

Qom Rugs

Charm of Silk and Colors





Qom Rugs

Charm of Silk and Colors

Dedication

To My Friend Dr. Mark R. Jones

You were the man that helped me to realize my dreams. Without you, none of this would be possible. Your interest and inquiring mind about oriental rugs inspired this project. You are the most imaginative and perceptive person I have ever met. Very few people have these gifts. You have faithfully believed in my vision and understood the importance of this project.

You came in as a curious investor, and have become my most loyal and trusting friend. You were the Godsend that made this all possible.

To My Father Mozafar Khazai

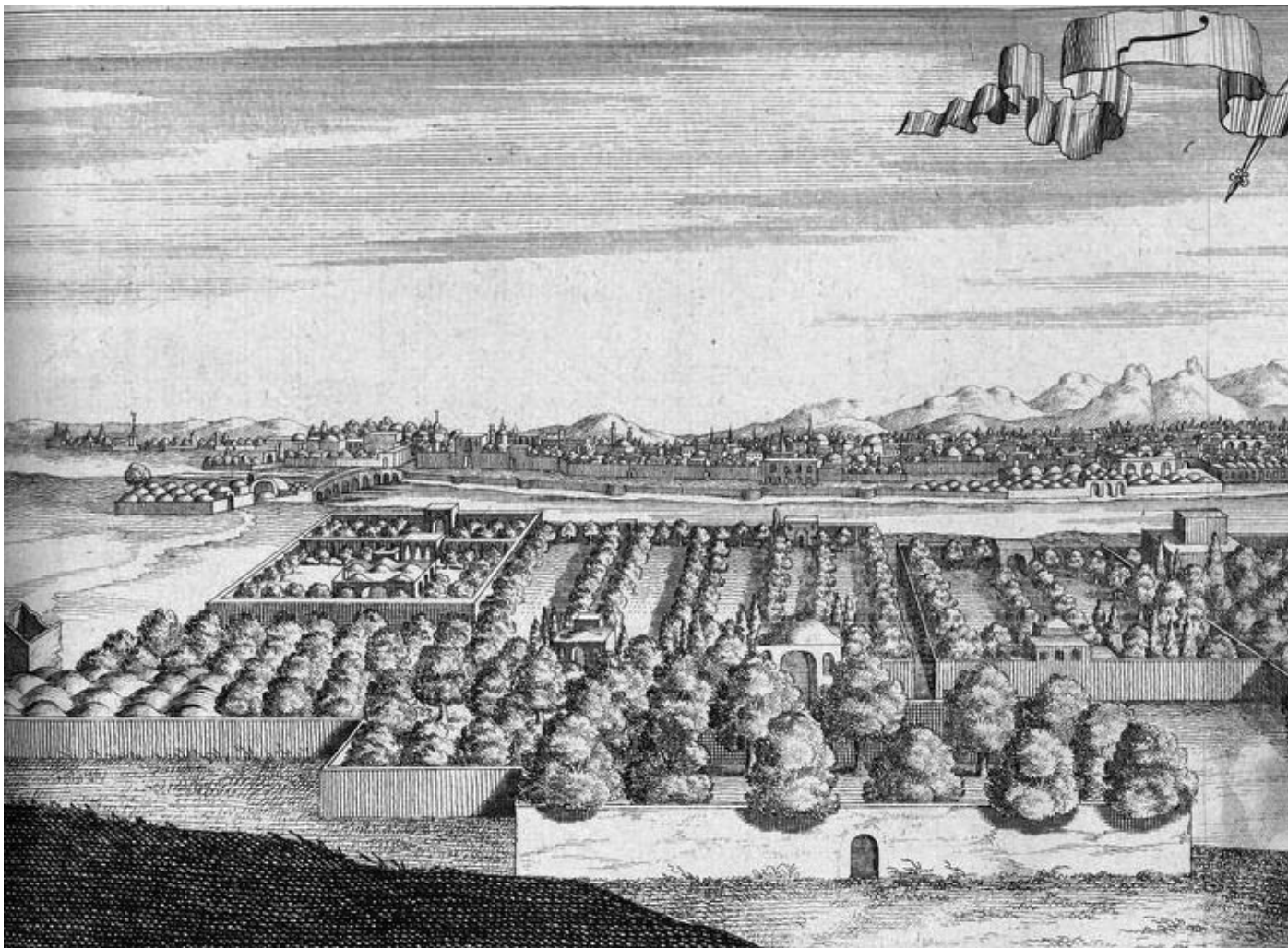
I dedicate this work to my late father – the man who initially cultivated the passion I have for thinking ambitiously and having big dreams. Acting as a living example, he nurtured the virtues of discipline and hard work within me, which have led to my life's achievements and overall success. His unending generosity, courage, friendship, networking, and ability to live life large will always leave me in awe.

Qom (also Romanized as Qum) is an ancient city located on the northern boundary of the Iranian central desert.

Qom is a holy city for Shi'a Muslims, as it is the site of the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima Masuma, sister of Imam Reza, the 8th of Shia Imams, whose shrine in Mashhad in northeast of the country is the only Shi'a Imam tomb inside Iran. Qom is the major center for Shi'a scholarship in the world, and a significant destination for Shi'a pilgrims.

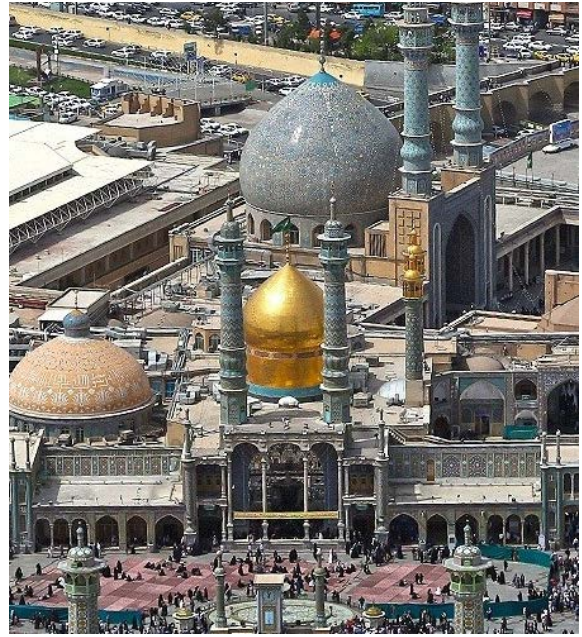
North of Qom is the Iranian capital Tehran and south of it lie the ancient city of Kashan. This route passes through salt lakes and salty mounts from each miners bring crystals of salt various in color, opacity and formation.

