

## UNDER WESTERN EYES



## First experiences of Iranian hospitality

(Part 2)

By Flowergyaru

I sat down and set about waiting for his wife to come. I sat on a bench with five other women, and within seconds we were all chatting happily away (they spoke no English and I no Farsi, but our sign language was great!).

We talked about families, our countries, and love. It was great fun, who would have thought that a trip to the post office would be such a special experience!

At the appointed time, the gentleman's wife appeared in full chador. The three of us jumped into a taxi and sped of into the suburbs pulling up to a high fence.

Tall fences give complete security to houses. The house itself was a 3 room apartment with the living room being the main entertainment area. Large carpets covered the floors - this is where sitting and eating is done.

The couple had two children who took to me instantly showing me all their toys and DVDs.

It was very surreal to sit on the floor eating cucumbers, sipping tea and watching Iranian TVs.

I stayed for hours, enjoying my first real glimpse into Iranian life. We ate, napped, and ate again. I had to convince them to let me go home to my hotel that night - they wanted me to stay with them as long as I liked. What lovely people.

The next few days I spent wandering the Bazaar, visiting the museum and basically seeing as much of the town as I could. I was the only foreigner I met - it was great!

Walking on the street people would stop and stare (I was instantly spotted as a foreigner) but most were too shy to approach me.

On my last day in town, one of the women I had met at the post office, had managed to track me down at my hotel. She wanted me to come and stay at their house, and here, have these gifts. I was overwhelmed. Unfortunately I had made arrangements at the next place and had to move on, so she very kindly helped me to the bus station and to get my ticket.

### First impressions of Iran? I love it

The bus ride from Tabriz to Qazvin was certainly exciting! We managed to break down, not once, but several times. The first few times everyone just piled off the bus to wait while it was fixed, but the third time, the bus driver just gave up - liquid was pouring out of the back.

The women settled down to wait for another bus to come along while the men crowded the bus assistant demanding their money back.

Some of my money was refunded before the bus driver stopped a truck for me (I was the only one heading to Qazvin) and got me a lift to my destination. I was a bit dubious at first, but the driver was a true gentleman, offering me tea (in true Iranian style).

The main purpose of visiting Qazvin was to visit the Assassin's castles (main one being Alamut) in the area.

Alamut was once a mountain fortress in the arid hills, thought to have been originally built in 840, at an elevation of 2,100 m. It was built in a way that had only one passable artificial entrance that wound its way around the cliff face (the one natural approach, a steep gravel slope, was too dangerous to use); thus making conquering the fortress extremely difficult.

In 1090 the fortress was invaded and occupied by the powerful Hashshashin who used it as a base to go out and assassinate their persecutors and other powerful forces in the region. As in most of the region I am travelling through, Alamut was finally conquered and destroyed by the Mongols.

I had teamed up with a Frenchman staying at my hotel and hired a car and guide. The guide was fantastic, a real character in his bright red clothes driving his falling to pieces Hillman Hunter. We wound over hills and through valleys, occasionally catching glimpses of tiny villages through the clouds - it would have been a beautiful day if it wasn't for the weather.

Our guide parked at the bottom of a mountain and pointed up, just saying one word: 'Alamut.'

He wanted us to climb it... I was a bit dubious as our guide looked out of shape, but, as I found out very quickly he was absolutely in shape, a mountain climber, and I was the unfit one.

It was a struggle for me to climb the mountain. I was hot and sticky - but, an hour and a half later, after much encouragement and pushing, I made it to the top. A big accomplishment, I was feeling good.

The view, when the clouds occasionally parted, was amazing. It felt like we were on top of the world. The fortress itself wasn't too exciting... but the view! Oh yeah, when we were a little over half-way up, we came across the path that the locals were using, with the car park a short 5 min walk away.

(Source: Tourists' personal blog)  
(To be Contd.)

# Jajim, genuine nomadic art



A rural man weaving a jajim on a horizontal loom.

Compiled by our staff writers

Jajim is popular in many villages and nomadic tribal regions. The only difference between various jajims is their color and delicacy of thread and patterns. The most important element in a weaver of jajim is her/his patience and ability.

