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THE EASTERNERS AND THE WESTERNERS
APPROACH TO THE ORIENTAL CARPET.

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1976.

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BERGAMO, XVIII C. 6-10 x 5 (2.08 m x 1.52 m)

INTRODUCTION

When researching the subject of Oriental carpets in libraries I came across some interesting information on the actual books. The study of the Oriental carpets and the existence of antique carpets was kept secret in the West in order to keep prices down, until the Vienna Exhibition in 1891. From this time onwards it seems that the study and interest of the West has steadily grown. Today hundreds of books on the subject are on the market, oriental carpets and rugs are sold in all the big department stores of Europe and the United States, and the antique carpet is recognised as a very high form of art.

"Anyone who looks through carpet literature today is surprised to find that the favourite and most reliable books are the early ones, "Bode-Kuhnel", the fourth edition of which appeared in 1955 is a good example. The starting point for this book was an article which Wolhelm von Bode wrote in 1892 and expanded to book form in 1901. The book was revised by Ernst Kuhnel in 1914, 1922 and 1955 (Fifth edition). It has certainly changed in the course of sixty-three years but it is amazing how much in the original version of 1892 is still valid today" - says Kurt Erdmann in "Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets."

The work of F.R. Martin "A History of Oriental Carpets before 1800" is reputed to contain the greatest wealth of material of any rug book ever written.

The writings of Kendrick-Tattersall and later of Pope are also highly valued. In fact I have found that these names are mentioned in the bibliographies of just about every book on oriental carpets written since.

With the dawn of cheap colour reproduction methods,

however, a change in the type of book on Oriental carpets and rugs has emerged. Publishers realised very quickly the suitability of the hand-knotted Eastern carpet as a subject to be reproduced in glossy print. So from the 1960's onwards the Oriental carpet has joined fine art, automobile, military uniform, wild life etc., in glossy books on the coffee tables of a newly aware public. Along with the hundreds of beautiful colour reproductions the reader will find a brief history of carpet making, and then the author rushes on to describe briefly his selected gallery of colour plates, which usually cover the main stylistic areas of the carpet world. But all this information is too brief due to the lack of space, because after all it is for the pictures and not for the texts that these books are bought.

I do not wish to slam the publishers for giving the public these glossy reproductions and for bringing a new concept of design into the living-rooms of the public - on the contrary I welcome them. But I cannot help wondering what purpose the texts serve. Do the owners ever read what is written opposite the pictures? The texts are usually written by experts in the field of Oriental carpets, who were probably commissioned by the publishers to present a book using a large number of colour plates and a proportionally small text. The result is usually a text too broad to be of any use to anyone who knows anything on the subject; and there is usually too much name-dropping and condensing of information for an outsider to gain any grounding on the subject. "A little knowledge - especially of an esoteric craft - may be a dangerous thing." House and Garden 1973 on the subject of Oriental carpets.

Unfortunately it is these "Coffee table" books which I have found filling the college and public library bookshelves. But hand-knotted carpets are only one of the arts of the East. In fact I have learnt more by reading books on mythology, architecture, history and arts in general of the Near and Middle East than from all the texts of the "coffee table" books put together, because even though we can look at hand-knotted carpets today quite divorced from these other subjects, it

remains a fact that at the time of their making these other elements of Eastern life were having an effect on them. By studying religion we find that the ancient Zoroasterian beliefs, the preaching of the Prophet Mahommed in the sixth century A.D. the different religious sects, such as the strict Sunnites and the more lenient Shutes, have all had and have an effect on the design of carpets. Just as the reigns of certain dynasties meant changes in quality and mingling of styles. The history and the standard and type of design in the carpets can be traced out in the architecture, arts and other crafts of the East.

If I had had the time and the relevant books I would like to have gone into a more detailed study of the history or perhaps the mythology of the Near and Middle East in relation to the development of the hand-knotted carpet in that area. However, since I have neither of these necessities I have approached this essay from a different angle. I have been able to get some modern books which do not fall into the "coffee table" category. They are "Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets" by Kurt Erdman (1966); "Turkish Arts" by Oktay Aslanapa; "Oriental Rugs and Carpets" by Fabio Formenton (1970); and "Oriental Rugs in Colour" by Preben Liebetrau (1962). The dates I have given are the dates on which these books were first published - English translations did not appear for two to four years after their first publication.

Kurt Erdmann, a German, is one of the great modern experts on Oriental Carpets, his writings are highly valued and referred to by modern scholars. Oktay Aslanapa, a Turk, has published many valued books on the Turkish hand-knotted carpet. Both these men are professors of Eastern Art and of carpets in particular and both are recognised and studied by all interested in carpets.

Fabio Formenton, a Persian, is a carpet dealer from a

a very old family of dealers. Preben Liebetrau, a Dane, is also a carpet dealer, he works in a department store which stocks Oriental carpets. Both these men have not only studied the commercial aspects of the carpet but also its history, make, etc., as can be seen from their books.

I have reviewed these four books with a view to comparing (a) the approach of the Eastern and Western professor to the same subject; (b) the approach of the Eastern and Western dealer to the same subject and (c) as far as can be determined from these four books the approach of the Easterner compared with that of the Westerner to the subject of the Oriental Carpet.

Note: When I refer to the carpet and the rug or the Oriental carpet and rug, in all cases I am talking about the hand-knotted carpet and the hand-knotted rug of the Near and the Middle East; with occasional reference to the hand-knotted carpets of the Far East.



Antique Khotan
10 ft × 4 ft (305 cm × 112 cm)

PART I.

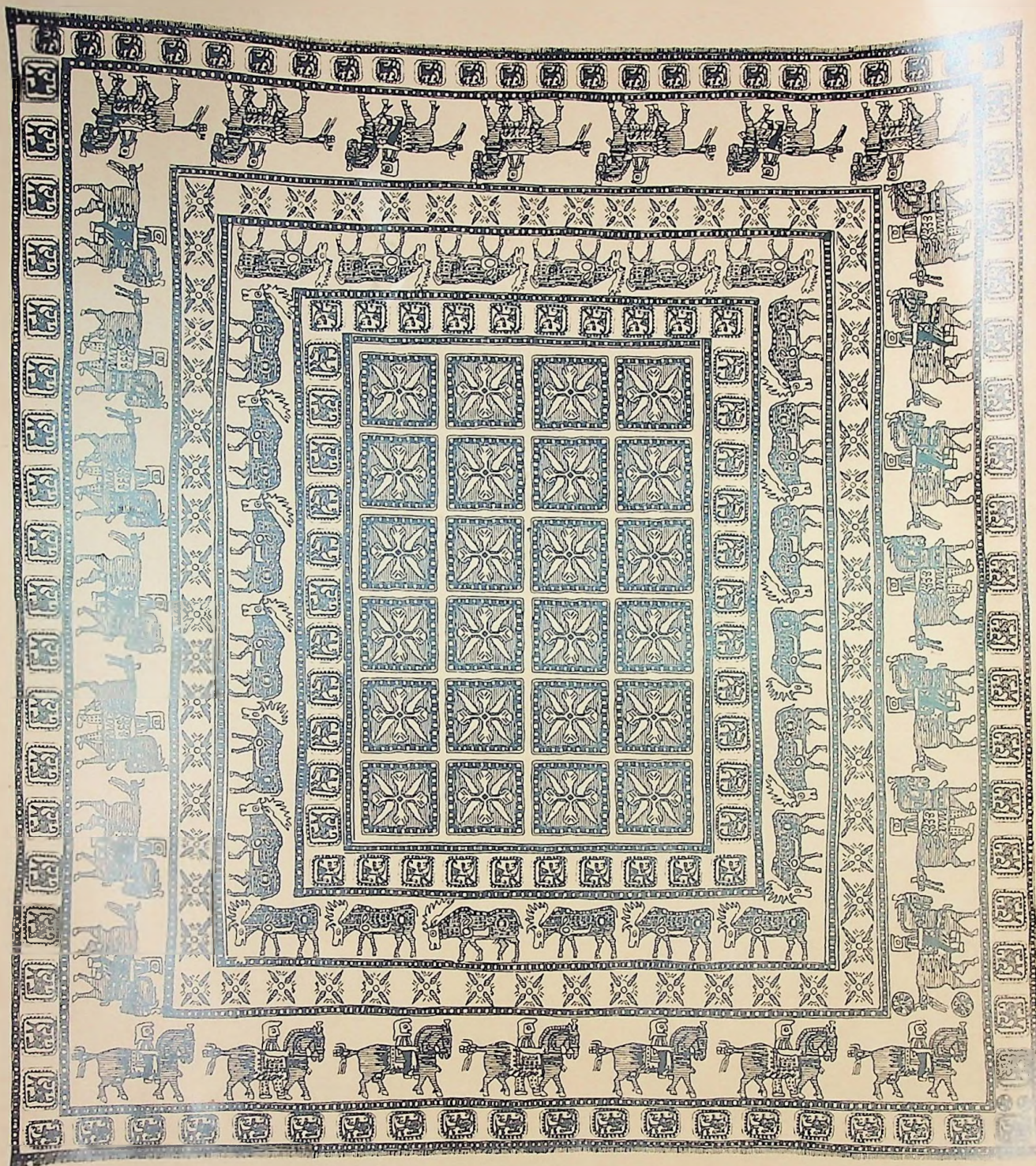
PRACTICAL HANDBOOKS.

