

## Persian Rug or Kilim. To Weave a Masterpiece

The tools need to create some of the worlds most intriguing rugs are surprisingly few. One is a loom. It may be large as in a modern industrial factory or it may be small enough to carry on the back of a horse. The looms' role is to hold the warps (longitudinal strands) under tension so that the weaver may weave the wefts (horizontal strands) between the warps to fabricate the rug. The earliest portable looms were backstrap, ground, warp-weighted or frame. A backstrap loom is used while the vertical warp thread is attached to a branch or some other appropriate object and tied around a tree and around the weavers back. Tension is adjusted by leaning back, hence the name.

The ground loom would be strung between rows of pegs with the weaver being forced to work while leaning over the loom. This led to the "pit loom" being developed (necessity being the mother of invention) whereby the weaver could be level with the loom while her legs were in the pit in the ground.

The warp-weighted loom has the vertical "warp" thread suspended from a branch or a tree and attached to the ground or weighted down as the name suggests. The "weft" thread (horizontal) would then be woven across the warp threads by hand or with the aid of a rod. A frame loom is based on the same principles as other looms with the addition of a frame enabling the loom to be carried easily. For the purposes of this discussion we will not delve into modern looms. Also required for the production of early rugs were a few more tools. The beating comb is much the same as our modern day comb, except it is of course much larger. It can be made of wood, bone, horn, metal or a combination of these. Its function is to compress the wefts lines to get the resulting tightly woven Persian rug or kilim. A knife or scissors are used for obvious reasons. The shuttle is a stick with notches in the ends. The weft end is put in the notch and the shuttle is inserted between alternate warps to produce a weave. However, most weavers prefer to do this with their own hands.

### Persian rug materials

Fine rugs are always made with natural materials, cotton, wool and silk are the most common; silk being the most expensive of course and the most highly prized. The popularity of wool as the prime material used to make a Persian rug or kilim lies in its inherent properties. Wool is flexible, durable, readily takes on dyes and easy to handle when it is spun or woven. Also it must be noted that wool is readily available in the regions where Persian rugs and kilims are made due to the nomadic life of the peoples in these regions.

This is one of the intriguing characteristics of rug making peoples whereby the Persian rug or kilim can be ascertained to come from a certain tribe based on the wool that is used and the dye also. Some sheep's wool is more highly sought after and makes a more lustrous Persian rug or kilim.

Cotton is commonly used for warps because its high strength makes it keep its shape. Also it retains its natural whiteness through the passage of time. A third reason is that as cotton can be spun into thin strands. Animal hair (goat, horse or camel) is used in the making of Persian or kilim rugs to create certain effects. Camel hair is sometimes used to give extra strength to a woolen rug. Horse hair is used to provide attractive bangs or tassels. Fine goat hair when mixed with wool gives a silky sheen. Silk will always be a luxurious material which is why silk rugs are rare but still produced. As part of a brides' dowry a silk rug or kilim will be jealously treasured as a status symbol and protected as family wealth.

Gold or silver thread, beads and baubles and other decorative items may be included in the design of a Persian rug or kilim.

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### About the Author

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