

Journal of the Oriental Rug and Textile Society





ORIENTAL RUG & TEXTILE SOCIETY

ORIENTAL RUG AND TEXTILE SOCIETY of GREAT BRITAIN

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The Oriental Rug and Textile Society of Great Britain was founded in 1977 to encourage interest and enthusiasm in the carpets and textiles of Asia and now of the whole world. We aim to advance understanding of the processes involved in their creation and to promote knowledge of the traditional centres of weaving.

Members receive details of up to eleven events (lectures, visits and trips abroad) each year and three full colour journals.

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Front cover: Carpet weaving at the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum, Baku, Azerbaijan. See article on page 4.

ORTS JOURNAL AUTUMN 2022

For those who missed it, and those who didn't, this autumn's journal includes a lively account from Dimity Spiller on the ORTS visit to Glasgow in September, a great success and fully subscribed. Members' appetites for travel further afield may be whetted, carbon offsetting permitting, by our first article, introducing the magnificent Azerbaijani Carpet Museum, a must for serious carpet scholars. The important role played by Azeri carpet-weaving in the world's material heritage is indisputable and immeasurable. We welcome also Andy Dailey's second contribution to the journal, this time in concert with Tim Hays, shedding light on the little-known and highly colourful field of Balkan saddlebags. Finally, our acting chair Andrew Rawstron's review of Orient Stars 2 provides a considered perspective on this long-awaited volume.

Fiona Kerlogue



ORTS members dining at Damasquino's in the Saltmarket district of Glasgow on the eve of our visit to the Burrell Collection in September. See more details on page 29.

ORTS LECTURE PROGRAMME Spring 2023

Wednesday, January 18th. Dr Sonia Ashmore: Missing Threads - the continuing history of muslin. University Women's Club. 18.00 for 19.00.

Wednesday, February 15th. Lynne Milgram: From Household to Digital Sales - Marketing Contemporary Textiles in the Northern Philippines. 18.00 UK time. Via Zoom only.

Wednesday, March 15th. Penny Oakley: Suzanis: a new look at an old story. University Women's Club. 18.00 for 19.00.

Wednesday, April 19th. Dr Ben Hinson: Collecting late antique textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum: Greville Chester, Gayet, Thomas and friends. University Women's Club. 18.00 for 19.00.

Azerbaijani Carpet Weaving: Origins and Modernity

Azerbaijani Carpet Weaving: Origins and Modernity

Shirin Melikova

Azerbaijani carpet weaving has evolved over the centuries. Throughout history, the carpet has characterized each epoch, demonstrating sustainable forms of development on the one hand and the era's artistic, emotional, spiritual, and ideological concepts on the other.

When discussing the history of weaving in modern Azerbaijan, artefacts from archaeological excavations take us back to the Neolithic era. Archaeologists discovered the remains of mats, including *cheten* and *hasir*, in various regions of Azerbaijan, still produced in the country's southern areas today. Their purpose has always varied. They serve as floor and wall coverings, protect against moisture, are used during cooking, and appear as individual household items and headdresses.

The region's archaeological excavations and written sources from antiquity and the early Middle Ages record the ever-increasing importance of carpet weaving in the lives of people living here. Excavations near Mingachevir clearly demonstrate that carpets played a significant role in the interiors of residents' dwellings. Notably, the local ancestors of today's Azerbaijanis traditionally engaged in carpet weaving, like other Turkic peoples, and brought originality, exquisite taste, and unique character to this art. Their recognizable contributions through the centuries eventually formed the basis of domestic, regional groups of carpet compositions.

Significantly, the country's natural conditions further enabled the art of Azerbaijani carpet weaving to flourish. In the mountains and foothills of the South Caucasus, transhumance was widespread. Towards summertime, semi-nomadic herdsman drove sheep to the alpine meadows of the *yaylak* (mountain pastures), while closer to winter, they went down to the plains. Many generations of these herdsman bred local breeds of sheep, distinguished by high-quality wool and providing carpets with a luxurious texture. The abundance of local flora and fauna provided ample opportunities for dyes to be developed (along with paints originating from plants, animals, and minerals). Finally, the herdsman's way of life left its mark on carpet ornamentation in many areas of Azerbaijan. It also fuelled the rapid development of carpet products, which are vital for the settled population and truly indispensable for semi-nomadic herdsman due to their portability, durability, and versatility.

In Azerbaijan, there are eight flat-woven weaving techniques, classified according to their complexity: *hasir*, *palas*, *kilim*, *shadda*, *ladi*, *varni*, *zili* and *sumakh*. Flat-woven carpets and carpet products are among the most archaic products in which one can trace the stability of compositional and ornamental forms (see back cover). Various ethnic groups and sheep-herding tribes created them. For all these tribes, the carpet formed the interior of portable houses, *alachigs* (tents), replacing furniture and household items.

At the same time, the carpet performed a magical and protective function. Its ornaments acted as amulets protecting animals, the house, and its owners. Today, we can point to specific motifs woven into a carpet's ornamentation that indicate its origins within a particular tribe. We can also trace the connection between images of real and mythological animals and birds on carpets with tribal totems. Flat-woven *varni* carpets bore a stylized image of a dragon and appeared in every Karabakh household, functioning as a talisman for the whole family. The deeply significant figure of the dragon occupies a special place in Azerbaijani carpet weaving. The Turkic peoples used this ancient motif, one of the oldest adorning numerous Azerbaijani monuments. The petroglyphs of Gamigaya testify to its historical popularity, along with a three-headed dragon blocking the flow of water on a golden bowl (ca. 9th-century BCE) from the Khasanli Hill in Iranian Azerbaijan's Sulduz Mahal. The image of the dragon also occupies an important place in Azerbaijani folk tales and has many toponyms associated with it.

The dragon's symbolic meaning also changed under various beliefs and representations. Having symbolized the angel of war since ancient times, it also represents the keeper of wealth and treasures. The dragon signified as well the power of Caspian tribes who settled on the Mil-Mugan Plain. In carpet



Figure 2. Shadda. Karabakh, Azerbaijan. Late 19th century. Warp, weft – wool. Interweaving, wrapping. Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum collection.



Figure 3. Varni. Karabakh, Azerbaijan. 18th century. Warp, weft – wool. Wrapping. Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum collection.

weaving, dragons are also identified with clouds and lightning. The connection between dragons and water springs from beliefs in earth and sky serpents. Azerbaijani carpets contain various dragons associated with the sky and earth elements. They can also symbolize the god Tengri within the ancient Turkic tradition, although dragons themselves were not revered as gods. Since ancient times, various stylized dragon images have appeared in the compositions of flat-woven and piled Azerbaijani carpets. According to legend, dragons on a carpet symbolize water and household abundance and protect families and tribes from difficulties, the evil eye, and evil spirits. Our great-grandmothers depicted a highly stylized S-shaped dragon on their varni carpets (see Figure 3).

During the Middle Ages, the well-deserved fame of Azerbaijani carpets grew progressively due to the Great Silk Road passing through the South Caucasus. This road brought the best Azerbaijani carpets, exquisite in ornament and rich in material, to Europe. They became status gifts and luxury items available only to society's elite circles, secular and ecclesiastical. European paintings of different periods, starting from the early Renaissance, provide a fascinating resource for researching and understanding the

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distribution of carpets. Carpets decorate interiors in biblical scenes, portraits of kings, still lifes, and narrative paintings. International interest in them has not waned even today. They feature in exhibitions in the world's largest museums, and the best examples of ancient Azerbaijani carpets reside in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Textile Museum in Washington, the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, the State Hermitage Museum and the Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg, the Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow, the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art and the Vakiflar Carpet Museum (Istanbul Carpet Museum) in Istanbul, among others.

