

Educational Programs

PUBLIC GALLERY TALK & TOUR

Timbuktu to Tibet: Rugs and Textiles of the Hajji Babas

Saturday, October 25, 11 am

Sumru Belger Krody, Associate Curator, Eastern Hemisphere Collections

Free. No reservations required; limited to 35.

FAMILY FIRST SATURDAYS

First Saturday of the Month, 2–4 pm

Drop in and explore The Textile Museum with your family. Each month's themed program focuses on different objects and activities.

Participants enjoy scavenger hunts, hands-on projects, artists' demonstrations, performances, and more. Free; no reservations required.

Dancing Along the Silk Road

Saturday, November 1, 2–4 pm

A,B,C, Arabic Alphabet

Saturday, December 6, 2–4 pm

Ring in the New Year!

Saturday, January 3, 2–4 pm

Clothing from Timbuktu to Tibet

Saturday, March 7, 2–4 pm

TEACHER WORKSHOP

Timbuktu to Tibet: Textiles for Teachers

Saturday, November 8, 10:30 am–1:30 pm

Learn how people the world over express their diverse traditions, lifestyles, fashions, and technologies through the textiles they create.

Materials for hands-on classroom activities and light refreshments are provided.

Fee: \$5.00. Advance registration required.

Call 202.667.0441, ext. 64.

FILM

Gabbeh

Saturday, December 13, 2:30 pm

An epic tale of forbidden passion and a romantic ode to beauty, nature, love, and the textile arts, *Gabbeh* tells the story of a folkloric carpet with a hidden secret. Directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, the film is introduced by Sumru Belger Krody, Associate Curator of Eastern Hemisphere Collections. In Farsi with English subtitles.

Free; advance registration required.

Call 202.667.0441, ext. 64.

EVENINGS AT THE TM

Join us for a dynamic series of programs planned for one Thursday evening each month beginning in November. This series is funded by Eleanor T. and Samuel J. Rosenfeld. Fee per lecture: \$15/members; \$20/non-members.

Register for the series to receive a discount!

Fee for the series: \$80/members; \$105/non-members.

Advance registration required, seating is limited.

Call 202.667.0441, ext 64.

Daily Splendors: An Exploration of the Culinary and Decorative Arts of Africa and Asia

Thursday, November 6, 6:30 pm

Join Amy Riolo, culinary historian and author of *Arabian Delights*, for a lecture, demonstration, and book signing. Following the talk, enjoy a selection of delicious international foods.

Tapestry of Sound: Classical Indian Ragas

Thursday, January 8, 6:30 pm

Enjoy an evening of listening to classical Indian ragas performed on the sitar and surbahara. Shubha Sankaran is the only woman actively performing the surbahar on the global concert circuit, and the only artist focusing exclusively on that instrument. Brian Q. Silver was recognized for his sitar artistry by the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities and by the National Endowment for the Arts.

LUNCHTIME GALLERY TALKS

Free. No reservations required; limited to 35.

Take a break and join The Textile Museum for a series of lunchtime talks in the exhibition *Timbuktu to Tibet: Rugs and Textiles of the Hajji Babas*. Join curators and other experts as they share insight on select works from their unique perspective.

Rugs for Court and Commerce

Thursday, February 12, 12–12:30 pm

Daniel Walker, Director

Design Transfers

Thursday, February 19, 12–12:30 pm

Sumru Belger Krody, Associate Curator, Eastern Hemisphere Collections

Central Asian Rugs and Textiles

Thursday, February 26, 12–12:30 pm

Richard Isaacson, Independent Researcher

LOCATION

The Textile Museum is located at 2320 S Street, NW, a ten-minute walk north of the Q Street exit of the Dupont Circle Metro station (Red line).

MUSEUM AND SHOP HOURS

Monday through Saturday 10 am–5 pm;

Sunday 1–5 pm. Closed Federal holidays and

December 24.

ADMISSION

Free with a suggested donation of \$5 for non-members.