View of Qom city in a painting in 1723 AD

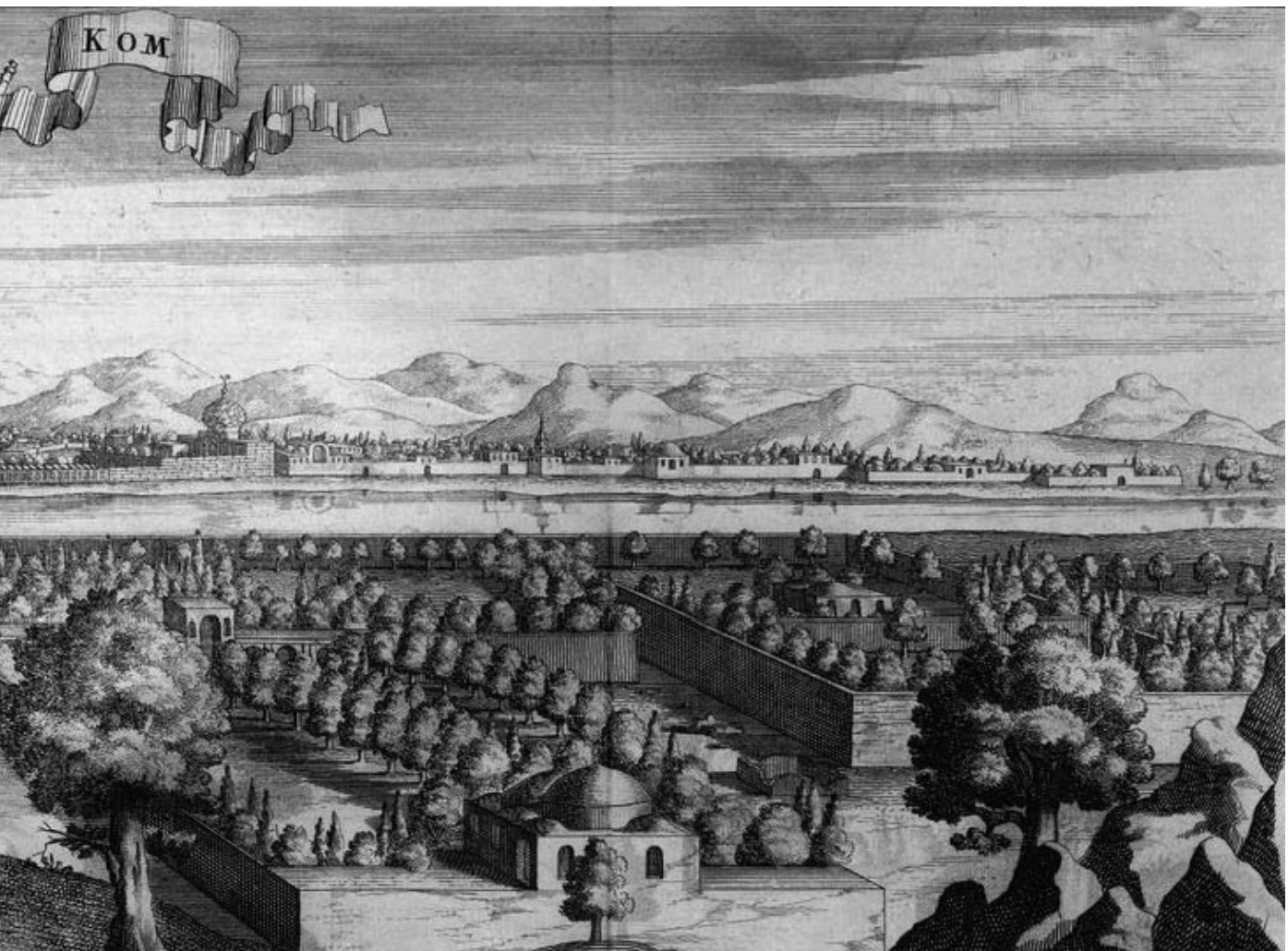




Qom Province



The Fatima Masumeh Shrine in Qom





From this route came also the design basics of what Persian Qom Rug is attributed to: the royal or courtly Persian style.

Pieces worthy of such renovation must be woven with high grade silk and fine kork (mohair), dyed naturally without any chemical dyes or left undyed to celebrate their nature' hues. The weave, too, must be neat, accurate and thoroughly honest to give form to the most lavishing designs.



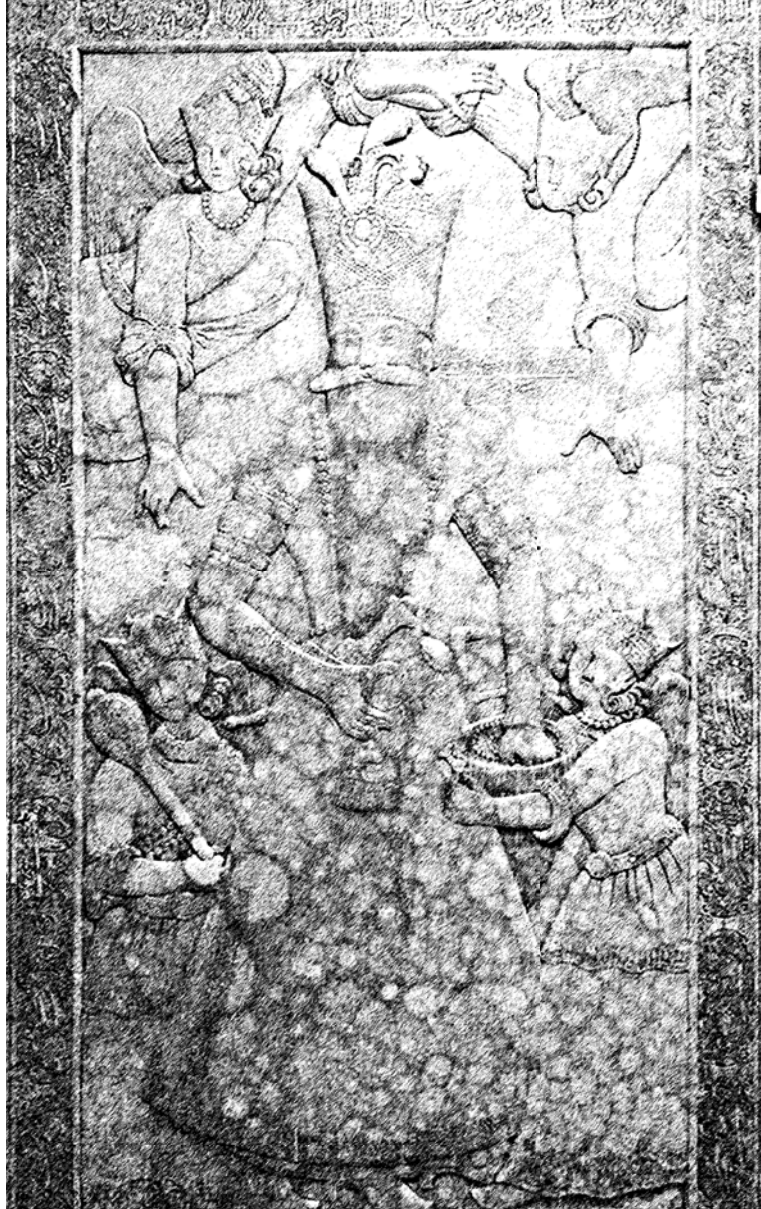
*The Rothschild Small Silk Medallion Kashan Carpet, mid-16th century
(Safavid period), Museum of Islamic Art, Doha*



One of the "Salting" group. Wool, silk and metal thread. Kashan carpet, Safavid period, about 1600



The rug weaving history in Qom in the current style backs to the second decade of the 20th century, when merchants of Kashan brought their looms to Qom and started the business on a limited scale. They brought with them loom-drawings of Kashan' workshops sharing the designs with Qomi households. But we could trace Isfahan-Kashan's influence on Qom back to the 16th and 17th centuries.



