

Rubia Darya

- Specializes in authentic hand-woven rugs and textiles from weaving groups in central and west Asia.
- Focuses on old and antique rugs up to 150 years old

Inside this issue:

Baluch Weaving Traditions 1

First Fridays 1

Featured rug - Sangchuli Baluch 2

Rug Dictionary 3

Rubia Darya's Gallery 4

Baluch Weaving Traditions

Among the more eclectic and enigmatic rugs and weavings are those of the Baluch and other tribes occupying the areas of western Afghanistan and eastern Persia in the 19th and early 20th century. This perhaps reflects both the geographical location of the Baluch peoples, as well as the characteristics of their social structure. Geographically, the Baluch peoples occupied "marginal" territories, along the edges of several diverse cultures in eastern Persia, Afghanistan, India and Turkmenistan. Socially, the Baluch were remarkably open to the inclusion of foreigners into their social structures. Despite the diverse influences, distinct Baluch "identities" emerged around common language, values, and ways of life. Clearly, weaving was a central and valued aspect of Baluch culture. Among tribal weaving groups, they developed perhaps the most diverse weaving techniques, with a sophistication in

their weaving techniques not matched by most other weaving groups. Their weavings range from very fine bags and animal, to medium sized carpets. Weaving was exclusively the domain of girls and women, while men were responsible for gathering, preparing and dying wool. It was customary that a Baluch bride would provide a set of high-quality weavings as part of her dowry upon marriage, signifying the high value placed on weaving skill. The aesthetics of Baluch weavings reflect their geographic proximity to several other tribal weaving groups, and their openness to incorporating others' designs in their weavings. As a result, the Baluch have a wide design repertoire. However, Baluch weavings retain distinctive aesthetic characteristics with a *gestalt* that is usually easily recognizable. This includes a generally modest range of colours, organized design layouts, but a notable "freedom" in the



"Baluch" rug, c. 1900, W. Afghanistan

composition. A particular feature is the sparing use of white, usually as an accent to bring a design "alive".

Rubia Darya @ First Fridays in the Exchange

The Rubia Darya Gallery is delighted to participate in "First Fridays in the Exchange". "First Fridays" is a chance to get to know Winnipeg's historic Exchange District, held on the 1st Friday evening of each month. It's an opportunity to visit and talk to artists in their studios, experience an art gallery opening or craft exhibit and explore

the area's unique shops. Rubia Darya is open for most of the First Fridays evenings, often with a focus exhibition on a particular weaving group. For more information about First Fridays and to find out if Rubia Darya is "on", look them up here: (www.firstfridayswinnipeg.org). Our next "First Fridays" event will be July 3, 2015.





Technical Description

Size: 6.5 x 3.5 feet

Materials: Wool warp, weft and pile.

Knotting: Asymmetric, open-right.

Age: 100+ years

Featured Rug - "Sangchuli Baluch"

Origin

This rug was likely woven in the late 19th or early 20th century by a woman in the Sangchuli sub-tribe of the Baluch. The Sangchuli inhabited areas of Western Afghanistan, near Herat.

Materials

The rug is hand-woven using a knotted pile technique to create the design. It was most likely woven on a typical wooden horizontal loom used by the Baluch and many other nomadic weaving groups. The warp and weft are wool, and lustrous and fine sheep's wool was used for the pile. Traditional Baluch weavers were known for using the best wool (shorn in the Spring) and did not wash the wool extensively before dyeing so that it retained its natural lanolin, which creates the lustrous look and feel of old Baluch rugs. The wool was dyed using natural dyestuffs: madder root for the shades of red and indigo for shades of blue. Undyed brown and white wool was also used.

Design and aesthetics

This rug displays a somewhat typical field design with large floral motifs within a lattice of hexagonal "frames". The origin of this design is uncertain, though it has some similarities with very old lattice designs found in some Turkmen and Persian rugs. A somewhat unusual design feature of this rug is the use of a hooked medallion in the place of floral designs in the central column and the outer flanking columns. This blend of the floral Persian design and the more Turkmen tribal design pools is a fascinating feature of Baluch rugs. The main border (between the two prominent white ground borders) features a beautifully developed "curled leaf" design, which is also likely drawn from the Turkmen design pool.