Tabriz carpets, primarily narrative ones, occupy a special status (see end note). From the 13th-14th centuries, their ornaments derived from contemporaneous Tabriz miniatures. This occurrence became a tradition and, later, during the Safavid dynasty (16th-17th centuries), palace carpet workshops were part of a vast complex that included the Shah's library. Huge palace carpets were woven there, including those exported abroad. The heyday of Tabriz carpet-weaving had a hallmark: so-called dragon carpets whose ornamentation was typical for Tabriz. Such carpets are known within Azerbaijani carpet weaving as *Khatai* compositions. *Khata* or *Khatai* is one of the founding tribes of the Azerbaijani nation. The ornament's clan elements gave the carpet composition its name. The most valuable examples of these ornaments adorn 16th-17th-century Karabakh carpets.

In the 16th century, artists created carpets with gold and silver thread in the weft, depicting scenes from



Figure 4. *Khatai* carpet. Karabakh, Azerbaijan. 17th century. Warp, weft, pile – wool. Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum collection. The carpet was donated by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in 2018.

miniature paintings. They also wove garden and hunting carpets incomparable in beauty and almost as valuable as gold. The most famous miniaturists, representatives of the Tabriz school headed by the unsurpassed Sultan Mohammed, produced sketches for these luxurious gifts. The world-famous masterpiece of carpet weaving of this era, the incomparable Ardabil carpet from 1539, resides in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

For centuries, weavers in every region of Azerbaijan have been creating luxurious carpets. One of the oldest centres of carpet weaving was Karabakh. Houses in the city of Shusha were huge, and carpets were made especially for their vast rooms, where they completely covered the floors. Frescoes decorated the walls in these chambers, and the ceiling painting repeated the carpet's composition. Thus, artists designed habitats with fascinating ornamentation on every surface, transferring people to another dimension.

In Azerbaijani culture, the carpet remains more than mere home decoration and a part of numerous festivities and ceremonies. It reflects the originality of a society's outlook and artistic taste, incorporating Azerbaijan's successive cultural layers historically and stylistically.

Like any part of a culture, Azerbaijani carpet weaving has experienced ups and downs caused by political and economic events. Thus, the endless 18th- century feudal wars, political and economic instability, and reduced trade and handicraft production created an extremely unfavorable environment for carpet weaving. Commissions from the Shah's palaces, the aristocracy, and merchant classes for large, luxurious, and expensive carpets to decorate interiors decreased. This situation, in turn, led to the degeneration of professional carpet workshops (*karkhana*) and the gradual departure of highly qualified carpet weavers from this profession.

In the early 19th century (1804-1813), the protracted Russian-Persian war further crippled Azerbaijani carpet production. By its end people were divided and there were political and administrative reorganizations, leaving the art of carpet weaving in the former khanates' territories on the verge of extinction. Nevertheless, the tradition of widespread distribution of carpet weaving in Azerbaijan survived its rockiest periods: the 18th- century



Figure 5. Lampa carpet. Tabriz, South Azerbaijan. 19th century. Warp, weft, pile – wool. Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum collection.

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Figure 6. Interior of the Karabakh room. Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum.

from which merchants and dealers profited much more than the artisans who made these valuable carpets.

khanates and Russian control in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Between 1850 and 1913, Azerbaijani carpets featured at industrial and agricultural exhibitions in Tblisi, Moscow, St. Petersburg, London, Vienna, Berlin, and other cities (Abdullayeva 1971, 9-10). A new wave of demand for Azerbaijani carpets led to a huge increase in exports,



Figure 7. Carpet workshop in Guba. Early 20th century.

In 1899, the Department of Agriculture and Land Management under the Ministry of Trade and Industry of the Russian Empire organized the Caucasian Handicraft Committee. Its main task was to develop the crafts of the Transcaucasus and the North Caucasus. The Committee focused on carpet weaving as a profitable craft for the country and its development but did not aim to preserve Azerbaijan's carpet-weaving traditions. Even so, Azerbaijani ornaments and

carpet compositions featured in mass-produced sketches and technical assignments that the Committee developed and distributed to cottage industry weavers throughout the Transcaucasus (Abdullayeva 1971, 11). The Committee's head, the artist Julius Straume, established the method of fixing carpet ornaments by tying the knot technique to sketched cells.

The Caucasian Handicraft Committee lasted until the First World War in 1914. Following the October Revolution of 1917, the carpet shops, workshops, and Committee laboratories transferred in 1924 to the ZakGosTorg (Joint Stock Company of the Transcaucasian State Trade), which continued the Caucasian Handicraft Committee's activities during the Soviet era (1924-1935) and ensured the export of Caucasian

carpets to global markets. Nevertheless, these activities had negative consequences on Azerbaijani carpet-weaving culture. The world's collectors, trade dealers, carpet specialists, and reference books mistakenly referred to Azerbaijani carpets as Caucasian carpets. M.D. Isaev, a well-known researcher of that period, noted that most carpet weavers in Transcaucasia represent the Turkic peoples, and most of the region's crafts feature characteristics of their art (Isaev 1932, 104). In 1928, the Azerkhalcha Association was created to manage carpet-weaving factories throughout Azerbaijan. Their products appeared at many foreign industrial exhibitions and fairs.

During the later Soviet period, other republics in the Union had factories designed to mass produce the machine-made carpets that were significantly in demand within the country. In Azerbaijan, carpets remained exclusively hand-made, a responsibility that the scientific and creative production association Azerkhalcha oversaw. Later, on May 5, 2016, after the Republic of Azerbaijan had gained independence, it became an OJSC (Open Joint-Stock Company). May 5 was established as a professional holiday in Azerbaijan: Carpet Weaver's Day.

In 2004, a law to protect and develop Azerbaijani carpet art was prepared and adopted. It outlined such critical tasks as compiling a register of Azerbaijani carpets, providing state support for folk art, and training scientific and methodological personnel. Additionally, in 2010, Azerbaijani carpets were added to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. That fact demonstrates the significance and value of our national culture within the global context.

Azerbaijani carpet art has reached enormous heights over the centuries, going beyond the national and acquiring universal significance. In other words, we Azerbaijanis gave the world our carpet as one of the pinnacles of modern civilization. Since 2010, November 16, the date of Azerbaijani carpets' inclusion within UNESCO Representative List, has been celebrated in the country as the Day of the Azerbaijani Carpet. In February 2018, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, signed a decree approving the State Programme for the Preservation and Development of Carpet Art in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2018-2022. This programme safeguards the preservation, study, development, and promotion of Azerbaijani carpets.

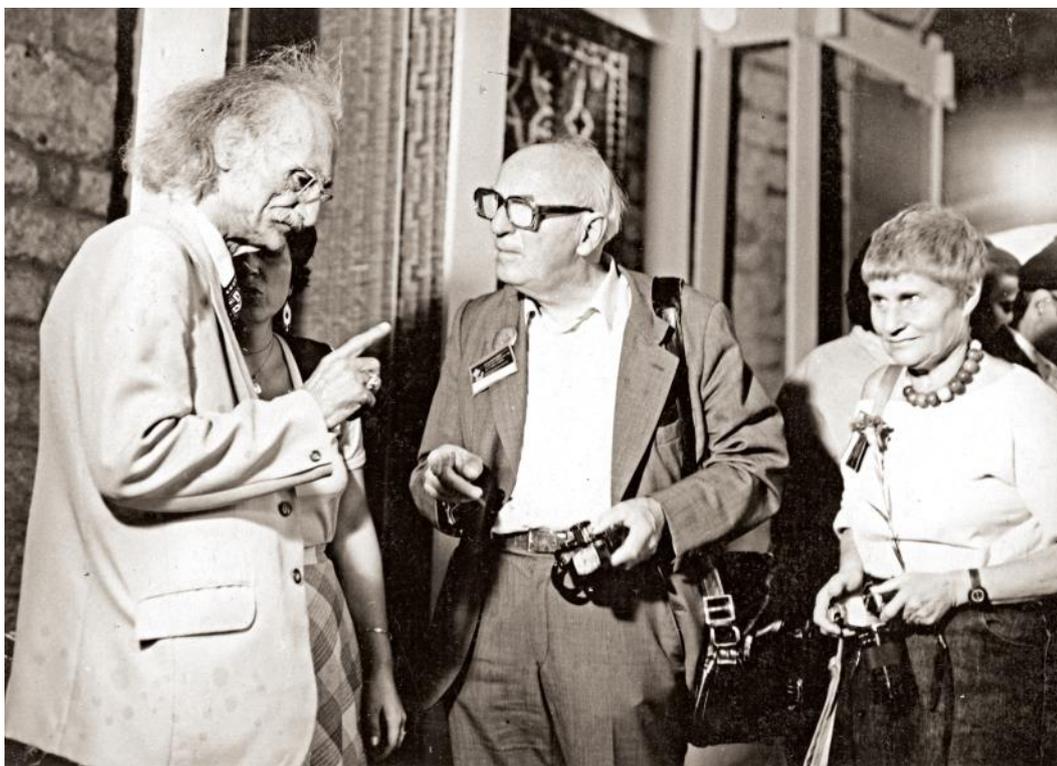


Figure 8. From the 1st International Symposium on the Art of Oriental Carpets, 1983, Baku, Azerbaijan, Latif Karimov with symposium participants.