Review of two books by two modern Oriental Carpet dealers,
Fabio Formenton and Preben Liebetrau.

"Oriental Rugs and Carpets" by Fabio Formenton was published by Hamlyn in 1974. The author of this manual is in his late thirties. He was born in Teheran and lived there until he was twenty-six. He then joined the family business, which specialises in the export of rugs and carpets, travelling constantly throughout the centres of production in the Near and Middle East. "His long apprenticeship has given the author a rare knowledge of the fundamental aspects of the craft"- House and Gardens.

On reading this magnificently produced book it was no surprise to learn that Fabio Formenton is at present enjoying a successful career as a writer and publisher in Italy. He has written this book for the Westerner. It is a handbook for the beginner and a reference book for even some of the most expert. "Armed with this remarkably well planned, well written, well printed manual, the wanderer through the basement at Liberty's, or the Souks of Aleppo or Istanbul, will feel much more at ease. A Little knowledge - especially of an esoteric craft - may be a dangerous thing, but there is no need for knowledge to remain so minimal with Fabio Formenton as a guide." - House and Gardens (1973).

Fabio Formenton says in the foreword of his book: "This catalogue is easy to consult because the centres are arranged in alphabetical order and because it is illustrated with maps of each region and colour plates of the most representative carpets and rugs. A register of provenance, technical details and description of each type makes this collection a complete guide intended for anyone who, for whatever reason, is interested in Oriental carpets."



The Pazyryk carpet. In the lower right-hand corner are the two small circles the significance of which has been variously interpreted

fig. 1 The Pazyryk Carpet as it appears in "Oriental Rugs and Carpets" by Fabio Formentor.

fig 1. The first part of "Oriental Rugs and Carpets" is devoted to the history of carpet-making, its beginnings and its spread. Then a section on some of the important types of historic Carpets to be found in museums, which illustrate the continuity of traditional techniques and decoration, with reproductions to illustrate the text. This is followed by a chapter on techniques, materials and a look at the materials and tools used. This is the best concise history of the knotted carpet I have found to date, mainly because its content is so well researched and supported with references to actual evidence. He brings us right from the earliest theories, the Pazyryk Carpet, Ancient Greek, Achaemenian, Mesopotamian, Babylonian and so to more documented times - these later historical records are concentrated on the Persian influence. It is evident from the concentration on Persian history and his later remarks, that Fabio Formenton considers his native Persia to be the centre of the carpet-making world. He acknowledges that the dominations of Turks, Russians, Afghans and Mongols all had their part to play in the history of the Persian Carpet. This is as much a history of rulers and their love of the arts which resulted in raising the standard of the arts in general; or on the other hand, as often occurred, the reign of a barbaric ruler would cause the standard of art to deteriorate and at some periods the art of carpet-making almost died out.

Fabio Formenton, it would be necessary to point out, is dealing with, for the most part, the history of the Persian floral and ornamental carpets which were the type made in palace workshops or village factories for the Mosques, palaces and the better-off homes. His history barely touches on the geometrically designed carpets of the nomads.

Along with literary records of the ancient civilisations already mentioned and the records contained in European Renaissance and Middle Ages paintings, frescoes and mosaics, Fabio Formenton uses some of the examples of rare carpets which

have been discovered in recent times, notably the Marby Carpet, Pazyryk Carpet and the finds of the Seljuk Konya Carpets.

To illustrate the quality of designs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, from which time almost 2000 specimens have come down to us, Fabio Formenton has chosen nine examples which he deals with under the headings of artistic merit, detailed description and a complete historical profile. The carpets he has chosen are:-

- (i) The Marby Rug, Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm;
 - (ii) Turco- Egyptian Carpet, Osterreichisches Museum, Vienna;
 - (iii) The Ardebil Carpet, Victoria & Albert, London;
 - (iv) Persian Hunting Carpet, Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan;
 - (v) Hunting Carpet, Osterreichisches Museum, Vienna;
 - (vi) The Tree Carpet, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia;
 - (vii) Persian Prayer Rug, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York;
 - (viii) "Polanaise" Persian Carpet, Osterreichisches Museum, Vienna;
 - and (ix) Indian Prayer Rug, Osterreichisches, Museum, Vienna.
- (not many actual carpets or carpet fragments from periods earlier than the fourteenth century A.D. have survived. This is due to the fact that wool deteriorates when in contact with atmosphere. The organic substance of which wool is composed deteriorates gradually on a day to day basis until it eventually disintegrates)

In the section on techniques the reader can be in no doubt as to how the carpet is actually made. The different knotting techniques, tools, materials, dyes and finishing are all covered with adequate explanations and diagrams. Included in Oriental Carpets, however, is information that would not easily be found in Oriental carpet books other than those written by dealers. Information, for example, on the Oriental names for different sizes e.g., "Qali - the literal translation of qali is carpet, although this name is used solely for carpets of large dimensions, i.e., 7ft. 6ins. x 11ft. or more." Commercial organisation of carpet makers is also covered. It is important to understand the set-up of the different producers—



fig. 2

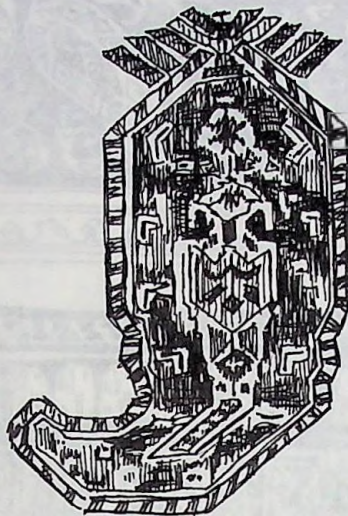


fig. 3.



fig. 4

Above three interpretations of the boteh motif.

fig. 2 Kashan boteh; fig. 3 Senneh boteh;

fig. 4 Mir boteh.

Below - fig. 5 Zil-i-Soltan motif as it appears
in a Qum interpretation.

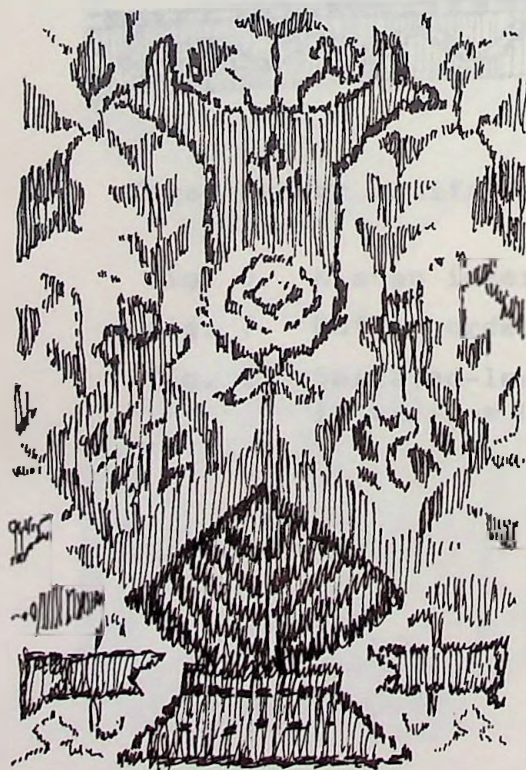


fig. 5

Illustrations from
"Oriental Rugs and
Carpets" -
Fabio Formenton.



fig. 6

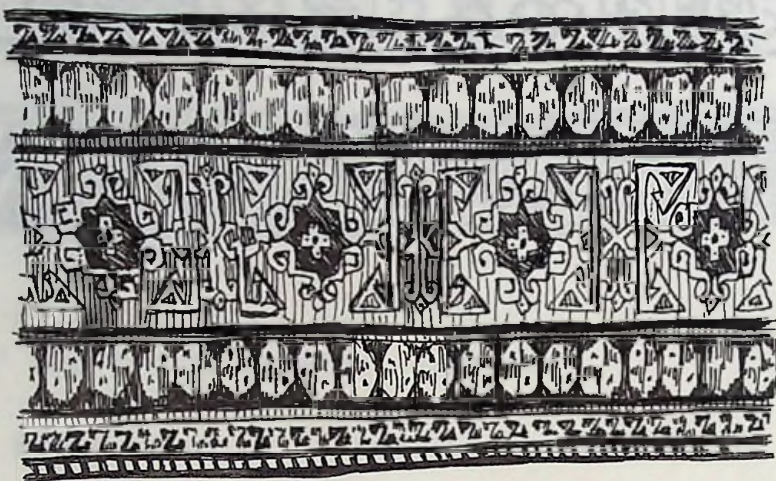


fig. 7

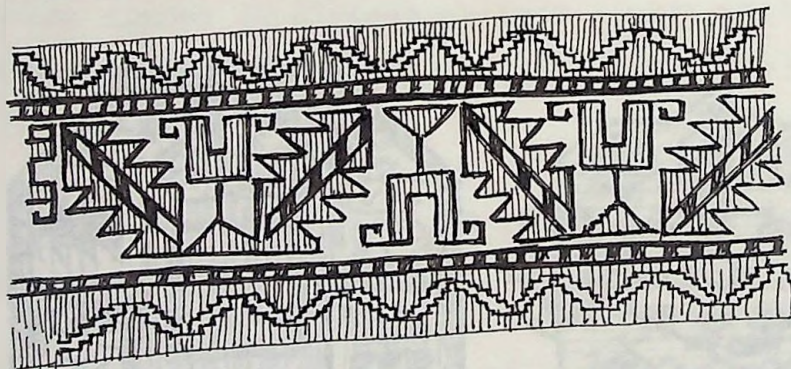


fig. 8

Three border motifs from "Oriental Rugs and Carpets" -
Fabio Formenton.

