

## BESHIR PRAYER RUGS

## Classification by Design

This detailed classification is supplementary to, and should be read in conjunction with, Ralph Kaffel's article 'Beshir Prayer Rugs' in HALI 151, Spring 2007, pp.74-83.

## TYPE 1: WHITE-GROUND WITH TREES

## Type 1A

- 1:1** E. Tsareva, *Rugs and Carpets from Central Asia. The Russian Collections*, 1984, pl.98  
E. Tsareva, *Tappeti Dei Nomadi Dell'Asia Centrale*, 1993, pl.6  
A.A. Felkersam, *Stary Gody*, 1914, unnumbered page, 'Uzbek Beshir'  
F.V. Gogel, *Kovry Sovetskogo Sojusa*, 1950, fig.27  
HALI 27, p.14  
HALI 53, p.247  
M.L. Eiland et al., *Oriental Rugs in Pacific Collections*, 1990, p.242, pl.278  
The Dudin rug, probably 18th century. By 1990 it had undergone some restoration, principally to sides and ends. The prayer arch is based on the *giyak* motif (Tsareva 1984).
- 1:2** F. Spuhler, H. König & M. Volkmann, *Old Eastern Carpets*, 1978, pl.98  
HALI 3/1, ad.p.4 (Sailer)  
HALI 30, p.2  
1980 ICOC Programme (Sailer)  
HALI 59, p.83 (Herrmann)  
E. Herrmann, *Asiatische Teppich- und Textilkunst 3*, 1991, p.83 (ex-Carlowitz collection)  
W. Stanzer et al., *Antique Oriental Rugs from Austrian Collections*, 1986, pl.120  
U. Jourdan, *Oriental Rugs Volume 4 Turkoman*, 1989, pl.298  
The closest analogy to the Dudin rug, early 19th century. The meander border motif of the Dudin rug is replicated in the outer lateral strips of the field. Eight colours vs. ten in the Dudin rug, not as finely woven.

**Fig.4: Stylised quatrefoil tile border**



- 1:3** Christie's, London, 20 April 1994, lot 26. Attributed to

the 18th century, but my notes say "thick and coarse; the stiffness of the drawing suggests a later date." Stylised quatrefoil 'tile' border.

Christie's, London, 24 April 1997, lot 422  
HALI 50, ad.p.36-37 (Karim Khan)

**1:4 HALI 151, p.75, pl.2**

Previously unpublished. Jim Dixon Collection

- 1:5** Sotheby's, New York, 10 April 2002, lot 69  
Fragment showing the trellis field with 'bat shaped' leaves.

**1:6** Sotheby's, New York, 13 December 1996, lot 108

Fragment. While in **1:5** the curled leaves are arranged in a trellis pattern, here they are attached to six vertical stems.

**Fig.5: Octagons enclosing stylised palmettes****1:7** Phillips, London,

16 June 1992, lot 5  
HALI 63, p.62  
HALI 64, APG p.168

Curled leaves on three vertical stems. While in **1:1** through **1:4** the *kochak*-topped poles are attached to a mihrab, here they are free-standing. The review in HALI 64 queried whether this was actually a prayer rug. Unusual border motif; octagons enclosing stylised palmettes.



## Type 1B

**Fig.6: Pendant branch**

- 1:8** U. Jourdan, *Oriental Rugs Volume 4 Turkoman*, 1989, pl.299

P. Bausback, *Antiker Teppiche Sammlung Franz Bausback 1987/88*, 1987, p.190

Type 1-B rugs also feature multiple tree trunks topped by *kochaks* or double-



hooked crowns, but instead of the curled leaves, the trees have pendant branches. This example features four tree trunks surmounted by four full crowns and a half-crown. The narrow 'double-comb' border is reminiscent of talismanic symbols. This type of double-comb amulet also appears on Uzbek torbas (see Sotheby's, New York, 10 December 1996, lot 21).

**1:9** Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 12 November 1994, lot 104

Five tree trunks with pendant branches, similar to **1:8**. No mihrabs, but catalogued as a prayer rug. Published prior to restoration in HALI 32, p.51 (Donelian Collection)

**1:10** Nagel, 17 October 1992, lot 2202

Three tree trunks, ascending pattern. Narrow *tumar* band border

**Fig.7: Stylised cruciforms**

- 1:11** E. Herrmann, *Seltene Orientteppiche VI*, 1984, pl.59  
HALI 6/4, p.415, exhibition review

Central tree enclosing quartered motifs; sloping branches with ascending buds; double border; inner border of 'Uzbek-type' star octagons, outer border of stylised cruciform motifs, similar to *ashik* güls. *Besh Ai* octagons in the spandrels.

**1:12** HALI 98, p.27 (Kelimhaus Johannik)

Single central tree with ascending branches. Outer strips in the field contain stylised cruciforms as in **1:11** Narrow border, variant of the border in **1:8**.

- 1:13** H. McCoy Jones & J.W. Boucher, *Weavings of the Tribes in Afghanistan*, 1972, pl.22

Single double-hooked topped mihrab. Single *giyak*-striped tree with ascending branches and pendant buds. Catalogued as 'Afghan'. Border of 'Uzbek-type' star octagons.

**Fig.8: Pendant and ascendant branches**

**1:14** M.L. Eiland Jr. et al., *Oriental Rugs in Pacific Collections*, 1990, pl.154 (Jay Jones Collection)



There was a reference to the Dudin prayer rug (1:1) in the ICOC exhibition catalogue caption, but the comparison is tenuous. The unusual feature of this rug is the design of its branches, with both pendant and ascendant buds. Border of tiny geometric flowerheads. M.L. Eiland Jr. & M.L. Eiland III, *Oriental Carpets: A Complete Guide*, 1998, pl.230: "Seems to be a part of an entirely different tradition than the pomegranate-type with its vari-colored field." It is possible that many of the Type 1-B rugs, as suggested in 1:13, are products of the Afghan Ersari.

