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July 2nd, 2015, 11:04 PM

#1 \square

Joel Greifinger

Members

Join Date: May 2008 Location: Massachusetts Posts: 75 📙 Kuhi khorjin?

Hi folks,

A while back, I got this 28"x 26" (71x 66 cm.) bag face. The many (24) pointed central medallion struck me as a variant of a Crivelli star and it had a vaguely Kufic-looking doodad in the middle. It has moderately-depressed wool warps that are a mix of ivory and undyed brown and brown wool wefts. The knots are symmetrical. There is a one-inch stripe in weft-substitution weave below where the closure tabs had been. The back of the bag has alternating stripes in blue, brown and reds in plainweave about two inches of which remains. After entertaining some other possibilities and consulting with a few other folks, I settled on thinking it was probably some species of Afshar.





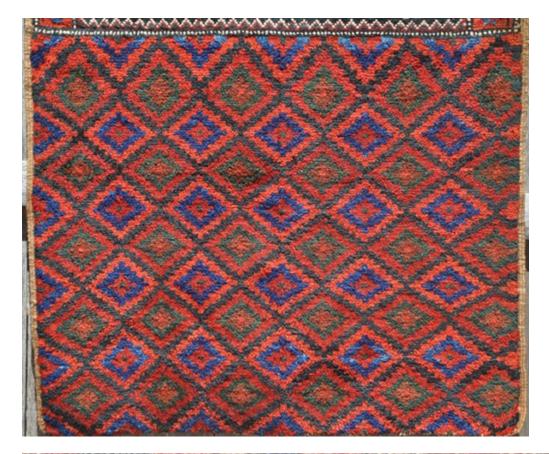
Even though I did not remember seeing this design before, now that I



started looking, they, of course, began appearing.

Not long after, I came across this complete (29.5"x 51" 75 x 130cm.), opened-up khorjin. The design of the pile bag face has obvious similarities with the first, but here the back of the bag is also done *entirely* in pile. This now had me extremely intrigued, since I could not think of any other khorjin-sized bags that were piled, front and back. Here too the warps are ivory and undyed brown wool and moderately offset. It has ivory wool wefts and the knot is symmetrical. It has the same weft-substitution pattern above the bag face and below the closure tabs.







While searching for varieties of Afshar bags, I came across this quote from a presentation that Austin Doyle and Michael Seidman did at the Textile Museum in 2009 that was reported at R. John Howe's *Textiles and Text*. Speaking of a group of symmetrically-knotted rugs woven in the Jabel Barez Mountains referred to as Afshar-i-Kuhi, or just simply Kuhi, Doyle

mentioned that, "The Kuhi have a unique khorjin in which the front and back are both piled."

Now I figured I was getting somewhere. All I had to do was find some



examples of piled Kuhi khorjin.

After a bunch of searching, pretty much all I found was the probable source of the Austin Doyle mention. In the entry on "Kuhi" in Peter Stone's *The Oriental Rug Lexicon*, he writes, "Tribespeople of the Kerman area west of Sirjan. Rugs of these tribes are tied with the symmetric knot, double-wefted and with offset warps. Saddlebags are woven with pile on both faces." There is no citation to either source or examples.

While other examples with similar 'star medallion and Kufic doodad' design have appeared, only one that I've seen (culled from her photo archive by an intrepid friend) shows the piled back. It was offered for sale online as Afshar:





Does anyone out there know anything about these bags? About bags piled on both sides more generally? About Jabel Barez, Afshar-e-Kuhi piled weaving?

Thoughts, comments and speculations all appreciated.

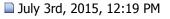
Joel Greifinger

Last edited by Joel Greifinger; July 15th, 2015 at 11:27 PM.





#<u>2</u> \square





Join Date: May 2008 Location: Cyprus Posts: 76



Nice bags, Joel, I am envious.

Your second bag and the one in the third picture are quite Baluch-esque. And I remember the Afshar-Balush "confusion in attribution" regarding a group of flat-weave salt bags we discussed in the past...

