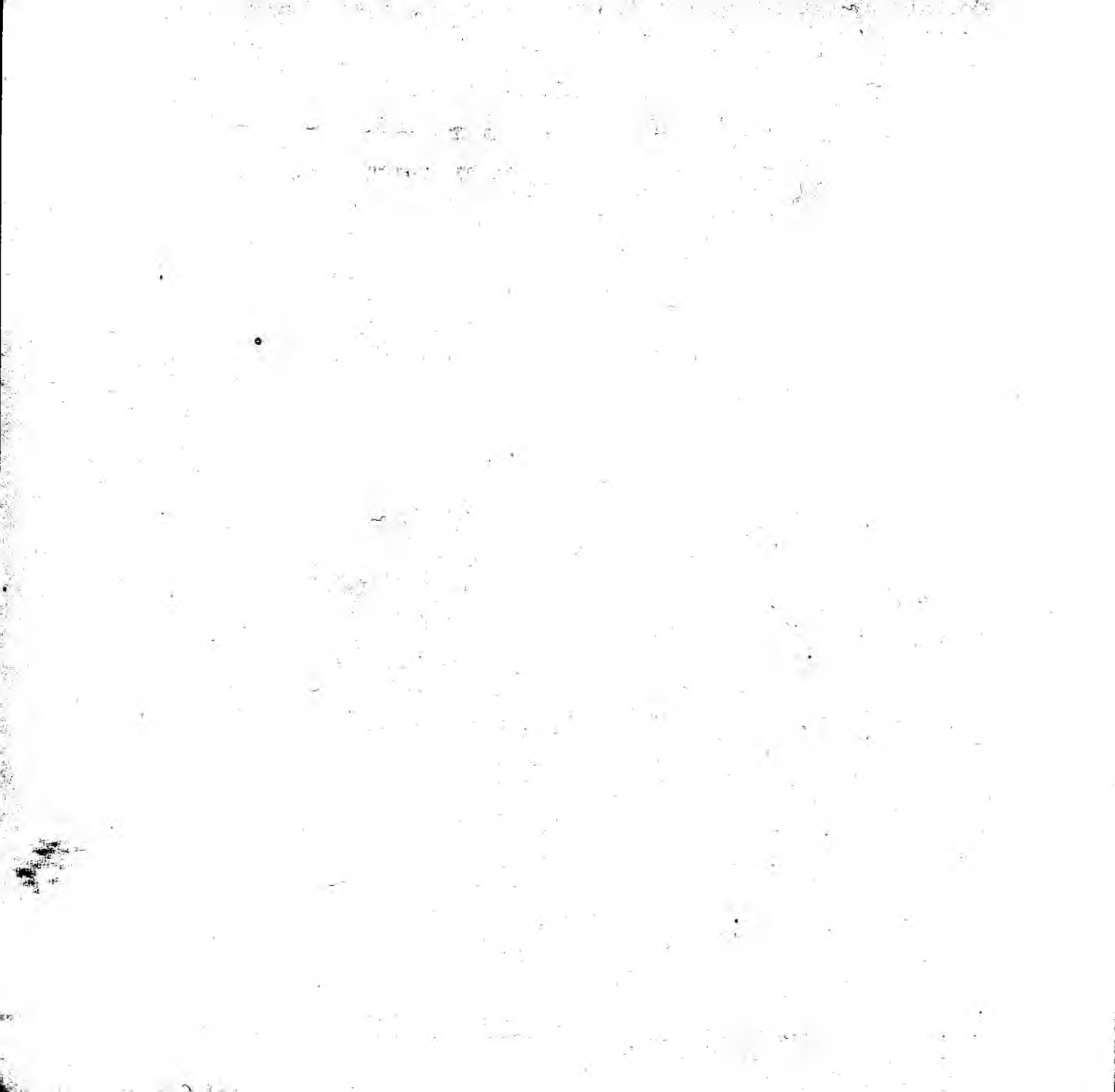


Jenny Housego

# TRIBAL RUGS





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An Introduction to the Weaving of the Tribes of Iran

Jenny Housego

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## The Main Tribal Areas of Iran

The map shows the approximate location of the main tribes of Iran to-day. It is not intended to be definitive.



# Representative Technical Analyses

The following are brief technical analyses of a typical example from each of the nine principal weaving tribes or areas discussed in this book. Z and S refer to the spin and the ply of the threads. Thus Z2S means that the individual fibres have been spun anti-clockwise, then two finished spun threads are taken and plied clockwise. This is most commonly encountered although Z3S is sometimes found. Diagrams explaining the main techniques are on pages 22–23. 'Sides' and 'ends' explain the finishes of a piece. These often prove to be important factors in identification.

## **Plate 5 Mughan Shahsavan Horse-blanket**

*Size* 1·75m × 1·55m

*Warp* Z2S, wool, blue and red

*Weft* Z2S wool, blue and red

*Technique* additional all-over weft-wrapping

*Sides* plain weave

*Ends* bottom: horizontal braided herringbone band and braided warp fringe; top: plain weave folded over and sewn down

## **Plate 33 Khamsa Shahsavan Bedding Bag**

*Size* 1·00m × 0·42m × 0·64m

*Warp* Z2S undyed ivory wool

*Weft* Z2S red wool

*Technique* face: all-over weft-wrapping; back, bottom and sides: red plain-weave

*Sides* herringbone overcast in several colours

*Ends* plain-weave folded over and sewn down

## **Plate 45 Kurdish Pile Rug**

*Size* 1·82m × 1·01m

*Warp* Z2S undyed natural and brownish wool

*Weft* Z2S undyed brown. 2 shoots between each row of knots

*Technique* knotted pile, symmetrical knot

*Sides* not original

*Ends* bottom: not original; top: band plain-weave

## **Plate 54 Luri or Bakhtiyari Horse-blanket**

*Size* 1·90m × 1·54m

*Warp* Z2S wool, undyed brown

*Weft* Z2S various colours, wool

*Technique* double interlocked tapestry, extra-weft patterning stripes, two widths sewn together

*Sides* plain-weave, overcast in red wool

*Ends* bottom: knotted and braided warp fringe terminating in coloured tassels; top: plain-weave turned over and sewn down

## **Plate 100 Qashqa'i Rug**

*Size* 2·08m × 1·21m

*Warp* Z2S undyed light brown/dark brown wool

*Weft* pink wool, two shoots between each row of knots

*Technique* pile, asymmetrical knot, open left

*Sides* one cable overcast in alternating strands of pink and mustard

*Ends* bottom: plain-weave band; top: band plain-weave with knotted warp ends

**Plate 118 Kirman Horse-blanket***Size* 1·68m × 1·72m*Warp* Z2S red wool*Weft* Z2S red wool*Technique* all-over countered weft-wrapping, guard stripes in discontinuous extra-weft patterning*Sides* overcast in ochre and brown wool with added tufts*Ends* bottom: herringbone band with braided warp ends and tassels; top: herringbone band with plain-weave folded over and sewn down**Plate 80 Baluchi Prayer Rug***Size* 1·38m × 0·83m*Warp* Z2S undyed ivory wool*Weft* brown wool, two shoots between each row of knots*Technique* pile, asymmetrical knot, open left*Sides* four cables overcast by the weft*Ends* top and bottom: plain-weave bands with extra-weft patterning**Plate 138 Kurds of Khurasan Rug***Size* 2·59m × 1·59m*Warp* Z3S undyed ivory wool*Weft* red wool, three or four shoots between each row of knots*Technique* pile, symmetrical knot*Sides* two cables overcast in red wool*Ends* bottom: missing; top: band plain-weave in red and ivory stripes with knotted warp ends**Plates 146 and 147 Luri Varamin Bag***Size* 1·32m × 0·72m*Warp* Z2S undyed brown wool*Weft* red wool*Technique* face: all-over weft-wrapping; back: plain-weave with extra-weft patterning, dovetailed tapestry, pile knotted with symmetrical knot*Edges* overcast not original*Ends* bottom: braided warp ends; top: ends turned over and sewn down

# Introduction

Tribal rugs are part of a tradition very different from that of the finely woven floral carpets with which the name Persia (the more usual Western term for Iran) has long been associated. Yet they have a power and vitality of their own. Designs are geometrical, abstract, with an inventiveness of detail and boldness of colour that sometimes echoes contemporary painting.

Unlike the commercial urban and village products, they were woven exclusively for home use. Furnishings of the type used in the West are unknown. Life is spent on the floor, upon which various coverings are always laid. Best pieces are kept aside for special occasions. Bedding is stored in decorative bags stacked round the sides of the tent, and rolled out at night. Bags in all shapes and sizes provide versatile containers. Thus woven goods form the mainstay of household equipment. And into these everyday objects was once poured a love of colour and pattern which had no other outlet, and was handed down from generation to generation.

The study of such rugs is not without problems. Persian monarchs have had a propensity for

uprooting peoples en masse for political or military reasons, and putting them down elsewhere. The Safavid Shah 'Abbas (1587-1629) moved large numbers of Kurds to the eastern province of Khurasan to form a bulwark against the unruly Uzbeks to the north. Nadir Shah Afshar dispersed his own tribesmen to various parts of the country. Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar (1798-1834) transplanted to areas near Tehran several clans of Shabsavan from which to levy recruits for his army.

Thus different groups of one tribe may be found in far-flung areas, perhaps adding to their own repertoire some of the weaving techniques and designs used by newly acquired neighbours. Inter-marriage and changes of allegiance between tribes have further contributed to the diffusion.

These factors often make difficult an attribution to a specific tribe. At the same time, tribes in the past have moved freely across what are now modern political frontiers. In a discussion of a rug woven by Kurds, for example, provenance could as well be eastern Turkey, eastern Iraq or even the Soviet Caucasus, as Iran. Equally in a fast disappearing way of life, tribes themselves have forgotten what

their ancestors wove, and may be unaware of the work even of a neighbouring group. A piece found in one place may be unrecognizable to someone perhaps only a few miles away. Thus even systematic field-work presents problems in a field which, until recently, has scarcely been studied at all.

In most cases, however, it is possible to indicate the region in which a particular rug was made by the type of wool and weaving techniques employed. Colour is another factor, and so is the drawing of the design. This last can sometimes be the least satisfactory element since there are some popular designs that are shared by several different tribes.

There will be no attempt at precise dating of any of the pieces illustrated. Until the political upheavals Iran has undergone in the past fifty years, it is likely that tribal traditions had remained unchanged for generations. Goods were woven for everyday use and replaced when they wore out. Most of the rugs here are probably less than one hundred years old, and many are more recent.

Colours can help in indicating age. In the past these were made from plants or roots, and mellowed with the years. The first synthetic dyes introduced into Iran in the 1850's were prone to fading, particularly the pinks and purples. Later these dyes, which are less laborious to make, were fixed with more permanency, but continue to have a disadvantage over natural colours in their very immutability. The two are not always immediately distinguishable. Little weaving is carried on among the tribes now, who often prefer to sell their wool for the large price it commands, and buy what they need from nearby villages. Modern tribal rugs, such as they exist, are all too often characterized by harsh, bright colours, stereotyped designs and coarse weaving.

Tribes were habitually, though not exclusively nomadic. Increasing numbers are becoming

settled. The term 'tribal' does not necessarily imply a migratory way of life. It is used here to denote peoples of similar ancestry, like the Lurs or the Kurds, or those of mixed origins like the Qashqa'i or the Shahsavan. Inevitably, however, the borderline between their weaving and that of villagers, into whose communities former nomads have been absorbed, is often blurred.

The following pages treat the country anti-clockwise, from northwest to northeast. Included are the main weaving tribes under separate headings as well as areas where tribes of different origins mingle.

The word 'rug' is used as a general term for covers and bags of all kinds, flat-woven as well as knotted pile. Terminology of the main types found is discussed under a separate heading below.

#### **The Turkic Tribes of Northwest Iran**

The most famous of these are a confederation of tribes known as the Shahsavan. There are several groups scattered in the northwest part of the country. The largest migrates from the plains of Mughan, in the northeastern tip of the province of Azarbayjan, to summer pastures on the slopes of the fourteen-thousand-foot Mount Savalan, west of the town of Ardabil.

Their most outstanding contributions are ceremonial horse-blankets with bold stylized peacocks and animals marching across them (plate 5). Covers for floor and bedding are decorated with a variety of abstract and formalized floral and other motifs, on grounds of different colours (plates 1, 2). Saddle and bedding bags in various shapes and sizes portray a wealth of ornamentation in bright colours (plates 7, 16, 17, 18).

These are woven in a weft-wrapping technique sometimes known in the West by the misleading term *sumak*, probably after the town of Shemakha in the Caucasus. The technique is by no means

confined to that area, however, and the technical description of weft-wrapping will be used here, rather than an inappropriate geographical name.

The most popular colour is a clear, bright red, along with blues, greens, oranges, pinks and a characteristic purple. White is often cotton, which provides a sharper definition than achieved by undyed ivory wool.

Until recently all such pieces were mistakenly attributed to the Caucasus, that mountainous district north of what is now the Irano-Soviet frontier.

However, several of the pieces illustrated here are characteristic of the type of weaving and design that is now recognized as Shahsavan. But the peoples of the whole of this region are of similar ancestry, and as such their weaving has much in common. Before the Russian conquest of the Caucasus in the nineteenth century there was no frontier here, and tribes used to move freely backwards and forwards.

Unfortunately field-work, which might help to clarify problems of provenance, is not permitted in the Soviet Caucasus, but there appear to be certain distinguishing factors of Shahsavan pieces. One is the wool, which in this part of Iran tends to be somewhat dry and grainy to the touch, as well as being rather darker in colour. That associated with the Caucasus is ivory coloured, and soft and lustrous. Another is the predilection of the Persian weaver for incidental detail – human figures, animals, birds, floral or tree forms – interspersed randomly among the main elements. The Caucasian was perhaps more concerned with fineness of weave, clear line and an uncluttered field.

The Shahsavan are a confederation of mainly Turkic tribes composed of several clans. Their origins are obscure. The name first appears in the reign of the founding Safavid monarch, Shah Isma'il (1499–1524), whose family came from nearby Ardabil. They were probably used by Shah

'Abbas (1587–1629) to help quell the power of an earlier confederation, the Qizilbash, though seem not to have been formed into a proper confederation until the eighteenth century. Shahsavan in Turkic literally means 'Lovers of the Shah', implying those loyal to the crown.

They, like many other inhabitants of this border area, are the descendants of Ghuzz Turks who swept down from the steppes of Central Asia from about the eleventh century. An immense empire was formed by the Saljuqs, a powerful branch of these Turkic invaders, which at its height stretched from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to the western borders of China. Numerous Turkic peoples settled in Azarbayjan, and in due course most of the original inhabitants became completely turkicized. The Azari Turkic dialect is still today spoken nearly as far east as Tehran.

In the Safavid period (1500–1736) the states of Transcaucasia (the part of the Caucasus that lies south of the main, northern range) were vassals of Persia, though there was intermittent occupation of the whole of the area by the Ottoman Turks. It was not until the nineteenth century that the Persians had finally to cede their Caucasian vassaldoms to the Russians, and a border was established. By the time of its closure at the end of the century, numerous tribal groups associated with Shirvan, Ganja, Qarabagh and other places in the Caucasus had fled from the Russians, and joined Persian-based tribes. At the same time, some Shahsavan chose to remain on the other side. The main group of Shahsavan, who used to travel deep into the Mughan plain in winter, was now confined to a small portion south of the Aras river, which divides it from Russian Mughan.

Unfortunately they weave little now, except for some commercialized weft-wrapped brocades. The designs of these, however, are based on traditional ones, which, together with the few old

pieces they still possess, are enough to provide an idea of what they once wove, which includes the flat-weaves described above. Pile-weaving has largely ceased among them, and never seems to have featured to any large extent. Certain pieces can be tentatively attributed to them on the basis of quality of wool, structure, design and colour (plate 4).

Tapestry-woven textiles called *gelims* (this is the Persian term rather than the more common Turkish *kilim*) formed a flourishing industry in the area until a few years ago. Though the industry is village-based, numerous Shahsavan are settled in the area, and perhaps continued to use techniques that their nomadic kin had abandoned. Gelims were once considered a poor relation to the knotted pile rug. But it has now been recognized that they represent a significant tradition in their own right. They are large in size and the designs large in scale. Most striking perhaps are repeating palmettes which somewhat resemble crab-forms (plates 19, 20). These designs, like several others, are shared with the Caucasus.

There are numerous pieces, both weft-wrapped, tapestry-woven and pile, which cannot be specifically attributed to the Shahsavan or indeed to any one group – or even to one side or the other of the border. Given the similar ethnic and cultural background of the inhabitants, any attempt at such attributions would in any case be largely irrelevant. Several of the illustrations, therefore, are given provenances to northwest Iran or the southern Caucasus (plates 1, 2, 13, 14, 16, 19, 23).

Other Shahsavan groups of northwest Iran will be treated under the next heading, Hashtrud and Khamsa. Still others are to be found among the Bakhtiyari, and in Fars, but probably in too small numbers to have had any significant effect on the weaving there.

Little is known of the weaving of the tribes of Qaradagh (not to be confused with Qarabagh which lies in the Soviet Caucasus), a district adjoining Mughan to the west. Culturally and ethnically related to the Shahsavan, though not forming part of the confederation, their work perhaps bears close resemblance to that of their neighbours. Or it may be that they were responsible for several types that have not yet been attributed. Some numbers from Qarabagh and elsewhere in the Caucasus joined them at the closing of the frontier. Once again there are doubtless many shared features.

In the south of Qaradagh (which means 'Black Mountain' in Turkic), some miles northeast of Tabriz, is the village of Qaraja. This is famed for a well-established tradition of distinctive long, narrow pile rugs called runners. The likeness of the two names sometimes leads to confusion, but these village products have nothing to do with the tribes of Qaradagh.

#### **Hashtrud and Khamsa ; Qazvin and Sava.**

The districts of Hashtrud and Khamsa in north-west Iran are little known in the West. From here, however, have come some remarkable pieces whose origins have, until recently, been obscure. Hashtrud, dominated by Mount Sahand and watered by eight rivers from which its name is derived, lies south of the Tabriz – Mayana road, and east of Lake Riza'iyya, in Azarbayjan. Khamsa, to the east, is part of the province of Zanjan, and is roughly bounded by the towns of Zanjan, Bijar and Qazvin. It should on no account be confused with the confederation of tribes bearing the same name in southern Iran. Khamsa is the common derivation of the Arabic word for five.

Both districts are inhabited by large numbers of Shahsavan, thought to have been moved south in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Afshars,

too, are traditionally associated with this area. A Turkic tribe of the once powerful Qizilbash confederation, they were given lands west of Lake Riza'iyya by Shah 'Abbas (1587-1629) from whence they spread eastwards. Subject to the usual mass movements of tribes, they have been scattered all over Iran, large numbers to the northeastern province of Khurasan, and best known from the point of view of tribal weaving, to Kirman province in the south. In the north-west, Afshar is used as a term for a large-scale weaving industry in villages north of Bijar, where are made carpets with the so-called *Herati* design. Long settled, such Afshars appear to have little to do with the type of weaving with which this book is concerned.

It is the Shahsavan who are largely responsible for the interesting tribal weaves. It remains an anomaly, however, that designs, colours and certain techniques are quite distinct from those of the Mughan Shahsavan. The wool is softer, the use of white cotton is rare, colours are more muted, but above all it is in the repertoire of designs that the difference is most apparent. It is likely that traditionally each clan of the Shahsavan confederation had its own designs. These perhaps remained intact among the groups that were sent south, while the influx of Caucasian tribes into the Mughan Shahsavan in the later nineteenth century significantly influenced the weaving of those who remained behind.

Large gelims, usually made in two pieces sewn down the middle, have broad horizontal bands containing stepped hooked lozenges, often divided by narrower bands with a characteristic zig-zag pattern. Sometimes these are replaced by extra-weft patterned bands (plate 25). Somewhat reminiscent of the white ground covers of the Mughan Shahsavan are bags, horse-blankets and coverings with weft-wrapped designs of *botehs* and other floral forms. These are all apparently

made by both Hashtrud and Khamsa Shahsavan. Some of the bags, however, fall into separate groups.

Nineteenth century gazetteers refer to the Shahsavan of Hashtrud as Duvayran Shahsavan. The tribesmen themselves now do not recognize the term, referring to several different clan names rather than to a collective one. Attractive bedding and saddle-bags woven in an unusual reverse weft-wrapping technique (plates 9, 27) probably originate from this group, as do some other exceptional bags, finely woven in soft, glowing colours (plates 8, 28, 29, 30). Several families are still nomadic, moving from summer pastures in the mountains of Takht-i Sulayman, northwest of Bijar, to winter villages south of Mayana. They weave almost nothing now.

Hashtrud was also the centre for attractive, thickly woven rugs some of which resemble the so-called Kazaks of the Caucasus (plate 24). In weave, however, they are distinctive. Wool tends to be pale brown or buff, and is used undyed for the warp; the ends are often characteristically braided in a way frequently also found on gelims.

Little is known about the once powerful Muqaddam tribe of western Hashtrud, on the eastern shores of Lake Riza'iyya.

The Shahsavan of Khamsa are known by the name of Amir Afshar Shahsavan and claim, as the name implies, to be both Afshar and Shahsavan. They may thus be a tribe of Afshar origin that joined the Shahsavan at some unknown date. Alternatively a Shahsavan clan perhaps amalgamated with Afshars already in the area, when they arrived at Khamsa in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. No longer nomadic, they became settled some fifty years ago. Their gelims are like those of Hashtrud. Distinctive are the unusual bedding bags with only one face decorated (plate 33), the rest in red plain-weave which also

forms a characteristic back for most of the saddlebags. These in their turn portray a number of designs, including a rather heraldic motif perhaps derived from a Sasanian bird form (plate 32). A distinctive two-headed beast, alternating with stylized trees is characteristic of the area (plates 38, 39, 40), though this may represent the work of the neighbouring Kurds rather than that of the Shahsavans.

Further east are two more Shahsavans groups, the Inanlu Shahsavans (who are thought to be related to the Inanlu of the Khamsa confederation of Fars), south of Qazvin, and the Baghdadi Shahsavans round Sava. Both are still partly nomadic. The Baghdadi are the larger, their name derived, so they claim, from a sojourn at Baghdad whence they came, probably at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to their present habitat. They used to weave attractive slit-tapestry bedding bags with borders of additional weft-wrapping.

Weaving of gelims was carried on until a few years ago in villages between Sava and Qazvin. Examples in a simple lattice pattern somewhat recall those of Fars, though more interesting are some individualistic designs that are found nowhere else (plates 35, 36).

### The Kurds

The Kurds are thought to be amongst the most ancient inhabitants of the Iranian plateau. Their language is of the same Indo-European origin as Persian. They are to be found not only in western Iran, but also eastern Turkey, eastern Iraq, the Soviet Caucasus and even Syria. Large numbers have also been dispersed in different parts of Iran.

Given such a wide area, it is hardly surprising to find that so many differences are to be encountered in their weaving. Little systematic research has yet been carried out, which adds to the problems of identification.

Best known are the rugs of Senna and Bijar. Senna, now called Sanandaj, lies in the heart of Kurdistan. This is famed for a type of rug with a refinement of design and weave which, Cecil Edwards theorized, sprang from a sophisticated urban demand of some 200 years ago when the town became an important provincial capital. Though connected in no way with the weaving of the nomadic Kurdish groups, such rugs are an important facet of Kurdish work. Alongside such rugs are also made extraordinarily fine, slit-tapestry gelims. The Herati design has long been popular (plate 41). Included also in a rich repertoire of other designs are delicate botchs and diagonal stripes intricately woven in many colours (plate 62). With the exception of the exquisite silk gelims of Safavid Persia, nowhere else in the country has there existed the production of such gelims. The technique is generally associated with big, bold pieces with no particular regard to fineness of weave.

Another type of rug is to be found in villages around Bijar, which lies northeast of Sanandaj on the edge of Kurdistan. Comparatively small in size, these are easily recognizable by their characteristic quality. Though by no means fine, the wefts (there are two between each row of symmetrical knots) are so tightly pounded down by means of a special comb, that the resulting fabric is very stiff. The Herati pattern is again popular, but more original are the older tree or garden designs (plate 42). Like those of Senna, these rugs are products of settled Kurdish communities in an area where nomadism has probably played little part for years.

From the Bijar area also originate some flat-woven horse-blankets and bags (plate 38, 39). It is not clear whether these are the work of Kurds, or of the neighbouring Shahsavans of Khamsa. Often found on these pieces are characteristic two-headed beings on a ground of dark blue. This

motif is sometimes attributed to the Kurds, though it may equally be used by neighbouring groups. Border designs and the use of deep colours, however, are not shared with other pieces attributed to the Shahsavan, though the technique of weft-wrapping is similar.

Several Kurdish communities are also found around Qazvin, northeast of Bijar. They are the weavers of distinctive weft-wrapped bags with lattice patterns or those featuring the two-headed beings described above (plate 40). A broad strip of knotted pile gives reinforcement to the base of each side. The two main groups are the Mafi, who come from an original homeland near Kirmanshah in Kurdistan, and the Rashvand, thought to have been part of the migration of Chemishgazak Kurds from eastern Turkey and Qarabagh, who are now established in Khurasan. More Kurds dwell in the Alburz mountains. Among these are the Khajavand Kurds of Kalardasht.

Sawj Bulagh, now renamed Mahabad, lies in southern Azarbaijan, just north of Kurdistan. It has a long history as a Kurdish centre of some importance and as a gathering point for the local rugs. These are heavy and thick, woven in lustrous wool and deep colours. Designs are bold and simple, often based on large central medallions (plate 44). The famous so-called *mina-khani* design may have originated from this area (plate 45). A characteristic border design of Kurdish rugs is an undulating floral scroll (plate 45) which is found on many early nineteenth century rugs and derives from classical Persian carpets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

From the region around Kirmanshah come rugs and pile saddle-bags with lattice patterns in rich, glowing colours (plates 46, 61). These are sold in Iran under the trade name of Sanjabi, one of the large tribal clans in the area. Another important group are the Jaff, who are found on both sides of the border between Iran and Iraq. Jaff is the name

under which these pieces were at one time sold in Baghdad. A third trade name, that of Mosul, is used in the West. Mosul is a town in northern Iraq which at one time acted as a collecting place for Kurdish rugs. Thus there are no less than three different trade names for one type of rug, a situation that is certainly confusing. These tribes used to migrate from the mountains of western Iran and northeast Iraq to winter in the warmth of the Mesopotamian plains, and thus cover a large area. All the names are therefore probably valid. Future research may perhaps identify other individual groups, and give a more precise terminology. In the meantime, 'Western Kurdistan' may be a more appropriate term.

Another large group of Kurds live in the north-west borderlands with Turkey. The Jalalis are the largest clan of the area. From here come gelims often associated with Lake Van and surrounding districts in eastern Turkey. Migrations have meant a continual crossing of the border, and so it is not surprising to find similar work carried out on either side. In contrast to the common assumption that such work is confined to Turkey, a group from the Textile Museum, Washington, was told by a Kurd from the Van area that the best gelims were actually woven in Iran. Typical of these are patterns of adjoining hexagons and diamonds (plate 51), and parallel bands of zig-zags (plate 50). They are woven in slit-tapestry with a characteristic outlining of the pattern with an additional weft. From here too are runners woven in two narrow strips, with alternating panels of weft-float brocading and plain-weave (plate 49).

Two further groups of Kurds, those of Varamin and Khurasan, will be discussed under separate headings.

### **Lurs and Bakhtiyari**

Until recently, the weaving of the Lurs, of whom the Bakhtiyari are a part, was as obscure as the

origins of the tribe. However, a group of highly individualistic flat-weaves has now been attributed to them. The designs are quite original, and in no way akin to those of the Turkic tribes, nor, indeed, to those of the traditional Persian repertoire. It may not be too fanciful to suggest a source of inspiration that stems from an extremely ancient culture in these remote mountainous areas, of which the famous bronzes of Luristan are a part.

An assortment of stylized animal and bird forms, often with two or four heads, make a frequent appearance on bags, which come in several shapes and sizes (plates 56, 59). Most common are large double saddle-bags with weft-wrapped designs, and bases of knotted pile for reinforcement. Frequently a weft-wrapped panel on a white ground also appears on the back (plate 57). Magnificent gelims are equally original in design. These are made in double interlocked tapestry, a technique that gives much strength but is not reversible. Borders of swastika motifs are not uncommon, and provide a bold frame for stylized botchs or lozenges which are popular central designs (plates 52, 54). Long skirts with a variety of motifs form decorative end finishes.

The Lurs have never been prolific weavers of pile rugs, and are often credited with pieces that do not fall readily into other categories. Their rugs tend to be thick and heavy; in quality they are more like those of the Kurds, with whom they have ethnic links, than those of the Turkic Qashqa'i. Designs are widely varied (plates 87, 90).

Bakhtiyari is the name generally applied to the weaving of numerous villages in the Chahar Mahal district west of Isfahan. This is misleading, however, since settled Bakhtiyari tribesmen form only a part of the large community which includes peoples of several different origins. Designs are taken from classical Persian prototypes and woven on a cotton foundation (plates 88, 89). Such rugs have little to do with true tribal weaving.

At Shushtar, on the edge of the coastal plains of Khuzistan on the Persian Gulf, are woven very fine, double interlocked gelims, undoubtedly Bakhtiyari in inspiration (plate 55). The town is the centre of the Bakhtiyari winter quarters but such pieces are generally thought to be the work of the townspeople rather than of the tribes themselves.

Little is known of the history of the Lurs. Some accounts suggest that they may have come from Syria in the tenth century. Their language is Persian in origin, and is the chief link between the four main branches. These are the Lurs proper, who inhabit Luristan, adjoining Kurdistan to the south; the Bakhtiyari, whose long migration takes them from the high Zagros mountains west of Isfahan down to Masjid-i Sulayman on the plains of Khuzistan; and the Kuh Gilu'i and Mamassani Lurs who live further east, in Fars, where their territory adjoins that of the Qashqa'i.

These last-named Lurs appear to have a weaving tradition distinct from that of the other Lurs and Bakhtiyaris. They weave pile rugs, weft-wrapped bags (plate 94) and gelims (plates 67, 91, 93) which have much in common with their neighbours, the Qashqa'i. Indeed it is often quite impossible to tell the two apart. Authors of a catalogue on Luri and Bakhtiyari weaving have noted the common concensus in Iran that the Lurs of Fars favour large, uncluttered designs of medallions, lattice or striped patterns. Qashqa'i gelims, although using a similar basic format, are more busy in pattern and minute in detail (plate 72).

### **The Qashqa'i of Fars**

Most famous among the Persian tribes are surely the rugs of the Qashqa'i. In sheer variety of designs, clarity of colour and fineness of weave they have seldom been surpassed. Many motifs betray their northern Turkic origins. Like the Shahsavan they are a confederation of tribes of mixed origins, most of whom probably arrived in northern Iran with the Ghuzz hordes from Central Asia. One

of the many theories is that they were established in a mountainous district called Qasha Dagh, west of Mount Savalan where the Shahsavan spend the summer. From that may have been derived their name. At a later date they went south, perhaps sent by Shah Isma'il (1499-1524) to protect his southern shores from the Portuguese who held sway in the Persian Gulf. That they are related to the Shahsavan and peoples of the Caucasus is evident by comparing many of their motifs (plates 21, 102, 103 and plates 4, 5, 14, 15).

But seldom would a piece from one area be confused with that from the other. The Qashqa'i put their designs together in their own way, the palette is different and so are their weaving techniques and the quality of the Fars wool. Above all, however, the Qashqa'i metier is in pile rugs. Among popular motifs a menagerie of animals includes peacocks (plate 21), gazelle, deers, lions (plate 26) and even the domestic fowl. These are usually spaced round three central medallions, along with hooked polygons, formalized rosettes and flowers. Botehs make frequent appearances (plates 96, 97, 98). These are a much beloved Persian motif, common in India too, though what they represent has been the subject of much controversy. They may appear as a minor infill, or as the main feature, marching over the field, turning this way and that in alternating rows. Sometimes two or three smaller forms lie within a bigger one, giving rise to the name 'mother and child' botehs (plate 96).

Bags are also usually pile-woven, with distinctive designs mainly based on a central medallion which sometimes contains angular bird forms. Often the most interesting features of bags are the finishes, particularly the fastenings which are brocaded and decorated in a variety of ways.

Colours tend towards clear reds, blues, greens, and a lot of yellow and ivory. Both asymmetrical and

symmetrical knots are used, woven between two red wefts. Characteristic side finishes have two alternating colours overcast round a single cord. Weft-float brocaded chevron or chequered stripes form attractive skirt finishes. These, however, are found in several parts of Iran and are not confined to the Qashqa'i.

Gelims are woven in the slit-tapestry technique, and have a boldness and simplicity which is lost in the profusion of ornamentation of the pile rugs. Horizontal bands contain strange comb-like motifs (plate 24); 'dazzler' gelims with zig-zag diagonal lines in different colours create a psychedelic effect (plate 93); others have a plain coloured field, with a medallion and corner design, long popular as a classical Persian motif on book bindings as well as carpets (plate 91). Sometimes such gelims are hard to tell apart from those of the Lurs of Fars.

Other flat-woven techniques include weft-wrapping, weft-float brocading, extra-weft brocading and additional warp brocading, and appear on horse-blankets (plates 102, 103) and bags (plates 105, 108), but never to the same extent as pile. A popular type of horse trapping has knotted pile motifs which are often in the form of stylized human figures, on a plain-weave ground, which gives a two-dimensional effect (plate 95).

Some authorities have ascribed certain characteristics to individual clans, but there is no space here to indicate such peculiarities. In many cases an attribution to the Qashqa'i at all is open to doubt. Intermingling between the Qashqa'i and neighbouring tribes, such as the Lurs, the Khamsa, and those of Kirman, has led to an endless diffusion of ideas.

According to Dr. Oliver Garrod a section of Buchaqchis from the Kirman area were incorporated into the Qashqa'i clan of Kashkuli Kuchak during the last century with considerable effect upon their designs. This was but one of several

movements which has made the task of identification most confusing. Added to this is a flourishing village industry, among whom are many settled tribesmen. The name Shiraz, the capital of Fars, which is the gathering centre for the rugs of the district, is often used to describe village rugs.

### The Khamsa of Fars

This is the name of another confederation of five tribes, formed in 1862 by the powerful Qavam family of Shiraz (these southern tribes must not be confused with the district of the same name in northwest Persia).

Of these the Baharlu were once part of the Qizilbash confederation of Azarbayjan, but it is not known when they came south. The Nafar are also mainly Turkic, though the name is Arabic, and both Arab and Lur peoples are included in the tribe. Turkic also are the Inanlu, who are probably related to the Shahsavan Inanlu of Qazvin. Much controversy surrounds the Bassiri, who seem to be of mixed origin with Arab elements. Their language, however, has become so confused that it is comprehensible to nobody but themselves.

Khamsa weaving has not been accorded the same treatment as that of the Qashqa'i and, as yet, is correspondingly less known. Cecil Edwards reported, however, that their output was over double that of the Qashqa'i. It may be that they are in fact the weavers of numerous pieces often attributed to their more famous neighbours.

To one of the Arab groups can probably be credited one of the most original Khamsa designs. This is known as the *murgi*, meaning chicken, in which large numbers of the domestic fowl peck busily away on a field of light or dark blue, or ivory (plates 109, 111). This popular motif has also been adopted by other groups.

To the Bassiris has been attributed an attractive design of adjoining serrated leaves round a central medallion (plates 28, 112). This is found both on

pile bags and rugs. Bags with extra-weft patterning (plate 107) are also thought to be the work of the Bassiri, though the technique is probably used by the Qashqa'i too.

Boteh designs are common, often woven in dark colours (plate 110). Sometimes these are difficult to differentiate from similar Qashqa'i pieces with whom there are also common technical features.

The Baharlu are generally considered to be the weavers of the finest rugs among the Khamsa.

### Tribes of the Kirman District

Though the tribes in this southeastern province are largely Turkic, many of their designs are quite distinct from those of other Turkic peoples, such as the Qashqa'i and the Shahsavan. Some authorities have noted similarities in motifs found in rugs of east Turkistan. Others seem more closely derived from a typically Kirman tradition, and especially from the shawls for which the city was famous in the nineteenth century. Several rugs are clearly based on a shawl prototype, with botehs dispersed among a lattice of leaves. Botehs, indeed, are a favourite feature and appear in a variety of forms both naturalistic and stylized (plates 78, 114, 115, 119).

Dark blue is much used, but unlike Kurdish rugs, it is offset by lavish use of white so that the effect is not one of sombreness (plate 117).

Though pile rugs are by far the most numerous, some outstanding flat-weaves have also been made here. These are generally brocaded in weft-wrapping with the usual predominance of blue. Broad horizontal bands contain a variety of motifs (plate 117), while another type has rows of stylized botehs. Also characteristic is a kind of box design (plate 118).

All such pieces have tended to be branded as 'Afshar'. This is unquestionably the largest and most important group, but there are several other

distinct tribes as well, who are doubtless responsible for some of the weaving. Little field-work has been carried on in this area and tribal distinctions have not been made. Until something more is known, the general term of 'Kirman area' seems more appropriate.

There are two main clans of Afshars, the Jahanshahis and the 'Amu'is. Turkic peoples, they formed part of the once powerful Qizilbash confederation of Azarbayjan. Their association with Kirman has been a long one. Cecil Edwards considered that some may have been sent south by Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576), and this is supported by the fact that there were Afshar governors of Kirman in the sixteenth century. Shah 'Abbas probably moved more, though it seems that the mass migration was due to Nadir Shah (1736-1747), himself an Afshar. They must have been a colourful, turbulent people to have been so dispersed.

The Buchaqchis are another notorious local tribe. They may have been an offshoot of the Afshars of Zanjan, moved to Fars by Nadir Shah, but proved so unruly that they had to be sent on to Kirman. A section of them were possibly incorporated into the Qashqa'i clan of Kashkuli Kuchak, upon whose rug designs they had considerable influence. There seems indeed to have been a considerable intermingling among the tribes of southern Iran. The Sulaymanis, on record as the richest in terms of flocks in the province, are said to have been a branch of the Bulvardi Sulaymani of Fars, and moved to Kirman some 300 years ago. The Shuls perhaps originated from Luristan, and moved to Fars in the thirteenth century, whence they eventually found their way to Kirman.

