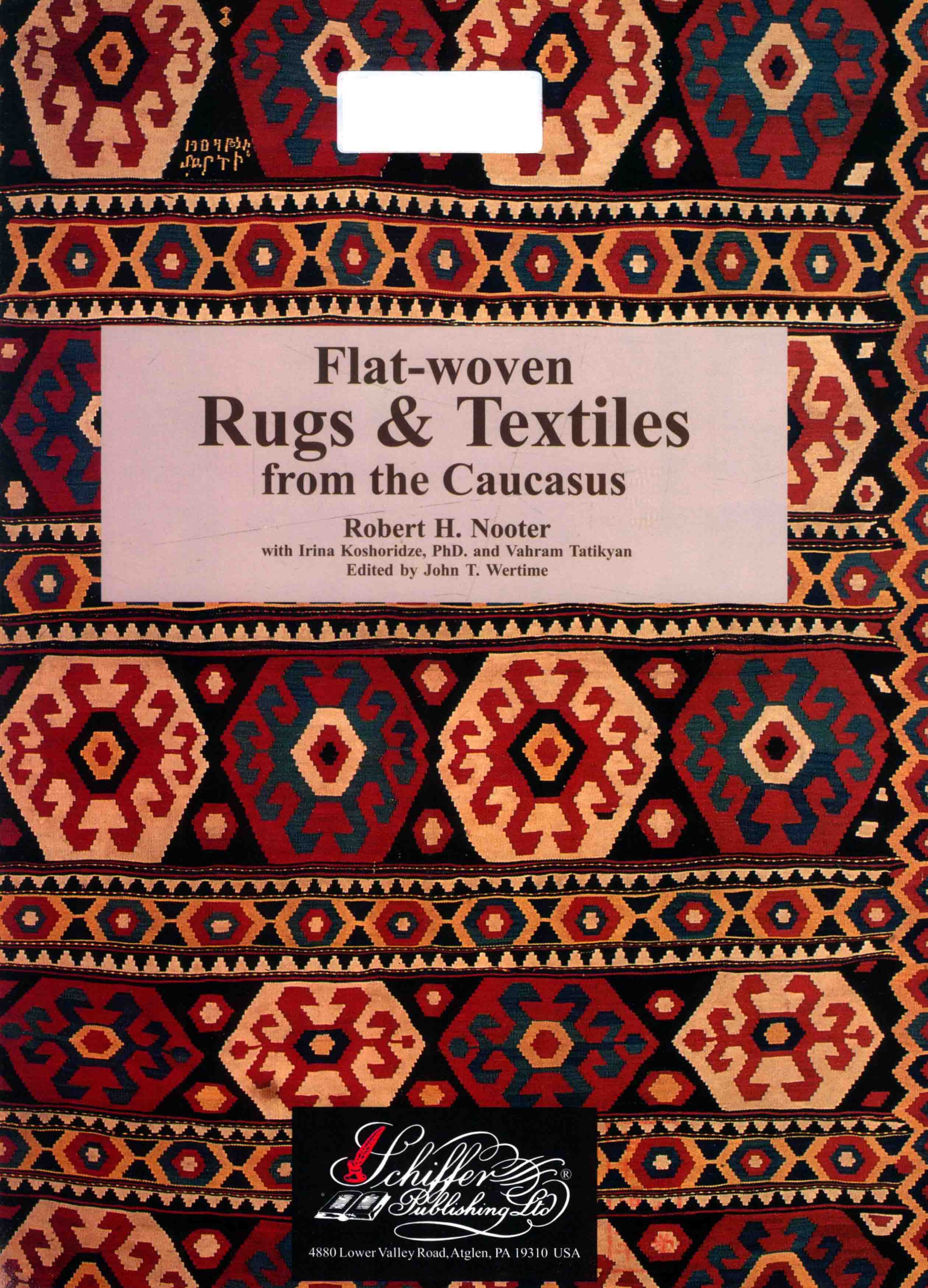
US $59.95
9 780764 319617 55995
ISBN: 0-7643-1961-2



Flat-woven Rugs & Textiles from the Caucasus

Robert H. Nooter

with Irina Koshoridze, PhD. and Vahram Tatikyan

Edited by John T. Wertime

Schiffer® Publishing Ltd

4880 Lower Valley Road, Atglen, PA 19310 USA

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my dear wife, Nancy,
who offered unending encouragement and support for this endeavor.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Nooter, Robert H.
Flat-woven rugs & textiles from the caucasus / by Robert H. Nooter, Irina Koshoridze, Vahram Tatikyan.
p. cm.
ISBN 0-7643-1961-2
1. Rugs, Caucasian. 2. Kilims—Caucasus. 3. Weaving—Caucasus. I. Title: Flat-woven rugs and textiles. II. Koshoridze, Irina. III. Tatikyan, Vahram. IV. Title.
NK2809.C3 N66 2004
746.7'2'09475—dc22

2003018727

Designed by John P. Cheek
Cover design by Bruce Waters
Dutch 801 Rm BT

ISBN: 0-7643-1961-2
Printed in China
1 2 3 4

Published by Schiffer Publishing Ltd.
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Atglen, PA 19310
Phone: (610) 593-1777; Fax: (610) 593-2002
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Acknowledgments

This publication would not have been possible without the assistance, support and encouragement of many people. High on the list is Asya Shiralieva, Scientific Worker at the Azerbaijan Carpet Museum, who accompanied me on all of the field trips in Azerbaijan. Her extensive knowledge of the textiles, culture, history and ethnic background of the people of Azerbaijan is based not only on her twenty-five years of experience at the Museum, but also on extensive field travels to the villages in all parts of the country. She freely shared her knowledge and experience with me over a period of five years.

Also important was Vahram Tatikyan, an Armenian scholar who visited most of the villages of the Caucasus over a thirty-year period and photographed the flat-woven textiles that he found there. Vahram was also most generous in sharing his knowledge and his photographic archives with me. He, his charming wife Marie and I spent many interesting evenings in their Yerevan apartment, often until midnight, exchanging views and information on the origins of the textiles and the history and culture of the region.

