flocks of these "Tadshiks"—the peasants—yield a specially fine wool, ranging from B to D in fineness, mainly

however, consisting of C quality with normal crimp, fairly good luster, light weight and bright to creamy white color, the latter shade being more prevalent. In luster this wool is inferior to Coi-Maku, Luristan and Kirman, its hand however is much softer and sub-

The pile is rather high, consisting of 20000 to 30000 knots per square foot. The average size is 10 x 13 feet. The best Chorasans, very famous for their beauty, were formerly supplied by the Khain-district, which now has lost its former importance. At present



Fig. 1. Map of Persia Showing Main Wool Districts

tle. The durability is not so good. The wool from the Southwest of the province is of fine white or medium brown uniform color, resembling somewhat Cashmir hair in luster and softness.

The Chorasans often show an abundance of colors and variety of design. The border generally consists of ten to fifteen small edgings, every one of them a marvel of tendril-, leaf-, or flower-ornaments. Medallions are used on plain bluish-red, brown or blue ground or surrounded by rich flower- or tendril-ornamentation. On Meshed rugs a surprising amount of blue is used, especially light blue in connection with bluish-red or steel-blue with copper-red. Generally these rugs are woven very closely; they are of fine texture, soft and subtle and the subdued sheen of the hair imparts the appearance of raw silk.

the best Chorasans are furnished by the Birdshens-district, which however actually belongs to the province of Kuristan on the border of Afghanistan. These rugs contain about 30000 knots per square foot. The main customers for these and the Chorasans-Meshed rugs in general are the United States. At present a rug is on the loom at Meshed, ordered for the Shah, 42 x 60 feet in size, made entirely from silk which will take about four to five years to complete.

IV—Rugs from Central Persia

As such are considered: Feraghan, Kashan, Isfahan, Hamadan, Sarabent, Dshandshagan, Sultanabad, Muskabad, Mahal and Saruk.

The Irak-Adshemi wool is the material for these rugs. It is strong and durable, mostly of a fine white

and from C to E in fineness. Some of it occurs in a light-brown shade, similar to camel hair. Due to the oil content of the soil—especially in the Southwest—this wool is highly lustrous. It is free from downing wool, subtle, elastic, rather straight and very uniform in its staple. It is especially suitable for light shades.

(a) *Feraghan-rugs* can easily be identified due to their regularly repeating small pattern. Their dull colors give a somewhat monotonous impression. The design on ground and border consists of small hooked figures, small rosettes, leaves, plants and branches in inter-meshing arrangement. The Herati- or fish-pattern is characteristic for these rugs. The principal colors are steel-blue with copper-red and with small white or light green effects. The rugs are loosely woven with from 5500 to 7500 knots per square foot; they belong to the cheapest class of Persian rugs.

(b) *Kashan rugs* are produced in two types, a woolen rug with cotton- or silk warp and an all-silk rug, the latter being produced as a special luxury only, with up to 82000 knots per square foot. The woolen Kashan is still one of the finest rugs on the market, made from the finest and most beautiful wool of the Irak. It is very closely woven with up to 35000 knots per square foot; it has very short and velvet-like pile; it is of rather complicated design with large medallion, matching corner-pieces and wide borders of rich tendril-work. Unfortunately vegetable colors are very seldom used on these rugs.

(c) *Isphahan rugs* are flowered rugs with a pattern of more or less styled flowers. Tendrils, palmettes, blossoms and flowers form panels which look very natural. The main colors are pink and blue in various shades. The pile is very short; the square foot contains from 7500 to 15000 knots; the average size is 10 x 13 feet.

(d) *Hamadan rugs*. Their home is the town of Hamadan and its vicinity in the province of Feraghan. The material is mostly camel hair of natural color and light-brown Irak wool. The camel hair is used in various color shades from light-brown to brownish black; besides these natural shades mainly blue is used in various shades. Sometimes an old Bordeaux-red can be found in these rugs. Often a medallion is used on a plain ground of camel-brown or blue. Hamadan rugs have a high pile and are made generally in sizes of 5 x 10 and 6½ x 13 feet and in runners of 20 feet length. Besides Irak wool such from Southern Kurdistan and Northeastern Luristan is used on Hamadan rugs.

(e) *Sarabent* rugs come from the Persian province of Irak near the town of Hamadan. The wool used

for the pile is a goat-wool from a Kurdish goat. Warp and filling consist of cotton. The motifs used in these rugs are small palmettes, which repeat constantly on a red or dark-blue background. The border consists of 4 to 6 inches of crème colored stripes with a blue border on the outside. Typical of Sarabent rugs is the palm leaf, which is always found with tendrils in the border. The Sarabent or Mir-rug has short, velvet-like pile with 16000 to 22000 knots per square foot. The average sizes are 40 x 42½ inches, 8 x 10 feet or 13½ x 20 feet.