The city of Qom has been tied with Persian royalty and courtship thence lots of Shia Persian Shahs of Isfahan and Tehran have been buried there in the holy shrine. In one tragic occasion during the fall of Isfahan the invaders let a caravan of several Safavid princes' bodies out of Isfahan gate to be buried in Qom.

Such royal tombs used to be carpeted with courtly rugs. Some of the most famous Persian rugs have been woven originally for royal tombs such as Victoria and Albert's Ardabil which had carpeted tomb of Sheikh Safi, the forerunner of the Safavid House in Ardabil.

Tomb of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar in Qom



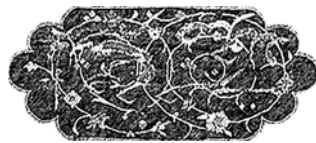


Shaikh Safi (Ardabil) Carpet located in Room 42, Jameel Gallery of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, England





Shah Abbas I and his court



Generally, tombs of dignitaries are appropriate places to find magnificent woven pieces. Lots of magnificent Sasanid silken clothes and tapestries, for instance, found the chance of preservation nowhere better than inside Vatican chest tombs.

There in the holy shrine of Qom, under the shadow of the Golden Dome, stood the tomb of Shah Abbas the Second.

His throne name indicates his wish to revive his ancestor's glory, Shah Abbas the Great, whose rule was the climax of Safavid dynasty. He was with no doubt the greatest patron of art in the Iranian early-modern history and one of the most reputed of all. About 300 silk carpets woven during or shortly after his reign have survived. Most of them have been attributed to Isfahan and Kashan. Abbas the second proved to be worthy of his throne name both in ruling the country and art patronage.

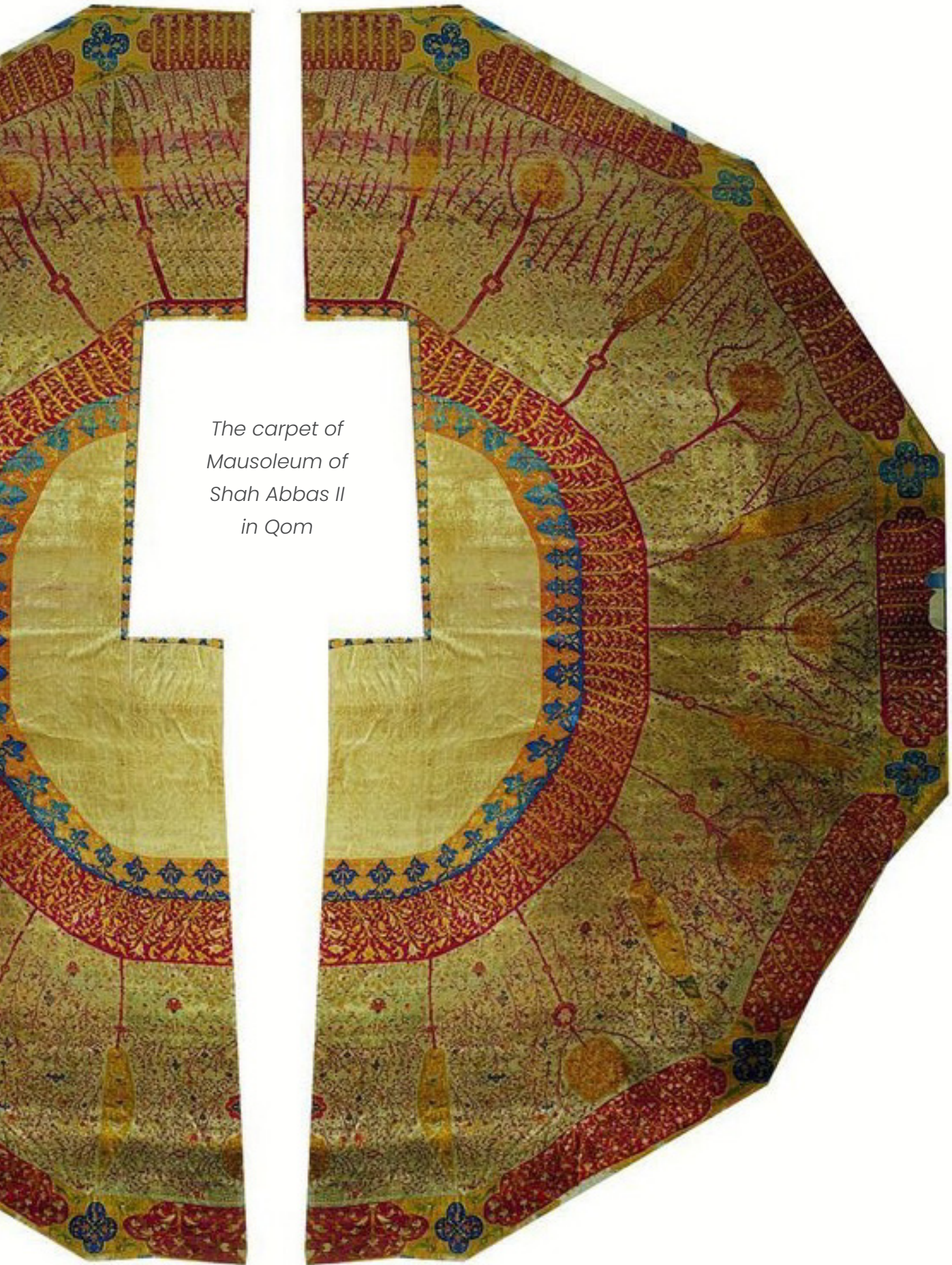
Abbas II of Persia and the Mughal ambassador. 17th century Persian painting