As a matter of fact, John Wertime's article "Some Salt Bags from Kerman Province" mentions the (and I quote) "Jamal Barez (better termed Jabal-e Barez)" area

http://www.tcoletribalrugs.com/article13saltbags.html

Perhaps the people who made those salt bags are the same who wove your second bag?

Regards,

Filiberto









#3

■ July 3rd, 2015, 06:01 PM

Jim Miller Members

Join Date: Sep 2008 Location: Rochester, NY Posts: 5



Joel



Here is the cousin to your first piece. I bought this from Tom Cole several years ago and he described it as kurdish from North West Persia. Jim

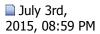














Join Date: May 2008 Location: Massachusetts Posts: 75



Balucho-Kurdish?

Quote:

Your second bag and the one in the third picture are quite Baluch-esque.

Hi Filiberto,

When I first got the bag face, I entertained the possibility that it was some sort of hitherto undocumented symmetrically-knotted 'Baluch' bag. Symmetrically-knotted 'Baluch' khorjin are not all that plentiful to begin with, but after searching (and

#**4** \square

Edit Quote

inquiries to some collectors) I didn't find any similar pieces generally attributed as 'Baluch'. On the other hand, when I read the Doyle/Seidman Textile Museum presentation, they said, "The rugs are termed Afshar Jebel Barazi or Kuhi. Afshars coexisted with Lak and Baluch tribespeople. Afshar-I-Kuhi rugs are easily distinguished from other Afshar rugs, being deep-piled with soft, shiny wool in dark colors reminiscent of Baluch rugs. Old Kuhi rugs are symmetrically knotted with two shoots of weft between rows of knots, with depressed warps."

In his Afshar monograph, Tanavoli also writes that Kuhi rugs are distinguishable from other Kerman products (like Afshar) in using "darker shades. Their red, for example tends to maroon. Furthermore, while two tones of brown and mustard can be found in most of their weavings, clear yellow is often either absent or much minimized. Their green is subdued and distinctively more of a dark emerald color. Blue and navy blue are used moderately." This fit the bill pretty nicely.

As you mention, there is some literature on Jabal Barezi flatweaves. In addition to the Wertime article (here's the accurate Web address:

http://www.tcoletribalrugs.com/article13saltbags.html), there was also an article by P.R.J. Ford in *Oriental Rug Review*:

https://web.archive.org/web/20130628080623/http://www.rugreview.com/122b.htm. I haven't found any published examples of the piled rugs or bags.

Hi Jim,

I kept my search narrowed to either Kerman or 'Baluch' related groups or the mix of weavers from the Varamin area, because of the presence on the bags of the pattern done in weft-substitution, as these are the only groups in Iran that I aware of who utilize it.

The images of your bag have not yet made their appearance. I hope they arrive soon.

If it includes decoration done in weft-substitution, I would be a bit skeptical of a NW Persian Kurdish attribution. Kurds from the Varamin area? That might be another story.

Joel













#5

July 3rd, 2015, 09:14 PM



Join Date: May 2008 Location: Cyprus Posts: 76



Hi Joel,

Quote:

here's the accurate Web address

Thanks. I don't know how that colon (meaning the punctuation mark) ended in the middle of the "www" part of the address. An attempt to colonization, maybe. Now it's corrected.

Jim, I presume you sent the photos to Steve. If they don't appear in the next few hours, send them to me and I'll upload them tomorrow morning local time.

Regards,

Filiberto















#6

July 3rd, 2015, 09:48 PM



Members

Join Date: Sep 2008 Location: Rochester, NY Posts: 5





Joel

Steve kindly posted the picture for me.

Sadly, the end are no longer intact, so we can't tell if the kilim ends contained any weft substitutions









#**7**

July 4th, 2015, 08:12 PM

Joel Greifinger

Members

Join Date: May 2008 Location: Massachusetts

Posts: 75



Quote:

Sadly, the end are no longer intact, so we can't tell if the kilim ends contained any weft substitutions

Hi Jim,

Well, we can't say for yours. 👀

However, there does seem to be a great deal of consistency in this design feature on the other specimens I've found. These two sold in the last few years. On the first, it's not clear whether the back of the bag was piled or plainweave. The second (which has piled closure tabs), is complete with plainweave back.







