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Turkotek Discussion Forums > Virtual Show and Tell
 **Jaf Kurd Bagface**

Welcome, [Filiberto Boncompagni](#).
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Virtual Show and Tell Just what the title says it is.

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April 18th, 2021, 07:11 PM

#101

[Carl Gray](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2020
 Posts: 7

 **When is a Jaffa not an orange?**

What a fascinating thread this is!

I have through the posts here and those from a couple of other threads, including the very long one referred to, and although it seems to have been touched on (apologies if amongst the many postings there is a definition) I haven't found a definitive answer as to what constitutes a Jaff piece.

A question was asked as to whether the term Jaff is only associated with, ignoring the backs of bags, knotted work but I couldn't see that this was answered.

I have a few pieces which were described as being Kurdish Jaff when I got them and one piece described as a Kurdish Sanjabi. What they all have in common are the typical diamond motifs. The Sanjabi piece was acquired from a dealer and repairer who knows his stuff and who described it as being meatier than Jaff work. The Jaff pieces came from a dealer who is also knowledgeable.

It is obvious, reading through this thread, that methods of knotting vary considerably, but would something containing the related design elements of woven weft substitution construction be classed as Jaff? I have such a piece which is 36cm x 36cm. Note the half diamonds left and right sides which, like many other examples in this thread, are not woven with the same level of accuracy. Was this laziness on the part of the maker or a considered design feature I wonder?







I also have a very cute small bag that is 27cm x 27cm which has what I think is quite a nice arrangement of a single diamond in the middle surrounded by partial diamonds.







The last piece is the Sanjabi one which contains the design elements seen in many of the examples in this thread but the colours are much brighter, it is coarser and it is quite large at 75cm x 67cm. Reading up, the Kurdish Jaff and Kurdish Sanjabi tribes are distinct groups, but it is clear that their weavings share many of the same motifs and probably methods of construction, so can one separate work from the two groups (other than by the obvious tribal background difference) and if so how?





I look forward to reading your comments.

Last edited by Carl Gray; April 28th, 2021 at 12:34 AM.



April 19th, 2021, 11:33 AM

#102

Filiberto
Boncompagni
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 163



The Sanjabi provenance has already being discussed, see archived Salon "Two Northwest Persian Rugs by Daniel Deschuyteneer"

http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00035/salon.html

And the following discussions:

http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00035/content.html

that included a lot of authoritative folks, like George O'Bannon, Mike Tschbull, Wendel Swan and Mark Hopkins.

I don't remember if they reached a conclusion... 😞



April 19th, 2021, 11:46 AM

#103

Filiberto
Boncompagni
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 163



Oh well, then there is Joel's answer to Dinie on the same question, just a year ago:

http://www.turkotek.com/misc_00144/Bumper3.pdf

Hi Dinie,

As far as I'm aware, almost nothing has been written about Sanjabi Kurdish weaving and the little that has is based upon...very little. The presumption that they did not use offset knotting presumably comes from O'Bannon's comments in the section on possible Sanjabi weavings in his Arizona Collections book, where he freely admits that his attribution of the pieces as Sanjabi is not based upon any field evidence and is thus highly speculative.



In the various Facebook rug sites, experienced collectors and dealers sometimes post pieces and attribute them as Sanjabi or Jaf and I ask them on what basis they distinguish. Generally, they don't respond. The only answer I can remember getting was from a dealer for whom I have high regard who wrote, "Just a feeling, Joel" 🙏

Amen 🙏🙏🙏



April 19th, 2021, 06:02 PM

#104

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 155

When did they 'become' Jaff?

Jim (PRJ) Ford's "Oriental Carpet Design" was, when it was published in 1981, a distillation of the state of market understanding by a leading player in the industry. On Kurdish production he wrote: "The carpet trade employs almost exclusively five names only for the very wide range of products of Persian Kurdistan: Senneh(...); Bijar(...); Kakaberu(...); Kolyai(...); and Sanjabi (another tribal name) for several not precisely defined types from the south of the region, reaching down into Luristan."

Elsewhere in the book, he shows a typical diamond bag face and identifies it as Sanjabi and in another section he wrote: "Sanjabi is the name of one of the southernmost Kurdish tribes, but it is used rather loosely in the carpet trade to describe a range of tribal or village types of the Kermanshah area. The warmth of the colouring, the light brownish shade of the red and a single-wafted construction on woolen warps are typical Sanjabi features."

It set me to wondering, when did the diamond bags now typically identified as Jaff in the market and the rug literature "become" Jaff in the minds of dealers and collectors. Back when Jacobsen wrote of having sold tens of thousands of them, he referred to them merely as "Kurdistan Saddlebags". For Ford, in 1981, they were Sanjabi. Jenny Housego mentions that the bags were called Sanjabi in Iran, but sold as Jaffs in Baghdad.