**1:15** H. Elmy, *Antique Turkmen Carpets IV*, 1998, pl.50  
Elmy's comparison to U. Schürmann, *Central-Asian Rugs*, 1969, pl.48, is devoid of logic, as is the mid-18th century dating for this piece. At 8'5" it is unusually long, but the Herrmann rug (1:11) is even longer (9'10"). Border of stylised quatrefoils resembling tile work (see 1:3).

**1:16** Unpublished. The only known blue-ground Beshir prayer rug. The design appears to be a hybrid of various classic motifs. Ascending branches with ascendant buds on a central chevron-striped tree. Triple *kochanak* mihrab. The white-ground border replicates a bud pattern. A similar plant motif may be seen in a striped Beshir rug in HALI 1/1, p.7.

**Fig.9: Stepped diamond border**

**1:17** Sotheby's, New York, 1 March 1974, lot 75

Highly stylised tree with ascending branches with horizontal buds. Stepped 'diamond' border. Catalogued as Beshir but most probably Afghan in origin.



**Fig.10: Unusual pentagram border**

**1:18** Lefevre, 21 March 1975, lot 44  
Triple *kochanak* mihrab. Highly stylised. Unusual 'pentagram' border, closely related to the motifs on the 'rarest pattern' torba: V.G. Moshkova (eds. O'Bannon & Amanova), *Carpets of the People of Central Asia*, 1996, p.272, fig.120. Attributed by Lefevre to the Kizil-Ayak of Merv.



**Fig.11: Tile pattern in mihrab**

**1:19** P. Bausback, *Antike Orientteppiche*, 1978, p.228  
Triple *kochanak*. Botchs in spandrels and outer field strips. A tile-pattern mihrab, similar to the border pattern in 1:3



**1:20** Skinner, 25 April 1998, lot 160  
Rippon Boswell, 20 May 2000, lot 76  
Nagel, 27 May 2003, lot 43  
Mihrab as in 1:19. A rug with a longer version of this design was advertised by The Rug Co-Op (Hazledine, Legge & Montigel) in HALI 73, p.122. This is the final Type 1 piece with 'ram's horns' finials. The next four rugs feature highly geometric 'T'-shaped versions

**Fig.12: 'Bow-tie' shaped cruciforms**

**1:21** W. Loges, *Turkoman Tribal Rugs*, 1980, pl.88, p.150  
F. Spuhler, H. König & M. Volkmann, *Old Eastern Carpets*, 1978, pl.100  
HALI 2/4, p.282



Ascendant branches radiate from a central tree flanked by two 'T'-topped columns. Border of stylised 'bow-tie' shaped cruciforms (as in 1:11) between striped lines.

**1:22** Lefevre, 9 February 1979, lot 7  
Lefevre, 30 October 1980, lot 20  
HALI 1/3, ad.p.12 (Lefevre, prior to restoration)  
HALI 3/3, p.256, auction review  
Very similar in all respects to 1:21.

**1:23** Adil Besim, *Mythos & Mystik 3*, 2000, pl.64  
Phillips, London, 14 April 1986, lot 57

Phillips, London, 6 November 1986, lot 21

Phillips, London, 22 November 1988, lot 21

Rippon Boswell, 14 November 1992, lot 106

Appears to be a somewhat later version of the two above (1:21, 1:22). Border of 'Uzbek-type' star-octagons, referred to as a variant of the *tscharch palak* motif. The branched trees are known as the *gapyrga* motif.

**Fig.13: Boxed stars border**  
**1:24** HALI 151, p.75, pl.3

Sotheby's, New York, 15 December 1998, lot 28  
Quite similar to 1:21 and 1:22. The catalogue caption compares it to the Loges rug: "...a more spacious appearance as the leaves are larger in scale, and the foliate elements are less cramped." Border of boxed stars.



## TYPE 2 – POMEGRANATES

**Fig.14: Pomegranate border**

**2:1** HALI 151, p.74, pl.1

Rippon Boswell, 16 November 1996, lot 141 = HALI 91, APG, p.157

Sotheby's, New York, 20 September 2001, lot 55 = HALI 120, APG, p.125

Unknown prior to its appearance in Wiesbaden in 1996, and considered "best of type" by, among others, the editors of HALI, Detlef Maltzahn (RB), Mary Jo Otsea (SNY) and Robert Pinner. The first HALI APG review stated that "it is unsurpassed in our experience in its quality of drawing, proportions and clarity of colours, including the luminous red and white of the ground". In the on-line *Cloudband* magazine, Robert Pinner wrote that "...the dominant white area of this beautiful rug is filled with small pomegranates, a symbol of fertility also found on a group of silk rugs attributed to Yarkand in neighbouring East Tukestan. The 'head' which broadens out at the top of the white mihrab carries a 'kochak' (ram's horns). Much rarer is the similar kochak-topped 'head' on the small red mihrab, which is missing in most of the rugs of this group". As pointed out in HALI 120, at 7'7" x 4'9" it is the largest rug in this group. Pomegranate border



**2:2** Rippon Boswell, London, 13 June 1983, lot 35  
 HALI 5/3, ad.p.76 (Rippon Boswell)  
 HALI 5/4, APG, p.76  
 HALI 6/1, ad.p.45 (Rippon Boswell)  
 This rug has some of the features of the above (2:1), including the border and similar flowering plants.

**2:3** R. Benardout, *Woven Stars*, 1996, pl.57  
 Sotheby's, New York, 30 April 1983, lot 136  
 P. Bausback, *Alte und Antike Orientalische Knüpfkunst*, 1983, p.149  
 HALI 5/4, ad.p.52 (Bausback)  
 Butterfield & Butterfield, 10 April 1987, lot 46  
 HALI 35, APG, p.85  
 HALI 111, p.121, LACMA exhibition review  
 A pomegranate border similar to the two above (2:1, 2:2), but with a more regimented arrangement of flowering plants within the red mihrab, and the addition of triangular bands to the spandrels

**Fig.15: Circle and cross border**

**2:4** G. O'Bannon et al., *Vanishing Jewels: Central Asian Tribal Weavings*, 1990, pl.10  
 Stylised rosettes in the spandrels and the red mihrab. The border, called the 'circle and cross' border (hereafter C & C border) in P. Stone, *Tribal & Village Rugs. The Definitive Guide to Design, Pattern & Motif*, 2004, p.305, no.T-50, is a close relative of the three above. In my opinion, this border also represents pomegranates.



