

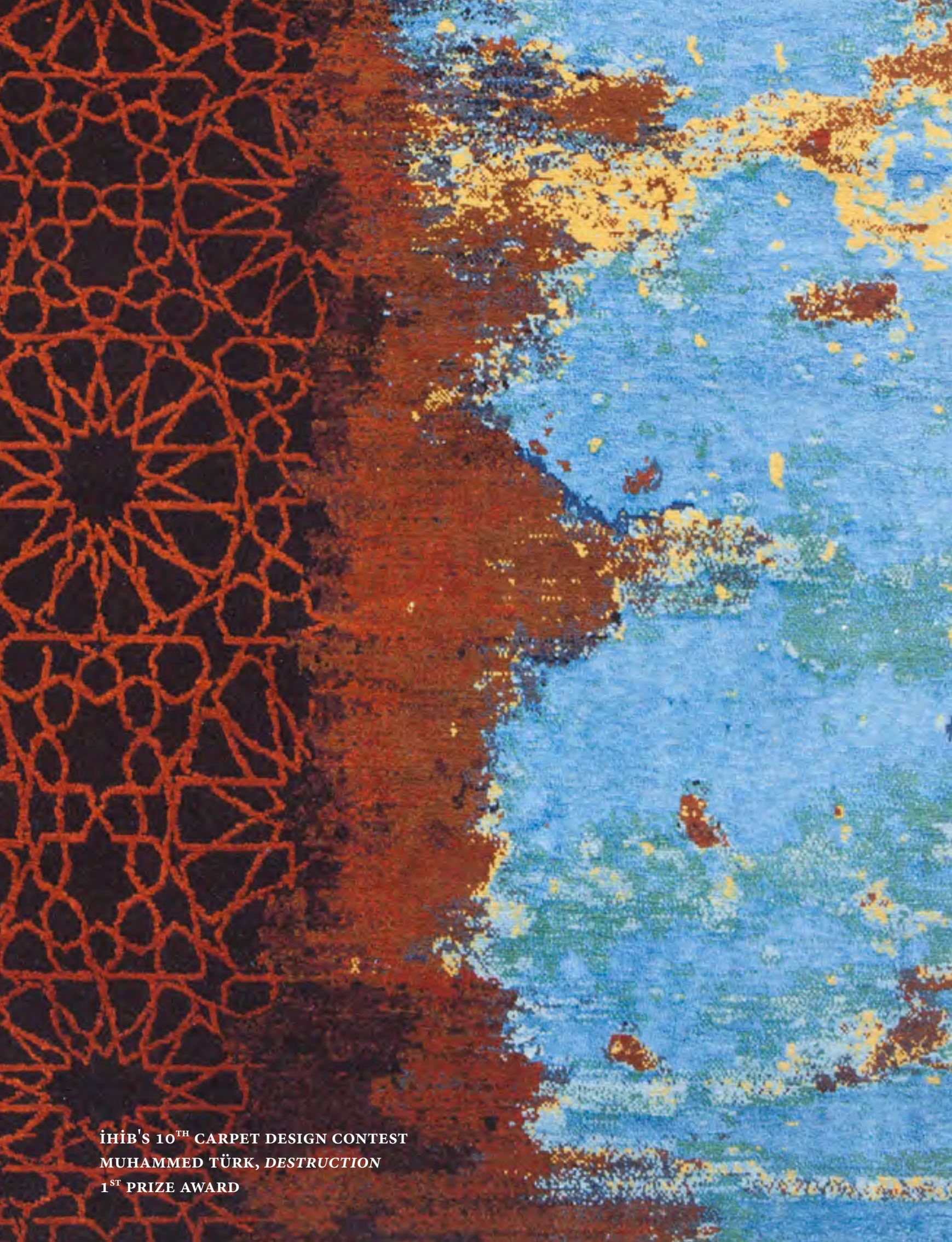
The background of the entire cover is an abstract, painterly representation of a rug pattern. It features a dense, textured surface with a rich palette of reds, oranges, yellows, and blues. Scattered throughout are numerous circular motifs, some in white with yellow centers, others in yellow with red centers, and some in blue with white centers. The overall effect is one of vibrant, organic energy.

# ALIVE

*İHİB's magazine of Anatolian rugs and kilims*



January 2017 issue



İHİB'S 10<sup>TH</sup> CARPET DESIGN CONTEST  
MUHAMMED TÜRK, *DESTRUCTION*  
1<sup>ST</sup> PRIZE AWARD

# ALIVE.

Dear Rug Lovers,

Anatolia is one of the most important rugs and kilims centres, thus of weaving. We, living in this land, are lucky to be part of this heritage. We all know that rugs are not only used in daily life but also are works of art. These characteristics render rugs an important historical source. While shaping the future of Turkish rugs, we do not forget the past.

İHİB (Istanbul Carpet Exporters' Association), the most important representative of the Turkish rug and kilim industry, is dedicated to taking this heritage one step further by making design and designers an inseparable part of our life and our society. Having celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> National Carpet Design Awards, our aim is to discover talented young designers and to channel them towards the carpet industry by emphasizing cooperation between universities and the rug sector.

İHİB supports projects to revive weaving in different regions of Anatolia as well as projects to produce rugs in schools for the handicapped in order to help their reintegration into society. These projects and our dynamism will allow us to maintain the top position as manufacturers and exporters of machine woven rugs and also to become the top exporter of handwoven design rugs.

While maintaining our worldwide known "Turkish Carpet" brand, our main goal is to create a new worldwide known brand, the "Turkish Design". As well as our many projects to attract attention to our heritage and to the designing potential in Turkey, we held the 1<sup>st</sup> Istanbul Carpet Week that included the 1<sup>st</sup> Istanbul International Carpet Conference with an audience of 300 guests and B2B meetings with 100 foreign buyers. We are working hard to maintain the popularity of our Turkish Carpet brand.

Uğur Uysal, *İHİB Chairman (Istanbul Carpet Exporters' Association)*





Alive January 2017 issue  
Rug Allan's Fever by Wool and Silk (photo Gary Franco)

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# ALIVE

## EDITORIAL

In this year's edition of Alive we take great pleasure in publishing a series of articles by some brilliant contributors.

We discover the glorious past of Anatolian kilims and carpets thanks to two highly talented researchers : Udo Hirsch, whom we believe to be one of the biggest specialists of Anatolian kilims, with an article about Anatolian Cult kilims and Stefano Ionescu with an article about the amazing Ottoman rugs that ornate the churches of Transylvania. We delve into the creative minds of two very successful designers of contemporary rugs, Jürgen Dahlmanns and Erbil Tezcan, to get an insight into their process of creating and their view of the rug world. Steve Landrigan looks into the active role of Afghan Turkmens in the world rug production and in the Istanbul rug trade. We also present Osman Can, an entrepreneur who produces top quality replicas of Selçuk and Ottoman rugs in his workshop in Selçuk near Ephesus. Rob Leahy shares with us with his extensive research, a highly instructive article about the development and the expectations of the American market in the field of rugs. Hüseyin Alantar in his enlightening article tackles the controversial subject of the “mihrab”, debated by many specialists. Last but not least, Nihat Yıldız portrays İHİB's social weaving project achieved in vocational schools for the handicapped.

We'll also tell you all about our successful inaugural edition of Istanbul Carpet Week with its Istanbul International Carpet Conference as well as the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Turkish Young Rugs Designers Contest. The contest attracts more and more candidates and the creative artwork goes up a notch every year.

We are greatly proud to continue with our quality publications about the world of Anatolian and international weaving.

Enjoy,

Ahmet Diler, *Vice-president of İHİB (Istanbul Carpet Exporters' Association)*



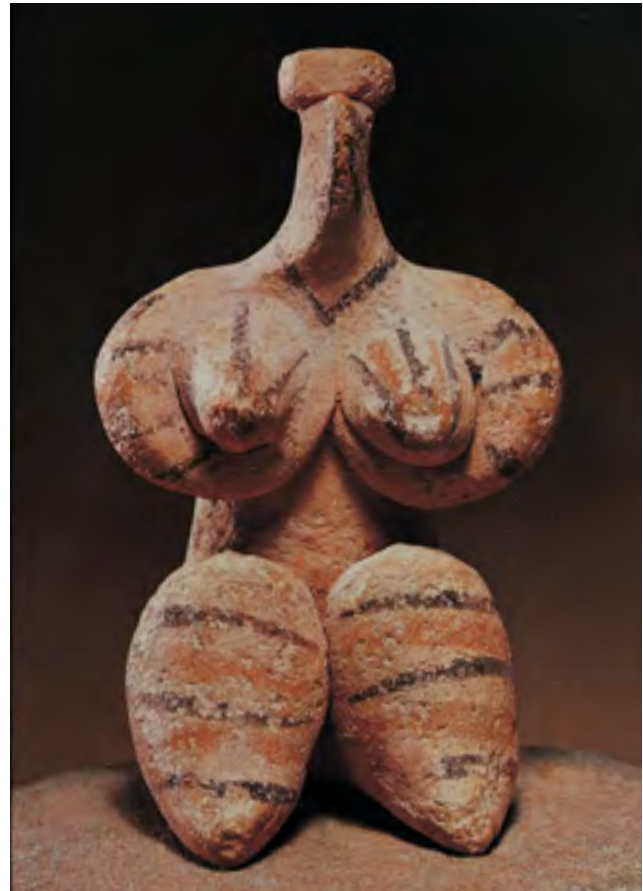
Photo : Claude Lux

# ON THE HISTORY OF MOTIFS IN ANATOLIAN CULT KILIMS

TEXT UDO HIRSCH, PHOTOS UDO HIRSCH & NİHAT YILDIZ

♦ I consider traditional Anatolian large motif kilims as “cult kilims” that were certainly not woven just for decorative purposes. Cult kilims carry cultural, mostly religious messages and were therefore predominantly used for ritual celebrations. There is sufficient evidence that over thousands of years, religious symbols were being depicted on various materials such as ceramics, metal, stone and wood. This is true also for textiles; they should be rated as particularly meaningful representatives of authentic cult forms.

In order to understand the religious significance of Anatolian cult kilims, it is necessary to have some background knowledge. I will therefore give a resume of the history of cult and culture in Eurasia, especially in the Near Eastern regions. One can discern three main stages of evolution. Certain crucial innovations such as a different mode of economy, other social structures and accordingly, new religious concepts, used to mark the transition period between two stages. Social and religious conceptions are indeed manifestations of culture and they widely depend on the economic system of the time. The names given to the three stages of development correspond to their respective mode of economy. The first stage is that of hunting and gathering (Palaeolithic) and the second is that of farming (Neolithic). The first stage's mode of economy was eventually abandoned with the beginning of the second stage. The third stage began when city states were first formed. They developed on the basis of trading and sophisticated irrigation facilities in gardens and fields. Detailed knowledge of cattle breeding was essential too. When the stage of city states commenced, the previous



1

system was not wiped out completely at once. Under certain environmental conditions, city states developed alongside farming. Further innovations that took place during the Bronze and Iron Age can be considered variants of the second and third mode of economy.

## STAGE ONE : HUNTING AND GATHERING

The expressions of culture in a community depend on the environmental conditions and accordingly, on the economic system of the time. The economic system of the Palaeolithic was hunting and gathering. The semi-

open park-like landscapes of Eurasia, stretching from Western Europe to Siberia, offered most favourable conditions for this mode of economy. The Palaeolithic hunters and gatherers occupied the land in small mobile groups, merging for short periods of time with other communities where food resources were copious. Very early, they developed explicit religious concepts based on the observation and interpretation of natural occurrences. In caves that reach deep down into the ground, the Palaeolithic people worshipped the Great Mother Earth whose womb gives, takes and maintains life. Wall-pictures from the caves show animals that were particularly important to the ancient hunters and gatherers. Many abstract illustrations were also found on the walls. The majority of animals and many female forms were painted in red. In some contexts, the use of the red colour implies that blood is equated with life.

Apparently, even the Palaeolithic people used to attribute a particular “mother’s role” to the Great Mother. In their wall pictures, they illustrated her as a goddess or protectress of the home, responsible for the food supply. Some wall pictures show the Great Mother as the patroness of the hunters. But most of all, she was featured as the Great Mother who alone has power over human and animal life and rebirth.

Thus, religious or cult motifs along with numerous plain geometric ones were common in Eurasia wherever sedentary hunters and gatherers lived. Major Palaeolithic motifs were naturalistic portrayals of animals, female figurines and reliefs (only a small number), illustrations of men (rare), hands, a large number of abstract motifs such as zigzags, wavy lines, chevrons and niches arranged on top of each other, compositions of circles, triangles, squares

and, in particular, lozenges and intricate meander and swastika forms, also ample hooked motifs and, of course, compositions of the various forms (cf. Hirsch 1989). Not only female symbols, but also zigzags, wavy lines and lozenges were used to illustrate fertility and life. Even today, the diamond with or without hooks is considered a symbol of fertility in many regions of Eurasia. It is actually a very popular motif in Anatolian kilims. Elizabeth Barber (1994) describes the diamond as the graphic form of the vulva and therefore one of the most powerful fertility symbols. Ambros (1986) considers the hooked diamond as the major fertility symbol of the early agriculturists. Finally, Kelly (1989) claims that the diamond is the common motif in any Eurasian textiles.

There are many variations of the fertility motif in Anatolian kilims. Some are illustrated in the collection.

#### STAGE TWO : FARMING

Farming and cattle breeding were only possible in areas with rich natural resources of both wild cereals and animals suitable for domestication. On the basis of cereal cultivation and the domestication of pigs, goats, sheep and cattle, the Neolithic society developed in the Near East region known as the Fertile Crescent. The initiators of the economic system were women. They were the first to sprout the seeds and plant cereals, and to breed young animals for domestication. Thus, women became more knowledgeable in the field than men and consequently established the characteristic features of Neolithic cult and culture. Concepts of the Mother Goddess that had before been associated with fertility, life and rebirth, were modified in the Neolithic period. These modifications resulted from changes in the economical system.

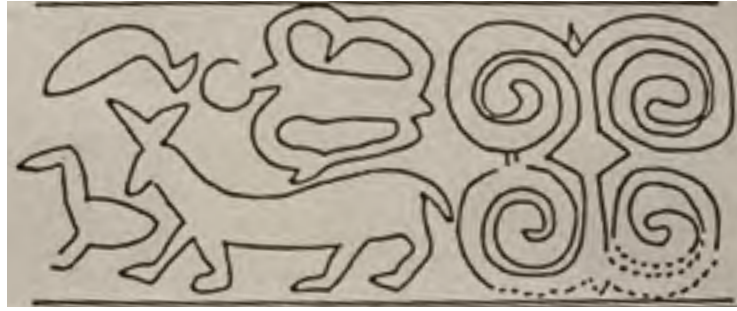


1  
Goddess of Fertility,  
figurine,  
Syria Ca. 2000 B.C.,  
Private collection

2  
Goddess of fertility,  
Sivrihisar kilim,  
Kirkir Rugs collection

Before cereals were planted, women used to put the seeds into special vessels in which they would germinate. The shapes of the vessels resembled female bodies. They were decorated with red waterlines symbolising fertility, so the seeds that had been collected from dying plants were resting in vessels, i.e. the Goddess' womb, to be reborn and to grow into new plants. The Neolithic people's confidence in rebirth is also apparent in their tradition of burying the red-painted bones of the dead in large vessels of female shape.

In the Near East, it was the custom to lay the deceased down in specific places where Griffon vultures would come and eat the flesh off the bones. Griffon vultures have always been common birds in the Near East. The Neolithic people regarded them as guarantors of rebirth and, accordingly, attributed them to the Goddess as symbols of reincarnation. The Goddess' power over life and death, however, was represented by big beasts of the region, the leopard and the lion. Ever since cattle became domesticated – certainly one of the most outstanding



3

3

Birth Symbol, seal from Susa, 2500 B.C., Louvre, Paris

4

Birth Symbol, Aydın kilim (Western Anatolia), Arapgir collection

achievements of the Neolithic – the bull was the Mother Goddess' divine companion.

The bull's blood was sacrificed to her, which illustrated that the bull died only to be reborn by the Goddess.

The earliest depiction of the Mother Goddess cycle, that is Mother Goddess with symbols of her power, was found in Catal Höyük. Wall paintings of the cycle of human life were also found in this Neolithic settlement. Some of these illustrations have survived in a fairly good condition until nowadays.

Furthermore, red-painted bones of many dead were discovered. They were wrapped up in fabric and buried under red-coated pedestals. Bucranias, i.e. benches with rows of inlaid bulls' horns, were placed on the

pedestals. The walls above the benches were decorated with monumental red painted reliefs of the Goddess giving birth. The red coating of these cult chambers showed their dedication to life. The Catal Höyük women remained almost in physical contact with their dead, symbolically supported by the Goddess' assistants, whose illustrations were with them on the walls. The women did not only buried their deceased in these chambers, they also came there to give birth, and thus represented the Goddess, celebrating the cycle of life.

These acts of cult were the most intense and vivid demonstrations of fundamental religious conceptions. Moreover, they did not only relate to the human life cycle but also to



that of animals and plants. During the Neolithic period, many different qualities and skills were attributed to female deities in the countries of the Fertile Crescent, as was the case in Anatolia and parts of South Eastern Europe. The most essential motifs dating back to the Neolithic period are :

- the birth-giving Goddess ; the Goddess holding her breasts, symbols of fertility and life ;
- the Goddess flanked by two birds, vultures, eagles, swans or cranes, symbols of re-birth ;
- the Goddess flanked by two leopards, lions or wolves, symbols of power over life and death ;
- the Goddess flanked by bulls, stags or goats, symbols of the male life cycle, guarantors of the community.

Different religious ideas were illustrated in varied naturalistic and abstract forms. There was also a fair amount of swastika forms, yin-yang motifs, diamonds with or without hooks and other abstract symbols. We have sufficient archaeological evidence that these exemplary forms of cult expression spread equally from the Near East to the West and to the East. Motifs were actually passed on like operating instructions, along with the knowledge of Neolithic economical achievements.

Wherever farmers did not give up their plain structures of economy, the relating descriptive forms of cultural expression remained largely unchanged over several thousand of years.

Anatolia, the Caucasus and parts of the Zagros have belonged to these regions until today.

### STAGE THREE : CITY STATES

The earliest city states emerged at crossings of important trade roads, some time around 4000 B.C. Irrigation systems were developed in the Euphrates and Tigris regions so that comprehensive farming and gardening became possible, with rich crops in comparatively confined areas. The more specialised mode of economy brought along changes of social structures and new forms of religious expression.

Particularly noteworthy in this context is the transformation of the Great



5  
Goddess Artemis with birds,  
Delos, Ca. 650 B.C.

6a-6b  
Goddess with birds,  
Kağızman (North East  
Anatolia),  
Arapgir collection

6a



6b





Goddess into a vegetal form. At this stage, she was often depicted as a tree-of-life. Later on, in areas where the tree-of-life motif was no longer meaningful, the symbol was reduced to a decorative element, the palmette form. In tree-of-life motifs and occasionally even in arrangements with palmette forms, the Goddess is usually accompanied by traditional symbols of her powers.