TOURS

Highlights Tours, offered each Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 pm, feature selections from the different exhibitions on view. No reservations

are required. Docent-guided exhibition tours for groups of six to forty may be scheduled for Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays after 10:15 am, and Thursdays after 1:30 pm. To schedule, call 202.667.0441, ext. 65 at least four weeks in advance.

MUSEUM SHOP

The Textile Museum Shop—hailed as one of Washington, D.C.'s best museum stores—offers a unique array of handmade textiles, jewelry, books, gifts, and other merchandise created by contemporary textile artists. For more information, call 202.667.0441, ext. 29. Shop online anytime at www.textilemuseumshop.org.

WEB SITE

Visit www.textilemuseum.org for information on current exhibitions, upcoming public programs, museum membership, and more. While there, sign up for the Museum's e-newsletter to receive updates on Museum activities, programs, and news.

The Hajji Baba Club

In 1932, a group of like-minded men met in New York to found a club, which they named after Hajji Baba, the hero of the nineteenth-century novel, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* by James Justinian Morier. Hajji Baba Club members shared a passion for collecting and studying Oriental rugs. Over the years, the Hajji Baba Club has had enormous impact on how we view, appreciate, study, and promote rugs as well as other textiles as an art form and as objects of cultural significance. The Hajji Babas have also served an important role in making textiles and rugs a part of the art historical discourse. George Hewitt Myers, founder of The Textile Museum, was an active member of the Club. To celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Hajji Baba Club, members chose to share their enthusiasm with a wider public by presenting for exhibition a varied and exciting selection of rugs and textiles in *Timbuktu to Tibet: Rugs and Textiles of Hajji Babas*, drawn from the holdings of members past and present.

Timbuktu to Tibet

RUGS AND TEXTILES OF THE HAJJI BABAS

October 18, 2008–March 8, 2009

CAPTIONS

Figure 1 Cover (*arkilla jemgo*), West Africa, Mali, 19th or 20th century, Collection of Karen A. Bennett

Figure 2 Double bag (*khordjin*), Bakhtiari, Iran, 19th or 20th century, James C. Morel, New York, NY

Figure 3 Animal trapping, Turkmen, Central Asia, 18th or 19th century, Nancy Jeffries and Kurt Munkacsi

Figure 4 and cover (detail) Textile fragment, Ottoman, Turkey, 16th century, The Textile Museum 1.70, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1952

Figure 5 Carpet fragment, Safavid, Iran, 16th century, Marshall and Marilyn R. Wolf Collection



THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

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Timbuktu to Tibet: RUGS AND TEXTILES OF THE HAJJI BABAS

Within the diverse cultural traditions, lifestyles, fashions, and technologies represented by textiles, there are common threads that bind us together. People around the world use textiles to meet physical, aesthetic, and spiritual needs: clothing themselves, defining their living spaces, and performing their rituals. As social currency, textiles reveal a great deal about an individual's wealth, social status, occupation, and religious and ethnic associations, as well as a culture's values, codes, and social order. Textiles support commerce and delight us with their color and ornament.

One of the determining factors in how textiles have been made, decorated, and used from Africa to East Asia is whether the people creating them are nomadic or settled. The textiles produced by these two divergent groups differ greatly in terms of their aesthetic, technical, and functional qualities; because of their continuous interaction, however, nomadic and settled people have shaped each other's textile traditions. The *arkilla* from Mali exemplifies this point beautifully (Fig. 1). *Arkillas* are woven by the Songhay-speaking Peul or Fulani people in central Mali in the inland delta region of the Niger River. They sell these textiles to the Tuareg nomads, who do not weave. The Tuareg in turn use the *arkillas* in their tents as covers or dividers, or sometimes at weddings as blankets.



Fig. 1

CARAVANS, COVERS, AND CONTAINERS

In nomadic societies, which are diminishing rapidly, textiles facilitate life on the move and provide a medium for artistic expression. They were made for personal use, never for sale except in times of extreme hardship. In addition to their practical role in everyday living, as bags, covers, and bedding, textiles were used as decorations on animals and in tents during special occasions such as weddings, religious ceremonies, and when hosting guests.