**2:5** C. Cootner, *Oriental Rugs: An Introduction/Prayer Rugs*, 1974, no.14  
 Lou Georgi Collection. Very similar to 2:4 (border and rosettes) but squarer.

**Fig.16: Variant circle and cross border**

**2:6** W. Stanzer et al., *Antique Oriental Rugs from Austrian Collections*, 1986, pl.121A  
 Rows (rather than a column) of plants in the inner mihrab; triangular band in the spandrels.  
 Border a variant of the C & C motif.



**2:7** W. Grote Hasenbalg, *Der Orientteppich, Seine Geschichte und Seine Kultur*, 1922, vol.III, pl.103  
 C & C border. Flowering plants (tulips?) in inner red mihrab and spandrels.

**2:8** U. Schürmann, *Central-Asian Rugs*, 1969, pl.48  
 Very similar to 2:7 above. The main border also frames the inner red mihrab.

**2:9** J. Orendi, *Das Gesamtwissen über Antike und Neue Teppiche des Orients*, 1930, no.1026  
 An elongated version of 2:7 with a somewhat different treatment of the 'white head'.

**2:10** R. Ettinghausen et al., *Prayer Rugs*, 1974, pl.XXXIX  
 W.B. Denny, *Oriental Rugs*, 1979, pl.70  
 HALI 2/4, p.281  
 Very similar in all respects to 2:8.

**2:11** A.U. Dilley, *Oriental Rugs and Carpets: A Comprehensive Study*, 1931, pl.LV  
 Very similar to 2:7.

**2:12** C. D. Reed, *Turkoman Rugs*, 1966, pl.43  
 Eight rows of three rosettes in the mihrab. Triangular bands in the spandrels. C & C border.

**Fig.17: Tumar band guard border**

**2:13** A.B. Thacher, *Turkoman Rugs*, 1940, pl.47  
 An interesting variant with pomegranates throughout: in the red mihrab and in the spandrels. C & C border, with a *chinar gül* outer band (Tsareva 1984, pl.100). In his caption, Thacher suggests a link to Chinese Turkestan, also "the source of Chinese yellow employed in the outer band stripe"



**2:14** A.F. Kendrick & C.E.C. Tattersall, *Handwoven Carpets Oriental & European*, 1922, pl.190  
 R. Neugebauer & S. Troll, *Handbuch der Orientalischen Teppichkunde*, 1930, pl.126  
 R. Neugebauer & J. Orendi, *Handbuch der Orientalischen Teppichkunde*, 1909, pl.146  
 C & C border. Flowering plants in mihrab and spandrels.

**2:15** I. Bennett, *Rugs and Carpets of the World*, 1977, p.167  
 Border as 2:14. Flowering plants in red mihrab; rosettes in the spandrels. Unusual addition of octagons (*besht ai* medallions) to the spandrels.

**2:16** Doyle's, New York, 20 May 1992, lot 621  
 HALI 64, APG, p.168  
 Border as above (2:14, 2:15). Flowering plants in red mihrab. Rosettes and triangular bands in the spandrels (see Adil Besim, *Mythos & Mystik 3*, 2000, pl.70 for similar bands on an Ersari jollar).

**2:17 HALI 151, p.76, pl.4**

Jim Dixon Collection, previously unpublished. Border as above (2:14, 2:15, 2:16). Rosettes in red mihrab and the spandrels. The border framing the red mihrab is of small crosses and differs from the main border.

**2:18** S.A. Milhofer, *Oriental Rugs*, 1976, pl.42  
 Border as 2:17. Plants in mihrab and spandrels.

**2:19** H. McCoy Jones, *The Ersari and their Weavings*, 1969, pl.1  
 H. McCoy Jones & J.W. Boucher, *Tribal Rugs from Turkmenistan*, 1973, pl.33  
 J.L. Bacharach & I.A. Bierman, *The Warp and Weft of Islam*, 1978, pl.79  
 James D. Burns Collection. Border as 2:17. This rug has a number of unusual features: the *kochak* motif atop the 'white head' is enlarged, resembling 'rabbit ears'; the red mihrab, in addition to five rows of three plants each, contains five ovals filled with notched 'arrow-heads', characteristic of certain Beshir rugs. The horizontally oriented plant forms in the spandrels are a feature found in certain Ersari torbas (e.g. D. Reuben, *Guls & Gols I*, 1998, pl.49; Netherhampton Auctions, 29 April 2004, lot 809).

**2:20** HALI 5/3, p.351  
 Rhode Island School of Design Art Museum. Border as 2:17. Plants in mihrab and spandrels.

**Fig.18: Variant pomegranate border**

**2:21** Christie's, London, 18 April 1985, lot 54  
 HALI 3/4, p.318, 1986  
 Austrian Collections Exhibition  
 The border is a variant of 2:1-2:3. Star-like flowers in the spandrels. The plants in the red mihrab have unusual yellow leaves, and the star-like motifs are repeated.



**Fig.19: Border rosette**

**2:22** Rippon Boswell, 10 November 1990, lot 150 Sotheby's, New York, 16 December 2005, lot 65 Octofoil rosettes in the border, the red mihrab and the spandrels. Triangular bands in the spandrels, and small plants in the upper sections of the spandrels.



**2:23** HALI 136, p.149 – Reto Christoffel, Steinmaür HALI 141, p.33 Rosettes in border and spandrels, as in **2:22**; plants in red mihrab.

**2:24** L.W. Mackie & J. Thompson, *Turkmen Tribal Carpets and Traditions*, 1980, pl.95 HALI 44, p.42 HALI 136, p.95 The Textile Museum, Washington DC, Arthur D. Jenkins Collection. Rosettes in border and spandrels as in **2:22**; plants in red mihrab.