- fig. 6 Kashan interpretation of boteh motif.
- fig. 7 Kufic border in a Shirvan interpretation.
- fig. 8 Serrated-leaf border, a highly formal design
in various Caucasian carpets.

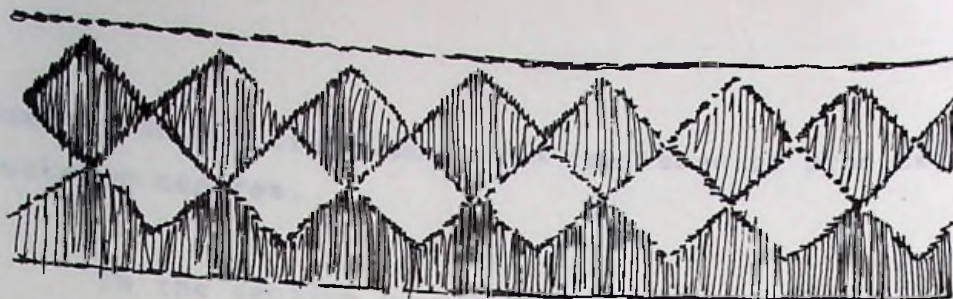


fig. 9

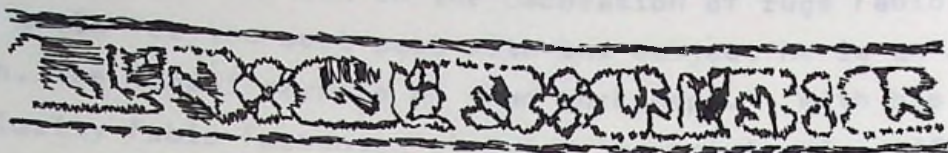


fig. 10

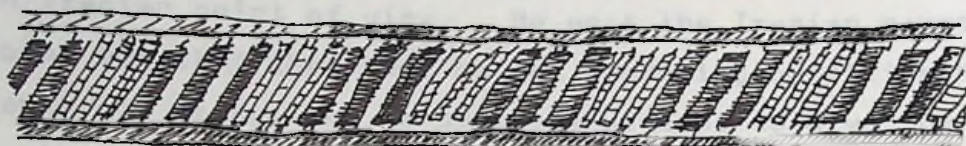
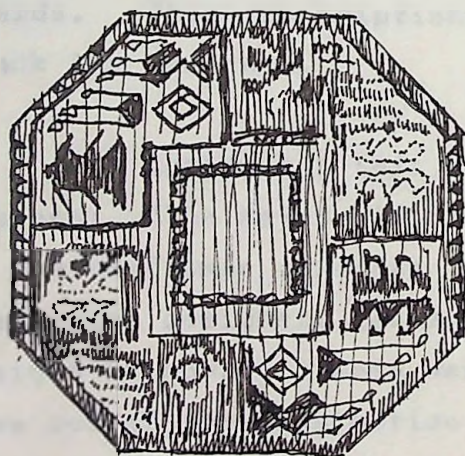


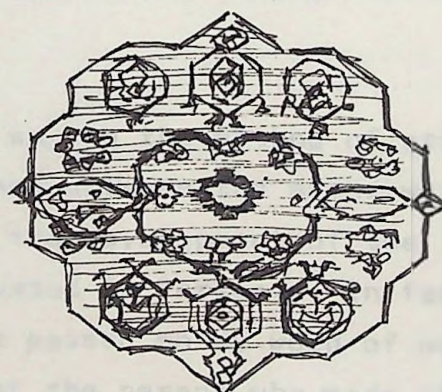
fig. 11

Guards formed by fig 9 diamonds; fig. 10 rosette garland and fig.11 parallelograms.

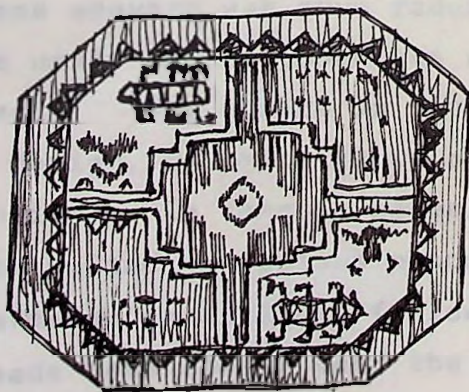
Below, four different interpretations of the gul.



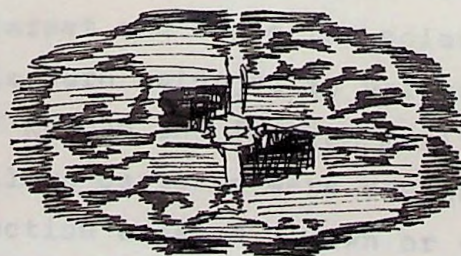
Gul^{fig. 12} Afghān



Gul^{fig. 13} Kizyl-Ayak



Gul^{fig. 14} Kerki



Gul^{fig. 15} Bukhara

nomad, country craftsman, town craftsman or producer in large workshop centres.

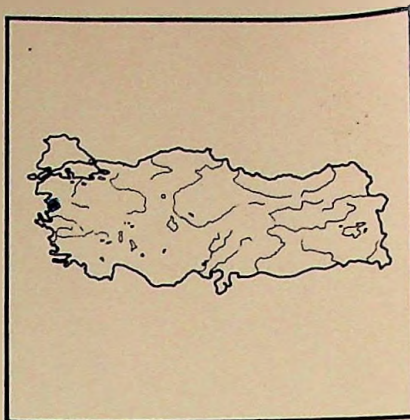
In the section on the decoration of rugs Fabio Formenton deals for the most part with the subject he is an authority on, the floral carpets of town workshops. With his usual clarity Fabio Formenton explains the origin of motifs - from an Iranian point of view. He uses the Iranian names and does point out that the other carpet producing countries have other names and means, but he does not attempt to give these. He explains how the motifs differ in shape in different geographical regions and mentions in detail the more common Field Motifs; fig 2→4. the Boteh, Gul, Herati, Joshagan, Harshang, Mina Khani, fig 5. Zil-I-Spltan, Shah Abbassi and the Border Motifs; Border Boteh, Kufic Border and Serrated Leaf Border. He explains in detail fig 6→8 how the carpet is divided up into field, border motifs and the fig 9→11 guards. These descriptions are further explained with the black ink sketches.

The author has this to say on the method of producing designs: "The major difference between the nomad work and that of the craftsman consists in the development of the function of the master designer, called ustad in Persia. In fact while the designs of nomad carpets were passed on by word of mouth or grew out of the imagination of the person who made the carpet, the design of the floral carpet was drawn on a cartoon and meticulously reproduced by the skilled artisans. The work of these weavers was thus reduced to a simple manual task, whilst the ustad who designed the carpet and chose the colours got the credit. The ustads in their turn belonged to various schools of design, of which those of Kerman and Teheran merit particular mention. In Teheran marvellous cartoons were designed which were suited to various production areas." Town or village craftsmen or artisans followed the floral motifs whereas the fig 12→15 nomads have always used the geometric motifs, which are common to their particular tribe.

BERGAMA



Wool



PROVENANCE Bergama is a town in western Turkey about thirty miles from the Mediterranean coast.

The carpets from this area are, however, almost exclusively of nomad or semi-nomad origin, and owe their name to the city where they are sent for sale.

TECHNICAL DETAILS As in all Turkish carpets, Bergama rugs use the Turkish knot. The knot density per square inch is rather low (33 to 80) and this is a characteristic common to all the carpets of Asia Minor.

The looms used in the Bergama area are almost exclusively horizontal. The warp and weft is in wool and it is only within the last few decades that cotton has been introduced.

The weft threads are almost always red and as many as three or four are used between the rows of knots, a characteristic by which to identify a Bergama. If, in fact, you look at the back of a Bergama rug, you can clearly see the red stripes formed by the weft threads. The fairly deep pile is always in good quality lustrous wool.

Another peculiarity of Bergama rugs is that they are nearly always almost square in shape. They are also almost always small in size, the usual dimensions being 2ft 7in x 3ft 6in, 4ft 3in x 5ft, and 5ft x 6ft 3in.

DESCRIPTION The origin of these rugs is somewhat remote and is linked by affinity of design to sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rugs known

opposite page: *Rare Ghiordes prayer rug dating from the end of the eighteenth century. The decorative motifs show French influence. The colours are typical of carpets from this area. (Pars Collection, Milan)*

fig. 16 Reproduction of pg. 90 in guide, it is accompanied by a colour plate.



fig. 17 Symbol of tent i.e. of nomadic life of the tribe who made the carpet on a groundloom.

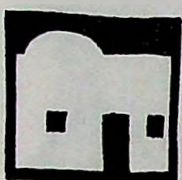


fig. 18 Symbol of carpets woven chiefly in towns and small communities using vertical loom.



fig. 19 Persian Knot symbol.



fig. 20 Turkish Knot symbol.



fig. 21 This symbol indicates the yarn, wool or cotton, used for the warp and weft.