In numerous representations, she is flanked by birds, goats or bulls, sometimes by zoomorphic figures that combine several functions in one character. Early Mesopotamian scriptures do not only give historical proof of the Mother Goddess cult but also report on the continuity and modifications of related religious concepts. Many varied forms and additional motifs appear in the city states. Alongside adaptations to regional conditions, that is, illustrations of the Goddess with animals of the region, entirely new forms appeared. Particularly striking is the transformation of the Goddess into the tree-of-life and other plants. The Goddess on top of the holy mountain is another common motif from those

times. Both forms are flanked either by birds or leopards, or by lions and bulls, stags, goats and other animals.

Historical accounts from that time give evidence that the Goddess was depicted and worshipped in many temple territories. Thus there is, for the very first time, authentic proof of the roles attributed to the Goddess ; she was regarded ruler over the country, mother and preserver of life, guarantor of fertility and re-birth.

Apart from a specialised horticulture, the early city states contrived also a specific pastoral agriculture that accordingly led to full-nomadism in parts of Mesopotamia. On this background, male deities gained significance during the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. The central themes of mythological reports are disputes between the monarch and the priestess representing the Goddess.

We can interpret controversies of this kind as conflicts of palace against temple. The conflicts were about ruling powers, the supremacy of the monarch over the priestess and of the God-concept over that of the Goddess. The main subject of those conflicts was accordingly the supremacy in the

7

Goddess with birds,  
Aydınlı kilim (Western  
Anatolia), Arapgir  
collection

economic system of the time.

In urban and full-nomadic settlements, the idea of a male deity was gaining ground while the concept of the Goddess as the principle deity was retained in rural communities.

#### **ON THE CONTINUITY OF ANATOLIAN MOTIFS IN THEIR CONTEXT**

The early scriptures from Assyria do not only give information on Assyrian trading centres ; they also tell us something about the Assyrian population, the Hittites, Luvians and others. We can find clear definitions of cultural and religious forms of expressions and distinct descriptions of local deities alongside reports on business affairs.

According to several texts, strange Indo-European deities, which had been brought along to Anatolia, were replaced by local deities like the Anatolian sun-goddess Arinna. In Anatolia and in certain other countries ruled by Indo-Europeans,



8  
Mother Goddess giving  
birth, Malatya kilim  
(South East Anatolia),  
Arapgir collection

9  
Mother Goddess with  
birds, Taşpınar kilim  
(Central Anatolia),  
Arapgir collection



8

9



10  
Mother Goddess,  
Taşpınar kilim (Central  
Anatolia),  
Arapgir collection

the Mother Goddess retained her traditional pre-eminent position, as did Artemis in Lydia and Cybele in Phrygia. Together with her cult, Cybele, the Magna Mater, was even installed as the Roman state religion. Galatians invaded Anatolia in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Later on, they split up into several tribal groups and became sedentary in today's region of Ankara. They brought with them numerous deities. There was, for instance, Epona, the pan-Celtic patron goddess of horses, and their familiar Mother/fertility Goddess. Consequently, these tribes adopted the Anatolian goddesses without much difficulty. Mylilla in Assyria, Mitra in Persia, the Greek Aphrodite, Anaitis and Anahita in Afghanistan and Iran, Tanais of Scythia were all Mother Goddesses. Although their domineering position was variable with different Indo-European groups, they always retained their original powers and functions. Forms of religious expression associated with the Goddess have remained practically unaltered until these days. Christian iconography portrays the four evangelists – the pillars of Christianity – as power symbols of the Neolithic Great Goddess : Matthew is portrayed as the angel, the bull stands for Luke, Mark is the lion and John the eagle.

In Anatolia, various regional forms of expression developed depending on the Goddess worshipped in the area. The forms were passed on by no others than the members of the relevant rural groups.

In former Caria in Southwestern Anatolia, cult vessels and vases were discovered, adorned with motifs known to have been popular in just that one region around 600 B.C. Particularly noteworthy are several rows of rhombs with hooked outlines in mirror image. The motif derives from the large repertoire of traditional Neolithic illustrations of fertility goddesses. Hooked diamonds in mirror image have always been principal motifs in the so-called Aydınli Kilims.

They were woven in villages around Aydın, a town in the centre of former Caria.

The most common illustrations in Phrygia, Western Anatolia, were bulls' horns and birds. Even today, the motif of the Goddess flanked by birds is often executed in kilim weaves of that region. The Goddess on top of the mountain-motif, however, has always been restricted to a rather small mountainous area in Northeastern Anatolia.

Not only forms of expression but also ritual acts have survived over long periods of time. Even today, there are groups of women in certain parts of Anatolia who worship Hittite stone reliefs dating from early history. They are manifestations of the Mother Goddess for the women. In some other areas, Anatolian women still make pilgrimages to particular trees and wells to ask for fertility for the family and homestead.

There are still many festivals in Anatolia commemorating seasonal rituals that used to be celebrated in the temple territories in early history. Folk dances, songs, festive presentations and cultural activities are all manifestations of everlasting traditions. In his book "On the Dramatic Fertility Rituals of Anatolian Turkey", Metin And quotes many examples demonstrating the continuity of Anatolian cult from early history to present time (And 1978). He holds the opinion that most of today's Anatolian festivals and folklore celebrations bear essentially the same mythological features as did the ritual acts of the early farmers and stock breeders in the Near East. However, not all village festivals relate to pre-Christian, pre-Islamic, or early Anatolian traditions. Numerous rituals are associated with early Persian or Central Asian customs. Nevertheless they are all varied cultural products of Anatolia's turbulent history. They are also evidence of the membership of different ethnic groups to traditions they had often brought from afar. In the early Neolithic period, it was the custom for flesh to be removed from the bones of the dead. Initially, vultures used to eat the flesh off the bones; later on, priestesses or priests in bird-like gowns used to perform the

ritual. In Southern and Southeastern Europe, these cultural activities were kept up for several thousand years. King Barbarossa was one of the last historical figures whose mortal remains were officially purified in a ritual act. The bones were cooked and stripped of their flesh in Antioch in 1225. Wrapped up in fabric they were then transported to Jerusalem in a case and remained there to await the Day of Judgment and Resurrection. The common ritual of cooking the mortal remains was prohibited by Pope Boniface VIII in 1299. However numerous rural communities held on to it for much longer.

Even today, there are villages in southeastern Europe where the deceased are buried without any ceremonies, only to be dug up by the village women after about three years. The women then purify the bones, soak them in red wine and wrap them in textiles. Following extended celebrations, the bones are re-buried in the family's vault to await Resurrection Day.

In Sardinia, even in this century, the dead used to be laid out in specially prepared sites where vultures would strip the flesh off their bones. After having been purified by the birds, the bones were buried in spacious stone graves alongside the mortal remains of the deceased's ancestors.

We have sufficient historical evidence that there was a non-interrupted tradition of Mother Goddess cult in various parts of Anatolia, over several millennia until the Byzantine period. In other regions, for example in the Caucasus, the ancient ritual acts are still being practised in certain elements of modern cultural activities.

At this point, the wheel of the Near-Eastern Great Goddess cult, which has lived on for over 8000 years, turns a full circle. Traditional forms of cult expression that are still being practised must in no way be considered "remnants" of the past. They are, indeed, illustrations of fundamental concepts underlying any of our major religions. On closer examination, it is also quite obvious that the traditional forms of expressing cult have always been celebrated by women in the first place. Traditional forms of cultural expression that are still being practised

by many women in rural Anatolia, diverge greatly from patriarchal rituals common in Islam. Hence we are dealing here with a true feminine religion that may accordingly be described as the second or unofficial face of Islam.

A similar two-facedness is apparent in the Christian religion. Perhaps one can see in this characteristic an essential reason for the survival of the early Great Goddess cult expressions in Anatolia and other parts of the world. ♦

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1  
Small-Pattern  
“Holbein”,  
Western Anatolia,  
early 16<sup>th</sup> century,  
178 × 404 cm,  
1300 kn/sq dm  
The diagonal border  
is found in later  
Anatolian village rugs.  
Brukenthal National  
Museum (BNM), inv.  
M 2182

# ANATOLIAN RUGS IN TRANSYLVANIAN CHURCHES

TEXT & PHOTOS STEFANO IONESCU

◆ About 400 Turkish rugs, dating from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, have survived until today in Transylvania (see Table). They form the richest and best-preserved corpus of small format classical Ottoman rugs outside Turkey. Most groups of the golden period of Turkish weaving are represented : “Holbein”, “Ghirlandaio”, “Lotto”, “Bellini”, Uşak, Selendi and a wealth of so-called “Transylvanian” carpets. Many are in astonishingly good condition with full pile, rich colours and even with intact kilim and fringes, as they have never been used on the

floor. Carpet collections in western museums tend to have been put together arbitrarily while the Transylvanian heritage offers a representative cross section of the Anatolian commercial production, including remarkable specimens that remained in the same place for centuries (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).  
Anatolian rugs made their appearance in Europe, especially in Italy, in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century Florentine, Sienese and Venetian paintings. Rugs are shown at the feet of saints, of the enthroned Virgin or in Annunciation scenes. Later

GROUPS	16 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY	17 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY	18 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY	TOTAL
“Holbein”	5	-	-	5
Ushak	1	5	-	6
“Lotto”	6	78	11	95
Selendi	1	48	-	49
Single-Niche “Transylvanian”	-	6	-	6
Double-niche “Transylvanian”	-	87	12	99
“Transylvanian” Prayer Rugs	-	67	7	74
“Transylvanian” Column Rugs	-	20	5	25
Other (incl. 1 17 <sup>th</sup> century Kilim)	3	3	15	21

on, rugs started to be used as a status symbol or a sign of acquired wealth; on special occasions rugs would be hung from the balconies of grand houses. Similarly, a carpet draped across a table in a portrait served to emphasise the importance and the prestige of the sitter. For this reason the denominations of “classical” Anatolian carpets are often associated with the old masters who included them in their paintings. Then there is the special case of 17<sup>th</sup> century sajjadeh, called “Transylvanian”, a conventional designation coined in the early 1900s which points to the fact that several hundreds of rugs of this type survived in the area (Fig. 3).

Without attempting a summary of the region’s complex history, we should note that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, following the conquest of Constantinople, Transylvania along with Moldavia and Wallachia became vassal states submitted to the Ottoman Porte; it is important to underline that these Christian countries were never transformed into Pashaliks and that they never came under direct Turkish occupation. Until the treaty of Karlowitz of 1699 which concluded the Austro-Ottoman war, Transylvania had the status of an autonomous Principality maintaining its religion and its own administration but paying tribute to the Ottoman Porte. There were no Turks or other Muslim populations living there. By contrast, following the Battle of Mohacs in 1526, part of Hungary was designated a Pashalik and was under Turkish occupation for over a century and a half.

The reason why so many Anatolian rugs have survived in Transylvania is a fascinating inter-cultural phenomenon which for a long time has not been fully understood. Trade was however the mean by which people in Transylvania came into contact with rugs and kilims, along with other Turkish textiles : towels, blankets, bed covers, tents, rope, clothes and occasionally wool. In order to ply their trade, the Hungarian and Transylvanian merchants relied on a firman from 1483 which was actually a peace treaty between Sultan Bayazid II (1481-1512) and Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary.

It stipulated free access for tradesmen in times of peace. Merchants travelling from Constantinople formed caravans of wagons reaching the Danube either via Burgas or by the major route to Central Europe which ran through Edirne. Having crossed the Danube, Turkish goods would travel onward to Braşov and Sibiu through the Bran pass or along the Olt valley, the main route crossing the southern Carpathians. A very significant document about this trade is the custom register of Braşov of 1503 which states that over 500 Turkish rugs entered the town during the year ! The detail of Franz Neuhauser II’s water colour shows a fair in Transylvania where Turkish merchants were also offering carpets (Fig. 4).

But trade itself is not sufficient to explain the unique accumulation of rugs in Transylvania. Neighbouring areas south and north of the Danube were also crossed by the trade

with the Ottoman Porte and rugs were highly appreciated as well. Nevertheless, nothing comparable to the Transylvanian ‘miracle’ has been recorded in any of these areas. According to 16<sup>th</sup> century records, when the Voivode of Transylvania visited a town, the houses displayed rugs as a token of respect. Important events in the life of prominent citizens such as weddings or births were also honoured with a gift, donum. Records show that in 1538 alone the municipality of the Saxon town Braşov donated 27 rugs; it is estimated that between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century, over 1.000 rugs were used as gifts by the Braşov municipality. Turkish rugs were very popular both in rural and urban environments of Transylvania ; they were highly appreciated by the Hungarian aristocracy, but the significance that rugs had within the Saxon



2  
“Ghirlandaio” rug,  
western Anatolia, 16<sup>th</sup>  
century, 130 x 187 cm,  
840 kn/sq dm  
Ev. Church of  
Heldsdorf, inv. 23

3  
Black Church, Braşov,  
a “must see” for every  
carpet connoisseur :  
“Transylvanian” rugs in  
outstanding condition

communities was probably more complex. They served to confirm the social status of the owner, lending prestige on special occasions. Note in the painting in Fig. 5b, on the table, a “Bird” rug with cloudband border as the one from Sighișoara.

Rugs came into the ownership of the Reformed Churches mainly as pious donations from parishioners or guilds. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the coming of the Reformation, the number of figurative images inside the Protestant churches was drastically reduced. Most of the frescoes were white-washed or destroyed, and in many cases replaced by Anatolian rugs instead. These textiles, in the spirit of the Sunni Islam of the Ottoman Turks showing floral or geometric patterns (and never animals or human beings as the Persian rugs), became a suitable and decent decoration, compatible with the rigours of the Reformation.

An inscription, painted with ink on the kilim of a rug in Sighișoara, explains the reason of the presence of the

rug in the church : *“having obtained two benches, after long persistence, in gratitude and in honour of god. the fraternity (guild) has given (the rug)... being heads of the guild dan(iel) hom(mer) : in 1689”*.

This is how Anatolian rugs were accumulated in considerable numbers in Transylvania. The removal from the commercial circuit and the fact that they were used to decorate walls, not floors, was crucial for their conservation over the years. This is unique and quite extraordinary if we consider that the Ottoman Empire dominated the region at that time. This fact confirms not only the religious tolerance of Transylvanians but also the capacity of Oriental rugs to bridge different cultures.

Since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century hundreds of old rugs left Transylvania and now have completely disappeared from private homes. The great carpet collections owned in the past by Hungarian noble families in Transylvania or by other private

individuals have been lost, either as a result of wear and tear or in some cases preserved abroad.

#### **SINGLE AND DOUBLE-NICHE “TRANSYLVANIAN” RUGS**

According to many authors the prayer carpet, called sajjada in Arabic, is the “most popular and widely used type of carpet” (R. Ettinghausen, Prayer Rugs). The 17<sup>th</sup> century Anatolian prayer rugs with star-and-cartouche border and a decorated field are called Single-niche “Transylvanian” rugs. Only 12 first period examples with arabesque spandrels are known today ; they survived mostly in Transylvania but also in Turkey and in a few collections world-wide.

The Sibiu single-niche “Transylvanian” (Fig. 6a) is probably the best and earliest example. It is not really known how this design came into being and how it was adopted by provincial west Anatolian weavers. The lobed profile of the arch recalls the prayer rugs illustrated in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century

3





4  
Franz Neuhauser  
II, Annual Fair in  
Sibiu, about 1800,  
watercolour and  
gouache, BNM inv.  
XI-935

5a  
Robert Wellmann,  
Saxon young maid  
preparing for the  
wedding ; note the  
“Bird” rug on the table

5b  
“Bird” rug, Selendi,  
inscribed 1646, 137 x  
204 cm,  
This pattern recalls the  
İznik tile revetments as  
those seen at Rüstem  
Pasha Mosque.  
Ev. Church Sighișoara,  
inv. 534

Persian miniatures. The overall composition shows similarities to earlier works of Ottoman architecture as the tiled mihrab with arabesque spandrels at the Tomb of Mehmet I in Bursa (built around 1420 by the “masters of Tabriz”). According to very recent research, this layout, a mihrab shape topped by an inscription, surrounded by a wide cartouche border and reciprocal motifs, recalls the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman stained glass windows. This can still be seen in some of Sinan’s works like Süleymaniye Mosque (Fig. 7a), Sokollu Mehmet Pasha Mosque or, as Prof. Gülru

Necipoğlu points, at the Tomb of Şehzade Mehmet, where the original inner windows survived. The same design is found in a miniature from Surname-i Hümayun of 1582 (Fig 7b). The fact that 9 (out of 12) first-period Single-niche “Transylvanian” rugs have white or yellow ground is again compatible with this idea. Decorative elements, as the reciprocal trefoil border and even the chain-like minor border are employed in the Iznik tile revetments of the same period, as those found at the Sultan’s Tomb at Süleymaniye. This suggests that the overall design of the Single-niche

“Transylvanian” rugs (which lacks a forerunner in carpets) derives from the Ottoman style of second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A distinctive element of all first-period “Transylvanians” is the star-and-cartouche main border ; a portion of a rug with such a border first appears in the Portrait of Abraham Grapheus of 1620 by the Dutch master Cornelius de Vos. For this reason Michael Franses postulates that examples like this “may well date back to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century”.

The comparison of first-period Single and Double-niche “Transylvanians” (those with arabesque spandrels, star and cartouche border and the mosque lamp motif) reveals that the double-niche design is clearly derived from the single-niche one. The reason why the double-niche layout came into being can be explained by a historical fact : the edict sent to Kütahya in 1610 under the rule of Sultan Ahmed I (1590 Manisa-1617) which stated : “We heard that weavers are producing carpets and sajjades in your kazas (townships) depicting mihrab, Kabe (Kaaba) and hat (calligraphy) on carpets and sajjades and selling them to non-Muslims. Shaykh al-Islam prescribes this is against Islam and forbidden by şeriat.” (Ahmet Refik, Istanbul Hayatı (1000 - 1100), 1931, Istanbul, doc. 83, pp.43-44 Translation by Levent Boz, Ankara).

This information clarifies the long-



5a



5b

debated origin of the double-niche layout of this “Transylvanian” group. In fact, making rugs for export to non-Muslim countries in the double-niche format was a way of ostensibly obeying the Edict. When the second niche was added, the field pattern had to be adapted but in many early examples the directional feature of the prayer rug is still there. For example the rug from the Central Museum in Utrecht has two cusps but only one mosque-lamp (Fig. 8a).

The idea of the double-niche may have been borrowed from small-medallion Uşaks (yet the palette and all the motifs are different) or from bookbinding but the overall design elements clearly reflect the Single-niche rugs. There are a few double-niche “Transylvanian” rugs with cross-panel but none have a script, which again complies with the above mentioned edict.