Of the Qutlus, legend relates that they came to Kirman with a descendant of Saljuq in the eleventh century, but this has never been verified. The Qara'is were once an important Turkic tribe now

scattered in Kirman and Khurasan. The bulk of them are to be found round the town of Turbat-i Haydari.

### The Baluch

Bordering on Kirman is the province of Baluchistan, an arid region which stretches eastwards into Pakistan and southwards to the Indian Ocean. The quest into the origin of the Baluch remains unanswered. Chauvinistic members of the race claim descent from Nebuchadnezzar. More likely they are peoples of old Iranian stock who, established in the mountains of Kirman, were pushed east by the Turkic invasions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, to take refuge in their present inhospitable lands.

But it is not here in Baluchistan proper, but in the fertile province of Khurasan and the borderlands of Afghanistan that their best weaving is done. Probably it was Nadir Shah (1736-1747), that monarch most prone to forcible movements of mankind, who set them here. Another group is thought to have joined them at the end of the nineteenth century.

Weaving in Baluchistan itself is confined to the simplest of flat-weaves and course rugs; it may be that this northern tradition extends back only as far as their migration in the eighteenth century, and their contact with numerous weaving peoples long established in Khurasan. Their reputation as mere copyists of other peoples' designs may therefore to some extent be justified in the comparative brevity of their weaving history.

Whatever designs they may have borrowed, they have interpreted them in an unmistakable Baluchi way. Pile rugs are the most famous. The immediate impression is one of deep reds and blues, but monotony is relieved by the limitless variations of tone. Camel wool is also widely used, and lightness

is achieved by splashes of white, yellow, orange, and more occasionally green and mauve. Most popular are lattice patterns containing geometric or floral motifs (plate 126). Prayer rugs with the usual Muslim *mihrab* (niche), often have camel grounds with formalized tree forms (plates 80, 124, 125). Baluchi rugs tend to be small in size, and knotted with the asymmetrical knot. Side finishes are broad, with three or four cables overcast in goat hair. An attractive feature is the broad flat-woven skirts at each end. However, some of the most original designs – ones that perhaps stem from a much longer tradition entirely their own – are found in flat-weaves. There are several types, though probably the most famous are those with broad horizontal bands (plate 122). Though this format is popular all over Iran, the variety of characteristic Baluchi ornamentation in dark blues, reds and oxblood gives these pieces an impressive starkness that is entirely their own.

In this region of eastern Khurasan and western Afghanistan there are other tribes. The work of the Taimuri, an Afghan tribe, often masquerades as Baluchi. To the southwest, around Firdaws, are peoples of Arab descent whose designs are probably derived from the Baluch. Rugs that recall those of Kirman may have been made by the Turkic Qara'is, a branch of whom reside in Khurasan. There are some pieces, which incorporate elements of both Baluchi and Kirman tribes, and have not been attributed at all (plate 120).

### The Turkoman

The Turkoman are tribes of Central Asia rather than of Iran, and their weaving is quite distinct from that of the Iranian tribes. The palette is not extensive; lavish use is made of red which appears in shades from dark oxblood to a rich pinky tone. This is the most usual field colour for the so-called *gul* motifs which are typical of the Turkoman, almost to the exclusion of any other design. 'Gul' is

the Persian word for flower and stylized forms, presumably derived from flowers, are arranged in regular formation. Blue is the other main colour, with limited use of ivory and brown, and an occasional yellow. Within these stylistic limitations the range of variations is extensive. All the major Turkoman tribes have their own particular guls, though due to the recent changes in tribal intermarriage and the absorption of smaller tribes by larger ones, the earlier distinctions are now often lacking. Turkoman rugs are frequently finely woven, usually with the asymmetrical knot. This is in contrast to the Persian tribal tradition in which fineness of weave has rarely been a preoccupation and the symmetrical knot is dominant.

Though the Turkoman are descended from the same Ghuzz tribes as the Turkic groups of Iran, their rugs are part of a tradition quite distinct from that of the tribes that properly belong to Iran. There are, however, some Turkoman groups living within the Iranian borders. Traditionally there was no formal barrier between Iran and what is now Soviet Central Asia, and as in the other border areas, tribes roamed freely. At the establishment of the frontier in the late nineteenth century several Turkoman groups chose to remain in Iran. This explains the presence of Yamut on the eastern seaboard of the Caspian sea and in the adjoining mountains, whilst Guklan live nearby to the east. Some Tekke groups are to be found east of Mashhad.

No specially revealing characteristic of these Iranian Turkoman have been noted. Several recent publications have been devoted to Turkoman rugs and so the discussion of their weaving here is therefore short. The illustrations are confined to a few pieces made by the groups living on both sides of the border (plates 129, 130, 131, 132, 133).

### Kurds of Khurasan

The Kurds of the eastern province of Khurasan have an interesting history. According to the Dutch anthropologist, Martin von Bronison, they are an amalgam of two Kurdish groups, one from the Elazig district of central Turkey, the other the Otuziki tribe from Qarabagh in the Caucasus, both of whom fled into Persia to escape persecution at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth century. Shah 'Abbas settled some of these Kurds between Qazvin and Rasht (they are probably the Rashvand Kurds there today – see 'The Kurds' above). The rest he moved on to Varamin, where they were moulded into one tribe by the name of Chamishqazak, the original title of the Elazig Kurds. In 1602 they were moved on yet again to the northeast, where they were to provide a bulwark against the Uzbeks who were threatening the security of the province. Today there are two main confederations, the Shadlu and the Zafaranlu, divided into numerous sub-tribes. They are based round the towns of Bujnurd and Quchan, west of Mashhad.

Given their origins, it is hardly surprising that such peoples should have woven in a rich diversity of designs. Indeed, their pile rugs are often erroneously sold under the title of Kazak. Some of the designs are similar to those of that region of the Caucasus; so also are the wide red side finishes, the red plain weave skirts, and the red weft. The wool, however, lacks the extreme softness and lustre that often characterizes these so-called Khazaks. With certain types of eastern Turkish rugs there are also many shared features. At the opposite end of the spectrum they have borrowed designs from the Baluch, from whose work theirs is sometimes superficially hard to differentiate. But the Kurds use the symmetrical knot, while the Baluch prefer the asymmetrical.

An attractive design is composed of beetle-like forms set in squares (plate 81). This is not unlike

a characteristic motif of the Ersari tribe of Afghanistan and Central Asia, from whom it was perhaps derived. Stepped hooked adjoining lozenges, one of the most universal of Persian tribal designs, are also found (plate 138). Woven with a predominance of a characteristic golden yellow, red and ivory, and narrow borders in a simple zig-zag, such pieces are usually easily identifiable.

Another popular motif is known as the *hawz* (water-tank), which appears as a large cruciform medallion, containing compartments of floral ornamentation (plate 137). This recalls similar designs from both the Caucasus and eastern Turkey; indeed it is sometimes hard to tell them apart. The Khurasan Kurdish rugs, however, are generally more elaborate with a greater variety of colours, and differ too in feel.

As weavers of non-pile rugs they are less inventive. Their flat-weaves generally have the dark colours associated with Kurdistan. Weft-wrapped bags have a lattice pattern containing hooked lozenges (plate 135). Lattice patterns are also found on the large extra-weft patterned rugs, as well as wide horizontal stripes (plate 136).

### Varamin and Garmsar

The town of Varamin lies southeast of Tehran. It is generally known as a centre for bright blue rugs with the mina-khani design. This consists of a lattice with daisies which is probably derived from a Kurdish prototype (plate 45). However, quite apart from this village industry, the area has also produced some remarkable tribal weaving. This is the result of the extraordinary diversity of tribes who mingle here, which includes Kurds, Lurs, Arabs, Shahsavan, Qashqa'i, Turkoman and other Turkic clans.

One of the distinguishing features of Varamin rugs is the frequent use of undyed dark brown wool for warp, and sometimes also for weft. This is the

predominant colour of the local sheep. Also characteristic are small rosettes scattered over the field of gelims, the fastenings of bags and the plain-weave skirts of pile rugs. The symmetrical knot is employed.

Lurs are the weavers of some remarkable weft-wrapped bags (plates 84, 146, 147, 148) which have some similarities with those of Luristan. One such was actually found by the author in a winter farmhouse near Varamin. Its owners recalled that it had been in their possession for as long as they could remember, and certainly nothing of the kind is woven now. Dr. Michael Rogers has noted in the world history of Rashid al-Din that there were Lurs here as early as the fourteenth century, when Varamin was an important Mongol centre. Reza Shah (1925-1941) is known to have brought up some numbers, and there were doubtless other migrations in between. The Burburs and the Hadavandi are the two main clans. They are not properly nomadic now; winter is spent in houses on the Varamin plains, while the flocks and some families move up to the Alburz mountains for summer pastures. The differences between their work and that of the Lurs further south are often subtle rather than immediately obvious. Varamin colours tend to be brighter - perhaps due to variations in local dyestuffs as well as in the quality and colour of the wool; Luri-Varamin designs are simpler and less cluttered, with fewer borders. An easy distinction is that raised corner reinforcements of Luri and Bakhtiyari bags are not found here, nor are the brocaded white ground panels of the back (plates 56, 57). Certain pile rugs can also sometimes be attributed to the Varamin Lurs, as can a group of gelims which differ little from those of the south.

The Kurds are Pazuki, once a powerful tribe of Erzerun in eastern Turkey, which was apparently dispersed in the sixteenth century. Several families

came to live round Varamin. They may have been part of the migration of Chemishqazak Kurds who continued on to Khurasan. This would account for certain similarities in the weaving of these two groups (plate 139). The Varamin Kurds now seem to have become completely absorbed, and to have lost a separate identity from other groups. As with the Shahsavans in the area, information surrounding their present habitat is hopelessly misleading. It may be that there are now no distinctly Shahsavan or Kurdish settlements, though one of the districts of Varamin is still known as Pazuki. The Shahsavans inhabitants are probably settled members of the Baghdadi clan of Sava, (see 'Hashtrud and Khamsa' above) whose traditional winter quarters are to be found in a wide area between Sava, Qum and Varamin. This would account for some of the similarities in gelim designs in these neighbouring areas.

Further east, in villages around the market town Garmsar, numerous examples of gelims with the so-called dazzler design are to be seen (plate 145). These often resemble those of Fars - indeed, it is known locally as the Shiraz design, but as with Luri bags, there are subtle distinctions. The palette is darker and much use is made of the local wool, which besides being dark, is coarser in quality than the softer wool of Fars. The technique of dovetailing the colour areas is usual here, whereas slit-tapestry is more common in Fars. Skirts with narrow chevron brocaded stripes are a shared feature, and should not be considered distinctive of any particular area.

The inhabitants of the village in which such pieces are to be seen are Alikai or Osanlu, Turkic peoples whose origins appear quite unknown. Their weaving, however, strongly suggests a relationship with the tribes of Fars.

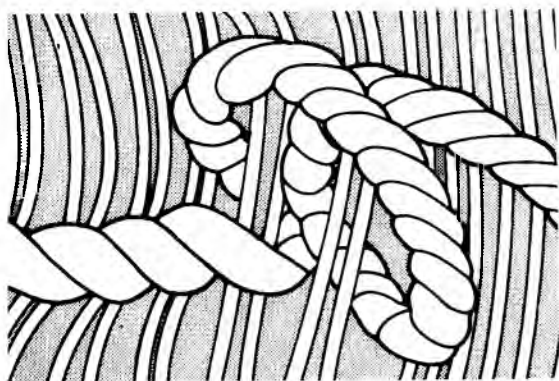
From Garmsar also comes a distinctive type of gelim, with rows of polygons arranged diagonally on a dark blue or undyed brown-black ground (plate

144). Small rosettes are interspersed among them – a common practice among weavers of this Varamin and Garmsar region. Hour-glass forms are the usual border motifs. It is not known whether these too are the work of Turkic peoples, or that of others, possibly Kurds, in the area. These are but one type of weave whose tribal origins are far from clear in a region of such mixed peoples (plates 82, 83).

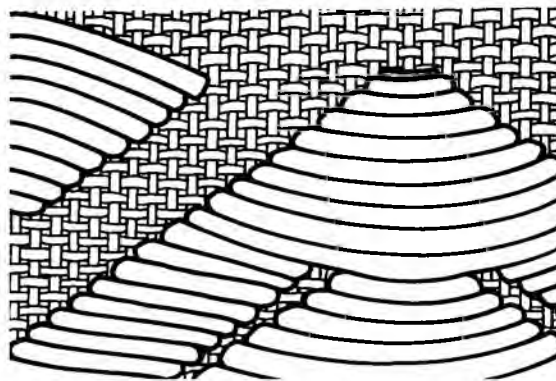
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## The Main Techniques Encountered in the Tribal Weaving of Iran

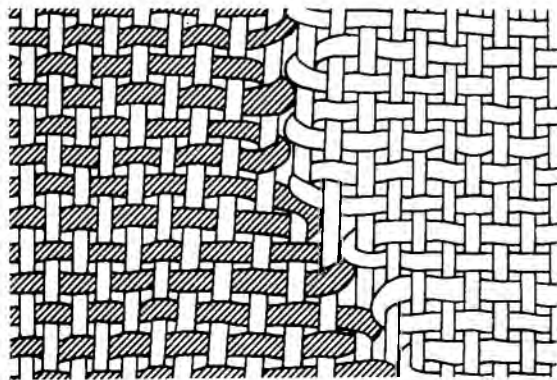


1 **Weft-wrapping.** One of the most common brocading techniques for flat-weaves, the weft wraps the warp forward over four then back over two. The ratio can be varied. In reverse weft-wrapping, the short passage appears on the face rather than the long one. It is sometimes known as *sumak*, one of several confusing geographical terms.

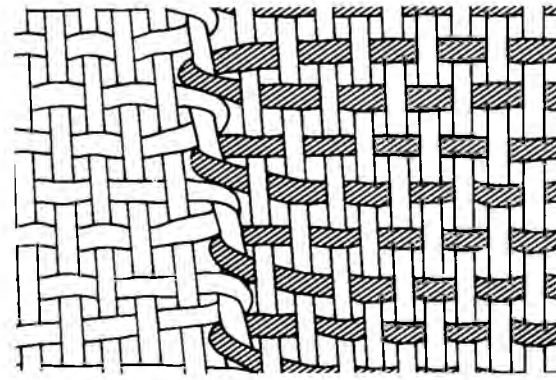


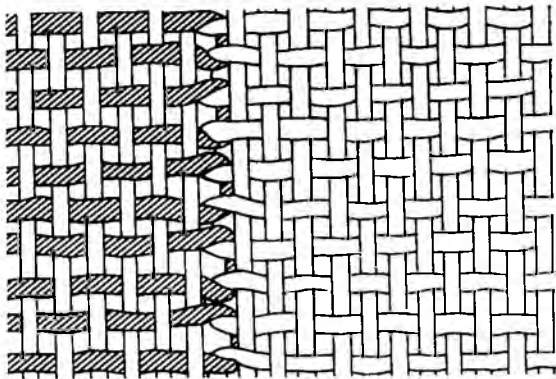
2 **Extra-weft Patterning.** Another brocading technique in which supplementary wefts are introduced to form the pattern on a plain-weave ground. They may float along the back when not employed on the front, or they may be discontinuous when the cut ends hang loose at the back.

3 **Slit-tapestry.** The most common gelim weave in Iran, in which the wefts turn back at the meeting of the colour areas to leave slits between each colour. Gelims so woven are reversible.

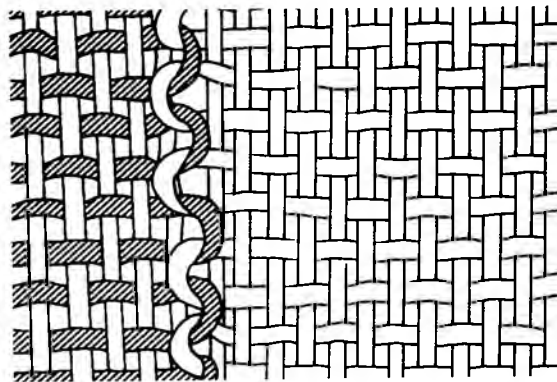


4 **Dovetailing.** A gelim technique used in some areas in which wefts from adjoining colour areas alternately turn back around a common warp, thus leaving no gap between each colour. Such pieces are usually reversible.



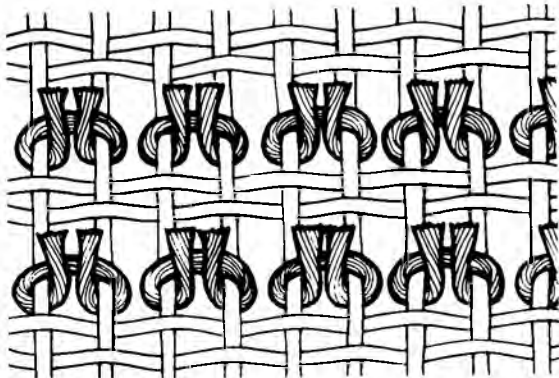


5 **Double Interlocking.** A technique particularly employed in the gelims of the Lurs and Bakhtiyaris, in which the wefts of adjoining colour areas are linked round each other, backwards and forwards, at each passage. The face is shown.

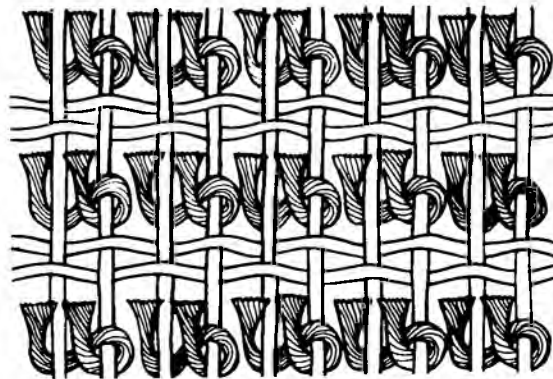


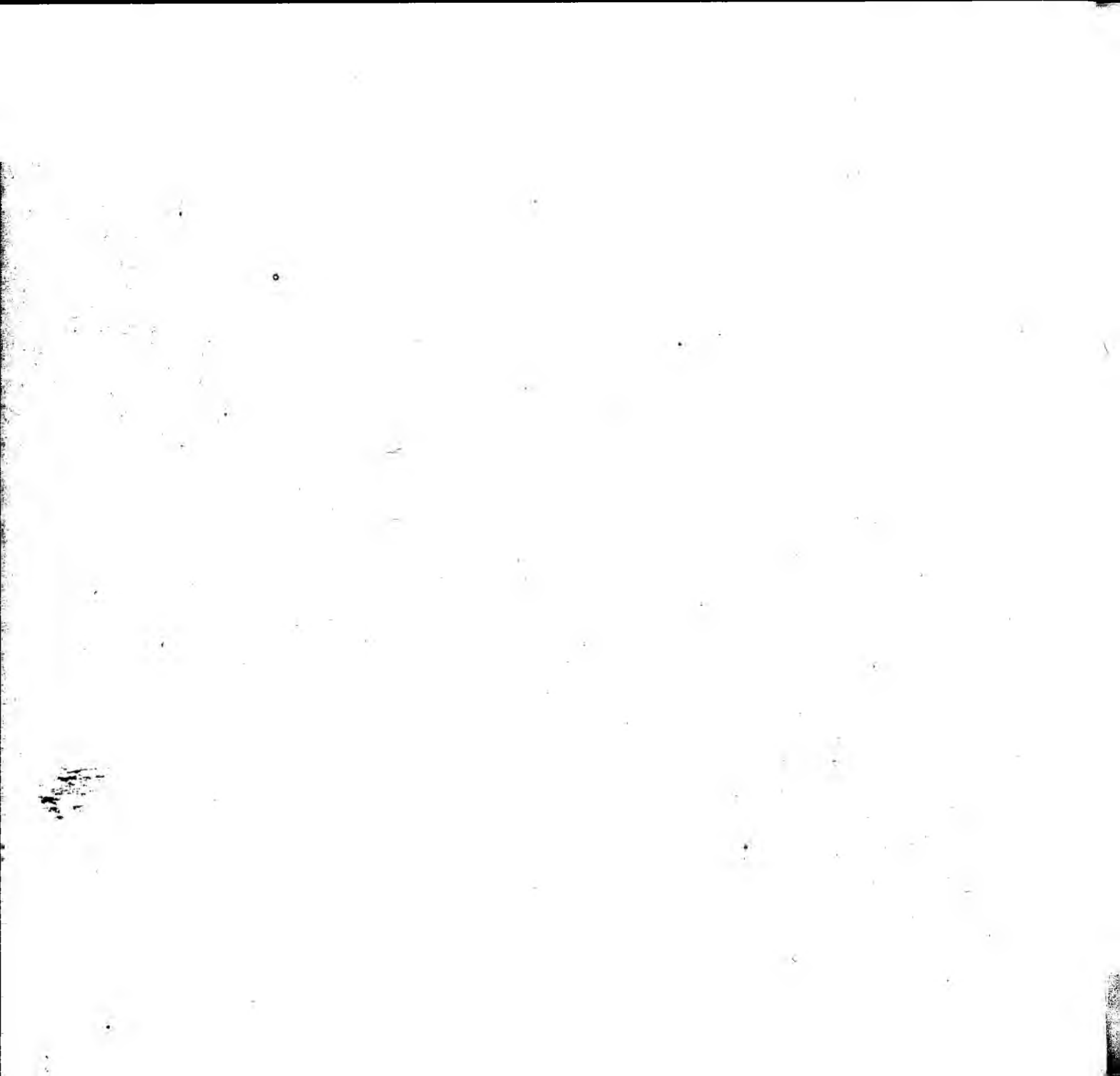
6 **Double Interlocking.** This shows the reverse of 5. The technique produces a ridge at the back which gives much strength. Gelims so woven are not reversible.

7 **Symmetrical Knot.** This is the type most commonly used among Iranian tribal groups. It has been known as the Turkish knot, but as it is found in many parts of Iran, the term is misleading.



8 **Asymmetrical Knot.** This is found in some of the tribal rugs of Fars and Kirman, and in most Turkoman and Baluchi Rugs. It is the knot of village and urban rugs of Iran, and has been known as the Persian knot.





**Plate 1 Cover: Northwest Iran or South Caucasus.** A splendid  
weft-wrapped cover in glowing  
colours, which could have been  
woven on either side of the  
border. The peoples of this area  
share a common ethnic and  
cultural heritage and their  
weaving has much in common.  
It is related to plate 2 and may  
have been woven by the same  
tribe, perhaps the Shahsavan.  
Size: 2.01m x 1.98m  
Photo courtesy of David Black  
Oriental Carpets





**Plate 2 Cover: Northwest Iran or South Caucasus.** A rare cover from the frontier region with a beautifully balanced, weft-wrapped lattice design containing motifs perhaps floral in origin. Diagonal bands form large diamonds of subtle colour on an unusual dark brown ground. The design of the border is common to both flat-weaves and pile rugs.

Size: 1·80m × 1·64m

Private Collection

**Plate 3 Shahsavan Nomads, Northwest Iran.** Slowly making their way up the lower slopes of Mount Savalan is a group of Shahsavan nomads with heavily laden camels. They have come up from the Mughan plains near the Soviet border where they spend the winter.

Photo: Jenny Housego



**Plate 4 Pile Rug: Northeast Iran.** This might be taken for a Caucasian pile rug, with which there are many shared features. But the dry, rather grainy wool, the deeper colours, particularly the red and oxblood, and the animal motifs of the field, are more characteristic of northwest Iran. It has cotton warps and wefts, the symmetrical knot, and may be the work of the Shabsavan.

Size: 3.18m x 1.00m

Private Collection





**Plate 5 Horse-blanket:**  
Shahsavan of Mughan, North-  
west Iran. A splendid example of  
a horse-blanket woven by the  
main group of Shahsavan who  
migrate from the Mughan plain  
to the slopes of Mount Savalan.  
Stylized peacocks, a favourite  
motif, march across the centre  
of the field while other animals  
fill the surrounding panels. The  
design is in weft-wrapping on a  
plain-weave ground.  
Size: 1.53m × 1.75m  
Private Collection.

**Plate 6 Shavsavan Tent: Northwest Iran.** This is a tent of a well-to-do Shavsavan family in the summer pasturelands of Mount Savalan. It is made of white felt with a design stamped on the entrance flaps and surrounds. The hole in the top lets out smoke. Poorer nomads have plainer black tents.  
Photo: Jenny Housego



**Plate 7 Bag: Shabsavan of Mughan, Northwest Iran.** This saddle-bag was actually found in the Shabsavan tent illustrated opposite. It belonged to a member of the Seyyitler clan, who said that it had come through marriage from another clan, the Mughanlu, many years ago. The design is a typical one and still in use today.

Size: 1.17m × 0.50m

Private Collection



**Plate 8 Bedding Bag-face: Hashtrud or Khamsa, Northwest Iran.** This fine old bag-face illustrates in full splendour the northwest Persian love of pinks, purples and reds. Natural colours such as these can never be equalled by chemical dyes which, though bright when new, have a tendency to fade. The hooked lozenges in the centre are similar to those on rugs with Turkish designs painted by Memling in the fifteenth century. It was probably woven by the Shahsavans.  
Size: 0.97m × 0.46m  
Private Collection



**Plate 9 Bedding Bag: Shahsavan of Hashtrud, Northwest Iran.** A bedding bag in brilliant colours. Such pieces, used to store bedding and other household equipment, are stacked neatly round the sides of a tent. This illustration shows a long side, with a decoration of hooked lozenges within octagons, and the striped base. The design is in weft-wrapping. It is probably attributable to the Shahsavan of Hashtrud.

Size: 0·84m × 0·40m × 0·51m

Private Collection



Plate 10 **Shahsavan Woman Weaving:** Hashtrud, Northwest Iran. In a Shahsavan winter village in the district of Hashtrud this woman is weaving a so-called *jajim*, a warp-faced fabric woven in a long, narrow strip. These are later cut into equal lengths and sewn together to form coverings of various kinds. 'Jajim' is the Persian term for the technique, which is used all over Iran.  
Photo: Jenny Housego





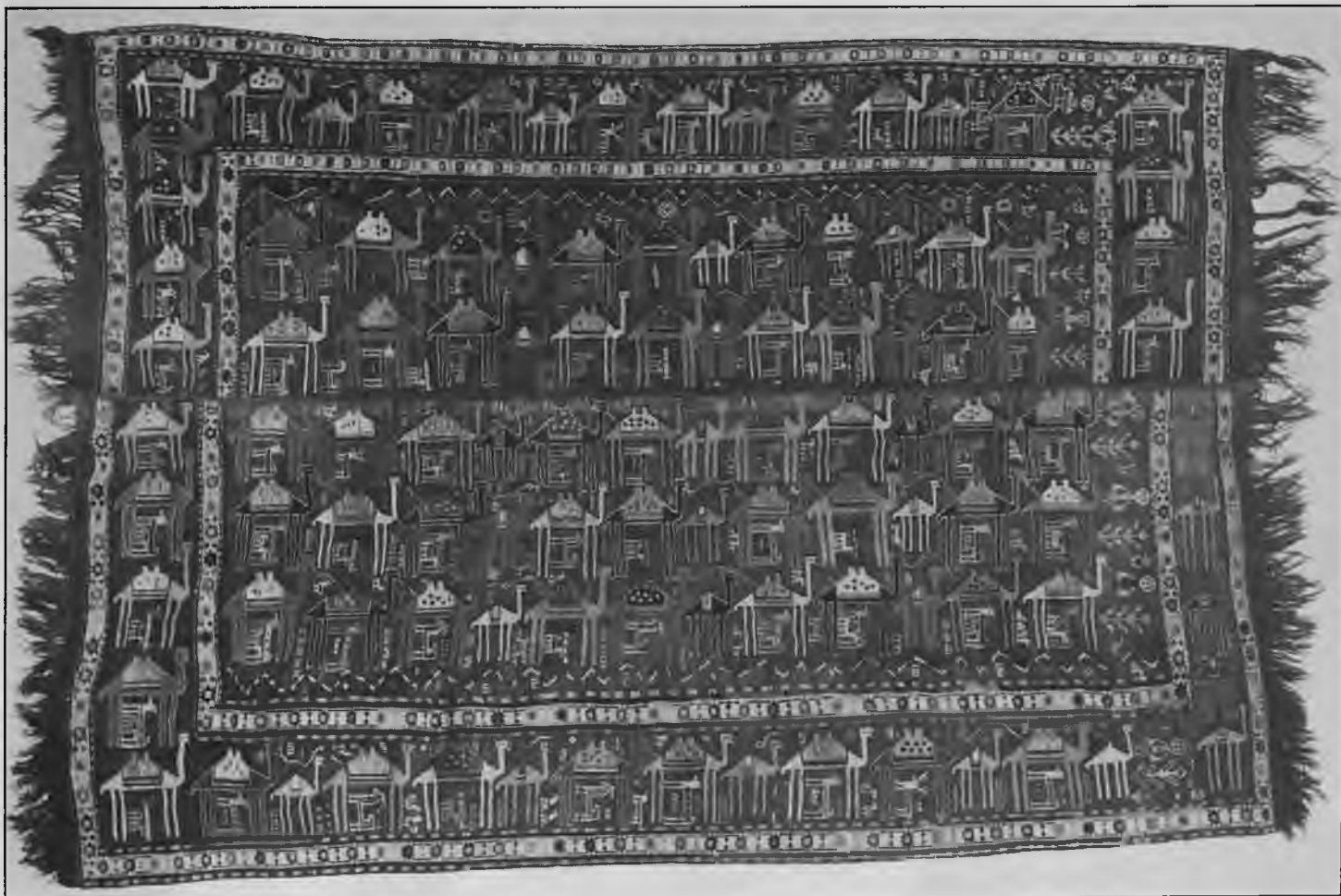
**Plate 11 Gelim: West Iran.** The simplicity of the ground and the old rose field of this slit-tapestry gelim contrast admirably both in texture and design with the medallion, which is in pile. This is a rare feature. It contains the so-called Herati pattern much used in west Iran and particularly associated with Bijar. This piece, on cotton warps, was probably woven somewhere in the area.  
Size: 3.32m × 1.24m  
Private Collection

Plate 12 Pile Rug: Luri or  
Kurdish, West Iran. A rare old  
piece, whose colours display to  
the full the craft of the traditional  
dye-master. Some of the motifs  
recall bags from the Khamsa  
district of north west Iran,  
though the animals are more like  
those of the Lurs. The main  
border is unusual. Probably  
woven by Lurs or Kurds, it is  
one of many rugs that is impossible  
to classify accurately.  
Size: 2.00m × 1.42m  
Collection of Richard Purdon



**Plate 13** Cover: Northwest Iran or South Caucasus. Caravans of two-humped camels parade across the field of this original flat-weave. Each line is led by a man with a large head and enormous hands. Animals of several different breeds surround them, some nursing their young. The pattern is weft-wrapped on a ground of brown, deep rose and mulberry.

Size: 1.73m × 2.45m  
Private Collection



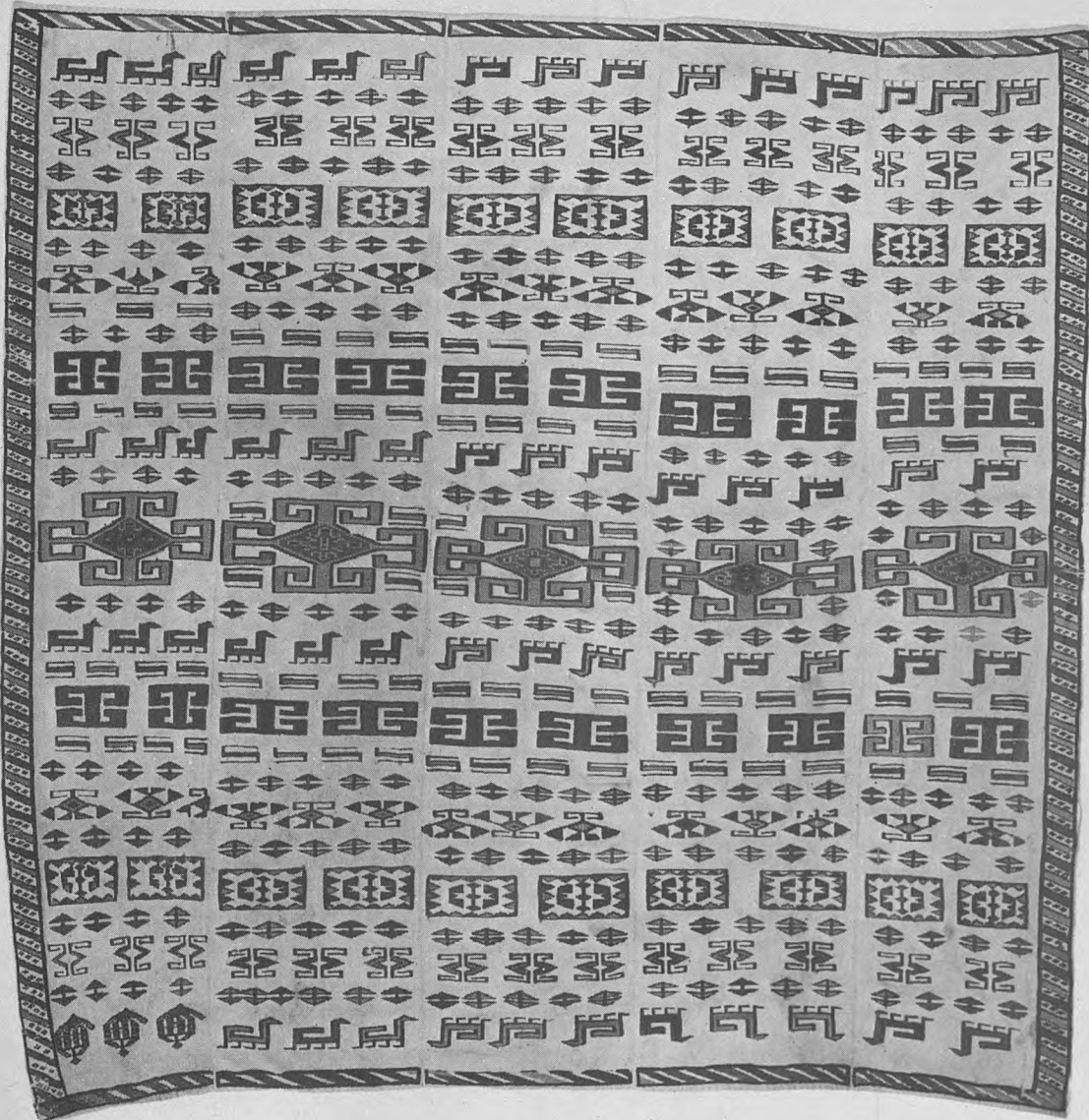
**Plate 14 Cover: Northwest Iran or South Caucasus.** The border of this fine flat-woven cover consists of stylized animals and bird forms. It makes a striking contrast to the simplicity of the field, where the only decoration is a zig-zag line that marks the merging of the red and blue ground colours.

Size: 1.80m × 1.51m  
Collection of Oliver Hoare

**Plate 15 Cover: Shahsavan of Mughan, Northwest Iran.** This piece is typical of the work of this northern group of Shahsavan and shows many of their favourite motifs. It is made of five warp-faced plain-weave strips with weft-wrapped decoration on a white cotton ground. Such covers, used for the floor or bedding, were often backed with felt for extra warmth.

Size: 1.71m × 1.75m  
Private Collection

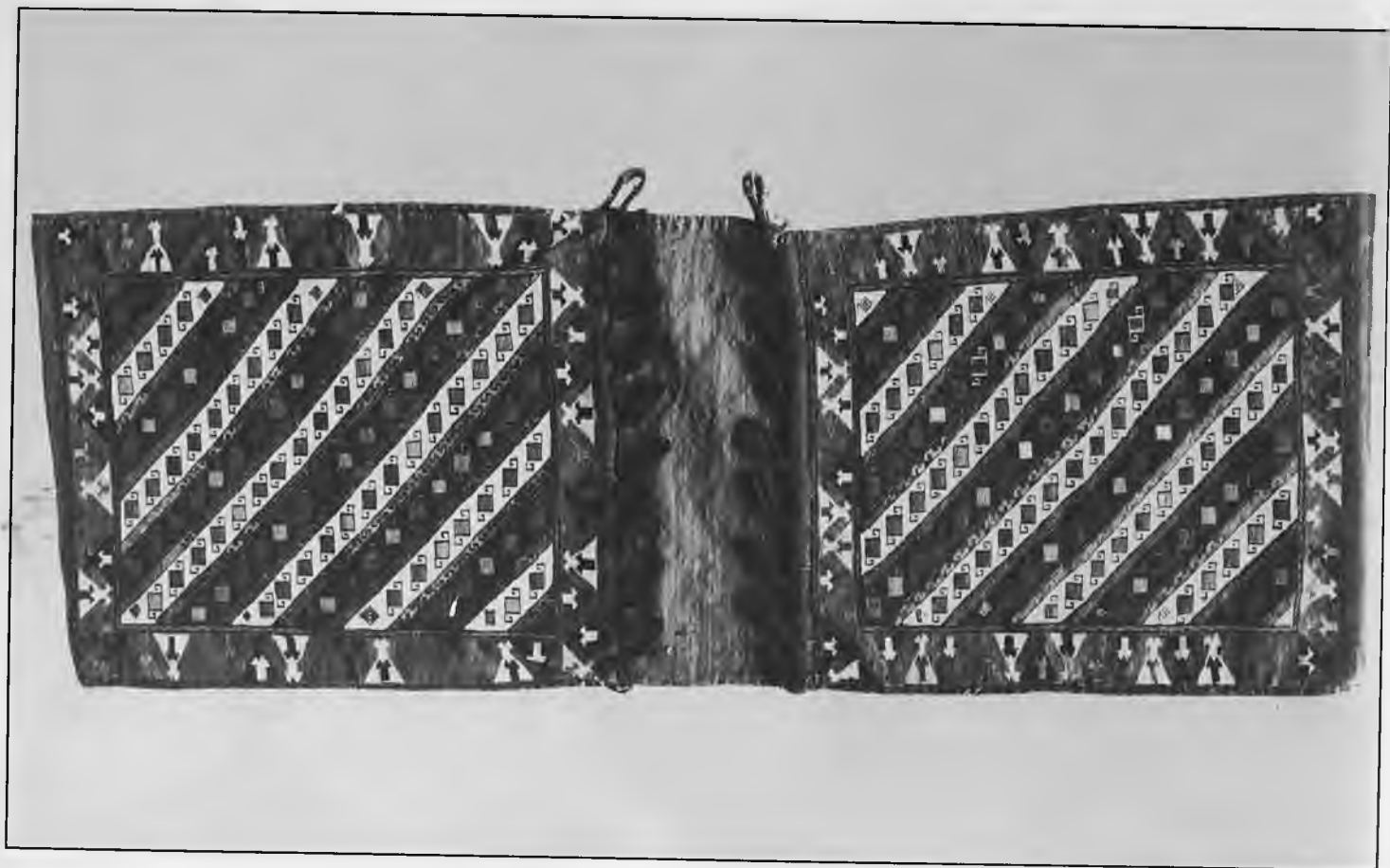




**Plate 16 Saddle-bag: Northwest Iran or South Caucasus.** An unusually finely woven weft-wrapped saddle-bag with a design often found in this border region. The guard stripes have a ground of deep red, which contrasts admirably with the blue and white diagonal stripes of the field. Other colours are green, light blue, mustard and ivory.