In order to pursue their way of life successfully, nomads would have required a fairly high level of material wealth. In Jon Thompson's words, "The nomadic way of life had nothing to do with vagrancy or simply wandering about." Its basis was the breeding of livestock and migration between sets of terrain not usable at all times of the year. Wool and leather were basic necessities for the nomadic way of life. Nomads had to have three important possessions to survive: equipment for living—tents, felts, ropes, bedding, cooking utensils; camels or other sorts of animals to carry belongings and housing elements; and a large enough group of livestock to provide meat, milk, leather, and wool.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Nomads relied heavily on textiles for containing and carrying their belongings as well as for creating and furnishing their tents. They produced covers and containers in a variety of shapes and sizes to serve these purposes. Women of the Bakhtiari tribe in west central Iran wove a special type of double-bag called *khorjin* using three different weaving techniques—knotted-pile, weft-wrapping (*soumak*), and tapestry weave (Fig. 2). These bags contained attractive sets of slits and loops around the openings which were used to fasten the bag closed. The bags were then placed on the animal's back and secured with woven bands.

The weaving of nomads is a traditional art form maintained only by women, who weave from memory. Knowledge of the designs is passed down from grandmother to mother to daughter. Their traditional designs have been used for centuries with little change, often making these textiles difficult to date. Many motifs embellishing nomadic textiles have now-forgotten origins, but the ease with which these motifs could be memorized ensured their continued use with little change over a period of five or more centuries.

By the time of her wedding, a young nomadic woman, such as a Turkmen of Central Asia, would have woven the basic furnishings—storage bags, a door rug, a large floor carpet—for the tent in which she and her future husband would live. Of particular importance were the weavings used on her wedding day, which included pairs of large trappings for the decoration of the camel on which she would ride, concealed within a covered litter, to meet her husband's family (Fig. 3).



Fig. 4

TEXTILES FOR URBAN SOCIETY

Textiles with the most intricate designs, complex weave structures, and very expensive silk and metal yarns are the products of people living in settled societies, who have the financial and human resources to devote to this art form. For centuries, the great disposable incomes of the wealthy urban elite and the ruling families provided the assets to sustain highly specialized and skilled craftsmen, from designers to weavers, who worked on major weaving projects. Urban societies can also provide the time and means for sericulture, and for growing cotton, both of which produce important materials for weaving. Unlike nomadic communities, settled communities have no strict time frame for weaving; there is no need to finish work before disassembling the loom to move on to the next pasture.

In traditional Islamic society, the fashion leader was the king, shah, sultan or local ruler who, according to the ideals of the time, maintained an artistic establishment employing poets, artists, musicians, and a great variety of skilled craftsmen. These craftsmen produced items of the highest quality, such as weapons, furnishings, clothing, and animal trappings for the court's use. These courtly styles were closely followed by people of lesser means, who were always keen to stay in fashion. High on the list of desirable items were silk textiles, which were produced by the most advanced technology of the times and were often the most expensive items in circulation (Fig. 4). These silk textiles were frequently copied using a less expensive material, such as silk instead of metallic threads, or a technology which did not require large complex looms, such as embroidery.

Carpets were produced at every level of urban society; however, those destined for the royal court were carefully designed in the prevailing courtly style, woven by skilled craftsmen under the direction of the ruler's staff, and created with the most costly materials available. Owing to the perishable nature of such materials, very few such carpets have survived intact (Fig. 5). The highly complex and sophisticated designs and myriad colors of the textiles produced to serve the needs of the ruling court influenced generations of weavers and embroiderers from all walks of life.

Sumru Belger Krody
Associate Curator, Eastern Hemisphere Collections

For further in-depth discussion of these topics, see Jon Thompson's books, *Timbuktu to Tibet: Exotic Rugs and Textiles from New York Collections* (2008) and *Oriental Carpets from the Tents, Cottages and Workshops of Asia* (1993). Both are available in The Textile Museum Shop and The Arthur D. Jenkins Library.



Fig. 5