

# Safavid Persian Carpets

## Part One

The 16<sup>th</sup> century was of great importance to the Persian art history which includes carpet weaving. In this article, **Boustani Glorious Handicrafts** shows you the great flowering of local arts under ruling of the [Safavid](#) dynasty, the first native empire that governed on all across the Iran since the 7<sup>th</sup> century [Arab conquest of Persia](#).



The Maximum Extent of the Safavid Empire under Shah Abbas I

The course of these rulers (from 1499 to 1722) includes what is considered to be the classic period of Persian carpet weaving. Before the Safavids we have no evidence that the art was anything more than a village craft (the first carpets to appear in miniatures were small and covered with repeating rectilinear figures). But under Safavid patronage design took a revolutionary direction toward curvilinear rather than rectilinear patterns.



The Rothschild Small Silk Medallion Carpet.1540 to 1560-The Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar

In process of carpet designing, the medallion format and arabesque detail reached new heights of aesthetical perfectionism. The new patterns required a highly developed technique, with cartoons drawn before the weaving began. Unfortunately, despite thousands of pages of speculation, surprisingly little is known about these carpets, and there is meager likelihood of our ever acquiring more specific information. Still, we may approach the problem from several direction: attempting to date carpets, to locate their places of origin, and with this information to outline a coherent picture of the development of weaving during the Golden Age. This achieved step by step with the increasing progress of fine techniques of weaving that facilitated the rendering of complicated, curvilinear details.



Ardabil Carpet.mid-16th century-V&A Museum, London

Our data in the first area are most convincing, although few in number. Among the 2500 to 3000 carpets and fragments that have survived from this period, only a few are dated. [Ardabil Carpet](#) dated 1539 is famous among these, now in the Victoria and Albert museum in London. We also have inventories listing the possessions of various European princes who acquired Persian carpets or commissioned their produce, and these provide an approximate date with only slightly less accuracy. The last method of dating is by inference, drawing conclusions about carpets with design elements similar to these to those of other arts, such as architecture and miniature painting, both of which are often more datable.



Central Medallion of Ardabil Carpet.mid-16th century-V&A Museum, London

Localization as to place of origin is more difficult and has been done with certainty for very few early carpets. Generally this is accomplished by grouping carpets together according to design and construction, then assigning them to a city where carpets are thought or known to have been made. This has led to great disagreement among art historians. Four major areas are frequently chosen as centers of production: **Isfahan**, **Kashan**, **Tabriz**, **Kerman**, eastern Persia.