

Nomadic Persian Rugs, Part One

While the Iranian government, for much of the twentieth century, attempted to settle tribes still practicing at least partial nomadism. This involves part of the tribe migrating to progressively higher ground in the spring and summer to find fresh pasturage for their flocks, and then returning to the lowlands for the cold season. Parts of each tribe remain sedentary, growing cereal crops for survival over the winter. Eventually this way of life will probably become extinct, as migrating nomads have always been problematic for governments. Nomads have been difficult to control, and their lifestyle has led to a certain independence from central authority. It also has led to rugs with different visual flavor from those of the Persian villagers, consequently varied kinds of nomadic Persian rugs have held a special appeal for carpet lovers from across the world.

Boustani is proud to introduce to you some main Iranian tribes as the largest creators of nomadic rugs with their own styles.

Qashqai

The Qashqai, a grouping mostly of Turkic origin, and the dominant tribe of the region, is made up of a number of subtribes including the Qashguli, Bulli, Darashuri, Kuhi and others. There are theories that the first of these Turkic people entered the Fars province, Iran in 13th century, having been forced south by arrival of Mongol armies in Azerbaijan.

At times the Qashqai have represented a powerful force within Persia, as a migrating tribe is organized along military lines, with all men essentially able to function as warriors. There has also always been a certain friction, and interdependence, between the migratory and settled populations.

The Qashqai weave two types of rugs. Probably the most ancient tradition is the Gabbeh. These have probably been woven for local use for centuries.

The best of these rugs are powerfully colored and boldly designed, often showing additional simple geometric border stripes at both ends. There has never been a large supply of the higher grade Qashqai rugs, and the best are avidly sought by interests.

A number of trapping associated with nomadic life are also made by the Qashqai, including many kilims, horse covers and a number of bags. Qashqai kilims in particular are woven in vivid colors that resemble more the gabbeks than the other Qashqai pile weaves.



The rugs most frequently woven for the market are all of wool, asymmetrically knotted and are based primarily upon traditional Persian designs, with frequent use of Herati pattern, at time with a small medallion. The repeating Boteh also occurs on many Qashqai rugs and adaptations of the Moghul *mille-fleurs* (Literally thousand flowers) design in a prayer rug format are also woven, but these are ordinarily made in the workshops of settled tribespeople around the town of Firuzabad rather than by nomads.



Qashqai rugs often show a variety of ornaments arranged with less formality than one would find on a Persian city rug, and they carry about them a liveliness often lacking in the typical village rug. Many nomadic rug enthusiasts see these pieces as adhering more to earlier and non-commercial traditions than the rugs of settled people, and yet that may be an exaggeration. The degree to which these rugs predate the expansion of the Persian rug industry in the late 19th century is still not clear, although a few have in woven dates suggesting a mid-century origin. This brings up the question of whether the original Qashqai products are the gabbehs and kilims, while the asymmetrically knotted rugs in non-tribal designs may represent a later commercial production.

The best of these rugs are powerfully colored and boldly designed, often showing additional simple geometric border stripes at both ends. There has never been a large supply of the higher grade Qashqai rugs, and the best are avidly sought by interests.

A number of trapping associated with nomadic life are also made by the Qashqai, including many kilims, horse covers and a number of bags. Qashqai kilims in particular are woven in vivid colors that resemble more the gabbehs than the other Qashqai pile weaves.