**2:25** G. Griffin Lewis, *The Practical Book of Oriental Rugs*, 1920, p.274 Rosettes in border and red mihrab. Spandrels similar to **2:22-2:24** above.

**2:26** Sotheby's, New York, 5 November 1983, lot 180 Sotheby's, New York, 14 December 2006, lot 138 Rosettes in border, red mihrab and spandrels.

**2:27** Sotheby's, New York, 7 April 1978, lot 62 HALI 26, p.89, Herrmann exhibition, 'Rare Rugs of the Turkoman' Rosettes in border, red mihrab and spandrels. Triangular bands in spandrels.

**2:28** Sotheby's, New York, 31 May 1986, lot 3 Rosettes, botchs and small plants in spandrels. Plants in red mihrab. Triangular bands in spandrels.

**2:29** A. Riegl, *Katalog der Ausstellung Orientalischer Teppiche im K.K. Oester. Handels-Museum*, 1891, no.138 Rosette border, triangular bands in spandrels.

**Fig.20: Darak variant flowerhead border**

**2:30** Sotheby's, New York, 3 December 2002, lot 107 HALI 128, APG p.125



B. Fernandes, 'Mountain Looms' exhibition brochure, Singapore, Sept/Oct 2004 Flowerhead border (variation of the *darak* motif). Rosettes in spandrels and red mihrab, which is framed by a C & C border.

**2:31** Nagel, 12 November 1977, lot 119/6 P. Bausback, *Antike Orientteppiche*, 1978, p.526 Flowerhead border. Rosettes and horizontal flowering branches in red mihrab (see **2:19**). Octagons (*besh ai* motifs) inside the triangular bands in the spandrels. The red mihrab had a rare, *kochak*-topped 'head' (see **2:1**).

**2:32** H. McCoy Jones, *The Ersari and their Weavings*, 1969, pl.2 Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, McCoy Jones Collection, no.1988.11.497 Flowerhead border. Rosettes in spandrels and red mihrab.

**2:33** I. Neff & C. Maggs, *A Dictionary of Oriental Rugs*, 1977, p.171 Lefevre, 24 January 1975, lot 1 Flowerhead border. Rosettes in spandrels. Rosettes and horizontal flowering branches (see **2:31**) in red mihrab.

**2:34** E. Tsareva, *Rugs and Carpets from Central Asia. The Russian Collections*, 1984, pl.100 Flowerhead border (variation of the *darak* motif). Tsareva calls the horizontal flowering branches in the spandrels and red mihrab "twinned, stylised toothed leaves".

**Fig.21: Triangles border**

**2:35** R. Pinner & M.L. Eiland Jr., *Between the Black Desert and the Red*, 2000, pl.75 M.L. Eiland Jr. & M.L. Eiland III, *Oriental Carpets: A Complete Guide*, 1998, pl.232 Rippon Boswell, 20 May 1995, lot 117 *Tumar* band border. Plants in spandrels and red mihrab.



**2:36** HALI 2/2, p.139 *Tumar* band border. Single mihrab containing plants (no spandrels).

**2:37** P. Konzett, *Alte und Antike Turkmenische Teppiche*, 1982, p.6 *Tumar* band border. Single mihrab filled with star-like flowerheads.

**2:38** HALI 35, p.101, Thornborough Galleries Exhibition

E. Herrmann, *Seltene Orientteppiche X*, 1988, pl.98 *Tumar* band border. Single mihrab, filled with plants.

**2:39** Lefevre, 3 February 1978, lot 13 *Tumar* band border. Rosettes and small *besh ai* octagons in spandrels. Plants in red mihrab. Lefevre refers to the "Beshir tribe that settled down to a village and agricultural life in the Oasis of Bukhara in the 17th century".

**2:40** Lefevre, 5 October 1979, lot 37 Skinner, 24 April 1993, lot 162 HALI 115, p.81 *Tumar* band border. Plants with serrated leaves in red mihrab and spandrels.

**2:41** M.L. Eiland, *Oriental Rugs, A Comprehensive Guide*, 1981, pl.207 M.L. Eiland, *Oriental Rugs from Western Collections*, 1973, p.36 *Tumar* band border, eight rows of three rosettes in red mihrab (see **2:12**). Triangular bands and small plants in spandrels.

**2:42** J.A. Straka & L.W. Mackie, *The Oriental Rug Collection of Jerome and Mary Jane Straka*, 1978, p.43, pl.41 *Tumar* band border. Red mihrab with *kochak*-topped 'head' (see **2:1**), is filled with *segiz kelleh* motifs (a variant of V.G. Moshkova, *Carpets of the People of Central Asia*, 1996, p.278, pl.LXXVIII, no.5).

**Fig.22: Unusual floral variant**

**2:43** E. Tsareva, *Rugs and Carpets from Central Asia. The Russian Collections*, 1984, pl.99 Russian Ethnographic Museum, *Music for the Eyes: Textiles from The Peoples of Central Asia*, Antwerp 1998, pl.7 *Tumar* band border. Red mihrab with 'head', filled with seven rosettes. The ivory arch is decorated with an unusual floral motif instead of pomegranates. Tsareva knows of no analogies. Rosettes in spandrels.



**Fig.23: Stylised turtle border**

**2:44** H. McCoy Jones & J.W. Boucher, *Tribal Rugs from Turkmenistan*, 1973, pl.33 (Wolf Collection)





Grogan & Co., 1 November 1989, lot 164  
*Oriental Rug Review*, vol.10, no.2, p.59  
 Mangisch, 17 February 1990, lot 138  
 Sotheby's, New York, 15 December 1995,  
 lot 100  
 HALI 127, p.52 (Galerie Arabesque)  
 Stylised 'turtle' border. Small plants  
 and triangular bands in spandrels. Red  
 mihrab has a *kochak*-topped 'head' and  
 contains five rosettes.

