

Report

# Persian Carpet: A New Look From a Different Angle

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## Introduction

Handmade carpet production in Iran goes back to the history, of which is not the subject of this short paper and presentation. Carpet production and in general carpet culture especially in rural areas is combined and mixed with every-day life of many people. In rural places, almost all the women know how to make carpets. They learn this from their mother and grow up with it. Many of them weave the carpets to take to their new homes when they get married. In Iran, carpet is not a mere commodity. It has different cultural, artistic, and historical heritage attached to it.

## National Statistics

The population of Iran is about 65 million. In Iran, there are around 1,200,000 looms scattered in 27,000 villages and 210 cities, on which 2,200,000 weavers work. Roughly, 300,000 people work in the related fields such as artistic work, wool preparing and spinning, dyeing, repairing, washing, exporting, transporting and etc.

In the year 2002, the export value of handmade carpet was USD 517,000,000, which showed almost 1% decrease to the year before which was USD 522,000,000. In this year, 5,920,000 square meters of handmade carpets were exported from Iran. One square meter of exported Iranian carpet was priced USD 83.00. In the year 2003, the export value of handmade carpet was USD 573,000,000 which showed almost 11% increase compared to the previous year. In 2003, 5,728,000 square meters of handmade carpets were exported from Iran. One square meter of exported Iranian carpet was priced USD 100 in 2003. Table 1 shows the value of Iranian carpet export in US Dollar for the past few years.

After oil, handmade carpet is the highest source of foreign exchange earning for Iran. The most important aspect is not the value, but the employment which carpet sector provides as a job, and in most of the cases as a complementary income for the housewives and the families.

## World Market

Based on the statistics I received from the International Trade Center affiliated to the United Nations, in the year 2001, Iran had 30% of the total



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Table 1, Persian Carpet Export, 1998-2003

| Year | Value \$ | Change |
|------|----------|--------|
| 1998 | 570      |        |
| 1999 | 691      | +21%   |
| 2000 | 581      | -15%   |
| 2001 | 522      | -10%   |
| 2002 | 517      | -1%    |
| 2003 | 573      | +11%   |

world market share. India with 18%, China with 12%, Pakistan with 11%, Nepal with 6%, and Turkey with 5 % share ranked respectively. Table two, presents some statistics on this matter. The total export of handmade carpet for the year 2001 experienced 11 % decrease.

In the year 2001, the United States of America imported more handmade carpets than any other country with 33 % of the world import. Germany with 24 %, and Japan with 5 % of the world import ranked next. Table three, takes a closer look at these data.

It can be seen that the total value of the handmade carpet import in the year 2001, decreased by 9 % compared to the previous year.

The Table presents some statistics on the American market and shows that the import of rugs & other floor coverings has increased over the past three years for which dif

Table 2, Handmade Carpet Export and the Market Share The Year 2001

| Country  | \$ 1,000  | Compare to the year 2000 | World Market share (%) |
|----------|-----------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| World    | 1,759,855 | -11%                     | 100                    |
| Iran     | 537,243   | -17%                     | 30                     |
| India    | 330,245   | -6%                      | 18                     |
| China    | 227,111   | -9%                      | 200                    |
| Pakistan | 211,089   | -3%                      | 11                     |
| Nepal    | 116,430   | -17%                     | 6                      |
| Turkey   | 97,957    | 0%                       | 5                      |



Table 3, Handmade Carpet Import and the Market Share The Year 2002

| Year<br>Country   | 2000       | 2001       | 2002       | 2003       | Total          |
|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| Iran<br>Share     | 114<br>14% | 112<br>14% | 123<br>14% | 130<br>13% | 479<br>13.7%   |
| India<br>Share    | 354<br>42% | 324<br>41% | 385<br>43% | 424<br>44% | 1,487<br>42.5% |
| Pakistan<br>Share | 105<br>12% | 95<br>12%  | 97<br>11%  | 99<br>11%  | 396<br>11.3%   |
| China<br>Share    | 218<br>26% | 218<br>28% | 256<br>29% | 280<br>29% | 972<br>27.8%   |
| Turkey<br>Share   | 52<br>6%   | 39<br>5%   | 33<br>3%   | 41<br>4%   | 165<br>4.7%    |
| Total             | 843        | 788        | 894        | 974        | 3,499          |

Table 4, Rugs & Other textile floor coverings imports to U.S.A (million dollar)

| Country     | \$ 1,000  | Compare to the year<br>2000 | World Market share<br>(%) |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| World       | 1,631,538 | -9%                         | 100                       |
| America     | 540,521   | -8%                         | 33                        |
| Germany     | 407,873   | -8%                         | 24                        |
| Japan       | 82,680    | -15%                        | 5                         |
| Italy       | 67,625    | -23%                        | 4                         |
| Britain     | 66,769    | -4%                         | 3                         |
| U A E       | 48,383    | +6%                         | 2                         |
| Switzerland | 46,188    | -4%                         | 2                         |
| France      | 45,008    | -4%                         | 2                         |
| Canada      | 30,007    | -15%                        | 1                         |



ferent reasons maybe submitted. One may argue that this increase is because of the rise in the prices in the carpet exporting countries. It can be argued that more people are buying carpets including the younger generation, although they have different tastes compared to former generation which liked classic designs and different color combination.

### What Are the Latest Developments?

In the recent years in Iran, there has been a growing attention paid to natural dyes and handspun wool. This has been because of the infrastructure set up by some good dyers and producers.

More dealers and scholars go to Iran these days and they have been also encouraging the Iranian producers and exporters to make more carpets with handspun wool and vegetal colors. Some of German and American carpet companies have also entered into joint-venture with their Iranian counterparts. The non-Iranian companies can provide the market information and employ modern sales techniques. Their Iranian colleague can also program and produce the carpets which meet the customers needs and demands.

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