Zurab Potschishvili and Asmat Saghiridze were valuable guides and pleasant traveling companions on our field trips to visit Borchaliu and the Akmet region in Georgia, as were Tamara and Eduard Babyan for one of my Armenian trips. Irina Koshiridze, Deputy Director of the Georgian State Art Museum, was a valuable source of information regarding the ethnic and cultural history of Georgia, and Tatyana Grigoliya of the Museum's staff was always helpful and supportive of my quest for origins and identities. Elena Tsareva of the Russian Ethnographic Museum added another dimension to the search for origins through her exploration for comparable examples in the Museum's historic collection, as well as offering personal encouragement and inspiration.

The Textile Museum, in Washington, D.C., helped to stimulate my interest in learning more about origins by arranging for me to make a series of presentations of the expanding collection at the Museum's "rug mornings" that are held every Saturday. John T. Wertime and Richard E. Wright were helpful in providing the example of their earlier publication and by making this work more professional and accurate than it otherwise would have been, and John was helpful in sharing his expertise of textile structures, an area of weakness for this author. He was also the source of two of the most beautiful pieces in the collection.

The dealer community in the Caucasus was without exception willing to share information, spending many hours viewing the photographs of the collection and giving their opinions regarding origins. Ultimately, those who were the most helpful were the ones who collected textiles in the villages themselves, or who actually lived in the areas of their expertise. Shamil Shiraliyev at the rug shop "Gizilgul" in Baku; Tatul and Manvel in Yerevan; Surik in Sham Shaddin, El Dar Idrisov (Figure 1), who has a shop in Baku but is of Borchaliu origin; Nazim (Figure 2) with a shop in Kazakh town; Vigen Navasardian and his father in Yerevan, who helped me in the early years and with whom we learned together; and Samuel, Armen and Vrezh Postyan (Figure 3), from an Armenian family that has been in the rug business for four generations, all provided valuable information. I obtained many fine pieces from Stepan Vasilyan and his partner Ovek Srapionyan, who have a shop in Yerevan, from Vidadi Muradov in Baku, who, in addition to offering fine antique textile pieces, produces excellent hand-woven contemporary rugs and carpets in old designs and natural dyes, and from the carpet dealer Eldar Mamed-Zade in Tbilisi. Erol Kazanci, owner of the Sirvan Gallery in Istanbul, was another important source of some of the finest pieces in the collection.

Fig. 1. Baku carpet dealer El Dar Idrisov.

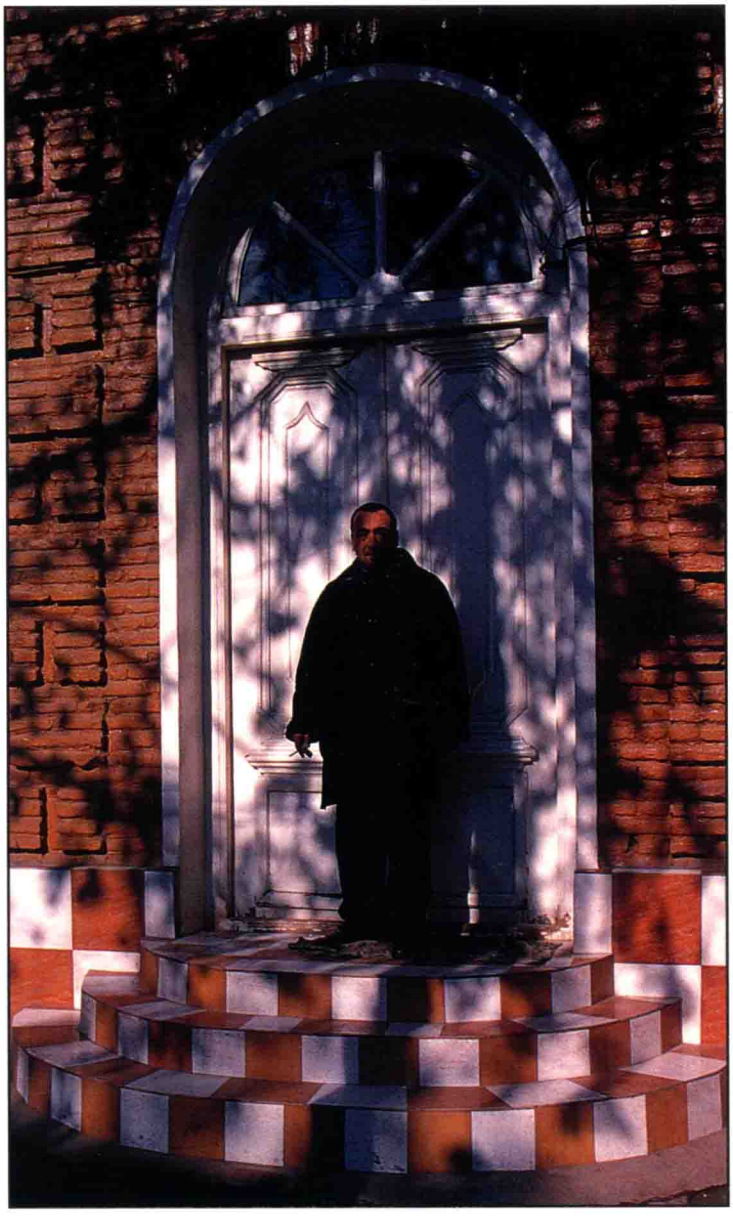


Fig. 2. Carpet dealer Nazim in front of his carpet shop in the town of Kazakh.

Fig. 3. Carpet dealer Vrezh Postyan in front of his son Armen's carpet shop in Yerevan.