Rugs in the double-niche format became very “trendy” and by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, this layout took over the single-niche one, which continued to be produced in smaller numbers. They became one of the most successful products of the Anatolian village weavers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and were exported in considerable numbers to Transylvania, to Hungary and further north to Poland and Sweden (where the 1672 inventory of Skokloster Castle mentions 10 small Turkish table covers). The presence of “Transylvanian” rugs is also recorded in Central Europe and mostly in Holland : about 70 works of 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painters show this type of rug, mostly on tables (Fig. 9). According to a recent survey in private and public collections world wide there are 24 Single-niche and 337 Double-niche “Transylvanian” rugs.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Anatolian weavers modified the patterns of the double-niche rugs to satisfy the market demand, requiring faster production. The first step was the change in the spandrel design. Mirroring the arabesque spandrels takes more time for the weaver and it was often a source of errors in the bottom niche. This is most likely the reason why the arabesques were replaced with a new pattern with large rosettes and saz leaves (Fig. 10a and Fig. 10b). This



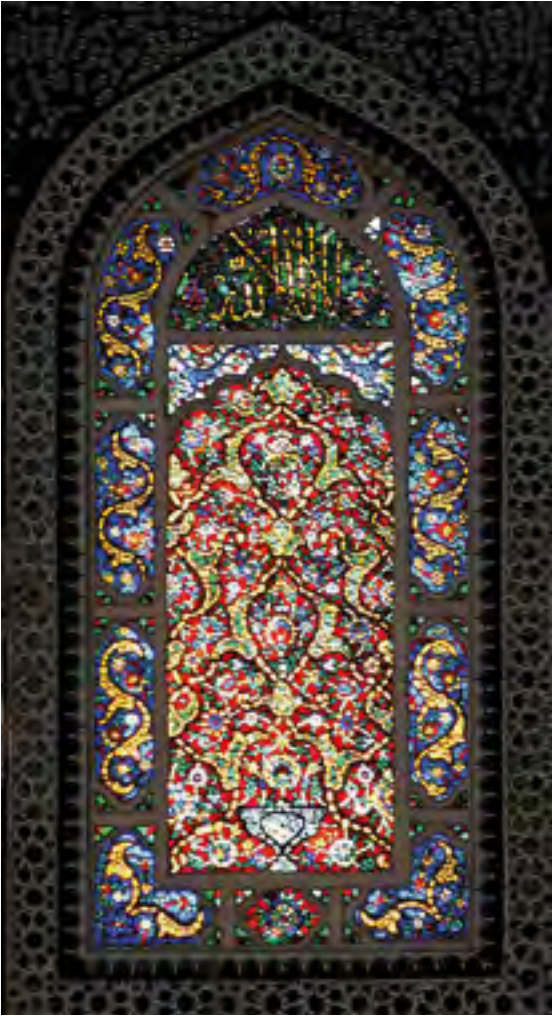
6a  
Single-niche  
“Transylvanian” rug  
with arabesque cross-  
panel,  
Western Anatolia,  
early 17<sup>th</sup> century,  
118 x 155 cm,  
2470 knots/sq dm.  
The niche shows  
a delicate floral  
scrollwork with an  
ascending palmette,  
pointing to the mosque  
lamp.  
Brukenthal National  
Museum (BNM), inv.  
M 1626



6b  
Single-niche  
“Transylvanian” rug,  
Western Anatolia,  
first half 17<sup>th</sup> century,  
112 x 176 cm.  
The palette and the  
layout recall the  
Ottoman stained glass  
windows.  
Beatrice and Hrandt  
Avakian Collection,  
Museum of Art  
Collections, Bucharest,  
inv 83599/267

6a

6b



7a



7b

7a  
Stained glass inner window on the mihrab wall. The actual windows reflect the original ones. Süleymaniye Mosque, finished by Sinan in 1557

7b  
Parade of the artisans, procession of the glaziers with their inner (içlik) windows. Surname-i Hümayun of 1582 (TSM Env 1344) folio 402  
Courtesy Prof. Ömür Bakırer, Ankara

motif is clearly borrowed from the Ottoman floral style but no similar arrangement has survived in textiles, ceramic or in other media. The new spandrel design was easier to memorise and quicker to weave; finally the spandrels with large rosettes and saz leaves became the distinctive motif and also the most stable design element of the double-niche “Transylvanian” group. The same type of spandrels can be found in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century rugs from Bergama, Demirci, Kula, Dazkırı or Konya and further to the East, echoing the patterns of the 17<sup>th</sup> century “Transylvanians”.

As the market demand was strong, in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century new border and field patterns have been used, as shown in Fig 10a and Fig. 10b. The design evolution is by no means a linear process and every rug is influenced by the weaver’s skill and by her personality; however there is a clear trend towards symmetrical and simplified patterns which are quicker to weave. The design elements of the field became scattered and tended to be

centralized or aligned along the vertical axis as in the white-ground rug from the Brukenthal Museum ; the lamps are often replaced by palmettes. Yet in some examples the directional feature of the original sajjada is still traceable. Several examples show the large floral medallion (first seen in the Cairene prayer rugs, as the one in the Topkapı Museum) or the small-Uşak medallion which was very popular in Anatolia.

#### “TRANSYLVANIAN” PLAIN-NICHE RUGS

The earliest examples can be dated to mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, which denotes that the Edict of Kütahya was no longer observed. A recent classification of this group, based on spandrel design, accounts 42 examples with interlaced arabesques, 94 with flowering stems (as the wonderful example in Fig. 11) and 80 with serrated leaf and carnations, which are slightly later. Consistently they are all woven upside down in order to control the position of the cusp inside the field. This technique was not seen in earlier Uşaks prayers but can be found in later Gördes and

Kula rugs. Typically the borders show the Ottoman-style pattern with rosette and palmette, seen in the Cairene prayer rugs. Only a few examples show the cartouche border, which suggests that Plain-niche ‘Transylvanian’ rugs were made in different centres than the double-niche ones.

#### “TRANSYLVANIAN” COLUMN RUGS

Of all the Anatolian rugs which survived in Transylvania this small group stands out for their elegance, which evokes a real sense of the sacred (Fig. 12). The forerunners of this 17<sup>th</sup> century group are the Cairo-Ottoman prayer rugs, with a triple-arch supported by columns, surmounted by a crenelated frieze and a dome. This design, often understood as the “Gateway to Paradise” is clearly derived from architecture ; most probably it represents the portal of a mosque (compare with the Mosque of Kairouan in Tunis). Nevertheless the origin in Ottoman rugs, of the coupled-columns, with stepped, faceted bases is still debated. This design fertilised the



8a



8b



8a  
Double-niche  
"Transylvanian",  
Western Anatolia,  
first half 17<sup>th</sup> century,  
120 x 167 cm,  
Transitional example  
with only 1 lamp,  
Central Museum,  
Utrecht, inv. 9123

8b  
Double-niche  
"Transylvanian" rug,  
Western Anatolia,  
first half 17<sup>th</sup> century,  
121 x 200 cm,  
1400 kn/sq dm  
V&A Museum,  
London, inv. 302-1984

9  
Thomas de Keyser,  
Portrait of a Lady  
1632,  
79 x 53 cm,  
oil on panel  
Gemäldegalerie, Berlin



10a  
Double-niche  
“Transylvanian”  
rug with large floral  
medallion,  
Western Anatolia,  
third quarter 17<sup>th</sup>  
century,  
125 x 160 cm,  
1320 kn/sq dm;  
The National Museum  
in Kraków, inv. MNK  
XIX-4403

10b  
White-ground Double-  
niche “Transylvanian”  
rug with palmette  
border,  
Western Anatolia,  
third quarter 17<sup>th</sup>  
century,  
125 x 175 cm,  
1440 kn/sq dm  
BNM, Sibiu, inv. M  
2188

11  
Plain-niche  
“Transylvanian” Rug  
with flowering stems  
spandrels,  
Western Anatolia,  
second-half 17<sup>th</sup>  
century,  
132 x 175 cm,  
approx. 1.350 knots/  
dm<sup>2</sup>  
Brukenthal National  
Museum, Sibiu, inv.  
M 1618



creativity of the Anatolian weavers and became the central concept of some spectacular 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Central Anatolian rugs.

In 1699, Transylvania became part of the Hapsburg Empire and in the next decades the local taste changed. It is not a coincidence that the production of “Transylvanian” rugs ceased in the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century but patterns and motifs can be traced in later Anatolian rugs.

The study of a large number of rugs, classified according to the design and the correlation between carpets in painting and inscribed rugs, provided a dating method with an accuracy of under a quarter of a century. Hopefully in the future there will be new findings which will support the attribution of the “Transylvanian” group to specific weaving centres in western Anatolia. Nevertheless this is actually the most popular and also the best documented type of 17<sup>th</sup> century Anatolian small-format rug.

#### **REPLICAS OF “TRANSYLVANIAN” RUGS MADE IN SULTANHANI**

It is a great challenge to produce accurate replicas of classical carpets, which may be a solution for safeguarding the rugs displayed in the Transylvanian churches for future generations. Substituting the originals and moving the rugs from churches to parish museums in order to avoid continuous exposure are the key reasons of this project. On the other hand, the project aims to explore the return to traditional weaving : good design, hand spun wool, natural dyes and traditional technique.

The first step in producing a replica is achieved by talented designers: among them are two architects passionate about carpets, Chris Andrews and Andrea Pacciani and a young designer from Transylvania, Eduard Baak. With the help of high resolution photos and with careful examination of the originals, a knot-by-knot drawing for the weaver and a colour chart are produced. Finally the weavers are required to match the drawing, a complex process as the traditional patterns have been forgotten. Small variations may affect or even compromise the proportions or

11







13

12  
Six-column  
"Transylvanian" rug,  
Western Anatolia,  
late 17<sup>th</sup> century,  
129 x 188 cm  
Brukenthal National  
Museum, Sibiu, inv.  
M 1620

13  
The Replica of a  
Cintamani rug and of a  
lost Animal rug,  
Ev. Church Mediaș

14  
Replica of the Single-  
niche "Transylvanian"  
of Sibiu,  
Drawing Andrea  
Pacciani,  
Manufacturer Ibrahim  
Tekin



14

the overall look. The rug is then submitted to professional finishing including shearing, washing and clipping of the blacks. The whole process may last about 3 months.

The first attempts are very encouraging and after a several samples, we are happy to report that several Replicas have been delivered to the churches in Mediaș and Bistritza in Transylvania (Fig 13). The Replica of the Single-niche of Sibiu, woven near Aksaray by the team of İbrahim Tekin, was shown during the recent Carpet Week in Istanbul (Fig. 14).

Carpet weaving has been recorded in the area Konya-Aksaray since Marco Polo, while today Sultanhanı is the world "capital" of carpet restoration. Hopefully, in the next few years a new brand will be established here, based on "classical" Anatolian patterns, called "Sultanhanı-Transylvanian" Rugs. ♦



## ISTANBUL CARPET WEEK

# INAUGURAL ISTANBUL CARPET WEEK

TEXT AHMET DİLER & PHOTOS MAHMUT BARAN

♦ The Istanbul Carpet Exporters' Association (İHİB) inaugurated the first Istanbul Carpet Week (ICW) from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2016. Istanbul Carpet Week is a new event that aims to make its mark on the international scene and to become an important moment on the international rug calendar.

The event allowed for a debate on the importance of the preservation of the declining Turkish weaving tradition as well as ideas on how to adapt present day rug production with new skills and with design, in response to the demand of the market. Ideas were shared on how to participate in the development of the world's carpet industry.

Around 100 buyers from the USA, Canada, Middle East and European countries were present and were welcomed by fifty Turkish companies. Together, they explored the possibilities for future collaboration thus creating strong ties between retailers, buyers and designers from abroad and local Turkish rug companies. Turkish rug producers showed their ability to respond to the new expectations of the rug world's actors. We believe many important business relationships were tied and that these will allow for new exchanges and will participate in the development of the carpet industry in Turkey.

Ten antique rugs from different regions of Anatolia from private collections of merchants were on display for all to admire in the lobby of İTKİB's (Istanbul Textile and Apparel Exporters' Association) building where some of the activities were held.

Just before the B2B meetings, the First Istanbul International Carpet Conference (IICC) took place. The conferences focused on traditional weaving and on modern rug designing. In the audience were many academicians, students of textile arts and local businessmen. Seven speakers were present : Professor Dr Hamdi Ünal, a knowledgeable specialist of Hereke carpets spoke about his research of many years ; Udo Hirsch who has travelled all over Anatolia and reviewed thousands of rugs presented "The Motifs of Anatolian Cult Kilims" ; Stefano Ionescu shared his

passion for Western Anatolian carpets from the Ottoman period that decorate Transylvanian churches ; Hadi Maktabi, who comes from a long family tradition of carpet trading spoke of carpets from Iranian Azerbaijan ; Carol Sebert, who produces modern rugs with traditional hand weaving techniques, presented her work and the ideas and methods behind her beautiful creations ; Erbil Tezcan, an innovative and prolific designer, described his way of interpreting the world in his designs and how he combines tradition and modern designing in his rugs ; Robert Leahy closely scrutinized the expectations of the American market as well as the relationships and contrasts between carpet producing countries.

The Istanbul Carpet Week included the award ceremony for İHİB's 10<sup>th</sup> annual Turkish Young Carpet Designers' contest and an award ceremony for the best Turkish handmade and machine made carpet exporters, during a lavish banquet at the Polat Renaissance Hotel.

Our international guests were hosted on excursions to major historical sites like Aghia Sophia, the Blue mosque, the Vakıflar Carpet Museum and the Grand Bazaar and enjoyed a night cruise with dinner on the Bosphorus.

We would like thank David Young and Ben Evans from Hali and Cover magazines for their precious collaboration in the organisation of the event.

A huge success in 2016, we intend on further developing the 2017 Istanbul Carpet Week which will take place in a spacious venue, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of October with a yet bigger national and international participation. ♦

## ISTANBUL CARPET WEEK

# FIRST ISTANBUL INTERNATIONAL CARPET CONFERENCE

TEXT AHMET DİLER, PHOTOS MAHMUT BARAN & TOVI DİLER

İHİB (Istanbul Carpet Exporters' Association) is proud to have successfully organised the First Istanbul International Carpet Conference, the centrepiece of the First Istanbul Carpet Week. We wished to celebrate the rich past of Anatolian rugs and at the same time, explore the future of modern design in Turkish rugs. We had the great honour of welcoming seven speakers, worldwide renowned academicians and designers.

PROF. DR. HAMDİ ÜNAL (1), a knowledgeable specialist of Hereke carpets, spoke about his research of many years and on the topic of innovation. Head of the Textile and Fashion Design section of the University of Beykent's Fine Arts Faculty, he was previously a researcher at Marmara University's Fine Arts Faculty and has had personal exhibitions in Turkey as well as abroad. During his talk, Prof. Dr. Ünal highlighted the importance of protecting and respecting traditions but pointed out that creativity is vital for the carpet industry.

CAROL SEBERT (2), head of the company Creative Matters, brought to our conference her vision of designing original, handcrafted floor coverings. She creates for interior designers, architects and residential clients worldwide. Sebert leads a team of talented artists whose creations grace upscale retail stores, hotels, corporate offices and residences in more than 40 countries. The design firm is committed to environmentally friendly production methods, improved working and living conditions for carpet weavers, and the elimination of abusive child labour in the carpet industry. Sebert credits her success to artistic passion, a collaborative approach to business, a talented and capable creative team, and trusted relationships with clients and mill owners from New York to Nepal.

STEFANO IONESCU (3) shared with us his passion for Western Anatolian carpets that made their way via the trade routes to Transylvania during the Ottoman period. These rugs decorated and still decorate Transylvanian churches such as the Black Church in Brasov, Romania. Stefano Ionescu has dedicated almost twenty years to the study of these rugs, the repository of the richest and best-preserved corpus of small 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century Turkish carpets outside the Islamic World. Stefano gave a fascinating talk to explain the presence of these rugs in Transylvania on which he has published a comprehensive study, "Antique Ottoman Rugs in Transylvania". The author is now producing in Central Anatolia high quality replicas of the originals in Transylvania employing hand carded and hand spun wool, natural dyes and traditional techniques with the aim of replacing the originals, which will then be preserved in museums.

HADI MAK TABI (4) who comes from a long family tradition of carpet trading, coupled with an academic career, gave a very enlightening speech about Iranian Azerbaijan rugs from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Accompanied with beautiful images to illustrate, he spoke of how the function and designs of rugs from the "greater Azerbaijan" slowly altered over time.

Dr. Maktabi has been teaching Art History at the American University of Beirut since 2007. In 2014, the Hadi Maktabi Gallery for Rare Carpets & Antiques was launched and is set up as a cultural centre for the promotion of textile arts.

ERBİL TEZCAN (5), an innovative and prolific designer, described during his talk his way of interpreting the world around us in his designs and how he combines tradition and modern designing in his rugs. He finds inspiration for his designs from many different avenues. In 2009, Erbil decided to start his own business, Wool & Silk, LLC. The name of the company points to that which, along with his exquisite designs, sets his carpets apart from the rest. He developed his own unique texture composed of a Tibetan wool and silk blend and his newest texture, a blend of silk, wool and yak hair, has had tremendous success. Erbil has won many prizes at the prestigious Domotex Trade Show in Hannover. Wool & Silk now has customers in over 25 states in the USA, and many international customers spanning from Canada to Australia.

UDO HIRSCH (6), who has travelled all over Anatolia and reviewed thousands of rugs, fascinated us with a talk about "The Motifs of Anatolian Cult Kilims". He established during his talk how religious symbols

from the Neolithic time onwards have evolved into kilim motifs. Udo has been working for over 40 years as a consultant for international environment protection, development associations and non-governmental organizations. During that period, he had an opportunity to work on the history of traditional weaving in South America, in North Africa, in Madagascar and especially in Turkey. Some of his work and his field research have been published as articles or books such as “The Goddess from Anatolia” with James Mellaart and Belkıs Acar. Since 2009 he mostly lives in Güzelyurt (Cappadocia in Central Turkey) where he produces organic wine in big old Cappadocian jars.

ROB LEAHY (7) closely scrutinized for us the expectations of the American market, the relationships and contrasts between carpet producing countries as well as explaining the way internet is taking over the rug business. Owner of Fine Rugs of Charleston, Rob Leahy has been in and around the rug industry since 1967. For his work, he has travelled to Iran, India and other rug making countries. He is a Certified Rug Appraiser and past President of ORRA, the leading association of rug appraisers and dealers in the USA. Rob Leahy’s interest in Afghanistan began in August 2007 when he first travelled there as a member of a US Department of Commerce mission to assist Afghan carpet weavers. He serves on the Advisory Board of Arzu Studio Hope, a US based support program for women and children in Bamyān, Afghanistan. ♦



From the left to the right : Udo Hirsch, Rob Leahy, Carol Sebert, Uğur Uysal, Pr. Dr. Hamdi Ünal, Hadi Maktabi, Stefano Ionescu and Erbil Tezcan



2



5



3



6



1



4



7

## ISTANBUL CARPET WEEK

# ISTANBUL CARPET WEEK'S B2B MEETINGS

TEXT AHMET DİLER & PHOTOS MAHMUT BARAN

♦ The second edition of an international Buyers' Delegation to Istanbul was again successful with the participation of about 100 buyers, four times more than in 2015, some of which were returning participants from the previous year.

The close collaboration with Hali and Cover magazines allowed us to reach a great number of potential buyers from many companies likely to be interested, with a large portion coming from the USA, a few Canadian and Middle East companies and an important number of European companies. The international delegation was welcomed by approximately 50 Turkish companies.

Right after the first edition of the International Istanbul Carpet Conference (ICC) held at İTKİB, the Istanbul Textile and Apparel Exporters' Association, retailers, buyers and designers had a chance to meet with these companies to create contacts and thus hopefully establish fruitful business partnerships. The local companies had an opportunity to share their knowledge and their competence and to demonstrate their ability of adapting to the rapid evolution of the market in their production. These discussions will allow for Turkish companies to direct their efforts in the right direction using their traditional Anatolian know-how.

This edition of the B2B meetings may have also laid the foundations for a future rug fair in Istanbul in the near future... who knows?