#8 🗆

Edit Quote

Edit Quote 2

Quote:

I remember the Afshar-Balush "confusion in attribution"

According to the Encyclopedia Iranica, the three largest tribal population groups in Kerman Province are Jebālbārezi, Baluch, and Afšār. The weavings we associate as Jabel Barez come from small villages in the Bam sub-province which, including the city of Bam had 3,860 households in the last census. I'm quessing there's been a lot of mutual influences between these groups over time.

Joel











Rich Larkin

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008 Location: Massachusetts

Posts: 19



Hi Joel,

Interesting thread. One point (among others) that struck me was made in the OR Review article by P. R. J. Ford (see Fig. 3 therein), linked by you in frame #4, above. He shows a flatwoven Afshar piece from Northeast of Meshed featuring distinctive weaving characteristics common to the work of Afshar weavers from the area of the Jamal [sic] Barez mountains, though the two groups are separated by a thousand miles and four hundred years. Amazing!

Having that example of remarkable persistence in mind, I look at the very distinctive medallion in these bags. No doubt, it has been around for some time, though it has managed to elude YHS most of the time.

Rich















Members

Join Date: May 2008 Location: Canada Posts: 21



Hi Joel,

Interesting puzzle. We got a bag face like the ones you show several years ago, and always just called it Afshar because of the ribbed back. Now you ¡BRAVO!

are taking things further & Ours is also wool on wool, with deep warp depression, ivory warps, but bands of ivory and red wefts.

#9





Those backs are interesting. The piled ones look like a kelim design done in pile, with the simple diamonds and the lack of borders. Actually, Fig. 9 in the Ford article gives a nice example of the same design in kelim. Wrong tribe though . But I wonder where they are? If piled backs are the norm, what did they do with them when they cut them off? I have seen more of those bag fronts on-line, but never a separated back. With the pile they would make nice table rugs...

Edit Quote

#10 \square

Quote:

Having that example of remarkable persistence in mind, I look at the very distinctive medallion in these bags. No doubt, it has been around for some time, though it has managed to elude YHS most of the time.

Rich, I think a case could also be made for a fairly recent design $\overline{\mathfrak{m}}$. Made for the market bags with an inventive design thought up by a creative weaver? All the bags shown here look to be in good to excellent condition, with very little wear to front or back. Ours never struck me as truly old. The colours all look good, maybe natural, maybe well chosen chrome dyes even? Would anyone want to place them much before WW II? The design seems to have fallen out of the sky. Unless someone comes up with an older form, a comparison could be made with the "seh mihrabi' Baluch, also thought to be a comparably recent design without older antecedents.

Dinie











Rich Larkin

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008 Location: Massachusetts

Posts: 19



Hi Dinie,

Quote:

I think a case could also be made for a fairly recent design 00. Made for the market bags with an inventive design thought up by a creative weaver?

You may have put your finger on something. I've wondered about such a phenomenon in regard to more than one suddenly ubiquitous design that seems to spring from nowhere. For example, rugs in this drawing style have been popping up:



Mine has what may be an unfortunate palette. I doubt seriously that purple had anything to do with ancient natural dyeing methods. But it does illustrate a style recently in vogue in, apparently, Afghanistan. Similarly, your khorjin and the others in this thread also demonstrate a

#**11** \square

Edit Quote 22

clear kinship (among themselves, not with my piece), but not a wellknown traditional motif...at least in my experience. If it reflects invention, though, how does that process take place?

BTW, I'm not necessarily sold on the proposition that the subject design of this thread is the product of recent invention. The various examples posted do show the obligatory variation generally found within particular design types. By contrast, note the nearly perfect (?) symmetry of the one I posted. No doubt it was woven by hand, but it looks like a knot-for-knot copy of a machine made piece. Of course, one has the sense the examples posted by Joel and others were made in a more remote setting than mine, above.