My World Bank traveling companions on trips to the Caucasus were most generous in helping to transport heavy parcels, especially Anders Bonde, Antti Talvitie, and Jesus Renzoli. Gevorg Sarksyan in Armenia and Farid Mamedov in Azerbaijan were also always helpful in arranging transportation and making arrangements for the field trips. And I am grateful to my dear wife Nancy for tolerating frequent absences from home so that I could traipse around the Caucasus, and who, in fact, provided continual encouragement.

Last and most important were the many village people who were willing to share their cultural heritage with a stranger. Their invariable courtesy and generosity in taking us into their homes and sharing their food and their knowledge with an inquisitive foreigner substantiated the Caucasian reputation for hospitality in the extreme. I hope that this book will help to preserve that heritage for all time by creating a record of the achievements of a culture now mostly gone but hopefully never to be forgotten.

Preface

A more substantial body of knowledge is now available in the Western literature regarding the sources and origins of Caucasian flat-woven textiles compared to that of twenty years ago. The work of Richard E. Wright and John T. Wertime, drawing on early Russian texts, was presented in the publication *Caucasian Carpets and Covers*, 1995, in connection with an exhibition of Caucasian flat-weaves at the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. This work includes photographs of Caucasian textiles from Russian texts published at the end of the nineteenth century, which were used as "anchor pieces" to compare with the exhibited examples.

A more recent publication entitled *Azerbaijan Carpet* by Roya Tagiyeva, 1999, draws heavily on examples from the extensive collection of the Azerbaijan Carpet Museum (officially called the Latif Kerimov State Museum of Azerbaijani Carpets and Handicrafts) in Baku. This collection, the largest of its kind and extensively documented as to collection source, was assembled under the guidance of Latif Kerimov, now deceased. Its text is an important additional source of information to the previously available texts about the places where these intriguing textiles originated.

Another source of information regarding the origin of Caucasian flat-weaves, with an English text, is the publication *Rugs and Carpets from the Caucasus,* Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad, 1984. Co-authored by Latif Kerimov, Nonna Stepanian, Tatyana Grigoliya, and David Tritsishvili, it presents well-documented examples of Caucasian pile carpets and flat-weaves from Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, including the Georgian Tusheti flatwoven "pardaghis" (kilims) that have only rarely been published in the West.

There are still significant gaps, however, in identifying the origins of Caucasian flat-woven textiles that were produced in the period during which they were still being woven for home use, usually with natural dyes. Most of the examples that fit this description are from eighty to one hundred and fifty years old. Caucasian flat-weaves have been available in the West in relatively small numbers for a long time. However, they appeared in large quantities when the Soviet Union broke up into fifteen separate countries in 1990 and 1991. Turkish traders soon entered the new countries and acquired textiles that had only been available in small quantities during the Soviet period. A large number of pieces promptly found their way to Western markets, but with very little information concerning their place of origin or ethnic identity.

In 1991, numerous examples of flat-weaves from the Caucasus appeared in the local carpet shops in Washington, D.C. Struck by the beauty of the pieces, I began to acquire some of the sumakh bags and other flat-woven articles without really knowing what they were. But their elegance and masterful workmanship were irresistible. In 1994, I began to travel to Armenia in connection with my work at the World Bank, and a much fuller perception of the weaving culture of the Caucasus was revealed.

In the early 1990s, Armenia and Azerbaijan were in the throes of a debilitating war over the region of Nagorno-Karabagh (Mountain Karabagh). The impact on the Armenian economy and way of life was profound, with electricity available only a few hours each day in Yerevan, shortages of food, and an insufficiency of all the basic necessities of life. But the spirit of the people was joyful and friendly, and we were welcomed to their festive ceremonies and dances with kindness and acceptance. In the outdoor market in Yerevan called the *vernissage* (Figure 4), there were carpets, kilims and bags of all kinds and descriptions, impossible to resist even when in ragged and dirty condition. I recall inspecting a kilim (Plate 57) at the *vernissage* during a snow storm, and only with great difficulty was it possible to see the textile as new falling snow replaced the old as fast as it was removed.

Fig. 4. Yerevan open air market called the *vernissage*.

When Georgia and Azerbaijan were added to my work schedule, the die was cast. The collection expanded during each visit, along with pieces acquired in the United States, Paris, and Istanbul. With the expansion of the collection grew a curiosity to learn more about the origin of the pieces. More than thirty trips to Armenia and fifteen or more to each of the other two countries have provided an opportunity not only to collect a wide range of flat-woven textiles from the area, but to learn from a variety of sources as to where they were produced.

I soon learned that there are varying and often contradictory opinions about where the pieces were woven, and by whom. Those in Azerbaijan tend to attribute most of the weavings to the Azeris. The Armenians tend to think that most are woven by Armenian weavers. The Kurds and the Tats, both prolific and expert weavers, have no official voice to make their case, and therefore frequently their weavings are not identified. And as these peoples lived together in an intermixed way and without clear boundaries one hundred years ago, sorting out who wove what is a difficult undertaking, even for the most neutral investigator. Thus I began the search for more precise and complete information to expand the available knowledge as far as possible before sources and origins become even more difficult to determine.

The problems encountered in finding solid answers were many, as described in other sections of this publication, but the more the obstacles, the greater the compulsion to press ahead. It also seemed likely that all field knowledge would soon be gone, and any additional information that was to be accumulated would have to be acquired quickly. Thus the basis for this publication was born and the process was set in motion. I hope that the result will add something of significance to our knowledge of these important and beautiful expressions of the human condition.

There will be those who take exception to some of the conclusions reached in this publication. Indeed, it would be surprising if there were not some compelling evidence regarding origins that was not available to me. I hope that those who have such evidence will come forward so that the public record will become more complete and valuable information will be preserved for future generations.