When discussing the current state of carpet weaving, it is worth noting that a number of universities and an art college in Azerbaijan teach this art. The creative endeavours of makers in this field, both young and mature, are very diverse. Numerous contemporary carpet artists work in a classical way, others strive to go far beyond the usual canons while remaining true to the Azerbaijani carpet's deep essence. Significantly, Azerbaijani carpet art is at the centre of

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Figure 9. The 1st International Symposium on the Art of Oriental Carpets, September 5–11, 1983, Baku, Azerbaijan.

attention of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and UNESCO, which continuously support and implement many projects in this area.

Azerbaijan's cooperation with UNESCO in the carpet weaving field began in the Soviet era. This was particularly evident in the holding of the 1st and 2nd international symposiums on oriental carpet art in Baku in 1983 and in 1988. These occasions were two of the first events that established the Azerbaijani carpet in the international

arena. The 1st symposium attracted 170 prominent scientists, artists, collectors, museum specialists, and journalists from 19 countries, including the USSR. Among them was a UNESCO delegation headed by the UNESCO Director-General Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow. The group of foreign speakers included scholars such as Richard Wright, Carol Gambosh, Taher Sabahi, Alberto Boralevi, and Nejat Diyarbekirli. Robert Pinner, the Secretary-General of the International Conference on Oriental Carpets (ICOC) and the editor-in-chief of HALI magazine also attended. The 2nd symposium brought together 150 delegates from 10 countries, including the host country. Notably, while the first symposium was devoted to oriental carpets in general and only one of the three sections discussed Azerbaijani carpet art (the other two concerned oriental carpets and miniatures), the second symposium was entirely dedicated to Azerbaijani carpet art.

The Baku symposia were organized by the government of the Azerbaijan SSR, the Ministry of Culture of the Azerbaijan SSR, and the Institute of Architecture and Arts of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR, with the assistance of the UNESCO Secretariat, within the framework of the participation of the USSR in cultural activities of UNESCO. The Azerbaijan State Museum of Carpet and Folk Applied Arts, as our museum was called then, played a huge role in the preparation of these large-scale events. In particular, the museum's exhibits, including carpets and objects related to different areas of applied art, mounted several major exhibitions organized within both symposiums.

After Azerbaijan gained its independence, our museum initiated the next international symposiums on the art of Azerbaijani carpets together with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan. Baku hosted the 3rd and 5th International Symposiums on Azerbaijani Carpets in 2003 and 2017, respectively, while the 4th International Symposium on Azerbaijani Carpet Art, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the late great carpet artist and carpet scholar Latif Karimov as a tribute to his memory, took place in 2007 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

About a century ago, it became clear that this huge and invaluable area of folk culture – Azerbaijani carpet weaving – required its own museum. In the late 19th to early 20th centuries in Azerbaijan, a number of factors made evident the need to create several museums. These included the fact that our people have an ancient history and cultural and educational experience, the wealth of monuments of tangible and spiritual culture and the population's interest in them, as well as the importance of preventing the export of such valuables abroad. During this period, several museums of various profiles began to function.



Figure 10. The 5th International Symposium on Azerbaijani Carpets under the topic *Traditions and Innovations*, October 17–21, 2017, Baku, Azerbaijan.

A giant step in the significance, protection, promotion, and development of Azerbaijani carpet weaving was the founding of the Azerbaijan State Museum of Carpet and Decorative and Applied Arts in 1967 in Baku. It was the first museum of its kind in the world and arose from the initiative of outstanding scientist and artist Latif Karimov. Thanks to state officials and, primarily, former President Heydar Aliyev, the Treasury allocated an unlimited budget in 1970 to purchase objects and undertake expeditions to the

regions. Before the museum's opening, the republic's most prominent scientists, ethnographers, and historians headed by Latif Karimov developed a five-year preliminary programme of work, arranged scientific expeditions to the regions of Azerbaijan, and laid the foundations of the museum's two largest collections – Pile Carpets and Flat-woven Carpets. At the same time, the museum gathered exhibits for other collections, including national costumes, embroidery, and fabrics.



Figure 11. Latif Karimov discusses specifics of the Gimil carpet with museum staff. Juma Mosque, Icherisheher, Baku, Azerbaijan. 1980s.

In 1985, the Carpet Museum established its Shusha Branch. The branch resided in a mansion in Shusha that had been the home of the Mehmandarovs, an Azerbaijani noble family. It preserved and demonstrated the best Azerbaijani carpets, carpet products, and artworks of decorative and applied arts created in Karabakh. In 1991, to prevent the illegal export of handmade carpets and folk and applied arts abroad, an expert commission was established at the Carpet Museum.

For its first quarter of a century, the museum was in the building of the Juma mosque in Icherisheher, a 19th- century architectural monument. In 1992, after Azerbaijan gained independence, the mosque was returned to the clergy, and the museum moved to the Museum Centre. This building was the former branch of the Lenin Museum, occupying an entire floor. In 2007, President Ilham Aliyev signed a decree — ‘On the improvement of museum work in Azerbaijan’ — that provided for constructing a separate building for the Carpet Museum. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation implemented this large-scale project. The famous

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Austrian architect Franz Janz won the competition for the building's creation. In 2014, the museum moved to a new building in Seaside Park shaped like an unfolding carpet. It also received a new official name: The Azerbaijan Carpet Museum. In 2019, the Azerbaijan Carpet Museum received national status.

Today, the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum (ANCM) preserves the richest and most diverse collection of Azerbaijani carpets, representing all national carpet weaving regions and most of the designs characteristic of each of the four types of carpet weaving: Guba-Shirvan, Ganja-Gazakh, Karabakh, and Tabriz. Currently, the collections of the ANCM contain over 10 thousand exhibits and include seven collection categories: Pile Carpets; Flat-woven Carpets; Carpet Products; Artistic Metalwork; Ceramics, Glass, Wood, and Paper; Fabric, Clothes, and Embroidery; and Jewelry. The museum keeps objects from the Bronze Age, the Ancient Period, and the early Middle Ages, although most of the collection focuses on the 18th to 21st centuries.

The museum's modern building provides all conditions for exhibiting, tours, restoration, and storage of exhibits, as well as hosting various events, including textile symposiums and conferences. Acting as a cultural and educational centre and being a pioneer of innovative museum activities in the country, the ANCM conducts a number of projects to study its collections, revive forgotten weaving methods and teach them to everyone, create carpet exhibits' replicas, and also publishes books and catalogues. One of the museum's most important projects is to work with people with special needs and create an inclusive space where one can learn as much as possible about the valuable aspects of a particular collection. To do so, we supply Braille captions in Azerbaijani and English, audio recordings for detailed information about each exhibit, and offer sign language tours. The museum provides an interactive and tactile display in the permanent exhibition: embossed mini-versions of the pile and flat-woven carpets. Visitors in wheelchairs can easily and independently navigate our spaces. Our entire exposition, explications, and captions are arranged so that one can read them effortlessly and use touchscreens while sitting.