After obtaining the needed thread and different dyes, the jajim is woven. The majority of jajims are woven in an open space (such as streets or workshops in a village). This is called the stretching of the jajim. Special and delicate designs and patterns such as Joulma, Sirga, bricks, almond, or the bezel of the ring are used in the jajim.

Since the majority of the inhabitants of Khalkhal city, Khoresh Rostam district and their surrounding villages are skilled weavers of jajim, the jajim woven in these regions is famous. Givi Zavieh, Nimhil, Nassaz, Barandaq, Jafarabad, Sajhrud and Chenar Liq are famous villages where jajim is woven.

Jajim has a thick cloth like palas. However, it is a kind of two-side carpet, which is thinner than palas. Jajim is woven with colorful and fine threads of wool or mixture of silk and wool. It is a hand weave with no fluff and its two surfaces could be used. It is a tribal weaving and used as a coverlet or protector from coldness.

Before coming of quilt and blanket, jajim has been the only coverlet of tribesmen. Although it is rough and coarse, it will become fine and delicate by continuous use very soon.

Weaving of jajim is simpler than kilim and more common, as well. A common jajim with 2.5 meter length and 2 meter width could be woven in less than a month by two weavers, contrary to a rug that has millions of knots or kilim that has tens of motifs in several colors.

There are fine jajims woven in tribes, which have 3 to 4 mm thickness. These jajims are used for decoration.

Jajim, like kilim, is woven on horizontal loom. According to the pattern, which weaver has in mind, colorful warps with certain space have been prepared,

rows or stripped in different colors. Corners of each row have ornaments similar to basic images of 'Kongere Madakhel,' which narrow parts of tooth are towards the inside and in front of each other making a fantastic design.

'Flower.' Like other jajim images, is in parallel lines, but darker colors in each row, beside the next row, placed close to each other in such a manner, that are seen as a beautiful images. These images, according to weaver's taste, which is specified by colors, create such beautiful flowers, which are compared to seven-color napkin.

'Toothed.' Parallel lines of these jajims have 3 to 4 cm width. Each row has specific color. In the middle of each row, 'toothed' basic image passes throughout jajim length and makes itself apparent among colors.

'Shisheh-Dermah' jajim These jajims are mostly used for decoration and hardly woven in tribes. 'Shisheh-Dermah' is usually woven in two dark and light colors and sometimes with a margin, which is in harmony with ground in color.

This kind of jajim is mostly seen in dark blue and white, margin in white and black or in white and red. It is one sided hand woven, as the extra wefts of its other side are seen. Basic images of 'Shisheh-Dermah' are lozenges, in which their sides are along to each other. In the center of every lozenge, a special motif is woven. Margin is woven in parallel lines and stripped and in harmony with ground.

'Needle' (Rend) jajim Images of these jajims are like those of kilim (in both ground and margin). Peacock, Cashmere Flower, Khorasan, Lengej, Tehran, Aqajeri, Someh-dan, flower leaf, Alma flower, and images in various colors are mostly used; and wool or fuzz warps and wefts, make images magnificent. Sizes of these jajims, depending to the usage, are different, but 2x2.5 m is more common. Corners of jajims, used as bedspread, are decorated by Gumpuls and colorful pendants.

'Checkeded.' This kind of jajim is woven in small and large squares. Colorful warps replace each other and show applied colors in every square, so lighten and darken colors of the ground. Sometimes it is decorated with small woolen Gumpuls which gives it special brightness. These Gumpuls are applied in the center of squares or on the corner of them, in rows or zigzag pattern, as margin of jajim.

'Khotab.' Khotab is woven in parallel

## "When something is so obvious, there is no need to be expressed"

Compiled by our staff writers

The title of this article is an Iranian proverb, which is commonly used by ordinary people. This proverb has been one verse of a poem written by an anonymous poet.

However, this verse after being used by Zahir Aldin Mohammad Baber, the founding father of Gurkani dynasty in India, in one of his poems became famous (Baber has been an able poet).

From that time, this verse turned into a very common proverb among Farsi speakers.

Baber in Turkish means 'tiger.' Zahir Aldin's nickname was tiger, which in Persian culture is the symbol of bravery and chivalrousness. He has been a courageous warrior and conquerer.

After his father passed away, he came to power and had to defeat some pretenders including his uncles.