**Fig.24: Sary gyra border**

**2:45** Skinner, 6 December 1997,  
 lot 119

Rare *sary gyra* (Ersari) or  
*ak gyra* (Chodor) border  
 (see W. Loges, *Turkoman  
 Tribal Rugs*, 1980, pl.89), outer  
 C & C border. Triangular bands and  
 small pyramid-like floral motifs in red  
 mihrab and spandrels.



**Fig.25: Floral lozenges and tendrils border**

**2:46** HALI 151, p.77, pl.5

Rippon Boswell, 10 November  
 1990, lot 92  
 HALI 55, APG, p.166  
 Unusual border of floral  
 lozenges with tendrils. Triangular  
 bands in spandrels as well as quartered,  
 serrated leaf motifs. Serpentine band  
 in red mihrab, as well as a repeat of  
 the leaf motifs. Similar border on  
 many secular Beshir carpets (e.g.  
 U. Schürmann, *Oriental Carpets*, 1966,  
 p.217; HALI 3/4, p.301; L.W. Mackie &  
 J. Thompson, *Turkmen Tribal Carpets  
 and Traditions*, 1980, p.201, fig.64), but  
 very rare in prayer rugs. This motif is  
 commonly seen as one of the standard  
 bands on large, banded Ersari chuvals  
 (see H. McCoy Jones, *The Ersari and  
 their Weavings*, 1969, pl.43). Remnants  
 of this border may be seen in the  
 Schürmann rug below (2:47).



**2:47** U. Schürmann, *Central-Asian Rugs*,  
 1969, pl.46

U. Schürmann, *Orientteppiche –  
 Ein Bildband*, Wiesbaden n.d., p.71  
 O. Bernheimer, *Alte Teppich des  
 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts der Firma L.  
 Bernheimer, München*, 1959, no.114  
 F. Spuhler, H. König & M. Volkmann,  
*Old Eastern Carpets*, 1978, pl.96  
 Double serpentine band enclosing  
 eight-pointed flowerheads in the  
 inner mihrab. The outer ivory arch is

filled with small flowerheads. Inner  
 meander border. Outer border has  
 remnants of the floral lozenge motif  
 (see 2:46). Inner mihrab framed by a  
 repeat of the inner meander border.  
 One of the smallest examples (4'2" x  
 2'11"). The extensive use of blue and  
 black is a highly unusual feature in  
 Beshir prayer rugs.

**Fig.26: Double-boteh border**

**2:48** Sotheby's, New York,  
 1 October 1998, lot 184  
 Sotheby's, New York,  
 17 December 1999, lot 150  
 Unusual double-boteh  
 border; same motifs fill mihrab.  
 No spandrels.



**Fig.27: Detached curled-leaf border**

**2:49** *Tapetes Orientais  
 Coleccao Gulben-  
 kian*, 1985, no.4  
 Unusual detached  
 'curled-leaf' border. For a similar border,  
 see W. Loges, *Turkoman Tribal Rugs*,  
 1980, pl.92. Inscription cartouches in  
 spandrels. Quartered serrated leaves in  
 spandrels and inner mihrab.



**Fig.28: Diamonds and triangles border (pomegranate variant)**

**2:50** *Oriental Rug Review* 1/2, p.1,  
 'Reflections of Infinity'  
 Exhibition, San Francisco  
 Christie's, London, 9 October  
 2006, lot 145  
 Unusual 'diamonds and triangles'  
 border (a variant of the pomegranate  
 motif). A collection of diverse plants  
 and floral motifs (similar to 2:1) in red  
 mihrab and spandrels. For a similar  
 border see Rippon Boswell, 23 May  
 1998, lot 141.



**Fig.29: Flowering vine meander border**

**2:51** HALI 3/4, p.299  
 HALI 4/2, p.141  
 J. Franses, *Tribal Rugs from  
 Afghanistan and Turkestan*,  
 1973, p.27, col.pl.III  
 Unusual meandering flowering vine  
 border. The pomegranate motif is  
 repeated in the inner mihrab as well  
 as in the spandrels. Triple border of  
 diverse motifs on ivory, blue and  
 yellow grounds.



**Fig.30: Linked octagons**  
**2:52** HALI 151, p.78, pl.6

Lefevre, 25 November  
 1983, lot 29

E. Herrmann, *Seltene  
 Orientteppiche III*, 1980, pl.111

An unusual example with a spaciouly  
 rendered pomegranate tree in the ivory  
 mihrab. The remainder of the rug, the  
 side borders, the inner mihrab and  
 the spandrels are filled with linked  
 octagons.



**Fig.31: 'Unique' border motif**

**2:53** W. Grote Hasenbalg,  
*Der Orientteppich,  
 Seine Geschichte  
 und Seine Kultur*, 1922, vol.III, pl.102  
 HALI 4/2 p.141

HALI 102, p.139, Elmy exhibition  
 H. Elmy, *Antique Turkmen Carpets IV*,  
 1998, pl.49

A very unusual example. The border  
 is composed of complex motifs similar  
 to those in the "rarest" type of Ersari  
 torba: see V.G. Moshkova, ed. O'Bannon  
 & Amanova, *Carpets of the People of  
 Central Asia*, 1996, p.272, fig.120, for  
 which the caption states that the motif  
 has never been adequately interpreted,  
 it being "...impossible to tell if it is floral,  
 zoomorphic or simply geometric." The  
 version here is more elaborate than  
 Moshkova's. The ivory mihrab is filled  
 with a budding tree but lacks pome-  
 granates. The unusually-framed 'head'  
 of the mihrab invades the upper border.



**2:54** F. Spuhler, H. König & M. Volkmann,  
*Old Eastern Carpets*, 1978, pl.99

Type 2 variant  
 In this rug the hooked *kochak* motif is  
 larger than usual and resembles 'rabbit  
 ears'. The inner mihrab as well as the  
 spandrels are filled with a honeycomb  
 pattern of red flowers on a blue ground.  
 The main border pattern is a blue and  
 red meander enclosing flowers or  
 stylised insects. At the time of its  
 publication in the catalogue of the 1978  
 Munich ICOC collectors exhibition it was  
 the only known example of this design  
 (see 2:55). The authors argue that "the  
 red and dark brown shapes hanging  
 from the trees are, in our opinion,  
 blossoms. The attempt to derive this  
 figure from East Turkestan-style pom-  
 egranates does not seem convincing"  
 I respectfully disagree.