While determining origins has been a compelling passion for me during the past several years, appreciation for the beauty of the flat-woven textiles of the Caucasus preceded the interest in origins. These outstanding expressions of traditional Caucasian life and culture drew me to the subject as a moth to the flame, without which the interest in origins would never have seemed so compelling. When Elena Tsareva of the Russian Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg reviewed the first draft of the text for this publication, she wrote, "Can you add a little bit of 'romantic veil' in your text so that people can feel how interesting is this topic, and how much you love those wonderful woven beauties?" I do not know if I can add the "romantic veil" that Elena suggested, but I hope that the passion and wonder that is evoked in those of us who delve into the mysteries of Caucasian flat-woven textiles will come through to the reader.

A rough rule of thumb is that in the Caucasus, pile carpets were woven for sale, but the flat-woven textiles were woven for use by the weavers' families. Like all generalizations, there are many exceptions to this rule, but to a large extent it is correct. Perhaps those of us who concentrate on the flat-weaves do so because we believe that the essence of the culture that we are observing is reflected in this expression of a life and time long gone. Elena is correct- - there is romance there, and I hope that we can reveal it in the text that follows.

Contents

Chapter I

Background

Geography

The term "Caucasus" is used in this book to refer to an area that is more correctly called the "Southern Caucasus" or "Transcaucasia". This includes the countries of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia that lie along the range of mountains known as the Lesser Caucasus. Modern-day Azerbaijan, which came into existence in 1828 when Russia and Iran divided the larger Azarbayjan (Persian spelling) region, with its capital in Tabriz, into two parts, with the northern part called Azerbaijan (Russian spelling) coming under Russian control. The Greater Caucasian mountain range, located to the north of Transcaucasia mainly in what is now southern Russia, extends into the northern part of Georgia, an area that encompasses many ethnic groups including the Chechnyans, Ingushetians, Ossetians, and others that are not the subject of this text (see Map I).

Ethnic Origins in Transcaucasia

An early impression was that it would be impossible to identify the ethnic origins of the weavers of the textiles from this area. Furthermore, it seemed likely that pieces woven in the same area would be similar in design even if the weavers were from different ethnic groups. It soon became apparent, however, that knowledge of ethnic origins could provide important information about the source and origin of the weavings. While designs are borrowed by other groups and in locations different from their place of origin, in some cases the weaving structure reveals information about the ethnic origin of the weaver, which in turn sheds light on the origin of the textile. Therefore, this section will describe the ethnic setting as it affects the examples in the collection.

The Caucasus has been a crossroads for multiple ethnic groups moving from Asia to Anatolia and back again, some of whom stayed to make the Caucasus their home. It is also criss-crossed by the old trade routes connecting Europe and Asia, often referred to as the Silk Road. The publication *Azerbaijan: Where East Meets West* refers to the area as divided into four main language groups:

-the indigenous Caucasian peoples, with thirty-nine different languages;

-the Turkic peoples, who originated in Central Asia, Mongolia and Siberia, with languages belonging to the Altaic-Turkic language group;

-the peoples who speak Indo-Iranian languages (a subgroup of the Indo-European language family) and who trace their roots to Persia;

-more recent immigrants, consisting of Russians, Germans, Ukrainians, Poles, and other European nationalities.

Early Inhabitants of the Caucasus

The earliest surviving ethnic groups in the Trans-Caucasian countries are the Armenians, the Georgians, and the Lesghis, who live on both sides of the border between Azerbaijan and Dagestan. If these peoples have an earlier place of origin, no one knows with any certainty where it was. All of these "original" inhabitants shared a sedentary lifestyle based on agriculture, augmented by the raising of livestock. At earlier times in their history, both Armenia and Georgia commanded large and important empires, but were at various times overrun by Scythians, Romans, Persians, various Turkic peoples, and Russians. Armenia adopted Christianity in 301 and Georgia in 330, and both cultures have survived their turbulent past to remain vital and integral cultural entities.

Another important ethnic group consisted of the early inhabitants of the area that is now Azerbaijan, which most probably originated in ancient Persia. They became the basis for the Albanian empire (no relationship to Albania in the Balkans) established in the fourth century B.C. with its capital in Gabala, which is located between Shemakha and Sheki in the northern part of Azerbaijan (Tagiyev, 1999, 29-33). The Albanians adopted Christianity as the state religion in the fourth century A.D., but were later overrun by Arabs and Turkic invaders, adopted Islam, and lost their separate ethnic identity.

Transcaucasia also includes small numbers of Tsakhurs, Laks, Inghiloys, Khinaligs, Rutuls, Kryses, Udis, and Budukhs, all indigenous to the Caucasus, and some Avars, who came to the mountainous areas north of Sheki close to the Georgian border in the first century (Wegge, 1996). Kurds were early inhabitants, arriving in about the ninth century from Iranian Kurdistan, with a large concentration of them settling in the borderlands between Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh. Of these peoples, only the Kurds and the Avars have been of sufficient numbers to make their mark on the weaving culture of the area.

Historical Setting

Some background regarding the movements of armies and peoples and the establishment of empires is necessary to understand the ethnic influences that affected the weaving culture. This brief history can in no way do justice to

the complex events that shaped the area, and serious students will want to consult the more expansive studies that are available (see especially Tagiyeva, 1999). For the purposes of this abbreviated history, the starting point will be the seventh century, when Arabs from the Middle East conquered the area that is now called Transcaucasia. They introduced Islam, which was quickly adopted by the population in the area that now comprises Azerbaijan and the Moghan steppes. In the tenth century, the Oghuz and Seljuk Turkic-speaking peoples from the east of the Caucasus moved into Anatolia. By the eleventh century, the Seljuks were firmly established in the eastern and central parts of Anatolia, which they shared with the remnants of the Byzantine Empire. These nomadic herdsmen also overran most of Transcaucasia during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, except for parts of the Armenian and Georgian entities, and intermixed with the remnants of the Albanian empire.