Rich











Dinie Gootjes

Members

Join Date: May 2008 Location: Canada Posts: 21



Hi Rich,

The more I want to agree with you, the more I continue to agree with myself 🕒 🗓 .

Ouote:

The various examples posted do show the obligatory variation generally found within particular design types.

That is true only if you look at the rug as a whole. The general lay-out, with several borders and all kinds of filler motifs, is as you would expect on any kind of SWP bag. The "different" element, the central medallion, is actually strikingly identical. Almost all the little doodads and flourishes within the medallion are present in all seven bags. The Tom Cole example and the one with the piled tabs have a slightly simplified inner outline (the light blue lines in the TC bag), for the rest they are all almost too similar.

It is obvious that they have not been made slavishly following a cartoon or example bag. In some cases parts of the medallion have been shortened or elongated to make them fit the space, but it is all there. And though there are lots of random elements around the medallion, nothing at all inside it. Of course we are looking at a small sample, but it is a random sample, just brought together for this thread. If we look at the (not quite random) sample of star in octagon Baluch bags Joel brought together in his salon:

http://www.turkotek.com/mini_salon_00031/salon.html

we see far more variation in the drawing in the central octagons/squares than we see here.

So, trying to doubt myself, I turned into a believer (almost, until someone has a better argument

Dinie











#**12** \square

July 7th, 2015, 12:41 AM

Joel Greifinger

Members

Join Date: May 2008 Location: Massachusetts

Posts: 75



Quote:

I have seen more of those bag fronts on-line, but never a separated back.

Hi Dinie and Rich,

I brought the bag with the piled back to my hometown Rug Society picnic show and tell in May, hoping that some among the ruggie folk present might have seen other khorjin with fully-piled backs. Coincidentally, another member had brought along a piece that he was intrigued by that certainly looks, back and front, like the piled back of one of these putatively Kuhi bags:



As for how recently the "24 pointed-star medallion with internal Kufic doodad" design went into production, that certainly seems to be part of the puzzle. While none of these pieces seems really (i.e. 19th century) old, at least some, like my piled back bag, don't look like they're right off the shelf, either. Here's a close-up of some abrasion from the front of that bag that has a plausible "field wear" look about it:



If these really are very recent "made for the market " bags, they would unlikely see that type of wear.

As Dinie mentioned, the colors lack any bad synthetics. They are either natural or modern chrome dyes that are well-chosen and applied. So, while they might be quite newly-minted (having come onto the international market just in the last few years), they also may be somewhat older items that were produced, as Rich said, in a remote setting. A small set of villages in the Jabel Barez mountains where the Jebālbārezi tribespeople were rumored (in Western rug literature) to produce khorjin with pile on both sides, for example.

One interesting conjecture suggested by a very astute friend and ruggie was that perhaps these began to appear on the market in the wake of the 2003 Bam earthquake, the epicenter of which was amongst these villages. It would not be the first time that massive disruption and dislocation lead to the emergence of new-to-the-market tribal textiles.

There's also the puzzle of whether the pile-backed ones were being produced concurrently with the plainweave-backed version, or are the latter a later, less traditional edition.

I've come across one more image of a pile-backed khorjin. It appears to have the same border showing through from the front of the bag.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any images of the front ::



Joel











Members

Join Date: May 2008 Location: Canada Posts: 21



Hi Joel,

Great find, that back. So they do exist as separate rugs. Where there is one, there probably are more.

One thing: I never meant to imply that these bags are newly made for the market right now. I asked above if anyone thought them older than WW II.

Thinking aloud, playing devil's advocate to my devil's advocate: if you were making bags purely for the market, would you go to the considerable trouble of using pile for the back? But if you had always made them that way, you would probably just continue doing that. Or not? And has anyone ever seen bags with a different front design and these specific piled backs? I don't know what I think any more, but the contrast between the freely chosen borders and field elements, and the uniformity in medallion remains striking. I would love an explanation.