Size: 1.43m x 0.53m

Private Collection

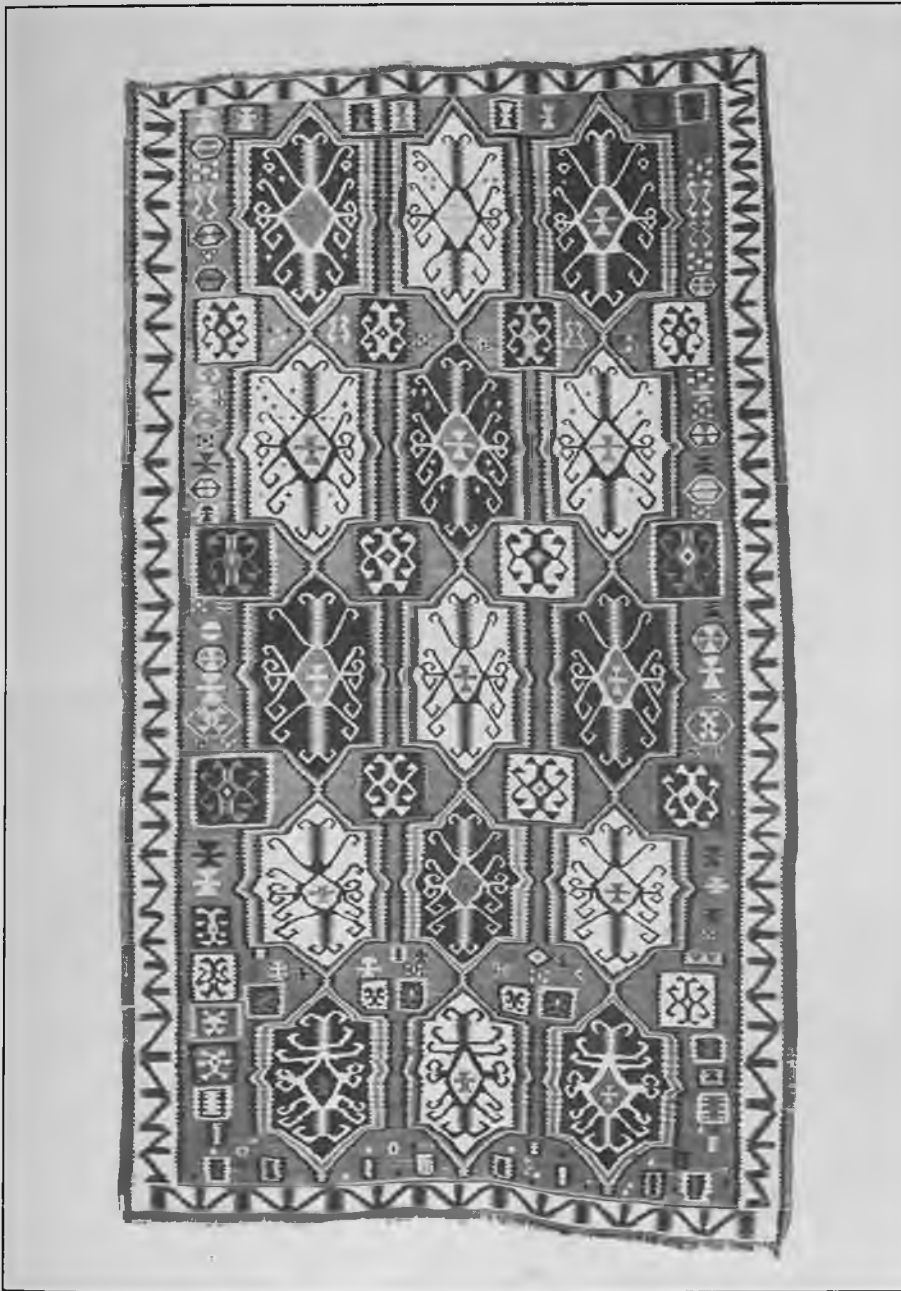




**Plate 17 Bag-faces: Shabsavan of Mughan, Northwest Iran.** Here the two long faces of a bedding bag, such as that in plate 9, have been joined in the middle, a common Persian practice, to make a shape thought to be more acceptable to the West. These are rare in bearing a date, 1321 AH (1903 AD). The design is a typical one of this border region and is frequently used by the Shabsavan of Mughan. Size: 1.77m x 0.99m  
Private Collection

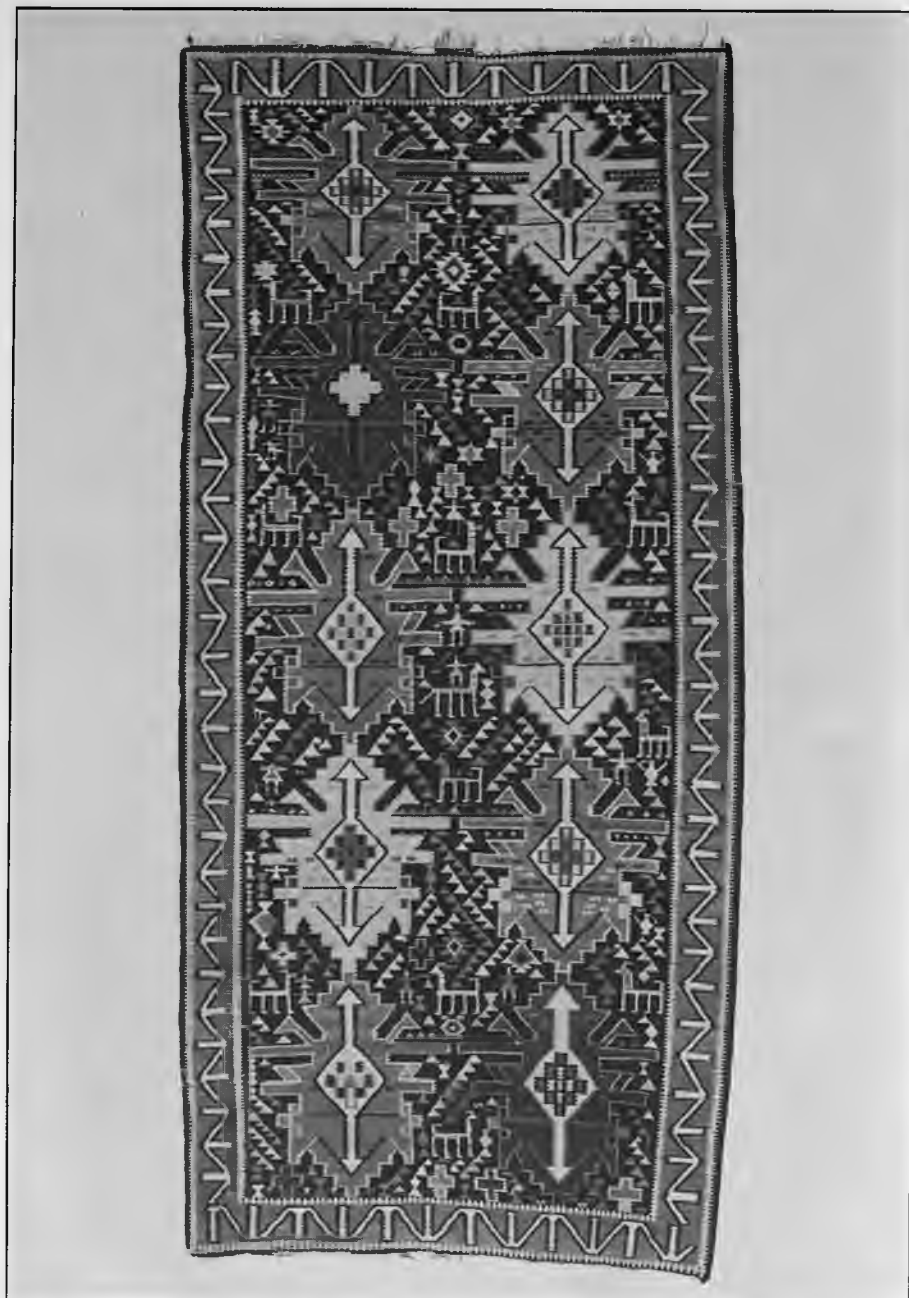
**Plate 18 Bag: Shahsavan of Mughan, Northwest Iran.** This bag was probably half of a double one, and has another common Shahsavan design. It features in the large west-wrapped rugs they still make today. It has marked similarities to the famous so-called dragon rugs, sometimes known as *sileh*, that are usually attributed to the Caucasus. These, too, may be the work of the Shahsavan. Size: 0·61m × 0·49m  
Private Collection

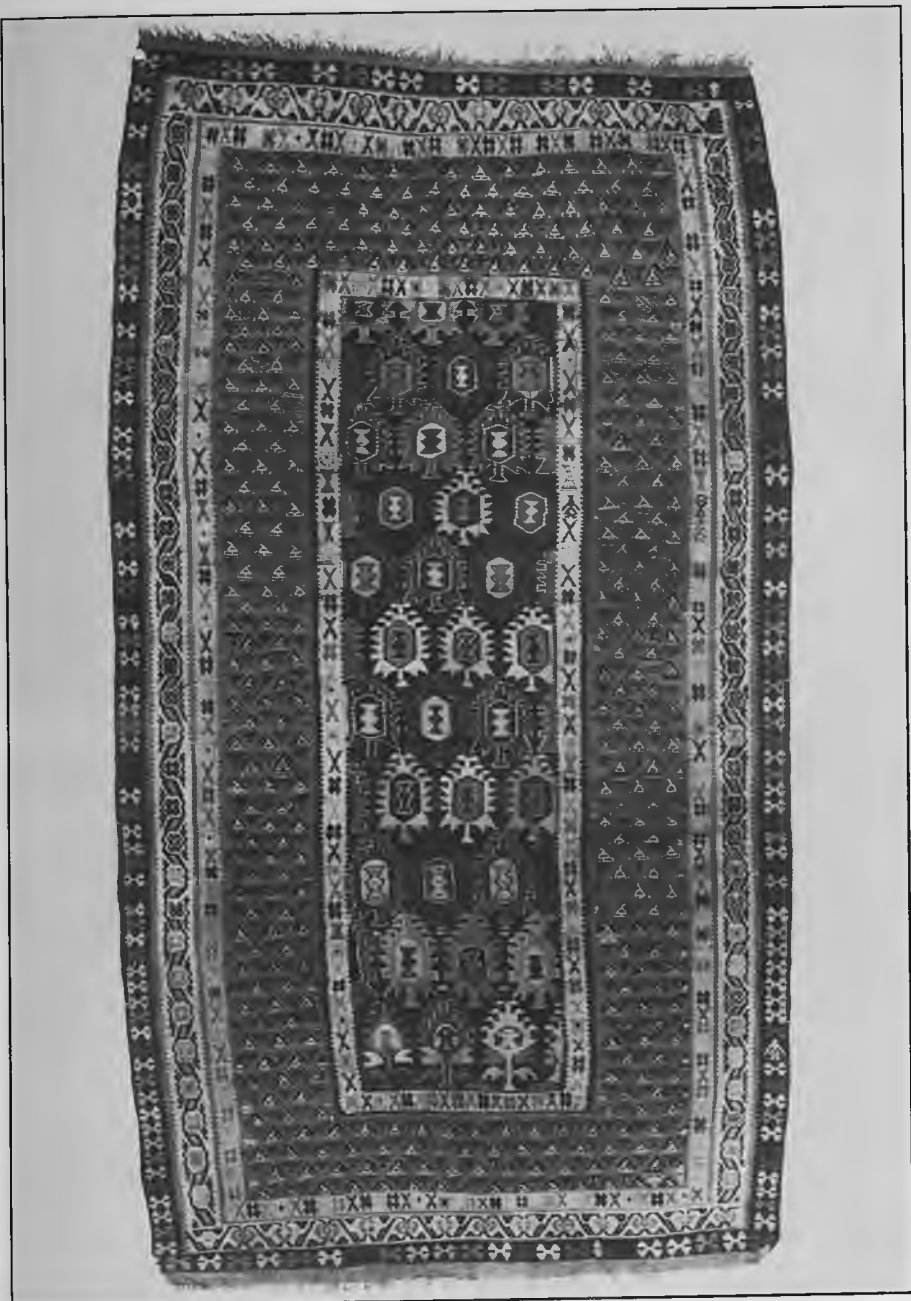




**Plate 19 Gelim: Northwest Iran or South Caucasus.** A striking slit-tapestry gelim with a bold design carried out mainly in rust red and ivory. It is a well-known type and could have been woven on either side of the border.  
Size: 2.67m × 1.81m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. T 451-1976

**Plate 20 Gelim: Northwest Iran.**  
The geometric palmettes that form the main elements of this directional slit-tapestry gelim are usually associated with the Caucasus. However, the riot of human figures; some with typical Azarbayjani hats, animals, birds pitchers and angular ornamentation indicate the work of the Persian weaver. Several of the motifs are brocaded. Size: 3.42m x 1.49m  
Private Collection

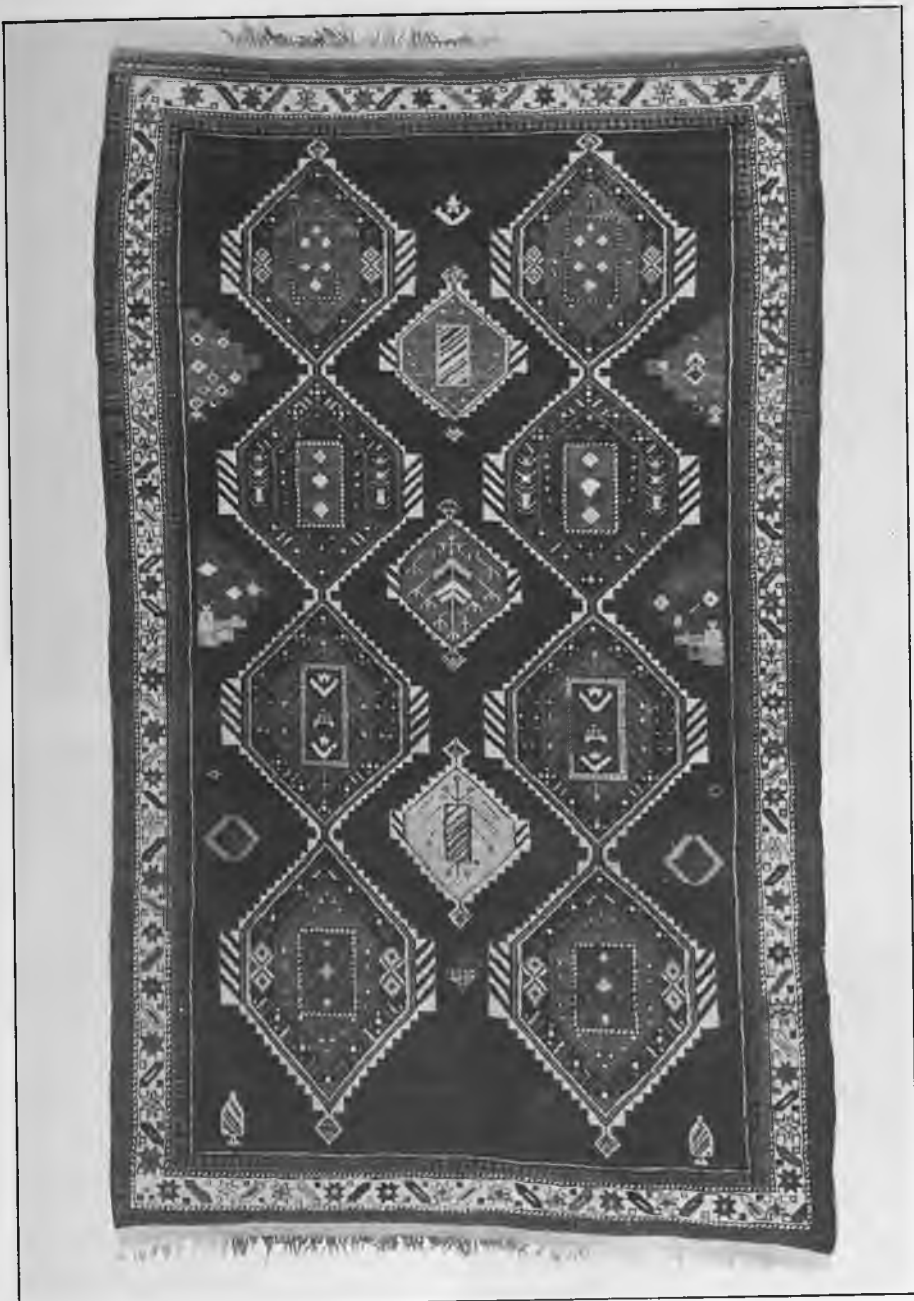




**Plate 21 Gelim: Northwest Iran.**  
The loose weave and the designs, particularly the pinecone-like botehs that surround the palmettes of the central panel, are characteristic of gelims from villages around Namin, a town to the north of Ardabil. Numerous Shavsavan have settled in the area, though such pieces may prove to have more relationships with the mountainous district of Talash, which straddles the Irano-Soviet border to the east.  
Size: 3.06m x 1.70m  
Private Collection

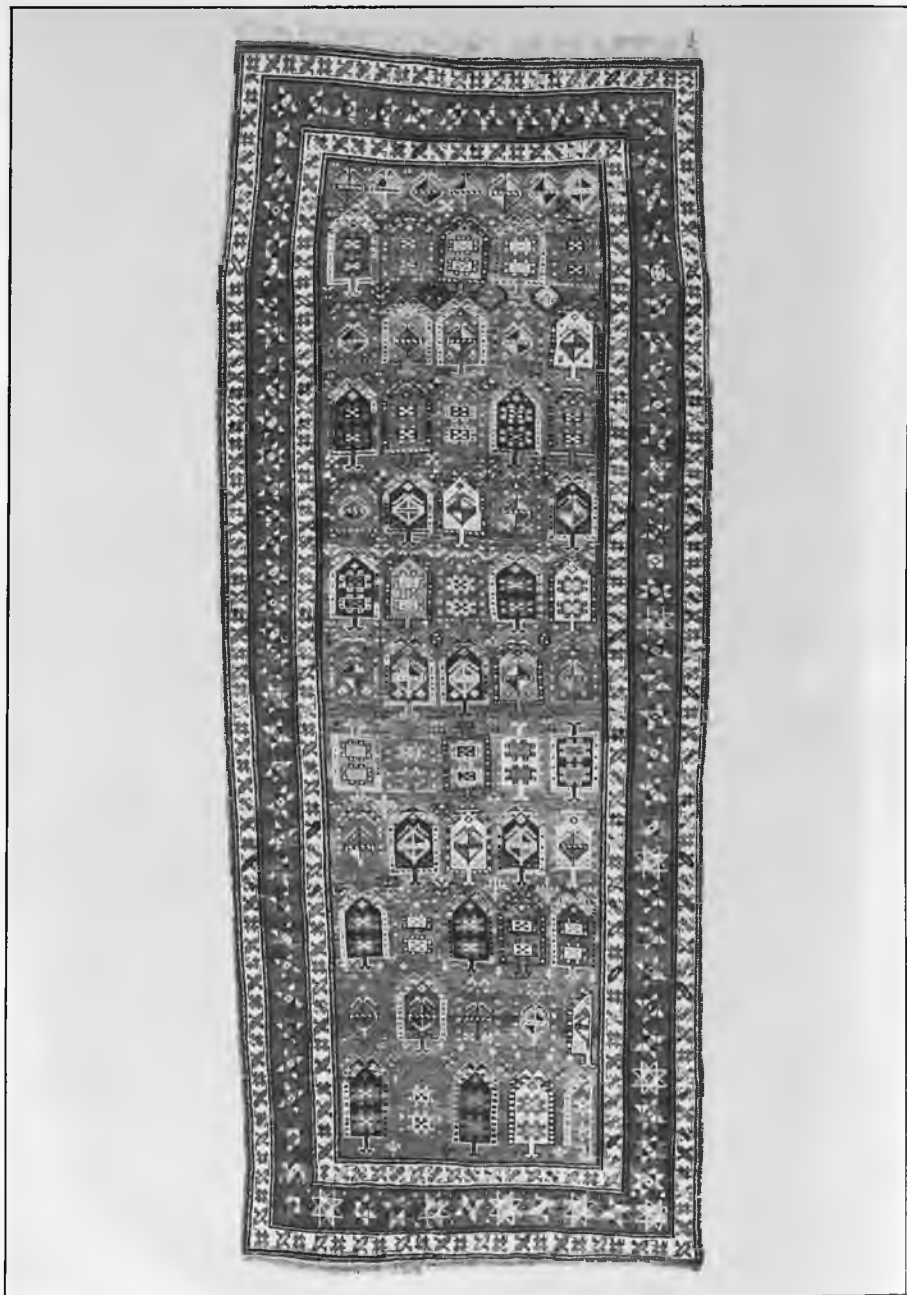
**Plate 22 Pile Rug: Northwest Iran.** The design of this rug is directly derived from an earlier Caucasian prototype. It is known in Tabriz as a stylized version of a much loved Persian motif, the *dast dil-bar*, or 'Hand of the Beloved'. The structure which includes cotton wefts and the quality of the wool suggests a Persian origin, as does the infill of ornamentation which includes a human figure. The border of the piece is common throughout the frontier region.  
Size: 2·61m × 1·04m  
Private Collection





**Plate 23 Pile Rug: Northwest Iran or South Caucasus.** An unusual rug, with a bold design of adjoining hexagons on a dark brown field. It has cotton wefts, a feature of several northwest Persian rugs, and a feature too of those of Shirvan across the border. It is one of many pieces that cannot be positively attributed, though the human figures and randomly placed diamonds are perhaps indicative of Persian work.  
Size: 2.74m x 1.67m  
Private Collection

**Plate 24 Pile Rug: Hashtrud, Northwest Iran.** The way this rug is woven, and in particular the characteristic braiding of the warp ends at the top, suggests the district of Hashtrud as its origin. The drawing of the formalized arabesque of the two narrow guard stripes is found on rugs from the Caucasus, with which these pieces are sometimes confused. It is not known whether they are the work of the Shabsavan or of other Turkic peoples in the area.  
Size: 3.55m × 1.44m  
Private Collection

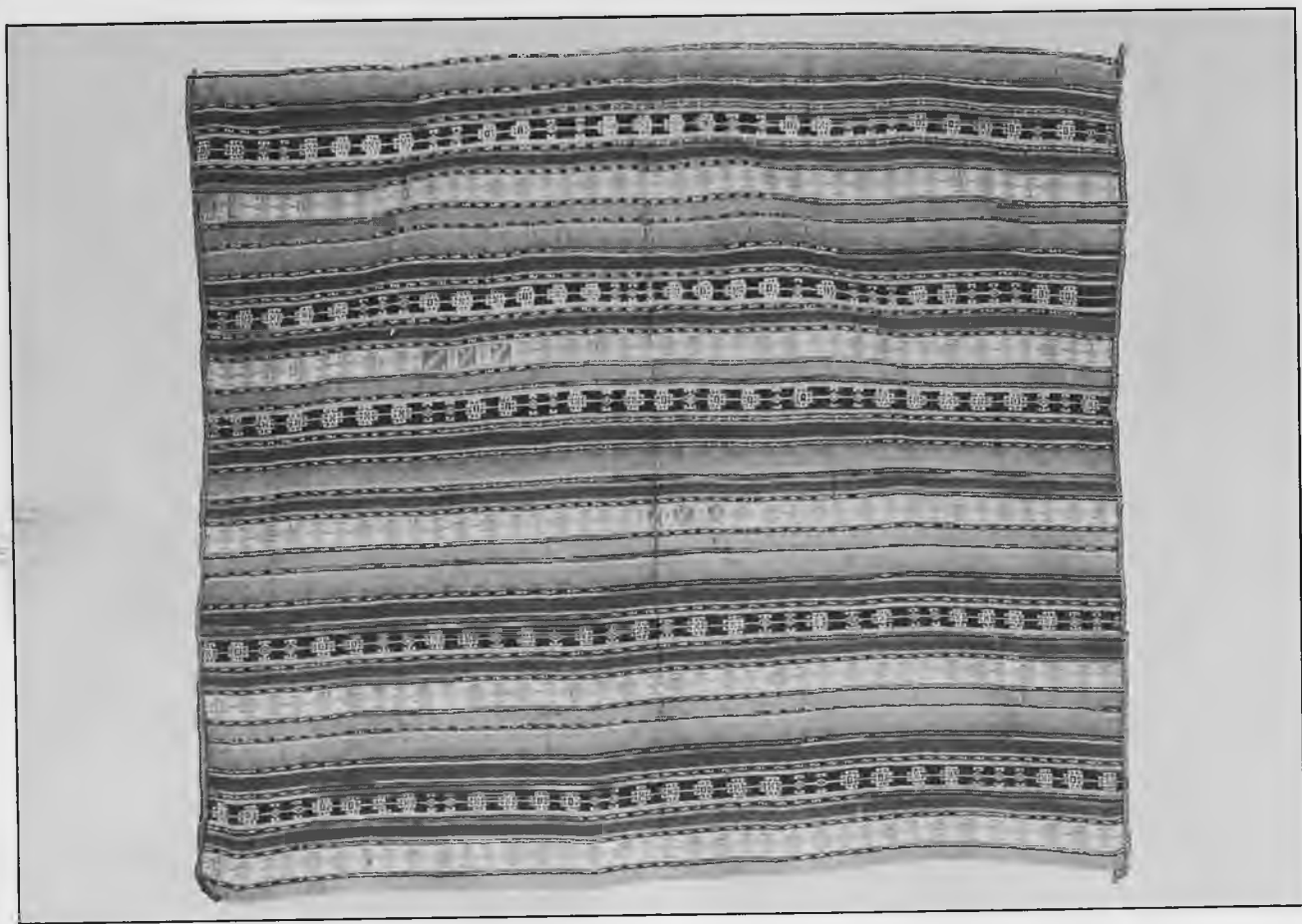




**Plate 25 Gelim: Shabsavan of Hashtrud, Northwest Iran.** Gelims with broad horizontal stripes are found in many parts of Iran as well as the Caucasus. Typical of the Shabsavan of Hashtrud and Khamsa are large gelims woven in two pieces, afterwards sewn down the middle. Here the narrow stripes are extra-weft patterned while the main panels are in slit-tapestry.

Size: 3.53m × 1.45m  
Private Collection

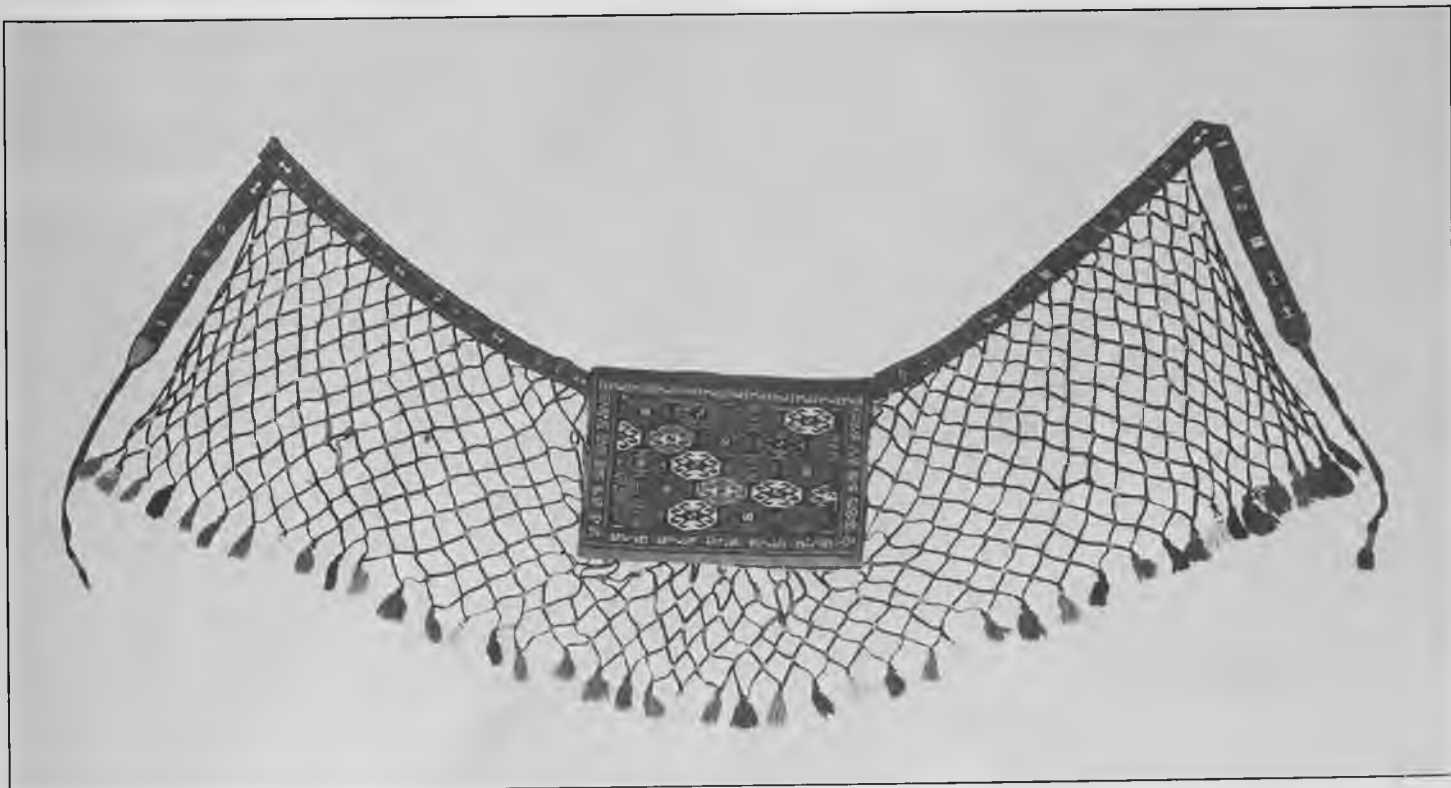
**Plate 26 Jajim: Hashtrud, Northwest Iran.** This is a distinctive type of flat-weave, woven in long narrow strips (see plate 10) with a warp-faced pattern rather than the more usual weft-face. Jajim is the term by which this technique is known in Iran. They are made throughout the country and are often hard to attribute. This example was found in Tabriz where it was attributed to Hashtrud. Size: 1.70m × 1.54m  
Private Collection



**Plate 27 Trapping:** Shabsavan of Hashtrud, Northwest Iran. This small reverse weft-wrapped bag belongs to the same group as the bedding in plate 9. The Shabsavan are the main tribe of Hashtrud and are probably the makers of such pieces. The netting is purely decorative, and used to adorn the sides of a tent, while the bag stores small domestic valuables. Sometimes they are also used as animal trappings.

Size (of bag): 0.50m × 0.46m

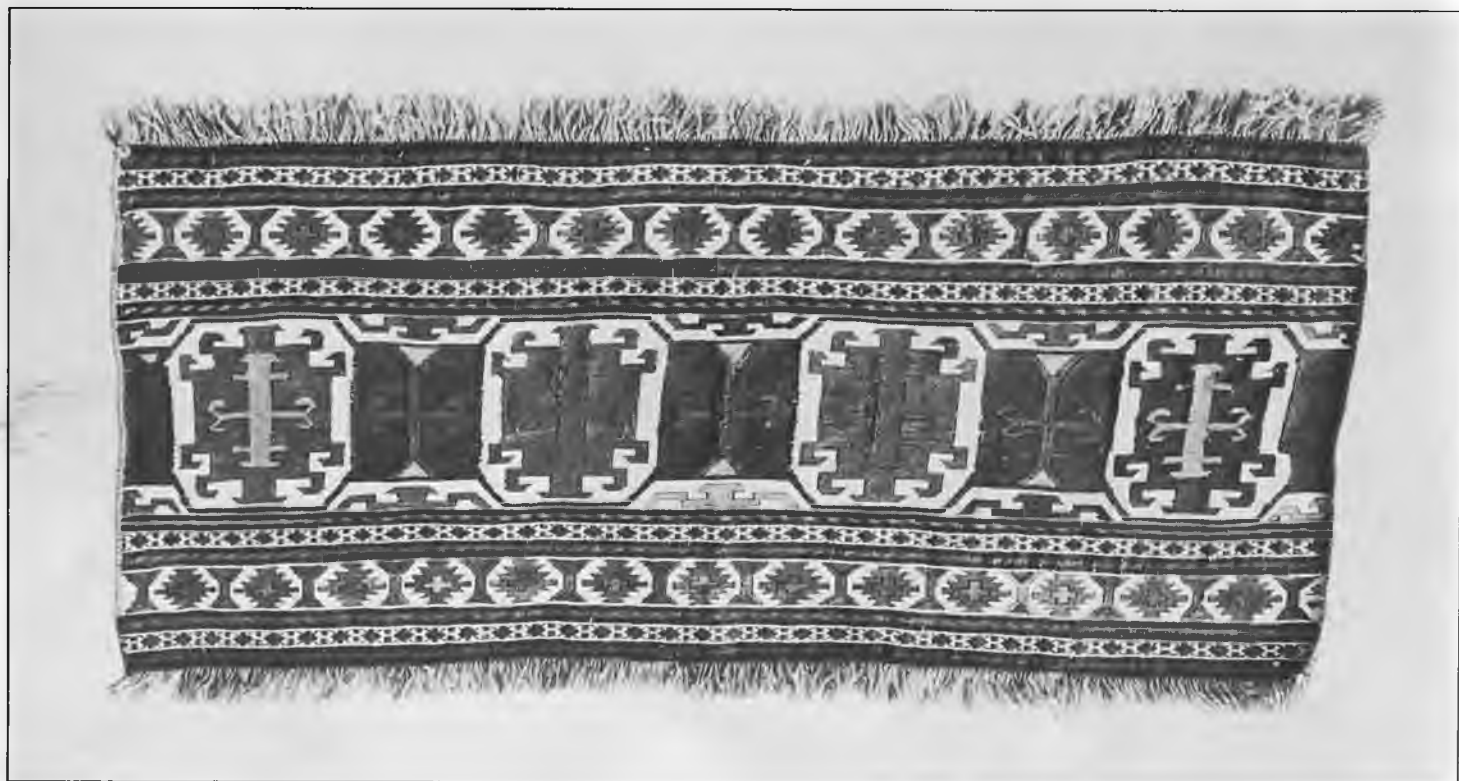
Private Collection



**Plate 28 Bedding Bag-face: Shahsavan of Hashtrud, Northwest Iran.** This bold  
weft-wrapped bag-face was part of a complete bedding bag found in a Shahsavan  
winter village south of Mayana. In summer these people go to pastures in the  
Takht-i Sulayman mountain range which lies north of Bijar. They are  
responsible for a variety of flat-woven pieces.

Size: 0.46m × 1.03m

Private Collection



**Plate 29 Saddle-bag: Hashtrud or Khamsa, Northwest Iran.** The design of hooked lozenges within a lattice is popular in many parts of Iran. However, the stars of the border, the colours – red, blue and ivory – the red back and the quality of the wool of this piece point to the work of the Shahsavans of Hashtrud or Khamsa.

Size: 1.62m × 0.76m

Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright No. T 73-1948



**Plate 30 Bedding Bag: Hashtrud or Khamsa, Northwest Iran.** This bedding bag was found in Mayana, and is typical of the work of the Shahsavan of this region. Colours are predominantly medium blue, light red and ivory. Note the characteristic stars of the border. This face and the two side faces are in weft-wrapping. The other long face (illustrated opposite) is in extra-weft patterning.

Size: 0·87m × 0·44m × 0·49m

Private Collection



**Plate 31 Bedding Bag: Hashtrud or Khamsa, Northwest Iran.** This is the reverse side of the bag in plate 30 and is in extra-weft patterning. It is unusual to find two techniques on one bag. This technique and design are also often used for large floor coverings in this area.

Size: 0·87m × 0·44m × 0·49m

Private Collection



**Plate 32 Saddle-bag: Shabsavan of Khamsa, Northwest Iran.** Bags with this design were once often found in the Qazvin bazaar and appear to be the work of the Shabsavan of Khamsa. The central medallion has a somewhat heraldic quality, perhaps derived from some early bird form. The upper and lower bands have the so-called bird border design that is found all over Iran, but typical of this area are the stars of the main guard.

Size: 1.40m × 0.55m

Collection of Michael Noel-Clarke



**Plate 33 Bedding Bag: Shahsavan of Khamsa, Northwest Iran.** This bag was also found in the Qazvin bazaar, one of the gathering centres for Khamsa pieces. It is one of a characteristic group where only a single face is decorated in weft-wrapping. The sides and the back consist of the red plain-weave that is so much a feature of the backing of most bags from this area. The design of the central panel is typical.