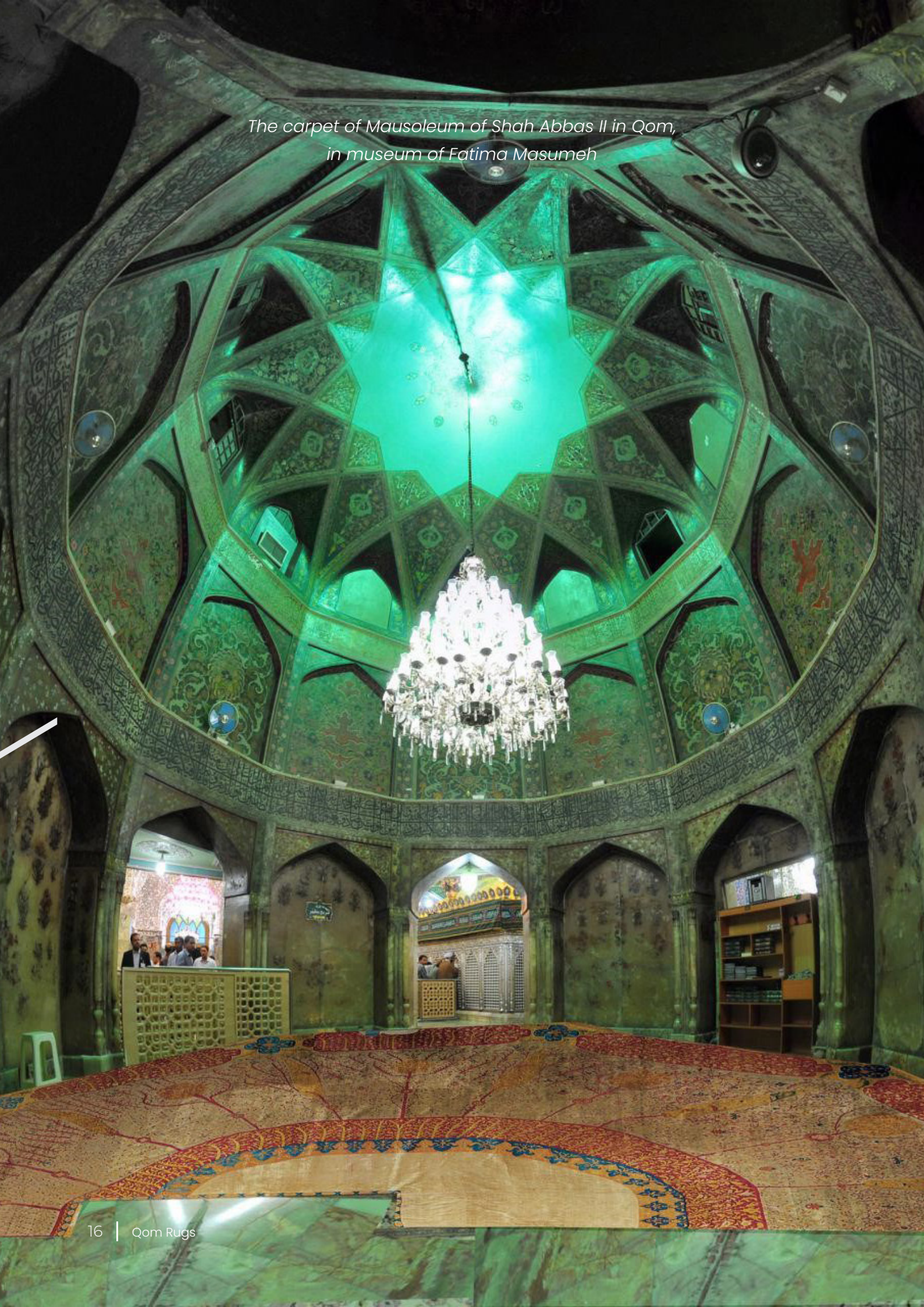
A pair of fine silken carpets, preserved today in the Qom's holy shrine museum, had used to carpet his tomb woven under the command of his heir. Embracing the chest tomb, these semicircular pieces benefited of the finest stitch possible for a piled carpet. Its design pictures the major stages of the cypress life cycle. Iranian folks use to call their tall youth and beloved ones 'Sarv' (Cypress) as well as their martyrs and living souls of their late relatives. Considered the very tree of life for Iranians, Persian cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*) has always been a frequent motif in their arts.





*The carpet of
Mausoleum of
Shah Abbas II
in Qom*

The carpet of Mausoleum of Shah Abbas II in Qom,
in museum of Fatima Masumeh



There are other related pieces with affinity in design and weave with this pair in the museum, probably used as wall hangings around the tomb. One of the pieces has a signature of a certain Joshagani designer: Master Nematollah of Joshagan, in the year 1082 H.



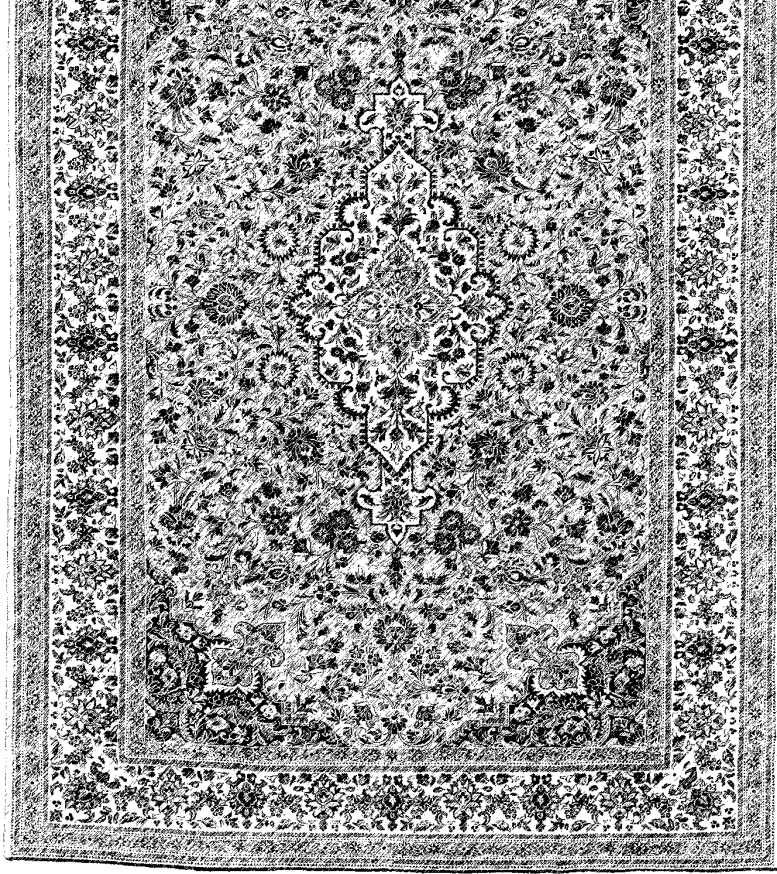
The Silk Carpet of Mausoleum of Shah Abbas II in Qom



The principal metal-thread carpet and six of the smaller carpets are reproduced in Pope's Survey of Persian Art plates 1260-1257, and several were exhibited "disposed just as they are to be seen round the tomb" at the 1931 Persian Art Exhibition held at Burlington House in London.



Detail showing the Silk Carpet of Mausoleum of Shah Abbas II in Qom



Safavid's royal workshops were mostly located in Jolfa between Isfahan and Kashan. At the height of its glory Jolfa produced royal rugs and carpets not only for the Persian Court, but also for the Mughals of India. Master Nematollah's signature shows how Qomi people have always been in touch with the Isfahan-Kashan court school.





Qum Patina carpet from Persia / Iran

Despite rising of new dynasts and changing the capital from Isfahan to Tehran, Kashan and Isfahan succeeded to maintain their reputation not only in rug weaving but in lots of other handicrafts. It was not until the late modern era that Qom introduced herself as a center for court woven pieces.



Persian Qom Silk Rug



Qom has been described a city of gardens and wealthy people in the beginning of the 20th century. Rug production seems to be deeply affected by the fact. Qomi people used to weave rugs with more leisure than in any other rug center so they put their focus on quality, being able to follow their own taste of art.