Figure 12. Exterior of Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum in Baku.

The ANCM implements its inclusive ideas also at the international level. *Invisible Art: Expanding the Boundaries of What Is Possible* is among its successful inclusive projects. The exhibition was concentrated primarily on visitors with visual impairments. It was organized jointly with the State Hermitage Museum with the support of the French jewelry and watch house Cartier. Part of this project represents tactile fragments from the *Pazyryk* carpet, the world's oldest pile carpet. Specialists from both museums created these fragments jointly: The Hermitage laboratory developed the *Pazyryk* carpet's colour scale, while the ANCM laboratory selected shades of wool, and coloured yarns with natural dyes. Afterward, the ANCM's Traditional Technologies Department created sketches and wove replicas of the fragments from the famous Hermitage exhibit.

The ANCM's Traditional Technologies Department has been operating since 2014. The department revives traditional carpet weaving techniques, creates replicas of carpets preserved in the collection, and develops experimental and individually designed carpets. Among the projects which have been implemented are the production of carpets from undyed wool of local sheep breeds, and the revival of flat-woven carpets, including *chiyi palas*, *shadda*, *verni*, *zili*, *karvud*, and double-sided pile weaving techniques. The ancient technology of combining pile and flat weaving is the basis of a special tactile method, patented by the museum. This innovation makes it possible for individuals who are visually impaired to 'see' our carpets, experience a variety of techniques, and feel the ornaments' shapes. To



Figure 13. *Undyed Wool Carpets project, Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum, Baku.*

produce carpets, the department uses raw materials coloured with natural dyes. The department specialists also teach carpet art to everyone, including people with disabilities, children, and foreign visitors.

It is worth mentioning the project of undyed carpet production that I curated in 2020. We revived this little-known tradition within Azerbaijani carpet weaving. Since ancient times, along with colourful carpets, there have also been carpets assembled of natural tones: black, white, gray, and all shades of brown. Undyed-yarn carpets appeared much earlier than those made of dyed yarns. Later, craftsmen developed their expertise in obtaining natural dyes, and the production of undyed wool carpets declined. However, this incredible tradition did not disappear. Flat-woven carpets of undyed yarns were produced continuously in Azerbaijan. In the 20th century, the carpet artist Jafar Mujiri became famous for his experiments in this technique. Today, our museum continues this tradition. Weavers of the ANCM's Traditional Technologies Department have created replicas of five classic carpets from the museum's collection: *Shamakhi*, *Khilabuta*, *Nakhchivan*, and *Khatai* (two different types). To design their compositions, we combined natural shades of wool of such sheep breeds as *mazekh* (Nakhchivan), *shirvan* (Shamakhi), *garadolag* (Aghjabadi), and *bozakh* (Ganja-Gazakh).

From the first days of its existence, the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum has paid great attention to the study of the cultural heritage associated with carpet weaving. As a major scientific centre, the Museum regularly organizes international conferences that bring together scientists, artists, and collectors from different countries, signs cooperation agreements with the world's leading textile museums, and holds exhibitions and scientific projects on the basis of bilateral agreements. Thus, the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum in cooperation with the Baku Turkish Cultural Centre of the Yunus Emre Institute organized the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd International Symposiums *The Common Language of the Turkic World – Ornaments* in 2016, 2017, and 2018, gathering scientists and museum professionals specializing in Turkic culture.

And in 2019, during the 43rd Session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum opened the exhibition *Cultural Heritage of Azerbaijan from the Louvre Museum*. For the first time, three rare exhibits from the permanent collection of the world-famous Louvre Museum – the 18th-century Karabakh carpet *Khanlig*, the early 19th – late 20th-century Karabakh carpet *Chelebi* and the early 18th – late 19th-century Shirvan carpet *Ajdahali* – were on display in Baku.

The ANCM, in cooperation with foreign museums, implements joint projects on the scientific attribution of samples of Azerbaijan's national heritage preserved abroad. Following scientific research, we publish an

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extensive catalogue that includes the attributed objects and we organize an exhibition. Among these projects are *Azerbaijan, A Land of Fire and Carpets* at the National Art Museum, named after Bogdan and Varvara Khanenko (Kyiv, 2007), *Harmony of Space. Traditional Art of Azerbaijan* at the State Museum of Oriental Art (Moscow, 2019), *Azerbaijani Carpets in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art Collection* (Istanbul, 2020), *Weaving the Thread of Fate into the Carpet... Decorative and Applied Art of Azerbaijan in the Russian Ethnographic Museum Collection* (St. Petersburg, 2021).

The ANCM is the first in the country's museum sector to establish a Children's Department. The department provides various masterclasses and several courses. Specialists teach children and teenagers the techniques of flat-woven and pile carpets, including mats, *palas*, *kilim*, *shadda*, *zili*, and *sumakh*, as well as the design of carpet compositions, and the study of the semantics of pattern. They also use gameplay to enhance learning.

Fashion Show from the Grandmother's Closet is an educational programme designed to popularize the national costume. The project includes theoretical and practical classes. The museum regularly organizes children's performances in the *kilimarasi* folk genre, shadow theatre, and puppet theatre. The ANCM's team and the Children's Union operating within the museum work on scenarios and prepare puppets. The museum also runs a children's music and theatre studio.

In 2018, the ANCM was awarded the prize for Best Experience in the field of intangible cultural heritage database by CIDOC – ICOM International Committee for Documentation, as well as becoming a nominee for the 2018 European Museum of the Year Award and receiving an award for its noteworthy achievement in raising the public quality of the museum. For the third straight year, the Carpet Museum has been awarded the Certificate of Excellence by TripAdvisor. At the moment, the ANCM is the most visited museum in the country.

Note

Tabriz, as well as Ardabil, is now in Iranian Azerbaijan, formed of three provinces in the Azeri-speaking part of present-day Iran. Ed.

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Dr. Shirin Melikova is Director of the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum, Associate Professor at the Azerbaijan State Academy of Fine Arts and Chair of ICOM Azerbaijan National Committee.

director@azcarpetmuseum.az



Figure 14. *Museum Without Borders. Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum's inclusive project.*

Balkan Saddlebags primarily from the collections of Timothy and Penny Hays and Andy Dailey

Tim Hays and Andy Dailey with photography by Gentjan Ballazhi

It is relatively common to find carpet and kilim saddlebags from Anatolia, south Persia, and central Asia in the market and in important collections. These can be large, small, and even tiny, depending on the product to be transported and the type of animal that would carry it. Many collectors have at least a few of these saddlebags in their collections and one may find them in the markets of Istanbul converted into cushions and pillows.

Saddlebags from the Balkans, however, are practically unknown except for a few found in a couple of collections, including museums. The Balkans were historically either part of the Ottoman Empire, or in close proximity to it, and therefore part of the international trade network of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. Publications regarding this topic, according to our research, are few and far between.



Figure 1. Saddlebag from Kukës, Albania, 138 x 45 cm, goat hair and wool, collection A. Dailey.

In 2002, the *Bulletin of the Ethnographic Museum of Belgrade, Volumes 65-66*, published an overview of the collection of handmade bags at the Ethnographic Museum of Belgrade, which included a handful of saddlebags from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the article, there was a brief discussion on the use of saddlebags of different types, which correlates with our recent field studies in Albania. Pictures of traditional bags have been published in Albania, such as those depicted in *Arti Popullor Ne Shqiperi* [Folk Art in Albania], produced by the Albanian Academy of Sciences in 1976, but with no accompanying text or explanations. *Qilima Shqiptare* [The Albanian Carpets], published by The State University of Tirana in 1968, had a single clause, as part of a larger sentence, indicating that goat hair bags were a major product of one particular village near Tirana until the Second World War; there was no other mention of bags at all.