On his grandmother's advice, he asked a Tajik tribal chief to help him trounce rivals. When confronting his uncle Ahmad, he said the following verses:

Don't fight with the 'tiger' Amhad the Freeman  
Tiger's agility and wisdom is obvious  
If you resist for long and don't take advice  
"When something is so obvious, there is no need to be expressed"

## Landmark masterpiece of Western genre

Compiled by our staff writers

'The Wild Bunch' (1969) is director/co-writer Sam Peckinpah's brilliant yet controversial Western, shocking for its graphic and elevated portrayal of violence and savagely-explicit carnage, yet hailed for its truly realistic and reinterpreted vision of the dying West in the early 20th century.

Peckinpah had earlier directed another classic western about the West's passing, 'Ride the High Country' (1962) and the epic western film 'Major Dundee' (1965). Many of the film's major stars, including William Holden, Edmond O'Brien, Robert Ryan and Ben Johnson, were veterans of westerns with a more romantic view of the West in the 40s and 50s. This hard-edged film was beautifully shot in wide-screen by cinematographer Lucien Ballard.

Its unrelenting, bleak tale tells of aging outlaws (the 'wild bunch') bound by a private code of honor, camaraderie, and friendship, but they find that they are at odds with the society of 1913. The lone band of men led by Pike Bishop (William Holden) have come to the end of the line and no longer are living under the same rules in the Old West. They are relentlessly being stalked by bounty hunters, one of whom is Pike's former friend Deke Thornton (Robert Ryan), who would rather side with the outlaws if it weren't for the threat of being sent back to Yuma Prison.

The film's posters stated the theme of changing times and the industrial revolution in the early 20th century of Texas and Mexico, at a time when airplanes, cars, and machine guns were being introduced into society.



## CELEBRITY

## Breaking through the cutting edge of science

Compiled by our staff writers

Loftali Askar-Zadeh (born 1921) is a mathematician and computer scientist, and a professor of computer science at the University of California, Berkeley. He is an Iranian of Azeri descent.

He studied at Alborz College in Tehran, and later at the University of Tehran, from which he received the B.S. degree in electrical engineering in 1942.

He traveled to the United States in 1944 to pursue graduate studies, and received the M.S. degree in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1946.

Subsequently, he joined the faculty of Columbia University as an instructor in electrical engineering, where he earned the Ph.D. degree in 1949 and was appointed assistant professor in 1950. He was promoted to the rank of Professor in 1957.

In 1959, Dr. Askar-Zadeh left Columbia University to join the faculty of Electrical Engineering Department at the University of California, Berkeley. He was named Chairman of the department in 1963. During his five-year tenure as Chairman, the department was run efficiently.

He has continued his teaching and research career as the Professor Emeritus from 1991 at Berkeley in his capacity as Director of the Berkeley Initiative in Soft Computing.



ASKAR ZADEH

At Columbia University, he taught courses in electromagnetic theory, circuit analysis, system theory, information theory, and sequential machines.

His doctoral dissertation initiated a new direction in frequency analysis of time-varying networks. In 1950, he co-authored, with Professor J. R. Ragazzini, a seminal paper on an extension of Wiener's theory of prediction. In 1952, he co-authored, also with Professor J. R. Ragazzini, a paper on sampled-data systems, which led to the widely used method of z-transformation.

After moving to Berkeley, he focused his attention on linear systems and automata theory. This work led to his collaboration with Professor Charles Desoer on a text on linear system theory entitled The State Space Approach, which laid the foundations for the modern approach to systems analysis and control.

In 1965, he authored his seminal paper on fuzzy sets. This landmark paper initiated a new direction, which, over the past three decades, has led to a vast literature and a rapidly growing number of applications ranging from consumer products to subway trains and decision-support systems.

In the future, the impact of fuzzy logic is likely to be felt not only in the realm of products and manufacturing, but also in the basic sciences, and especially in mathematics, physics, and chemistry.

He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and a Foreign Member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences.

Among his awards are the Ronda Prize, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers' Rudolf Oldenburger Medal, the Grigore Moisil Prize, the Kampe de Fariet Medal and several honorary doctorates.

He is also a fellow of American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Association for Computing Machinery, and the American Association for Artificial Intelligence. He was awarded the IEEE Medal of Honor in 1995 "For pioneering development of fuzzy logic and its many diverse applications."