



Antique Tabriz, Circa 1880

Ref: 31104

Size: 10' 3" x 14' 4"

Content: Wool

Collection: Antique

Hand-knotted in Persia

Antique Tabriz Carpet, 10' x 14'4" Northwest Persia, Circa 1880

Situated in the far northwest of Persia, the city of Tabriz has been a leading center for the production of the finest rugs and carpets since the fourteenth century, if not earlier. By 1500 Tabriz had emerged as a major power center for the Safavid dynasty, and many of the great carpet masterpieces of this period were made there. During the great revival of rug weaving in the nineteenth century Tabriz still had its master weaver-designers like the famed Haji Jalili, and Tabriz once again became a great carpet-producing city. Given this long and distinguished tradition, it comes as no surprise that no other Persian center of rug weaving can demonstrate a comparable range of designs or pattern types. The Tabriz design repertory is actually so rich and varied, that its products cannot be identified according to pattern or motif, but rather through the distinctive combination of refined classical Persian design with a preference for symmetrical knotting, extra wefting, and, at times, dyed warps. Whatever sorts of design one prefers, and whether one inclines to room size rugs or smaller pieces, they may all be found among the outstanding products of Tabriz right down to the present time.

This magnificent piece echoes the great 'tree carpets' of northwest Persia made in the decades before and after 1600, especially the famous example in the Philadelphia Museum of Art¹. Like such classical forerunners, the design is as much pictorial as ornamental. It consists of vertical columns of trees and flowering shrubs arranged around a central axis of symmetry. Most notable are the delicate cypress trees arranged in pairs at the the lower end and one central cypress toward the top. Graceful weeping willows with swaying branches echo this three-part arrangement with two in the upper corners and one in the center at the lower end. The leafy bush in the very center is unique within the design. The remaining spaces are filled by various flowering trees, some emerging from vases. The pictorial element is emphasized by the small landscape elements from which most of the trees appear to 'grow.' The coloration is soft – sage and darker greens, burnt sienna, and ivory, all set against a warm, 'abrashed' terracotta ground. The main border consists of several of the field elements – cypress trees, flowering bushes, and vases sprouting vines – arranged in

1 C. Grant Ellis, *Oriental Carpets in the Philadelphia Museum of Art*, Philadelphia 1988, no. 47, 153-159.

serial repletion, framed by minor borders of Persian arabesques, but set against an ivory ground for contrast with the field. Four bushes of different form fill the corners of the border, accenting its framing structure. This is the very essence of the classical Persian elegance for which the weavers of Tabriz were famed.