(f) *Saruk rugs* (Muskabad-Mahal-Saruk)

They are made in the province of Saruk, south of Azerbeidshan. The coarser, harsher and lustrous Kurdistan wool is used on these rugs, which resemble in design and colors the Tabriz rugs, the colors being often still darker than on those rugs. The best of this group is the Saruk with from 7000 to 11000 knots per square foot. Mahal is inferior to Saruk but better than Muskabad.

V—Rugs from South-Persia

These rugs from Kirman and Shiras-Kashkai were formerly much in demand and represented some of the finest Persian rugs. Recently the South-Persian districts began to regain their old reputation. Kirman rugs are produced by settlers, while Shiras rugs are produced by nomads as well as by settlers, and Kashkai rugs are made only by nomads and often sold as Shiras rugs. Most of the rugs sold as Shiras are nomad-production.

(a) *Kirman rugs* generally resemble Tabriz rugs very closely, differing mainly in the wool used for the pile. The Kirman people use a considerable amount of fine goat hair, similar to Cashmir. For Kirman rugs often a ground of natural white is chosen; this ground and the finer pile form the principal difference from Tabriz rugs. These rugs contain from 13000 to 24000 knots per square foot, they are rather thin and of very short pile.

(b) *Shiras-Kashkai rugs*—The better kind of these rugs is on the market as Kashkai, often falsely called Mecca-rugs. Typical for these rugs is an abundance of small patterns, very characteristic in design. The material is a soft, lustrous sheep wool and partly a kind of Cashmir goat-hair. They are made in sizes 3½ x 5½, 7 x 10 and 7 x 12½ feet. Older pre-war pieces contained up to 33000 knots per square foot, which is now aimed at again, while in the prosperous times rugs were not woven so closely. The principal colors are copper-red, plenty of blue in all shades, often also much white, rarely yellow and green. Warp,



Tabriz-Heris Rug Design for Pillows
(120,000 knots per sq. meter)

filling and pile are wool, sometimes silk being used for the warp. Often the short sides of the pieces show a Kelim-like design in cube pattern, while the long sides are bordered by a cord, around which woolen yarn of various colors is wound at regular intervals.

VI—Kurdistan Rugs

Kurdistan is located in the Northwest of Persia, with Senneh, Bidjar and Mosul as principal towns—the latter actually belonging to Mesopotamia. But many rugs produced in Persian Kurdistan are sold as Mosul rugs. Medium and larger sized throw-rugs form the bulk of the production. The design is similar to the geometrical designs of Anatolian rugs, the principal colors being red, blue, yellow, white and green. The pile is long and shaggy. The rugs consist entirely of wool; only the warp sometimes is made from silk. Mosuls are all made by nomads.

(a) *Senneh rugs*. The town of Senneh is the main market for the rugs of the Kurdish nomads. Wools of the Southern Kurdistan and Northern Luristan are mostly used. The older Senneh-rugs are the finest small rugs of Persia; they are very closely woven with up to 28000 knots per square foot and a short plush-like pile. Warp and filling of these rugs are cotton. The size is mostly about 5 x 7 feet. They often show the old diamond pattern or their typical small, attractive

fine patterns in beautifully shaded color combinations.

(b) *Bidjar rugs* belong to the heaviest and thickest rugs of Persian origin (Felt-rug.) The Bidjar rug is the only rug in Persia with double warp- and filling-threads. The pile is long and tight. The whole rug is made from wool in an average size of 10 x 13½ feet. Design and colors are very attractive. This rug due to its high weight is not suitable for export, running too high in duty.

(c) *The Mosul rug* is a rug of smaller size—as used for throw rugs—of inferior wool material, loosely woven and of long pile, which sometimes however has a silky sheen. The design is geometrical and not very interesting. Mosuls are produced by primitive nomads from the Caucasus, Persia, Mesopotamia, Armenia and Anatolia. All these products are brought to Mosul on the Tigris river, where the rugs receive their trade name.

Rugs Made of Lamb Wool

Especially fine qualities of all hereto mentioned types of rugs are made from the soft and fine lamb wool, which, however, has only little strength and durability. Therefore these rugs are made for wall covering only and are patterned accordingly; they command a higher price than other woolen rugs.



Kirman and Tabriz Rug Design
(140,000 knots per sq. meter)