The turning point seems to have been the publication of "Discoveries from Kurdish Looms" with Eagleton's essay on "The Weavings of Iraqi Kurdistan" in 1983. There he wrote, "Only occasionally has a Jaf rug been found recently in the Baghdad bazaar. Far more important are the pile saddle bags, often having hooked diamond medallions. These are the descendants of the bags transported to the United States by the thousands from Iran and Iraq in the early 1920's."

As has been mentioned earlier in this thread, pile weavings attributed as Jaf have a wide range of structural characteristics (single or double wefts, from flat back to substantial warp-depression, different weft colors, etc.). Were all of these made by Jaf weavers? Some by Sanjabi? Other Kurds? Non-Kurdish neighbors?

At least we can (usually) distinguish them from the diamond field pattern bags made by groups in South Persia. 🙏

Joel



April 20th, 2021, 04:50 AM

#105

[Dinie Gootjes](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Canada
Posts: 63

To add to the names Joel mentions, in the Netherlands the diamond bags were usually called Mosul. As far as I know, that is the place where they were usually traded. There were also large Kurdish rugs with different designs sold under that name. I think that only with the international rug trade via the internet, did the Dutch dealers start calling them Jaff. And within the country many may still call them Mosul.



April 22nd, 2021, 06:56 PM

#106

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 155

Carl,

My speculation on the first of the bags you posted is that it began life as a *namakdan* (salt bag), but lost its neck along the way. As for which Kurdish group it was made by, such pieces with allover brocaded diamond field patterns have been *attributed* (accurately or not) to the Sanjabi, the Jaf:



and to the Kurds of Khorasan (Kordi):



among others. 😊

Joel



April 26th, 2021, 02:01 AM

[Carl Gray](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2020
Posts: 7



#107

To be or not to be, Jaff, that is the question

Thank you Filiberto, Dinie & Joel.

So, if my understanding is correct there is, currently, insufficient research to clearly differentiate between Kurdish Sanjabi and Kurdish Jaff or that the differences are insufficient to be able to tell them apart... and that there is a considerable amount of variation in terms of construction across the board.

If I can find a little time tomorrow I shall post a few examples which appear to be similar to me but have differences.

Your last posting makes absolute sense Joel. I have a similar complete salt bag and, side by side, they do look very similar in many respects other than the complete one probably being relatively young.





Carl

Last edited by Carl Gray; April 28th, 2021 at 12:32 AM.



April 28th, 2021, 01:01 AM

#108

[Carl Gray](#)
Members

Join Date: May 2020
Posts: 7

Diamonds are forever

Here are a couple more pieces which were described as being Kurdish Jaff but differ quite a bit in appearance and colour. Neither are knotted and I am still not sure if this classes them as something other than Jaff.





The 2nd is, in my opinion, the anomaly as it is much coarser and the back has plain stripes in contrast to the 1st which has the geometric patterns I have seen on other Jaff work. I'd be interested to learn what others think.





The last 2 pieces were both described as Shabsavan of Miyaneh (Azerbaijan). I have no reason to doubt this as the dealer got them from Miyaneh and is of Shabsavan origin.





As somebody who knows little about these things they all appear to have a great deal in common!

Last edited by Carl Gray; April 28th, 2021 at 01:08 AM.



July 9th, 2021, 07:28 PM

#109

[Joel Greifinger](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 155



Quote:

Your two batches of 'different' Jaffs often have borders and backs that seem to indicate their close relationship with the typical scarab in diamond Jaffs. What do you think about the two panel chuvals? Here is one that has retained part of its very Jaff looking back. I think they are most often called Sanjabi, but why? Or will I have to address my Jaff above as "Dear Sanjabi"?

Dinie,

Back in post # 100 you raised the provocative question of whether, even amongst the chuvals thought to have the most "emblematic" (cf. O'Bannon) Sanjabi design, some are actually Jaf.

In 1980, Saunders published one in *Tribal Visions* and suggests that it may be either Jaf or Sanjabi. It has wool warp and weft, but he writes that "Cotton is used occasionally in the weft of these pieces." It is double-wefted.