**2:55** HALI 67, ad.p.119 (Jabert)  
Sotheby's, London, 28 April 1992 lot 76  
A. Middleton, *Rugs & Carpets. Techniques, Traditions and Designs*, 1996, p.135 (Zadah)  
Type 2 variant, closely similar to **2:54**.

**2:56** HALI 151, p.78, pl.7  
Previously unpublished.  
Jim Dixon Collection.

**TYPE 3 – FLORAL**

**Type 3A – Double hook**

**3:1** HALI 151, p.79, pl.8  
Lefevre, 17 June 1983, lot 7  
HALI 5/3, p.322 (Lefevre)  
E. Herrmann, *Seltene Orientteppiche V*, 1983, cover & pl.85  
HALI 5/4, p.440 (Herrmann)  
J. Eskenazi, *L'Arte del Tappeto Orientale*, 1983, pl.85  
Arguably the best of this sub-group, which are often late and unappealing. In these rugs the 'head' of the mihrab is replaced by an oversized double hook (*kochak*) or ram's horns motif, in which the floral pattern of the ivory prayer arch is continued. *Tumar* band border.

**3:2** R. Hubel, *Book of Carpets*, 1971, p.251, pl.XXII  
Sotheby's, New York, 5 November 1983, lot 4  
Similar to **3:1** above, with similar border

**3:3** Sotheby's, London, 19 October 1983, lot 493  
Similar to above, border of small geometric crosshatched flowerheads.

**3:4** Skinner, 6 December 1997, lot 118  
Skinner, 8 May 2004, lot 95  
Similar to above, flowerhead border

**3:5** Christie's, London, 10 October 1991, lot 326  
HALI 60, APG p.152  
Weber, Zurich, 20 October 1990, lot 238  
Similar to above, but the inner mihrab has a 'head'. Flowerhead border.

**Type 3B – Geometric Flowers**

**Fig.32: Simplified floral motif**

**3:6** Rippon Boswell, 20 May 1995, lot 61  
HALI 5/4, p.560 (Kibitka)  
Rosettes in mihrab and spandrels. The simplified floral motif is listed in P. Stone, *Tribal & Village Rugs. The Definitive Guide to Design, Pattern & Motif*, 2004, p.294, no.T-27. For similar plant motif in secular carpets, see E.



Herrmann, *Seltene Orientteppiche IV*, 1982, pl.92; *Seltene Orientteppiche IX*, 1987, pl.89; and H. McCoy Jones, *The Ersari & Their Weavings*, 1969, p.24. Also used as a border motif, see Rippon Boswell, 28 September 1996, lot 7.

**Fig.33: Talismanic 'double-comb' outer border motif**

**3:7** Sotheby's, New York, 3 June 2005, lot 26  
HALI 57, p.154 (Louise Woodhead)  
Horizontal plant forms in mihrab. 'Double-comb' talismanic outer border.



**3:8** Edelmann, 10 November 1979, lot 145  
Similar to **3:5** and **3:6**. Strange atypical elaborate border. Zig-zag bands in spandrels. Edelmann assigned it to Afghanistan. These three rugs relate closely to a drawing in 1970 Tashkent edition of V.G. Moshkova's *Kovry Narodov Srednej Azii*, pl.LXXXIX, no.12.

**3:9** Mangisch, 18 March 1989, lot 2070  
Mangisch, 3 June 1989, lot 3140  
Similar to above. Border is a repeat of plants on a smaller scale.

**3:10** Nagel, 16 May 2000, lot 158  
Catalogued as Uzbek. Similar to **3:9** but a very late piece. Diminutive size. Border of boxed ascendant plants.

**3:11** Skinner, 4 December 2004, lot 244  
Virtually identical to the Moshkova drawing cited in **3:8**. Border of small flowerheads. Attributed to Afghanistan.

**3:12** HALI 78, p.26 (Adil Besim)  
Similar to **3:9**.

**3:13** C.W. Jacobsen, *Oriental Rugs, A Complete Guide*, 1973, pl.174  
Similar to **3:12**. 'Latchhook' border. Attributed to Afghanistan.

**Fig.34: Uzbek star variant border motif**

**3:14** Sotheby's, New York, 10 April 2002, lot 70  
Variant of **3:13** above.  
Double mihrab with three columns of flowering plants. Border a variant of the Uzbek-type 'star in octagon'. Inner mihrab 'head' recalls **2:53**.



**Type 3C – Segiz Kelleh Motif**

**Fig.35: Mutated darak border motif**  
**3:15** Adil Besim, *Mythos & Mystik 3*, 2000, pl.63

This rug and the following six examples represent another variant of the flowering plant motif, one which is arguably, in my opinion, the least successful aesthetically. According to the authors of *Mythos & Mystik 3*, the *segiz kelleh* ('eight heads' or 'eight gates') is an ancient Turkic motif. It is also found in Beshir 'chessboard' rugs, including: F. Spuhler, H. König & M. Volkmann, *Old Eastern Carpets*, 1978, pl.95; L.W. Mackie & J. Thompson, *Turkmen Tribal Carpets and Traditions*, 1980, p.201, fig.64; U. Schürmann, *Oriental Carpets*, 1966, p.217; and Rippon Boswell, 18 November 1995, lot 97 = HALI 85, APG p.140. The inner mihrab is framed by the familiar C & C border; the outer border is composed of of geometric flowerheads; the inner border, according to the authors, is a mutation of the *darak* motif found in Ersari art. For similar borders see Rippon Boswell, 16 November 2002, lot 12; Christie's, New York, 15 December 1995, lot 38; Nagel, 10 November 1998, lot 146; and W. Loges, *Turkmen Tribal Rugs*, 1980, pl.91.



**3:16** E. Herrmann, *Seltene Orientteppiche II*, 1979, pl.98

Quite similar to **3:15** but with the *segiz kelleh* motifs in the spandrels and Type 3B 'boxed geometric' plants in the border. Herrmann calls it a "truly Bukharan" rug.