The charm of Istanbul and the hospitality of the Turkish people have yet again bewitched our guests. We hope that word of mouth will widen the circle of actors

in the world of rugs with whom we can develop our industry thus leading us all to bigger and better things. ♦

7

Mustafa Kayhan of Norm Hali presenting his catalogue to a buyer

8

Memet Güreli, from Dokhu showing his creations to Birgit Krah from Reuber Henning, Germany



- 1  
Nurullah Özçilsal of  
Yörük showing his kilim  
production to a buyer
- 2  
Hüseyin Kaplan of Karavan  
with a buyer
- 3  
Steve Landirgan, Rob  
Leahy and Roz Rustigian at  
the B2B meeting
- 4  
Muharrem Aslan, owner  
of the company Ağacan  
with Ms. Jablonska from  
Patterson Flynn Martin,  
New York
- 5  
Mustafa Vardarsuyu and  
Fatoş Alpay of Bereket with  
a buyer
- 6  
Svend Rose-Olsen of Rose  
Aegre Taepper & Kelim  
from Denmark with  
the President of Hereke  
Associated Carpet Weavers



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## ISTANBUL CARPET WEEK

# İHİB'S 10<sup>TH</sup> YOUNG CARPET DESIGNERS CONTEST

TEXT AHMET DİLER & PHOTOS MAHMUT BARAN



♦ The annual Turkish Young Carpet Designer Contest is a preview into the future of carpet designing in Turkey. It sheds a light on the talent of a new generation and promotes a useful symbiosis between many sectors of the carpet trade. The award ceremony took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2016 at the Polat Renaissance Hotel. The number of young designer applications for the 10<sup>th</sup> edition reached a record, with 98 enrolled. A first selection allowed to reduce that number to 28 contestants and a final selection to 10 finalists. Such was the level that the jury found it difficult to choose those final 10 candidates.

The finalists' designs were created in different regions of Anatolia or by the designers themselves. For the award ceremony, their creations were displayed in the hall of the Polat Renaissance Hotel. All the young talented designers had the possibility to exchange with academicians, foreign designers and to meet members of the sector

with whom they will hopefully work in the future.

A larger jury to vote for the three winners was formed by members of our international guests (designers, buyers and international press) as well as Turkish academicians, designers, representatives of the carpet sector, İHİB's president, Uğur Uysal, the President of the jury, Nihat Yıldız and some of the board members. The 1<sup>st</sup> Prize went to Muhammed Türk's creation "Destruction", the 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize to Senem Kula's creation "Cycle" and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize to Faruk Açıkgöz's creation "Melting Ice Caps".

İHİB awarded 10 000 TL to the first prize winner, 7 500 TL to the second prize winner and 5 000 TL for the third prize winner. The other seven finalists were awarded 2 000 TL each. İHİB also presented the three winners with a laptop computer with appropriate design programs, the other finalists with drawing pads and the possibility for all ten to take language lessons during six months. The winner will also be sent for a year of study in a design school abroad, worth 40 000 €. The ten finalists' creations will be on display in Hall 16 at the Domotex fair from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 2017 and the ten finalists will visit the Frankfurt Home Textile fair and Domotex.

For İHİB, these young designers represent the future of Turkey's rug industry.



## MUHAMMED TÜRK

FIRST PRIZE AWARD

Born in 1989 and raised in Edirne, Muhammed finished primary and high school in his home town. Thanks to his interest in art and painting, he was accepted as a student at the Art Faculty of Trakya University. A year later, he took and passed the exams to enter Marmara Fine Arts University in Istanbul, in its Traditional Turkish Arts section. During his Bachelor of Arts studies, Muhammed drew Ottoman calligraphy for the famous television series “Muhteşem Yüzyıl” and “Kösem Sultan” as well as working as a designer in the jewellery sector. In 2014 he won the “RISING TALENT DESIGNER PRIZE” at the Ajur Jewellery Design Contest. After graduating, Muhammed oriented his work towards the textile sector. He worked as a designer for Armine and has since become interested in designing in the carpet sector.

### THEME : “DESTRUCTION”

Every day, historical monuments and the beauty of nature are destroyed because of badly done restoration, meeting human needs and insufficient education. In this work, his objective is to draw attention to this destruction and state that history is so strong and visible that it is impossible to destroy. History will always be uncovered underground.

♦





## SENEM KULA

2<sup>ND</sup> PRIZE AWARD

Born in Istanbul in 1991, Senem Kula finished the Çağaloğlu Anatolia Fashion Vocational High School in 2009. She is now a last year textile and fashion design bachelor student at the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University.

During her studies, she was honoured with 2<sup>nd</sup> place award at the 2014 ATHİB (Mediterranean Textile and Raw Materials' Association) woven fabric design competition and with 2<sup>nd</sup> place award at the 2015 UTİİB (Uludağ Textile Exporters' Association) house textile competition, in the category of bathroom textiles. As for her work experience, she has worked with Carpe Diem (The Netherlands) as a textile designer, Ümran Aysan Design (England) as a designer assistant and continues to work with the Cafetocafe Textile Group as a designer.

### THEME : "CYCLE"

In time, every artefact that shows vitality, after being treated by the human hand, tries to return to its previous existence... to nature. The object which applies that reduces the color and shapes the form. The project is developed by this idea ; the jute which is a completely natural raw material featuring with human friendly and green - an indigo organic dye stuff - adds design value and serves a complete sustainable design. It gains modern, alternative and different material to traditional methods.

◆





## FARUK AÇIKGÖZ

3<sup>RD</sup> PRIZE AWARD

Faruk Açıkgöz was born in Istanbul in 1994. He completed his primary, secondary and high school education in Kadıköy, Istanbul. Faruk participated in city and countrywide painting competitions during his secondary and high school years. In 2013 Açıkgöz prepared for the exams of Fine Arts Faculty by taking lessons at the painter Merih Yıldız's Art Studio, and got into Marmara University Faculty of Fine Arts. Whilst taking a major in Carpet/Kilim and Old fabric designs of Traditional Turkish Arts, he also took a minor in the textile branch of the same faculty. He is now in his final year at university. In 2015 Açıkgöz had a short term internship with the designer of Trend Hali. That same year he did field research on Hereke carpets and gained knowledge and experience about natural dyeing methods.

### THEME : "THE MELTING ICE CAPS"

The melting of the polar ice caps due to global warming is a sign that our earth is heading towards annihilation. These noticeable changes in the poles seem like a harmonious dance of melted blue sapphire lakes. Basing himself on these melting effects, he wanted his design to be pleasing to the eye and at the same time, convey a message. The design is horizontal and was installed on the loom that way with the fringes remaining on the sides. On one hand, he wanted to do something different and on the other hand he thought the transitions of the design would be clearer this way. The small bright colours used here and there are fragments of life remaining in nature, representing the end mankind brings onto itself. He has associated the subject of his design with this reality that is a problem common for all mankind. "If you tell the truth, you can reach deep into hearts".

♦





## THE OTHER FINALISTS



ERSEL AKAYDIN



NİGAR DEMİRTAY



DİLARA GEZER



ASLIHAN SEVİNÇLİ



ŞENAY SUBAŞI



ZÜMRÜT TALİ



NURETTİN YILDIRIM





## THE JURY DELIBERATION



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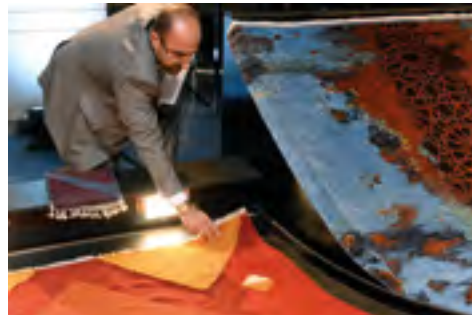
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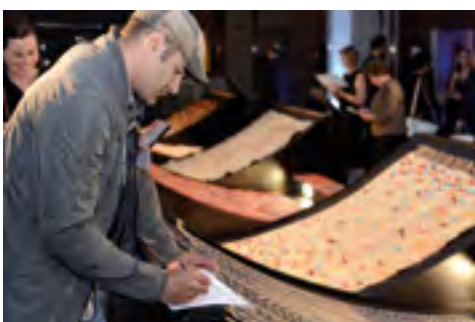
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- 1 Exhibition of the finalists' rugs at Polat Renaissance Hotel
- 2 Carol Sebert, head of the company Creative Matters and French designer Florence Bourel
- 3 David Young and Ben Evans from Hali and Cover magazines with Rob Leahy
- 4 Erbil Tezcan, Wool and Silk Rugs.
- 5 Salahattin Kaplan (R), President of Southeastern Anatolia Exporters' Association
- 6 Fevzi Işıklı of Hatipoğlu Halıcılık
- 7 Jury members voting for the winners



## THE AWARD CEREMONY



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1  
The ten finalists with the President of the jury, Nihat Yıldız

2  
Senem Kula (2<sup>nd</sup> prize), Uğur Uysal, Chairman of Istanbul Carpet Exporters' Association, Muhammed Türk (first prize), Mehmet Büyükeksi, President of Turkish Exporters Assembly, Faruk Açıkgoz (3<sup>rd</sup> prize)

3  
Uğur Uysal, Chairman of Istanbul Carpet Exporters' Association and Mehmet Büyükeksi, President of Turkish Exporters Assembly, awarding the 1<sup>st</sup> prize to Muhammed Türk



7

4  
Mustafa Çıkrıkçıoğlu, Deputy Chairman of Turkish Exporters Assembly awarding 2<sup>nd</sup> prize to Senem Kula

5  
Salahattin Kaplan, President of Southeastern Anatolia Exporters' Association awarding Faruk Açıkgoz with the 3<sup>rd</sup> prize

6  
The representatives of the top twelve exporters of hand made carpets in 2016 with Uğur Uysal and Mehmet Büyükeksi

7  
Representatives of the top twelve exporters of machine made carpets



8

8  
Mehmet Büyükeksi, President of TIM, giving a speech during the award ceremony

9  
Memet Güreli of Dokhu receiving the "Carpet Manufacturer of the Year" prize



9

## INTERVIEW ♦ THE PASSION OF CREATING

1  
Delft Supreme  
Collection  
Design : Three Birds  
100% handspun silk  
274 cm x 365 cm  
Hand knotted rug  
produced in Rajasthan

# JÜRGEN DAHLMANNNS

INTERVIEWED BY AHMET DİLER, PHOTOS MICHAEL TEWES



Jürgen Dahlmann by Castagnoli

*Your collections combine modern visual art languages with the ancient oriental tradition of carpets. How was this interesting combination born? What is its added value?*

Everything in this world is moving all the time. Sometimes there are amazing things but people have no time or interest in seeing them. As a collector of old traditional Tibetan carpets I, for sure, have the ability to see the beauty of the ancient oriental carpet, but many other people have not the time and they need somebody to build a bridge for them. I think this is how I understand my work. I make people see the beauty of this old tradition, the beauty of their pattern and the beauty of the handicraft. To reach my goal, I have to add modern elements or to talk in a modern way so people are able to understand and to see the beauty again and to add this product in our modern life.

*How do you develop the creative phase and how it is affected by manufacturing techniques with which the carpets are made?*

As an architect I am very well trained in combining visual ideas with the complexity of the production process and I am very grateful for this education because it helps a lot to be innovative with the hand knotted Persian and Tibetan rugs. During the first years, I spent half my time in the workshops in Nepal and India which helped me understand each single process of spinning the wool, dyeing the color, setting up the loom and to understand that, in the production process, a small group of people have to synchronize their daily life for 4-6 months to be able to create one single rug in its best. Knowing all the details in production helps me a lot to create nowadays my collections. It is like a language: first you have to learn the language for many years and then slowly you start speaking and if you are well trained, at the end your language can be like a poem. A poem to make people fall in love with the beauty of this amazing old tradition and our heritage of human culture.

*Your carpets often have shades and color gradients that require an especially virtuous work by the manufacturers. What problems arise in the transition from sketch to realization? And what enrichment?*

One of my major skills is to create movement in the pattern of a hand knotted rug. This is one of the most difficult challenges you can find in a hand knotted rug because in general the production process creates a very clear and stiff language of pattern. To achieve this “flow”, there are many different techniques you have to combine. It starts with the wool. You select a very rich wool which is not monochrome but has small colour variations in its structure. You follow up with this idea in the dyeing process. You make a traditional pot dyeing so the color has already a various graduation, it is called abrash. In the knotting process, you can mix color and material in one single knot and so on until the washing process. So you search for techniques that give a certain random effect. The individuality of each single rug makes it unique and a true one of a kind personality in our interior.





***You are an architect. How to interpret the relationship between the carpet, two-dimensional and three-dimensional space of the environments?***

The carpet is the only item in the interior that is able to create a room within a room without building walls, so for me a carpet is the most liberal form of architecture. The architectural dimension of a carpet is very high; with a carpet you can divide modern architecture into a walking area and a resting area. A carpet with a table creates a dining room, a carpet with a sofa creates a living room, simple as that, what more can you ask for? And as a carpet is textile, this resting area is very intimate. This is the beauty and the reason why as an architect I started to work with carpets.

***You studied political sciences and architecture. So, how did you end up designing rugs?***

As a young student of architecture, I travelled to Nepal for trekking, I think I was just 23 years old. After trekking around the Annapurna, an 8500 meter high mountain in the Himalayas, I purchased an old Tibetan rug 90 cm x 150 cm in the mountains. The price was very low, only 50 USD and only later in Europe, I found out that this checkerboard pattern had quite a value. Slowly I started reading more and more about rugs, went back to Nepal to visit the exile Tibetan camps and started a deeper relationship with some of the Tibetan families. Rugs became my passion and love. It took me around 10 years, the student became an architect and at the age of 33, I made the decision to transform my passion into my profession, a step in my life which I will never regret, for which I feel blessed every single day in my life since then.

***What have you brought that's new to traditional carpet weaving?***

In 2002 I founded my company Rug Star in Berlin, Germany. During the first seven years I only worked with the Tibetan weave which I am now producing with three different workshops in Kathmandu, Nepal. Over the last seven years I also started to work with the Persian weave which I produce in the North of India, in Rajasthan. Today we work with two workshops in the city of Jaipur and we've also started some activities in Agra.

I think the strong part of my work is the innovative aspect, as I am a very curious person. There are so many questions you can place, about the execution of color or pattern, about the use of material, the dyeing process and the washing process. I appreciate all that is established but at the same time my instinct is searching for other doors to be opened. There is only one component I always take above all other decisions and this is the issue of quality. I do not agree on any innovation if it means compromising any aspects of quality. Quality and curiosity, these are the two themes guiding me in my work and I think I will never stop doing so.

***You only produce handmade rugs. Seeing the latest technological developments in rug production, are you tempted to put them into use?***

I believe that every seven years a new cycle starts in your life and in your work. Rug Star is fourteen years old, the first seven years I innovated the Tibetan weave, the second seven years I innovated the Persian weave and this summer I entered a totally new field. I am in the middle of the process of setting up the Rug Star tuft collection, which we will exhibit



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1956 Collection  
Design : Pink  
30% Bikaner wool-70% silk  
250 cm x 300 cm  
Hand knotted rug  
produced in Rajasthan

3

3  
Folding Sky Supreme  
Collection  
Design : Black&White  
100% silk  
274 cm x 365 cm  
Hand knotted rug  
produced in Rajasthan

at Domotex 2017 for the first time. I am extremely excited about this next step, as it opens up the field of project business for hotels and offices. For private homes, I still think the hand knotted rug is what I would recommend, as you add something to your private home that has the ability to age and to become more beautiful with time. But for some public spaces and bigger projects, I am happy to bring my ideas into this type of work with tuft. Be curious and visit us at Domotex 2017 to see all the beauty we have been able to develop.

***How do you juggle creating and running a successful business?***

I am blessed, I really love my work, and so all challenges involved in setting up a successful business appear only half as painstaking as they really are. And besides, I have established an awesome team over the past fourteen years. We truly



4 >  
 Splash Lines Collection  
 Design : All Natural  
 35% wool, hemp&nettle  
 - 65% silk  
 250 cm x 300 cm  
 Hand knotted rug  
 produced in Nepal

5  
 Dragonman Collection  
 Design : Original  
 50% Tib. highlandwool  
 - 50% silk  
 274 cm x 365 cm  
 Hand knotted rug  
 produced in Nepal

6  
 Design process in  
 Rajasthan  
 Hand Writing  
 Collection  
 Design : I Love You

believe in what we do, so I think this is the key to understand the success Rug Star was able to achieve and hopefully there is still a very long journey in front of us.

***What are you upcoming projects and what trends do you foresee?***

At the moment I am opening a large number of Rug Star showrooms, Rug Star goes global at last. At the end of June in Vancouver, Canada, Beijing and Shanghai, China in July, Vienna, Austria in October and within a few years in Shenzhen, China, Toronto, Canada and Seattle, USA as well. This is a big step for me and my team. In terms of innovations, we set up the Rug Star tuft collection with a very wide range of designs and executions. We made the decision not to slowly glide into this new product range but to establish a full working range before January 2017, including product pictures, interior shoots, marketing tools, sample boxes and a distribution system. But as my heart will always beat for the hand knotted rug at same time, from my understanding it will always be the foundation of my work. I am presently working on the biggest collection in Tibetan and Persian weave I ever released at a show for presentation at Domotex 2017. In terms of trends, I have a lot to say, but this might go too far at this point in the interview.

***You are worldwide renowned designer and you have obtained many awards. What the key to your success? And finally, what advice would you give to young designers in general and more particularly concerning innovation and improvisation?***

I love people, I love the idea that single people, couples and families live with my work. I feel blessed with the idea that I am able to be part of their home, part of their daily life and I can achieve this truth my work. My work talks about the joy and love I can see people are able to give to each other. I think if you connect this with curiosity for the production process and a strong sense of quality, success is feedback to the positive energy you try to connect with. Ok, there is another secret for success, you need to work very very hard and never give up when a challenge hits you hard. ♦





# ERBIL TEZCAN, A TURKISH DESIGNER IN NEW YORK

INTERVIEWED BY AHMET DİLER, PHOTOS GARY FRANCO



Erbil Tezcan

***What is your professional background and the steps of your career?***

I have been in the rug business for 24 years. I started out as a stock clerk, handling rugs for a wholesale company in Philadelphia. While working there, one of their customers asked me to come to work for them at their retail company based out of the New Jersey/Metropolitan area. From there, I worked my way up to manager of the hand knotted rug department in the Manhattan store and eventually became the Hand Knotted Rug buyer for all locations. It was at this time I started designing rugs.

***When and how did you discover a passion for rugs? What difficulties did you experience when you undertook your work as an entrepreneur and rug designer?***

Coming from a background as a classical guitarist, I always had a love for the arts. My mother is a gifted needle worker and as I was growing up, I was always fascinated with her crafts. In addition, living in Turkey through my adolescence exposed me to the beauty which exists in the rug world.

***Generally speaking, how does your design and production process work?***

I consider myself a conduit for images I see around me which I transform into reality in the form of a design. A glimpse of life or a flash of light is a basis for envisioning a rug. I want my designs to be colorful, like our lives.

***In a few words, what can you tell us about your company Wool and Silk? Could you tell us about the features of the materials you use?***

As our company name suggests, we use wool and silk in all our carpets from Nepal. The wool and silk is blended using an exclusive formula I developed, which creates a luxurious look and feel. I also recently started a 100% silk production woven in India. I only use natural fibres in my designs keeping true to the traditions of carpet weaving.