The second and larger part of this volume is devoted to a catalogue or guide suitable for the uninformed or the most expert as a handbook for constant reference in identification of the different producing areas, each region has a distinctive style.

This section is divided into five main parts:

- (1) Turkey. Turkish carpets include those woven along the shores of the Mediterranean and on the Anatolian plateau.
- (2) The Caucasus. This area includes the vast region of the Soviet Union which extends from the Black Sea to the Caspian and is bordered in the south by the Iranian territory of Azerbaijan.
- (3) Iran. The term Persian is applied to all the carpets woven in Iran, the name given in 1935 by Reza Shah to present day Persia. Iran is the most important region both for quality and quantity of carpets.
- (4) Turkestan and Afghanistan. From this region come the carpets woven by the nomad tribes who live in the trans-Caspian steppes as far as the mountains of Afghanistan to the edge of the Pamirs.
- (5) Far East, China and India. With the exception of Chinese carpets, very few come from the Far East, - to this group may be added the carpets woven in Pakistan to designs originating in Turkmenistan.

fig 16.

These main regions are sub-divided into the actual areas of Production. All the possible regions and styles are represented here in the same manner i.e., the name of the area in the case of nomads or the town; a map of the country with the region marked showing its geographical location; the appropriate symbols (fig. 17-21); a colour reproduction of a typical carpet (no two carpets are the same); and a description covering the type of motif, border and usual size of field motif in relation to the border. Also the typical colour and colour proportion used in particular styles.

The book is completed with some hints for carpet owners on how to care for their carpets.

fig. 22.



fig. 23

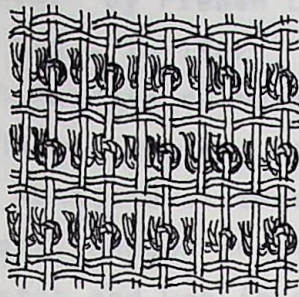


fig. 24

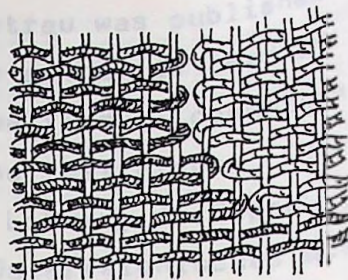


fig. 25

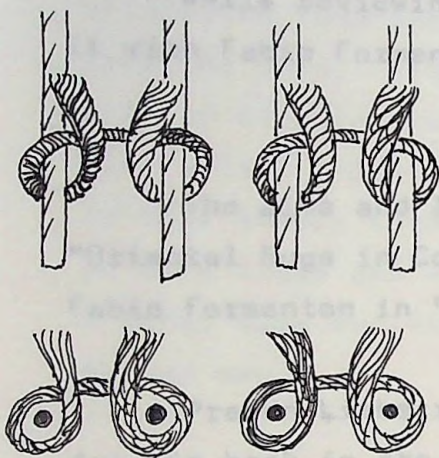


fig. 26

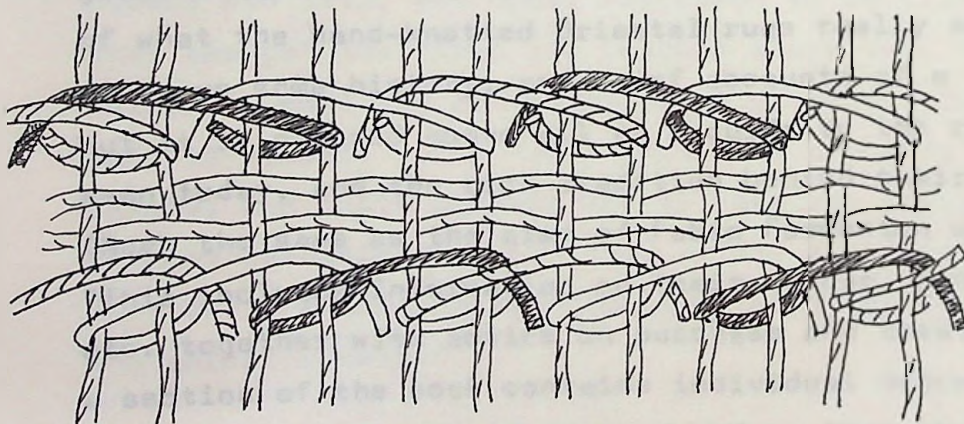
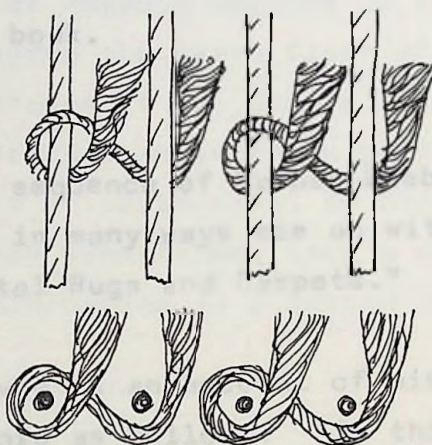


fig. 27

Preben Liebetrau: fig. 22 The Ghiordes (Turkish) knot
fig. 23 The Senneh (Persian) knot
fig. 24 Kelim weaving.

Fabio Formenton: fig. 25 The Ghiordes knot and same in section
fig. 26 The Senneh knot and same in section
fig. 27 Sumak weaving.

"Oriental Rugs in Colour" by Preben Liebetrau was published by Collier-Macmillan Ltd., in 1962. The author is head of the rug department at Magasin du Nord, the famous Copenhagen department store. In his forward we find that Preben Liebetrau, a Dane, has used the Kunstindustrimuseet Library in Copenhagen, the Victoria and Albert, London and the Osterreichisches Museum, Vienna, for his research and was in contact with the Iranian and Turkish Embassies in Copenhagen plus the help of experts in Denmark and Swenen.

While reviewing Preben Liebetrau's book I have compared it with Fabio Formenton's book.

The aims and layout sequence of Preben Liebetrau's "Oriental Rugs in Colour" in many ways tie up with those of Fabio Formenton in "Oriental Rugs and Carpets."

Preben Liebetrau gives us an account of his intentions for his book in the foreword as follows: "In this practical guide I have tried to give an impression, in text and pictures, of what the hand-knotted Oriental rugs really are. The book gives us some history, and brief accounts of a few famous rugs but it is planned above all as a guide to the rugs most commonly seen today, and the rich tradition behind their making." (Much the same as the aims of Fabio Formenton over a decade later). "This includes information on their colour, patterns, symbolism etc. together with advice on purchase and treatment. Finally, a section of the book contains individual descriptions of 65 typical selected rugs reproduced so that the reader may get a comprehensive idea of the whole Oriental rug market today."

From the answer to the question of the very first appearance of a knotted ^{CARPET}, we can see the different approach of the Easterner and Westerner:

Fabio Formenton: "Innumerable hypotheses have been formulated

as to where and when the first hand-knotted carpets were made. Some attribute the invention of carpet-making to the Egyptians while others hold that the first carpet-makers were the Chinese. Yet others think that the earliest carpets were made by the Mayas. There is a foundation of truth in all these theories since it is probable that many peoples, none of whom were in contact with the others, began to make carpets at about the same time. On one point only are the various theories on the origin of carpet-making in agreement. This is that carpets originated from the need of nomadic peoples to protect themselves from the cold. They covered the earth floor of their tents with an article which, because it was softer and warmer than just animal skins, was more suited to their purpose. According to this theory carpets had no pretensions to being an art-form at this stage and were only transformed into a work of art by a long, slow evolution culminating in a period relatively close to our own.

Preben Liebetrau: "Where and when carpets were first knotted nobody can tell, but nomad tribesmen in Central Asia may have been amongst the first rug weavers since they had the necessary material, wool and an incentive, a climate which was bitterly cold in winter. The first rugs were probably hides, pure and simple, and their purpose was to keep out draughts and cold. Perhaps deerskin itself served as the model for Oriental rugs with their small, knotted tufts of wool forming a pile not unlike the animal's coat."

This, no doubt, is Preben Liebetrau's evaluation of the theories of the first appearance of knotted carpets. It is, however, a less realistic and possibly naive approach when it is compared with that of Fabio Formenton.

From this point onwards Preben Liebetrau deals with actual carpet samples, which remain to this day, around which

to write his history of the carpet. This history also looks at the records contained in Medieval paintings and freizes of Italy and the paintings of Holbein. There is a brief mention of the great Persian high-point of art and architecture, and of carpets especially under the Safavid dynasty. The history then stops. Apart from the occasional romantic diversion as seen in the opening paragraphs of the history, Preben Liebetrau has stuck to fact. However, in comparison to Fabio Formenton, even with his Persian slant, Preben Liebetrau's history was aptly described by him in his forward as "some history" of the carpet.