The use of colour is typical for Baluch weavings. It has a restrained colour palette, using only shades of red, blue and brown, with sparing use of white to create dramatic highlights. Despite the limited range of colours the rug appears colourful, due to the creative use of different shades. The indigo blue field glows, and the deliberate use of varying shades (called "abrash") creates dynamism. The well-ordered by "free" drawing of the design contributes to the dynamic aesthetic quality, typical of the best tribal weavings.

Rug dictionary - Types of tribal bags and wedding decorations

In some editions of "Threadline" we plan to include definitions for terms used in relation to traditional rugs and weavings. In this edition, we focus on terms for the various types of tribal bags and animal trappings (decorations) that are used for decorative and utilitarian purposes. These are commonly featured as part of the wedding procession. Many of them represent the finest weaving since they were commonly included as part of the dowry to show the weaving skill of bride.

Asmalyk - Decorative weaving placed on the wedding camel in Turkmen weddings. Asmalyks are usually pentagonal in shape and are very finely woven.

Balisht - A medium sized elongated rectangular bag used to carry either clothing or grain. These often have pile-knotted decorative fronts and flat-woven backs. Balishts are also often used as cushion covers.

Chanteh - A very small bag to carry personal effects. These are quite rare now.

Chuval - A large rectangular bag that was used to carry clothing and other household effects.

Engsi (purdah) - Medium sized rugs that were hung in front of the doors of tents or yurts, most commonly used by Turkmen tribes. They have typical patterns usually including four field panels.

Khali - A large "main" rug of the Turkmen, usually used as the main area for welcoming guests into tents / yurts.

Khorjin - A saddle-bag, usually woven in pairs and joined together through a central connecting panel. These are usually flat-woven, but many have knotted pile for the faces of the bags.

Mafrash - A large bag that is shaped like a large rectangular "box", with a top closure. This is used to carry bedding and other materials as tribal groups migrate.

Namakdan - A bag designed to hold rock salt for transportation and distribution for sheep flocks. The namakdan has a particular shape, with a square body and a narrow rectangular opening at the top that flops over to keep the salt from spilling out.

Namazlyk - This is the term used to describe a small rug used for prayer. The namazlyk usually has a niche at one end of the rug which is to be facing Mecca for prayer.

Ok bash - A small rectangular bag with a tapered closed end at the bottom, used as a decorative item for the wedding procession. Some have suggested that it is also used to hold tent pegs.

Torba - A medium-sized long rectangular bag used as a decorative container to transport and store personal effects.

"Unroll your carpet and I shall see what is written in your heart."

Turkmen proverb

Bridal procession in a Turkmen wedding with the bride in the *kejebe* atop the camel



Asmalyk
Yomut tribes, Turkmenistan
Late 19th century

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About Rubia Darya

Rubia Darya Gallery



For centuries, women in tribal groups of western and central Asia have woven rugs, carpets, kilims, storage bags and other objects to bring beauty into their surroundings. With modernization and the commercialization of rug-making the traditional art of weaving has been largely lost and forgotten, but many of the “woven treasures” remain, having been carefully preserved by families from the tribal groups or by collectors of traditional woven art around the world. **Rubia Darya** is a new family-owned business in Winnipeg that aims to enhance the appreciation of these hand-woven rugs and textiles. Rubia Darya has a unique collection of old and authentic tribal weavings that exhibit the exceptional wool, dyes and aesthetic qualities of traditional textile art.

Rubia Darya's new gallery in Winnipeg's historic Exchange District provides a perfect setting for showcasing the exquisite beauty of their collection of old tribal rugs and textiles, many of which date back to the 19th century. The gallery is housed in a beautifully restored heritage building with high ceilings, old brick walls and large wooden beams. It's a wonderful setting in which to relax and enjoy a cup of tea, while seeing Rubia Darya's wide selection of rugs and other textiles. In the coming months, the Rubia Darya gallery will also be the setting for seminars and special exhibitions that highlight the cultural significance and aesthetic traditions inherent in the woven art from different tribal weaving groups.



Chanteh (personal bag)
Baluch tribes, Northeast Persia
Early 20th Century



**Namadkan
(salt bag)**
Kurdish tribes,
North-West Persia,
Early 20th century