***What are your sources of inspiration? Why did you choose Silk Road countries rugs as a base for your production? Did you bring anything new to traditional carpet weaving?***

I have always had a love for traditional designs, especially antique rugs. With my Afghanistan Collection, I have brought these timeless motifs back to life through careful integration of ancient dyeing and weaving techniques, coupled with an updated color palette.

***How do you combine creating and running a successful business?***

Hard work is the key to success in all aspects of life, especially in running a successful business. While my first love is designing, I really enjoy all facets of running my own business. I have an amazing business partner who manages the finances of the business so I may focus on the design end. We both enjoy interacting and servicing our wonderful client base. There are many different and unique key ingredients that contribute and define a business and my partner and I both understand the importance of nurturing our business.





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Rug *Summit*  
9'x12'

3

Rug *Soho multi*  
9'x12'

4

Rug *Harlem Sky*  
9'x12'

5

Rug *Snow*  
(close up)

***You are exhibiting at the famous Smithsonian Museum and you were chosen by Turquoise Mountain Foundation to run a project in Afghanistan. What can you tell us about these experiences?***

Working in Afghanistan with the local weavers has been life changing. I have come to a greater understanding for the talents and resiliency of the Afghani people. When I travel to Afghanistan, I live at the factory, among the workers and integrate myself into their way of life. I eat with them, sleep with them, and become part of their community. I am truly blessed to be involved with Turquoise Mountain and am honored to have my rugs at the Smithsonian Museum. When I was asked to design the history rug for the exhibit, I did so with great emotion wanting the rug to reflect the beauty and traditions of the wonderful Afghani society.

***Since 2012, you have obtained awards each year in the prestigious Domotex contest. What the key to your success? What advice would you give to young designers in general and especially to Turkish young designers in order to sustain the Anatolian rug tradition, one of the oldest in the world? What advice could you give concerning innovation?***

My advice to young designers would be to trust your instincts. Believe in your ideas and never give up. Never be afraid to be bold or to introduce new ideas. I have never worried what the current trends are. I design freely, without giving thought to what others are doing or how it will be received. For me, studying the old designs inspires me to create. Respect and learn from the history of rug weaving and design.

***What are your best-selling products and what are your personal favorites?***

Soho - Multi from our award winning Manhattan collection continues to be our best seller worldwide. My favorite designs vary from time to time. At this moment I am enamored by the designs I am creating from Afghanistan.

***Finally, what are your expectations for 2017?***

I am not one to set expectations. I always work hard and expect a lot from myself. I run my business based on my life philosophy, "Life is simple". ♦

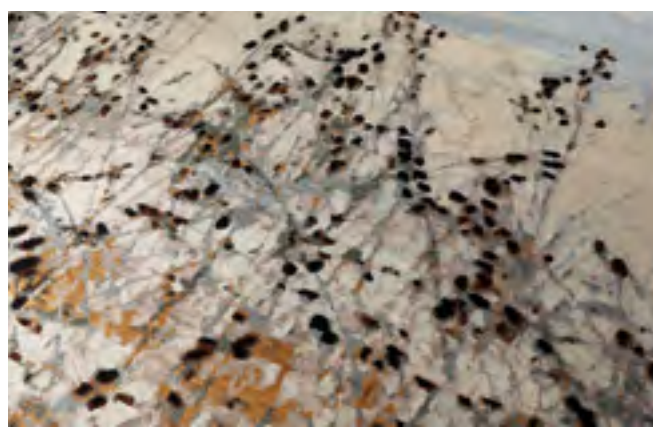
[www.woolandsilkrugs.com](http://www.woolandsilkrugs.com)



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1  
Afghan Turkmen  
carpet dealers from  
the carpet market in  
Andkhoy, a town in  
Northern Afghanistan

# THE AFGHAN TURKMEN CONNECTION

TEXT STEPHEN LANDRIGAN, PHOTOS STEPHEN LANDRIGAN & QAIS AKBAR OMAR

◆ Amid the narrow lanes of Istanbul's historic Covered Bazaar are dozens of shops operated by Afghan Turkmen. Their tiny premises are crammed with cultural artifacts from the ancient Turkic heartlands in Central Asia – jewelry, clothing and most especially carpets. Step inside, and you are more likely to be offered the green tea their families drink in Afghanistan than the apple tea favored by local Turkish shop keepers.

Yet few of the tourists who buy carpets from them there or in the surrounding neighborhoods are likely to know they are Afghans. In Sultanahmet, the Arasta Bazaar and along Divanyolu, dozens of Afghan carpet sellers have seamlessly woven their shops into Istanbul's mercantile fabric. Though the links between Afghan Turkmen and Turks are age-old, large numbers of Turkmen who have arrived from war-torn Afghanistan over the past thirty years have renewed the connection.

The Afghan Turkmen descend from the Oghuz Turks who migrated out of the Altai Mountains in the 7th century. Some pressed westward into Persia and Anatolia eventually peopling the Ottoman Empire. Others now identified as Afghan Turkmen circulated as nomads in the Amu Darya River region until European colonialists began drawing borders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That left the Turkmen divided between Afghanistan and what later became known as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Unlike other Turkic groups in Central Asia such as the Uzbeks and the Kirghiz, the Turkmen speak a dialect that is very close to modern Turkish.

“We can understand everything the Turks are saying,” notes Afghan Turkmen carpet dealer Alex Zahir. Born into a prominent family in Kunduz in Northeastern Afghanistan, he says that “Sometimes we use old words the people in Turkey might not immediately recognize. By the end of a week, though, we can adjust. Don't forget that we have a lot of Turkish soap operas in Afghanistan now. So we are hearing modern Turkish in a way that we did not when I was a kid.”

Youngsters are also being taught in Turkish-funded private schools that have proliferated across Afghanistan over the past 15 years. All classes are taught in Turkish. Even many non-Turkmen Afghans are sending their children to these schools owing to their high standard of education.

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the links became stronger. Airlifts in the early 1980s brought thousands of Afghan Turkmen to Turkey from the refugee camps in Pakistan to which they had fled. Many settled in Istanbul's Zeytinburnu neighborhood where they found work in the leather and textile factories while saving money to start their own businesses.

Some Turkmen remained in Pakistan and developed a vibrant carpet industry there. Initially they wove traditional patterns with deep red backgrounds. In the mid-1980's, though, an American carpet importer named Chris Walter visited Pakistan. Chris had worked in Turkey for several years, spoke Turkish and could talk with the Afghan Turkmen. He reintroduced them to the natural dyes that had been rediscovered by Turkey's DOBAG Project. Using a new range of natural colors, the Turkmen created

a style of carpet called the chob rang (meaning “vegetable dyed”) commonly known as chobi. For many years, the chobi dominated the international carpet trade. An Afghan Turkmen in Pakistan named Abdul Qadir Qandeel, widely known as Qandeel Bai/Bey, began marketing chobis through Pakistani wholesalers in Lahore to Europe and America. He soon became the largest carpet producer among the Afghans in Pakistan. Other Turkmen carpet producers followed his lead.

At the same time, some Turkmen opted to remain in Afghanistan to protect their businesses. Among them was Khal Mohammed, a well-established maker of traditional red carpets for which he had large standing orders from OCM, the European carpet marketing giant.

Khal Mohammed’s father was one of thousands of Turkmen who had sought safety in Northern Afghanistan after Joseph Stalin launched brutal repressions in Turkmenistan starting in 1932. Of the eight men in his immediate family, Khal Mohammed’s father was the only one to survive the Soviets.

At an early age, Khal Mohammed, who was born in 1940, was buying and selling carpets to support his family. When he started military service at age 19, he went to Kabul for the first time. In the carpet shops there he noticed that foreigners often bought old rugs, some badly worn. Soon he was collecting old carpets from the villages around his home in the north, and selling them in Kabul.

One day he thought, “If we sell all these old carpets, what will we have to sell in the future? So, I brought some of the old carpets to my grandmother. I had no idea how to make a carpet or how to dye wool. She did. As a young girl in Turkmenistan, of course she had made carpets. But not in Afghanistan. We had never had a loom in our house. She had not forgotten how to do it, though.” From her, he learned how to spin wool, dye it and weave it.

Before long, he was devising designs of his own by randomly combining motifs from old carpets. In fact, he was speeding up a process that had already begun when Turkmen from different tribes such as the Ersari, Tekke, Yomut and others started intermarrying in Afghanistan. Each had traditionally woven only its own patterns. But in Afghanistan, the patterns a woman had learned as a girl in her father’s tribe found their way into the carpets she wove as an adult in her husband’s.

Within a short time, Khal Mohammed had “discovered,” as he puts it, seventeen new designs. Now that number has reached close to 50.

Giving them all a unique look is the rich shade of red that he created by blending chemical dyes from Germany with the ground dried roots of the madder plant that Turkmen have been using for centuries to dye the dark wool of their sheep. His red has an enviable ability to look radiant in both natural and artificial light. The shade he devised is now known throughout the carpet world as Khal Mohammedi red.

Later he introduced machine-spun wool in Afghanistan. Some friends who had gone to Belgium told him that the makers of machine-woven carpets there discarded spools of spun wool that were nearly, but not completely, finished.

Khal Mohammed told them to send him a container of them. Soon he was bleaching the colors out of the spun wool and re-dyeing it his famous red. A very high quality carpet could be woven from what became known as beljeek wool.

When the Afghan Turkmen began to migrate to Turkey, they brought Khal Mohammedi carpets with them. The first ones came laid across their shoulders. Before long, though, the carpets were coming by the container and including a great many other styles as well.

In the early 1960s, a Turkmen carpet maker from Afghanistan’s Badghis province moved to Kabul where he set up a family carpet workshop. His name is Haji Mohammed Ewaz Badghisi. Kabul had long been a major market for carpets woven in villages across Afghanistan, but the Badghisi workshop marked the first time that carpets are known to have been woven commercially there. Badghisi specialized in weaving carpets in silk using multi-colored patterns blending Seljuk Turkish motifs with the floral patterns they spawned in Persia. Among his trainees were two young boys from Afghanistan’s Hazara minority community. Over time, they taught their relatives what Badghisi had shown them.

When the Afghan civil war in the early 1990s forced the Hazaras and their families to flee to refugee camps in Pakistan, weaving carpets became a way of survival for them. From Badghisi’s training, a whole new Hazara carpet industry was born. A generation later, they have become world leaders in carpet innovation and production, most notably Ariana Rugs, Amadi Carpets, Rahmati Carpets and Pacific Collection.

These Hazara carpet makers along with Afghan Turkmen came to supply an estimated 90% of the tourist carpet market in Turkey. In 2010, two groups of them separately set up showrooms at Istanbul Ataturk Airport Free Trade Zone (ISBI) attracting wholesalers especially from Europe. The showrooms were supplied by regular overland truck deliveries from Afghanistan.

Mahmut İbrahim Rahimoğlu, the Afghan Turkmen owner of Öz Şirin Kargo based in Zeytinburnu, stated that his trucks could deliver carpets from Afghanistan within about a week at a very modest cost to the Afghan carpet producers that was much cheaper than by air and much faster than by sea. The carpets his lorries brought from Afghanistan supplied the tourist carpet market all over Turkey that was then estimated at \$1 billion per year.

Now a new wave of Afghan Turkmen carpet producers is arriving in Turkey, this time from Pakistan where thousands have sheltered from the chaos in Afghanistan. Though many Afghan Turkmen have set up flourishing businesses there, Pakistan has never granted them legal





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Afghan Turkmen  
carpet dealers from  
the carpet market in  
Andkhoi, a town in  
Northern Afghanistan

4-5-7

Haji Qandel Bey Plant  
in Attock

6

Haji Rahman Qul in  
Pakistan

status. Consequently, their children and even some grandchildren have been born stateless and with uncertain futures.

The present Pakistani government is making it harder for Afghans of any background to remain. Afghans have to renew their visas every six months. Not knowing whether new visas will be granted, they have difficulties getting loans to start businesses. Turkmen who invest their own money in Pakistan can never be sure whether they will be able to recoup it. And without status, they cannot buy property.

“We no longer feel comfortable here,” says one of the many long-established Turkmen carpet sellers in Islamabad’s Super Market shopping center. He asked that his name not be used.

He mentioned Qandeel Bai, for instance, who had built a large carpet production facility in Attock. It had nearly 50 fire pits for dye pots, washing and finishing facilities, warehouses and even some cows to provide fresh yogurt to his several hundred workers. Qandeel Bai, however, was not allowed to own it and eventually lost it all to his Pakistani landlord.

Many of the Afghan Turkmen now coming to Turkey have relatives there. Some have been sending their daughters to Turkish universities. Others have been quietly relocating their businesses there, even before applying for immigration visas for their families. Most of those making the transition to Turkey bring with them years of professional experience, business acumen and savings.

“With the situation still so unsettled in Afghanistan, we cannot safely go home,” stated the Islamabad carpet seller. “We feel comfortable in Turkey. So that is where we are going.”

Like their nomadic ancestors, the Afghan Turkmen are now on the move. And one family at a time, their connection with Turkey gets stronger. ♦

#### Biography

Stephen Landrigan is a journalist with extensive knowledge of Afghan carpets. He has written for HALI and COVER magazines, as well as for RugNews.com. With Qais Akbar Omar, he has co-authored “A Night in the Emperor’s Garden” describing a Dari-language production of Shakespeare in Kabul in 2005.



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# THE REVIVAL OF SELJUK AND OTTOMAN RUGS IN ANATOLIA

INTERVIEW & PHOTOS BY AHMET DİLER

♦ Precise replicas of old Anatolian pile rugs are being woven in Çamlık, a small sleepy village close to Selçuk in the Southwestern Turkey. The driving force behind this endeavour is rug dealer Osman Can, owner of Can Carpets. He has created modern workshops where the work of the weavers and their social rights are respected, making it an exemplary social project. His work breathes life into the declining tradition of hand weaving in Turkey whilst teaching, at the same time, a profession to young women.

*In a few words, could you us the story of how Can Carpets was founded?*

In 1963, the German priest of the Virgin Mary Church in Selçuk became friends with my father, İsmet Can, who was a barber at the time. They exchanged language lessons teaching each other Turkish and German. Once he became more proficient in German, he converted his barber shop into a souvenir shop. Being one of the few who spoke a foreign language at the time opened up new options. In 1968 the souvenirs were dropped and his shop became a carpet shop. That's how Can Carpets was born.

*What difficulties did you face once you decided to take over your father's business?*

I was aware of the moral difficulty of taking over my father's business because my father was a respected businessman with a very good reputation. This meant that I had to keep up this reputation and further it even more. If I were to make mistakes, my father would hold me accountable. So I was always attentive, respectful, and sensitive about my work and about people. Right from the beginning I wanted to get into producing rugs but my father was against the idea, explaining how difficult it is and how risky it was financially. Due to his reaction I had to put it off my plans for a few years.

*Your shop is in Selçuk close to Ephesus, one of the world's most important archaeological sites, visited by thousands of tourists per year. Was it a major important contribution to your business?*

Obviously being in Selçuk close to Ephesus and the house of the Virgin Mary had a positive influence for our business

and lay the foundations of our work. The high capacity of accommodation in our town, thus the number of visitors, helped to realise my projects.

*Was there a tradition of weaving in Selçuk?*

Actually, I starting weaving in Selçuk. Some carpet shops had looms to demonstrate weaving but no-one was producing rugs with handspun wool, natural dyes and traditional methods. We are proud to be the unique company in Selçuk producing quality rugs.

*What difficulties did you encounter at first? Where did you find support and encouragement?*

I started producing my carpets in Sultanhanı and in Aksaray in 1995. Those first rugs sold very easily. It was only later that I realised that it wasn't that easy... At the beginning, I put together a team made up of the best carpet restorers. These professionals taught weaving techniques to about a dozen girls for a year. I was also lucky that my wife is a professional weaver. She suggested creating a workshop in the village of Çamlık, close to Selçuk. We tried not to neglect anything and to think of everything for this new workshop. Later on, I also opened workshops in Manisa, Güllübahçe and Aksaray. At the beginning, we learnt the hard way, for example I chose the wrong wool and the carpets were not of the quality we desired. But I never gave up and I decided to carry on.

*How did the idea of making replicas of Seljuk and Ottoman carpets come about?*

Foreign clients that visited our shop asked why we were not selling carpets like those on display in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts and in other prestigious museums worldwide. That's how the idea came about and little by little we started producing carpets inspired by those in the museums. In this manner, we have made old Turkish rugs known and loved.

*Can you explain in a few words the materials you use and your concept of production? Can you tell us about your dyeing techniques?*

We use the best wool available in Turkey. First we gather in





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2  
Reproduction of  
an Uşak Ottoman  
carpet

3  
Osman Can's shop  
in Selçuk

4  
Osman Can with wool  
died in his workshop

5  
Natural dyeing  
process with madder

6  
The workshop weavers

7  
One of the weavers

8  
Detail of an Uşak  
Ottoman carpet



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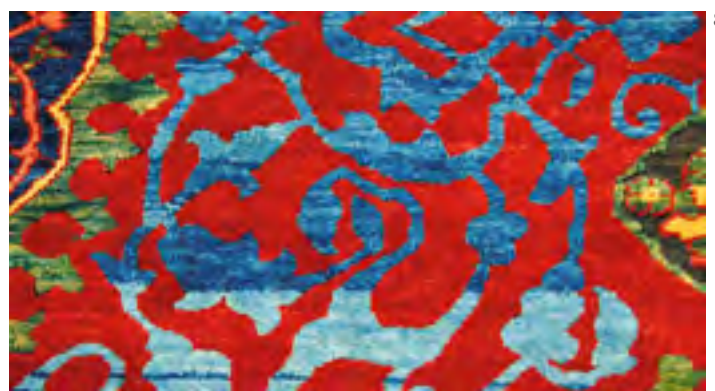
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May wool sheared from live animals that is then carded and handspun by village women. The wool we use contains no synthetics or acrylics threads, it is pure wool. The wool is treated with mordant before dyeing. This allows for the wool fibres to better absorb the dyes. We use madder red root, walnut shells, acorns, olive tree leaves, Reseda Luteola as well as indigo that we mix with other plants to obtain all the colours we need.

***What are your projects in the near future? Are you preparing a new collection? What do you think of products made by designers?***

Until now we have mostly produced carpets inspired by ancient Seljuk and Ottoman rugs. Recently, we have started creating a collection based on our young designers' creations. We have created a synthesis by combing historical models with modern ones. You'll be able to appreciate the results at Domotex 2017. We have a new slogan : "You dream it, we'll fulfil it".

***Do you follow trends in carpet production worldwide? How do consumers react to your carpets?***

We closely follow the trends and colours in the world of carpets. The design models that we see in magazines and at fairs guide us. Consumers react very favourably to our rugs. I think we appeal to a large public. These positive reactions encourage us to continue our carpet production.

***Which of your products please most and we'd be curious to know which your favourites are?***

What would be your answer if you were asked which of your children you preferred? You probably have a preference but you'd never say it because they are all precious and important. Yet those I feel closest to are the rugs from the Seljuk period.