**3:17** Christie's, London, 25 April 2002, lot 157  
Very similar to **3:15**; identical borders but with *segiz kelleh* motifs in the spandrels.

**3:18** Lefevre, 17 May 1974, lot 28  
Similar to **3:17**, but with a single mihrab with *segiz kelleh* motifs within and flanking the mihrab. Crosshatched flowerhead border.

**3:19** Lefevre, 8 October 1976, lot 17  
J. Lefevre, *Central Asian Carpets*, 1976, no.17  
Christie's, London, 15 October 1987, lot 56  
HALI 41, APG p.89, "An ugly example of the ugliest type of Beshir prayer rug"  
Nagel, 23 June 1993, lot 3208  
Very similar to above.

**3:20** *TurkoTek* online 'Salon', 24 February 2002 – Dennis Dodds rug morning at The Textile Museum, Washington DC. Similar to above with *kochanak* border.

**3:21** Sotheby's, New York, 11 December 1981, lot 142  
Same family as above, but with off-white mihrab that comes to a *kochak*-topped point instead of a 'head'. Zig-zag border.

**3:22** Sotheby's, New York, 3 June 1989, lot 17 HALI 112, p.117 (Newman)  
An unusual design variant incorporating many Ersari motifs, including botehs, horizontal flowering branches and highly stylised geometric plants. Double zig-zag border. To date a unique example.

**Type 3D – Flowering Shrubs**

**3:23 HALI 151, p.80, pl.11**

Lefevre, 2 April 1976, lot 1  
Unusual scalloped drawing of the prayer niche. Rosettes in inner mihrab and spandrels. C & C border.

**3:24** H. Clark, *Bokhara, Turkoman and Afghan Rugs*, 1922, col.pl.A, p.114  
For similar motifs in secular rugs see: HALI 113, p.114 (Hort); Sotheby's, New York, 9 October 1998, lot 1361 (Howard Feldman Collection); HALI 3/4, gallery p.1 (Newman); W. Loges, *Turkoman Tribal Rugs*, 1980, pl.91; E. Herrmann, *Seltene Orientteppiche II*, 1979, pl.99 (variant).  
For these plant motifs in the field and border of what may or may not be a prayer rug, see HALI II/2, p.169. Hartley Clark dates it to circa 1775! C & C motif in border and framing inner mihrab.

**3:25** W. Loges, *Turkoman Tribal Rugs*, 1980, pl.89  
Three columns of plants and two columns of half-plants along outer sides. C & C motif in side and bottom borders, as well as in the mihrab 'frame'. *Sary gyra* upper border.

**3:26** HALI 1/4, p.39 (Herrmann)  
Three columns; C & C border.

**3:27 HALI 151, p.80, pl.10**

U. Schürmann, *Central-Asian Rugs*, 1969, pl.49  
F. Spuhler, H. König & M. Volkmann, *Old Eastern Carpets*, 1978, pl.97 (Volkmann Collection)  
*Arts of Asia*, July/August 1974, p.53

Rippon Boswell, 15 May 1999, lot 131 HALI 106, APG p.140, "Best of type"  
C & C border. Frame of *darak* variant motifs (see 3:15)

**3:28** University of Chicago, *Islamic Prayer Rugs*, 1973, pl.19

H. McCoy Jones, *The Ersari and their Weavings*, 1969, pl.13  
HALI 109, p.47, 'Rugs of Rare Beauty' exhibition (ACOR 6, 2002), no.52  
*TurkoTek* online 'Salon', February 2003, J.W. Fell, 'A Trunkful of My Favorite Things'  
C & C variant border.

**3:29 HALI 151, p.79, pl.9**

Persian Carpet Galleries (Lefevre), 24 September 1971, cover & lot 16  
H. McCoy Jones & J.W. Boucher, *Weavings of the Tribes in Afghanistan*, 1972, pl.7 (Wolf Collection)  
Sotheby's, New York, 17 December 1999, lot 36  
C & C border. Mihrab lacks frame. 'Fence' type outer guard border. According to A.B. Thacher (*Turkoman Rugs*, 1940), the border design and colours are strongly influenced by the art of Chinese Turkestan. P. Hoffmeister cites this rug in *Turkoman Carpets in Franconia*, 1980, p.70, caption to pl.21.

**Fig.36: Diamonds and triangles border**

**3:30** Rippon Boswell, 6 May 1989, lot 81  
HALI 44, ad.p.6, Rippon Boswell  
Sotheby's, New York, 4 June 1988, lot 65 (unillustrated)  
Sotheby's, New York, 3 December 2002, lot 44 (Estate of James K. Marechal)  
'Diamonds and triangles' border.



**3:31** Sotheby's, New York, 30 April 1983, lot 1  
Nagel, 5 November 1983, lot 254  
U. Jourdan, *Oriental Rugs Volume 4 Turkoman Rugs*, 1989, pl.295  
C & C border, mihrab framed by a border of stepped polygons.

**Fig.37: Diamonds and triangles border variant**

**3:32** Nagel, 16 May 1981, lot 52A  
Nagel, 11 March 1983, lot 2003  
P. Bausback, *Alte und Antike Orientalische Knupfkunst*, 1980, p.159



U. Jourdan, *Oriental Rugs Volume 4 Turkoman Rugs*, 1989, pl.296  
Nagel, 10 May 1996, lot 115 HALI 85, p.53 (Nagel).  
Variant of the 'diamonds and triangles' border.

**3:33** New England Rug Society online prayer rug exhibition, December 2002, no.22 HALI 82, p.154 (Hazledine)  
Stepped polygon border; no frame for mihrab.

**3:34** HALI 1/1, ad.p.26 (Fell)  
E. Herrmann, *Seltene Orientteppiche II*, 1979, pl.97  
C & C border & frame.

**3:35** J. Opie, *Tribal Rugs*, 1998, pl.17:17 HALI 45, ad.p.27 (Besim)  
C & C border; no frame for mihrab.

**3:36** Nagel, 15 May 2001, lot 1766  
C & C border; plants splayed and flattened; uncharacteristic filler motifs. Probably a very late piece.