Like Fabio Formenton, Preben Liebetrau has devoted his next section to famous carpets. He in fact covers some of the carpets which Fabio Formenton reviewed. His history deals with the history of these carpets since they reached Europe, which Ruler owned it and when and how it got its present name. To my mind this history on its own serves to whet the appetite but not satisfy it like Fabio Formenton. The carpets he has chosen are:

- (i) The Ardabil Carpet, Victoria and Albert Museum, London;
- (ii) The Persian Hunting Carpet, Osterreichisches Museum,
- (iii) The Coronation Carpet, Rosenborg Castle, Copenhagen;^{Vienna;}

Preben Liebetrau's section on raw materials, dyes, colours and tools are much the same as Fabio Formenton's. However, Preben Liebetrau adds some interesting information of the Western influence of artificial dyes. "In 1856 the English chemist Sir William Henry Perkin discovered the first aniline dye These new dyes quickly found their way to the East, where they were welcomed since they made dyeing quicker and easier, and thus cheaper as well. However, the first aniline dyes were not suitable for rug yarns brought rugs into disrepute and caused alarming slump in exports Therefore in 1903 the Persian government stopped the import and use of aniline dyes between the wars chemical dyeing made great

progress and today dyestuffs from Western Europeare used all over the East in addition to natural dyes."

Preben Liebetrau devotes a large section to a subject which Fabio Formenton barely touched on, colour and motif meanings and symbolism. On colour meanings Preben Liebetrau writes "Since the Prophet's (Mohammed) coat was green, that colour is regarded as sacred and no true Moslem will use it as a principle colour. To Chinese, Iranian and Indian white is the colour of grief." etc. From earlier reading I have no doubt that the accounts of colour and motif meanings come from the books of some of the early twentieth century European experts who studied these aspects of the carpet. I see from the bibliography that he has used these books for research. (Walter A. Hawley "Oriental Rugs Antique and Modern" 1913; W. von Bode and E. Kuhnelt "Near Eastern Carpets" 1958). These books are still referred to today. They hold a wealth of knowledge on symbolism and Oriental beliefs relating to design of carpets - mostly from the viewpoint of the nomad.

Juxtapose to Fabio Formenton's section on the method of producing carpet designs, we could put this passage by Preben Liebetrau: "Rug-making is hard, time consuming and exacting work, done best by women. Perhaps they have more patience than men; they have at any rate slimmer and suppler fingers. Practically all nomad rugs are made by women, often with children to help. It is not uncommon for a woman to work with two children on each side of her. In this way they pick up the secrets and subtleties of rug-making.

"On the other hand, in regular town workshops which may hold up to twenty looms, men and women work together. Here the weaving is directed by a salim as he is called, who recites or monotonously intones the design being copied. Or again the design may first be set down in colour on squared paper, each

From Preben Liebetrau:-

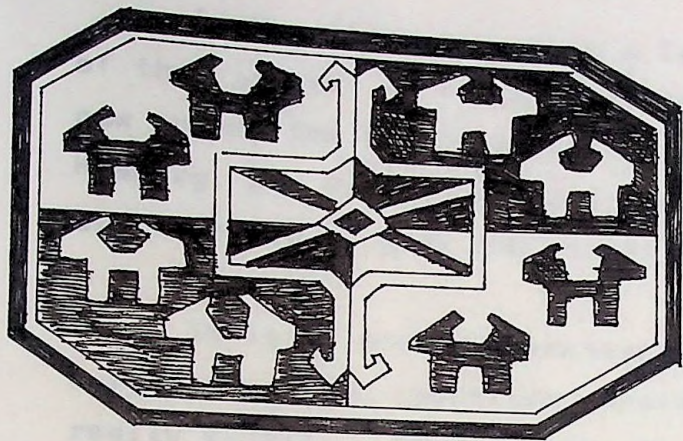


fig. 28 Afghan gul.

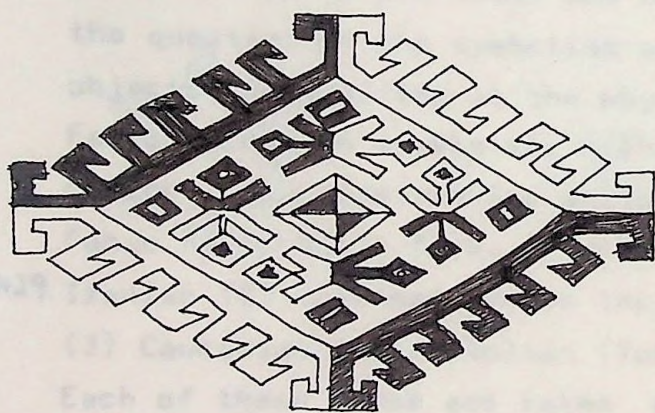


fig. 29 Turkoman gul.

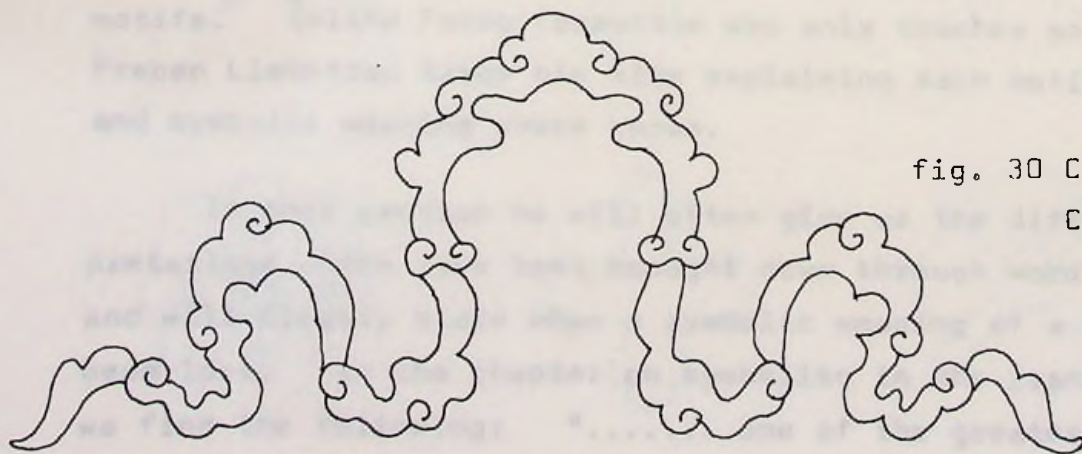


fig. 30 Cloud-band pattern
Chinese influence.

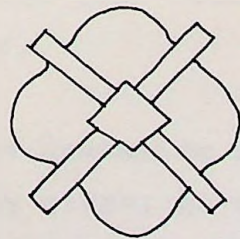
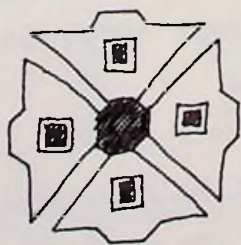
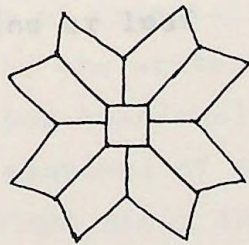
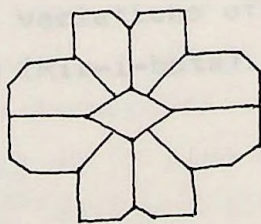
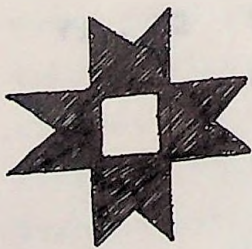
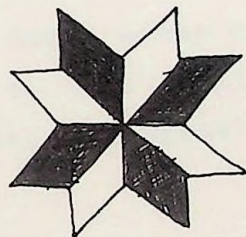
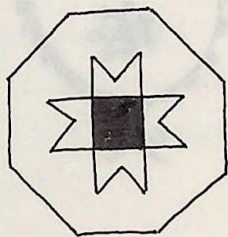
square indicating a knot. The weaver follows this coloured chart much as a pianist follows his sheet music."

Preben Liebetrau gives a European slant to the finishing of the carpets, as he did with the yarn dyes. "..... it is now common for Oriental rugs to be washed in Europe. London, Hamburg, and Vienna all have big wash-houses where chemicals are employed to give the carpet the lustrous and silky finish."

It is in the next section, where he deals with the major carpet producing countries separately, that Preben Liebetrau really excels. He disguises them under the headings of general descriptions, materials, symbolism and patterns. But he discusses them, refers to the views and opinions of others and looks at the question of the symbolism and patterns especially with an objectiveness giving us the whys, for and againsts in a manner Fabio Formenton excels at. The five major regions Preben Liebetrau divides the carpet-making world into correspond exactly to Fabio Formenton's five. Preben Liebetrau's are: (1) Persian or fig 28+29. Iranian (2) Turkoman groups including Turkoman and Afghan rugs (3) Caucasian (4) Anatolian (Turkish), (5) Indian and Chinese. Each of these areas are taken as a whole and not split into the individual centres as in "Oriental Rugs and Carpets." They are taken under headings of general description, materials, symbolism and patterns. A map of each region gives all the centres of manufacture, and there are black ink drawings of all the commoner motifs. Unlike Fabio Formenton who only touches on the motifs, Preben Liebetrau takes his time explaining each motif - origins and symbolic meaning where known.

In this section he will often give us the different interpretations which have been brought down through word of mouth and will clearly state when a symbolic meaning of a motif has been lost. In the chapter on symbolism in the Iranian Section we find the following: "..... one of the greatest modern experts on Oriental carpets A. Cecil Edwards. In "The Persian

fig. 31 Stars and rosettes in Iranian rugs.