Grand Timcheh (Bazaar) in Qom



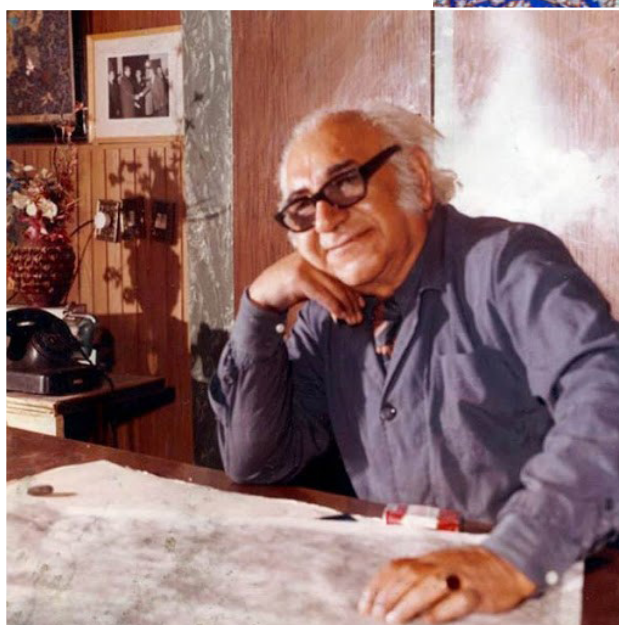




Their taste of art, of course, have been nurtured during centuries of watching the best pieces of Persian royal examples. A well-educated one, too. Qomi designers were mostly trained in the craft and familiar with art theories, having acquaintances also with European orientalists.

Zand historical house in Qom

A certain Ahmad Archang encouraged by art historian Arthur Pope to draw Isfahan tile's patterns. The result was admired well enough to make a stout branch in Qom types of design. Other famous twentieth-century weaver-designers of Qom include Arsalani and Rashti Zadeh, whose latter family still produce rugs in Qom.



Right: Ahmad Archang Left: Arthur Pope

Little by little silken rug production found its way into a more commercial way. Quickly the craft became popular in the city and expanded gradually to the villages of western route. East of Qom starts an immediate desert.



*A certain Ahmad Archang encouraged
by art historian Arthur Pope to draw Isfahan tile's patterns*

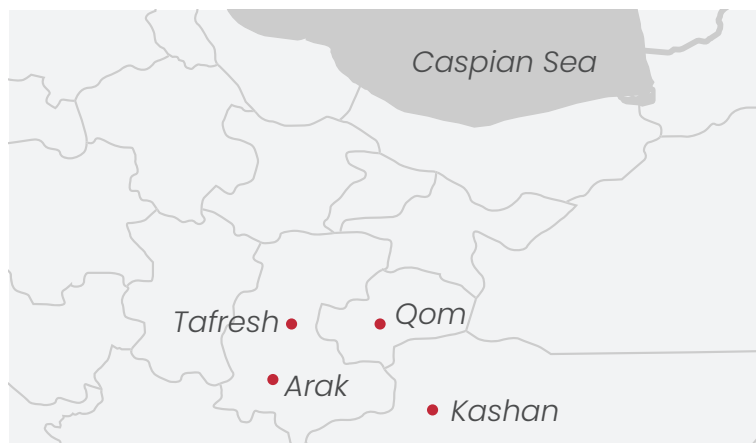


An Exquisite Small Size Geometric Persian Silk Qom Rug



Green Background Silk Persian Qom Rug

Western routes reach to Ashtian, Tafresh, Khomein and Arak (Sultanabad). These towns were centers of mass production with thousands of villages and one basic craft: weaving. With expanding the production, Qomi producers attracted western villagers to their own business, making Qom the biggest Persian silken rug production.



Qom to Tafresh, Arak, Kashan

New weavers have brought some features usually attributed to Sultanabad and Farahan areas like medallion-plain designs or medallions with Herati patterns.

These western areas have tribes with Caucasian origins such as Georgian and Armenians. They probably introduced Caucasian designs to Iranian north central areas. These geometric designs shapes another branch of Qomi designs, in addition to court designs which tend to curvilinear motifs.



Qom Rug with Geometric design



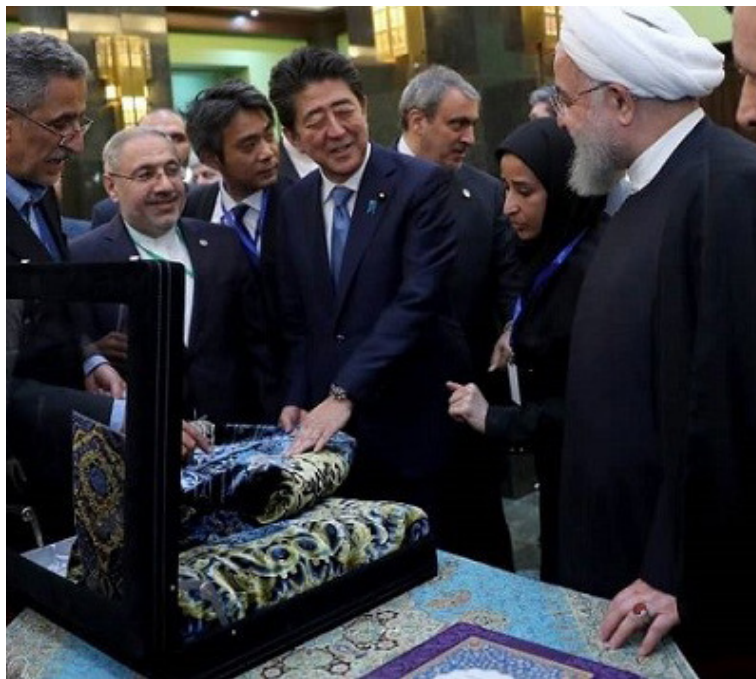
Not all of the court rugs have been woven for tombs. Lots of royal workshop's products were supposed to be given as royal gifts to nobles and notables of the kingdom or as diplomatic gifts to foreign dignitaries.