Bam earth quake and the appearance of these bags. Interesting thought indeed. So we are also looking for information about when these bags

Edit Quote 2

#**13** \square

came to the market. I bought ours from a private seller who might have known when he bought it, but I don't have contact information any more 🔯. I have very occasionally seen them from private sellers, and if I see one coming by again, I will certainly ask...

Dinie







#14 \square

Edit Quote

#**15** \square

July 8th, 2015, 05:30 AM

Rich Larkin

Memhers

Join Date: Jun 2008 Location: Massachusetts

Posts: 19



Hi folks,

Anyone really interested in the provenance of these and other less well known South and Southeast Persian weavings must read the 1993 article by John Wertime mentioned above (in frame #4, I think) by Joel. Wertime is second to no one in the rigor and discipline of his inquiries in these matters over the years. In the article, he looks at various items with distinctive designs, layout styles, and weaving practices that are variously attributed by well respected commentators. The obvious conclusion, and one of Wertime's principle points in the article, is that it is really difficult to answer these questions, even in light of the best available researches. It's discouraging when you think about it, if you care, but sobering.

Rich

Last edited by Rich Larkin; July 8th, 2015 at 05:42 AM.







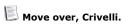






Members

Join Date: May 2008 Location: Canada Posts: 21



Hi All,

That Kufic looking design in the centre had to come from somewhere.

And it does. Not from Kufic borders, but from Para Mamluk carpets . The exact design is found in the centre of many Para Mamluk and 'Chessboard" carpets. Here is a clear example from a Para Mamluk fragment in the Textile Museum, but there are many more, see Gantzhorn p. 205-213. Many of the examples also here:

http://www.azerbaijanrugs.com/para-mamluk/paramamluk carpets index.htm



Then the medallion around it. I don't think it is strongly related to the 'Crivelli' star, to me it looks more like a rustic interpretation of a medallion type found on many classical carpets. Among the Holbein carpets, 'offspring' of the Para Mamluks, many have strapwork designs obviously descended from what we see in the Para Mamluks. And among the large medallion type, there are several that have a medallion that could have been the inspiration for the one we are talking about. None of them have the strong white outline used on the bags, a brilliant idea, but the general appearance is there.

For comparison:

The Kuhi medallion or whatever it is:



A computer reconstitution of a fifteenth century Crivelli motif (from one of Pierre Galafassi's Salons):



Three Holbeins, from the Rugtracker blog: http://www.rugtracker.com/2014/01/the-holbein-lotto-family-iithe-large.html:







This does not answer any questions as to how the design came to the Kuhi Afshar (assuming they are the weavers of the bags), and how long they have used the design, but the similarities, especially in the central design, are striking.

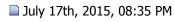
Dinie













Join Date: May 2008 Location: Massachusetts Posts: 75





Quote:

That Kufic looking design in the centre had to come from somewhere. And it does. Not from Kufic borders, but from Para Mamluk carpets

#**16** \square

Edit Quote

Hi Dinie,

The eight-pointed strapwork star does seem right out of the Para-Mamluk carpets of the 15th-early 16th centuries, such as the fragment from the Textile Museum you posted.

As Walter Denny wrote of these carpets, "the influence on subsequent weaving in the Mediterranean countries has been enormous." Among large-pattern Holbein carpets, there are some interesting variants on the strapwork design that suggest how it may have morphed in some of the bags we're examining (e.g. in Jim's bag face and my first example). This one is Plate 12 (p.72) in Denny's *The Classical Tradition in Anatolian Carpets* where it is cited as "possibly north-central Anatolia, 18th or 19th Century":





Oddly, the rug sold at Christies in April, 2011 described as "Possibly Bergama, Late 16th Century" with a reference to the 2003 Denny catalogue.

Unlike the center design, the inspiration for the 24-point star medallion seems more equivocal. Comparing it with neither the Holbein variants nor the Crivelli star provides me with that reassuring (though unsubstantiated) sense of proper fit.