***And to finish, what are your expectations for 2017?***

We hope that next year will be better and that the incertitude that has gained ground in our country and in the world will disappear so that people can live their life without fear. We motivate ourselves by believing that better days will come and that international trade will pick up. ♦

# THE EVOLUTION OF RUG RETAILING IN AMERICA

TEXT ROB LEAHY

## UNPACKING THE SUBJECT

From the beginning of civilization rugs have been a trade item. In fact, the reasons why people buy a rug has changed very little since the trading of goods began in prehistoric times. Over my 45 years in this business I have observed an almost primal way that consumers look at their rugs. It's as if the camp isn't set up until the rugs have been laid down and the furniture set around the center of the room. Comfortable, cozy even sumptuous are words that we use to describe the feeling that carpets can engender. From when first created, the softness and warmth of woolen weavings have helped create an environment that makes people happy.

After learning to domesticate sheep and goats and then to shear the hair from the animal, humans began to simulate the furry hides that they had been using to protect themselves from the elements. Items that replaced animal hides, whether for clothing or furnishings, would have immediately become important trade goods. In primitive non-monetized exchanges between our ancestors the basis for trade was the acquisition of things that you could not yet make yourself, but needed or wanted. The relative luxury of a pile surface commanded princely sums in trade. We know this because fragments of the earliest known pile rugs have been found in tombs of tribal rulers dating to 1500 BCE. No doubt, even then, there were tribes that specialized in textiles and rugs so we can date the first appearance rug sellers to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium BCE.

Although rugs and carpets, as a utility, have been a trade items for about 3500 years, they are at their core a decorative art. As races and tribes became more established, the need for warmth and comfort was replaced with a taste for ornament and color. By the time of Homer, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, we know that the Greeks prized their rugs as this verse from *The Odyssey* suggests. "On gracious thrones, layer upon layer were piled rugs of all kinds, the wonderful work of the busy mothers of the warriors." A century later, according to Arthur Upham Pope (*A Survey of Persian Art*, 1938), Plato was recognized as the owner of one of the most fabulous collections of rugs in all of Greece. And,

throughout their history, the Romans depicted rugs on funerary urns as an indication of the deceased's wealth.

After the classical period, for more than a thousand years, rugs were bought and sold across central Asia in centers considered for a long time to have been places of origin, but these were in fact markets where the trading caravans assembled their wares for sale to others. Nothing really changed until 1204 and the beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> Crusade. This was the fourth pursuit of Europeans trying to supplant Muslims from the Holy Land. Misdirected, it became little more than a mission of plunder for the, then powerful, merchants of Venice. However, it was a seminal event in rug history. Up to this point the rugs traded could only be bought from what was made along trade routes stretching from China to Constantinople. Afterwards, rugs would be made based on what the customers wanted. So, I date the birth of rug retailing, as we know it, to 1204.

The changes in the rug trade that unfolded after the 4<sup>th</sup> Crusade were dramatic and, for the time, no less challenging to the business of rug selling than the arrival of the Internet. Then, like now, there was collapsing of production in some places and a boom in others. There was a rush of contemporary styling and the development of new methods of rug making. Fortunes were lost and fortunes made. All over the task of sustaining the human instinct to satisfy the complex mix of yearning for softer surroundings and a desire to project elevated status through the possession of decorative arts.

## GETTING STARTED

While the Crusaders had initially intended to liberate Jerusalem by way of a naval invasion in Egypt the Doge of Venice, who was financing the 4<sup>th</sup> Crusade, succumbed to a golden opportunity to sack Constantinople. The Crusaders uprooted and took Constantinople's physical riches back to adorn churches, monasteries and castles all over western Europe. It was an entirely botched crusade leading the excommunication of its leaders, but it did position the Venetian merchant class to continue the flow of exotic products into Europe. At the dawn

of the Renaissance, they became intrepid travelers finding and duplicating art objects for sale to increasingly wealthy Europeans. Before and even after the Ottoman Empire took Constantinople, in 1453, most rugs sold to Europeans were marketed by Venetians and made in the villages of Eastern Anatolia and west of the Caspian Sea.

To the clergy, artists and aristocracy of Europe the possession of a rug from the Levant (which, at that time, meant the lands east of Venice), was a symbol of taste and refinement. Easy to transport and care for they were widely sold as table coverings and wall hangings as well as rugs. Paintings of the period from all across the continent bear witness to this. There are surviving sales receipts from a 1380's rug shop owned by an Armenian family in Bruges, Belgium which listed its location as "in the Burg across from the Church of Saint Donatien" (Fig. 1). In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries Bruges was northern Europe's principal entrepot for goods shipped by sea from Venice.

The next major events in rug history occurred in Persia under the reign of the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I (1586-1629). During the rule of Shah Abbas, sea trade became more efficient and safer. Increasingly wealthy Europeans were becoming more sophisticated and started favoring the more refined carpets from Persia. A patron of the arts, Shah Abbas created court workshops and raised the village craft of rug weaving to perhaps its highest artistic level in history. For the first time rugs were made in elaborate curvilinear patterns with detailed floral and animal motifs. One can only imagine how excited the European merchants and customers were to see the first Safavid rugs at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Outside of the Mediterranean, the Venetian influence over the trade in carpets ended and was taken over by Europe's new naval powers. By 1600 the Portuguese were buying and selling Persian carpets, then, briefly the Spanish took over the trade. Finally, after 1622, almost all shipments of Persia's rugs were made through the British East India Company.

However, with the passing of Shah Abbas, in 1629, Persia fell into disarray and the state interest in carpet making receded. However, with the selling power of English merchants, rugs continued to be important trade goods for the a few hundred years. Nearly co-incident with the Safavids in Persia, the Mughul kings of India began to make court carpets. Persian weavers were brought to Lahore and later wool and dyes through the East India Company. No doubt that the British had great influence in the beginnings of rug making in India. However, the tradition of village weaving was not in place in India, as it had been in Turkey and Persia, so carpets were not yet in sufficient quantity to become an export product.

The production and sales of rugs waxed and waned during the next hundred or so years from both demand and supply fluctuations. In 1722 Afghans invaded and sacked Persia destroying the court factory system of rug making. The production of carpets nearly stopped there and rug making reverted to the village craft system. Likewise, in Anatolia the Ottoman Empire was in slow decline and the rugs that made it to the bazaars of Istanbul were often tribal and no longer demanded in Europe. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the European powers were warring with each other and plunder supplanted trade as the way merchants supported themselves.

For those few families who could afford home furnishings in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe, the fashion moved away from the oriental look and towards the arts of the Rococo movement. In France rugs were hand knotted in the Savonnerie manufactory which remained under the strict control of the French court until 1768 and these rugs were among the greatest of diplomatic gifts. But, after 1768 there are records of private companies making the



1  
Bruges was a coastal town in Belgium that received goods from Venetian supply sources such as Constantinople. Note the canals, similar to Venice.

popular French rugs and tapestries of that period. Some early carpets imitated Persian rugs, but very soon the Savonnerie rugs became purely French designs, originally with a dark blue or brown field framing a medallion and densely massed flowers in bouquets of soft pastel colors. Beyond the royals and few wealthy families, however, demand was thin and died with the French Revolution in 1789. There were also court inspired productions in Spain and in England, the latter of which became the foundation for the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also, in the English town of Kidderminster, the first steam-powered loom rugs were made just after 1790 and proliferated throughout the next century.

#### MEANWHILE, IN AMERICA

In the colonial period and after independence, American homes were sparsely decorated and conditioned for utility. Up until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century decorative arts, such as Oriental carpets, would have been purchased on "The Grand Tour". For a range of reasons, wealthier American families would take trips to European capitals as often as they could afford. It may have been to study, for medical treatment or just to visit families that had stayed in the Old World. But, when they came home they carried with them a treasure trove of household goods that, even today, forms the supply base for antique furniture in America.

As it happened, events in Europe made Americans begin to appreciate rugs as more than utilitarian floor coverings. According to Kurt Erdman the concept of antique rugs began with two events, one was the Vienna exhibition of Oriental carpets in 1891 and the other, which he called more important, was the 1892 display and sale of the Ardebil Carpet in London (700 years of Oriental Carpets, 1966). The world's first ever exhibition of carpets, collected by Hapsburg Royalty, was a stunning display of centuries of craft and decorative art. But, these rugs went immediately back into private collections. The 1891 Vienna Exhibition was impressive, however, what separated the London event from the Vienna exhibition was that the spectacular Ardebil Carpet went on display to the public a year later at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). The art world was taken by the breathtaking beauty of the "The Holy Carpet of the Mosque of Ardebil" (Fig. 2). It was there for any well-heeled traveler to London to see firsthand and it was indeed a major attraction for Americans. A little known second rug, which had been partially sacrificed to repair the V&A's Ardebil carpet, was sought out and purchased by J. Paul Getty in 1931. It was later gifted to the Los Angeles Museum of Art.

Prior to its sale to the V&A, the Ardebil carpet was shown at the carpet firm of Vincent J. Robinson of Wigmore Street, London, who had received it for repairs in 1888. It was brought there by Ph. Zeigler & Company who had negotiated with the mosque authorities in Ardebil when they needed to raise money for

repairs. The Manchester based Anglo-Swiss firm had been active trading goods in Persia since 1883. Dealing only occasionally in carpets prior to the sensational impact of the Ardebil carpet, by 1900, Zeiglers was financing and shipping carpets employing 2500 looms from Sultanabad to Tabriz. Initially, the carpets were sold through London retailers such as Liberty & Company and Harvey Nichols, but soon a worldwide network was set up supplying department stores across the globe. Throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Zeiglers continued to create rugs designed to not only satisfy demand, but to create it. This period would be the birth of modern day rug retailing, for now the fashion component of having a rug in your home had eclipsed the utility.

#### THE ORIGINATORS

In December of 1907 Zeiglers got a major competitor as seven smaller companies joined to become the Oriental Carpets Manufacturing LTD (OCM). These companies had been active in Istanbul and set up headquarters in the port city of Smyrna (now Izmir). From the start, the OCM was a marketing oriented company headed by James Baker of G.P & J. Baker & Co in London. Baker's firm was one of the seven founding companies and he brought an extensive selling network throughout Europe and America (Fig. 3). The OCM became the first vertically integrated rug producer and was buying massive quantities of wool, spinning, dying and sending complete packages of designs and yarn all over Anatolia. They washed and finished their own rugs and shipped directly to customers from the port of Smyrna. The efficiencies they achieved allowed them absolute pricing control and the seven shareholders operated like a cartel. The early OCM rug designs were exact copies of the rugs shown in the famous 1891 Vienna exhibit of Hapsburg carpets. The collection of the OCM design masters is now owned by the Peykar family of Nourison, Inc.

By 1910 the OCM had spread its operations across Anatolia and needed more production ; they turned their attention to Persia. James Baker and his nephew A. Cecil Edwards ventured there, arriving first in Hamadan where they bought as many rugs as they could find. They went on to Kerman and found that one of their main competitors for the American market, New York's Fritz and La Rue & Co, was already well entrenched there. Baker and Edwards went on to Mashad and there found many rugs for sale. Returning from their first trip the pair convinced the stockholders of the OCM to move boldly in Persia with what they termed "systemized" weaving on a Turkish scale. In 1911 Cecil Edwards was back in Persia overseeing one of the most incredible expansions in business history. He organized buying branches in Hamadan and Mashad also opening in Malayer, Isphahan, Joshegan and Kashan by the end of that year. Meanwhile, James Baker was in New York where he purchased the Fritz and La Rue company, bringing both the Kerman production and its American customers into the expanding OCM network.

Over 1912 Cecil Edwards continued to buy up all the production he could find shipping rugs directly to London and New York. But, he also set up spinning and dying facilities and began sending out full production packages realizing the objective of duplicating the OCM's Turkish system of production. These rugs, though, needed to be shipped to Istanbul for a quicklime (calcium carbonate), wash that gave the new rugs an aged appearance. Using an organized approach and a growing reputation for dependability, Edwards was able to coax the deeply entrenched Tabrizi rug traders over to the OCM and also to buyout the operations of nearly all of their former competitors. Setting up production in the Arak district of Persia was Cecil Edward's most audacious move for Sultanabad, as it was known



2  
The Holy Carpet  
of the Mosque of  
Ardebil,  
V&A Museum

then, that had been Zeigler's stronghold since 1892. Edwards considered buying Zeigler's operations, but he shrewdly decided to wait them out. He realized that their weakness was that they were traders, not producers. Their primary business was selling of cotton print cloth to the Persians for which they needed to get payment back to England. Zeigler & Co. had employed a number of labyrinthine methods to get sales receipts back to England, trading payment for printed fabric into various commodities, eventually settling on carpets. Edwards realized the flaw of this still complex plan and he leveraged the OCM's ability to give immediate payment for the carpets they bought or produced. Prior to the OCM coming to Persia, Zeiglers had 2500 looms working for them. Within only a year the OCM had taken over 1000 of these looms and by 1913, on the eve of World War I, Zeigler wound up its operations. Cecil Edwards hired most of their good people.

The book "Three Camels to Smyrna", by Antony Wynn (2008) chronicles the life and times of A. Cecil Edwards and the Oriental Carpet Manufactures, LTD. It is the source for much of the foregoing information about the OCM. Another resource, which many consider the best book ever written on Persian carpets, is Cecil Edwards' book "The Persian Carpet" (1953). In both books, though, the authors give credit to the OCM that I feel should go to Zeigler & Co.

Homes in Persia were a substantially different layout and size than most European homes and even more so than American homes. As company buyers picked over the available rugs on the market they found a surplus of approximately 3'6 x 18' runners, 6'6 x 18' and 5'6 x 13' rugs that fit the typical Persian home. This layout allowed families to move the rugs easily and to go around pillars that supported the ceiling or roof. Also, if the family moved they could lay the ends on top of each other to fit the new room. However, these sizes were not marketable in Europe and America. It was major marketing innovation to arrange for the weaving of conventional western room sizes beginning with 8'x10', 9'x12' and larger to suit the mansion sizes of New York and Philadelphia. We see these sizes in Zeigler or Zeigler-inspired rugs beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which was before the OCM was formed.

Nevertheless, it amazes me what the OCM was able to accomplish in Persia and across the globe over 1910-1912. How did they do this in an age without airplanes and telephones,



let alone the internet? Cecil Edwards with a support from the amazing selling company created by James Baker in London and assisted by Fritz and La Rue in New York were able to boost output to astonishing levels and drive almost all of the competition in line under the OCM or out of business. It seems only two companies survived the OCM takeover in Persia, Gulbekian in London and K. S. Tanshandijian of New York. The latter firm was the developer of the American Sarouk and a success story in its own right. The hearty rug with a uniquely American design of detached floral bouquets might hold the sales record for units sold and still in use. Most rugs of the time were washed heavily before sale, but many of the American Sarouks were washed, then bleached out and repainted a different color and many were stripped again. Harsh treatment of wool hand knotted rugs to improve marketability is far from a new concept and will be discussed fully in a later section. The long run for the American Sarouk began in the 1920's and lasted till the 50's. Then, came the Kerman years. Kerman rugs were the trade's bread and butter from the end of the 1950's, the 60's and into the 1970's. A former OCM manager George Timoyanakis is credited for having developed the pastel Kerman designs that were imported principally through George B. Zaloom & Co of New York. The Kerman rugs looked absolutely vibrant after the chemical wash. The colors were very light; ivory, light blue, light red, salmon, etc. Like the American Sarouk before it, the look and feel of the Kerman rug did not appeal to Europeans and because of this the American importers virtually had the Persian market for these weaves to themselves. This meant that there was little or no competition from, at the time, the larger and more developed European market. Both the Sarouk and the Kerman, in spite of the heavy chemical washing, proved to be very enduring rugs. Attesting to this is that there are gigantic stocks of these rugs among New York's antique rug dealers, bought back cheaply as they fell from favor.

#### RISE OF THE DEPARTMENT STORE

The seeds of American rug retailing seem to have been planted in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Boston as an offshoot of the so-called dry good business. Dry goods are products such as textiles and related products and distinguished from groceries and hardware, etc. America's industrialization began with textiles in New England. Boston was the main port for export as well as the import of Europe's dry goods. The sales outlets for Boston's products were entrepreneurial store owners around the US who grew to become some of the nation's major 20<sup>th</sup> century department stores. The earliest were Arnold Constable & Co. (1825-1975), Jordan Marsh (1841-1996), Marshall Field (1852-2006), R.H. Macy (1858-), Strawbridge & Clothier (1868-2006), Woodward & Lothrop (1887-1995) and Famous Barr (1911-2006). There were other famous names such as Bloomingdales (1861-) and John Wanamaker (1896-1997) which grew into important department stores after having begun as clothing retailers. As they grew, department stores added categories and, by early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, each was the preferred rug seller in their city. In carpets, the OCM represented by James Baker's firm in London was the American store's primary source in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were a few ascendant rug sellers in the U.S. but Charles Fritz, owner of Fritz and La Rue, was strong in New York, but dominated Philadelphia. As mentioned earlier, the OCM took over Charles' company, Fritz and La Rue, in 1912. As the number of rug sellers in America expanded, there was one prominent rug retailer that set the standard for all others. W & J Sloane was formed in 1843 when Scottish brothers William and John Sloane opened a company in New York that is said to be the first to import Oriental rugs into the U. S. in 1852. The brothers expanded into furniture and other furnishings and soon became the home decorating choice of America's elite. The Oriental rug department was legendary and supplied carpets for many of America's grandest homes including the White House. The

company opened branches in San Francisco and Washington, DC. In 1891 W & J Sloane built and occupied a new building in New York City at the southeast corner of 19<sup>th</sup> and Broadway. It was directly across the street from the Arnold Constable & Co “Palace of Trade” which was built in 1869. Today, these two buildings house ABC Carpet and Home.

There were very few dedicated rug stores in the U.S. at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest known are Kebabian’s, started 1882 in New Haven, CT and Minasian’s 1897 in Chicago, IL. Many followed as new immigrants connected with extended family in Turkey, Armenia and Iran and began to bring rugs from their homelands. Company formations were most numerous as changes swept across the American economy. Three major waves of new rug retailers opened; the first just before World War I, another during the Depression and later after World War II. Reading the histories of numerous family rug businesses extant today, they seemed to have been rug stores first, evolving into rug cleaning as later generations entered the business. Coincident with the expansion of the largely Christian retailer community was a complement of Muslim and Jewish families who supported the trade as wholesalers. This delineation seems to have occurred because American consumers of the time preferred to do their shopping on Fridays and Saturdays.

As the U.S. population moved west and became more sophisticated the appetite for rugs and carpets grew. Machine made carpets came within reach for most Americans and by the 1950’s broadloom “wall to wall” installed carpet became a fashion statement. In 1928 the revolutionary Karastan spool Axminster rug was developed. Even though the still popular rugs were invented by a Marshall Field & Co. textile subsidiary, they were first shown for sale to the public at John Wanamaker in Philadelphia. Throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century up until the late 1960’s the department stores sold most of the country’s carpets and rugs.