Size: 1.00m × 0.42m × 0.64m

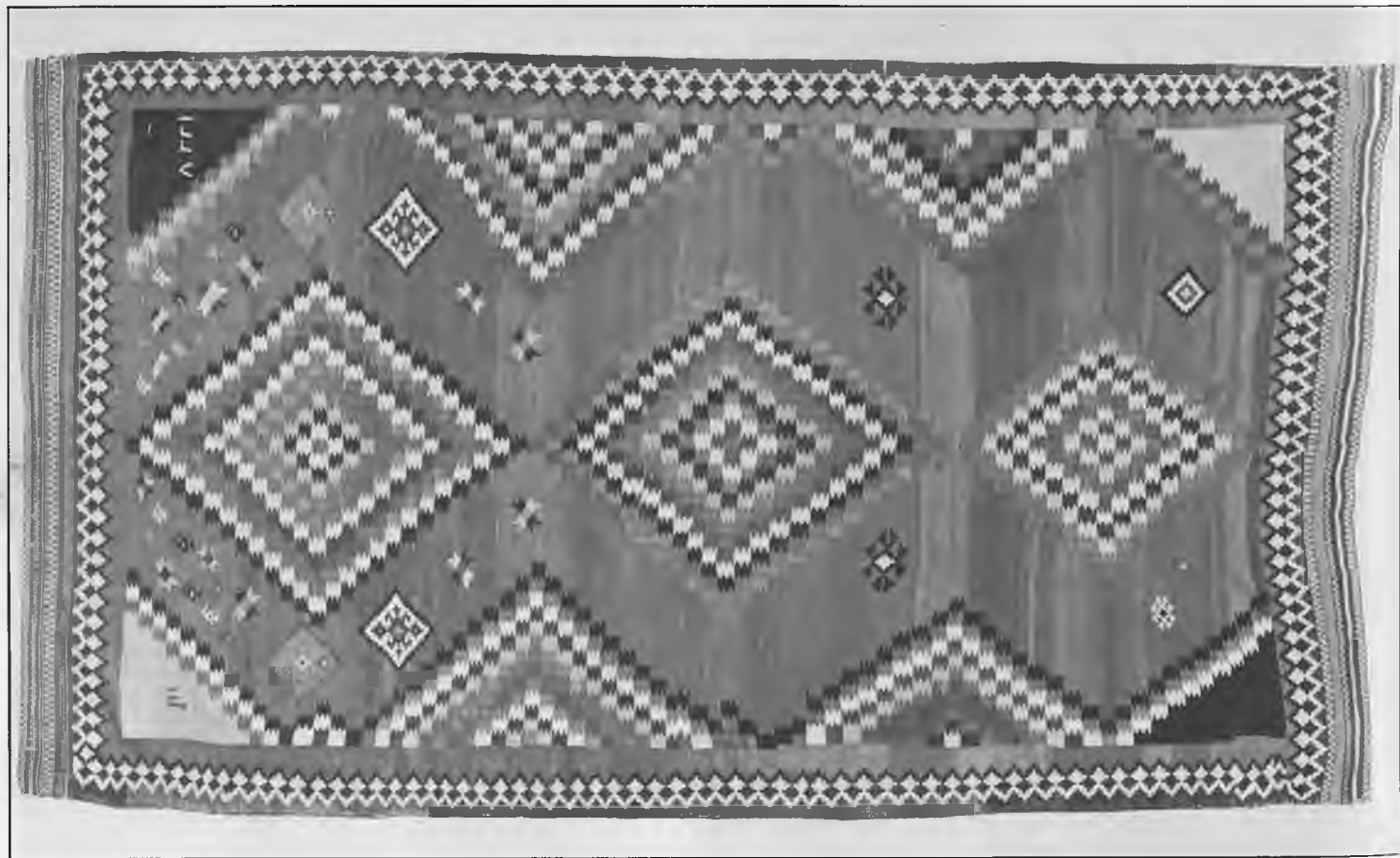
Private Collection



**Plate 34 Gelim: Sava Area, North Iran.** This unusually large, handsome gelim is almost comparable to a Paul Klee painting. It was found in the holy city of Qum, south of Tehran, and is probably the work of the Baghdadi Shabsavan. It bears a date in mirror image of 1338 AH (1919 AD) and has cotton warps which are a feature of gelims from this area, though the dazzler designs are not unlike those of Garmsar. The brocaded chevron end finishes are found in many parts of northern and southern Iran.

Size: 3.68m × 1.96m

Private Collection

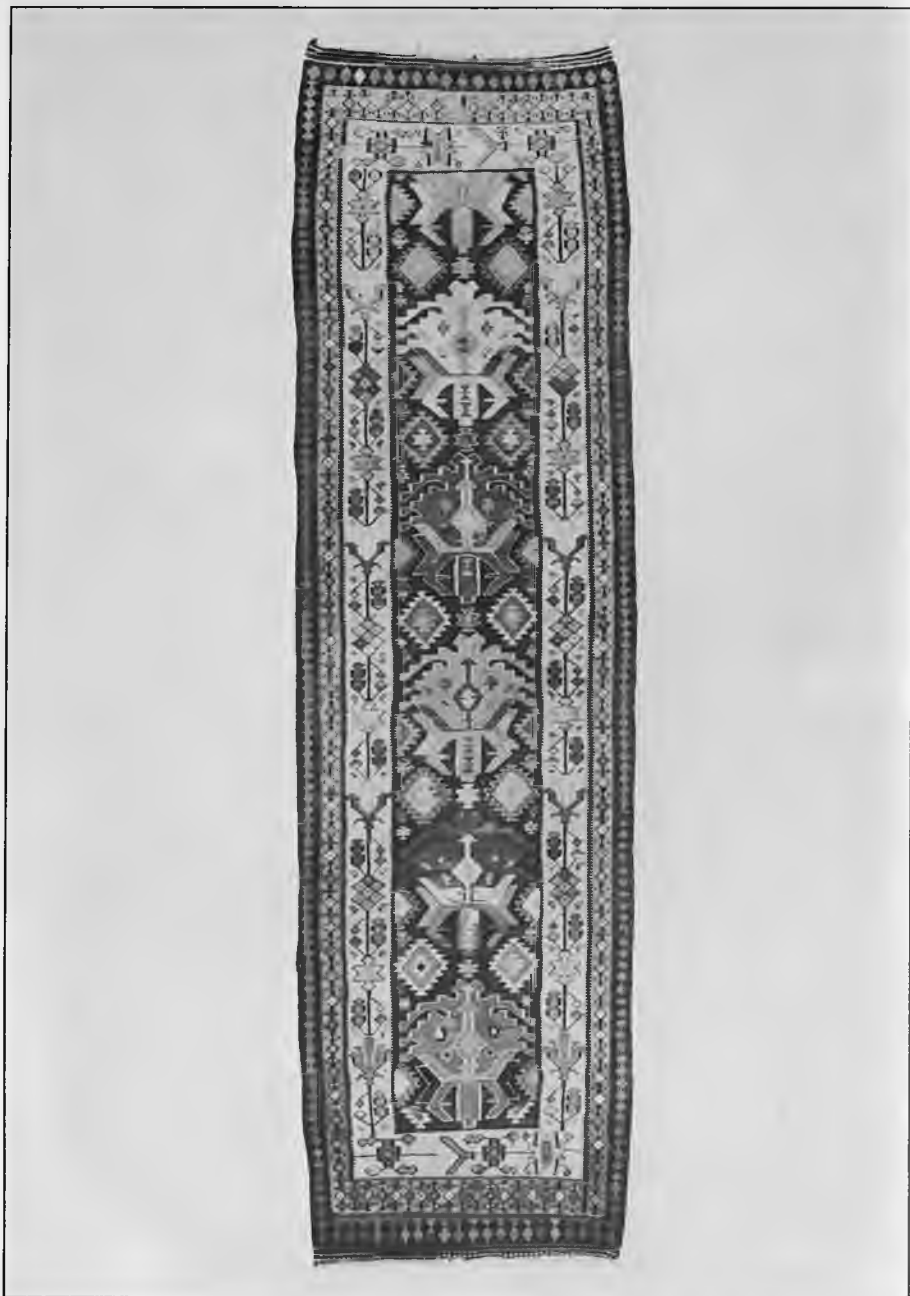




**Plate 35 Gelim: Sava or Varamin Area, North Iran.** Such gelims come from an area between Qazvin, Sava and Varamin. The stylized floral border, on a ground of mixed ivory wool and white cotton, is reminiscent of a common Caucasian and northwest Persian type, though the bold field is unique.

Size: 3.77m × 1.19m  
Private Collection

**Plate 36 Gelim: Sava-Qazvin Area, North Iran.** A striking example of a gelim from villages between Sava and Qazvin, amongst whose inhabitants there are numerous settled Inanlu and Baghdadi Shahsavan. Such pieces are often sold under the trade name of Zarand, a village northeast of Sava. The design is known locally as *palang*, meaning leopard, although what the connection with that animal might be is a matter for conjecture. Size: 3.68m x 1.10m  
Collection of Michael Noel-Clarke

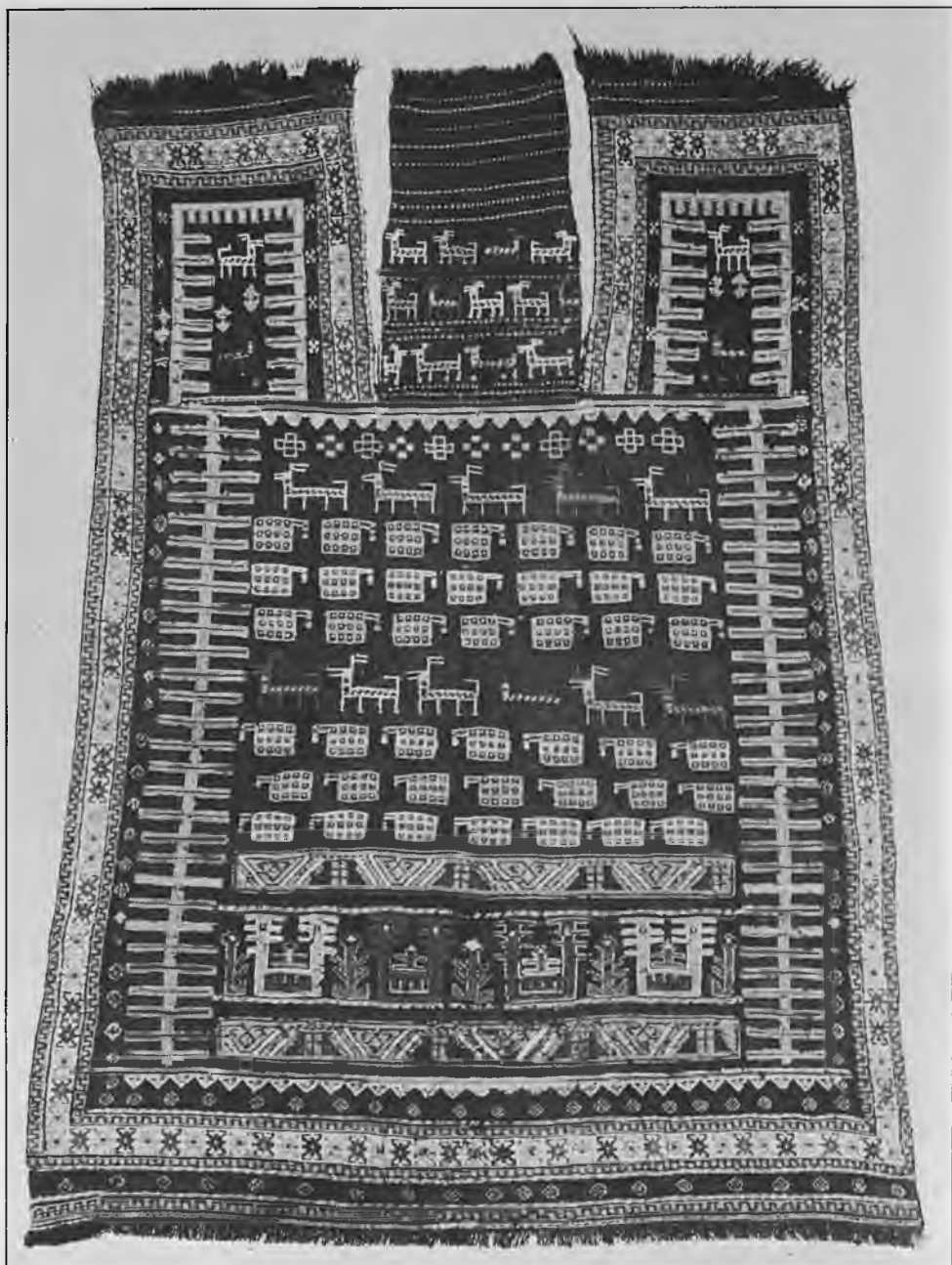




**Plate 37 Pile Rug: Sava Area, North Iran.** A curious rug with a ground of deep rust red with several variations in colour known as *abrash*. The brocaded end finishes and herringbone side overcasts are used in Fars, but also feature in pieces from north Iran. The quality of the wool indicates this latter region as do the border designs. It may be the work of the Baghdadi Shabsavan of Sava.  
Size: 2.43m × 0.89m  
Victorian and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. T 31-1970

**Plate 38 Horse-blanket: Kurds of Bijar, West Iran.** A bold tribal horse-blanket with weft-wrapped and pile decoration on a dark blue plain-weave ground. Such pieces originate in the Bijar area where there are both Shabsavan and Kurds. The dark colours and the border design, as well as the motifs of the field and the use of the pile, suggest that it was probably woven by the Kurds.

Size: 1.50m × 1.16m  
Collection of Amedeo and Claire de Franchis





**Plate 39 Bag: Kurdish or Shaksavan, West Iran.** This tiny weft-wrapped bag was found in Bijar, where opinions that it was Kurdish or Shaksavan were equally voiced. The two-headed bird forms are generally considered Kurdish in origin, but may well have been adopted by their neighbours. The ground is light blue.

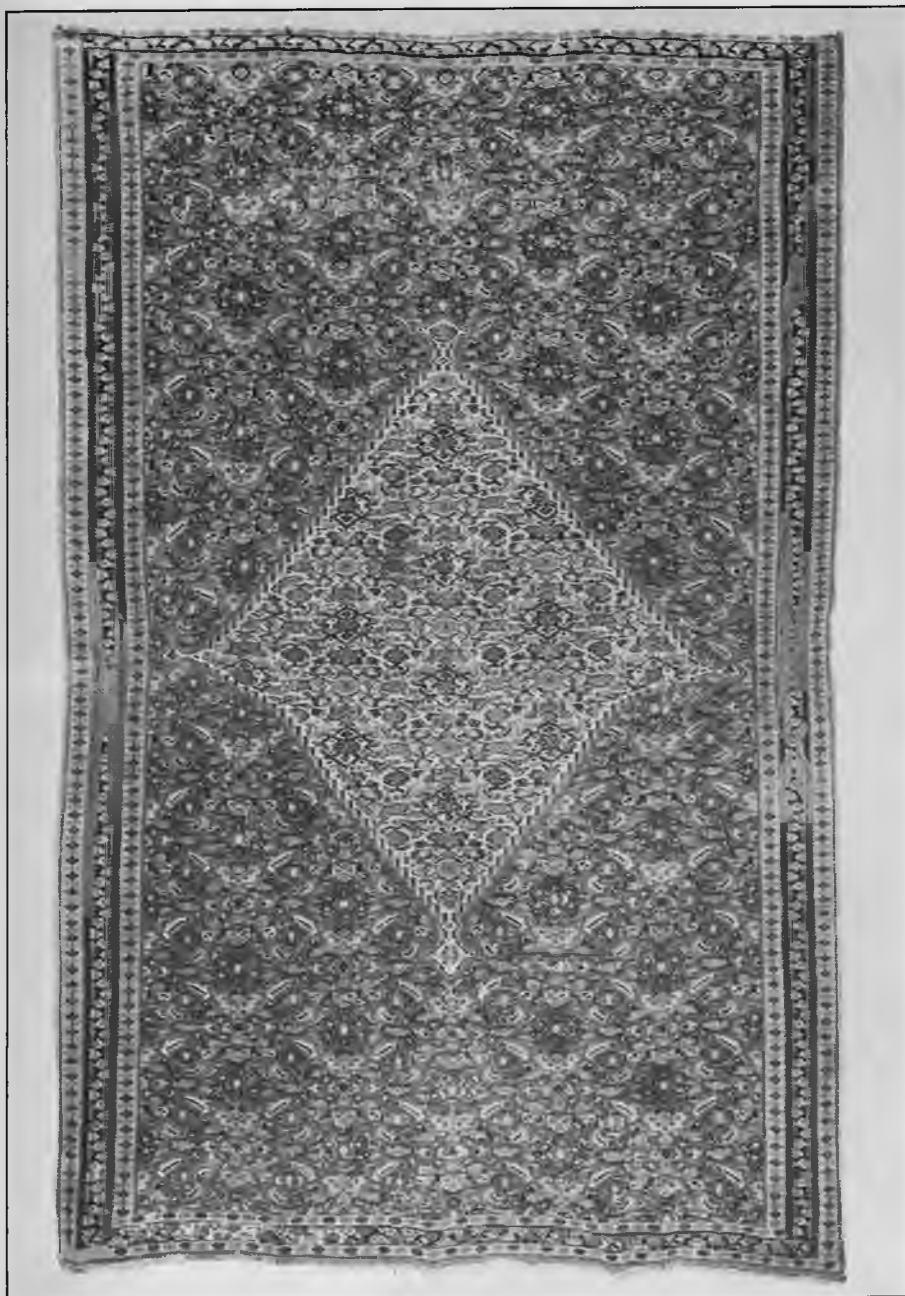
Size: 0.34m × 0.29m  
Private Collection

**Plate 40 Saddle-bag: Kurds of Qazvin, North Iran.** This is one of another group of bags which originate in the Qazvin area. They are weft-wrapped, with pile reinforcement at each end, and were probably woven by Rashvand or Mafi Kurds. The Rashvand appear to have existed here since the seventeenth century, whereas the Mafi came more recently from an original homeland near Kirmanshah.

Size: 1·59m × 1·40m

Private Collection





*Senna*  
Plate 41 *Gelim*: Senna, West  
Iran. A fine Senna gelim in  
delicate, glowing colours, with the  
so-called Herati pattern.  
Size: 1.98m × 1.32m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. T 235-1957

**Plate 42 Pile Rug: Bijar Area,  
West Iran.** The tightly packed  
weave of this small garden rug  
indicates that it was woven by  
Kurds in the Bijar region. A stream  
containing fish bisects the pale  
blue field, on which wild animals  
sport among flowering trees.  
Size: 2.07m x 1.22m  
Private Collection





**Plate 43 Woman Weaving:**  
**Bijar Area, West Iran.** In a village  
near Bijar this woman sat  
weaving a carpet from a cartoon  
she had bought in the town.  
When completed she would  
return to sell it in the bazaar.  
There is a flourishing industry  
carried on among all neighbouring  
villages.

Photo: Jenny Housego

**Plate 44 Pile Rug: Kurdish, West Iran.** An unusual rug with a deep rose-pink ground and a border of stylized camels alternatively light green and dark blue. It is probably Kurdish from the area of Sawj Bulagh, the Kurdish centre of south Azarbayjan.  
Size: 2.72m × 1.14m  
Private Collection





**Plate 45 Pile Rug: Kurdish, West Iran.** The central pattern of this old rug, with its formalized lattice and stylized daisies, is known as the mina-khani. It is characteristic of Kurdish rugs, though variations of it are made in Varamin and by the Baluch. The undulating floral scroll of the inner and outer guards are typical of Kurdish rugs, although more unusual is the main border, which recalls those of early Turkish rugs. This was probably woven in Sawj Bulagh or western Kurdistan.  
Size: 1.82m × 1.01m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. 142-1888

**Plate 46 Salt Bag: Kurdish, West Iran.** This pile salt bag is a good example of tribal weaving of west Iran, and was probably made by the Sanjabi or Jaff Kurds (see also plate 13). The pattern has been carefully planned in relation to the shape of the piece and the result is unusually successful. Similar dark toned lattices are also found in the flat-weaves of the Kurds of Khurasan.

Size: 0.66m × 0.54m  
Collection of Eric Pride





**Plate 47** Kurd in Sanandaj. In the bazaar at Sanandaj a Kurd wears the characteristic dress of turban, tight-fitting jacket and baggy trousers. The Kurds are one of the few tribal groups whose men have retained their traditional garb.

Photo: Jenny Housego

**Plate 48: Saddle-bag: Kurdish, Northwest Iran or East Turkey.** This saddle-bag is woven in slit-tapestry with the outlining in an additional weft of the colour areas characteristic of Kurdish weaving in this border region. This lattice pattern (see also plate 46) is a popular one among Kurdish weavers.

Size: 1.48m x 0.54m

Private Collection





**Plate 49 Flat-weave: Kurdish, Northwest Iran or East Turkey.** A characteristically Kurdish design of hooked lattices in extra-weft patterning here alternates with stripes of plain-weave. The predominant colour is a deep purple-mauve. Such pieces have been attributed to the Jalali Kurds of the border region with Turkey, and could probably have been woven on either side of the frontier.  
Size: 3.36m × 1.16m  
Private Collection

**Plate 50 Gelim: Kurdish, Northwest Iran or East Turkey.** Zig-zag bands with hooked motifs in several colours make a bold field for this slit-tapestry gelim. Like plates 48, 49 and 51 it comes from the Irano-Turkish border. Note the characteristic outlining of the pattern with an additional weft.

Size: 3.07m × 1.49m

Private Collection

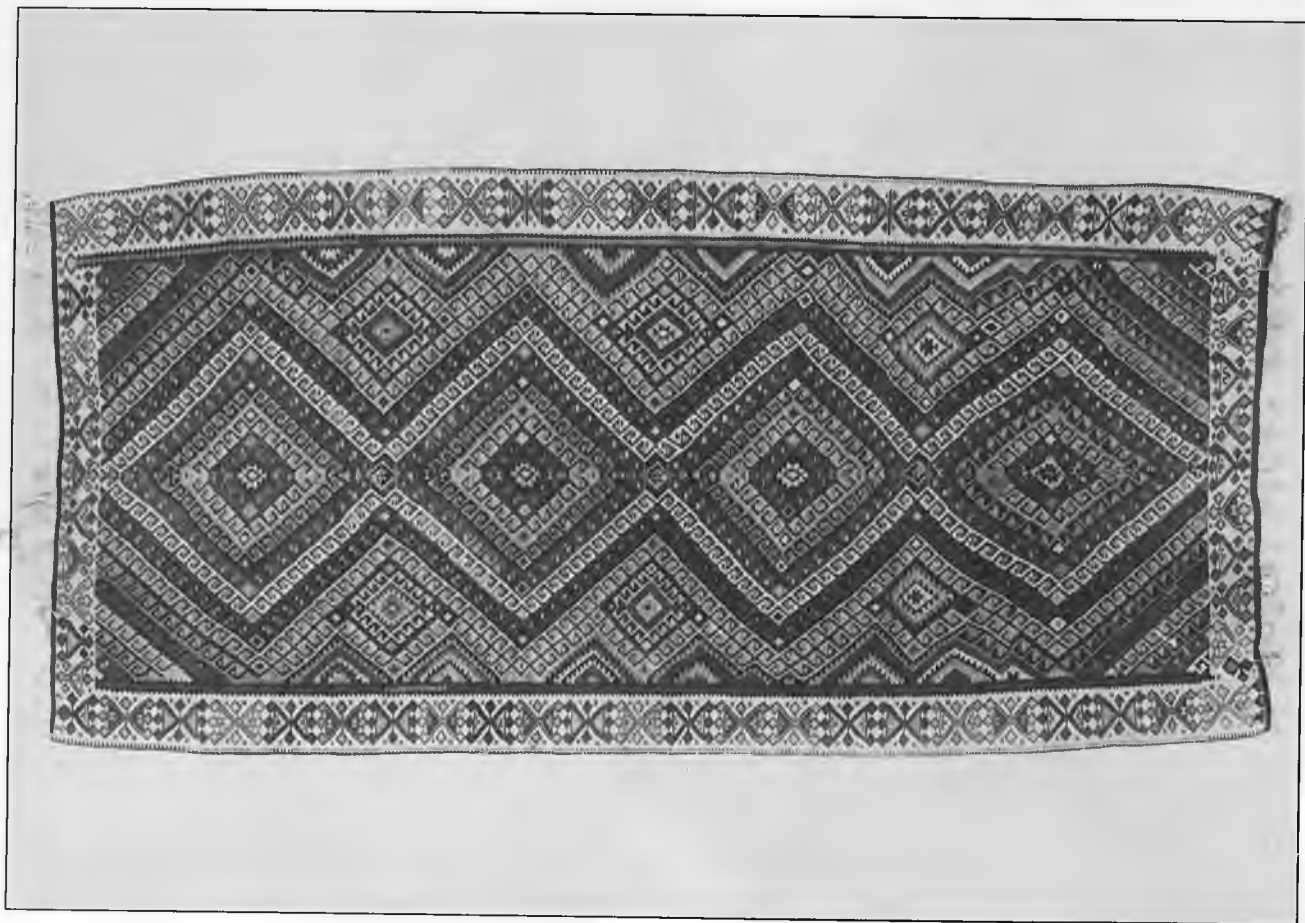
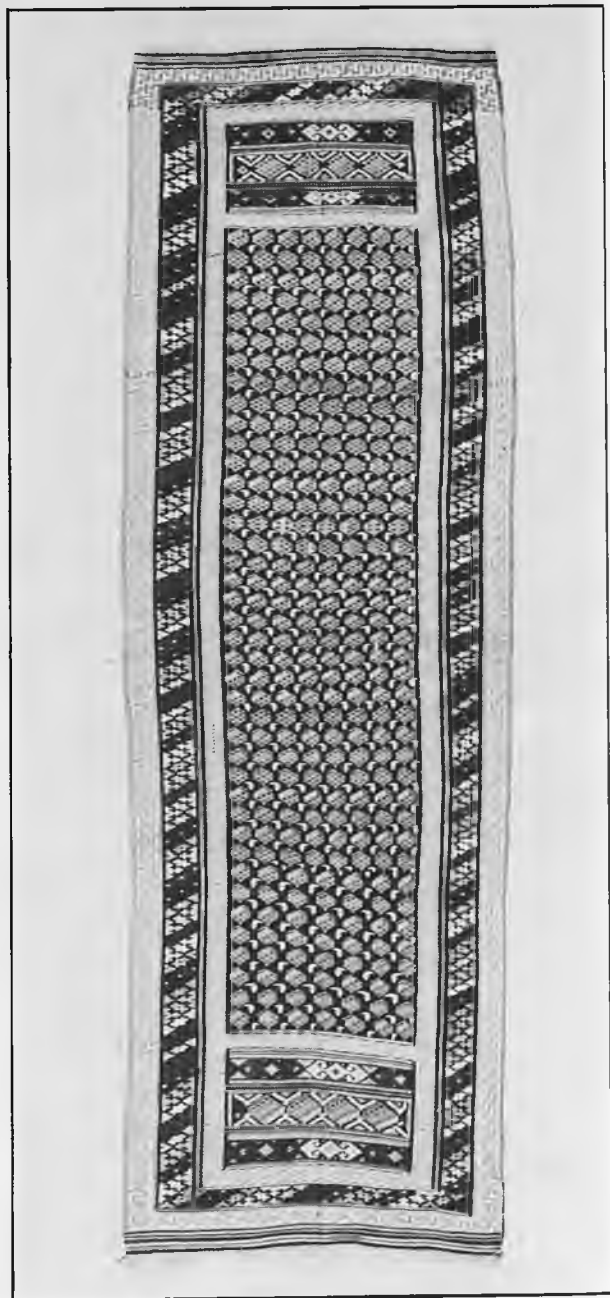




Plate 51 Gelim: Kurdish,  
Northwest Iran or East Turkey.  
Kurds have traditionally migrated  
backwards and forwards across  
this border. An exact provenance  
for gelims of this type is impossible  
to establish, though a Kurd in  
Lake Van in eastern Turkey said  
that the finest pieces were made  
on the Persian side. This has a  
design of columns of adjoining  
hexagons with continuous  
hooked diamonds in the border.  
Size: 2.00m × 1.34m  
Collection of Michael Noel-Clarke

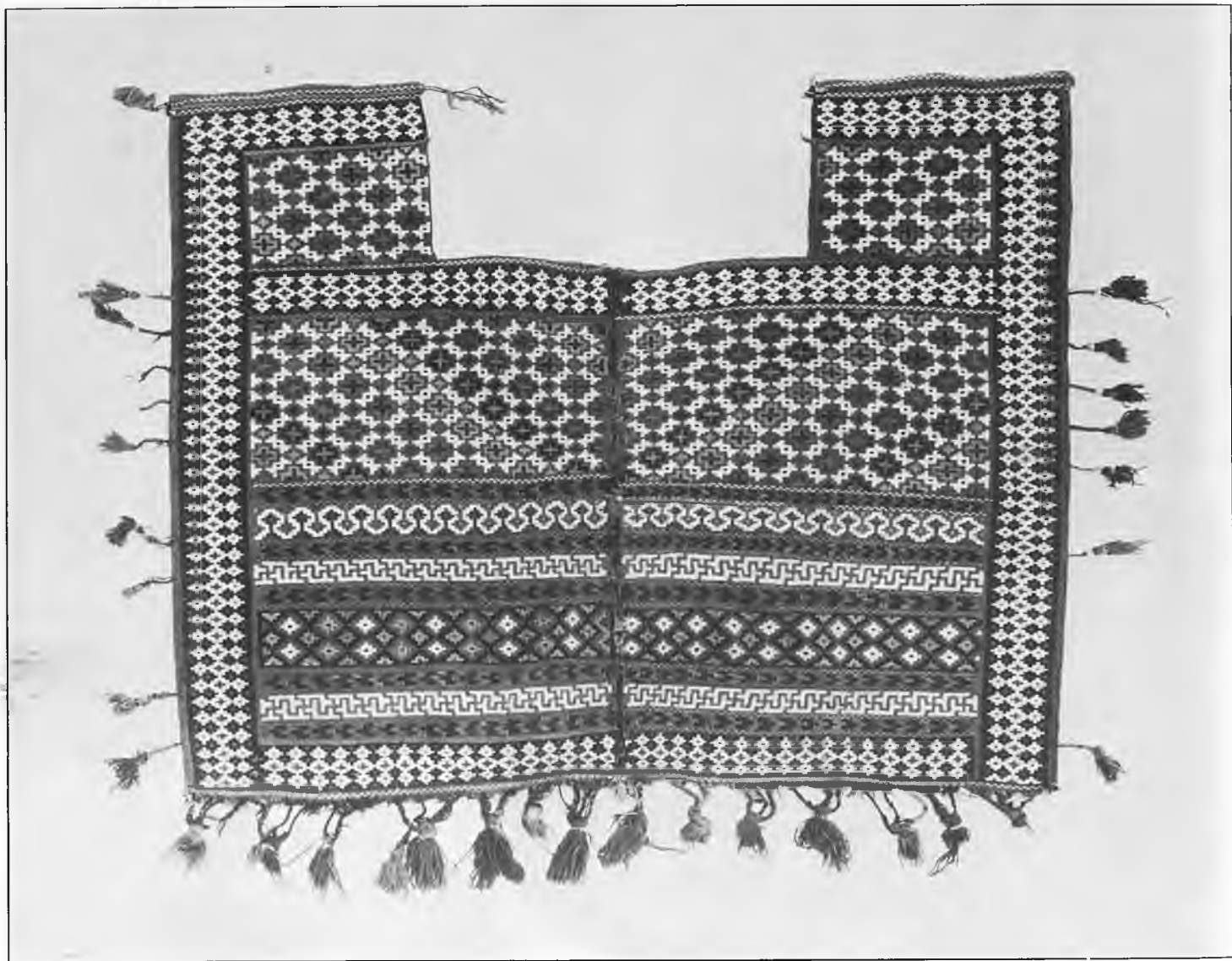
**Plate 52 Gelim: Luri or Bakhtiyari, West Iran.** One of the distinctive double interlocked tapestry-woven gelims of the Lurs or Bakhtiyaris. These tribes are closely related, and their weavings are often hard to tell apart. Here rows of botehs on a dark blue ground form the field, while characteristic border designs surround them. Note particularly the swastika motifs of the outer border. Colours are tan, brick red, mustard, gold, dark green, medium and dark blue and aubergine, and white cotton. This piece is unusually finely woven. Size: 3.92m × 1.35m  
Collection of Amedeo and Claire de Franchis.

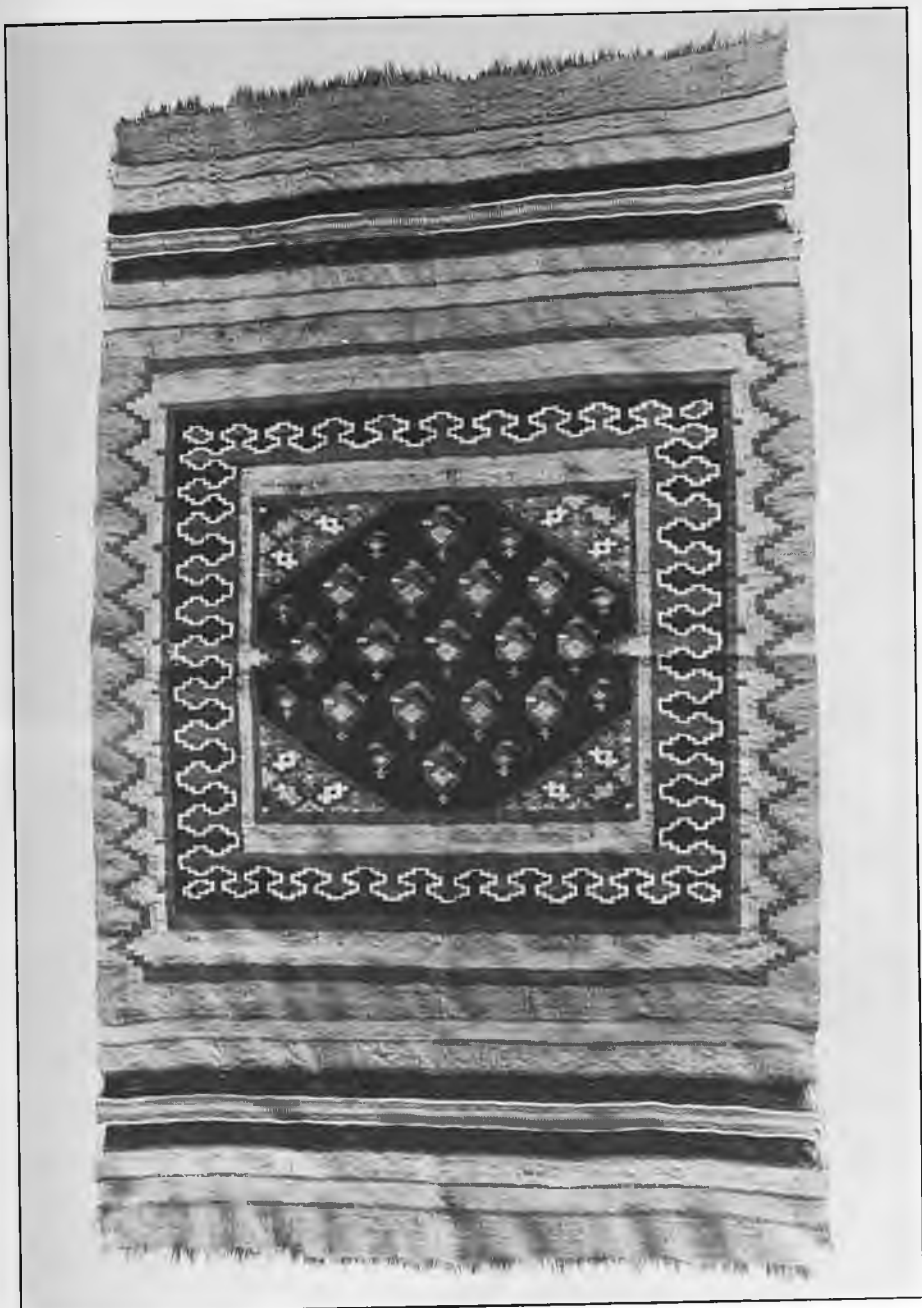


**Plate 53 Bakhtiyari Women and Children.** This group is sitting outside a tent during migration between their winter quarters on the plains of the Persian Gulf and summer pastures high up in the Zagros mountains.  
Photo: Lord Oxmantown



**Plate 54 Horse-blanket: Luri or Bakhtiyari, West Iran.** A bold horse-blanket in the usual double interlocked tapestry-weave of the Lurs and Bakhtiyaris. Brocaded zig-zag stripes divide each pattern panel. White cotton provides a strong contrast to the bright red, blues, dark brown and rust of the field. It was woven in two pieces.  
Size: 1.90m × 1.54m  
Collection of Eric Pride





**Plate 55 Gelim: Shushtar, Southwest Iran.** A small, very light, double interlocked tapestry-woven gelim from Shushtar, a town on the Gulf plains of Khuzistan, where the Bakhtiyari spend the winter. Probably woven by the townspeople rather than the tribeswomen, there is undoubted Luri-Bakhtiyari influence. The small size indicates its use as a wrapper to take clean clothes to the bathhouse, but full-size gelims are also made.