This carpet, one of a matching pair, belongs to a type known as "Polonaise," noted for its silk pile, pastel color palette, and extensive use of gold- and silver-metal-wrapped thread. The designation "Polonaise" reflects the (incorrect) nineteenth-century belief that carpets of this type were from Poland, a notion derived from the presence of similar carpets bearing European coats of arms. In fact, these carpets were made in Iran and shipped abroad in large numbers. Many were also brought to Europe by Persian embassies as gifts from the shahs, and some were commissioned in Iran by visiting Europeans. Though Polonaise carpets are relatively common, the design of overlapping cartouches seen here is rare



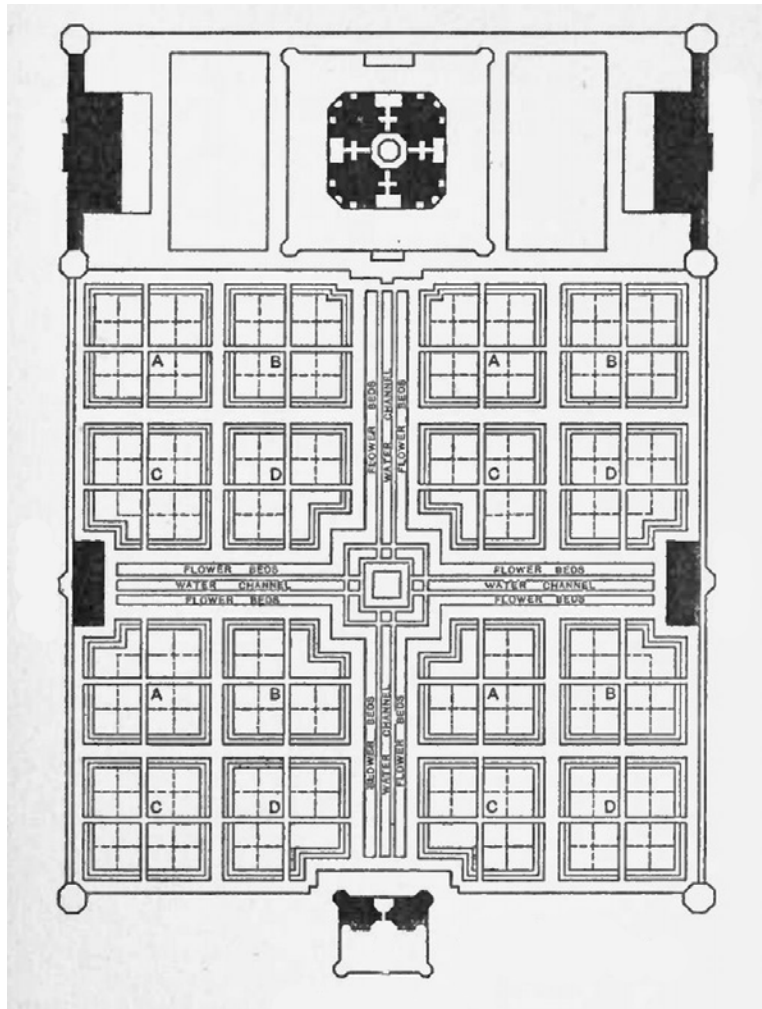
In this type of royal products, too, Qom continues the tradition. In recent years a square-shaped Qom rug made a reputation being gifted to the Japanese prime minister by the Iranian president. It is a 205 × 205 cm silken rug with more than 4 million knots woven during three years by two Qomi master weavers.



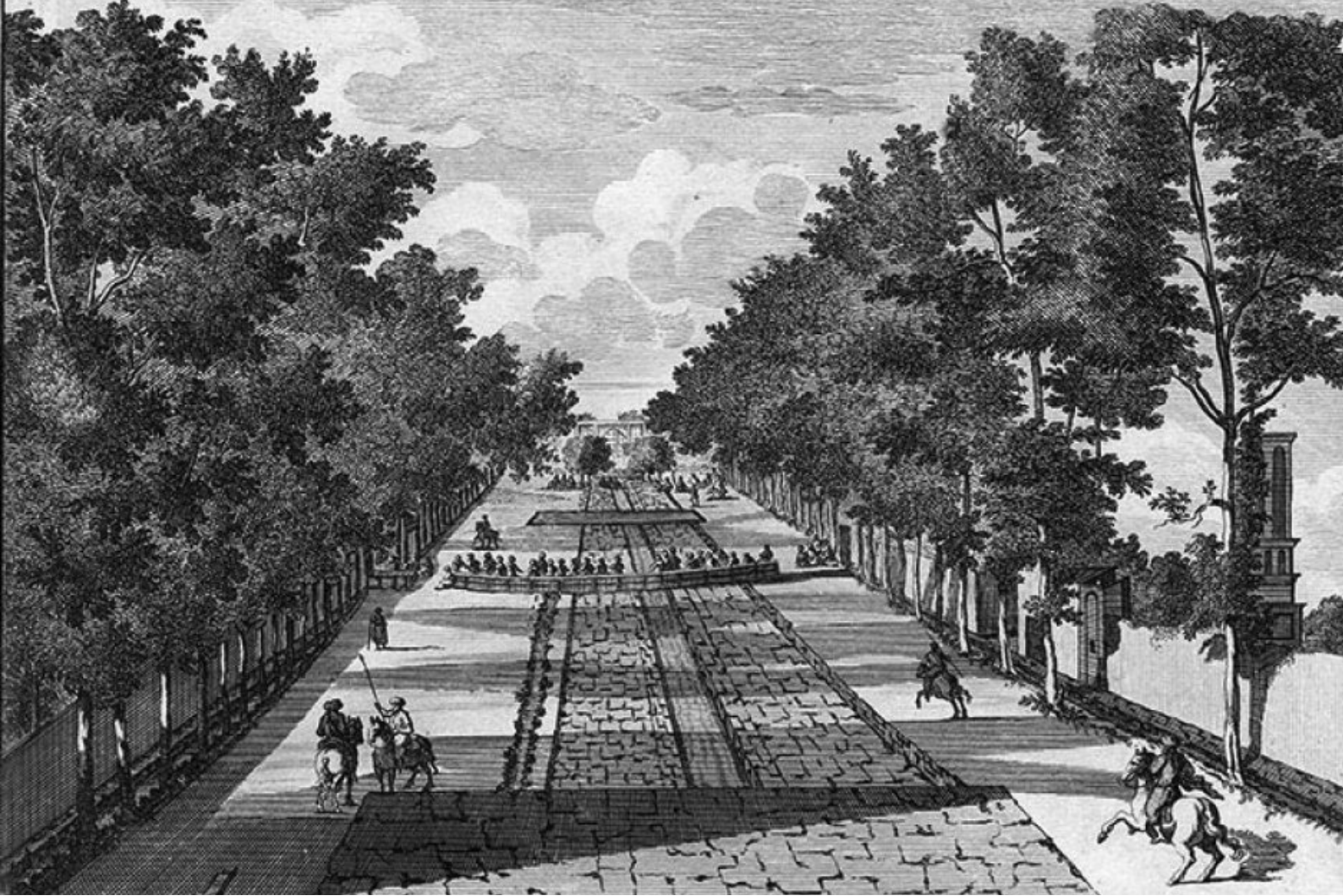
Rouhani's Gift for Abe



There are still amongst antique Qoms a type of rare Safavid Char-Baghs or Chahar Bahar. Quartered garden or Chahar Bagh is the basic form for Persian gardens which is based on their well-ordered irrigation system. A vital craft for cities surrounded by deserts to make protector gardens.



Chahar Bagh (4 Garden) plan in Persia



Isfahan Charbagh by Cornelis de Bruyn, 1705

Central pool watering four streams. It could be a simplified description for all central-medallion designs. But this lead to a more plan-shaped design of a garden woven on Safavid carpets with marvelous shades in mild compositions.



Qum Silk Rug by Abbas Jamshidi



Qum Silk Rug by Abbas Jamshidi

Hunting garden or Shekargah is a basic theme in Persian art used vastly in Qom designs.