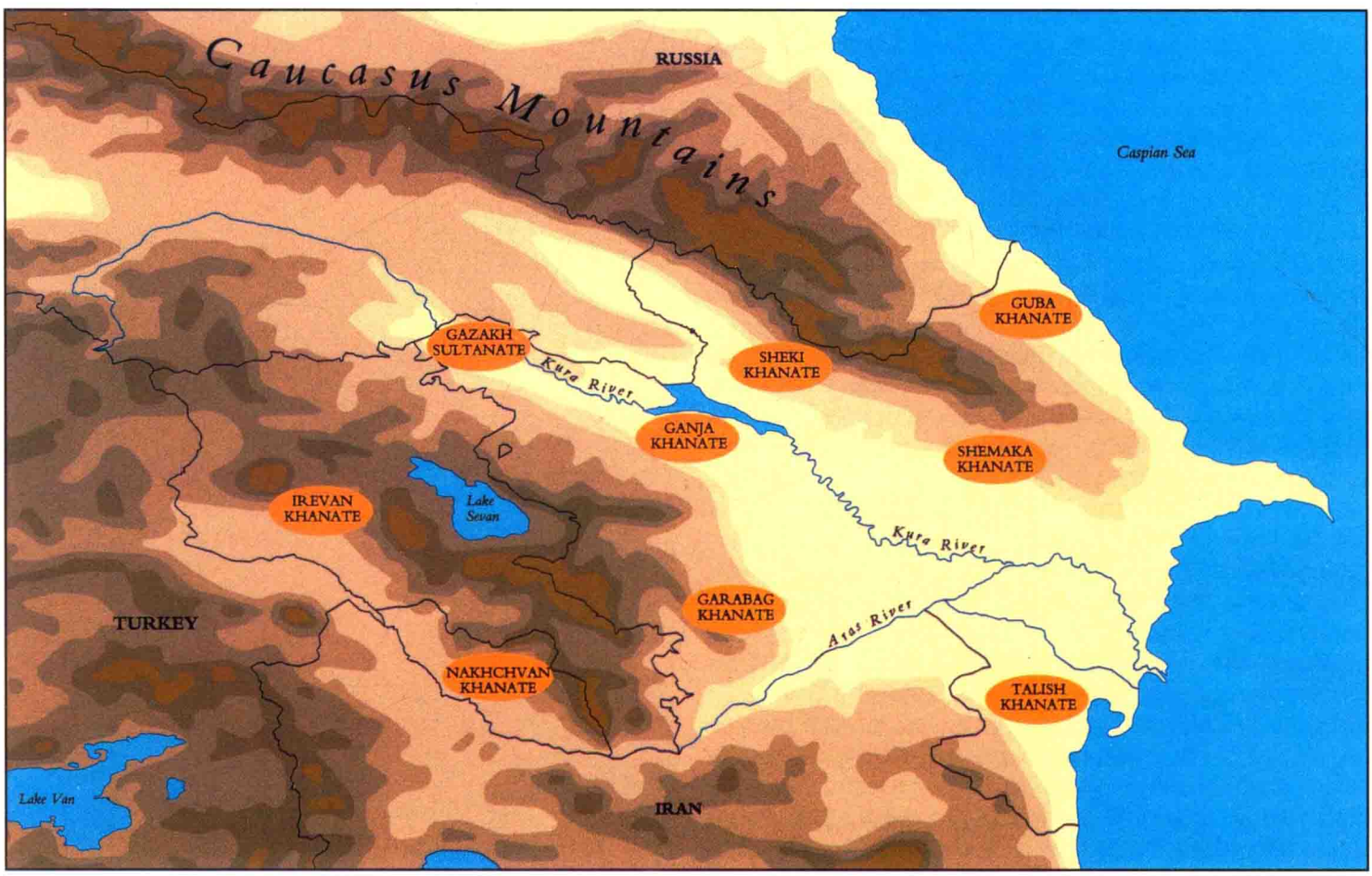
In the thirteenth century, Mongols arrived in Transcaucasia, overwhelming the local Georgian, Armenian and Turkic states. The Mongols were quickly absorbed into the local populations, however, and by the end of the fourteenth century, Azeris emerged as a discrete Turkic-speaking people with a base in Ardabil located in northwest Iran under the rule of the Savafid dynasty.

At the end of the fourteenth century the Ottoman Turks, who had supplanted the Seljuks in Anatolia, pushed some of their Turkic rivals from Anatolia into Transcaucasia, while Timur and the Mongolians put pressure on the Caucasus from the north and east. The conflict had a religious basis, as the Ottomans were Sunnis while the Azeris were Shiites. Thus the religious alignment was a Sunni west and north confronting a Shiite south and east.

In the sixteenth century, the Ottomans gained temporary ascendency in Transcaucasia until the Safavids under Shah Abbas I (1588-1629) mounted an effective resistance that regained most of the area from Ottoman rule. Many tribes, both Shiite and Sunni, left the oppressive Otttoman Empire to take refuge with the Safavids in Iran (Tapper, 1966, 65). In the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries, some of the Turkish groups from Iran, who were supporters of Shah Abbas I but who may or may not have been a formal part of the Shahsavan Confederation, moved into southeastern Georgia to provide a buffer from the invading Anatolian Turks. They were renowned as fierce warriors, and over time became loyal Georgian subjects (see Irina Koshoridze's essay at the end of this chapter). They still live in the area known as Borchaliu, and have retained their Turkic ethnic identity and language.

After the reimposition of Safavid control in eastern Transcaucasia, the area came under the loose administrative rule of the central government located in Tabriz. Local Khanates were established in the Caucasus, which operated as vassal states under the Safavids (see Map I). Khanates existed in Karabagh, Shirvan, Kuba, Baku, Ganja, Shekki, Talish, Erivan, and Nakhichevan. The Khans had much autonomous control of their areas. While the power of the local Khans was supplanted over time, the identities of most of these areas have been retained up to the present.