**3:37** A. Levi & E. Concaro, *Sovrani Tappeti*, 1999, pl.208 (State Russian Museum, St Petersburg)  
C & C border; no frame for mihrab

**Fig.38: Stars and bars border**

**3:38** P. Bausback, *Antike Orientalische Knupfkunst*, 1977, p.195  
P. Bausback, *Antike Orientteppiche*, 1978, p.527  
HALI 4/1 ad.p.77 (Sotheby's New York)  
Sotheby's, New York, 30 October 1981, lot 165  
HALI 4/3, APG, p.308  
'Stars and bars' border.



**3:39** Nagel, 13 October 1990, lot 425 HALI 43, ad.p.66 (Bausback)  
Hybrid 'stars, circles and crosses' border.

**3:40** A.B. Thacher, *Turkoman Rugs*, 1940, pl.46  
'Stars & bars' border; no frame for mihrab.

**Fig.39: Framed, stepped, opposing polygons border**

**3:41** R. Pinner & M. Franses, *Turkoman Studies I*, 1980, p.10  
Framed, stepped, opposing polygons border; no frame for mihrab.



**3:42** D. Black, ed., *Macmillan Atlas of Rugs & Carpets*, 1985, p.174

This rug, from the Wher Collection, belongs to a sub-group which features an oversized 'head', almost as wide as the mihrab, and in which the 'frame' of the mihrab continues into the 'head' and 'neck'. The frame is identical to **3:41**.

**3:43** P. Hoffmeister, *Turkoman Carpets in Franconia*, 1980, pl.21

Similar to above; C & C border and frame.

**3:44** HALI 151, p.80, pl.12

HALI.com, 10 June 2005, Galerie Arabesque

Similar to the two above. Border and frame as in **3:41**.

**3:45** Rippon Boswell, 24 May 1997, lot 9

Rosette border. Mihrab lacks a 'head'.

**3:46** Sotheby's, London, 14 October 1998, lot 73

C & C border. Unusual in the use of scattered botchs amidst the flowering plants. Good spacing but compromised by condition.

**3:47** W.T. Price, *Divine Images and Magic Carpets: From the Asian Art Collection of Dr. and Mrs. William T. Price*, 1987, pl.49

C & C border. Very small white 'head' relative to the proportions of the rug.

**3:48** HALI 121, p.60, Galerie Arabesque

C & C border. Filler motifs of Solomon stars in white mihrab.

**3:49** HALI *French Supplement*, 1982, p.15, no.8.

'Stars and bars' border as in A.B. Thacher, *Turkoman Rugs*, 1940, pl.46 (3:40); C & C border. Unusually small size (3'11 x 4'5).

**3:50** HALI 151, p.81, pl.13

HALI 98, p.109 (Newman) Exhibited 'Passages II/San Francisco Bay Area Collections', no.23

Possibly a child's prayer rug on account of its extremely small size (2'8" x 3'0"). Only a handful of related examples of similar size are known, including **3:49**; Gulbenkian, *Tappetes Orientais*, pl.4 (**2:49**); and a somewhat larger (3'3" x 4'3") and later virtual copy of this rug, but with a *sary gyra* border (**3:51**). Opposed stepped polygon

border (see H. McCoy Jones, *The Ersari and their Weavings*, 1969, pl.52, for a similar border).

**3:51** Adil Besim, *Mythos & Mystik 3*, 2000, pl.65

Very similar to **3:51**, but with a *sary gyra* border and a *tumar* band guard border.

**Fig.40: Boxed, stylised and hooked border motif**



**3:52** HALI 151, p.82, pl.14

Nagel, 6 November 2001, lot 225 (both halves)

Half with Ronnie Newman (13 November 2004)

Half with Zia Bozoğlu (*Cloudband.com*, circa 2004/5)

Both halves now Jim Dixon Collection. A very rare vertical 'saf'. The iconography of the mihrab is similar to **3:50** and **3:51**. The mihrab 'heads' contain octofoil rosettes. The border motif is a boxed, stylised and hooked twelve-pointed star. For a similar border see Rippon Boswell, 16 November 2002, lot 24.

**3:53** E. Tsareva, *Rugs and Carpets from Central Asia. The Russian Collections*, 1984, pl.101

*Herati* central panel, no mihrab. Tsareva, however, calls this rug a 'namazlyk'. Border motifs similar to **2:44**; two columns of joined flowering plants.

**3:54** HALI 32, p.51 (Donelian Museum)

Five vertical columns of flowering plants; *sainak* border. Related to above rug.

#### SOME UNCLASSIFIED EXAMPLES

**U:1** Sotheby's, New York, 9 March 1995, lot 1 HALI 81, APG, p.122, "deceptively simple design" All-over botchs, pomegranate border.

**U:2** Sotheby's, New York, 3 December 1988, lot 108 Some similarities to Type 3, but with unusual plant forms. Polychrome squares border.

**U:3** Woolley & Wallis, 11 February 2004, lot 100 Shield-like plant forms related to above and to 3:32. Afghan silk rug, circa 1950.

**U:4** J. Bailey et al., *Through the Collector's Eye*, 1991, p.18

Unique example, ex-Charles Richardson Collection, present whereabouts unknown. C & C border. The mihrab is flanked by stylised plants, similar to E. Herrmann, *Seltene Orientteppiche II*, 1979, pl.99. The mihrab contains leafy plants atypical of the genre. Similar plants may be seen on a Central Asian carpet advertised by Eitzenberger in the 2001 HALI Fair programme.

**U:5** Lefevre, 25 January 1974, lot 12 *Herati* pattern mihrab. Boxed, quartered, 'Memling'-type border.

**U:6** *Oriental Rug Review II/5*, p.18, with Nicky Eltz. Possibly a child's prayer rug (2'5" x 3'2"). Unusual design of four linked diamonds in the mihrab.