Hunting Scene Vintage Qom Persian Rug



Hunting Scene Vintage Qom Persian Rug

The excellence of Safavid royal carpets made the Safavid style of the theme the predominant interpretation, which is a well stylized version of 'shekar' (both hunt and prey).



Hunting Scene Vintage Qom Persian Rug



In the following centuries such designs were imitated in the Indian Mughal Court as well as Iranian city-workshops in Kashan and Tabriz. Today Qom keeps the tradition. Hunting rugs are often noticeably better in quality and coloring than other Qoms. They actually do their best for the theme.

Prayer rugs are also popular in Qom due to the religious atmosphere of the city as well as the fact that their size is appropriate for silk artistry.



Qom Prayer (Mihrab) Rug



The essential motif of a prayer rug is Mihrab. It is a semicircular niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the qibla, that is, the direction of the Ka'ba in Mecca and hence the direction that Muslims should face when praying.



Qom Silk prayer Rug

In the other hand prayer rugs share the structure with arch designs which are appropriate for tapestries and wall hangings. Silken piled pieces are, too, supposed to be hanged on a wall rather than covering the floor.



Qom Silk prayer rug



Qom Mihrab Rug



Qom Prayer (Mihrab) Rug



Qom Prayer (Mihrab) Rug

Various types of panel rugs are found in Qom inspired by courtly Joshagans as well as Bakhtiari tribal pieces.



A Qom carpet inspired by Bakhtiari framed (Qab qabi) designs



A Qom carpet inspired by Bakhtiari framed (Qab qabi) designs

In classic Joshagans rectilinear floral motifs, framed with invisible vertical lozenges, fill the ground to make a lattice of neat geometric sprays, leaves and flowers. Bakhtiari garden panels in comparison have framed distinctive frames with unbound garden motives inside them.



A Qom carpet inspired by Bakhtiari framed (Qab qabi) designs



A Qom carpet inspired by Bakhtiari framed (Qab qabi) designs

A type of Qom's design is called Zil-ol-Sultan. It has been named after a Qajar prince who governed Isfahan for years during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was the oldest Naser-al-Din Shah' son but never an heir to the Peacock Throne, not given birth by a Qajar mother.



Mass'oud Mirza Zil-ol-Soltan

Far from a prince charming, he made reputations more about cruel hunting with gun rather than art patronage and no one knows what exactly relates him to this type of ornamented design. It is an all-over design consisting of repeats of vases with floral sprays.



Qom Rug, Zil-ol-Soltan design



Qom Rug, Zil-ol-Soltan design

Rows of Botehs make frequent repeats for overall designs. Arranging these on cream grounds is a Kashani innovation, imitated vastly in Qom.



Qom Rug with Boteh motif



Qom Rug with Boteh motif



Another frequent design in Qom is Zirkhaki which is a modern design originated in Tabriz, followed just by Qom and Kashmar in Khorasan.



Qom Rug, Zirkhaki design

In such designs relics such as jars, cups and pitchers are arranged between floral patterns as well as birds like pheasants, animals, cypresses and pool or springs.

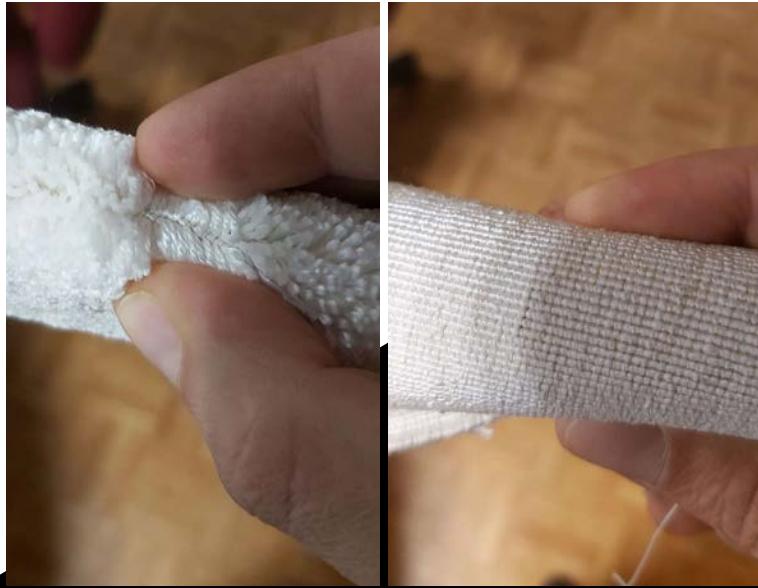
There are frames, in some Zirkhaki pieces, in which naturalistic pictures woven, following themes such as historical buildings. Zirkhakis have charm of wealth and breeziness of gardens both reminds the city of Qom.

Today Qom is a big city with more than a million populations. It is the biggest silken rug production in the world. 90 percent of its products are exported, with approximately 20 million dollars annual income.

Qoms are made with a pile either of wool, of wool with some motifs in silk, or entirely of silk. Kork (mohair) is preferred in Qoms to match the silk. The best kork of the world belong to Kerman. Fine sheep wool used in Qom come exclusively from Sabzevar in Khorassan.

Typical knot density in Qom is about 325 asymmetric (Persian) knots per square inch. There is no design Qomi weavers can't weave with their fine stitches and they love to emphasize this by selecting various pieces. They feel free to use good designs from other rug centers from Kerman and Khorasan to Caucasus and Azerbaijan. This approach doesn't lead necessarily to perfect examples, but sometimes it does.





A little known fact about Qum rugs is that the knots per square inch (KPSI) can be anywhere between 200 and 500 (and even more) which is an absolutely unprecedented amount of detail for a handmade rug



Both floral and geometric styles exist in Qom. When your weave is neat you're able to weave any design, whatever its origin or style. Qom designers select best of styles and make a neat woven example of it but they render them with their own taste of coloring, which tends to bright shades and mild tones on palette. Many light ground shades are used including cream and light red and unique shades such as light green, rose, gold and light blue which are rarely found elsewhere.









Qom rugs have a wide range not only in designs and colors, but also in shapes and sizes. Except Kallegi (wide runners) and runners, all standard rug and carpet sizes are common. Unusual shapes (such as oval, square or circle) are likely to be found in Qom rather than any other Persian rug center.