One may speculate as to why so few saddlebags are found in collections or discussed in publications. One reason may be that Ottoman law made it illegal for non-Muslims to ride horses and the Balkan region had a majority Christian population. How strictly this law was enforced is subject to debate. Saddlebags are often associated with nomadic people; the Balkans were dominated by settled villages although the region had small minorities of semi-nomadic Vlachs and nomadic Karakachans, also known as Sarakatsani, who might have had more use for saddlebags. That said, both groups were Orthodox Christian. Saddlebags may

Balkan Saddlebags

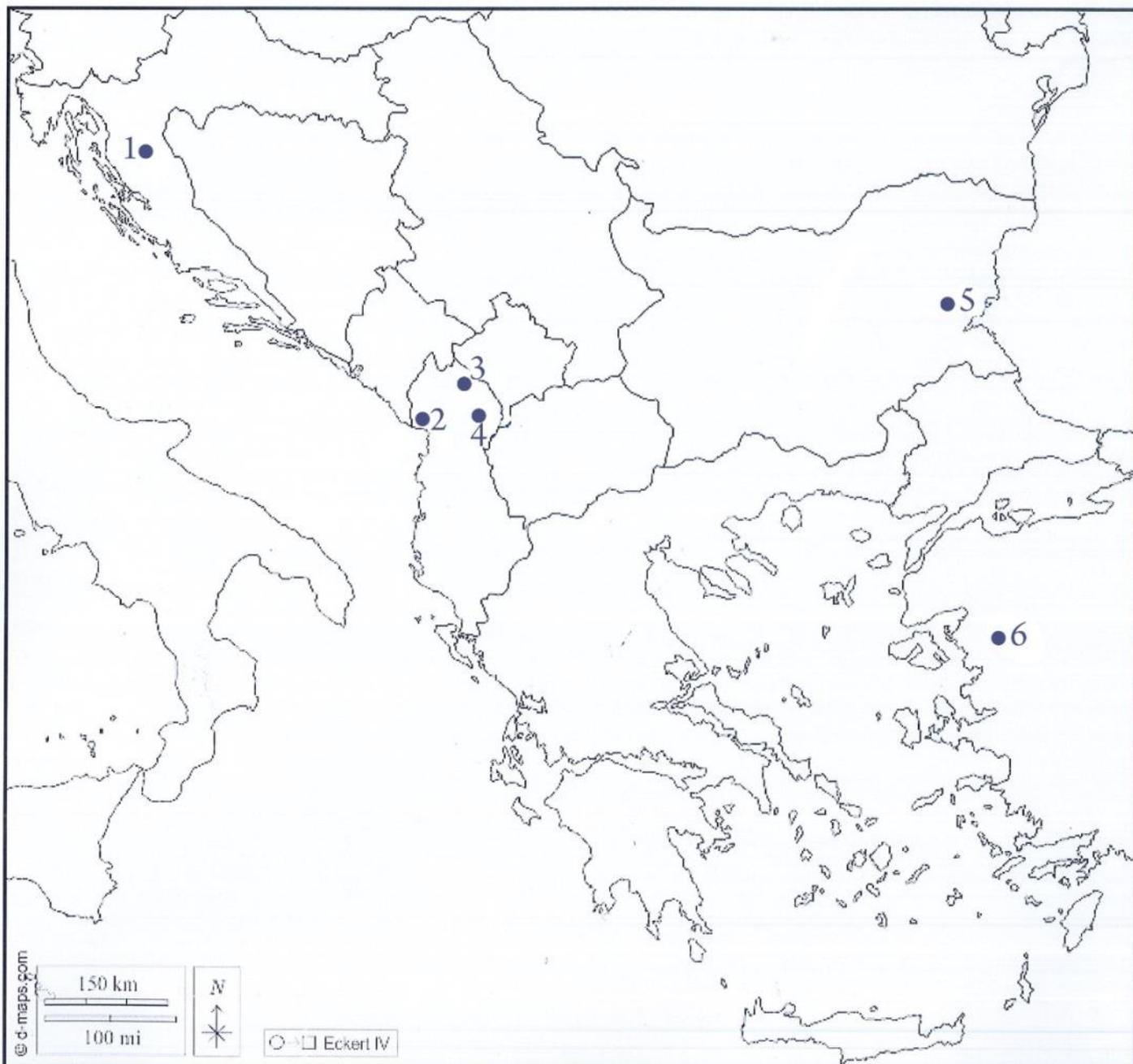


Figure 2. Map of Balkans and locations discussed in this article: 1. Lika, Croatia; 2. Zadrina, Albania; 3. Tropoje, Albania; 4. Kukës, Albania; 5. Burgas/Aitos region, Bulgaria; 6. Bergama, Turkey.

have simply not been preserved as they were used potentially on a very regular basis in all kinds of weather and may have simply been discarded, have had their materials recycled into other objects or new saddlebags, and/or have been ignored by collectors of woven objects.

As a result of our interest in Balkan weavings generally, and the dearth of information and research, it is our pleasure to present to readers discussion of this neglected topic with samples from our two collections.

It must be assumed that bags of all types, including saddlebags, were present throughout the Balkans throughout history, as until recent times the only means of long distance transportation were donkeys, mules, and horses. Even today, animal transport is common in rural, mountainous areas of the Balkans. In fact, the areas where kilim and carpet saddlebags have been discovered are those areas that until recently were relatively isolated, including mountainous areas and especially north Albania. In Albania, the areas that are now referred to as Kukës and Tropojë are where most of the saddlebags presented in this article originate. These areas were practically inaccessible until the last decades when a single-lane, unpaved road was slowly replaced by a modern, multi-lane highway.



Figure 3a and 3b. Saddlebag from Kukës, Albania, 132 x 46 cm, goat hair and wool, collection A. Dailey.



Figure 4. Bag from Kukës, Albania, 118 x 52 cm, wool, collection A. Dailey.

Purposes and Function

It must be remembered that until recently, most people in the Balkans had little or no furniture in their homes. Chairs, tables, cabinets were only found in some urban areas, but even then would have been relatively uncommon. Instead, people sat and slept on the floor. Food was stored in jars and bags, hung from a peg or nail in the wall or door frame to keep it off the floor, dry, and safe, like other household goods. As a result of this, it must be understood that what we think of saddlebags may have had multiple functions, including transporting and storage of goods.

According to the 2002 article in the *Bulletin of the Ethnographic Museum of Belgrade*, decorated saddlebags had two major functions. These were:

- Normal, daily transportation of goods

- Giving of gifts on a special occasion, such as a wedding or birth of a child

Such being the case, only decorated saddlebags were used to present gifts to a family, which might include the bag itself. The decorated side would be visible on the animal transport indicating to all that gifts and special items were contained and were on the way to being presented. When a saddle bag was being used for ordinary, daily purposes, the decorated side would face the animal and not be visible to human eyes.

Conversations with people from northern Albania indicate that in Kukës and Tropojë, decorated bags were woven by a potential bride and the women of her family. When she traveled to her husband's family on their marriage, these specially-made saddlebags would be packed with gifts for the groom's family, as well as her personal tools and clothing. When a child was born, family and friends would send gifts to the child and his or her parents in specially-made saddlebags as well. This may be why most of the examples in our collections have survived; they were family heirlooms commemorating important events.

Balkan Saddlebags



Figure 5. Saddlebag from Kukës or Tropojë, Albania, 133 x 48 cm, hemp and wool, collection A. Dailey.

Materials

All saddlebags in our collection are made of wool, goat hair, hemp, or cotton, or combinations of these. The bags come in several varieties, including:

- A single piece of hemp, cotton, or goat hair with a panel of kilim or carpet added at each end to form a bag
- A single panel of goat hair folded to form a bag at each end
- A single panel wool carpet folded at each end or lengthwise to form pockets.

It should be understood that bags made from wool were clearly not as durable as those of hemp and goat hair, but could hold a variety of colours and have raised pile, giving the saddlebag a rich texture. While hemp and goat hair are extremely durable, goat hair has the added property of swelling when damp, providing waterproofing to an extent and thereby protecting the bag's contents for long journeys.



