

Golestan Province's Turkmen carpets reflect colorful culture and history



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Turkmen carpets, woven in the northeastern province of Golestan, are a mirror reflecting the rich culture, history and civilization of the region passed down from one generation to the next for centuries.

The oldest discovered Turkmen carpet dates back 1,800 years; however, this doesn't indicate whether a carpet-weaving industry in the region existed before that, or not, because some Turkmen carpet designs existed hundreds of years BCE.

The theory that has been confirmed for a long time is that in the beginning, Turkmen considered their carpets merely as practical objects; however, over time,

they became aware of their artistic value.

Turkmen carpet designs arise from the local women's creativity.

Thousands of people are presently active in the fields of carpet weaving, marketing and sales across the province.

Hajar Keramat, a carpet weaver, told IRNA that Turkmen girls learn the traditional art of carpet weaving from childhood. There is no Turkmen girl who is not familiar with the craft.

Turkmen give newly-married couples a hand-woven rug as a gift. In addition, a genuine carpet must be included in the dowry of all girls.

"After I got married I decided to develop the business of

my father-in-law, who was a carpet salesman. We opened a small shop and gradually developed this business."

"Now, after a few years, we have a shop selling natural threads for carpet weaving. Moreover, we have established a carpet-weaving workshop, in which 80 Turkmen women are active."

The artisan said thanks to their various size, unique features and long historical backgrounds, Turkmen rugs have many customers both across Iran and the world.

Her husband, Khalil Aqatabai, said, "I was a music player when I was young, but due to my wife's great enthusiasm for developing the traditional profession of Turkmen, I changed my job after marriage and, with the

help of each other, we have managed to achieve great success over time."

He noted that the exquisite carpets, as a main symbol of Turkmen, are still produced in the province without any major change in the design.

The number of patterns of Turkmen carpets is close to 811. Turkmen mostly use broken geometric patterns, known as *akhal*, in their rugs decorated with rhombus frames, connected to each other with cross lines.

The size of Turkmen carpets is between one to 12 square meters. They are woven in various colors, including lacquered red, navy blue, dark green, white and beige. Turkmen carpets were registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 2011.



IRNA

Rich metallic ore deposits in Iran

The extraordinarily rich metallic ore deposits in Iran have favoured the early development of specialised crafts, especially metallurgy, since Chalcolithic times. Poly-metallic ore deposits are found in abundance throughout the plateau. Among the best known are the copper and silver deposits of Anarak-Talmessi in the Dasht-e Kavir Desert, which were systematically exploited since Sassanid times and probably already much earlier.

Pyrotechnology – the use of fire to alter the physical properties of a material – was used since the 5th millennium BCE to transform oxidic copper ores, such as malachite, into malleable metallic materials. The use of sulphidic ores, which are somewhat more difficult to process, as they require an additional procedure in the reduction of the ore, dates only slightly later. Arsenic copper

is the most widely used metal in this time and was probably made from arsenical copper ore. A more uncommon procedure was the systematic extraction of silver from silver-lead ore by means of a refinement process known as cupellation, which first appeared on the Iranian Plateau in the 4th millennium BCE.

Some of the best-known archaeological evidence for the processing of copper comes from a small workshop area in Layer 9 of Tappeh Ghabristan in the Qazvin Plain. It consists of a two-room house in the centre of the settlement, whose larger room was furnished with two hearths. A crucible with a pierced foot – a type now known as Type Ghabristan – was standing next to the larger hearth.

On the other side, a workbench or platform made of mudbrick had been set up. Pieces of copper ore

were found inside a large bowl within the same building, and several casting moulds for tools were scattered across the floor. The copper workshop of Ghabristan is a textbook example of the so-called "cottage industry", where all production steps, from the smelting of the ore to the final reworking of the finished artefact, are completed within one area.

The industrial settlement of Arisman is a good example for the systematic processing of copper towards the end of the 4th millennium BCE. The smelting of the ore now took place outside the actual settlement, and the construction of draft furnaces that utilised the locally prevalent winds to process enormous amounts of ore led to the accumulation of large slag heaps in the vicinity. During this time, only the casting and finishing processes took place within residential buildings.



Open hearth-mould of a shaft-hole axe with core-holder in clay



Crucible with a base

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled, 'Early Towns in Iran', from a book entitled, 'Persian Antiques Splendor', edited by T. Stollner, R. Slotka, and A. Vatandoust, published by German Mining Museum. The photos were taken from the book.