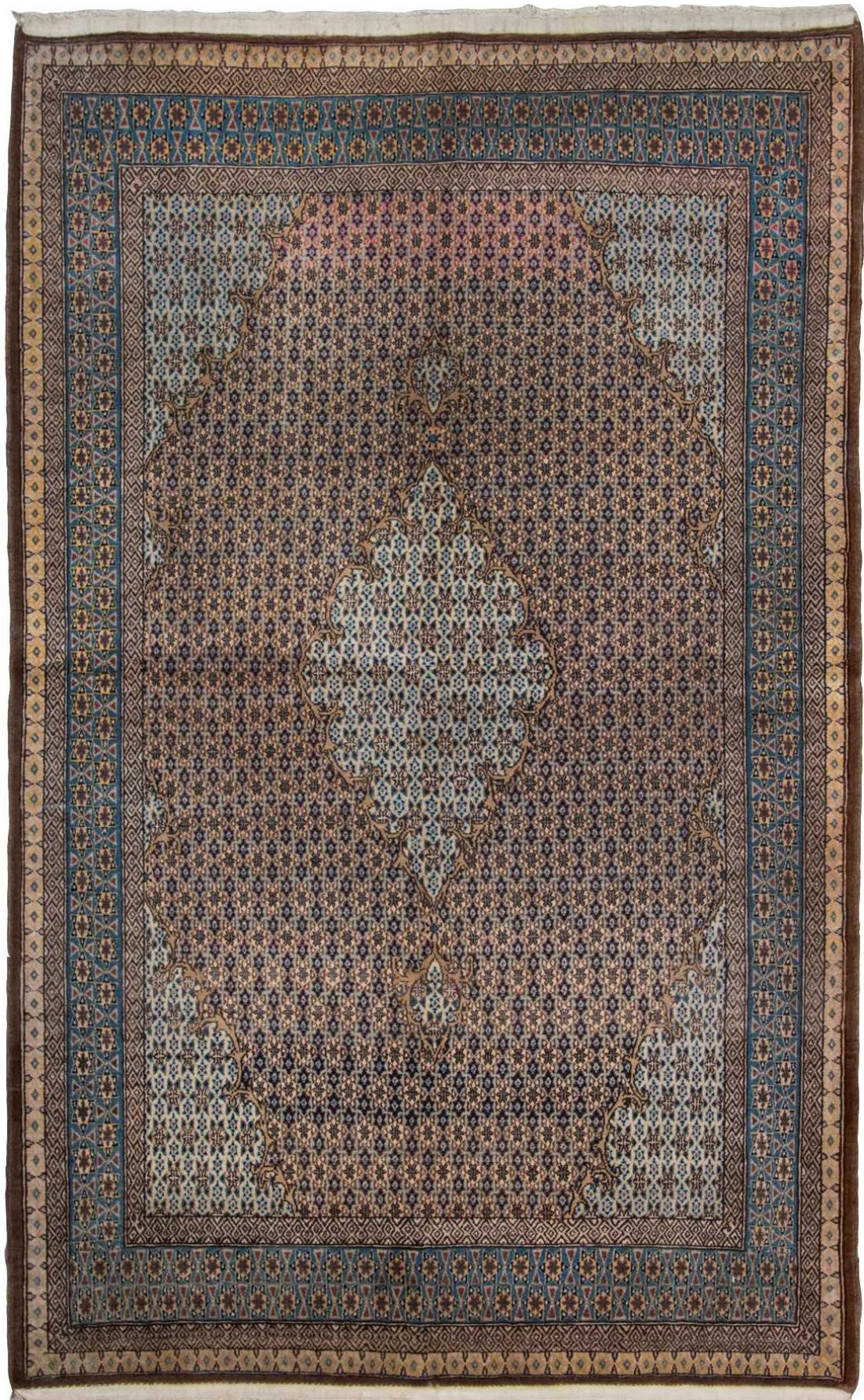




Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



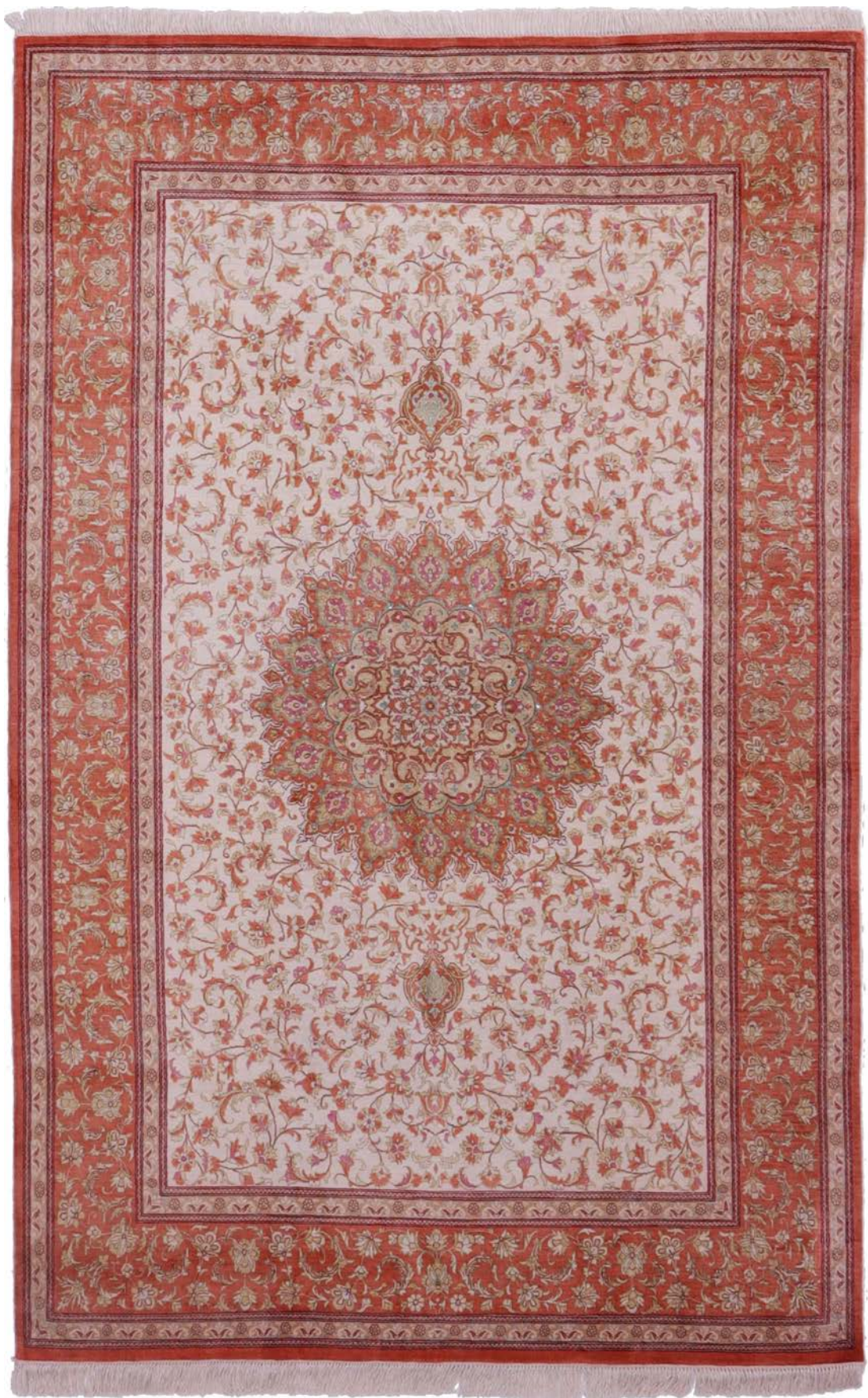
Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



Qom Rug



KR | KHAZAI
RUGS

A Family Tradition Since 1860's

www.khazairugs.com