Figure 6. Bag from Zadrima, Albania, 127 x 46 cm, goat hair, collection A. Dailey.

Decorative Motifs

Balkan saddlebags in our collections reflect the tastes of the Balkan weavings in general: bright and cheerful. Using natural and aniline dyes, most pieces are engaging, full of pinks, purples, and yellows. Purple and red colours were and continue to be made today using the residue of grape skins left over after the process of making brandy, *rakia* in Albanian. Quince leaves, tobacco flowers, nut skins, and onions produced other colours, such as yellows, greens, and blues. Aniline dyes provided vibrant yellows, pinks, and oranges.

The decoration on saddlebags, if any, reflect local, family and village traditions. There seem to be no large, regional motif patterns. We have broken down these forms into three broad categories:

Stripes and checkered patterns

Symbols and geometric forms

Vegetation and animal forms

It is generally believed that the oldest kilim and carpet designs in the Balkans are those of stripes and checkered patterns. Although of ancient origins, these motifs continue to be used today. What is interesting is that even the most mundane, every-day use saddlebags in our collections were decorated in stripes or checkers, at the very least.

A primitive goat hair bag (See Figure 7) with a basic stripe pattern was discovered in the Burgas/Aitos region of eastern Bulgaria. It was purchased from a translator whose grandfather had owned it. The region continues to make woven items from goat hair even today.

A red and black goat hair saddlebag (See Figure 6) was made in the Zadrina region of Albania. Red dye was derived from madder root, while black dye was created by boiling ash tree bark that was soaked for more than 20 days before boiling.

A goat hair saddlebag from the collection of Uglješa Stanimirović (see Figure 8) comes from the Lika area of Croatia. The single bag face presents 5 groups of stripes, each containing 9 smaller stripes in a variety of colours, including greens, blues, and reds. The central stripe in each grouping contains white, yellow, red, and blue forming a slightly more complex pattern. The bag was clearly used for transporting gifts or special items given the tassels on the bag faces as well as the corners.

Symbols and geometric forms found on some of the carpeted saddlebags in the collections may have originally held warding or magical functions, such as good luck charms, the meanings of which are lost in antiquity. They may also have been a sign of the family, like a coat of arms, in a world where one presumes most people were illiterate. These may have helped indicate personal property or announce a clan, tribe, or family to everyone.

Figure 7. Bag from Burgas/Aitos region, Bulgaria, goat hair, collection T. and P. Hays.



Balkan Saddlebags

Some of these patterns, symbols, or motifs are quite extraordinary. An example is a single panel of carpet clearly intended from the outset to form a saddlebag (See Figure 9). On the back, there is a complicated 12-pointed star with diamonds and triangles forming its interior, using 5 different colours. On each bag front are two stylized humans with orange bodies and pink and yellow heads, each standing in front of a yellow staff or giving birth. This panel has 7 small stars bordering it along the top in 4 different colours. Another bag from the same village uses the same colours, but other symbols to form a type of horizontal satchel (See Figure 4).

A very large saddlebag from Zadrina in northwestern Albania is another example that displays bright colours in great variety and with symbols (see Figure 10). The two faces of the saddlebag are very different, with one having two 10-pointed stars using four



Figure 8 (right). Bag from Lika, Croatia, goat hair, collection U. Stanimirović. Figure 9 (below). Bag from Kukës, Albania, 107 x 54 cm, wool, collection A. Dailey.





Figure 10. Saddlebag from Zadrime, Albania, 180 x 40 cm, wool and goat hair, collection A. Dailey.

colours on a field or purple-red surrounded by a border of orange, green, and blue. There are 13 bars of colour at each end containing the whole. The second face of this 180 cm long bag has a border of four colors with what may be two stylized human forms, with the heads separated by a band of colors ranging from green to purple to yellow to white. Whatever the motifs mean, the intricacy indicates that they were important, perhaps a symbol of the family or the village from which they originate.

Another saddlebag with a series of complicated symbols was also located in Zadrime (See Figure 11). Both bag faces have a central red field on which rests a 12-pointed white abstract bird form lined in green, with central diamond shapes in two colours and two pink 'wings', all outlined in green. The border consists of trapezoids, diamonds, and rectangles. When the peddler was asked what these symbols meant, it was indicated that the bag decoration contained a message between husband and wife, known only to them.

Vegetation is a common motif in Balkan kilims, usually in the form of trees of life, floral garlands, fruiting vines, and more. In general, it is understood that these were meant to encourage and celebrate fertility, by having either many healthy children or large, bountiful crops. One finds several examples in this article of decorated saddlebags that feature carnations, roses, and leafy vines.

A saddle bag from Kukës apparently depicts sycamore branches in white with leaves in autumn colors (See Figure 3a, 3b). The piled carpet pockets have been woven onto an orange goat hair base that would have faced the transportation animal. Another saddlebag from the same region depicts multicolored carnations on a burgundy field (See Figure 1). Yellow, orange, and red roses rest on a burgundy field surrounded by a yellow border flower and leaf forms in yet another example from Kukës (See Figure 5).

The final example of the floral and vegetation forms also comes from Kukës. The bag faces of piled carpet have a lovely scene of roses budding and in full bloom on a white field, lined in black, green, and orange, on a burgundy field (See Figure 12a and 12b). A very similar bag face was published in *Bergama Heybe ve Torba: Traditional Bags of the Yürüks in Northwest Anatolia Observations from 1970 to 2007* by Steiner, Pinkwart, and Ammerman. We can only speculate the connection, if any, between this example and one depicted in the book. Perhaps a saddlebag from remote, northern Albania made its way to the Bergama in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Perhaps one from Bergama made its way to northern Albania to inspire a local weaver. What we can say for certain is that the example shown here was indeed woven in the Kukës district.

Animal forms, even mythical ones, are poorly represented in our collections. We have found a single example in the form of a stylized



Figure 11. Saddlebag from Zadrima, Albania, 115 x 39 cm, wool and goat hair, collection A. Dailey.

black double-headed eagle on a red field, surrounded by two shades of blue borders and black and yellow bees (See Figure 13). The double-headed black eagle was and is a symbol found in kilims from today's northern Albania, southern Montenegro, and in Kosovo amongst Albanians. This motif originated in the Byzantine Empire and was used by the Albanian national hero Skanderbeg, Gjergj Kastrioti, in his campaigns against the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century. This symbol now forms Albania's national flag.

We continue to study and research Balkan weavings, including saddlebags and hope to share more information, research, discoveries, and special items from our collections in future editions of this journal.

Tim Hays is a retired civil servant with academic training in Earth Sciences, Public Administration, and National Security. He has been collecting and researching Balkan textiles for 15 years. Tim lives in SW Florida USA along with his wife, Penelope, where they curate the Just In From The East Collection.

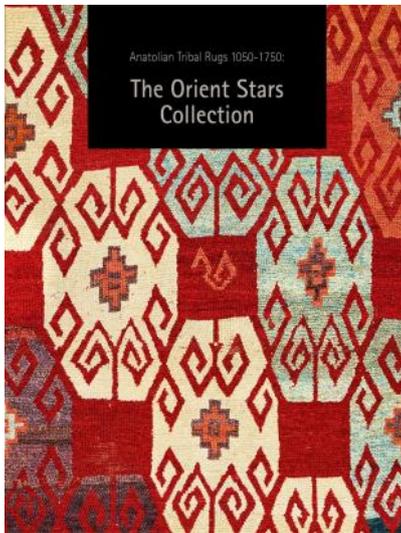
Andy Dailey is an international school director based in Durres, Albania and Cairo, Egypt. He operates the website Albaniankilims.com and the Instagram page [Albaniankilims](https://www.instagram.com/Albaniankilims).

Facing page:

Figure 12a and 12b (top and centre). Saddlebag from Kukës or Tropojë, Albania, 117 x 54 cm, wool and hemp, collection A. Dailey.

Figure 13 (below). Saddlebag from Kukës, Albania, 131 x 42 cm, wool and goat hair, collection of A. Dailey.





