



Antique Agra, Circa 1880

Ref: 28574

Size: 16' 5" x 29' 4"

Content: Wool

Collection: Antique

Hand-knotted in India

Agra Carpet, 16'5 x 29'4, Northern India, Circa 1880

Unlike Persia, India seems not to have had a longstanding tradition of pile carpet weaving reaching deep into the past. It was only in the aftermath of the Mogul conquest of India under Babur in the early sixteenth century, that the rulers of this new dynasty began to foster the production of court style carpets like those that they had patronized in their earlier capital at Herat in Central Asia. But Mogul court carpets soon began to rival the masterpieces being produced at the same time under the Safavid Dynasty in Persia. By the time of Shah Jahangir, patron of the famous Taj Mahal, the finest Mogul carpets were woven in the capital at Agra.

This magnificent Agra carpet is the true heir to these Indian masterpieces of the seventeenth century, for like them it rivals the craftsmanship, design, and luxurious presence of the greatest Persian court rugs. The field consists of a classic Safavid mina khani or interlacing vine trellis pattern that unfolds rhythmically across the field in delicate all-over symmetry. The delicate vine stems provide the organizing structure of the design, but they recede before our eyes, giving pride of place to the grand, stylized palmettes and 'cloudband' motifs that spew forth from the vines. The tonality of the floral components is delicate, relying on soft shades of gold, tan, or sage and ivory. But their subtle color contrasts beautifully with the underlying rich red field, whose saturated depth endows the carpet with the quality of color for which the finest Safavid Persian and Mogul carpets were famed. Somewhat more richly colored palmettes fill the main border, arranged as an intermittent continuous vinescroll set against a variegated soft forest green ground. Minor vinescroll borders on red and gold grounds underscore the framing effect of the main border. But ultimately it is the palatial scale this carpet that makes it the unquestioned equal of the great Mogul court carpets from which it is descended. The luminous quality of the wool pile can only be appreciated at first hand.