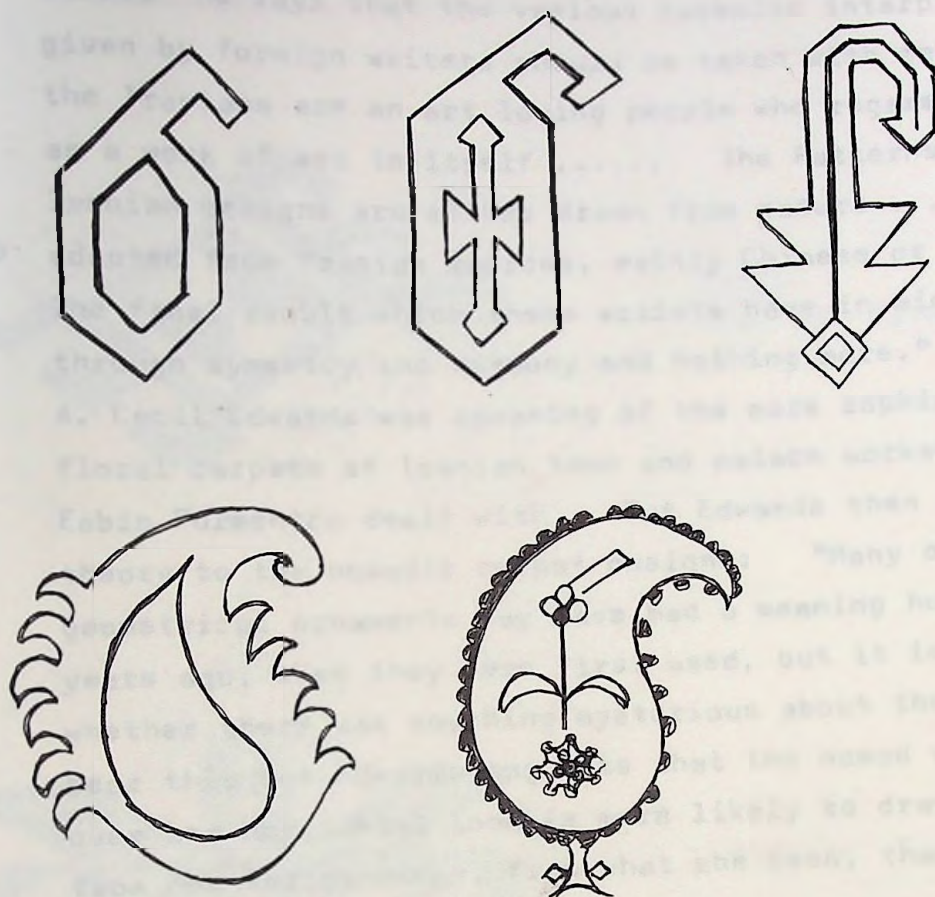


fig. 32 Several variations of the pine or leaf pattern (Mir-i-bota).

fig. 30 Carpet" he says that the various symbolic interpretations given by foreign writers should be taken with reserve, for the Iranians are an art loving people who regard a pattern as a work of art in itself The Patterns used in Iranian designs are either drawn from nature or are adapted from foreign sources, mainly Chinese or Arabic The final result which these artists have in mind is beauty through symmetry and harmony and nothing more." Here A. Cecil Edwards was speaking of the more sophisticated floral carpets of Iranian town and palace workshops, which Fabio Formenton dealt with. But Edwards then extends this theory to the nomadic carpet designs: "Many of these geometrical ornaments may have had a meaning hundreds of years ago, when they were first used, but it is doubtful whether there was anything mysterious about them..." To bear this out Edwards suggests that the nomad woman crouching over her horizontal loom is more likely to draw inspiration from her surroundings, from what she sees, than from the abstract world of ideas.

fig 31+32

"Thus we have every reason to treat with reserve the various interpretations and analyses of the Iranian rug. However, many who have studied the symbolism of Oriental rugs take a different view." (These would be the writers I have already mentioned in connection with colour meanings). Preben Liebetrau goes on to give us the meanings of these Iranian motifs e.g., "Stylised flowers often occur in the rugs, the iris, which appears in the finer Iranian rugs and in a few nomad rugs, represents religious liberty. The rose is also a favourite pattern - to Kurds of West Iran four roses together symbolise the tree of life." etc.

In the sections on the Turkoman and Caucasian rugs the meanings of symbols used are more readily given, as many of them are still used by the nomadic people to this day, e.g.,

From Preben Liebetrau:

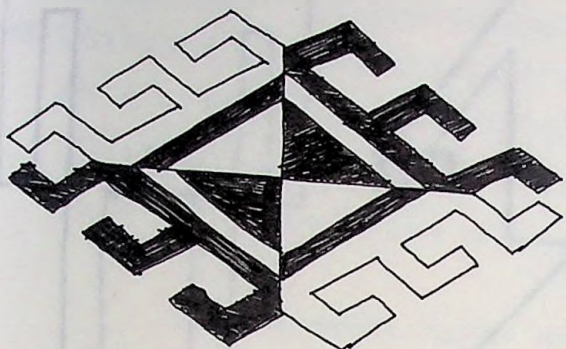


fig. 33 Tarantula pattern.



fig. 34 Tarantula pattern.

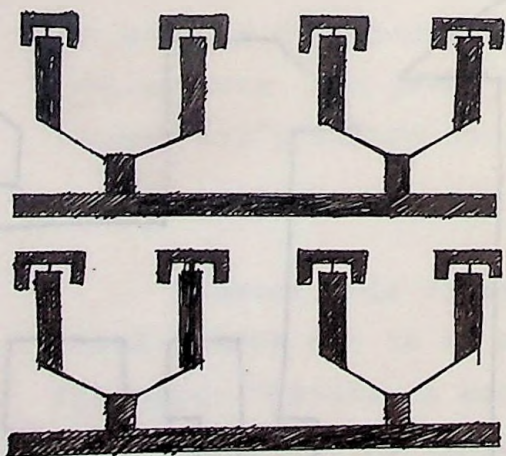


fig. 35 Candlestick ornaments
from a Turkoman rug.

Stylised figures from
Caucasian rugs.

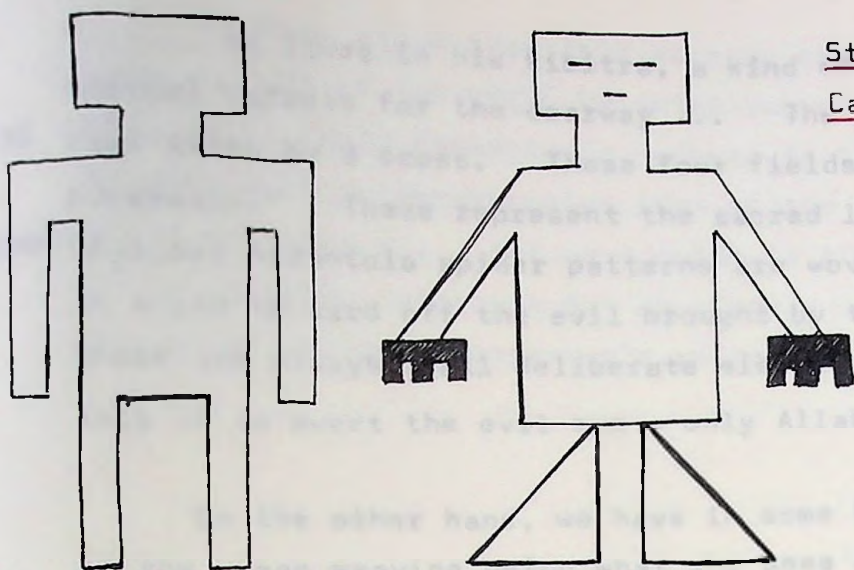


fig. 36 men.

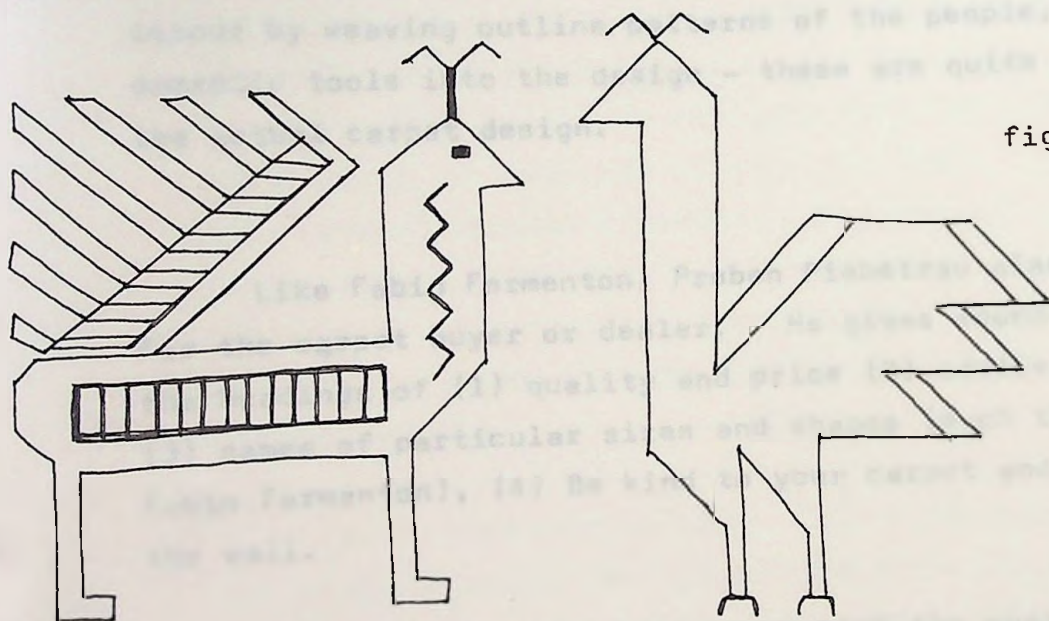


fig. 37 cocks.