Sometime during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the tribal groups in the eastern Caucasus evolved into a confederation called the Shahsavan ("Friends of the Shah"), made up largely of Turkic tribal groups of Shiite persuasion that supported the Safavids. The Shahsavan Confederation included some Kurdish and Iranian tribal



Map 1. Areas in the Caucasus Ruled by Khans in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century. (extracted from Tagiyeva, 1999, 36, Map V)

groups, and some of the Shahsavan clans consider themselves of Arab descent. Over time the Turkic language prevailed throughout the Confederation. The Shahsavan tribal groups shared a nomadic lifestyle, and over time many of them came to identify with the new designation of Shahsavan rather than with their original ethnic identities.

In the eighteenth century, when the Russians began a serious attempt to gain control of the Caucasus, Russia, Turkey and Iran fought a series of wars seeking domination of the area. In treaties between Russia and Iran in 1813 and 1828, the border between Russia and Iran was established along the Aras River, and in 1829 the Caucasus coast of the Black Sea passed to Russia. Thus by 1830, Transcaucasia was under Russian control, and the Khans were eliminated as politically independent entities. The nomadic Moghan Shahsavan, the northernmost of the four main Shahsavan groups, spent their summers in the Savalan mountains in Iran and wintered in the Moghan Steppe, which extends into what became Russian territory. Initially they were allowed to move their flocks in their traditional way. However, in 1884 the border was closed in an effort by the Russians to encourage the Shahsavan to give up their nomadic lifestyle and become settled agriculturalists.

Further adding to the mixing of peoples was the movement of Armenians caused by the various Turkish pogroms in 1915 and 1922. During these periods, large numbers of Armenians moved from various parts of Turkey, but particularly from the northeast around Kars and Lake Van (which is still called "Western Armenia" by the Armenians). The fleeing Armenians settled throughout the Transcaucasus, including the area around Yerevan, Karabagh, the areas to the west of Ganja and Shemakha, and to the northwest of Baku. More recently, the fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabagh has resulted in massive movements of people, with an estimated 800,000 Azeris moving out of Armenian-controlled areas to Azerbaijan and 500,000 Armenians moving out of Azerbaijan to Armenia.

The Turkic Peoples of the Caucasus

As described above, Turkic-speaking peoples came to the Caucasus in a series of incursions starting in the tenth century. It would be a mistake to assume, however, that all of the Turkic-speaking peoples of the area share the same customs and lifestyles. The earliest waves were absorbed into the local population and adopted a sedentary way of life. Some of the later tribal groups such as the Padar have maintained a tribal and clan structure and a nomadic lifestyle even today, with heavy reliance on livestock (particularly sheep and goats). The seasonal movements of the herds between the high summer pastures in the mountains and the lower winter pastures was a principal characteristic of this lifestyle, and influenced the type of weaving that was adopted. The Padars settled principally in the eastern part of Azerbaijan in the Shirvan Khanate region. An early Padar village named Pashaly, which was situated west of Baku but no longer exists, gave its name to one of the important kilim patterns (see Plates 1 to 5). At one time there were as many as six villages named Padar in Azerbaijan, but only two remain at present.

The clans of the Shahsavan are divided geographically into four main groups, three of which are located in Iran. Only the Moghan Shahsavan, consisting of more than forty clans or tribes, traditionally inhabited Azerbaijan territory. The towns of Salyan and Yardanli were their most important market towns and trading centers. However, after the border with Iran was closed in 1884, the northern-most elements of the Shahsavan settled in various parts of the Transcaucasus, including the Moghan Steppe, Karabagh, the district of Jebrail south of Karabagh, Nakhichevan, Ganja, and the Kurdamir district. One of the most important of the clans in Azerbaijan is the Afshar, according to Asya Shiralieva. There are numerous villages named Moghan, Moghanlu or Mughanli in Azerbaijan and at least one in Georgia, and several named Shahsavan, reflecting the influence that the Shahsavan had throughout the Caucasus.

The differences in lifestyle also included differences in dialects and in community relations. The nomadic peoples such as the Padar lived either in separate villages or in separate enclaves within established Azeri villages. This prevailed at least until the Soviet period, when there was a determined effort by the State to downplay ethnic differences. Thus most Soviet literature on weaving traditions does not identify the ethnicity of the weavers. At present, the Turkic-speaking people in Transcaucasia are uniformly called Azeris, and it is sometimes difficult to establish eth-

Fig. 5. 80-year old Tat woman in the village of Gilazy, Azerbaijan.

nic identities. On my first visit to a Tat village in the Ghyzy District, I asked our 80-year-old informant (Figure 5) her ethnic identity. She replied, "I am Azerbaijani!". When I asked what language she spoke, she said "Tat", and we subsequently found that all of her neighbors spoke Tat as well.

The Tats and Talish

The Tats, also called Dagli in Azerbaijan, speak a Persian dialect related to Farsi, an Indo-European language, and are thought to have originated in Persia. They are situated on the Apsheron Peninsula and in a cluster of villages along the coast of the Caspian Sea northwest of Baku. They live in settled villages, and are prolific and accomplished weavers.

The Talish, located in the southeastern part of Azerbaijan, are another Iranian-related people who also speak an Indo-European language. The region in which they live is inhabited by both Talish and Azeris.

The Armenians

As mentioned above, the Armenians are considered to be among the earliest inhabitants of Transcaucasia. At various times in their turbulent past, they ruled over large portions of Transcaucasia and eastern Turkey. During their long history, they have been overrun by all manner of invaders, but have managed to preserve their distinctive culture and their version of Orthodox Christianity. Undoubtedly, the Armenians were weaving for many centuries before the arrival of the Turkic peoples. Their weaving can sometimes be identified by names written in Armenian script or dates woven in Roman numerals, although it is always possible that the piece could have been woven by one person with an inscription inserted by another.

The Georgians

The Georgians were also indigenous to the area, and had a large and dynamic empire at various times in their history. They have undergone frequent invasions and occupations. Nevertheless, they have survived as a separate people, with traditions and a culture that has absorbed some of the invaders' proclivities but remained distinctly Georgian. They share with the Armenians a common belief in Christianity, although their version of Orthodox Christianity is unique to Georgia.