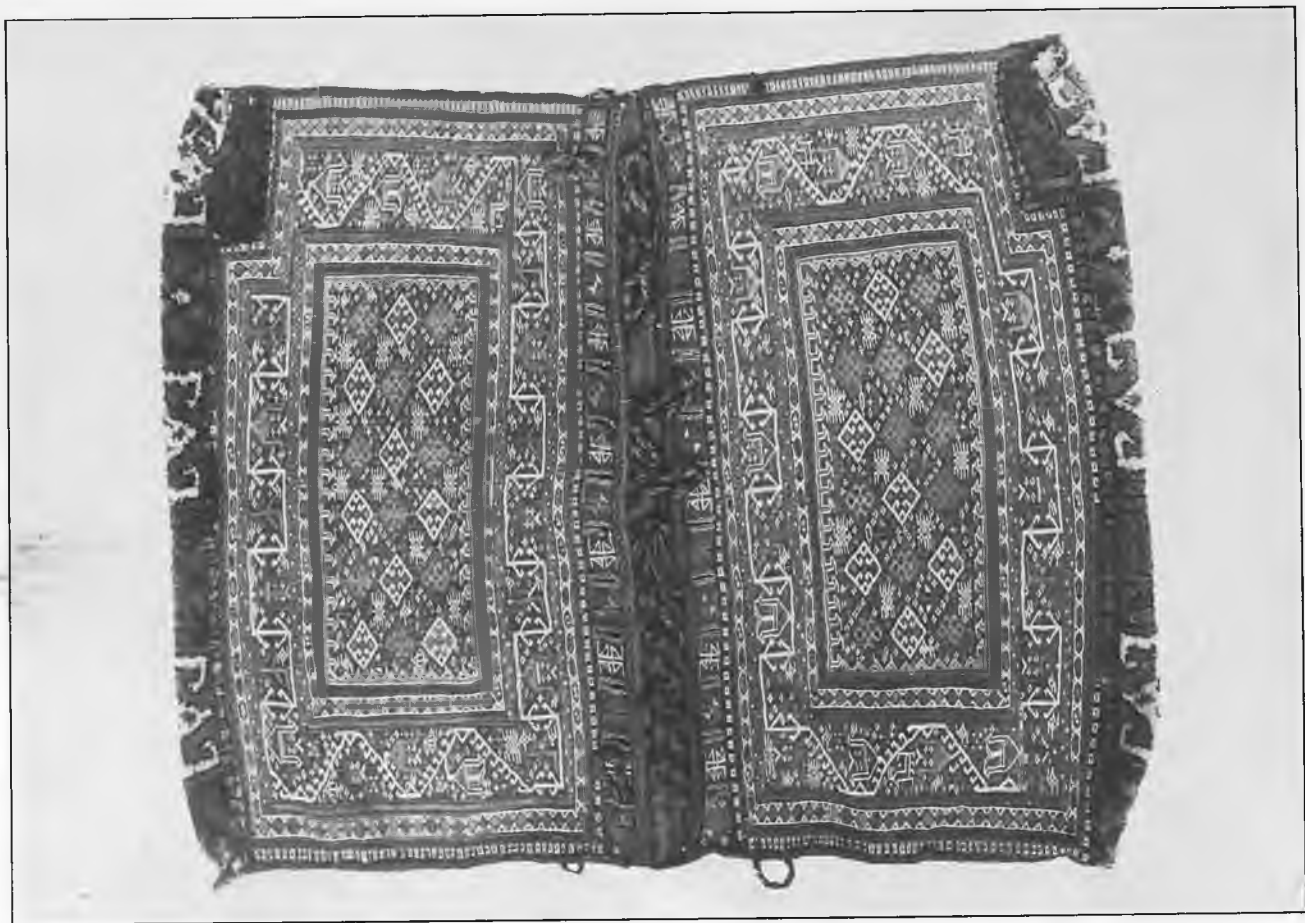
Size: 1.39m × 0.89m

Private Collection

**Plate 56 Saddle-bag: Luri or Bakhtiyari, West Iran.** A typical example of the individualistic bags of these tribes. The abstract meander of the border contains two-headed bird forms while rows of horned animals frame the central field. Note also the pile base and corner reinforcement. Usually both corners are raised to the same height. The back is illustrated opposite.

Size: 1.42m × 0.92m

Collection of Eric Pride



**Plate 57 Saddle-bag: Luri or Bakhtiyari, West Iran.** This is the reverse side of the bag illustrated opposite, and shows the panel of weft-wrapped decoration on a white plain-weave ground that is so much a feature of these bags. Sometimes it is also used on the fronts of bags.

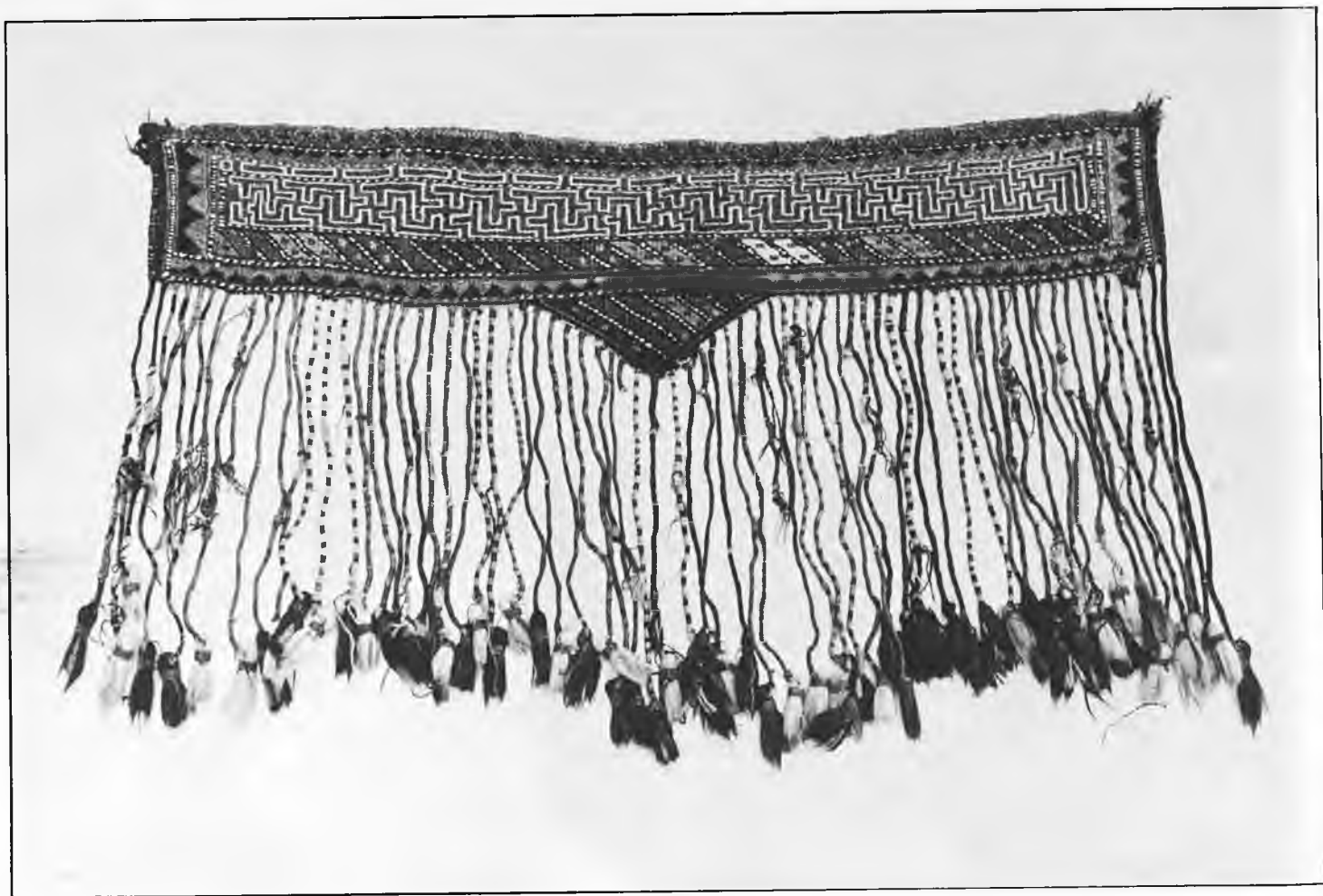
Size: 1.42m × 0.92m  
Collection of Eric Pride



**Plate 58 Breastplate:** Luri or Bakhtiyari, West Iran. This piece, used to decorate a horse's breast, has a lively colour combination of black-brown, coral, vermillion, gold, olive, blue-green and pale blue. Particularly interesting is the interconnected swastika design.

Size: 0·24m × 1·02m

Collection of Amedeo and Claire de Franchis



**Plate 59 Saddle-bag: Luri or Bakhtiyari, West Iran.** A design of crab-like forms is framed above and below by typically horned animal heads. The reciprocal trefoils of the main border are also characteristic.

Size: 1.25m × 0.66m

Collection of Amedeo and Claire de Franchis



**Plate 6o Bakhtiyari Family.** This family poses for a photograph while setting up camp on migration.  
Photo: Lord Oxmantown

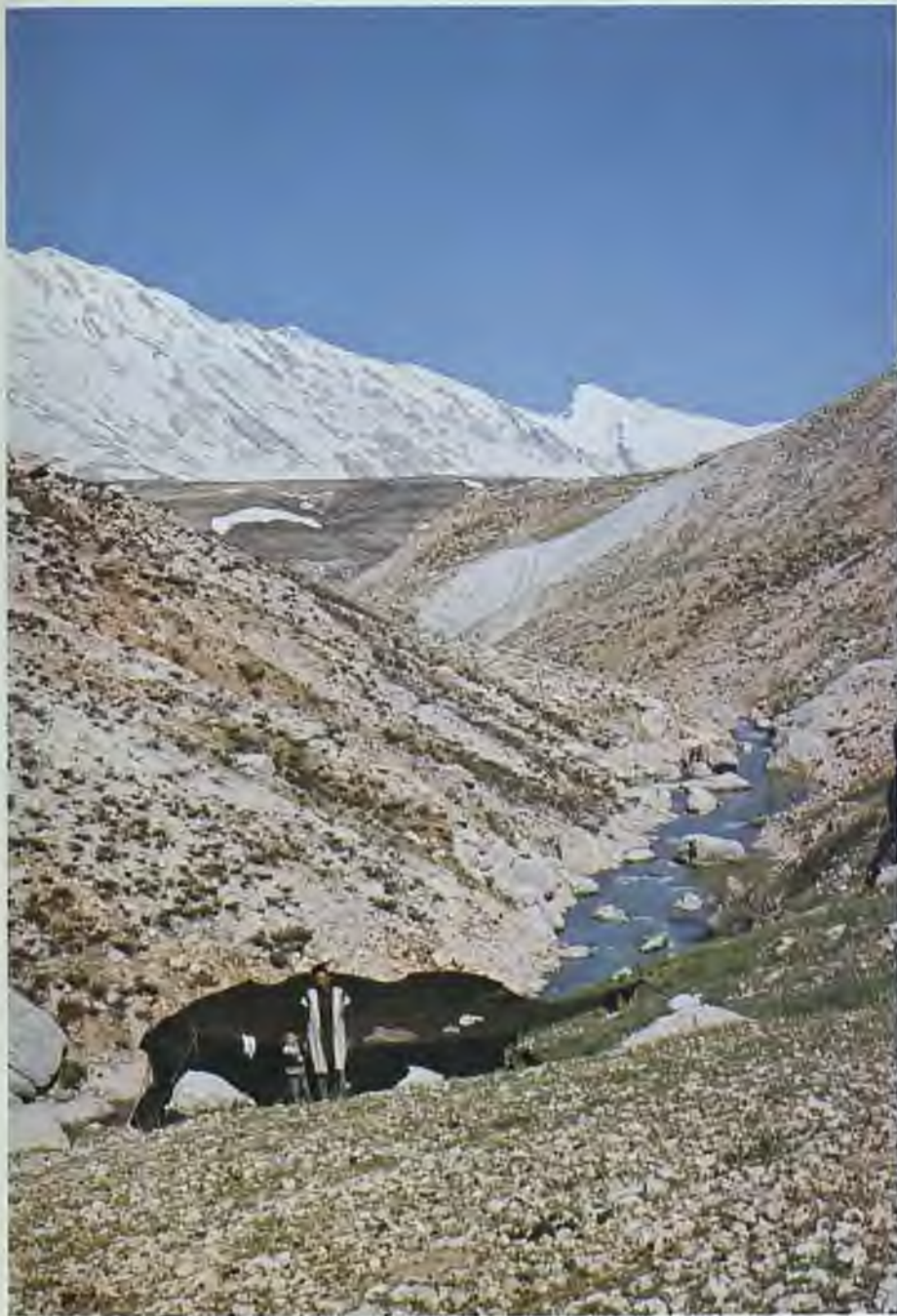




**Plate 61 Pile Rug: Kurdish, West Iran.** A shaggy, loosely woven rug with an unusual pronged border. The field design is typical of west Kurdistan, and suggests the work of the Sanjabi or Jaff Kurds, two of the main tribes in the area. They used to migrate from summer pastures in Iran to winter quarters in the warmth of the Mesopotamian plains. Such pieces are sometimes sold in the West under the trade name of Mosul, a town in Iraqi Kurdistan, which once acted as a collecting centre.  
Size: 2.26m × 1.52m  
Photo courtesy of David Black Oriental Carpets

**Plate 62 Gelim: Senna, Kurdistan, West Iran.** A rare, slit-tapestry gelim from the area of Senna, now called Sanandaj. This is the only centre in Iran where gelim weaving, usually associated with bold designs, bright colours and no particular regard for fineness of weave, has been carried into the realm of sophisticated urban production. This is a particularly beautiful, richly coloured example in an unusual design.  
Size: 1.75m × 1.36m  
Collection of Oliver Hoare





**Plate 63 Bakhtiyari Mountains:**  
**West Iran.** A Bakhtiyari tent in a  
dramatic mountain valley in the  
Zagros mountains. The black and  
white shepherd's coat worn by  
the tribesman standing outside  
the tent is still widely used.  
Photo: Lord Oxmantown

**Plate 64 Pile Rug: Bakhtiyari, West Iran.** Splendidly heraldic, with a variety of motifs including a head with a pronged tongue, this rug proudly proclaims in an inscription at the top that it is the work of the Bakhtiyari, and is dated 1302 AH (1884 AD). It must have been a special commission, probably for one of the once rich and powerful Bakhtiyari khans.  
Size: 2.96m × 2.15m  
Photo courtesy of David Black Oriental Carpets.



**Plate 65 Bakhtiyari Migration, West Iran.** Heavily laden Bakhtiyari women toil across a steep, snowy slope during a spring migration from the plains of Khuzistan near the Persian Gulf to summer mountain pastures west of Isfahan.  
Photo: Lord Oxmantown



**Plate 66 Bakhtiyari Migration, West Iran.** Flocks of sheep, goats and laden donkeys make their way over one of the high mountain passes of the Zagros range. The Bakhtiyari migration is the most arduous of any Persian tribe and covers some of the most dramatic country in Iran.

Photo: Lord Oxmantown





**Plate 67 Gelim: South Iran.**  
This striking gelim has a bold but simple design in glowing colours. Such pieces were probably woven by the Lurs of Fars, who seem to favour uncluttered designs rather than their more famous neighbours, the Qashqa'i, who have a preference for a more crowded field. The reciprocal borders are characteristic of both tribes, though the brocaded end-finishes are found in other parts of Iran.  
Size: 2.80m × 1.75m  
Photo courtesy of David Black Oriental Carpets

**Plate 68 Pile Rug: Fars, South Iran.** A fine old rug in mellow colours. The rather formal design perhaps suggests a village rather than a tribal origin, but such distinctions are often blurred because of the increasing numbers of tribesmen who have become settled. Sometimes these pieces are described as Shiraz rugs, the capital of Fars province which acts as a central collecting centre. Size: 2.40m × 1.10m  
Private Collection





**Plate 69 Pile Rug: Qashqa'i, South Iran.** An attractive rug, displaying many of the motifs beloved by the Qashqa'i tribe of Fars. Many are comparable to those found on rugs and flat-weaves from northwest Iran, and particularly those of the Shahsavari to whom the Qashqa'i are probably related. The so-called bird border is popular all over Iran.

Size: 2.51 m × 1.14 m  
Private Collection

**Plate 70 Pile Rug Detail, South Iran.** This is a detail of plate 101 showing a horseman with a bunch of burning twigs, traditionally part of the entourage of a groom on his way to fetch his bride. The drawing is primitive but vigorous.

Size (of figure): 0.19m × 0.21m

Private Collection



**Plate 71 Migrating Qashqa'i, South Iran.** Here Qashqa'i tribespeople mounted on donkeys and surrounded by their flocks pass through the oak groves of the plains of Kazerun. They are on their way from their winter lands on the Persian Gulf to the mountains between Shiraz and Isfahan.  
Photo: Jennifer Scarce



**Plate 72 Gelim: South Iran.** One of the distinctive, bold slit-tapestry gelims of Fars, with abstract comb motifs on horizontal panels of different colours. It was probably woven by the Qashqa'i and is one of their most original designs. This piece is exceptionally finely woven.  
Size: 2.61m × 1.53m  
Collection of Oliver Hoare



Plate 73 Qashqa'i Tent, South Iran. A typical Qashqa'i tent made of black goat's hair. Open at the front, the back is stacked with all the household goods which include a large variety of woven floor coverings and storage bags. Photo: Antony Hutt



**Plate 74 Figural Rug: South Iran.** Another figural rug from Fars but here the figures are human, their hands jauntily placed on hips, as they stand flanking fancifully drawn trees. Probably woven by the Qashqa'i, it may represent a scene from traditional folklore.  
Size: 2.93m × 1.35m  
Photo courtesy of David Black Oriental Carpets





**Plate 75 Lion Rug: Qashqa'i, South Iran.** Lions have had a special importance in Fars from Mithraic times. They have been utilised in rug designs by the Qashqa'i in renderings from the highly stylized to those taken from the realistic lions decorating British army blankets from India. In this bold and unusual piece the lion has the rising sun behind him, an old motif which has become the official emblem of Iran.

Size: 1.88m × 1.15m  
Collection of Manijeh and Parviz Tanavoli

**Plate 76 Saddle-bag: Bassiri, South Iran.** A beautifully drawn design in subtle colours of a type usually ascribed to the Bassiri tribe of the Khamsa confederation of Fars. Note the colourful brocaded fastenings and base stripes which are such an attractive feature of many south Iranian pieces. A detail of similar fastenings is illustrated opposite.  
Size: 1.15m x 0.73m  
Private Collection



**Plate 77 Bag Detail: South Iran.** Fastenings of bags are not only attractive but can also often help to identify origin. Here they are brocaded with extra-weft patterning. The back of the bag, in dovetail tapestry, can be glimpsed in the centre between the fastenings. The faces are pile woven. The complete bag is illustrated in plate 112.

Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright No. 1017-1884





**Plate 78 Pile Rug: Kirman Area, Southeast Iran.** All the elements of colour, design and weave in this piece identify it as having been woven in the Kirman area. Although most of the tribes there are of Turkic origin, their designs seem more derived from the classical traditions of Kirman. Botehs within a lattice such as here are often found on nineteenth century Kirman shawls.

Size: 1.92m × 1.75m

Photo courtesy of David Black Oriental Carpets

**Plate 79 Wool in Kirman, Southeast Iran.** Hanging up in a courtyard in Kirman, the wool is brought in from neighbouring villages and is awaiting dyeing prior to being woven into carpets.

Photo: Jenny Housego



**Plate 80 Prayer Rug: Baluchi, East Iran.** A striking old prayer rug with a particularly glowing yellow. The white is cotton which gives a stronger contrast than that achieved by undyed ivory wool. The brown ground has corroded in several places. Rugs of this type appear to have been woven in the Irano-Afghan border region near Herat. Size: 1.38m x 0.83m. Private Collection





**Plate 81 Pile Rug: Kurds of Khurasan, Northeast Iran.** Stylized beetle forms recall those of the Ersari tribes of Central Asia and Afghanistan. The colours and the weave, however, are typical of the Kurds of Khurasan who have adopted several designs along with a wide variety of their own. Characteristic of this particular group are the gold and tomato red and the zig-zag outer guard stripes enclosing reciprocal trefoils  
Size: 2·96m × 1·57m  
Private Collection

**Plate 82 Pile Rug: Varamin, North Iran.** On the basis of the motifs alone it would be hard to identify this unusual rug. However, the brown warps and band of plain-weave decorated with small white rosettes, visible at the top of the piece (the bottom ends and sides are not original), along with the inner border, indicate the Varamin area. Here several tribes of different origins mingle. Size: 1.73m x 1.21m  
Private Collection





Plate 83 Gelim: Varamin Area, North Iran. A powerful gelim with horizontal rows of flame-like palmettes framed by a lively border of brown-black prongs. It is known to have come from Varamin, and the typical brown weft, the dovetailing of the colour and the palette suggest that it was woven there. The reciprocal horizontal guard stripes are weft-float brocaded. The extra-weft outlining of the design is considered a Kurdish technique which perhaps suggests that this piece was woven by Varamin Kurds.

Size: 3.12m × 1.75m  
Private Collection

**Plate 84 Saddle-bag: Lurs of Varamin, North Iran.** The central motifs in this large saddle-bag woven by Lurs living in the Varamin area are perhaps highly stylized versions of the dragon and phoenix combat so beloved of sixteenth and seventeenth century Persian and Caucasian designers. Note also the use of white cotton and the rosettes on the fastenings of the bag. Size: 1.43m x 0.96m Private Collection



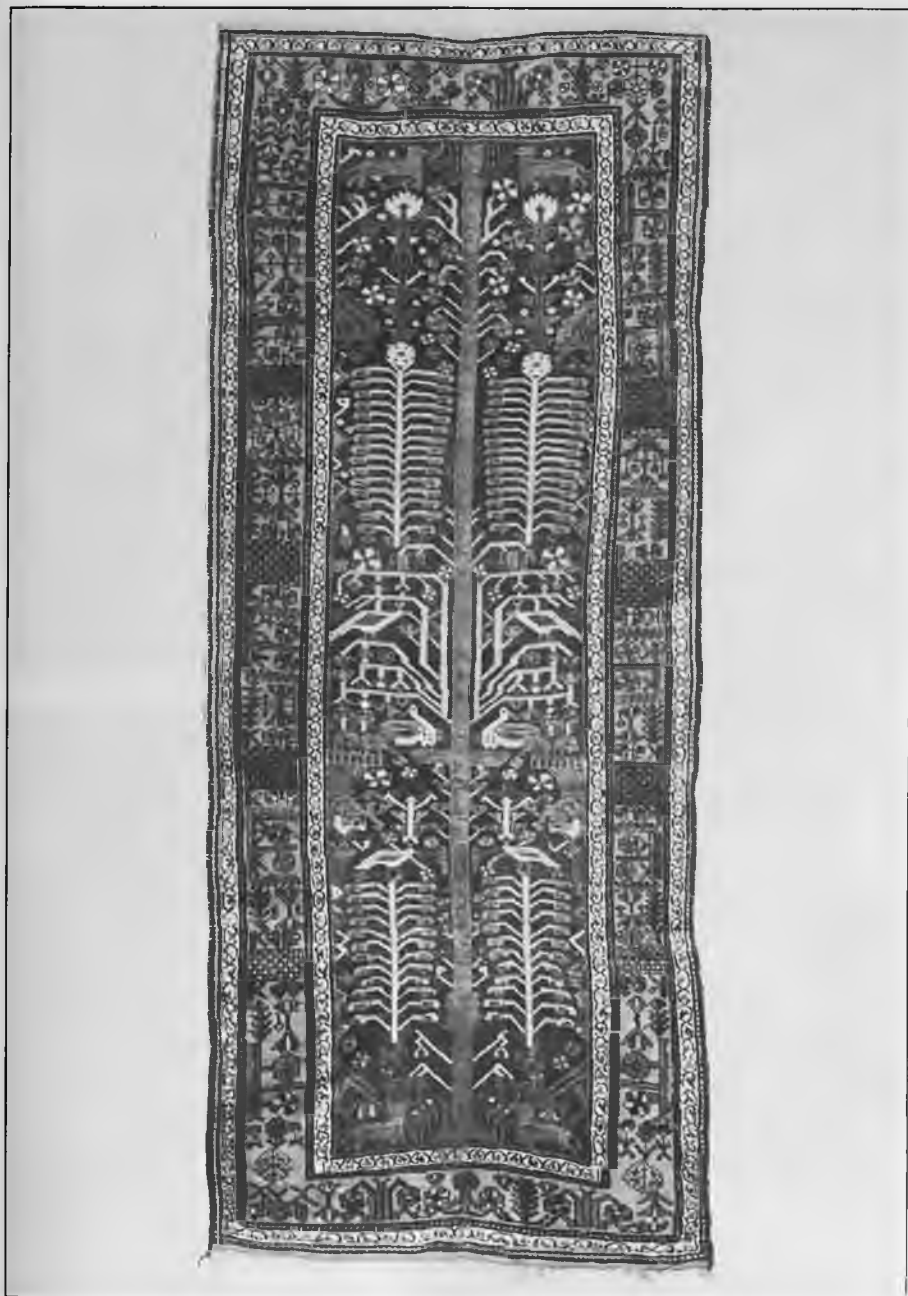
**Plate 85 Bakhtiyari Tribesmen.** Tribesmen resting beside a typical black felt tent. The one on the right is smoking from a *qaliyan*, a water-cooled pipe with a long neck.

Photo: Lord Oxmantown



**Plate 86 Salt Bag: Luri or Bakhtiyari, West Iran.** An attractive weft-wrapped bag. Such shapes were usually made as salt containers, the narrow aperture excluding air, though they were put to other uses.  
Size: 0.60m × 0.48m  
Collection of Eric Pride





**Plate 87 Pile Rug: Luri, West Iran.** This long, thick rug probably comes from Luristan, which adjoins Kurdistan to the south. It is a tribal version of a classical Persian garden rug. An angular tree, flanked by horned animals, stands amidst a profusion of animals, birds, flowering plants and other trees. The sides consist of the single, thick, overcast cord typical of the Lurs.  
Size: 3.18m × 1.29  
Private Collection

**Plate 88 Pile Rug: Chahar Mahal, West Iran.** An attractive rug with a vase and tree design, with birds singing on a dark blue ground. It is a type woven in the Chahar Mahal district west of Isfahan, where numerous Bakhtiyari tribesmen have settled among an already mixed population. Such pieces are not specifically tribal Bakhtiyari, though generally parade under the name.  
Size: 2.18m × 1.59m  
Private Collection





Plate 89 Pile Rug: Chahar Mahal, West Iran. Another example of one of the most common designs from the Chahar Mahal area, with compartments containing tree and shrub forms. Size: 2.18m × 1.47m. Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright No. T 127-1928

**Plate 90 Pile Rug: Luri, West Iran.** This rug, with its strange crab-like motifs is probably from Luristan. It is typically heavy in feel, and the diagonal teeth that edge the field are also found in Luri-Bakhtiyari bags. The serrated leaf and lozenge main border is not uncommon in this area. This is a good example of a rug that does not fit readily into any category. Unfortunately neither the side nor the end finishes are original as analysis of these can often help in identification.

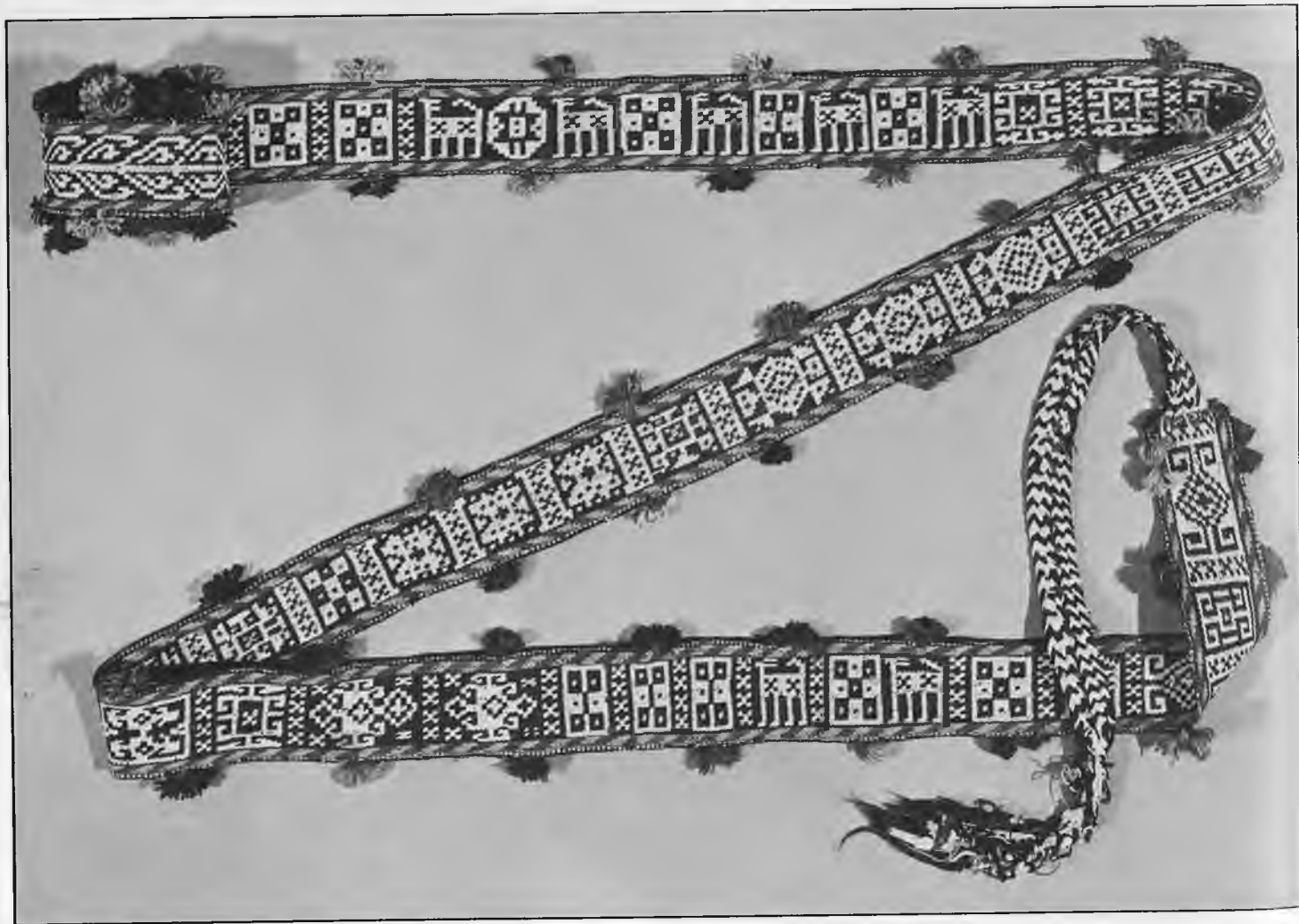
Size: 1.84m × 1.44m  
Collection of Eric Pride.





**Plate 91 Gelim: South Iran.** A slit-tapestry gelim from Fars, the work either of the Qashqa'i, or the Mamassani or Kuh Gilu'i Lurs of Fars. These Lurs seem to have a weaving tradition distinct from their relations in Luristan. It has close similarities with their neighbours, the Qashqa'i, from whose work it is often impossible to differentiate. The Qashqa'i, however, are generally considered to favour a more crowded field. Size: 3.13m × 1.70m Collection of Lord and Lady Oxmantown, photo courtesy of Whitworth Art Gallery

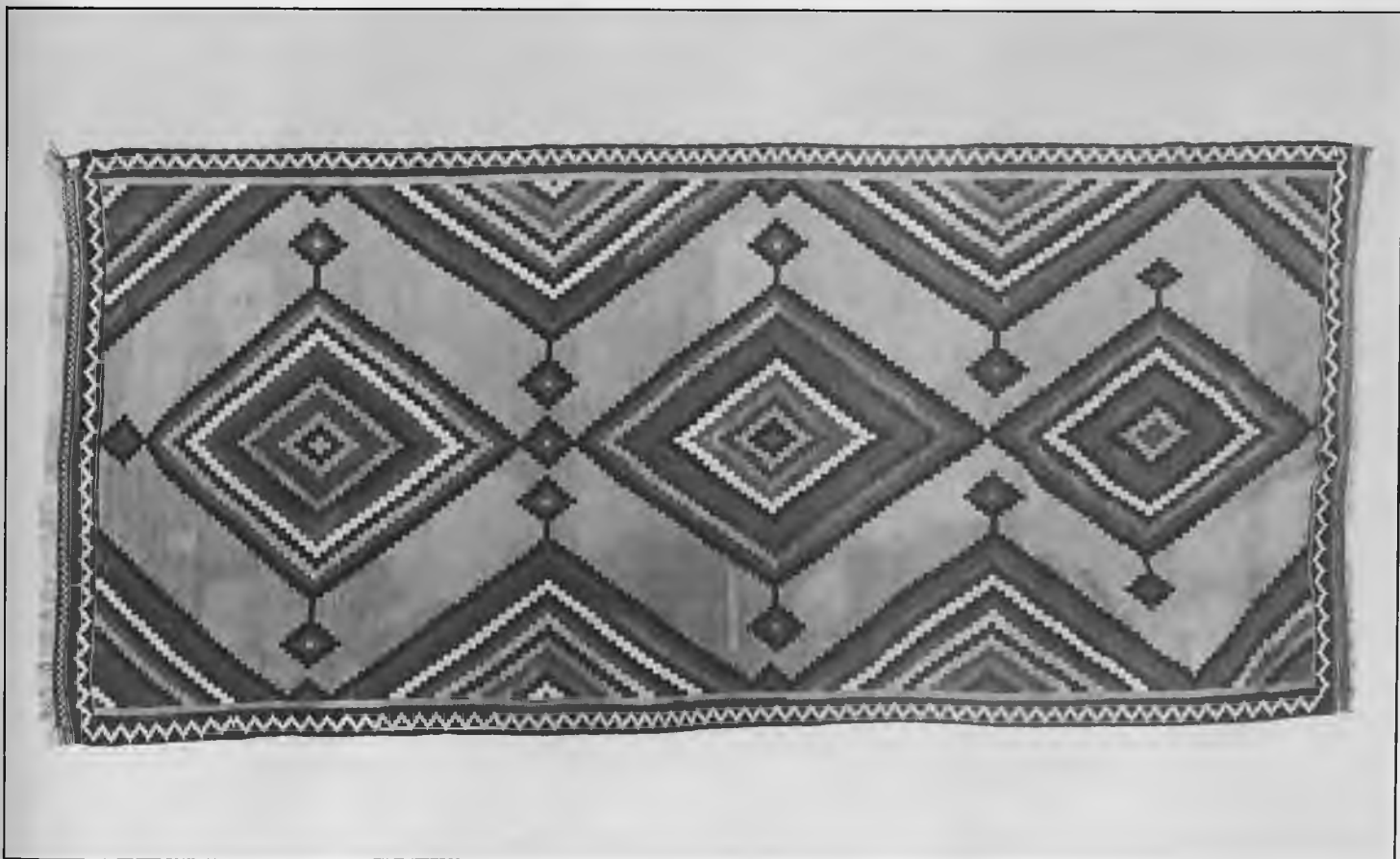
**Plate 92 Camel Band: South Iran.** This is a typical example of the long band used to fasten loads onto camels for migration. It is reversible, woven in a compound warp-faced double weave, with geometric designs and animals. Similar pieces are made all over Iran, though this one is the work of the Qashqa'i.  
Size: 8.02m × 0.55m  
Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester



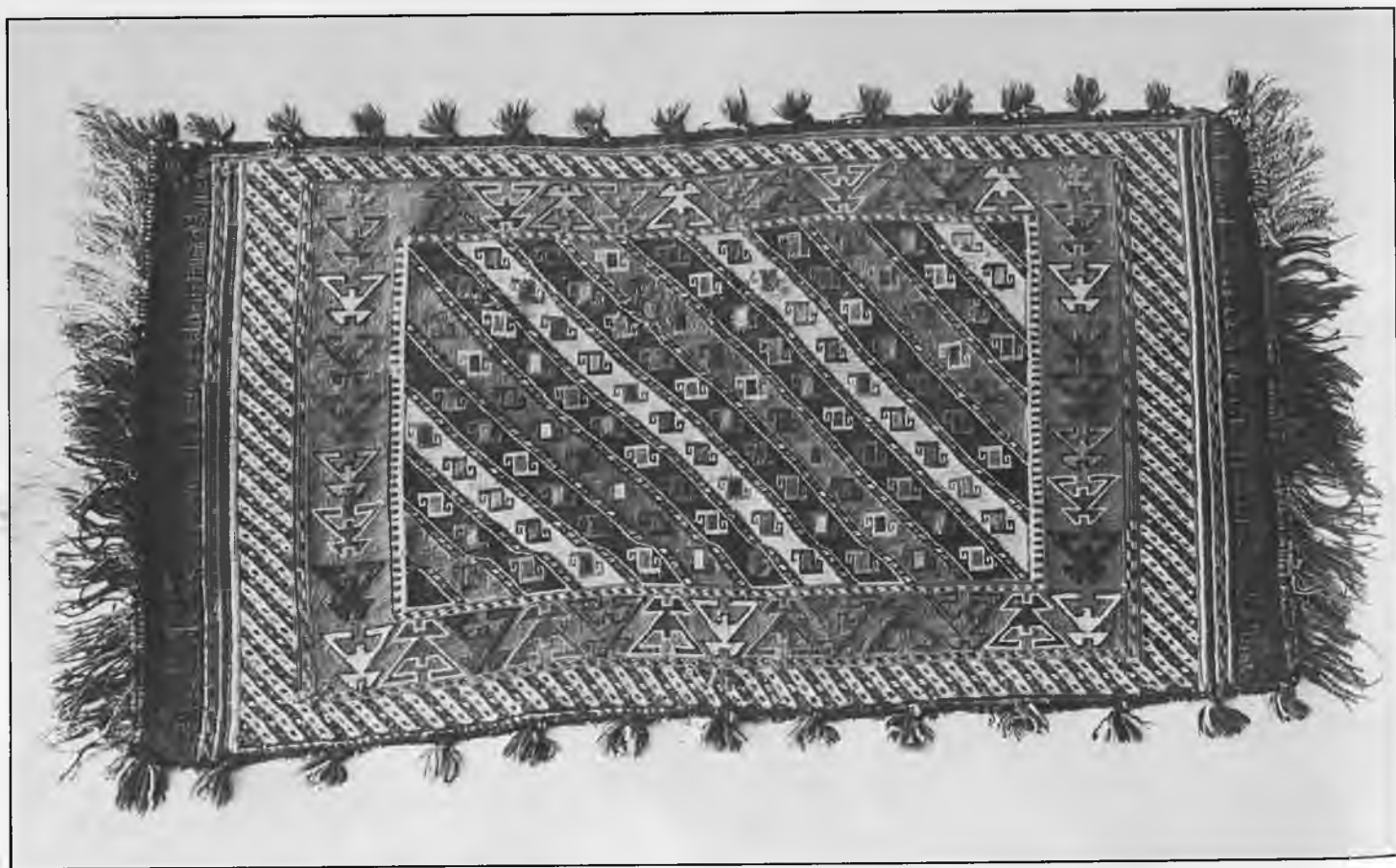
**Plate 93 Gelim: South Iran.** On a plain mustard ground are dazzler medallions and corner designs. The format is a typical Persian one based on book covers and much used in classical carpets. The zig-zag borders with crosses are characteristic of gelims from Fars; the brocaded chevron end-finishes, however, are found in several areas. As with plate 91, an exact provenance would be hard to establish.