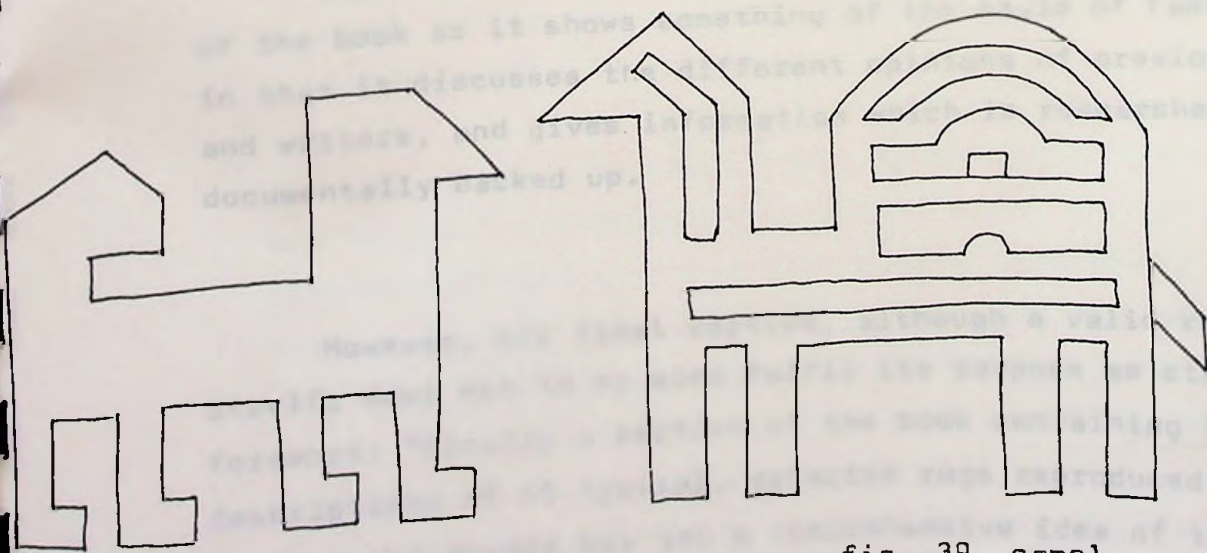


fig. 38 dog.

fig. 39 camel.

fig. 35 "..... he lives in his kibitra, a kind of tent There are special carpets for the doorway ... The pattern is divided into four parts by a cross. These four fields display candlestick ornaments." These represent the sacred light of Mecca.

fig. 33+34 Stylised tarantula spider patterns are woven into nomad carpets in a bid to ward off the evil brought by this desert spider. There are always small deliberate mistakes in nomad carpets. This is to avert the evil eye - only Allah can create perfection.

fig. 36-9 On the other hand, we have in some Caucasian rugs examples of the woman weaving using what she sees about her. In an area of solid colour she will combat the monotony of weaving solid colour by weaving outline patterns of the people, animals and domestic tools into the design - these are quite divorced from the actual carpet design.

Like Fabio Formenton, Preben Piebetrø also has a section for the carpet buyer or dealer. He gives sound advice under the headings of (1) quality and price (2) advice to purchaser (3) names of particular sizes and shapes (much the same as Fabio Formenton), (4) Be kind to your carpet and (5) a rug on the wall.

This middle section is to my mind the most valuable part of the book as it shows something of the style of Fabio Formenton in that it discusses the different opinions of previous experts and writers, and gives information which is researched and documentally backed up.

However, his final section, although a valid record in itself, does not to my mind fulfil its purpose as stated in the foreword: "Finally a section of the book containing individual descriptions of 65 typical, selected rugs reproduced in colour so that the reader may get a comprehensive idea of the whole Oriental rug market today."

I would argue that this section does not give a comprehensive idea of the WHOLE Oriental rug market today. Just by looking at Fabio Formenton's answer to this subject is sufficient to show what a comprehensive idea of the whole Oriental carpet world of today is. Yet as a guide to the 65 styles mentioned it is valuable, although not as clearly laid out and graphically explained as Fabio Formenton's guides.

in a more or less identical sequence.

"Oriental Rugs and Carpets" by Fabio Formenton is an all accounts a most valuable book. As a native of Iran he is deeply involved in the world of Oriental carpets, and although he does not take an indifferent angle on his national contribution to the Oriental carpet but rather elevates the Persian carpet this does not take away the information he gives us on all Oriental carpets and rugs. It is perhaps only natural that an Easterner can approach this subject more easily than a Westerner. The Westerner who is not only an outsider in that he lives thousands of miles away but that he lives in a society with different values, philosophies and methods of sale.

Yet I find that although Freben Liebetrau's history is not of the standard of Fabio Formenton's it is, nevertheless, Freben Liebetrau who fills a gap, that of symbolism and meanings behind the designs, which Fabio Formenton only mentions briefly in passing.

Maybe it is because Fabio Formenton's "Oriental Rugs and Carpets" was published a decade later and is a much more expensively produced book than Freben Liebetrau's "Oriental Rugs in Colour" that it is so much easier to read. I would suggest that the real reason Fabio Formenton's book is because he has more information on hand both in books (including Freben Liebetrau's "Oriental Rugs in Colour" - is this where he got his headings from? Certainly the sections are very similar), and from travelling. But most striking of all is the clever and more precise way of laying out his information

Both dealers set out with the same intention in mind i.e., to give the public, whether student, prospective buyer, or just the interested individual, an insight into the great tradition of Oriental carpets and to lift some of the mysticism around its history, design and manufacture. It is also the aim of both to make identification for design and commercial values easier. Both have set out the sequence of contents in a more or less identical sequence.

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PART 2

THE KONYA CARPETS

I have chosen the works of two professors of Oriental Art for my second review. Kurt Erdmann, a German, was a professor of Oriental Art in the University of Istanbul and later of the University of Hamburg. He travelled extensively in the Orient, studying all aspects of Oriental Art and in particular carpets and rugs. Towards the end of his life he made an intensive study of Turkish carpets - which are still little known and understood. (Kurt Erdman died suddenly in 1964). He was responsible for bringing to light valuable Turkish carpets and carpet fragments which had lain for years in deserted storerooms. He catalogued them; they now belong to the Turk ve Islam Museum, Istanbul.

Oktaý Aslanapa is the Professor of the History of Art at Istanbul University. He is a native of Turkey. I have not been able to find out very much information about him, other than that he has tried to promote the Art of Turkey in general. Like Fabio Formenton, who studies the history of knotted carpets, from the viewpoint of Persian carpets being the centre of the carpet-making world, Oktay Asanapa presents an equally impressive picture of the importance of the Turkish carpet to the carpet world.

"Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets" by Kurt Erdmann is a collection of fifty-one articles written for the journal Heimtax between 1960 and 1964. It was decided that these articles should be published in book form, but the author died before this book could be completed with introduction and notes. Kurt Erdmann's wife, Hanna, put the existing book "Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets" together. Of her husband's intentions for the book she writes - "it was to be more than a popular book but not quite a manual or complete history of the carpet. It is a many-sided work put together as a mosaic and the complicated problems and questions concerning the Oriental rug are fully surveyed."

As this quotation suggests many facets of the rug world are covered in the fifty-one articles (they are printed as they

had appeared in the magazine Heimtax). Such subjects as "The Discovery of the Antique Carpet"; "Verses in Carpets"; "Wagirehs"; "Carpet Cartoons"; "A Carpet Unmasked" (dealing with forged carpets); "Persian Carpets of Turkish Provenance" and many more, including several articles dealing with carpets lost in the museums of Berlin during World War II. Erdmann has also written a number of articles dealing with Turkish carpets including "The Konya Carpets"; "The Anatolian Animal Carpets"; "The So-called Holbein Carpets"; "The Lotto Carpets"; "The Turkish Booty"; "Carpets in Turkish Mosques"; "The Turk ve Islam Museum in Istanbul"; "Carpets in other Turkish Museums" and "The Burnt Carpets of Turkey" which were in the Berlin Carpet Collection.

In "Turkish Arts" by Oktay Aslanapa the author has taken the oldest and most important - yet little known - examples of Turkish Art and Craft and has tried to bring them to a wider circle through his extremely readable description, history and explanation of them. His subjects cover - "Carpets of the Seljuk and Ottoman Carpets"; "Ceramic tiles and mosaic"; "Miniature Paintings."

Sir Basil Gray of the British Museum, London, has made the following comments on the book "I have been interested to study these reproductions which on the whole seem to be remarkably faithful, so far as I know the originals" and he has remarked that the text and colour reproductions combined are "of great value to students."