Anatolian Tribal Rugs 1050-1750: The Orient Stars Collection

by Michael Franses

with contributions from Anna Beselin, Walter B. Denny, Eberhart Herrmann, Klause Kirchheim, Jurg Rageth and Cosima Stewart.

Hali Publications Ltd 2021.

Hardback, 414 pages with slipcase. RRP £145.

ISBN 978-1888113959.

Large, glossy books on rugs and carpets are published with great regularity. Their quality is inevitably mixed. This new addition to the shelves, from the Hali stable, addresses a major collection of early Anatolian rugs. It has been many years in the making, which no doubt contributed to the author's view that younger enthusiasts should 'travel widely' before putting pen to paper. So does it deliver?

This is not the first publication on the Kirchheim's collection. *Orient Stars: A Carpet Collection* was published in 1993 and was apparently known to some as 'the bible'. This successor volume travels across eight centuries, re-considers 43 of the most important rugs and adds a further 32 rugs and textiles which were subsequently acquired. Some of the most important pieces have now been carbon-dated (C dating).

As with many private collectors the Kirchheims' tastes changed significantly over time. Rugs that they had previously collected, including a number of 18th and 19th century yellow ground fragments attributed to the Konya, were dispatched and replaced by the earliest available Anatolian rugs that the trade was able to offer. The Kirchheims plainly had considerable financial muscle and, with some trading-in, put together a remarkable collection of early pieces, many in pieces (Figure 1), at considerable pace. The final collection may only be only surpassed in scale and depth by the holdings at the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul.

With Michael Franses firmly at the helm, this is a curated version of the Kirchheim's final collection. It is very much of our time – it may even be intended to frame current collecting sensibilities. The collection differs markedly from major 20th century collections – Ballard, McMullan et al. There are no 18th or 19th century Ghiordes, Ladik or Kula prayer rugs or anything much made for export. There are no Anatolian court manufacture carpets: no white-ground Selendi Bird-rugs: no Lotto rugs, and there is a general avoidance of anything too Persian in influence. Instead these are generally rugs of tribal or village production.



Figure 1. Eight-pointed Star and Four-Octagon Guls on Red: Central Anatolia. C dated 1472-1638.



Figure 2: *The Ungar Star Variant with Eight-Pointed Star Medallion: Ushak, western Anatolia: Circa 1400-1500 C 1426-1630. Not a rug produced by tribal nomads but a superb example in the collection.*

A Book of Parts

Historical context forms much of the first half of the book. Walter B. Denny contributes one chapter, addressing an on-going debate over the possible anthropomorphic and zoomorphic origin of some design elements with typical vigour.

There follows an excellent chapter by Michael Franses and Cosima Stewart covering the current state of knowledge on Anatolian carpet making, helpfully including high quality colour reproductions of the many paintings that inform our knowledge and outstanding examples of historic rugs and carpets held in major public collection. With some minor quibbles, these observations are an exemplary summary of our current state of knowledge.

The Plates



As was noted in the first book on the collection, rugs and carpets pre-dating 1800 represent a very small fraction of what was made and the few that have survived should best be viewed as random samples. Overall our picture remains fragmented.

There are 75 plates of rugs and textiles from the collection, accompanied by detailed commentaries. Sixty-nine are early Anatolian rugs. Some have legendary status, including the so-called 'Faces' carpet (see Figure 3). Others are previously unpublished. Throughout we are helped by seeing colour images of comparable pieces drawn from a range of public sources. Getting the requisite approvals to include those images must have been a monumental task alone. There are also helpful reconstructions of many fragmented pieces, which to novice and even semi-trained eyes can be difficult to read.

Figure 3. *Overlaid Creatures with Faces: Probably Kurdish, eastern Anatolia or possibly Persia: Circa 1050-1200, C 1042-1218.*



Figure 4. Two Crivelli Stars. Central Anatolia. Circa 1600-1650. Despite its fragmentary state, the drawing of the stars is outstanding.

The Carbon-Dating Game

As ever with very old rug and carpets, probable dating takes centre stage.

Michael Franses helpfully makes clear that carbon dating is only really of value for rugs or carpets pre-dating 1550, unless you are interested in identifying post-1950 products (or possible fakes). It is not entirely clear how this fits with Jurg Rageth's rather bolder assertion that for dating pre-18th century carpets and textiles 'radiocarbon dating is the only reliable method'. Mr Rageth's enthusiasm is in fact short-lived, being tempered by his further observation that all carbon dating of rugs made after 1650 is, without other dating aids, 'ambiguous and unsatisfactory'.

A cursory comparison of the conventional dating of rugs in the first volume of *Orient Stars* with the C dating now proposed in this book offers further food for thought. The dating of many rugs that

had been conventionally attributed is fundamentally unchanged. That tends to suggest that conventional tools of assessment remain valid. Mr Franses observes that C dating rarely produces results that predate art historically predicted time of manufacture. However, the 'Faces' rug (Figure 3), previously attributed to the 13th or 14th century, is now thought to have been made between 1050-1200 (C 1042-1218). A Konya fragment (Figure 5) previously dated 16th or 17th century may also be much earlier (1400-1500: C 1408-1625). If that is right it supports a design continuum in some central Anatolian rugs over several hundred years.

Clearly there remains plenty of room for argument on probable dating – and it extends beyond the value of C dating as a tool. Plate 74 (a white ground prayer rug, possibly from south-central Anatolia) (Figure 6) is a case in point. It is not carbon dated but by reference to design development and the colouring of comparable examples Michael Franses considers that it may have been made between 1650-1700. Previously it was dated as 19th century (Heinrich Kirchheim apparently disagreed). It is unclear why this particular rug has not been carbon dated, given the disparity of views from acknowledged experts.

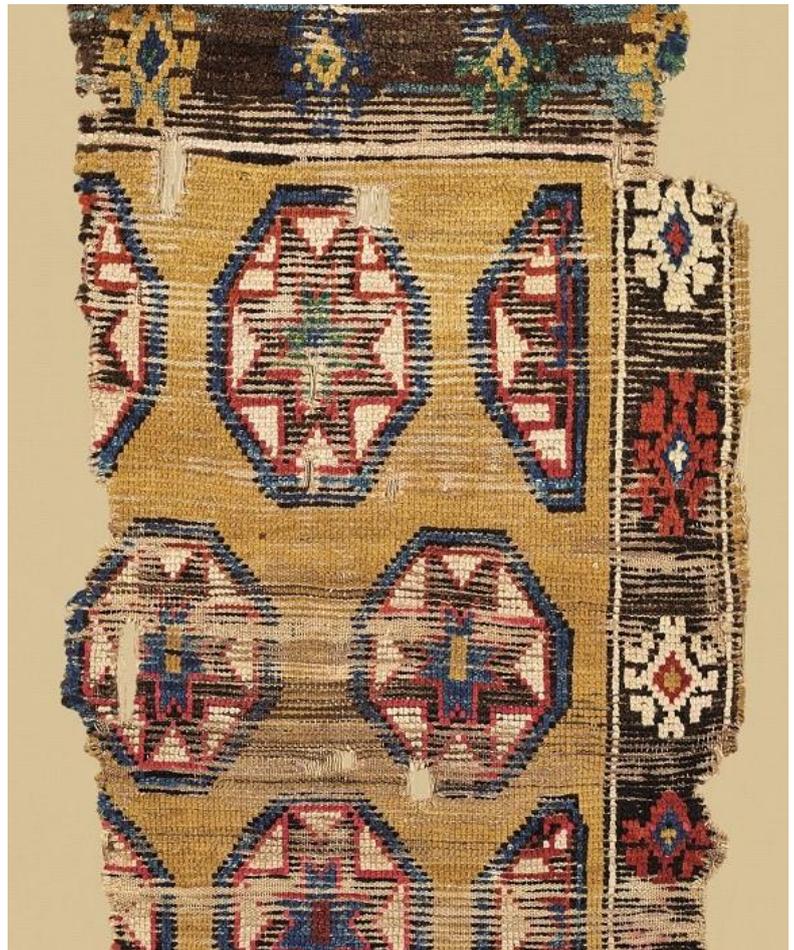


Figure 5. Eight-pointed Stars in Octagons: Konya region, central Anatolia: Circa 1400-1500 C 1408-1625.