Difficulties in Identification

The collection that is the subject of this work includes textiles that are, with rare exceptions, made with natural dyes, and are generally from eighty to one hundred-fifty-years old. There are many obstacles to making a firm determination of textiles woven that long ago, especially in an area where the people have been extremely mobile for both political and economic reasons. While there is some validity to the belief that pile carpets and rugs were generally made for sale and flat-woven textiles were made for use in the home, flat-weaves also moved around, for a number of reasons. During a field trip to a Shirvan village, I found two examples of textile fragments that were, to my eye, typical of pieces from Karabagh. In answer to my query, the family that owned the fragments said that they were parts of bags that were used to carry the belongings of a woman from Karabagh when she married a man from the Shirvan village that we were visiting. Two pieces that I found during a field trip to Borchaliu were said to have been purchased by the present owner's grandparents rather than woven by family members. So it is apparent that *pieces walk*, and the place where a piece is found may not be the place where it was woven.

I also learned that *patterns walk*. In the Georgian northeast, where the population is Tushetian (a Georgian ethnic group), I found a kilim with a typical Shemakha Shirvan design motif, woven in typical Tushetian colors, where the difference in dyes makes the colors distinctively different from Shirvan colors. The same was found to be the case for the Shemakha Shirvan motif called "Pashaly," where Karabagh weavers borrowed the motif but modified the original design. Thus not only do pieces move around after they are woven, but design motifs are sometimes borrowed by people in other areas and incorporated into their weaving.

Another difficulty in identification is that even when it is clearly established that a piece is made in a certain village or region, we do not know which other villages or regions also weave similar items. Only by finding provenance information on as many examples as possible can we get a perspective of the entire area from which a particular type of textile is produced.

All is not hopeless, however. The village where it is found, if known, is likely to be the place where it was woven, especially if other pieces of a similar kind are identified as from the same place and/or if the local people verify that it was woven there. Some regions are also considered to be the place of origin of a certain design motif based on the frequency of its production in that area and the age of some of the pieces from there compared to other areas that may have borrowed the design. But a recognition that pieces and patterns "walk" is important before accepting an attribution.

A further complication is that in the Caucasus, the same name may be used for several villages. Also, names were sometimes changed when the governmental unit responsible for the village was changed. Armenian village names were changed to Azeri names and vice versa when ownership of the areas changed, making the identification process more uncertain and difficult. And, as in pile carpet weavings, the names of villages or regions sometimes came to be used as names for carpets of a particular design, as in Karachop, Sham Shaddin, and others, so that it is necessary to clarify whether a source of information is referring to the design name or to the name of the village or region.

An additional problem relates to the pride of ownership of the weaving communities. As mentioned earlier, the Azeris seem to believe that most, if not all, of the important Caucasian weaving was produced by Azeris. The Armenians believe that they, on the other hand, are responsible for a large portion of the textiles that we see today. And the Kurds, who are no doubt responsible for some part of the production if we accept the Russian texts, do

not have any institutional way to state their claims. My conclusion on this matter is as follows: (i) many of the design motifs that we think of as Caucasian have their roots in Turkic weaving traditions; (ii) the Armenians and Georgians were weaving textiles before the Turkic peoples arrived, and undoubtedly continued to do so; (iii) when a design can be attributed to a particular region, it is likely that all of the peoples in that region wove similar products regardless of their ethnic background, but the structure of the woven piece may be unique to the ethnic group, thereby giving a clue as to its identity; and (iv) the weaving traditions of the Georgian-speaking peoples are distinctly different in design and dyestuffs, and are not easily confused with the weaving of the Azeris, Armenians, Tats and Kurds.

Spelling Choices and Pronuncation

Spellings for place names and tribal groups are phonetic, and appear in many different forms. This text, for example, uses "Shahsavan" instead of the equally acceptable "Shahsevan", the former more frequently used in Iran and the latter in Azerbaijan. "Borchaliu" can be spelled "Borchalo", as Irina Koshoridze does in her essay, but "Borchalu" is also acceptable. In Armenia the spelling Nakhichevan, pronounced "Na-*kich*-e-van", is used, but is spelled "Nakhchivan" in Azerbaijan and pronounced "*Nach*-e-van". We will use the Nakhichevan spelling in most cases because this is the way it appears on most western maps, with the exception of Map 1, which keeps the spelling of the Khanates that is used in the source from which it was extracted.

The use of "k" for the spelling of "Kazakh" and "Kuba" is used because that is the common usage in most western texts, probably taken from the Russian. In Azerbaijan, however, a "g" or "gh" is more generally used, as this is a closer phonetic approximation of the sound in Turkic. In fact, the Turkic language has four similar but (to the Turkic speaker) distinctive sounds for "g" and "gh" that this author can not distinguish or replicate. Turkic names that begin with a "c" are pronounced "ch", as in "Cayerli" (*Chay*-er-lee).

Methodology

One of the main objectives of this publication is to provide a more precise location identity than is usually the case for other publications on this subject where this is possible. In seeking to identify the origins of the pieces in the collection, identification was related to: (i) design, (ii) colors, and (iii) structure, in addition to the opinions of knowledgeable sources. The three together provide a much more firm basis for attribution than any one alone. The methodology used in this study was to utilize all available sources of information. This included:

a. Well-documented texts such as those referred to in the Foreword.

b. Comparisons with the well-documented examples in the Azerbaijan Carpet Museum, especially where collection history includes village attributions, and with the collection in the Russian Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg.

c. The opinions of the staff of the Azerbaijan Carpet Museum.

d. Findings from a series of field visits made in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2000, 2001, and 2002.

e. The opinions of Vahram Tatikyan, an Armenian who has studied the flatwoven textiles of the Caucasus for over thirty years, and who made some of his field photographs available for this publication.

f. Collection history. In some cases, attribution to a village or sub-region is based on having acquired a textile there with the specific knowledge that it was woven in that village. In others, the piece was acquired from a family that inherited it from an ancestor known to have woven it in a specific village.

g. The views of the dealer community in the Caucasus, in cases where the dealer opinions are confirmed by other sources and by each other.