But I think the true value of Oktay Asanapa's work may be seen in the words of Kurt Erdman, who made the following remarks on "Turkish Arts" when he was Director of the State Museum, Berlin and Professor at the University of Hamburg: "the complaint has sometimes been made that Turkish Art does not receive fair judgment abroad. Some misappreciations of Turkish Art in foreign literature have been pointed out it is true that Turkish art is not appreciated by foreign scholars in accordance with its real value. But even these wrong judgments stem partly from this fact. Where does it originate? It does not originate in

voluntary misappreciation by foreign scholarship, but foreign scholarship can't help undervaluing it, because little is known about it, and there is absolutely no opportunity of learning its true importance. What can be learned, outside Turkey, about Turkish miniature painting? Almost nothing This is the situation in all branches. Turkish Art is not justly appreciated abroad because the material available to foreign science is scarce. Foreign scholarship is the chief sufferer from this, but it can only be amended by Turkish scholars doing all they can to make known the treasures of Turkish museums, libraries, archives and last but not least, the wealth of Turkish architectural art.

During the eight years I was allowed to teach at the University of Istanbul, I endeavoured to do my share in this matter. Excursions took us all over Anatolia and revealed to us many unknown or insufficiently known monuments. The evaluation of this material is still in its initial stage. The approximately fifty graduate papers delivered by students during these eight years were aimed at a monographical coverage of particular groups of monuments, especially of Turkish artistic works. The material collected in them has in small part been made accessible to a broader public.

The present book aims in the same direction I believed I had to take during my activity in Turkey. Therefore I welcome it sincerely and congratulate its author, my faithful comrade, Oktay Asanapa, most cordially."

In view of the fact that Oktay Aslanapa and Kurt Erdmann knew each other and had more or less the same approach to written reports on Turkish art and carpets i.e., to bring their true value to a wide circle of the public, it would be interesting to look at works written on the same subject and to compare the approaches of Easterner(native) and European. I have chosen the accounts written by each author on the 1905 discovery of late thirteenth and fourteenth century carpets and carpet fragments in Konya. These works can be found in Kurt Erdmann's "Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets" under the article headed "The Konya Carpets" and in Oktay Asanapa's "Turkish Arts" in the "Carpets of the Seljuk Period" pages 15-23. I have taken into account the fact that Oktay Asanapa wrote his description after that of Kurt Erdmann, and we can see from his bibliography that Oktay Asanapa used Kurt Erdmann's article in his research. But I do not think that this has interfered very much in giving us a picture of the Easterner's and the Westerner's approach to the subject.

Comparison:

Kurt Erdmann gives us a background to the importance of the find by reference to comment of an 1892 article by Wilhelm von Bode on the need for early examples of carpets (the Konya Carpets are some of the earliest). Then accounts of writings of traveller of the time, Sarre; and of the discoverer, Herr Loytved, German Consul in Konya and information on the writings by these and other writers of the time. Then an account of the history of the carpets since their finding in 1905.

Kurt Erdmann gives this interesting background history:

"The famous Venetian traveller Marco Polo, who was in Asia Minor in 1271, had just returned from Persia In his opinion the Turkish carpet of the thirteenth century was superior to the Persian of the same period, and this had been supported by others. Ibn Said (+1274) wrote 'in Aksaray are made the Turkoman carpets which are exported to all countries of the world' and Ibn Batuta, who travelled in Anatolia at the beginning of the fourteenth century also praised them

When the carpets from the Alaeddin Mosque became known they were immediately associated with the literary references just mentioned. This was not surprising since Konya was the capital of the Seljuks and Alaeddin was their principal mosque. Whether the pieces really date from the years 1218-20 during which the extensions to the mosque were completed, and were given by the Sultan as products of a Court manufactory is another question."

Oktay Aslanapa removes his historical background to a more Eastern history approach. After a brief reference to the European discoverer he concentrates more on the actual carpets and records in Eastern history which might give clues to their dating. Juxtapose to Kurt Erdmann's background of writings by Marco Polo, Ibn Said and Ibn Batuta we might put Oktay Asanapa's words:

"What gives the Konya Seljuk Carpets their characteristic imposing appearance, however, is the bold Cific lettering used in their wide borders. The earliest surviving examples of this type of border show vertical Cufic characters ending in pointed triangles with tips like arrowheads..... The harmonious contrast of dark and light shades is very restful and within a restricted colour range an effect of richness is obtained through the inter-mingling of tones. Indeed, these early specimens (carpet fragments) evince an understanding of the use of colour on a level with that of the foremost painters" (miniature painters)..

....."...the Konya Seljuk carpets continue into the period of Alaeddin Key-Kubat, and it is quite possible that they were dedicated by him for use in the Alaeddin Mosque after he had it enlarged in 1220 A.D."

It is quite striking to the reader of these two works how Kurt Erdmann, the European, puts emphasis on the earlier writings of Europeans on the subject, while Oktay Aslanapa, the native, for the greater part refers to relevant records in Eastern history, including Persia and Egypt.

Both the professors conclude their articles with descriptions of the individual pieces, there are eight altogether. Oktay Aslanapa accompanies his descriptions with colour reproductions and black ink drawing details to further explain the text. He



fig. 40
Konya Carpet fragment



fig. 41 Detail from
background design



fig. 42 "Goose-foot,"
detail from inner border
motif.

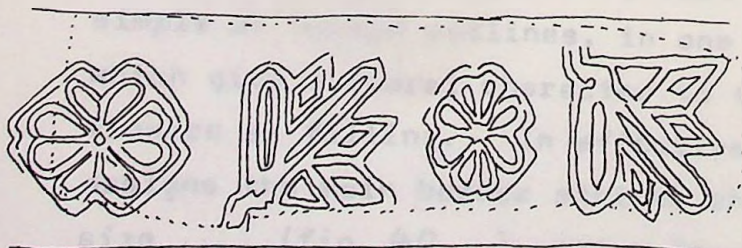


fig. 43 designs from 14th century
carpet fragments found in
Fuscat (Old Cairo).



has been the first to have permission to reproduce these carpet fragments in colour.

Kurt Erdmann's text is accompanied by black and white reproductions. "Until a short time ago photographs of only a few were available" and none of them in colour.

Descriptions for the same carpet fragment run as follows:

Oktaş Aslanapa "The fifty Konya rug is patterned with symmetrical flattened octagons in light blue on a dark blue ground. The surrounding area is enriched with latchhooks and one of the tips ends with an arrowhead (fig. 41). The middle area of these contains an angular letter (S) filler called flint. The Cufic border, white on red, is adorned with broken lines, blue and red; in the remaining square are octagonal stard, dark blue on red. An angular floral motif which is called 'goose-foot' placed alternately high and low, is used as an inner border (fig. 42). One of the Fusat fragments (a later discovery in Cairo in 1935-1936) "shows the same motif in more naturalistic treatment, with varied colours (fig. 43).

Oktaş Aslanapa has given a very detailed record of the carpet fragment and in all his descriptions, as in the above one, he relates design characteristics to latter finds of the same style. Kurt Erdmann's account of the carpet fragments takes a different approach as we will see from his references to the same carpet fragment:

"As far as I know they have only been shown twice outside Istanbul, one of the fragments (fig. 40) at the Vienna Exhibition of 1932..... The designs of these rugs are geometric, proportionately small in relation to the size of the field, and are arranged in offset rows. There are hexagons with simple or hooked outlines, in one case even a stem pattern which give a floral character to the design strongly stylized flowers as filling. In effective contrast to the small-patterned designs the main border stripes show Cufic script of monumental size (fig. 40) and a fragment from Fostat in an American private collection may have the same design."

(I have changed the fig. nos. in the quotes to comply with my fig.nos.)

My final comparison is on layout and planning of the articles. Kurt Erdmann's article is one long continuous script with no sub-headings, each aspect covered flows directly into the next. The reproductions are placed at the top of the pages and the text is underneath (the text does not relate specifically to the sample on the page). It is an enjoyable article to read but as far as layout goes I would think Oktay Aslanapa's plan would provide easier reading for students especially. It is clearly laid out and divided into sections on (1) history of the actual find; (2) historical background information; (3) individual descriptions accompanied by black ink diagrams; (4) colour reproductions. Although clearly laid out in this order for the reader; there are no sub headings.

CONCLUSION.

From the four books I have reviewed, it would appear that there are a number of points of difference in the approach of the Easterner and Westerner to the subject of Oriental Carpets. Unfortunately, the time factor only allows me to mention these points briefly.

- (1) One of the most striking points which has come across to me is the national pride which both Formenton and Aslanapa portray in their texts. Aslanapa deals solely with the art of his country, Turkey, while Formenton uses his Persian examples as far as possible to explain his points. The Europeans, Erdmann and Liebetrau can and do take an objective view of the carpet world in general, showing no particular preference for any one country.
- (2) The Eastern writers adhere to the subject as laid out in their foreword almost religiously, while the Europeans deviate to give us interesting (irrelevant?) side steps.
- (3) From their bibliographies I see that all the authors have referred to the early twentieth century books which I have mentioned in my introduction. It seems, also, that Aslanapa and Erdmann both used each others writings. Aslanapa had Erdmann's article on the Konya Carpets when he was writing his book. Formenton and Liebetrau both read the writings of Aslanapa and Erdmann. However, in the books I have reviewed both the Eastern dealer and scholar have used Eastern history and writings to support their points while the Westerners continuously use European and only occasionally Eastern writings.
- (4) Both the Europeans, Erdmann and Liebetrau seem to favour a long rambling text where the subjects merge into one another. Formenton especially and Aslanapa take a different layout approach. They use numbers, sub-headings and spacing to facilitate the reader in distinguishing where a subject begins and ends.

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