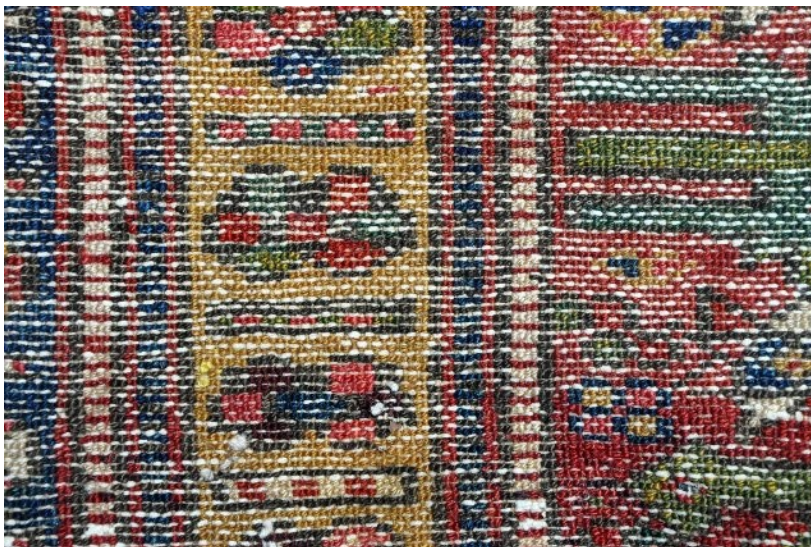
There is one that appeared in 1983 in *Discoveries from Kurdish Looms* that is just identified as "Iranian". This implies that it was not Jaf, the bulk of whose production was from the other side of the Iraqi border. Also wool on wool and double-wefted.


The seemingly "definitive" attribution came in 1998, when George O'Bannon wrote in *Tribal and Village Rugs From Arizona Collections*, "This design represents what is believed to be the main tribal emblem of the Sanjabi Kurds." However, as O'Bannon points out in his introduction to these purportedly Sanjabi weavings, "The Sanjabi attribution is weak without field documentation."



Just amongst the handful of this cuval type that I have, there is a rather wide structural range. Some have ivory wool warps and wefts, some red wefts and others have wool warps and white cotton wefts. On some the back is smooth, on others distinctively rough. Some are double-wefted, others single-wefted.

Here, for example, is a single-wefted model:



Were all of these made by the Sanjabi? Are some Jaf? Perhaps other Kurdish weavers? As O'Bannon correctly noted, any attribution is weak without field documentation. 

Joel



July 29th, 2021, 11:10 AM

#110

[Richard Tomlinson](#)

 Bird foot border

Members

Join Date: Jun 2012
Posts: 14

Hi guys

I have a question probably impossible to answer ... but here goes.

It relates to the so called 'bird foot' border (arrows) we see on many Baluch pieces. In this thread, there is some discussion about the various different arrangements of this design.

Does anyone know what the 'arrows' might represent? Sometimes they appear linked, and other times they are enclosed in boxes. Which of these designs seem 'older'?

Any thoughts?

Regards
Richard Tomlinson



July 30th, 2021, 04:38 PM

#111

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 155

Quote:

Does anyone know what the 'arrows' might represent?

Hi Richard,

It depends on what you mean by "represent". Do you mean, what did the weaver believe they stood for

beyond being a decorative motif?



However, if the question is what were the precursors of the design, here is the earliest pile example of which I am aware. It's a fragment from a Seljuk 'Konya' rug probably woven in the 13th century:



Joel



July 31st, 2021, 04:05 AM

#112

[Richard Tomlinson](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2012
Posts: 14

Hi Joel

Sometimes even I don't know what I am asking



I guess what I was driving at is whether or not the arrow is a **simplified** version of a motif that had preceded it. We see motifs that are simplified cloudbands, flowers, etc. Could these arrows be simplified vines or something else?

But perhaps, given the image you show, it is just simply a geometric motif that has existed for hundreds of years, with some variations.

Regards
Richard



October
18th, 2021,
05:24 PM

#113

[Joel Greifinger](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 155

Returning to the question posed in #100 & #109 of who made the Kurdish *jovals* that have come to be called Sanjabi, the latest published intervention is from Michael Rothberg's new book, *Nomadic Visions: Tribal Weavings from Persia and the Caucasus*. Included is this *joval* with the description: "*Joval* front, south Kurdistan, west Persia, north of Kermanshah, 19th century". In other words, when faced with making a tribal attribution for these pieces, avoid the issue. 🤔🤔🤔



Joel



October 28th, 2021, 04:35 AM

#114

[Dinie Gootjes](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Canada
Posts: 63

Hi Joel,

Great find in that Seljuk example of the arrow border! That is much older than I expected.

As to the dodging of a tribal attribution for the two panel *jovals*, that might be a courageous course in the absence of new field documentation. Nobody seems to be able to go beyond 'thinking' that they are Sanjabi. I see not giving an attribution as a way of saying "I don't know". They are so closely related to a certain type of what we call Jaff, that an argument could be made that they should be from the same weaving group, be that Jaff or Sanjabi. If we Photoshop diamonds into that field space, we would get quite

a plausible Jaff, see the one in frame #100. Or a plausible Sanjabi?



November 23rd, 2021, 05:11 PM

#115

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 155

Quote:

I see not giving an attribution as a way of saying "I don't know". They are so closely related to a certain type of what we call Jaff, that an argument could be made that they should be from the same weaving group, be that Jaff or Sanjabi.

Hi Dinie,



Perhaps we should just put Jaf and Sanjabi into the grab bag of rug attributions that at least implicitly warrant scare quotes or a "so-called" designation, like Baluch and Afshar among others.

Joel



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