The last- - the opinions of the dealer community- - requires some explanation, since it is a controversial methodology. My experience has been that some of the dealers who have collected materials from Caucasian villages for many years have excellent knowledge of the sources and origins of the materials that they have been collecting. Others do not- - their interest is simply in obtaining quality materials that they can pass on for a profit. It was necessary to make a judgment as to which dealer information is reliable and which is not, based on the reasons for their judgments and on the correctness of their opinions regarding other items for which the origins were already well established. I also found that the dealers were most apt to be reliable for areas where they had actually collected materials, and so not all information from a particular dealer is as good as other attributions.

I have referred to some dealers by name in cases where their opinions were most likely to be supported by their field collecting experience. Shamil Shiraliyev in Baku has spent many years collecting textiles in Azerbaijan, and is certainly one of the most knowledgeable of the dealers about that area. El Dar Idrisov in Baku, originally from Borchaliu, is knowledgeable concerning the textiles of Azerbaijan as well as Borchaliu and Kazakh. Manvel in Yerevan is from the Lori region, and has done much collecting in Lori, Tausch, and related areas. Nazim is a dealer who lives in Kazakh town and collects his pieces from the villages in that vicinity. Surik lives in the village of Norashen in the Sham Shaddin region, and has much detailed knowledge of the textiles in that area. And Tatul in Yerevan has been collecting in the field in Armenia and Karabagh for many years.

After testing each of the available means for determining origin, there is no doubt that a piece collected in the field or one with a solid family history is the most reliable method to determine origin. Most of the pieces in the collection now have identities that are quite firm and established on a reliable basis. Not all of the attributions have equal validity, however, and the origins of a few remain uncertain. The text will indicate the basis upon which the identifications were determined.

Village Names

In the search for the identity of the origins of the textiles in the collection, village names were sometimes offered that the author was not able to find on any available map (usually based on Vahram Tatikyan's field work). Furthermore, space did not permit showing all of the villages on Map 2, even in cases where their exact location was known. In each case, however, the village name is given even if the village location is not known, accompanied in the text with a larger known town or village shown on Map 2 so that the reader will know the approximate location of the village.

Significant Structural Clues

Some of the important structural characteristics that can help to identify areas and ethnic groups include the following, although there are many exceptions that make these confirming indicators rather than infallible guides:

a. Shirvan kilims are known for their thinness and fineness of yarn. Typically, Shirvan kilims have from 16 to 18 warps per inch, and are from 0.050 to 0.065 inches in thickness. Kilims from Karabagh more typically have about 12 to 14 warps per inch (although occasionally a piece from this area will parallel the Shirvan warp count, particularly in very old examples) and may be as thick as .085 inches. There are many pieces that fall between these ranges, in which case other means have to be used for identification.

b. Most Caucasian kilims and palases were made of wool for both warps and wefts, and the use of cotton warps is generally a clue that the piece was woven in Iran. Cotton was used in other ways in many areas, and therefore its use can sometimes provide a clue as to origin. Cotton warps were used for the foundation weave in khorjins in the Lori region and in mafrashes decorated with weft-float brocading in Zangadzor around Meghri and the southern part of Karabagh, as well as in zili covers in Karabagh around Shusha and the Jevat region. Cotton, or occasionally a combination of cotton and wool, was used to create a striking white color in the designs of flat-woven textiles in Shirvan, Ghyzy, Lori and Borchaliu, sometimes in the "Daraklu" kilim designs in Karabagh and Zangadzor and in the mafrashes woven in Kazakh, Borchaliu, Lori, Tausch, Zangadzor and Karabagh. Cotton was used for weft twining in all of the weaving areas.

c. Most kilims and zili pieces in Trancaucasia are made in one piece. For the exceptions made in two pieces, it is likely that the origin is Turkic.

d. End finishes can provide another clue. Azeri end finishes in the Shirvan area tend to be plain, although sometimes there is a small woven end finish. Armenian flatweaves generally have a variety of substantial woven or braided end finishes. Kazakh zilis also usually have braided end finishes, whether woven by Azeris or Armenians..

e. Pale blue is used fairly extensively in the Shirvan region, and is a clue to a possible Shirvan origin. It is used in a more limited way in most other areas also, including by the Shahsavan in Iran, and therefore is not a definitive indicator.

f. A "good green" (i.e. rich, pleasing) was made in Kazakh and the related areas of Tausch and Lori by overdying yellow with blue. Green was less frequently used in Shirvan flat- weaves, and when used, was sometimes made from a dye produced from grasses and other flora rather than blue over yellow.

g. The designs and colors on the backs of mafrashes and khorjins can sometimes provide a significant clue as to origins. For this reason, the backs of bags are shown in each case where this is not apparent from the frontal photographs. While the weavers sometimes used originality in their choices of designs and colors, tradition seemed to dictate that they stay within certain bounds in making their choices. In the Kazakh region, narrow stripes of dark blue or red and black, or tan and dark brown, were much used. In Borchaliu, the stripes were usually a little wider than in Kazakh or Karabagh, and sometimes there were interesting variations on the width of the stripes with narrow border stripes of blue on the edges of the black stripes. In Lori, tan and dark brown was common. In Tausch, three colors, usually dark red, yellow and dark brown, were used. In Karabagh and Kelbajar, narrow stripes of dark red and dark brown were also used. In the Shirvan region, the backs often had distinctive wide stripes in pale red, yellow and tan (see Plt. 135), but sometimes the backs were a single red color, as is common for Shahsavan bags. The backs of bags made with a cotton ground weave often were plain white, sometimes decorated with small S's in weft-float brocading. It would be a mistake to be too definitive, however, based on the limited number of samples in the collection. Rather, it is an interesting basis for attribution that can be studied further as other examples come forward.