Size: 2.99m × 1.36m.

Collection of Oliver Hoare



**Plate 94 Bedding Bag-face: Lurs of Fars, South Iran.** The design of this bag-face is similar to that of plate 16 from northwest Iran, but the heavier weave, softer wool, lighter red and the striped outer border are typical of Fars. This piece is probably attributable to the Lurs of Fars. The fringes and tassels are not original. Size: 1·19m × 0·68m  
Private Collection



**Plate 95 Horse-cover: South Iran.** The pile motifs on the flat-woven ground of this horse-cover give an almost three-dimensional effect. At the top human figures link hands, while below skirted ladies flaunt themselves above a row of upright-tailed peacocks. Characteristic of Fars, pieces of this kind are woven by both the Lurs and the Qashqa'i.

Size: 1.57m (max) × 1.37m

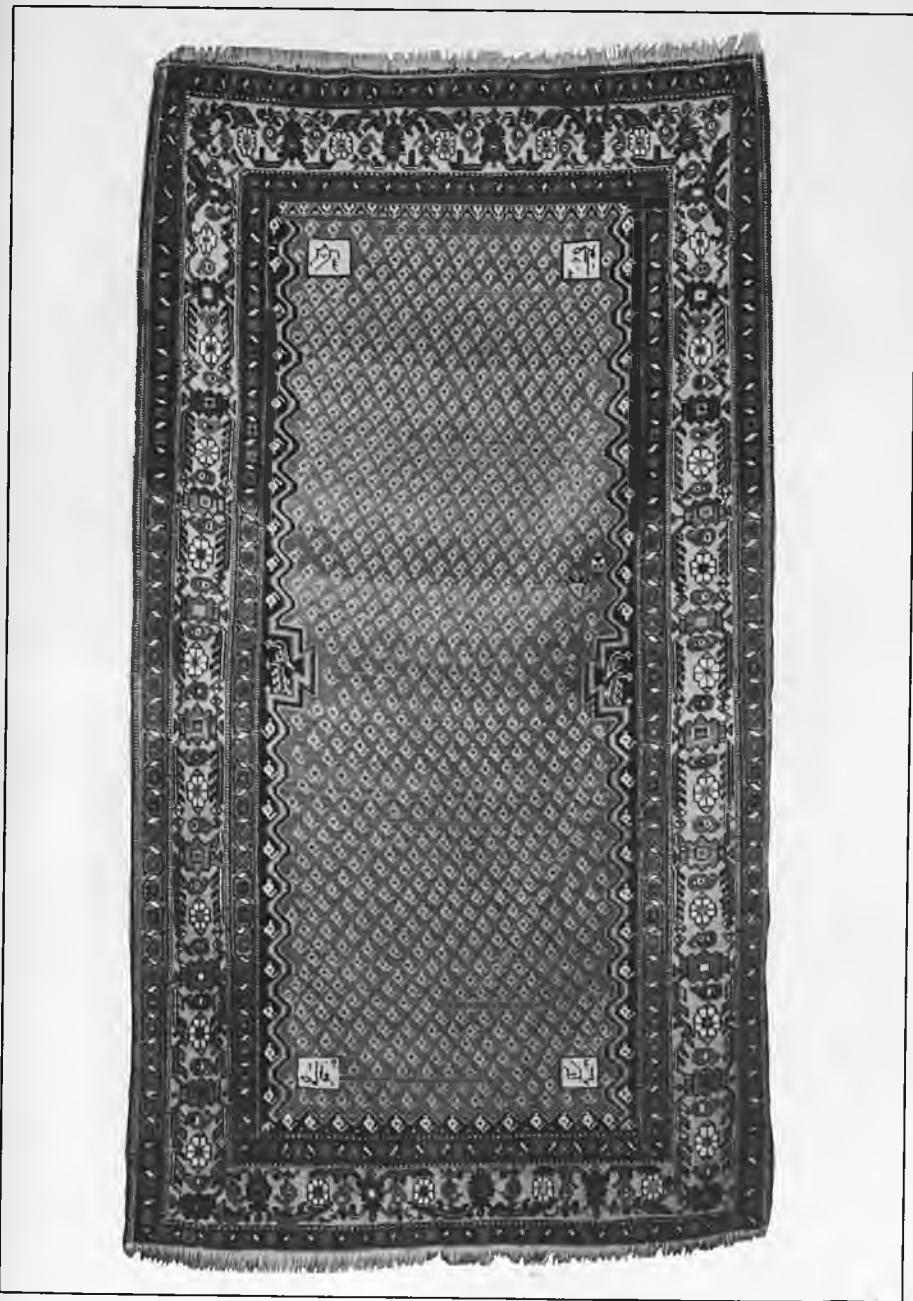
Collection of Eric Pride



**Plate 96 Pile Rug: Qashqa'i, South Iran.** A unique rug, with a design known as 'mother and child botehs', so-called from the smaller forms that huddle within the main botehs. The wide border consists of linked rosettes and more botehs, while at the bottom it gives way to several strange motifs that must have owed much to the whim of the weaver.

Size: 1.72m × 1.29m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. T 63-1969





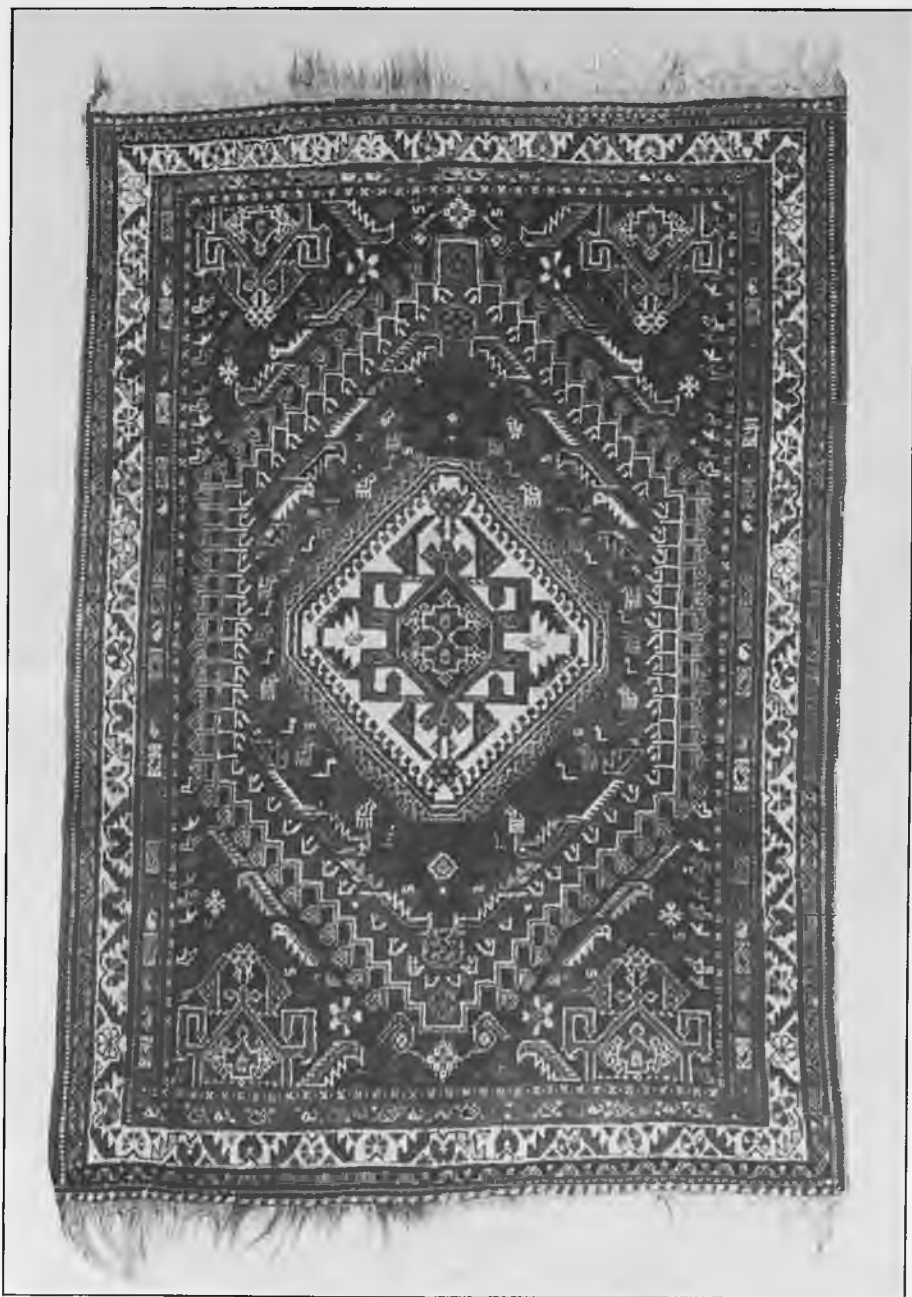
**Plate 97 Pile Rug: Kashkuli, Qashqa'i, South Iran.** This finely knotted rug is signed, a rare feature among tribal pieces. Four inscriptions proclaim that this was the handiwork of the Kashkuli, one of the principal Qashqa'i clans. The ground is a bright brick-red filled with yellow botehs.  
Size: 1·62m × 0·88m  
Victoria and Albert Museum  
Crown Copyright No. T 118-1929

**Plate 98 Pile Rug: Qashqa'i, South Iran.** An attractive rug with a central floral medallion surrounded by elegant botehs. Botehs are motifs popular throughout Iran, and are drawn in a variety of ways. Their origin is unclear, though it is generally thought to be a derivation of a floral form from India.

Size: 2.23m × 1.37m

Victoria and Albert Museum  
Crown Copyright No. T 70-1969

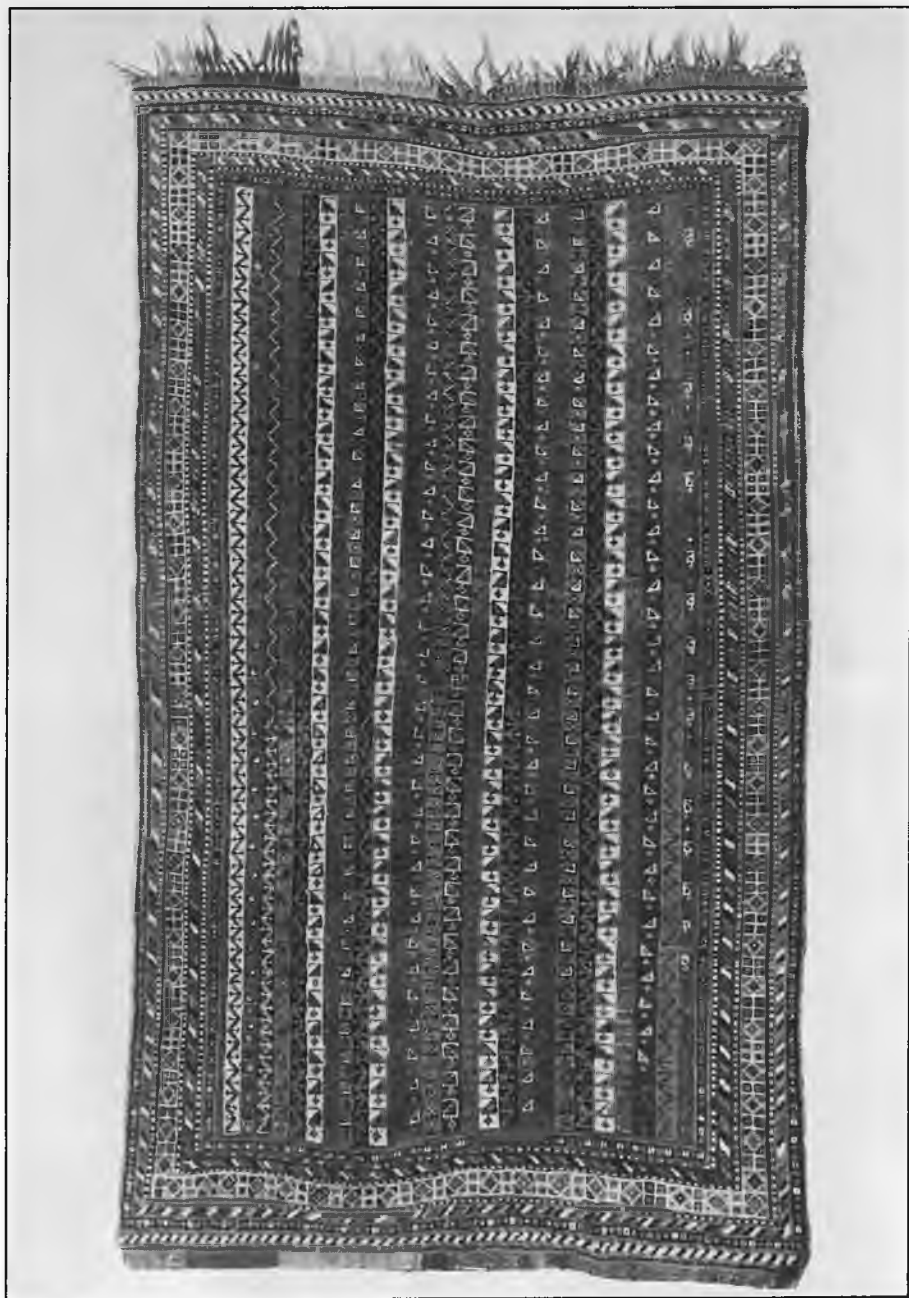




**Plate 99** Pile Rug: Qashqa'i, South Iran. One of a group of rugs with the field almost completely taken up by a large hooked medallion within which animals and birds surround a further, smaller medallion containing a geometric motif. Colours are predominantly bright red and blue.  
Size: 1.47m × 1.05m  
Private Collection

**Plate 100 Pile Rug: Qashqa'i, South Iran.** This group of rugs is characterized by their colour which includes a distinctive mustard, a mid-green, azure and pink. Among several designs is the one illustrated here. In the field, stripes of long-necked *botehs* alternate with undulating centipede forms on grounds of different colours. Note the characteristic side finishes, common among most Qashqa'i rugs, of a single, thick, bundle of warps, overcast here in mustard and pink.

Size: 2·08m × 1·21m  
Private Collection





**Plate 101 Pile Rug: Qashqa'i, South Iran.** This was probably woven as a marriage rug. On a ground of red, in which several changes of colour occur, known as abrash, are horsemen carrying bundles of twigs. These are traditionally carried by a member of the groom's entourage as he goes to collect his bride. A colour detail is illustrated in plate 70. The camels above are probably the bride's dowry. It has been suggested that rugs of this type were woven by settled Qashqa'i in the village of Nasrabad.  
Size: 2.67m × 1.35m  
Private Collection

**Plate 102 Horse-blanket: Qashqa'i, South Iran.** The almost mosaic effect in the lower, decorated part of this horse-cover is the result of the very fine weft-wrapping of an intricate design. There are obvious similarities with the stylized peacocks and birds used by the Shahsavan (plate 5) with whom the Qashqa'i are thought to share a common ancestry.

Size: 1.47m × 1.68m

Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright No. T 1015-1884





**Plate 103 Horse-blanket:**  
**Qashqa'i, South Iran.** As with the illustration opposite, there are several motifs, particularly the stylized tree forms of the central bands, that are shared with the Shahsavari. The technique of the weft-wrapping on a warp-faced plain-weave ground is also common to both. But the colours, the predominance of dark blue, the soft wool and the borders and end finishes here are distinctive of Fars.

Size: 1.90m × 1.60m

Collection of Michael Noel-Clarke

**Plate 104 Dancing at a Khamsa Wedding.** This was taken during festivities at a marriage in one of the Khamsa tribes of Fars. The women were waving brightly coloured handkerchiefs to intensify their own undulating movements. Photo: Jenny Housego



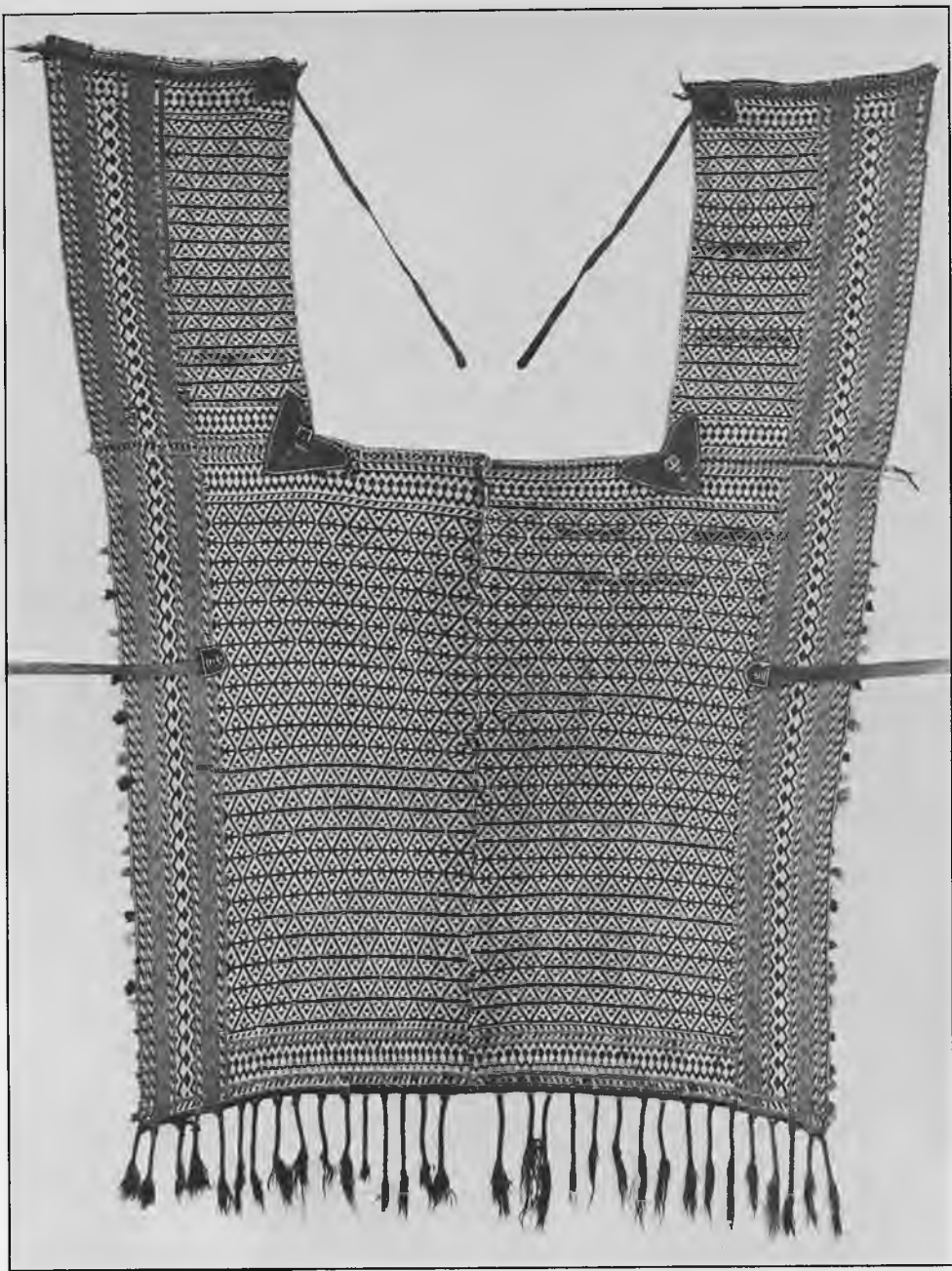
**Plate 105 Storage Bag: Qashqa'i, South Iran.** A large storage bag, woven in one piece but divided in the centre to form two separate compartments. The so-called bird-borders in the central panels are found in the weaving of most of the tribes of Iran. The items in front of the bag are typical Qashqa'i household goods.

Size: 1.46m × 0.72m

Collection of Dr. S. Jarman, photo courtesy of Whitworth Art Gallery



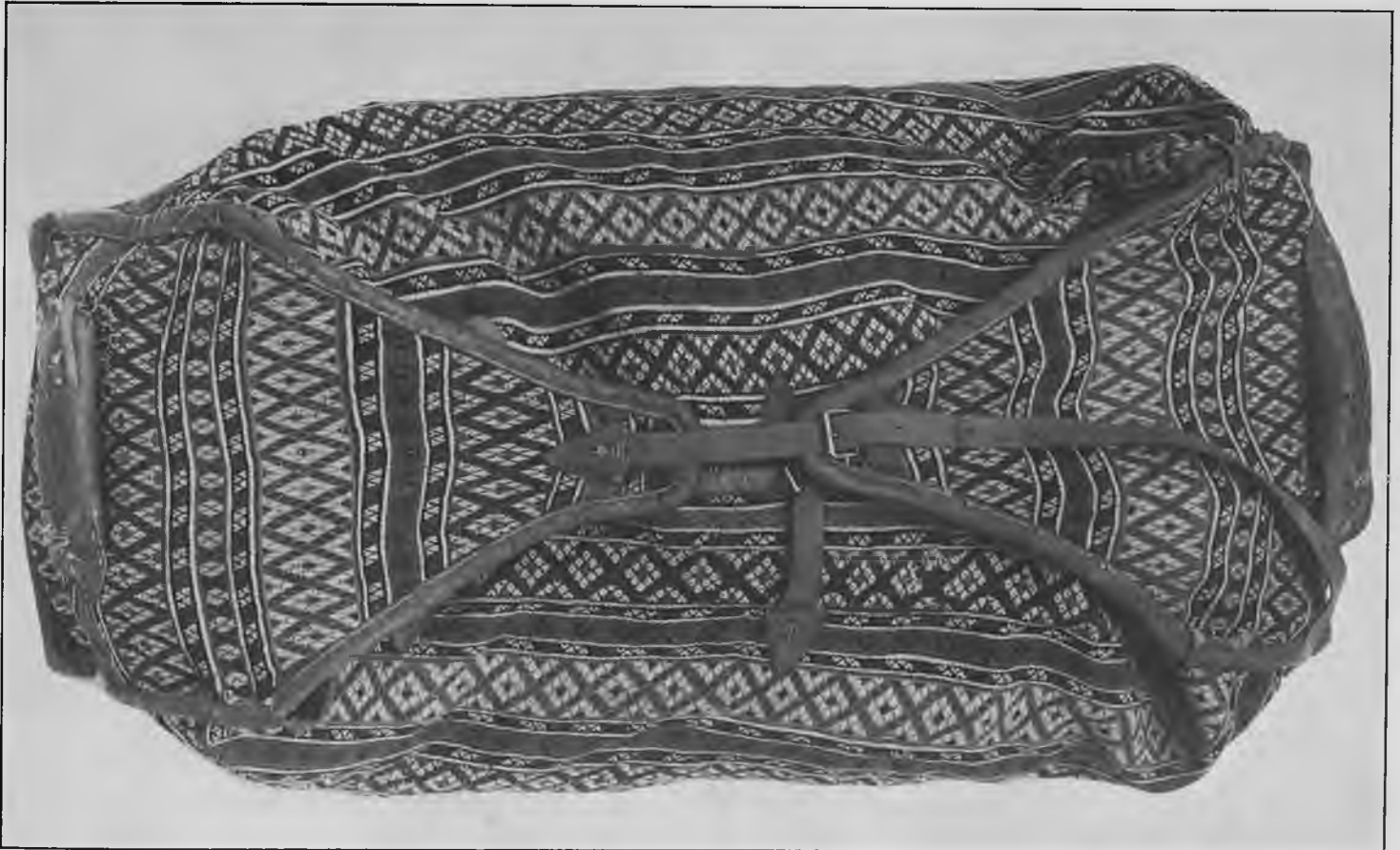
**Plate 106 Horse-blanket:**  
**Qashqa'i, South Iran.** The austere  
character of the field of this horse-  
blanket, finely woven in a  
warp-faced complementary  
warp-pattern weave, is broken at  
the borders by a striking  
combination of mustard and  
vermilion. It can be attributed  
to the Qashqa'i.  
Size: 1.70m × 1.33m  
Collection of Amedeo de Francis



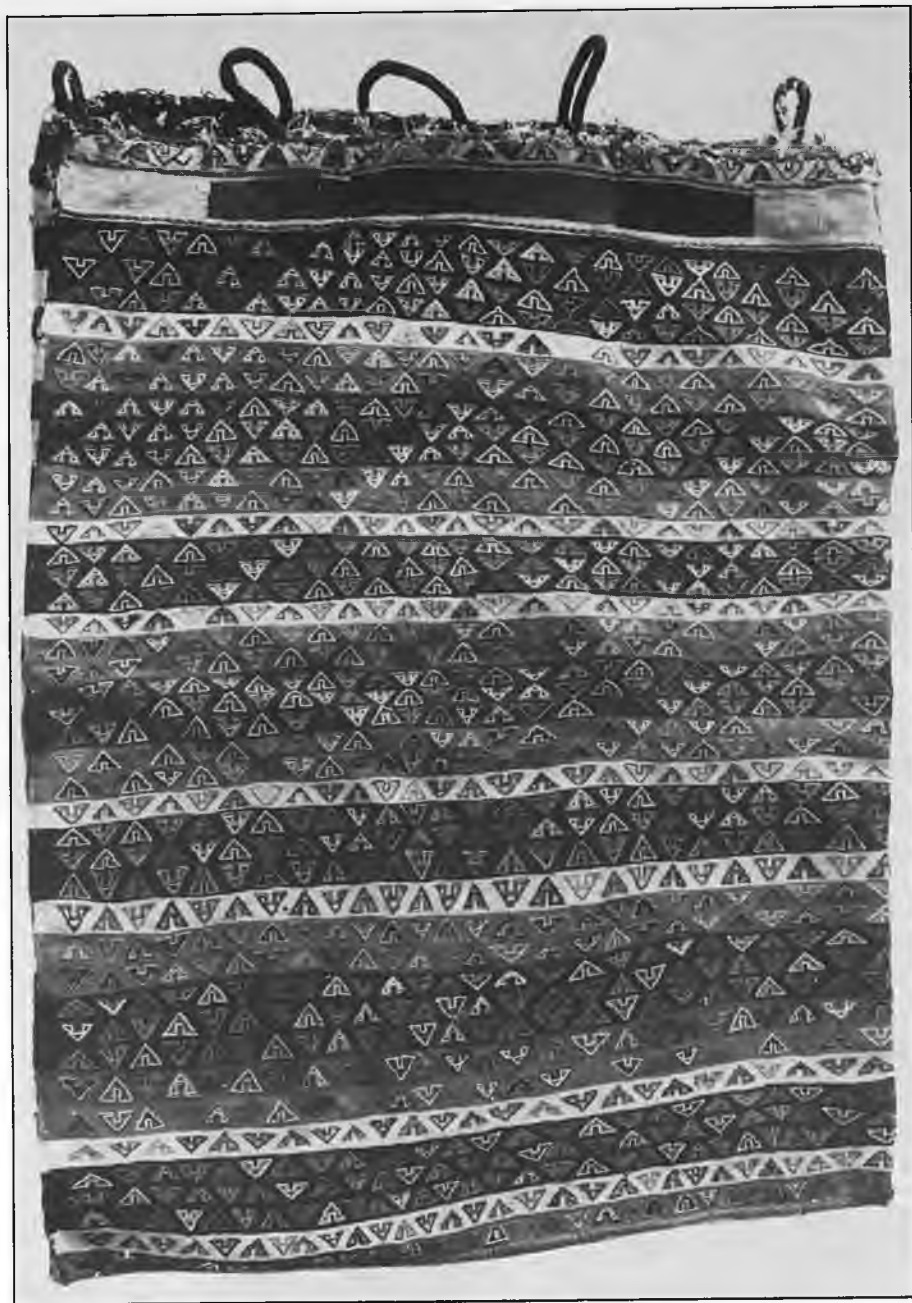
**Plate 107 Bedding Bag: South Iran.** This bag forms a typical tribal suitcase, complete with leather sides and straps. The design is in extra-weft patterning on a plain-weave ground, with a predominance of rust, yellow and orange tones. Such pieces are sometimes attributed to the Bassiri tribe of the Khamsa confederation, though they may equally be the work of the Qashqa'i.

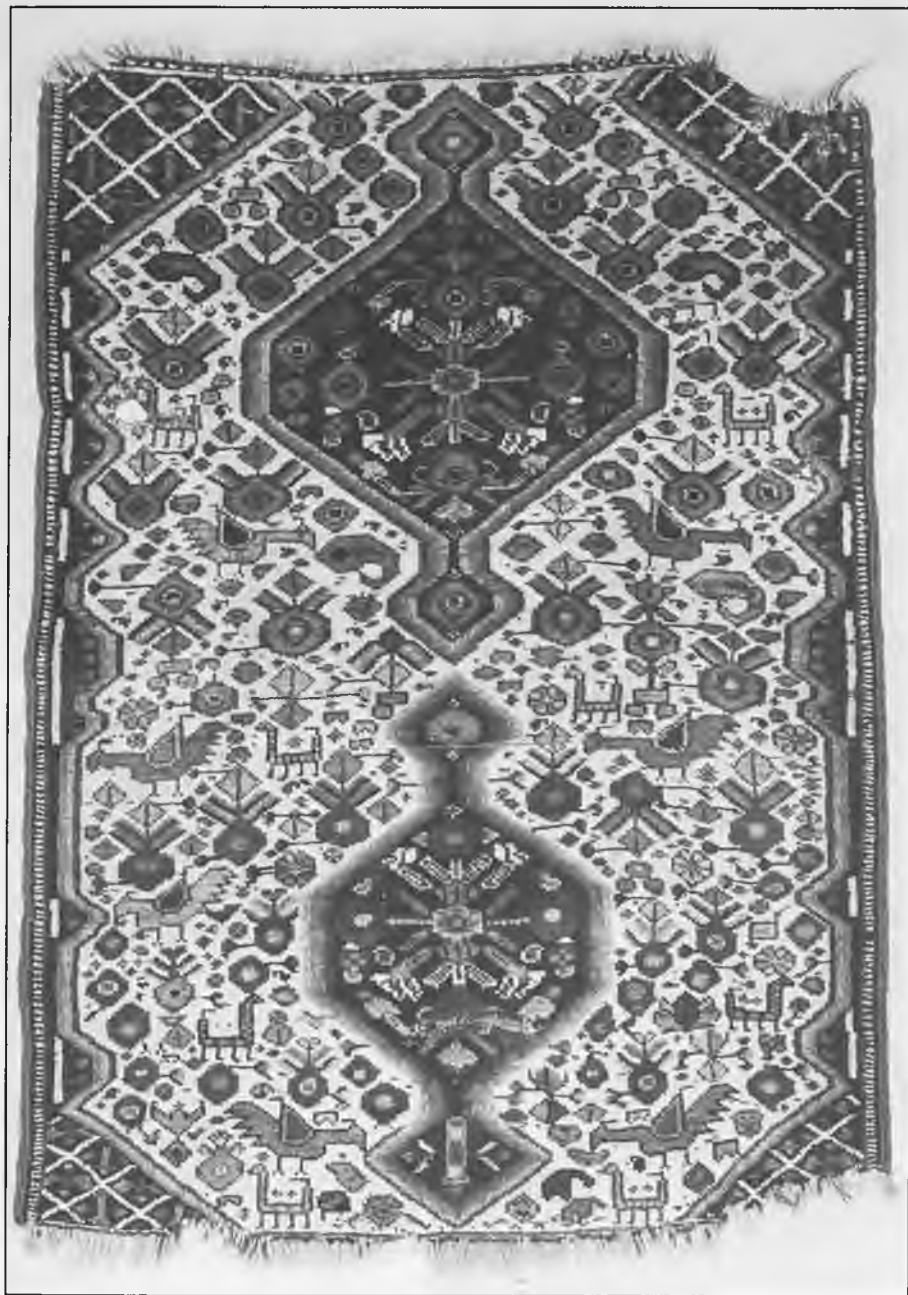
Size: 1.21m × 0.52m × 0.54m

Collection of Eric Pride



**Plate 108 Saddle-bag: South Iran.** Alternate bands in dark blue, rust, red and white are brocaded with a design of triangular motifs, possibly stylized birds. Found in the Shiraz bazaar, it was said to have belonged to a Qashqa'i Khan. It has also been suggested that it was woven by one of the Khamsa tribes, with whose work that of the Qashqa'i has many similarities.  
Size: 0.84m x 0.72m  
Private Collection





**Plate 109 Bag-face: Khamsa, South Iran.** Probably attributable to the Khamsa is this pile-woven piece, which is probably the face of a large bag. Although worn and in poor condition, it has a well drawn, balanced design, with chickens, animals and various stylized forms. That it is an old piece is attested by the date of acquisition by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1884, at which time it was already in its present condition.

Size: 1.39m × 0.73m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. T 1017-  
1884

**Plate 110 Pile Rug: Probably Khamsa, South Iran.** On a dark blue ground, rows of botehs face alternately left and right. Various motifs adorn them within and around. The main border, with its angular tree forms, and the dark colours suggest that this rug was woven by one of the Khamsa tribes. The chequered end stripes are found throughout southern Iran.

Size: 1.65m × 1.50m  
Private Collection





**Plate III Pile Rug: Khamsa, South Iran.** The medallions and field of this pile rug are covered with numerous chickens, all busily engaged at pecking at the ivory ground. The design is known as the murgi, or chicken design, and is generally credited to the Arab tribe of the Khamsa confederation. It is one of their most original designs. The stylized tree forms of the border, and use of a bright blue, are also characteristic of the Khamsa. Size: 1.98m × 1.37m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. T 33-1970

**Plate 112 Saddle-bag: Khamsa, South Iran.** An attractive Khamsa saddle-bag, with a characteristic design of serrated leaves round a star medallion. It has an attractive slit-tapestry woven back, part of which is visible between the fastenings in the centre. A colour detail is illustrated in plate 77.  
Size: 1.62m x 0.76m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. T 73-1948



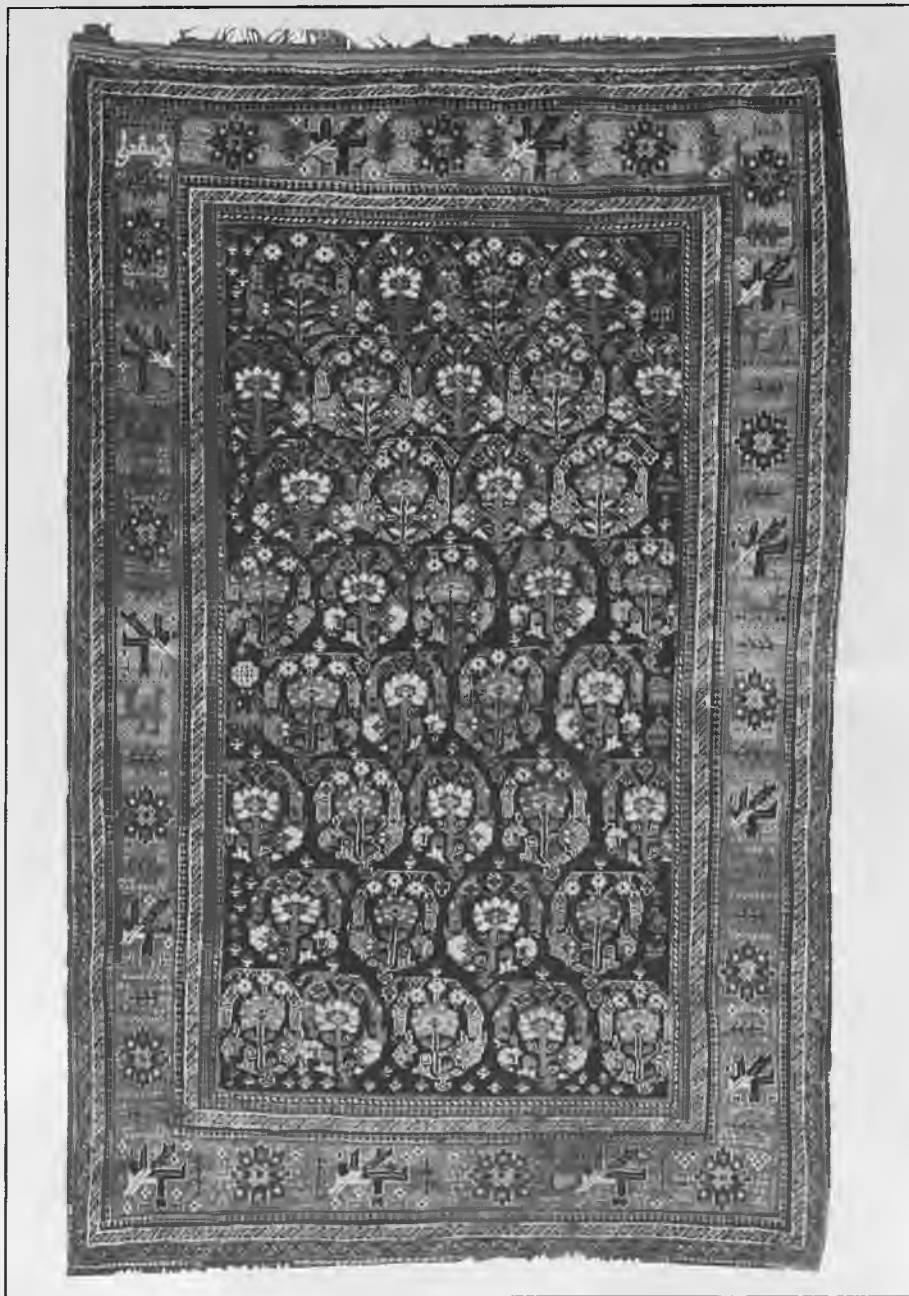


**Plate 113 Khamsa Woman.**  
A woman and child of the Khamsa  
confederation of Fars, in the  
typically mountainous, arid,  
autumn landscape southeast of  
Shiraz.