Even though rugs were becoming a less exclusive home furnishings item, the demand for finer handmade rugs continued to grow. However, during and after World War I there were virtually no Turkish rugs on the market and little continuity of rugs from Persia. The market’s appetite had to be satisfied with handmade rugs from other sources. To solve this shortage of rugs, the department store merchants asked rug importers to develop new sources. The interior designers of the time, particular the rug savvy staff at W. & J. Sloane, helped create new “must have” rug designs. First to break through were the Art Deco Chinese rug styles of Walter Nichols. Nichols had gone to China as a wool buyer in 1920 and by 1924 had started production of rugs in Tientsin, China (now known as Tianjin). Demand for his Chinese rugs exploded so others followed, including Frank Michaelian who opened his own production. But, as soon as 1927, stores in America wanted simpler designs and Walter Nichol’s agent in New York, Col. Gunnar Pande, designed simpler rugs for Nichols, “rugs with no borders, no animals to step on and no mysterious Chinese symbols that could provoke arguments between the salesmen and the customers” (*In Search of Walter Nichols*, Elizabeth Bogen, 1996). The original Pande, Cameron rugs, sold extremely well up until the Japanese invaded China in 1937, when production stopped. Further, with the start of World War II sales and production of rugs nearly ceased all over the world.

#### FINISHING TOUCHES

There has been an internal argument in the rug business concerning washing since chemists were first asked to make a rug look silkier, softer, in other words, older. The densely woven Nichols Chinese rugs were the first chemically washed

which rug sellers advertised the severe washing as a benefit. In their promotional materials the process claimed to put a silky shine on the surface of the rug and made it soft and pliable. Walter Nichols openly promoted one of the rug trade’s best kept secrets ; wool rugs were chemically washed to fulfill the expectations of the consumer. From 1911, when Cecil Edwards ran out of older Persian rugs to buy, anything destined for the American consumer was heavily washed and sheared to look older. And, it remained a well-kept secret. Initially, the OCM washing was done in Istanbul, but eventually they moved the processing to London. Their rugs were washed in the company’s Old Kent Road facility, where no employees other than the washers were allowed into the building. The finished look of the rug was determined in the wash, but the OCM’s chemists learned to control the wash color with the dyes used in the carpets. In the 1970’s the OCM shipped a specially formulated red dye to Afghanistan to be used in the making of Fil Pa Afghan rugs. When brought to London and washed, the red dye would consistently turn gold making that decade’s popular “Golden Afghan” rugs.

Meanwhile, in New York, Rug Renovating had been chemical washing rugs for U.S. rug importers since opening in 1896. Rug Renovating perfected many wash processes and their claim to fame was that they could wash a rug with harsh chemicals, prevent the colors from running, and keep the ivory shades bright. While the ideal way for a rug to gain a warm antique patina may always be for it to age and oxidize naturally, there is always greater demand than supply of a fickle market’s rug “du jour”. We may call it “fashion”, but it is good marketing creating its own demand.

The founder of one of the most innovative American retail rug companies, Charles W. (Jake) Jacobson, railed against chemical treating of Oriental rugs. In fact, he devoted an entire chapter in his book *Oriental Rugs, A Complete Guide*, (1962), to the topic. “Since my first entry into the Oriental rug business in 1924, I have been the most ardent opponent of the chemical treatment...” However, Jacobson later said, writing in 1977, that a lime wash really adds something to the look of a new rug and does not harm the quality. Being one who had staked his reputation on disparaging the chemical wash, this was major turnabout. But, by then, he must have begun to realize that the fiber and construction used in hand knotted rugs was engineered by nature to take more abuse than it is dealt in the normal lifecycle of a decorative item. Jacobson had also begun to sell Nichol’s Chinese rugs and, in his book, raved about the luster washed “Chindia” rugs, “Chinese rugs from India”, that Pande, Cameron had begun selling in extremely large numbers. Charles Jacobson, Walter Nichols and Cecil Edwards would shudder to see the treatments and finishes that we find in the markets today. Likoo wash (sodium hypochlorite), zero pile and brightly colored overdyed rugs have given new Afghan Chobi rugs and old Turkish Ispartas unimaginable effects. As this is written, the most stylish rugs in the market are carpets of silk and wool treated with caustic soda, (sodium hydrate), that eats away the wool pile, but not the silk, leaving very defined etched rugs. Despite some garish looks, the strong chemicals, when properly neutralized, don’t do as much damage to the wool as many would have you believe. According to a number of large rug washing companies that were surveyed for this paper, it is the quality of the wool and the weaving that is more fundamental to the long term wear characteristics of a rug. To them, this seems true even with the aggressively washed rugs of today.

#### SMILE, YOU ARE ON PANDE CAMERON !

When World War II finally ended in 1945 it concluded an almost

30-year period of weak demand for rugs. The business tried to get back on its feet. China had become a Communist country, Persia was in political disarray and beginning to focus on oil and Turkey had levied a disastrous export tariff on carpets. Large quantities of rugs had backed up in London and New York, but post war demand cut through them in only a few years.

Yet another new source was needed. Thus began India's rise to prominence as the world's largest supplier of rugs.

In 1944 the OCM purchased E. Hill & Company, its longtime agent in Mirzapur, India. This gave Fritz and La Rue in New York a new source. E. Hill had continued to produce Persian designs throughout the war on credit. It was a risky gambit that paid off because the company was able to supply department stores with fresh merchandise. However, it kept Fritz and La Rue committed to older designs and colors as the rug world was about to shift under its feet.

After the loss of Chinese production in 1937 and during the second World War Col. Pande had become an established wholesaler of Persian rugs. As the supply of prewar rugs was depleted Pande, Cameron & Co. needed more rugs. In mid-1946 Pande was in India and while there he met with the owners of Obeetee, Pvt. LTD. It was a cordial meeting and he unveiled a plan that, he said, could revolutionize the rug trade worldwide. Afterwards, one of the owners, Wilfred Oakley, advised Pande that they had a contract to supply Michaelian & Kohlberg. But, he went on, if Pande waited six months the agreement would end and they would work with him.

It was a watershed meeting for both companies. Obeetee was a 1920 partnership of three British ex-pats, as they appear in the name, Wilfred Oakley, Frankham Bowden and James Taylor. Possibly because of this meeting Obeetee remains today the leading exporter of carpets from India.

Col. Pande did wait and came back to India in 1947. His novel idea was to produce programmed hand knotted rug collections available to order in a range of sizes. He'd already had discussions with many American department stores and came to the second meeting armed with designs, colors and, most importantly, orders. The designs were modified and softened Nichols-inspired Chinese patterns that became known as "Chindia" rugs. When the first rugs were received at Sloane's in New York they sold out instantly. They were probably presold, as it soon became the way of the rug business to sell programmed rugs against production. The catalog grew as the product line spread across the country to nearly every department store and to many rug specialty stores. The rugs, because of their fashionable color and design, became best sellers with Obeetee becoming sold out through the 1950's and 60's. Up until 1982, the Chindia and its sister collections were chemical washed at Rug Renovating in their plant in Long Island City, NY. Afterwards, the washing was done in India. These rugs changed attitudes about chemical or, as it was merchandised, luster washing.

Karastan had been selling a full line of machine made rugs since their formal introduction at the 1933-34 Chicago World's Fair. But, the Pande, Cameron standardization of hand knotted rugs in pattern, color and size across the whole line was indeed a bold move. Perhaps, just as innovative was the national advertising campaign that the company undertook. The ads sold the Chindia's beauty in full color in *The New Yorker* magazine. While Pande, Cameron was continuously oversold, other importers began to imitate their designs. Seeing the benefits of programming other importers began to aggressively sell the department stores as well as a wider range of outlets. A few of the new entrants were: Amiran, Avakian Brothers, Bashian Brothers, Couristan, Hayim & Co. M.E.R. Noonoo, Shalom and Trans Ocean. The 1970's and 80's saw a rapid proliferation of new

rug constructions and sourcing countries. Flat weaves, Wiltons, Axminsters and machine or hand tufted rugs became available, allowing even more outlets to sell rugs to Americans. It became standard practice for the importer to carry inventory to support their growing dealer network.

#### **NEW SELLERS ENTER THE MARKET**

By the end of the 1960's many department stores had begun to depend heavily upon the New York importers. Other forms of rug retailing began to overtake the stores. Only stores in the largest markets of New York, DC, Chicago and San Francisco continued to send buyers overseas to source their own rugs. Most stores let their selections deteriorate and their merchandising lost its freshness and excitement.

In hand made realm, the 1970's brought a new way to sell rugs. There had been a few leased rug departments in the stores; in fact, Jacobsen's Oriental Rugs was originally a leased department at Dey Brothers in Syracuse, NY. Credit for being the innovator in this selling strategy, however, goes to Ken Mink. Ken was the rug buyer at W & J Sloane in the mid-1950's and was one of those few department store rug buyers of the day who still traveled overseas. In his wanderings he found, brought back and sold many types of rugs that other stores soon began to carry, building businesses for the source countries and importers. Among these were bold Axminster Rya rugs from Denmark, woolly Flokati rugs of Greece and traditional flat woven Alpujarra from Spain. In 1973, when Ken Mink was the buyer of Woodward and Lothrop, in Washington, DC he arranged to buy the store's handmade rug department and founded Kenneth L. Mink & Sons. A year later at John Wanamaker in Philadelphia Ken leased the entire department, including machine made rugs and broadloom, and perfected the formula. After adding the other segments at Woodward and Lothrop, Ken and his three sons went on to roll up stores across the country. As the age of the department store came to a close, in the late 1980s and early 1990's, the Mink family came through the disaster with leased departments in 170 Macy's stores. To my knowledge Macy's and Bloomingdale's, are the only remaining old line department stores that still sell rugs (Bloomingdale's is a separate division of R.H. Macy and the rug department is leased to Marjan International Corp.)

As the department stores lost their step, a couple of trailblazers in the New York market set an example for carpet and rug specialty store retailing across the country. Einstein Moomjy was founded in 1955 in Bloomfield, NJ by four brothers, Ted and Ernst Einstein and Walter and Albert Moomjy. From the early 1970's, Einstein-Moomjy set the standard for taste and elegance in floor covering retailing. Through its history, the company utilized catchy newspaper and radio ads that provided a wry commentary on retail advertising in general. One of the best known headlines was "Moomsday is Coming", which announced the company's semi-annual sale events. Einstein-Moomjy's product mix covered a broad price range of handmade rugs, broadloom and hard surface floors. In the late 1990's the company moved its flagship business to a two-store campus in Paramus, NJ, where furniture and home accessories were added to the merchandise mix. Einstein Moomjy at one time operated six stores in New Jersey and Manhattan. The company closed its Manhattan store in 2010 and filed for bankruptcy in September, 2011.

Another pioneering rug company, New York's, ABC Carpet and Home was actually established in 1897. Today the company's main location, in two buildings at 19th and Broadway, is the largest carpet and rug store in the world (Fig. 4). Jerry Weinrib, who recently passed away, was the grandson of the founder. Jerry found himself in the right place at the right time in the 1980's



Photo : Ahmet Diler

when he began to expand the company's selection and selling space. As the department stores declined, specialty retail came into vogue for both apparel and home stores. Up to 1979 ABC had been a discount carpet outlet when Jerry Weinrib leapt into rugs, buying out Schumacher's 500 000 square foot inventory. From there, the company added more space and expanded into furniture and furnishings. The ensuing transformation of ABC Carpet into a chic home furnishings emporium is credited to Weinrib's daughter Paulette and her husband, Evan Cole. Paulette won a reputation as a trend spotter and anticipated the growing importance of home life to the aging post World War II baby boomers. Cole joined the company in 1982 as Chief Executive and, according to his Wikipedia page, oversaw growth of the company from a \$3 million business to \$170 million in 2004, when he left the company.

Over the past 20 years, there is no doubt that ABC Home has been the style leader in the American rug business. The company's buyers, under the visionary leadership of former OCM manager Graham Head, have traveled widely and found new items that fit the company's merchandising direction. Among them were the Isparta patchwork rugs from Turkey (Fig. 5), the Color Reform overdyed rugs from Pakistan as well as from old Persian stock stuck in importer inventories and the beautiful AquaSilk recycled sari silk rugs from Jaipur. Like influential buyers before them they developed product, created demand for it and built businesses for their own company, their suppliers as well as the many competitors who followed their lead. I recently spent some time with Mr. Head and must say that

his passion for product development hasn't diminished. He listed two or three new ideas that he has to keep the freshness and excitement alive at ABC Carpet and Home.

Not surprisingly, companies across the U.S. emulated these two company's bestselling products and their merchandising strategies. During the 70's and 80's new rug specialty stores opened ; a couple of good examples of stores that have stood the test of time are, The Rug Gallery in Cincinnati (1972), and Rugs as Art in Sarasota (1986). The Armenian, Turkish and Persian rug sellers, particularly those who had evolved into rug cleaning, prospered over that period too. Increasingly the American rug stores, including the few remaining department stores, came to depend almost completely on existing and new rug importers. The best of these picked up the mantle of product development and the traditional dealer network yielded control of the fashion direction to them. They charted new courses and helped facilitate the rapid growth of online sales. Among the new importer entrants in the 80's and 90's were Art Resources, Bokara, Feizy, Kalaty, Harounian, Momeni, Nourison, Safavieh and Samad. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century there was thinning out of the dealer network as a combination of factors converged. First, there were fewer children entering the successful family businesses and a consequent rash of old line companies going out of business. Next, a plentiful supply of rugs in the producing countries gave inertia to take the "Going out of Business" pricing model and use across the country. Exaggerated retails and deep discounts became the standard pricing model for rug dealers. Retailers seemed to lose sight of the actual rugs that they were



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selling and, with support of the importers who consigned rugs, began to run events against each other offering discounts up to 90% off. These sales did not enhance the reputation of the rug selling community and may have helped set the stage for the internet sellers of today.

Because of the crazed price competition in the retail community in the early 2000's, the importers initiated another remarkable proliferation of fibers used and construction methods. Along with this new wave of rug wholesaler activity the interior design community fell in love with Sisal, Seagrass and Jute rugs. These immensely popular natural fiber floorcoverings, in both rug and wall to wall formats, were inexpensive and performed poorly. Their only real benefit was that they allowed customers and interior designers who put rug purchases at the end of the project and to preserve their budget. At the outset of the trend the principal source was a Boston importer named Merida, but Design Materials, Fibreworks and host of other mass market suppliers soon took over the business.

#### **THE BEGINNINGS OF THE FUTURE**

In the late 1980's and continuing into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the market for the Tibetan weave carpets from Nepal exploded. Coincident with a marked fall off for the so-called "Tibetan rug" in Europe, particularly in Germany, a couple of companies seized the available production and built a new business for American retailers in modern design rugs. There had always been a cyclical resurgence of contemporary design in the rug markets. From the Nichols bold art deco rugs of the 1920's to the dramatic Rya

4

ABC Carpet and  
Home in New-York

5

Isparta  
patchwork rug from  
Turkey

rugs of the 1970's, it always come back traditional designs. With the high quality and, often times, tasteful design of the current Tibetan rugs, I feel that cycle has been broken and we will see continued strength in contemporary rugs. The importers and/or retailers most responsible for this major shift in decorative taste are Tufenkian, Tamarian, The Rug Company, Warp and Weft, Lapchi and, most recently, Wool and Silk (Fig. 6).

The sourcing base of countries producing handmade rugs began to condense in the late 1990's as Iran was put back under a trade embargo. Turkey became an industrialized country, the country's workers no longer willing to participate in a hand weaving business and the government of China utilized its ability to central-plan itself out of hand made production and into machine made goods. India and Nepal were the greatest beneficiaries.

However, over the past 20 years, the tandem of Pakistan and Afghanistan have provided importers with an ever evolving supply of stylish and dependable rugs. The relationship between the often adversarial countries is based upon a history of mass migrations with Afghans fleeing oppression in their own country. Millions of them went to Pakistan in 1979 after Russia invaded



Photo : Gary Franco

6  
Wool and Silk  
Rug *Abbey Road Sky*  
9'x12'

and again in the late 1990's, fleeing the Taliban. While living in refugee camps, Afghan companies who came to Pakistan taught skilled migrant Afghan weavers new ways to make rugs and new washing techniques thus creating a whole new industry Pakistani businesses also benefited from. First, there were the still popular Afghan Kazak rugs, then the wood colored Chobrang rugs which we called Peshawar rugs in America. The Afghan weavers, now mostly back in Afghanistan, have continued to weave rugs as contractors for Pakistani exporters. Both have proven very flexible and seem to have adapted to new designs and the use of new fibers in their rug production.

The hallmark of Af-Pak rugs, though, is the development and use of creative new chemical washes. In part because of the unique finishing techniques, it is not easy to control production between two countries, this union has never been able to successfully produce programmed rugs. Yet, as one of a kind rugs, over the past 20 years, most of the new trends and style directions in rugs have come from Pakistan's finishing houses and the Afghan weavers. Even with most of Afghanistan's rug weaving working its way through Pakistan to the markets, three important rug makers have successfully developed all-Afghan productions. They are Amadi Carpets, Ariana and Pacific Collection (Fig. 7 & 8).

In the context of sourcing unique products from difficult parts of the globe, I really need to mention Zollanvari. The fourth generation Persian company is based in Shiraz, Iran and Zurich. The company is an innovative and dedicated supplier to retailers. In the late 1980's the real breakthrough for the company was to make the then popular full pile Gabbeh in room sizes. Later, through use of contemporary design and colors, the company's rugs became a worldwide success story. But, in 1995 sanctions were imposed on Iran resulting in a 2006 embargo that halted

Zollanvari shipments to the U.S. Ever resourceful, the company re-focused and developed a new product, from India, making the recycled Sari-Silk rugs available to stores across America. With the lifting of the embargo on Iran's rugs in 2016 Zollanvari is again producing very saleable Gabbeh-inspired rugs from Iran. We have seen rugs change from a utility item to a fashion statement and many exotic and expensive rugs have begun to sell in great numbers. Rug retailers are being asked to justify the price that they are asking for the ultra-contemporary Tibetan rugs, the recycled Sari silk rugs and the vintage looking rugs from Pakistan that we are selling. When considering the value of rugs made today we need to put them in context with the price of antique rugs. This is appropriate because the antique rugs we prize today are really co-incidences of decorative taste. In this exercise we must realize any rug created 100 years ago was designed to satisfy an individual customer's contemporary taste of that day. Who is to say new rugs, using age old methods and materials and designed for today's customers, will not be valuable 100 years in the future? Likewise, a century ago rug makers had no idea that the designs and colors, meant for their current customers, would become the antique rugs we value so dearly now.

At the other end of the price spectrum, in the 1980's many importers, Amiran and Trans Ocean in particular, adopted hand tufted rugs from sources in China. In the mid 1990's after the Nourison 2000 also made in China, was introduced, other importers jumped into tufted rugs from India. Tufted rugs are a remarkable value and allowed consumers to get more fashion for their "rug dollar". After 2000, flat woven durries and hand loomed rugs also became popular. These three constructions created an opportunity for a customer to be able to afford to change their home design more often than ever before. Rugs became disposable. While a threatening marketing development, it is not an uncommon trend as in the 21<sup>st</sup> century many products became less expensive to replace than repair. Take televisions, for instance, when was the last time anyone used a TV repair shop? We will see fewer consumers cleaning rugs in coming years and the rug cleaners will have to adjust.

There was also the development of a whole range of products with silk look-alike viscose fibers. Many names for the cellulosic fiber have been used resulting in market confusion that continues today. Sales forces at retailers were initially not well informed, but the rug cleaners seem to be helping the customer understand the relative merits of these fibers. In our showroom, we are seeing customers with a better understanding of the benefits and limitations of all or part viscose rugs.