Figure 6. *Two Niches and Tulips on Ivory: Possibly Taurus Mountains, south-central Anatolia. Circa 1650-1700.*

Overall the debate around the value of carbon dating seems no more settled by the different views offered in this publication. Perhaps it would bear fruit to return to Cyril Mango's observation that most academic history is complicated and uncertain, offering 'if not facts, some reasonable probabilities'.

The Value of Colour

As Michael Franses notes, few enthusiasts (or even authors) have the time or means to study collections first-hand around the world. Published examples of important rugs and carpets such as these are thus of great value.

For the most part the colour plates would appear to be excellent, with the proviso that I have not seen any of the rugs first hand. However, looking at the two books on the

collection side by side there are some oddities. See for example Plate 6 (item 218 in *Orient Stars 1*): Plate 7 (item 185 in *Orient Stars 1*): Plate 33 (item 190 in *Orient Stars 1*) and Plate 70 (item 130 in *Orient Stars 1*). There appears to be significant colour variation between the images of the same carpets in the two volumes, the reds in particular (and to some extent the yellows) being most obviously affected.

Collecting in Context

The rug community is not a large one and at the top level is smaller still. Many of these pieces were originally purchased from Garry Muse and/or The Textile Gallery, then in the hands of Michael Franses. Mr Franses has subsequently been Director of Special Cultural Projects for Qatar Museums and is of course the owner of *Hali*, the publisher of this volume. We are fortunate that he and others have done so much to ensure that these rare masterpieces are preserved for future generations, through conservation, appraisal and now in print.

Interestingly, the publication of this volume was originally intended to coincide with the sale of these and other items from the Kirchheim's extensive collection (Rippon Boswell on 2 October 2021). That sale was cancelled on the eve of the auction, following the acquisition of the collection by the Museum of Islamic Arts in Doha. It was apparently the Kirchheim's wish that the collection would be kept as a single body of work. That wish seems now to have been satisfied, albeit via export to Qatar and not, as they had hoped, by public acquisition and relocation to the Museum of Islamic Arts in Berlin.

So: Does it deliver?

Anatolian Tribal Rugs 1050-1750 is plainly essential reading for anyone with more than a passing interest in Anatolian rugs or culture. It records a remarkable collection and adds to our current knowledge with some excellent, well-written commentaries. Whilst not inexpensive, the quality of the rugs and the accompanying commentary make it good value for money. It is all the more valuable to those of us who are unable (or unwilling – see postscript) to visit the Museum in Doha, and are thus reliant on publications to educate, inform and entertain. The author, fellow contributors and the publishers should be congratulated on the success of a project that has taken many years, and some very hard miles, to fulfil.

Andrew Rawstron

Postscript

There cannot be any doubt that the Museum of Islamic Arts in Doha is amassing an outstanding collection of rugs and carpets. The Kirchheims' rugs follow many other stellar acquisitions. Plainly objects of cultural significance have always been the subject of trade and will inevitably remain so. However, public collection and exhibition also requires public access. Regrettably, some friends and colleagues in our small international rug and textile community will effectively be excluded as a result of Qatar's continuing criminalisation of homosexuality.

Accepting the need for sensitivity in commenting on cultural issues across a complex international landscape where financial power is a key factor, the silence of the rug and textile community on this and other issues of basic human rights in Qatar feels uncomfortable. If the line is not drawn somewhere, it is not drawn at all.

For now, and as a matter of fair balance, members of the Society with an interest in human rights in Qatar can find further information in this helpful briefing:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/qatar/>

Andrew Rawstron



ORTS members viewing West Asian textiles in the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre during the September visit to Glasgow.

ORTS visit to the Burrell Collection September 2022

A party of intrepid ORTS members came to the Burrell Collection from all directions to meet for a morning viewing the Islamic carpets and textiles with senior curator Noorah Al-Gailani. The Burrell has recently reopened after a major refurbishment and reordering of the collection, which is now laid out thematically. This creates a most enjoyable experience for the general public and is very popular with the locals but makes it more difficult for the specialist. Luckily the Garden room and the Hunting room are next to one another and these rooms contained the majority of the carpets. Garden carpets mainly reflect either the Heavenly Garden laid out on the Charbagh principle or the Earthly Paradise, which brings the floral indoors. We will all know much more about this subject after the ORTS lecture in October.



Noorah Al-Gailani explains some of the finer points of a carpet to the group.

animals. Despite the wear one can see that the camel has had his neck shaved in a pattern in a similar technique to voided velvet. Coincidentally, around the corner, in the Powerful Women room is a Tang dynasty girl on her camel which has been given a poodle cut. Elsewhere, led by Noorah, we found a section on making carpets. This needs a little relabelling. In the Family Love area were two beautiful dowry susanis, one being the outer part of a wedding night sheet with the central, plain area cut away. This was, understandably, bought as a door hanging.

After lunch at the Burrell we went to the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre and viewed, in the company of Noorah and

The great Wagner carpet, displayed for the first time in many years, is a supreme example of the former. Bought in 1939 in a bankruptcy sale, it lay on the floor in the drawing room of Hutton Castle, Burrell's home. The Earthly Paradise examples included a rare 18th-century example of a carpet signed by the Kurdish woman who wove it, full of highly coloured trees and weeping willows.

The Hunting theme allowed for a wide range of objects and for carpets with many animals, such as the Dragon carpet filled with pheasants, fawns, lions etc. One large, very worn fragment was the antithesis of hunting, in that animals are leaping out of the mouths of other



Viewing a Mughal animal carpet made in Lahore 1600-1700 on display in the Hunting room.



Private viewing of textiles in the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre, with conservator Helen Hughes and Curator Noorah Al-Gailani.

Helen Hughes, the textile conservator, the rest of the susani collection, bought in two batches in the 1940s. Each one is so different to the next and all so beautiful, two still having their original cotton backing. One, of a flower-filled trellis design, was possibly 18th century and certainly had quite a different feel to it and considerable charm. We also saw an Azerbaijan embroidery and a very unusual piece of velvet ikat.

At Noorah's suggestion we ate at an extremely good Persian restaurant with the delightful name of Saffron by Paradise. The next day a few of us were given the treat of a visit to a fellow member's museum quality collection nearby. This provided a sumptuous coda to an excellent short outing. True to the ethos of ORTS we had had two days filled with scholarly interest, beauty and good fellowship. Our grateful thanks to all who made this visit possible.

Dimity Spiller



TALKS

Live talks are held at the University Women's Club, 2 Audley Square, London W1K 1DB, which is a two-minute walk from the Dorchester Hotel in Mayfair.

Numerous buses stop near the Dorchester Hotel, including Buses 13, 16, and 36, which go from Victoria Station to Park Lane and Bus 38, which goes to Piccadilly and stops at the Hard Rock Café bus stop. The nearest tube stations are Green Park and Hyde Park Corner.

Doors open at 6 pm. Please sign your names at reception, and go upstairs to the elegant first floor drawing room, where there will be a pay bar.

Non-members are welcome to attend lectures for £7 a single lecture, students £5.

Lectures are free for members.

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Louise Teague louise.p.teague@gmail.com

Clive Rogers stroud@orient-rug.com

With thanks to Pia Rainey for managing the monthly newsletters

The ORTS journal is published three times a year. Contributions are welcomed from members and non-members. Please send ideas for articles and proposals for book or exhibition reviews to Dr Fiona Kerlogue on editor.orts@gmail.com

The deadline for content for the next issue is February 1st 2023.

Back cover: Kilim. Padar village, Shirvan, Azerbaijan. Early 20th century. Warp, weft – wool. Interweaving, wrapping. Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum collection. See article on page 4.