Photo: Jenny Housego

**Plate 114 Pile Rug: South or Southeast Iran.** The provenance of this rug remains elusive. It may have been the work of the Qashqa'i or the Khamsa, and the town of Niriz, southeast of Shiraz, has also been suggested. But the end finishes and some of the border motifs are more indicative of the Kirman area, where tribes of different origins mingle. The name Yusuf' Ali is signed at the top corners, which may be the name of an as yet unidentified clan.

Size: 2.33m × 1.43m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. 1013-1884



**Plate 115** Pile Rug, Kirman Area, Southeast Iran. A small rug, which perhaps served as a saddle cover. The design of botehs in a lattice of leaves is one often found in the shawls for which Kirman was famous during the nineteenth century, and is popular among both tribal and village weavers in this region.

Size: 0.80m × 0.70m

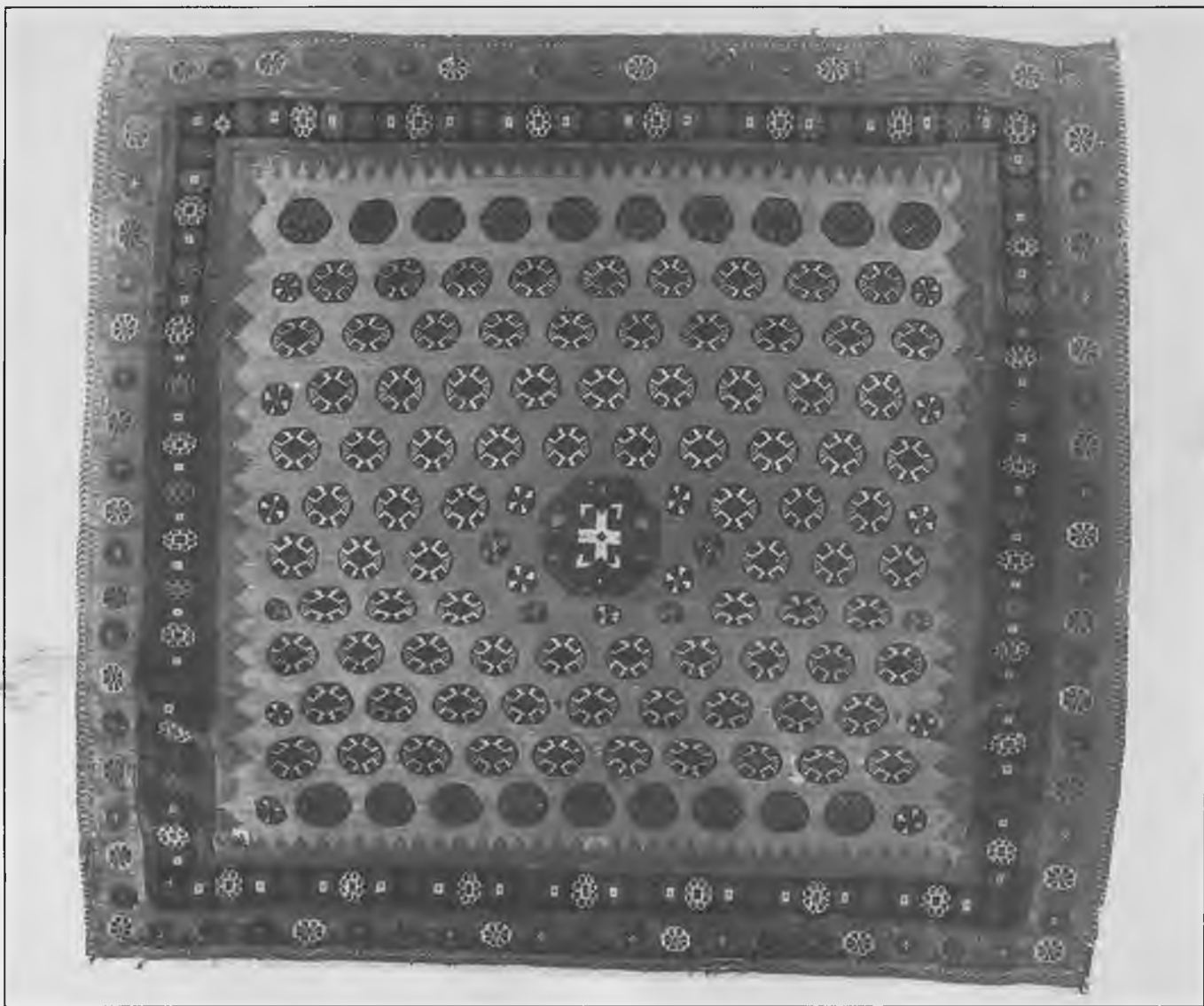
Private Collection



**Plate 116 Sufra: Southeast Iran.** The serrated inner border identifies this piece as a cloth upon which to lay food for honoured guests, known in Persia as a *sufra*. The ground is tapestry woven in a splendid deep rose and blue, and has pile rosettes woven with the asymmetrical knot. It was perhaps woven by one of the tribes in the Kirman area.

Size: 1.26m × 1.37m

Private Collection

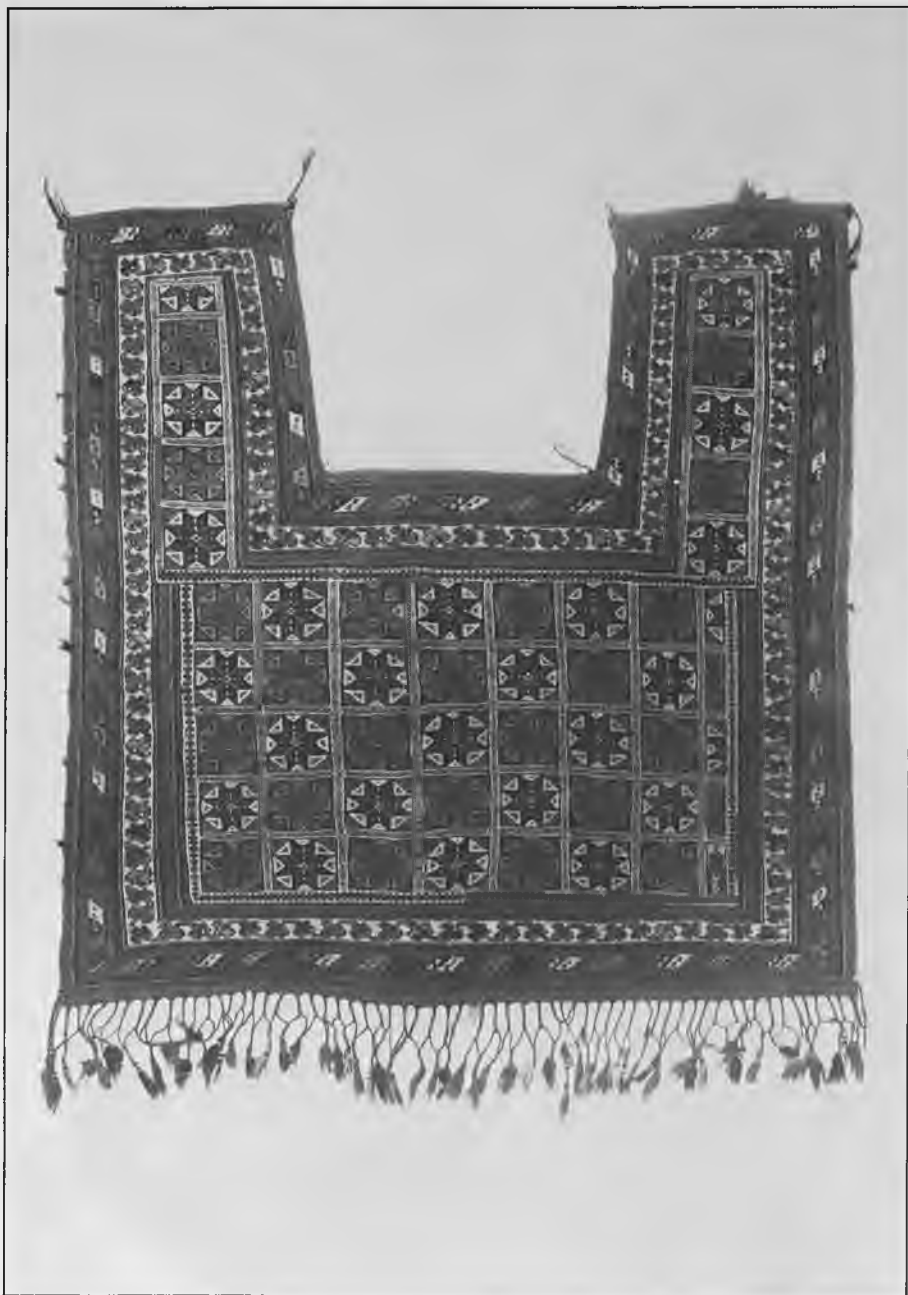




**Plate 117 Flat-woven Rug:**  
**Kirman Area, Southeast Iran.**  
Characteristic of the rich and varied designs of the Kirman area is this flat-woven rug, brocaded in all over weft-wrapping. Dark blues and reds are the predominant colours, enlivened by gold, green, ivory and white. The stylized botehs in the central panel and the lively reciprocal arrow-head border, studded with flowers, are common features.  
Size: 2.55m × 1.45m  
Private Collection

**Plate 118 Horse-blanket.**  
Kirman Area, Southeast Iran. A simple box pattern is the theme of this splendid horse-blanket. The subtle variations of colour, dark and light blue, dark green, orange-red, dark red, gold and ivory, give it a special power. The main border derives from a classical Persian design, and is frequently found on tribal rugs from here.  
Size: 1·71m × 1·69m  
Private Collection

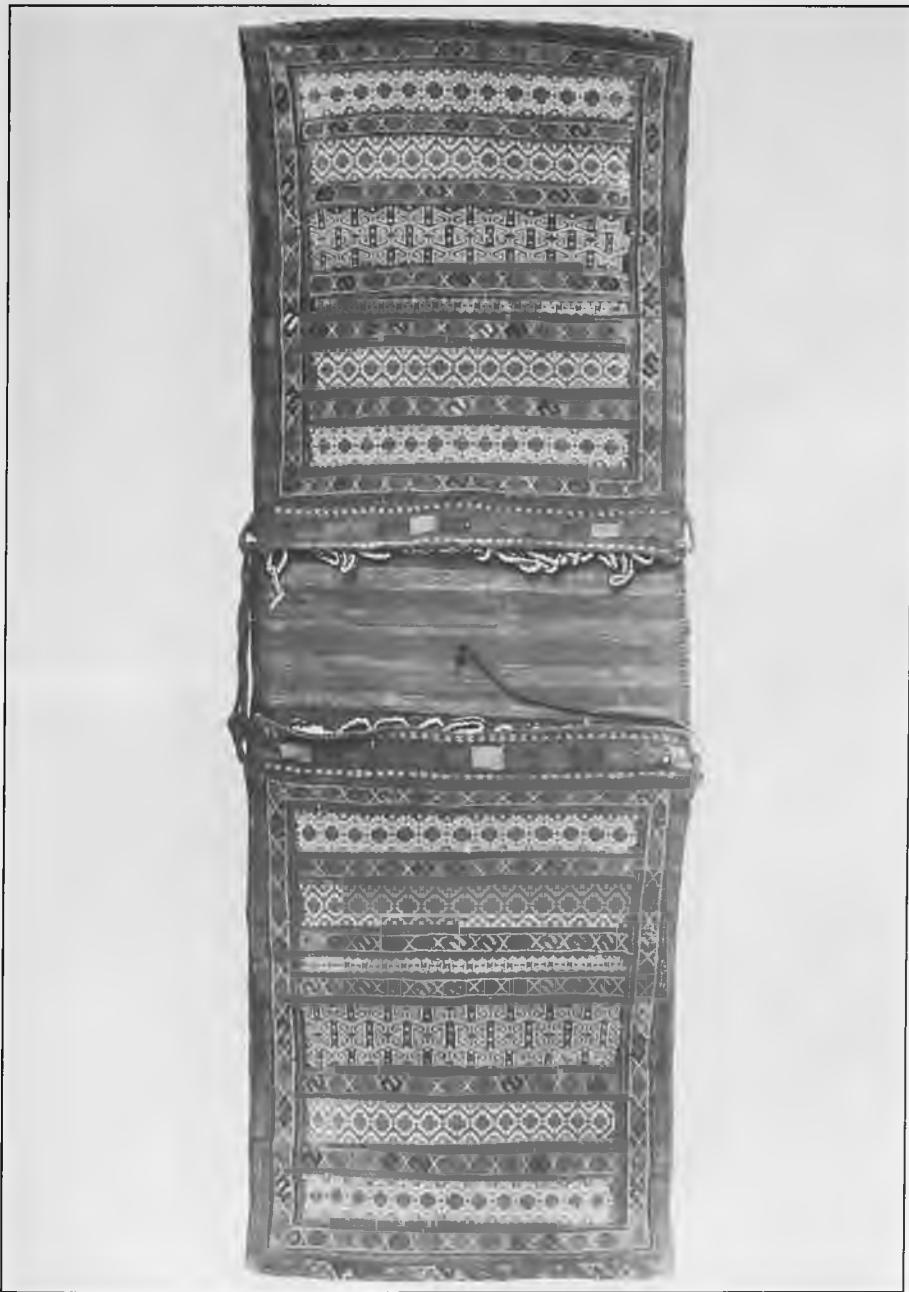
**Plate 119 Horse-blanket:**  
Kirman Area, Southeast Iran. A well-drawn design of rows of elegant botehs against a rich red ground makes this another magnificent horse-blanket. The white is cotton, which gives a sharp definition. It is woven in all-over countered weft-wrapping.  
Size: 1·46m × 1·47m  
Collection of Amedeo and Claire de Franchis





**Plate 120 Flat-woven Rug :**  
**Southeast or East Iran.** A  
curious piece, compactly woven  
with numerous uncut floating  
pattern wefts running the width  
of the rug at the back, in various  
greens, khakis, red and blue. It  
has a mixture of elements drawn  
from both the Baluch and the  
Kirman tribes, and could have  
been woven by either, or indeed  
by other, as yet unidentified,  
weavers of east Iran.  
Size: 2.38m × 1.65m  
Private Collection

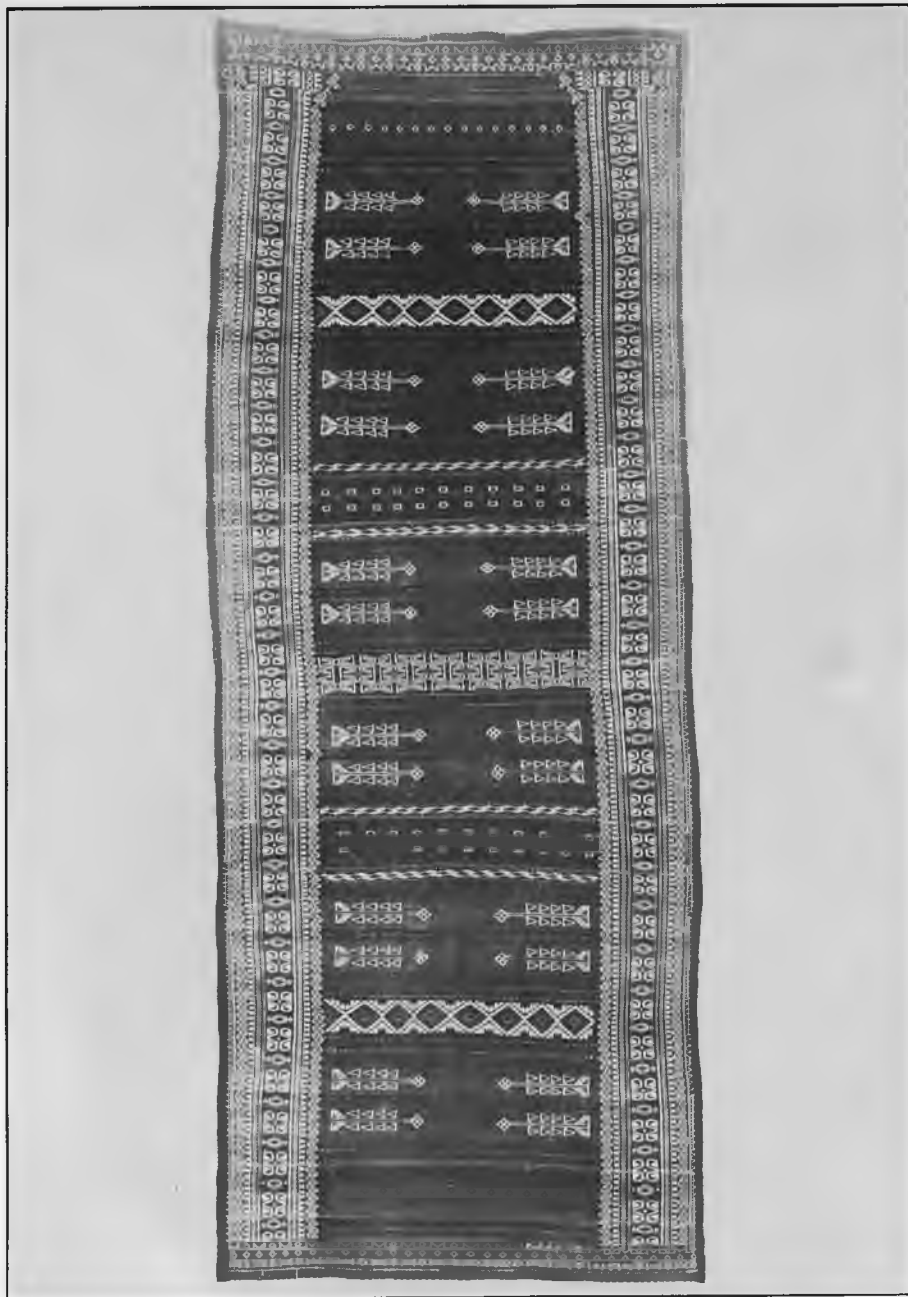


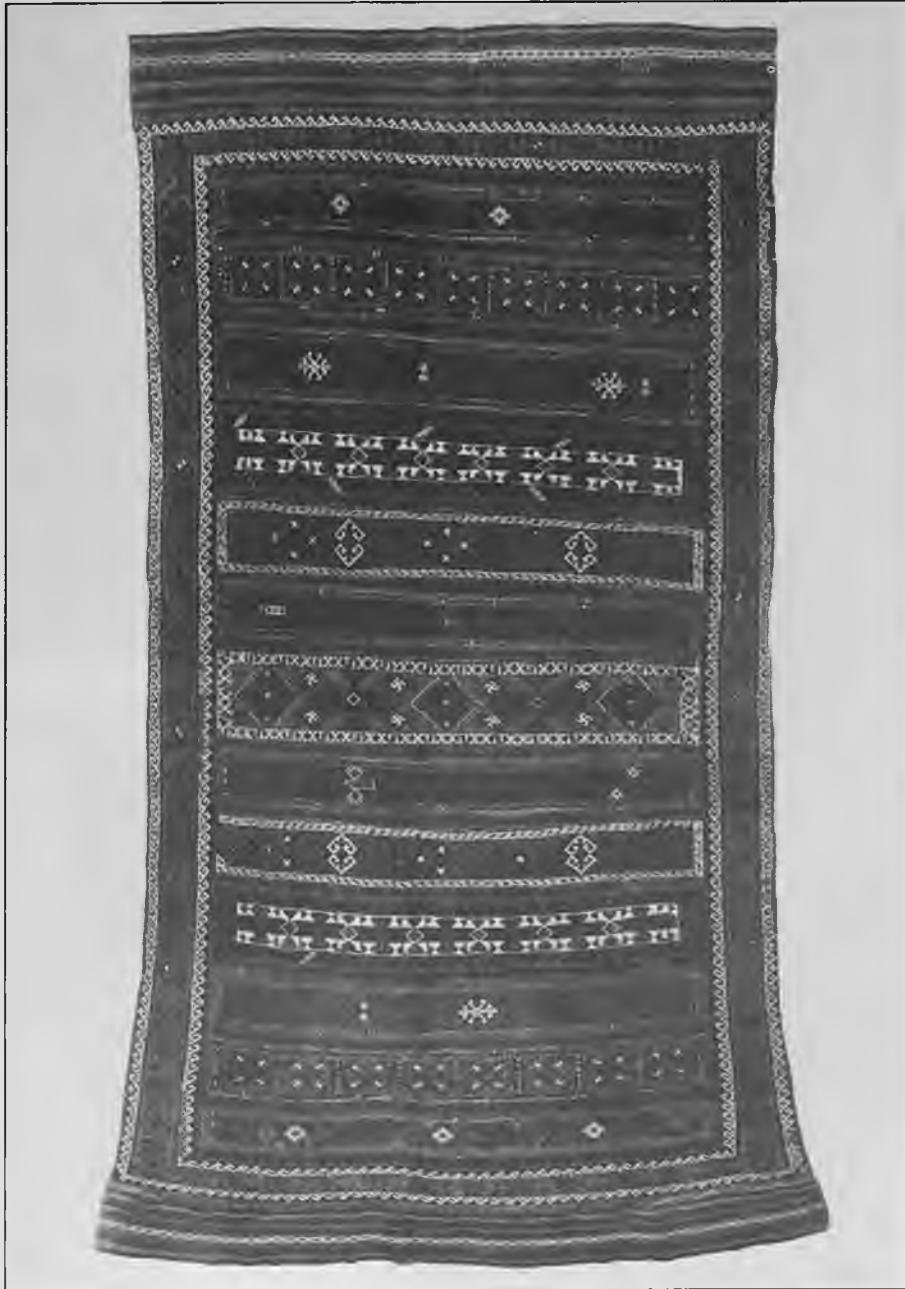


**Plate 121 Saddle-bag: Baluchi, East Iran.** An attractive bag with three different techniques, extra-weft patterning, weft-wrapping, and pile. The designs, in rust, blue, brown, ivory and green are typical of Baluchi flat-weaves, though the S's of the inner border are found also in other regions.

Size: 1.68m × 0.61m  
Collection of Eric Pride

**Plate 122 Flat-woven Rug:**  
**Baluchi, East Iran.** A striking  
flat-woven rug, with extra-weft  
patterning on an oxblood  
ground. The chain devices on  
the field may have some  
connection with the chains used  
for flagellation during the  
religious processions of Muharram.  
It was probably made on the  
borderlands with Afghanistan,  
south of Herat.  
Size: 2.37m × 0.99m  
Private Collection





**Plate 123 Flat-woven Rug:**  
**Baluchi, East Iran.** The sombre  
colours beloved of the Baluch are  
nowhere more apparent than in  
this striking weft-wrapped  
brocade with horizontal panels in  
oxblood, dark red, mulberry, dark  
blue and brown. Any hint of  
monotony is removed by the  
enlivening effect of the ivory wool,  
and the variety of motifs, which  
include swastikas in the centre.  
Size: 2.78m x 1.40m  
Collection Eric Pride

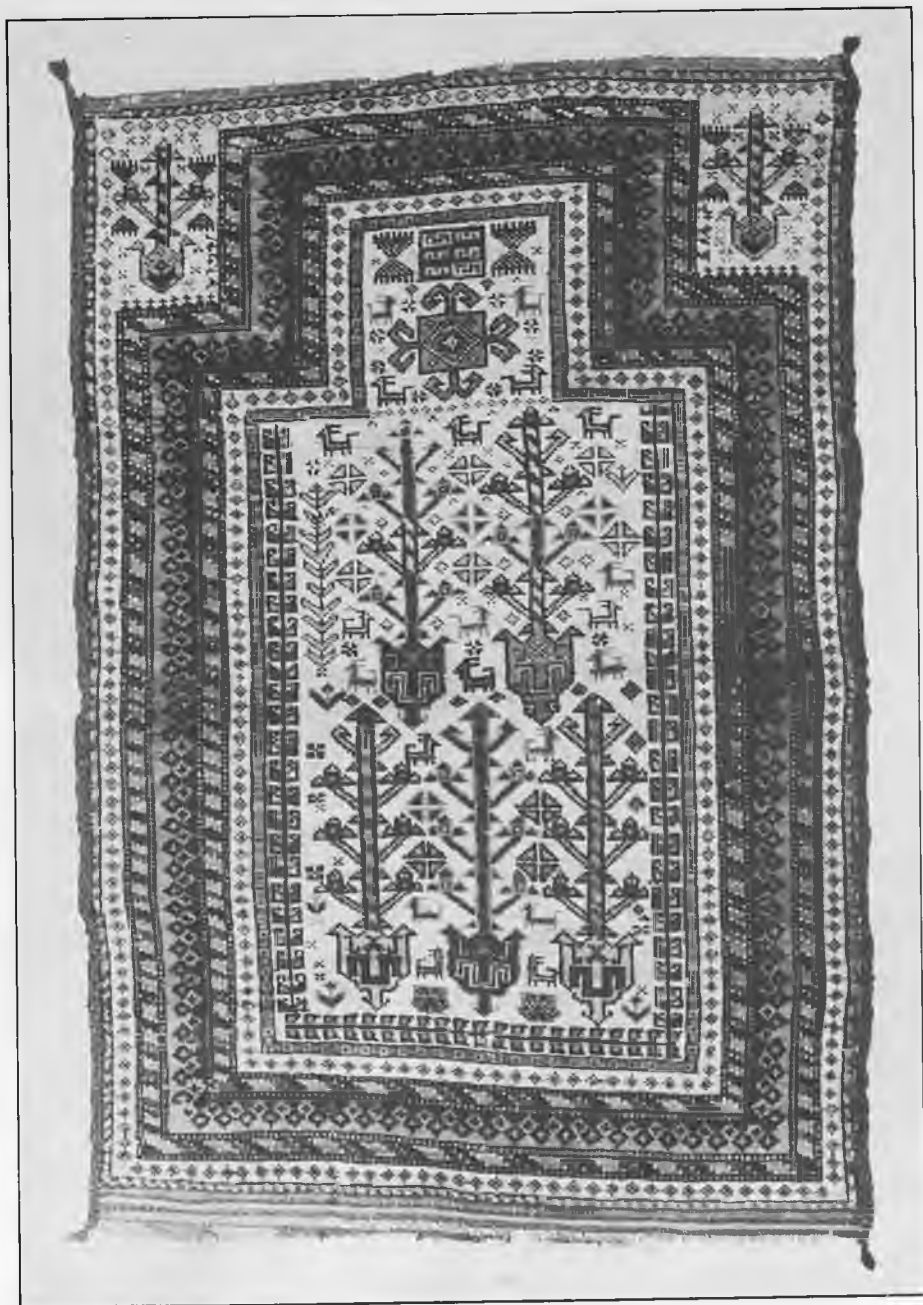
**Plate 124 Prayer Rug: Baluchi, East Iran.** A beautifully balanced prayer rug on a camel-coloured ground. Surrounding the mihrab are small flowers while in the centre of the field stands a stylized tree. Other tree forms fill the spandrels. Attractive flat-woven end finishes complete the harmonious effect.

Size: 1.56m × 1.14m

Victoria and Albert Museum,

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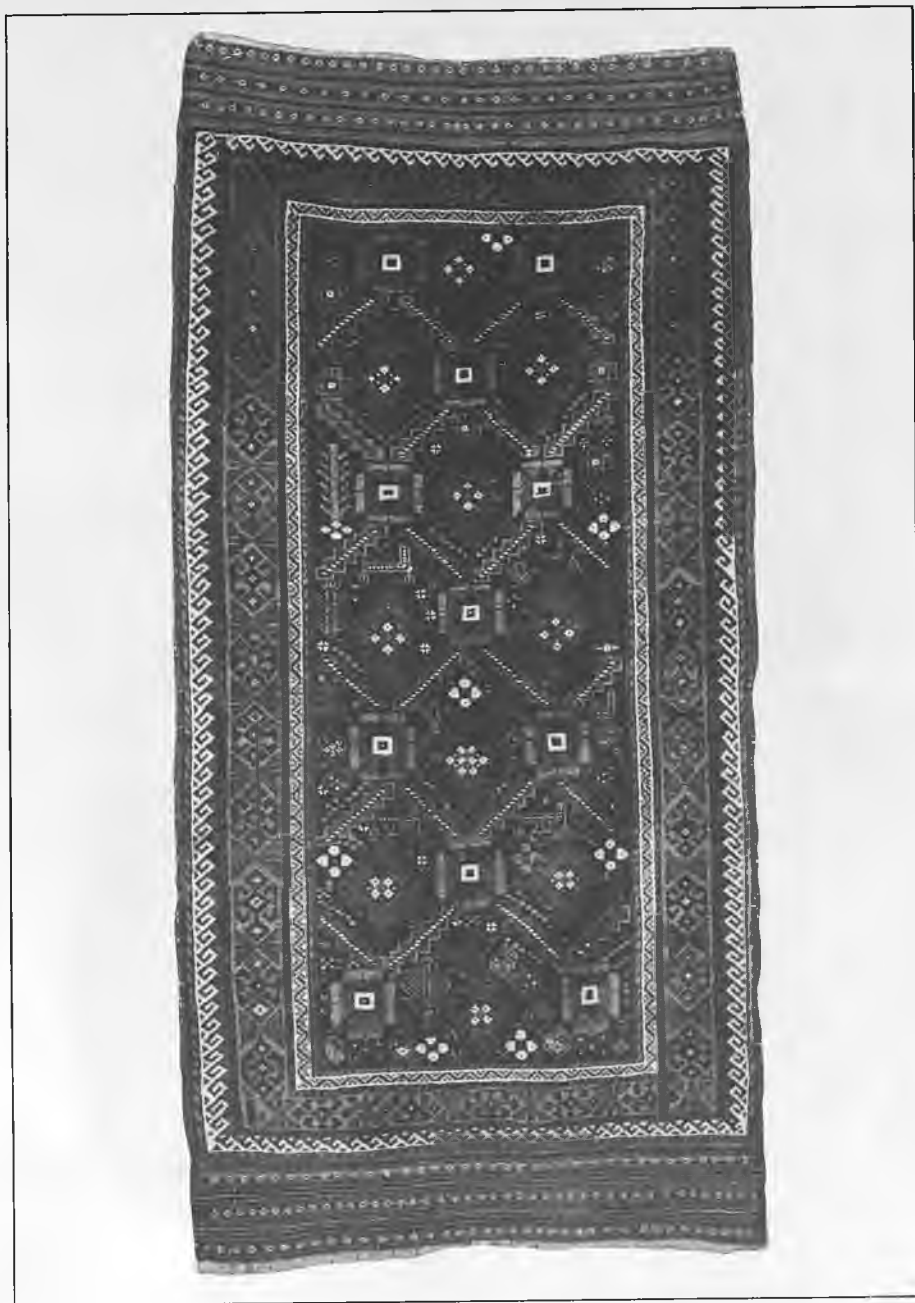


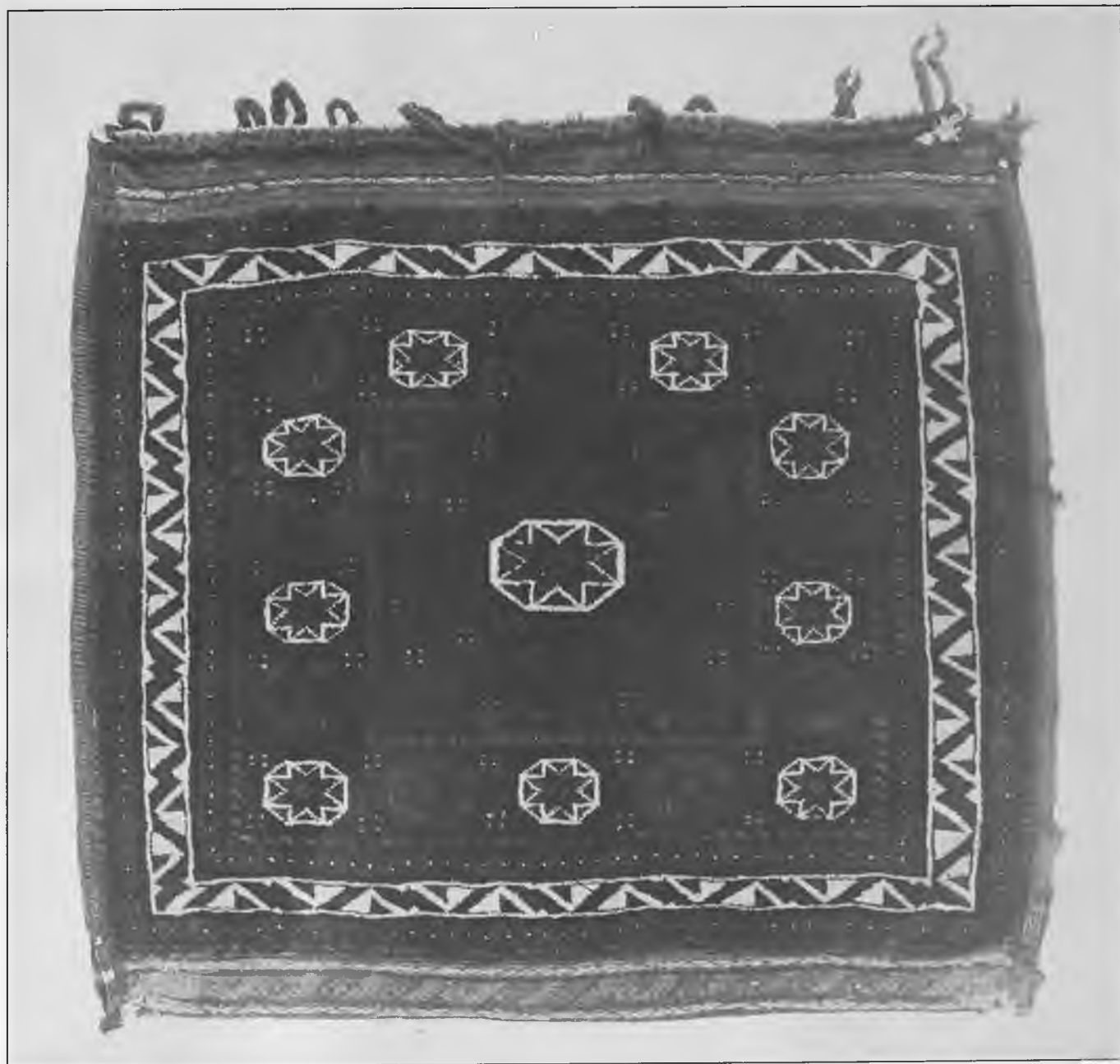


**Plate 125 Prayer Rug: Baluchi, East Iran.** Once again trees are the main feature of this small prayer rug. Trees represent life, as well as being a favourite motif in a land where they are a rarity. They are thus highly prized, and particularly beloved as a decoration for prayer rugs. Typically Baluchi are the dominant colours of rust and ivory. Size: 1.09m x 0.71m. Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright No. T 195-1922

**Plate 126 Pile Rug: Baluchi, East Iran.** The central field of this rug from the Turbat-i Haydari area has a lattice design formed by serrated leaves, with rosettes at the points. Stylized flowers and plants fill the remaining space, in deep reds on a dark blue ground. Attractive also are the skirts with brocaded rosettes in stripes on a plain-weave ground. Sizes: 2.05m × 1.01m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. T 193-1922

**Plate 127 Saddle-bag: Baluchi, East Iran.** A pile woven bag whose sombre colours are relieved by the white ground of the border and the outlining of the stars in the field. It would originally have had another half. Size: 0.84m × 0.75m  
Collection of Eric Pride

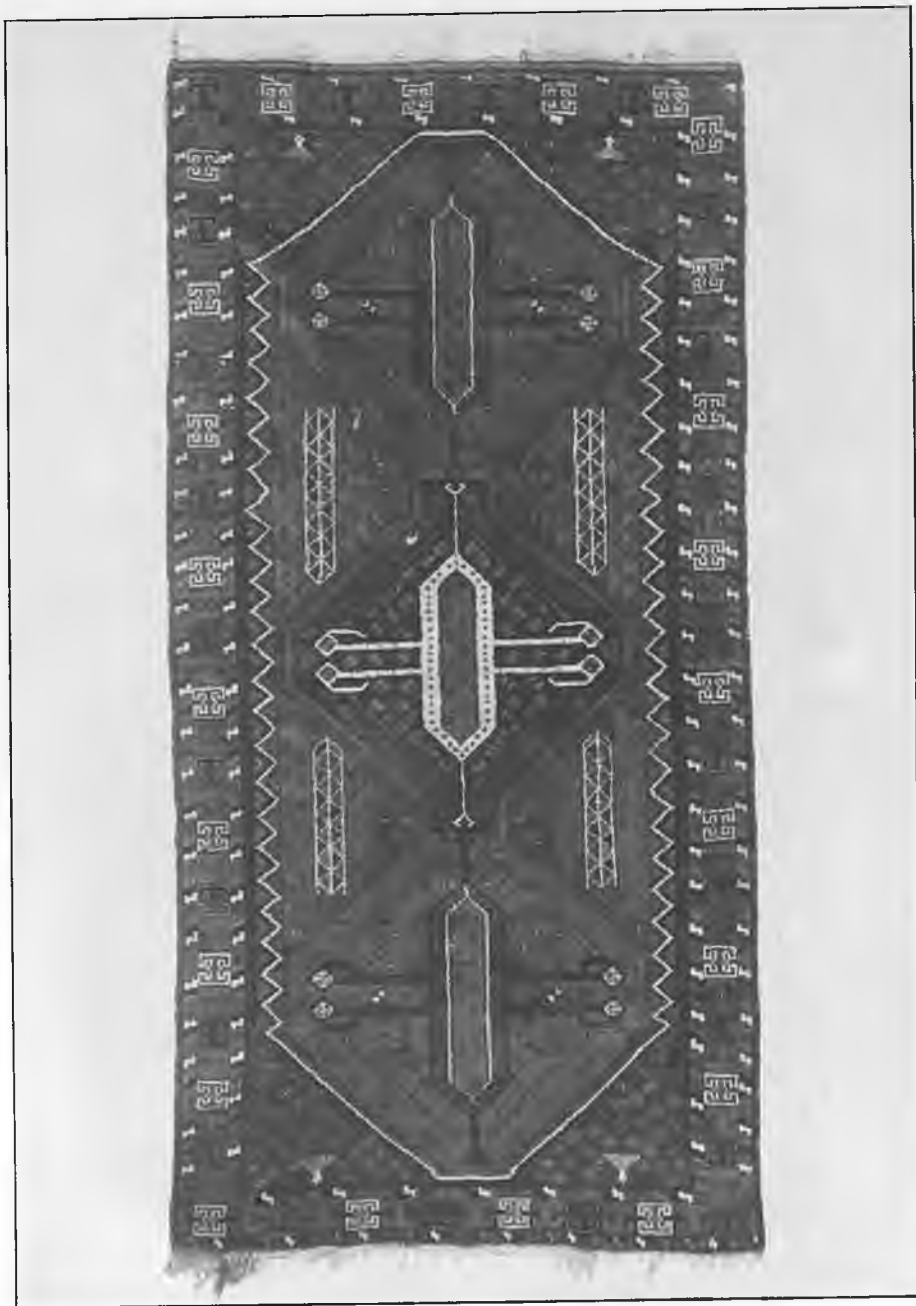


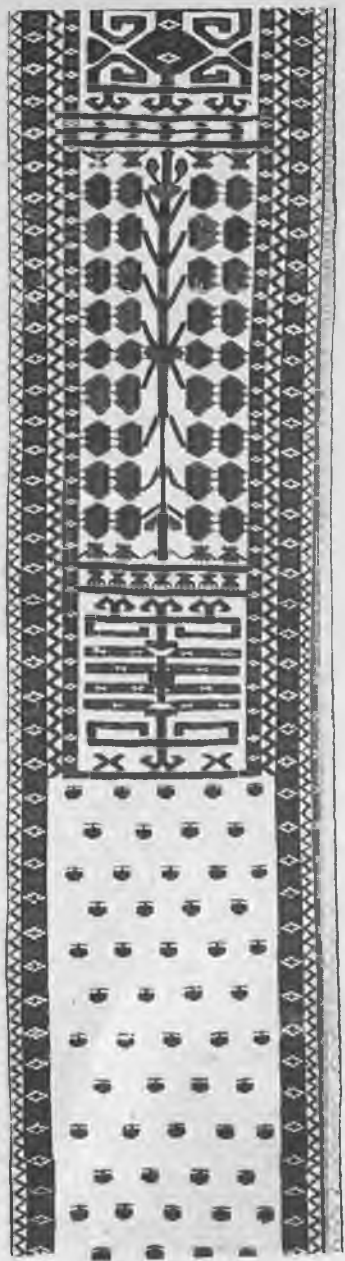


**Plate 128 Pile Rug: Baluchi,**  
**Zabul, East Iran.** An unusual pile  
rug from the area around Zabul  
near the Irano-Afghan-Pakistan  
border. It may be one of a group  
which Cecil Edwards describes,  
based on medallion rugs from  
Fars. Predominant colours are an  
orange-red, oxblood and bright  
blue.