Another fiber and construction development that is still sweeping through the markets is advanced poly fibers using face-to-face Wilton weaving machinery. These developments are taking place mainly in Egypt and Turkey (Fig. 9). Polypropylene fiber has always been solution dyed and Polyester is disperse dyed. This means that the color is in the fiber, not surface dyed as with wool and other fibers used in the rug business. This typically means that the two fibers are much more easily cleaned. The innovation that allowed the resurgence of the Wilton construction in recent years is that these fibers are now produced with better loft and resistance to becoming matted and crushed in traffic lanes. Also, they can now be made in finer yarn sizes that have a very wool-like feel. A few companies with very adept designers have harnessed the synthetic fiber innovations and created spectacular new rugs.

New sources entering the importer community as the 21<sup>st</sup> century began, all who have offer programmed lines, include Amer, Chandra, Jaipur Living, Kaleen, KAS, Loloi, LR Resources, Rizzy and Surya. A common thread among these companies is that all are feature Indian production. Most of these new

7  
Amadi Carpets' rug production in Afghanistan overseen by Zabi Amadi who is responsible for the company's creative production, Rug washing.

8  
The Sakhi Women's Weaving Center, solely run by women.



7



companies were onetime suppliers to the last wave of new rug importers or sold rugs directly to retailers. Each has added vitality to the rug trade and, through their promotion, has helped expand the business into new distribution channels. Many of these companies are major participants in the burgeoning online business. They approached the business differently. Of particular note is Surya where management realized in 2004 that they would not be successful following the same marketing plan as their competitors. The company famously spent millions of dollars on their showroom at High Point targeting furniture retailers. After ten years of dedication to the plan, Surya is dominant in the segment. Furthermore, they have been able to expand into a selection of coordinated products, becoming a more important source to furniture stores. Their momentum in furniture has allowed them to become a nearly dominant supplier to serious interior designers who have begun to buy directly from rug wholesalers. The most important aspect Surya's marketing plan, for them as well as the market in general, is that they created excitement and real growth in the furniture and interior design market for rugs.

#### ENTER THE INTERNET

The first few rugs were sold online in the late 1990's by digital pioneers during the dot.com boom. eBay was the first major marketplace for rugs and an incubator for many online sellers. By 2005 more committed companies began operating in this new digital wonderland. Rugs Direct, Rugs USA and Rug Studio led the way with more user friendly sites and free shipping. Early on, established retailers considered internet sales a curious sideshow. Some dipped their toes in the water as Overstock.com became the pioneer in multi-line offerings. Prices were low and rug importers and producers had trouble with their conventional distribution. They awkwardly put minimum advertised pricelists (MAP) into effect, but were never really able to enforce them. Both the sellers and the consumers were learning how to use the internet and confusion was rampant.

Rug dealers originally saw a lot of "showrooming" as customers came into the shops to see the brand, style and color of rug that they had seen online. However, improved websites and offers of free freight and even free returns have all but eliminated the practice. These days, the websites compete with each other and the rug importers have had to aggressively enforce their MAP programs between their online customers. In contrast to the early years, they have real clout now because very few online sellers stock goods in their own warehouses. The effective online participants depend heavily on supplier inventory, customer service and advertising programs.

Originally considered incremental sales to a company's main business, online costs were not allocated properly. Whereas a conventional retail store needs something over 50% gross margin to cover fixed and variable expenses, online retailers price their products at 25% gross margin. However, over the past few years online sellers have begun to realize that, while they have a very competitive fixed costs relative to in-store retailers, their variable expenses are much higher than "bricks and mortar" locations. As online companies have grown, though, they have found that they have the same or higher general and administrative costs (G&A) than "bricks and mortar" merchants. The cost of website development and maintenance has skyrocketed since that advent of the internet. New functionality and an enhanced relationship with the customer are fundamental to success online and the costs are incredible. One multi-line online seller is said to be developing a 3D experience where you can move furniture and rugs in and out of a photo of your room that you have taken with your phone. The bigger online companies have even begun

Photo : Mahmut Baran



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American merchants  
meeting Turkish companies  
in Istanbul

using local market TV advertising to direct customers to their website. Considering this arms race in the digital community, local rugs shop using tried and true promotional methods can be competitive again.

To put this in perspective, the key competitive arena in marketing websites is to project a local presence. One major online seller has said, "We want to be as fast as a trip to the store". Getting as close as they can to this goal has been the strategy of the three major web sellers of rugs : Wayfair, Amazon and Overstock.com.

#### SO, HOW BIG IS THE RUG MARKET ?

And, what percent is done online ? There are answers to these questions, but first you must define the market. The reader may note the first use of the term "area rug", but that description is now appropriate. For these purposes, the market definition is the following : Area rugs are floorcoverings that are used for decorative purposes. Area rugs are used in home or in commercial settings. Bath rugs or collected rugs are not considered area rugs. Carpet remnants are not area rugs, but carpet purchased for area rugs and finished with serged or bound edges are included. This definition is based on the customer's intended for use for the purchase and can be distilled down to "decoration versus utility".

The retail value of the 2016 US Area Rug market is \$2.71 billion. This number is built by defining the segments and estimating the volume in each. They are described below.

**Majors, In store.** This group of sellers are high visibility stores in major markets that promote rugs as a primary or major product category. Includes Restoration Hardware, ABC Carpet and Home, Home Goods, Pottery Barn (Williams Sonoma) and Stark Carpet. Some have very high online components ; Williams Sonoma reports that 50% of sales are online, however we can be sure it is a lot more sauces and dishes than rugs. Restoration does not report online sales ; in fact, they carefully guard this information. But, speculation in the rug business puts it at about 15% of sales.

**Multi-line Online.** Online sellers that carry a range of home products and that establish a relationship with the customer. The big three are Wayfair, Amazon and Overstock.com. These companies are increasingly focused on creating an experience that is as fast as a trip to the store. This sector also includes Macy's online, Bloomingdales online and Safavieh's online

business.

**Furniture Stores.** The vendors feel that this is the fastest growing in store segment as furniture stores have finally adopted rugs as a viable retail category. Nebraska Furniture Mart and its sister companies, Ethan Allen, Gabberts, Arhaus, Mathis Brothers, Bon Ton. Importer stocks are successfully supporting this segment and have allowed stores like Rooms to Go and La-z-boy Stores to move into rugs.

**Big Box.** This segment includes Home Depot, Lowe's, Costco, Sam's, Target, Walmart and IKEA. Large national sellers with stores in every city and many in large cities. Most business is done in store, but all have active website strategies.

**Rug Specialty.** Independent one or two location stores with hundreds like them across the country. They carry higher end carpets, cater to the interior design trade and may also carry broadloom carpet. Most have very limited online components to their business. Included in this segment are carpet specialty stores, where there is some business done in area rugs (as defined above) but, few carpet stores will support the inventory necessary to do much volume.

**Closeout Retail.** Deep discount stores that buy large quantities from importers as well as direct from overseas suppliers. The Dump, Greenfront, Beall's Outlets, Big Lots, Ollie's Bargain Stores.

**Interior Designers.** With many product categories catering to designers, particularly the fabric industry, designer have become more organized and now buy direct, dramatically enhancing their gross margin. Designers tend to buy custom rugs at the higher end, but not necessarily hand knotted.

**Department Stores.** Few are left that still sell area rugs. Macy's/ Bloomingdales, Kohl's, J.C. Penney. This segment can capture the family relationship that seems to be the winning online strategy. Consequently, the department stores are promoting aggressively via the internet.

**Rug Cleaners.** Across the country there are hundreds of rug laundries that also sell rugs. Usually selling better rugs that are more likely to be easier to clean. Except for some very specialized high end retailers, the rug cleaners tend to be sellers of antique rugs. This tends to increase their dollar sales on more limited units. They have little or no internet sales.

**Lifestyle Retailers.** Across the country stores like Pier 1, World Market, At Home, Bed Bath and Beyond have begun to sell rugs. There are also local Boutique merchants in every major city. They will sell area rugs that are less expensive than the average and usually in smaller sizes up to only an 8x10.

**Rug-only Online.** These are companies that sell only rugs. Online pioneers like Rugs Direct, Rugs USA, eSaleRugs, Rug Studio. This sector is increasingly disadvantaged compared to multi-line segment online.

**Majors, Online.** This segment is dominated by Restoration Hardware along with Williams Sonoma's divisions Pottery Barn and West Elm.

**Catalog-to-online.** Sellers who actually mail catalogs to customers as their only distribution method. Companies like Home Decorators (Home Depot), Ballard's and Frontgate. This is less of a channel today and more of a selling tactic ; almost all sales are completed over the internet.

#### **BUT, HOW MUCH IS SOLD ONLINE ?**

This was actually the original question I set out to answer, but needed to quantify the whole market to determine the percent that was being sold online. Adding up all the segments estimates above, I calculated the entire retail market at \$2.71 billion. From the same estimates, internet sales in all segments was \$679 million making the online share of market 25,1%.

The survivors in the higher-end, full service rug retail segment may be a unique lot, with a necessary role regardless of what online technology come over the horizon. Are they really different, though ? Were the last video, music, book or camera retailers different ? On the cusp of their extinction, I imagine that they thought that they were. Perhaps, rug retailers can be more like florists ? Flower shops were also a mainstay of the local retail scene, but most have lost out to 1-800-FLOWERS.com. However, every town still has one remaining flower shop for the few remaining customers who have to see and smell the roses. What makes that one florist viable ? Even more than service, dependability makes the difference. ♦



ΤΑΥΤΑ

1  
Angel bringing food to  
the Virgin Mary, who  
has been taken up into  
the holy of holies.  
Chora Museum,  
Istanbul

2  
The goddess Cybele  
and lions, in a mihrab  
carved into Stone.  
6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.,  
Aslankaya, Afyon  
Prof. Dr. Taciser  
Tüfekçi Sivas (İtkib)

# THE MIHRAB

TEXT HÜSEYİN ALANTAR

♦ A universal architectural element, the mihrab is neither to or the creation of any one culture. As its shape is reminiscent of a cave, there are researches who point to a religious relationship between the mihrab and caves. The archaeological evidence is that these natural openings in the rock have been considered holy places since prehistory. For humans of the Palaeolithic period, caves served as places to live, temples in which to perform prayer and other rituals, as well as sanctified rock cavities used as tombs. Thus it is claimed by some that caves were among the first examples of mihrabs.

It is clear that as an architectural element, the first examples of mihrabs appeared in the Neolithic age. In one of the oldest cities of Neolithic Anatolia, we find the Nevalı Chori temple with one of the first mihrabs of history, containing a “cult sculpture”. This is located in a house temple in Çatalhöyük near Konya. In the following period, around 2 200 B.C., King Gudea of the city Lagash built a new temple, and into its mihrab, he places statues of the chief god and of his wife.

The ascribing of religious significance to mountains, turning them into temples, and identifying of gods with mountains, are practices rooted deep in history. We find one of the first examples of a monolith perceived as the “home of god” in the Neolithic period. Not only mountains but rocks as well may be ascribed sacredness and serve as the home of a god.

From the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C on, the Hurris, a people of Eastern Anatolia and Northern Mesopotamia who held mountains and rocks sacred, began to have considerable influence on the Hittites, and following them, the Urartians. There is convincing evidence that both of these people considered the mountains the homes of the Gods. We then witness this belief adopted by several Anatolian



and Middle Eastern peoples such as the Phrygians. Beginning with the Hurris and continuing up until the Byzantine period, countless temple doors were carved into mountains and steep cliffs over a huge area of Anatolia. Considered to be temple entrances, the mihrab-shaped cavities are referred to as “door” today as they were of old. Generally in the appearance of temple doors with steps, rectangular and surrounded by three frames, they appear to be copies of the facades of religious structures. A



3  
Kayseri carpet,  
Hüseyin Alantar  
Collection



4  
Silk carpet with three  
mihrab design,  
Hüseyin Alantar  
Collection



5  
Mihrab composed of  
the branches of the  
Tuba tree,  
Hüseyin Alantar  
Collection

3

4

5

cuneiform inscription from the Urartu period (8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) clearly states the purpose of these empty mihrabs. “Ispuini and his son Menua made this door for the god Haldi”. These empty mihrabs, containing no image and known as the door of the god Haldi, were believed to open straight into the house of that God. In a Hittite example (Sipylos-Manisa Mountain) dating to 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C., and in some of the reliefs in the Phrygian region, the mother goddess is depicted as if standing in a doorway (152-68). Countless similar examples make it clear that these mihrab-shaped doors carved into mountainsides had a religious function. By now, the mihrab had taken on the quality of a place of divine epiphany. Despite the beliefs, this fundamental significance has been maintained down through the ages, from the Neolithic age to the present day.

#### THE MIHRAB IN ISLAM

The mihrab is an architectural element in the form of cell or a hollow, added to mosques and tombs in order to indicate the direction of the Kaaba. The earliest mosques had no mihrab ; in the earliest years of Islam, the direction of prayer was shown by a colourful rock or a line on the wall. In the era of the Abbassid caliph el-Walid, a mihrab was built in the Muslims’ first mosque, the Masjid-i Nebevi. Almost a century after the flight to Mecca, the first mihrab appeared in the Islamic world. It was also around this time that the first mimber (pulpit) and minaret came into use in religious architecture. It was not long before the mihrab became the most sanctified and honoured place in the mosque.

According to Arabic lexicographers, the word “mihrab” carries multiple related meanings including the “place of honor”, “place toward which prostration is performed” and “raised place”. In the Qur’an, it gains a more religious sense, used to indicate the place where Zechariah worshipped (Ali Imran 3:39) and the holy section of the temple in which Mary lived. According to Christian belief, the young Mary withdrew into the most important part of the Temple of Jerusalem, known as the “Holy of Holies,” and lived there for a time. In this sense the universal meaning of the word “mihrab” is the place where God appears. This sense is borne out by another verse in the Qur’an (Nur 24:35). Thus in Islam as well, the word has remained true to its old meaning. ♦



6

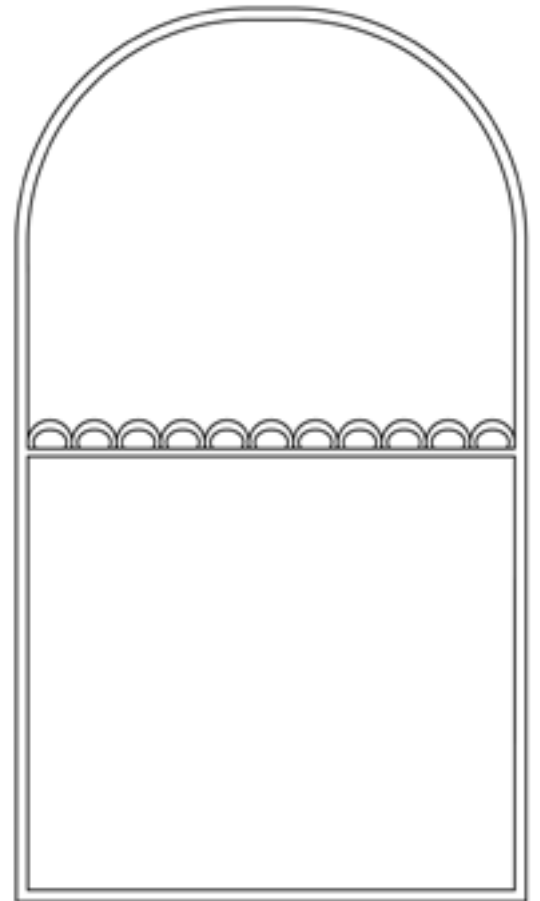
6  
 “Door of God Haldi,”  
 carved into Stone in a  
 mihrab shape,  
 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.,  
 Van  
 Prof. Dr. A.  
 Çilingiroğlu (İtkib)

7  
 Phrygian Mother  
 Goddess Cybele in a  
 mihrab,  
 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.,  
 Ankara (2-199)  
 (E. Akurgal Anadolu  
 Uygarlıkları, 1995, P.  
 199)

8  
 A mihrab  
 symbolizing the unity  
 of heaven and earth,  
 Hüseyin Alantar  
 Collection



7



8



# WEAVING WORKSHOPS FOR THE HANDICAPPED

TEXT NİHAT YILDIZ, PHOTOS AHMET DİLER

♦ This project is one of social responsibility. The aim is to prove that the real handicap is in our minds. It proves to us how much a physically or mentally handicapped person can be creative and productive.

İHİB works actively to increase the influence and the knowledge of the carpet sector. One of its most important activities is the project of teaching weaving and carpet restoration in schools for the disabled.

The aim of our association's initiative was to organise lessons in private schools and vocational centres so that the lightly disabled could acquire the art of weaving, with the aspiration for them to make a living in the future. This training in workshops would help prepare them for life by acquiring a sense of responsibility and becoming productive.

The materials and tools needed for this project were provided by İHİB under the presidency of Uğur Uysal. The board members Nihat Yıldız, Hasan Altuntaş, Haşim Güreli, Bülent Metin as well as officials from the Secretary General of İTKİB visited schools and designated two of them to organise for young students as of 10<sup>th</sup> grade, first workshops and then other lessons.

For the pursuit and durability of the project, Şükrü Burhanlı, a weaving instructor of carpets and kilims, was named by İHİB's board. He trained five teachers at the ERAM Fatih Vocational School and three teachers at the Yeşilköy Vocational School, eight teachers in all were trained in kilim weaving for four months. This training made it possible to produce later on several kilims with the students.

The considerable efforts provided more particularly by the school director of ERAM Fatih Vocational School, Muhlis Ekinci and the weaving teacher Erdal Yurtsever have allowed to achieve a workshop whose capacities in wool dyeing, designs and sizes correspond to what is needed in the sector. İHİB is to expand this workshop to ten looms so that members of the sector can place orders by providing the materials, the designs and sizes they wish. The disabled weavers will receive payment and thus subsidize their needs.

We foresee allowing students that graduate to take a loom home, if they wish, and by using the skills they have learnt, continue to produce kilims. In this fashion they can contribute to the family budget, have a job and become integrated into society.

During my many visits at these schools, I often noticed former students of the school hang around idly in the playground as they had nowhere else to go. They couldn't fit into society and couldn't stay home all day long with the families neither. They were excluded. We must realise that they are not a burden but full members of society. We must do all we can to win them back so that they become useful to themselves and useful members of the community. İHİB has taught them weaving and we have observed their great capacity of learning and their lovely creations. And you...? ♦



1

1  
Eram Fatih Vocational  
School's logo



2

2  
Erdal Yurtsever, the  
weaving instructor of  
the school showing  
their projects



3

3  
Nihat Yıldız, the  
director Muhlis Ekinci  
and the weaving  
instructor Erdal  
Yurtsever talking about  
the upcoming projects



4

4  
Muhlis Ekinci, the  
school director





İHİB'S 10<sup>TH</sup> CARPET DESIGN CONTEST  
FARUK AÇIKGÖZ, *THE MELTING ICE CAPS*  
3<sup>RD</sup> PRIZE AWARD

İHİB'S 10<sup>TH</sup> CARPET DESIGN CONTEST

SENEM KULA, *CYCLE*

2<sup>ND</sup> PRIZE AWARD



# Istanbul Istanbul Carpet Carpet Week Week

01 - 04  
October  
2017

- > Istanbul International Carpet Conference (IICC) with international and local speakers
- > B2B meetings with Turkish Rug Companies
- > 11<sup>th</sup> National Carpet Design Contest awards ceremony



**ISTANBUL CARPET EXPORTERS' ASSOCIATION**

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