

## A Classification of Carpets Signed by Mohammad Arjmand Kermani and a Study of the Factors Affecting its Development

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### Introduction

At the beginning of the Qajar dynasty (during the 19<sup>th</sup> century), many international companies and national carpet manufacturers started working in Iran. These manufacturers had their own signatures on carpets which were unique. This time in Kerman, there were some carpet manufacturers that played influential roles on Kerman carpet history and its introduction to the world. Besides, people who were interested in art knew artists that were familiar with Eastern and Western artists, even though Iranian leading pioneers are now subject to oblivion. Mohammad Arjmand Kermani was one of these eminent people who had a pivotal role in Kerman carpet history. Although he faced lots of challenges and hardship during his professional activities, he did not give up and continued his profession. As a result, he wrote an important chapter on Kerman's carpet.

### Research Method

The primary purpose of this research is to classify the design of signed carpets by Mohammad Arjmand Kermani and analyze the effective factors which formed the designs and motifs in his carpets. The questions are also in the same direction: a) which classifications and categories do the carpets woven by Mohammad Arjmand Kermani follow? b) What factors caused these classifications to be created? This research used a descriptive-analytical method. The research data was collected through fieldwork studies, interviews with his family and carpet experts, as well as through library studies. Furthermore, in order to accomplish the research aim, five carpet experts were selected and interviewed doing semi-structured interviews. The statistical population included those carpets signed by Mohammad Arjmand Kermani as 'Amal-E Mohammad IbneJafar', 'Mohammad Arjmand Kermani', and 'Arjmand Kermani'. Finally, twenty one signed carpets were selected due to availability and ease of access.

### Research Findings

Mohammad Arjmand Kermani was a leading carpet manufacturer who produced carpets from the late Qajar era till the Pahlavid period in Kerman. The findings of the paper showed that his lifestyle and his approach to life had a key impact on his success. For instance, during his childhood (at the age of 7) he quitted the elementary school and joined carpet designing workshops in Kerman. He was trained under the supervision of great carpet designers such as Hassan Khan Shahrokhi and Zaman Khan Mir Hosseini. Then, he learned the dying and weaving process. Consequently, from early ages he learnt how to produce a rug. Getting married with the daughter of a shawl dealer was another key event in his life. This marriage gave him the opportunity to transform his father-in-law's shawl workshop to a carpet workshop. During 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Kerman carpet was in

its golden age in terms of carpet exports. It means that during that time, many companies investigated in and dedicated their money to Kerman carpets. Thus, there was a great demand for Kerman rugs. In addition, Arjmand's personality traits, including his hard working, quick wittedness, early rising, determination, intelligence, smartness, creativity, inventiveness, responsibility, trustworthiness, respectability were important factors resulting in his success. He had various carpet signatures but the most important ones were 'Mohammad Ibn Jafar', 'Mohammad Arjmand Kermani' and 'Arjmand Kermani'. The point regarding these signatures was that each of them reflected the time of the carpet production. For example, 'Mohammad Ibn Jafar' signature indicated that those carpets were woven over the course of the Qajar era when he had no family name, and people called him after his father's name. By contrast, other signatures such as 'Arjmand Kermani' and 'Mohammad Arjmand Kermani' indicated that some carpets were woven during the Pahlavid era when he had obtained a family name. Moreover, the findings and results of this paper showed that his signed artworks were classified under two main design groups which included visual and decorative designs. Since various designs had been seen within each group, a more detailed classification for each category was proposed under the title of species. Therefore, each category had different types. The visual design group included portrait type species, governmental sign species, beliefs species, narrative species, and the imitative species affected by Western pictures. The decorative group included these species: the classic, Vase design, Vagire, Afshan, MatnPoshideh. It is worth mentioning that all these classifications were made based on his signed carpets.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this paper has showed that all Arjmand's signed carpets were attributed to two main groups which were the visual design group and the decorative design group. According to findings, it was concluded that the visual carpets that carried 'Mohammad Ibn Jafar' as the signature indicated that they belonged to the end of the Qajar period and the portrait type, attributed to the visual design group, included the picture of Mashahir (renowned people), kings, and leading rulers. Since this special species contained the pictures of the Mashahir, of monarchs such as Ahmad Shah Qajar, or of other outstanding rulers of the time, their commission by famous people to art manufactures including Mohammad Arjmand was confirmed. The second design group which was the decorative one, carried two signatures: 'Mohammad Arjmand Kermani' and 'Arjmand Kermani'. These two signatures demonstrated that these carpets were produced in the Pahlavid period and had five species, including classic, Vase, Afshan, MatnPoshideh, and Vagire designs. According to findings of this research, it was concluded that during the Pahlavid era, Arjmand had many commissions from the religious and governmental organizations (there are official documents at the museum that confirm this idea). Besides, he could manage all carpet workshops properly to manufacture quality rugs in terms of designs, colors, materials, and the weaving process. Moreover, he could produce oversize carpets for the halls of palaces. Commissions, demands, and unique carpet workshops were the most important factors affecting the designs of Mohammad Arjmand's carpets. Also, the result of fieldwork study showed that Arjmand's carpet workshops were built like a modern factory providing him with thorough control and supervision over all processes. Because of the uniqueness of his carpet workshops at that time, he could manage and address all parts of the weaving process and focus on producing various designs, quality carpets, and oversize rugs. As a result, he became a leading carpet manufacturer and obtained the nickname of 'King of Persian carpet' by foreigners.

**Keywords:** Mohammad Arjmand Kermani, Kerman carpet, Kerman carpet designs and motifs, classifications of carpet designs, signed carpets.