Size: 2.06m × 1.04m

Private Collection



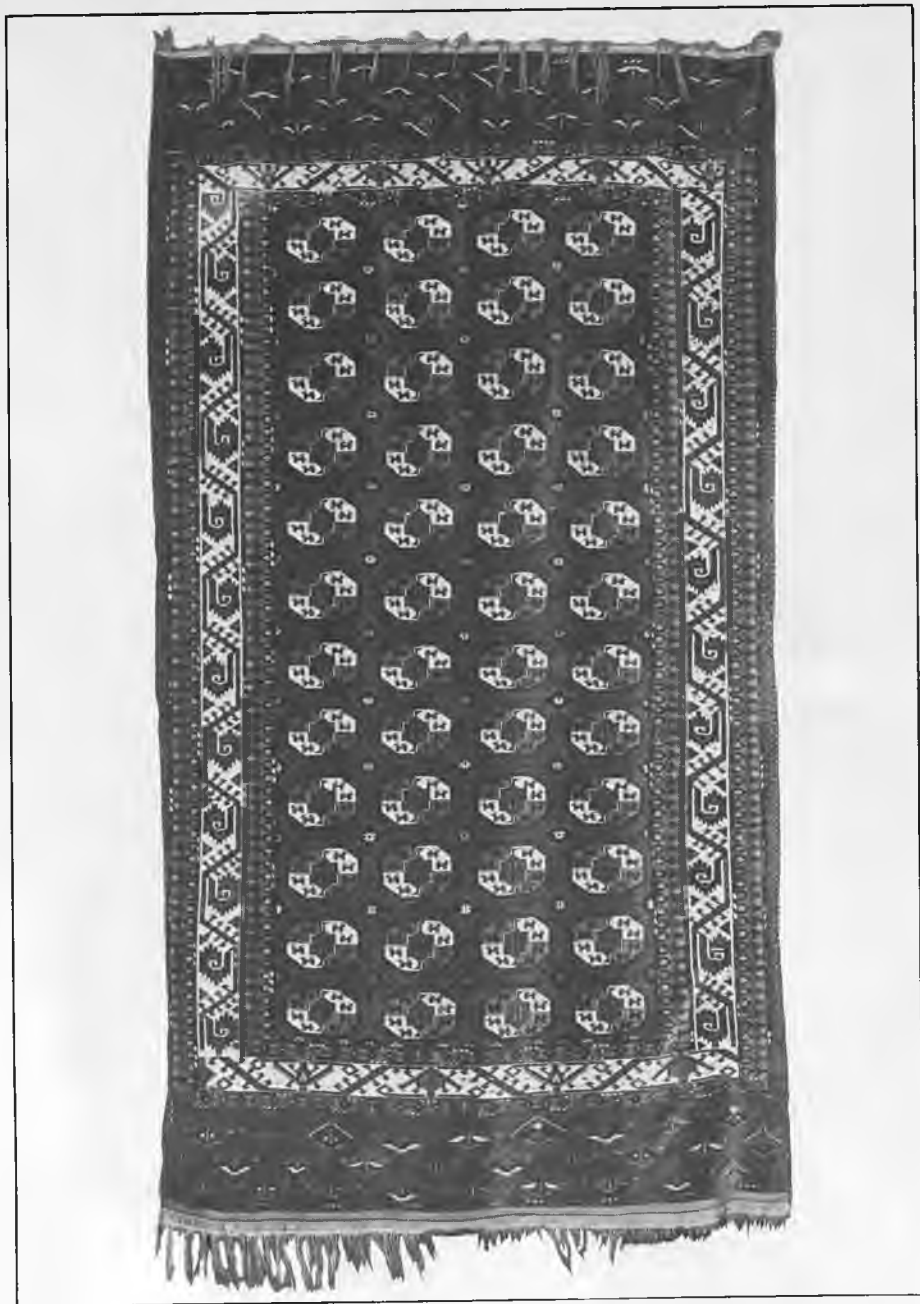


**Plate 129 Tent Band: Tekke, Turkoman, Northeast Iran or Central Asia.** A detail of a long tent band, its function is not only decorative but also to hold firmly in place, either outside or within, the struts that form the foundation of the spherical Turkoman tent. The design is woven in pile on a plain-weave ground.

Size: 11·81m × 0·35m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. T 147-1911

Plate 130 Pile Rug: Yamut Turkoman, Northeast Iran or Central Asia. The field of this splendid rug is dominated by rows of so-called *tauk-nuska* guls, one the major Yamut gul forms; between are minor gul forms. The border is a stylized meander, while shrubs decorate the skirts at each end. Though tribes of Central Asia, there are several Turkoman groups living over the border in Iran. No differences, however, have been noted in their work.

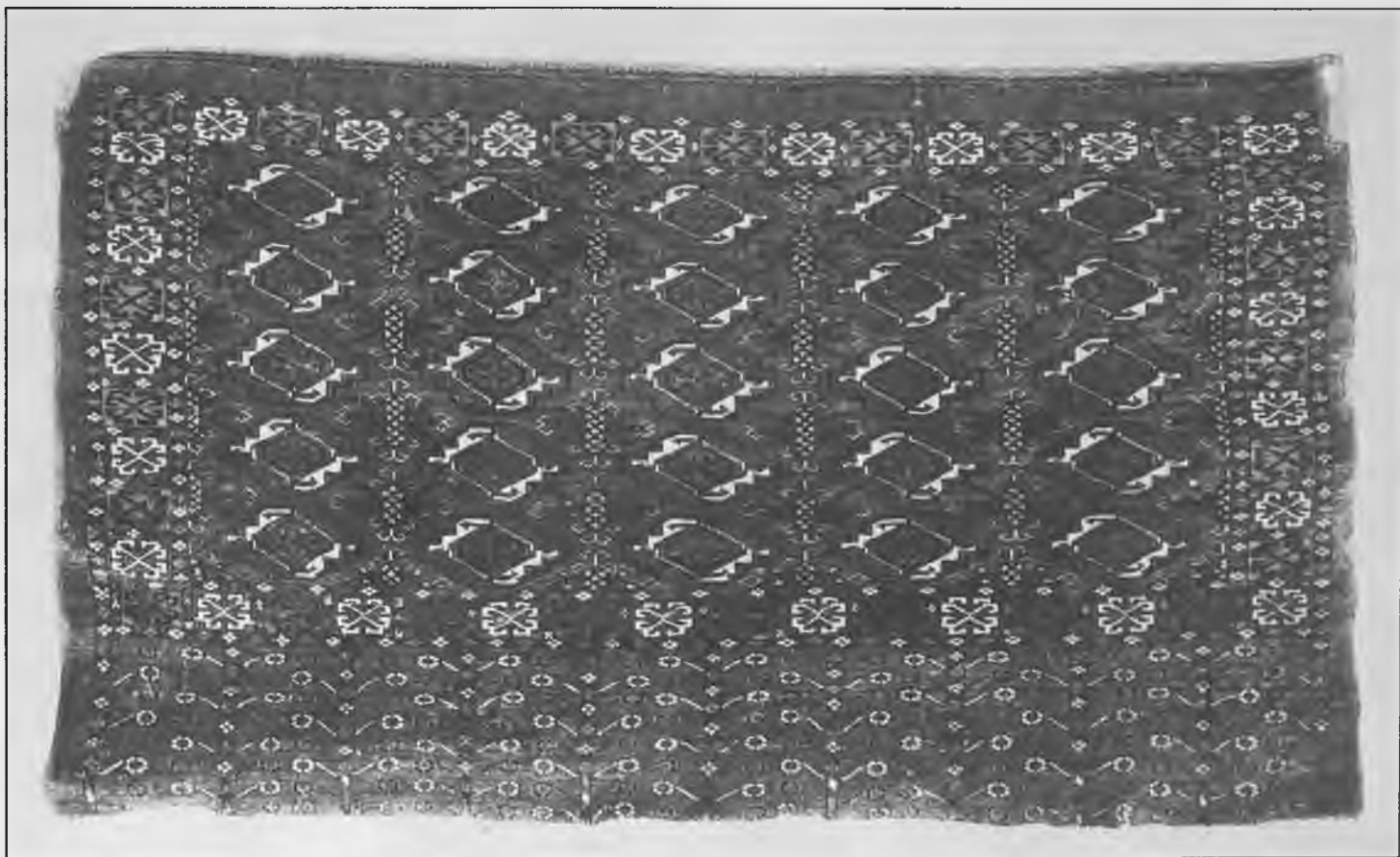
Size: 3.27m × 1.75m  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
Crown Copyright No. 854-1876.



**Plate 131 Bag-face: Tekke Turkoman, Northeast Iran or Central Asia.** A pile bag-face on a rich red ground. The guls are characteristically Tekke, reduced in size and flattened to make the most effective use of the small format of the piece. The skirt has a design of flowering plants.

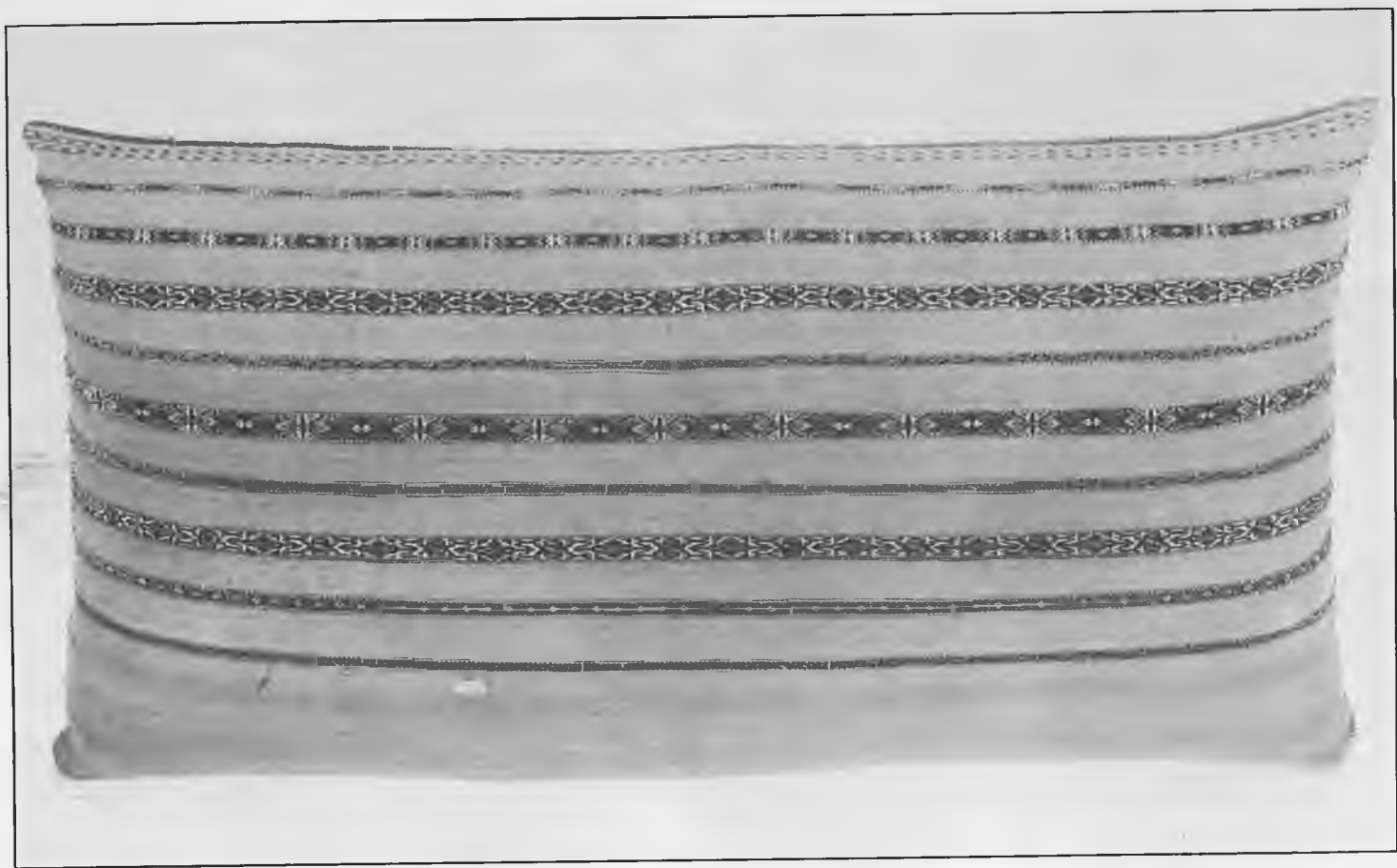
Size: 1.17m × 0.71m

Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright No. T 75-1969



**Plate 132 Storage Bag: Yamut Turkoman, Northeast Iran.** A splendid storage bag with stripes of finely woven pile containing different ornamentation on an old rose ground. It was found in the town of Gunbad-i Qabus on the plains east of the Caspian Sea, which is one of the Turkoman market towns of the area. Such pieces, however, are by no means confined to the Iranian Turkoman.

Size: 0·81m × 1·45m  
Private Collection



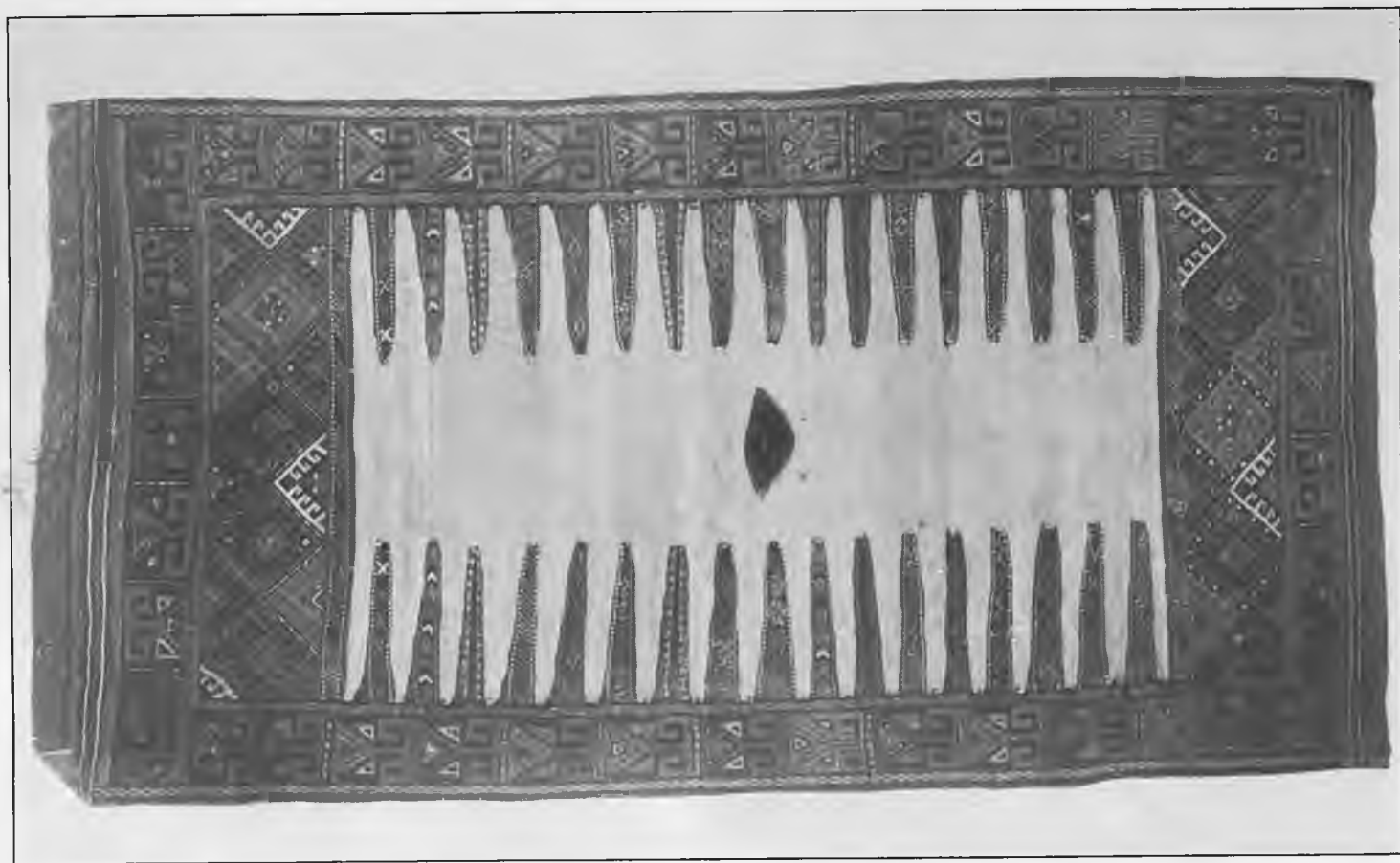


**Plate 133 Camel Trapping:**  
**Yamut Turkoman, Northeast**  
**Iran.** This piece was also found  
in Iran. Probably woven by the  
Yamut, it is an unusual trapping  
of a type used to decorate the  
head and neck of a camel for  
bridal processions at Turkoman  
weddings. It is made of a  
patchwork of flannel and cotton  
with embroidered motifs on the  
head flap, with feathers, and often  
buttons too, sewn on the centre.  
Size: 1·71m × 1·20m  
Collection of Manijeh and Parviz  
Tanavoli

**Plate 134** **Sufra: Kurds of Khurasan, Northeast Iran.** Sufra is the Persian word for a cloth on which to lay food. Tribal communities always keep a special sufra to place before honoured guests, and that illustrated here is such a piece. The pronged motifs penetrating into the field generally indicate this special function. It is in weft-wrapping on a plain-weave ground. The designs and dark colours are typical of the flat-weaves of these eastern Kurds.

Size: 1·46m × 0·80m

Collection of Eric Pride



**Plate 135 Saddle-bag:** Kurds of Khurasan, Northeast Iran. Reds, blues, pale gold and ivory are the colours of this fine weft-wrapped bag. Both in design and colour it resembles the work of the Kurds of Kurdistan, though remains unmistakably characteristic of the eastern Kurds.

Size: 1.34m × 0.62m

Private Collection



**Plate 136 Flat-woven Rug: Kurds of Khurasan, Northeast Iran.** A characteristic extra-weft patterned rug with a design of broad horizontal bands containing several designs.

Size: 3.12m × 1.45m  
Collection of Eric Pride





**Plate 137 Pile Rug: Kurds of Khurasan, Northeast Iran.** This is known as the *hawz*, or water-tank design, where pools are set in a stylized formal garden. A similar arrangement occurs in rugs from eastern Turkey and so-called Kazak rugs of the Caucasus. The Kurds of Khurasan came in the sixteenth century from original homelands in eastern Turkey and Qarabagh in the Caucasus; such similarities are therefore not surprising.  
Size: 2.71m × 1.34m  
Private Collection

**Plate 138 Pile Rug: Kurds of  
Khurasan, Northeast Iran.**

Adjoining octagons containing  
stepped hooked lozenges are one  
of the most popular tribal designs  
in Iran and the Caucasus.

However, the structure of this rug,  
its loose and floppy feel, broad  
side finishes, plain-weave skirts,  
and the colours, which are  
mainly gold, red, green, blue and  
ivory, make it unmistakably from  
this area.

Size: 2.59m × 1.59m

Private Collection





**Plate 139 Pile Rug: Kurds of Khurasan or Varamin.** A handsome rug with a design of palmettes on a pinky red field. It is known to have come from Varamin, though the border designs are more characteristic of the eastern Kurds. However, there are Kurds related to those of Khurasan in Varamin. Alternatively the rug may simply have been brought to Varamin.

Size: 3.09m × 1.92m  
Private Collection

**Plate 140 Pile Rug: Varamin Area, North Iran.** A pile rug with a lattice of diamonds from the area around Varamin, southeast of Tehran. Several tribes of different origins mingle here. One of the characteristics is the frequent use of undyed dark brown wool for the warp. This is the predominant colour of the local sheep.

Size: 2.72m × 1.15m

Private Collection



**Plate 141 Ru-kursi: Varamin Area, North Iran.** Typical of villages around Varamin are square pieces known as *ru-kursi*, which are covers for charcoal braziers. In cold weather the inhabitants sit with their feet next to the *kursi*, with a cover like this one pulled up to the chin, covering both themselves and the brazier. The design of a central cruciform and surrounding lozenges are woven in pile with the symmetrical knot on a plain-weave ground of dark brown and camel. Size: 1.42m × 1.37m  
Collection of Eric Pride



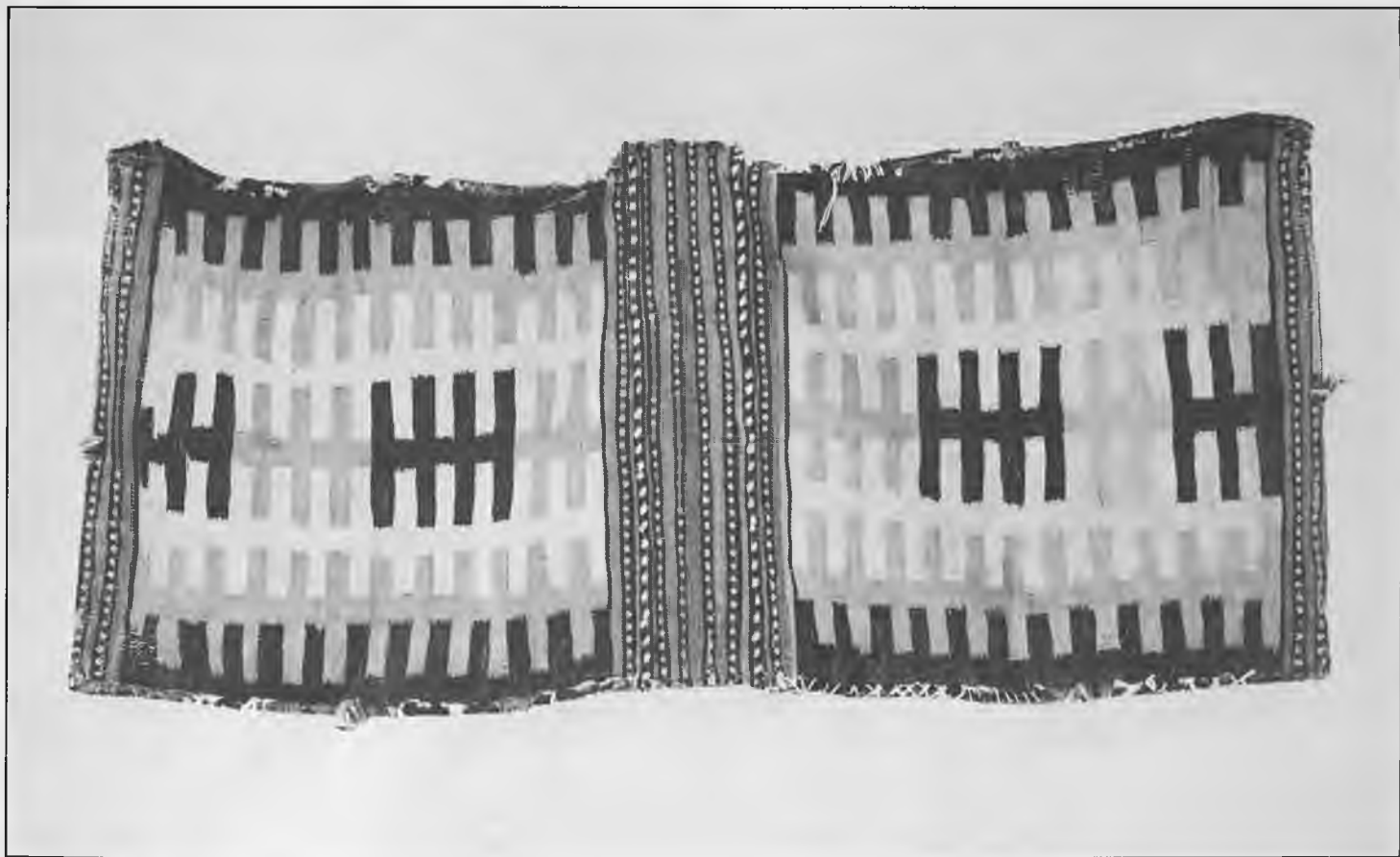
**Plate 142 Saddle-bag: Varamin Area, North Iran.** This is the face of a shaggy pile-woven bag from Varamin with a field design of a diamond lattice with lozenges in the border. Frequently, however, the backs of Varamin bags are as dramatic, if not more so, than the fronts. The back of this one is illustrated opposite.

Size: 1.39m x 0.71m

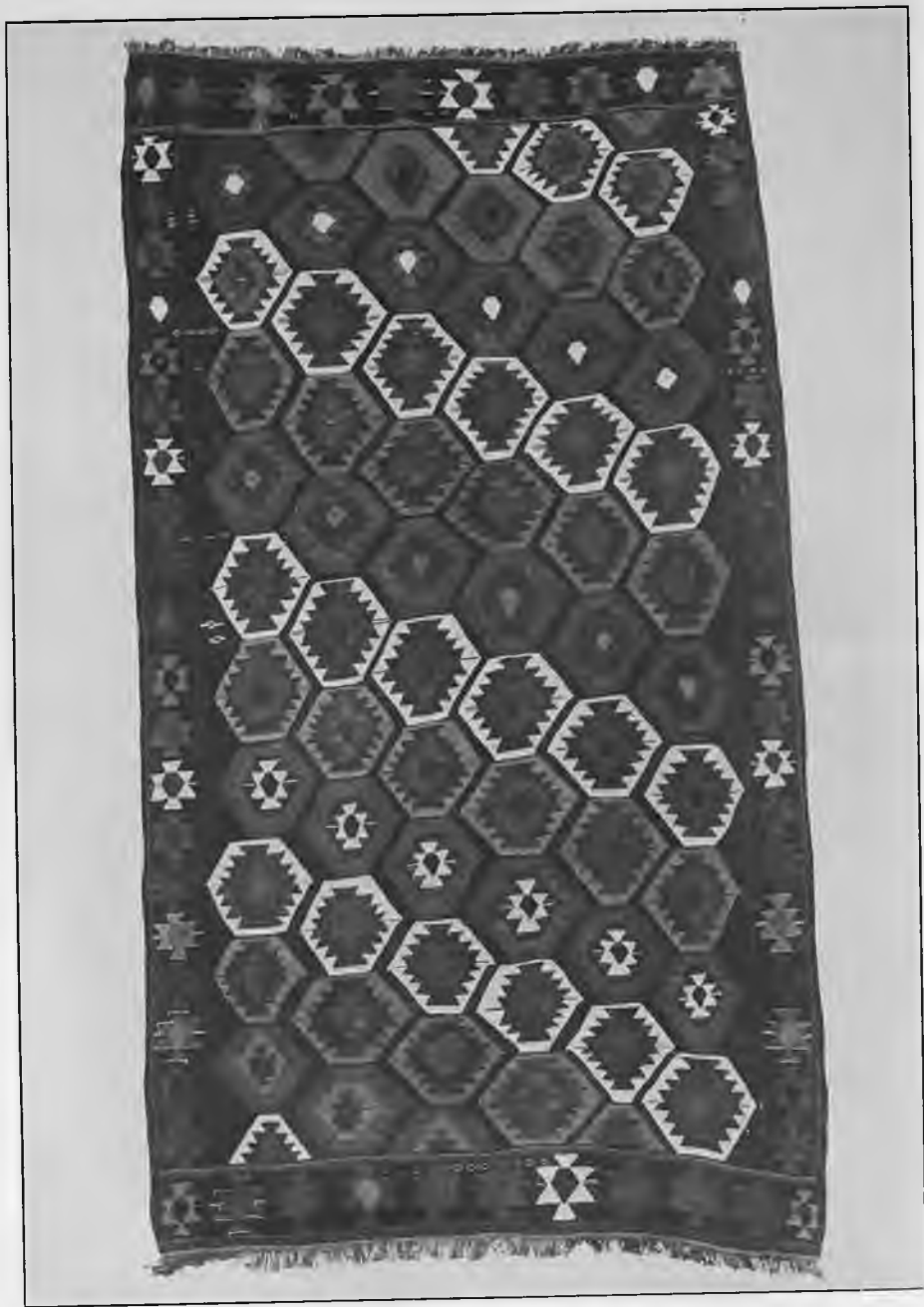
Private Collection

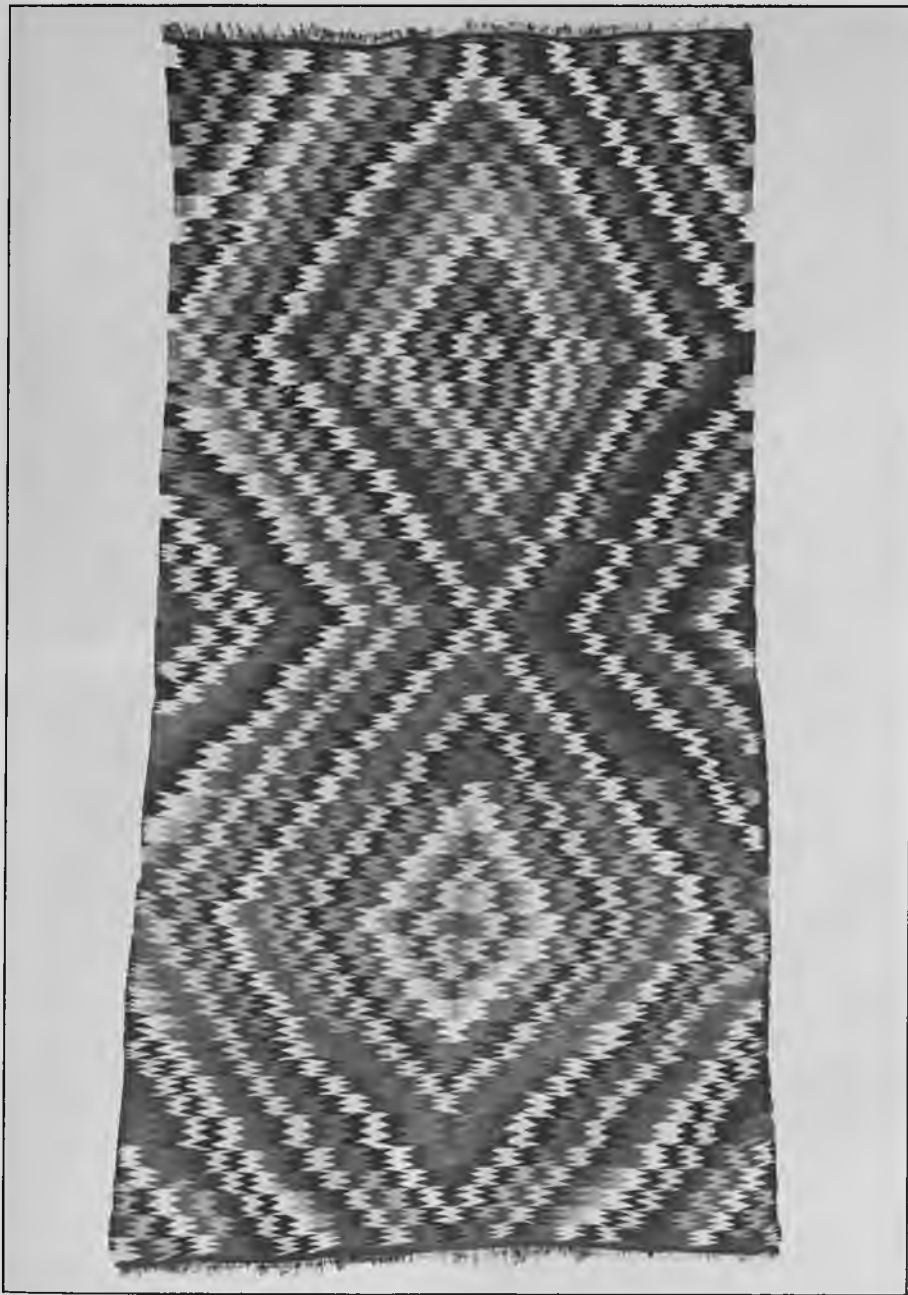


**Plate 143 Saddle-bag: Varamin Area, North Iran.** A clear, sharp design, totally abstract in concept, in pale ochre, salmon and blue-black slit-tapestry, makes a striking contrast to the pile front shown opposite. The bands of the brocaded rosettes are characteristic of this area.  
Size: 1.39m x 0.71m  
Private Collection.



**Plate 144 Gelim: Garmsar, North Iran.** Diagonal rows of hexagons in alternating colours of ivory, red and rust parade across a dark blue and brown-black ground. Such gelims come from villages round Garmsar, east of Varamin. Note the typical brown warp of this region and the brocaded rosettes scattered over the field. The border has stepped polygons in different colours.  
Size: 2.70m × 1.59m  
Collection of Eric Pride





**Plate 145 Gelim: Garmsar, North Iran.** The dazzler effect is known locally as the Shiraz design, and indeed such pieces are sometimes confused with similar ones from Fars. However, the brown warp, the dovetailing rather than the more usual slit-tapestry technique of the south and the deeper colours, which include a rich apricot, are all distinctive of Garmsar. The lack of borders is uncommon.  
Size: 3.36m × 1.78m  
Private Collection.

**Plate 146 Saddle-bag: Varamin Area, North Iran.** An attractive weft-wrapped bag with bird border motifs in the central bands and a stylized border version of the stars and bars design found in early Turkish rugs. It would be hard to identify this piece on the basis of design alone. However, the quality of the wool, the rosettes scattered on the mouth of the fastenings, the brown warp and the back (illustrated opposite) are characteristic of the weaving of the tribes of Varamin.

Size: 1.32m × 0.72m

Private Collection





**Plate 147 Saddle-bag: Varamin Area, North Iran.** This is the back of the preceding piece showing the pile-woven base, dovetailed tapestry panel and brocaded rosettes so typical of this area. This bag was probably woven by Lurs, who are recorded as being here from as early as the fourteenth century.

Size: 1.32m × 0.72m  
Private Collection

**Plate 148 Saddle-bag: Varamin Area, North Iran.** This is a typical example of a west-wrapped saddle-bag made by the Lurs of Varamin. There are similarities with the weaving of the Lurs and the Bakhtiyaris further south but also distinctions. Varamin designs tend to be simpler, with fewer borders and clearer colours, particularly the reds. The box-type motifs of the border are characteristic of Varamin.

Size: 1.19m × 0.65m

Private Collection



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## Series note

This volume forms part of an extensive series of illustrated works covering most aspects of Islamic art and architecture. While these books will serve as a source of reference for the serious student, they are also intended to provide the general reader with a lucid and up-to-date introduction to the subject.

## **Transliteration note**

**For the sake of simplicity the transliteration of words from the Arabic script has been made without the use of diacritical marks and macrons. The original spellings in Arabic script will be obvious to those in a position to know ; for the general reader the problem is of no importance.**



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This book paints a fascinating picture, not only showing superb examples of tribal rugs but also the way in which they are woven and the life of the tribes themselves. After many years study of the major rug-making groups, the author is able to describe the rich elements in the design as well as giving technical notes on the weaving so that the text and pictures together form an essential introduction for anyone who knows or cares about rugs.

Other titles in this series include:  
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