And, as you say, the questions of how and when these classical carpet designs got adopted by a group of weavers in the Jabal Barez remain.



Joel













July 17th, 2015, 09:29 PM

wleisenhart@msn.com How is your German? Guest

Posts: n/a

Hello Joel and others,

Thumbing through a batch of old Nagel auction catalogs, I found the attached image and German text description for lot #4358 in auction 311 on June 11,1985. It would seem to fit within the universe of related examples of '24pointed star with internal Para Mamluk doodad' /8 pointed strapwork star.





Regards,

Ike Eisenhart Seattle





■ July 18th, 2015, 03:07 AM

Joel Greifinger

Members

Join Date: May 2008 Location: Massachusetts

Posts: 75

Hi Ike,



Great archival research

I have been authorized \bigcirc to present Dinie's translation of the catalogue description from the German:

"The striking feature is the powerful gul outlined in white, which stretches

Edit Quote 2

#**18** \square

to the full height of the field and which has in its octagonal centre strapwork suggestive of the early type I Holbein carpets. The affinity with the strapwork medallions of the Ogurdschali carpets indicates a shared Central Asian origin. Of ethnological interest (are) the eagle claws attached linearly to the central lines in bright salmon, like they appear diagonally in Tekke guls. Velvety dense pile. Unusual that also the back is knotted and decorated with stepped diamonds. Through its characteristic Afshar palette related to the Afshar kelim, cat. nr. 4425. Silky full pile. Rare. Compare 282. Nagel catalogue 101b."

There are a few points I find notable. The back in this piece is knotted pile and decorated in stepped diamonds. Nagel presented the piece as "antik" rather than "alte" and described it as "rare". Perhaps in 1985 the first of these were just beginning to surface on the international market.

And, in addition to the analogy to type I (small pattern) Holbein carpets there is also a reference back to Ogurjali strapwork medallions. As I understand it, the Ogurjali are a Yomut sub-tribe from the east side of the Caspian Sea. What do their charactersitic strapwork medallions look like?



On the medallion front, I looked backwards from the Para-Mamluk to the Simonetti Mamluk at the Metropolitan Museum and found what could be viewed as a 24-point motif in the interior 'layers' of the central medallion.







Joel

Last edited by Joel Greifinger; July 18th, 2015 at 03:14 AM.





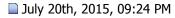














Join Date: May 2008 Location: Massachusetts Posts: 75



Moving from possible early antecedents to more proximate sources for the medallion on these bags, tribal weavers in Kerman are noted for their adaptations of classical Persian medallion designs. This one from the Afshar design pool might be a relation 000



In his discussion of Kuhi (a/k/a Afshar-e Kuhi) weavings made by the Jabalbarezi in *Afshar: Tribal Weavings from Southeast Iran*, Tanavoli writes, "The range of their designs is vast. In most of their designs (they) have inserted their own characteristic motifs. Besides their own (they) have used every Afshar design: flowers, vases, medallions, tulips, botehs and mirror frames, to name just a few. In all or most of these designs, the proportions and the symmetry are not as good as those of the Afshars'. The lines are thicker and the corners are less angular. In many of the designs, they have also included their tribal motifs."

His comments on the laxness in proportionality and symmetry is certainly reflected in the drawings of many of these bags that we have seen thus far.

Joel

Last edited by Joel Greifinger; July 21st, 2015 at 04:50 AM.













#<u>20</u>

■ July 21st, 2015, 11:15 PM

Paul Smith

Join Date: May 2008 Posts: 8



Looking for a source for the medallion...In a casual email conversation the ertmen gul was mentioned as a possible influence (so, the insight here is not mine, but Rich Larkin's), and then I looked over at this Chub Bash rug of mine--



The sides don't have points, but it sure looks pretty close to me. Getting us as close as Northern Afghanistan...

Paul

PS. I think these whatever-they-are Afshar bags are really beautiful...

















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