



Antique Tabriz, Circa 1900

Ref: 31103

Size: 12' 8" x 19'

Content: Wool

Collection: Antique

Hand-knotted in Persia

Antique Tabriz Carpet, 12'8"x 19' Northwest Persia, Circa 1900

The city of Tabriz in the far northwest of Persia 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 become 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. Because of this long and distinguished tradition, it comes as no other Persian center of rug weaving can match the wide range of designs or pattern types of Tabriz carpets. The Tabriz design repertory is actually so incredibly 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 exquisite Tabriz is descended from the Herati designs often attributed to eastern Persia and named for the city of Herat¹. The basic design component, two curving, 'sickle' shaped leaves surrounding a rosette, is arranged in groups of four surrounding a diamond-shaped lattice of flowering vines. This design module is then repeated endlessly in vertical and horizontal rows as an all-over pattern. At times this pattern is described metaphorically as a mahi or 'fish' design because of the resemblance of the small sickle leaves to the fish of this name. But what distinguishes the mahi mahi from the classical Herati design is the much smaller scale of the sickle leaves in proportion to the field. This fine scale endows the overall design with a delicate, lace-like quality. The uniformity of the endlessly repeating elements is varied and punctuated by the use of color. The floral and leaf elements are done in rich red, blue, green, and ivory, nicely contrasting to the deep aubergine of the ground. The main border then returns to the grander, classical scale of the sickle leaves, providing a

¹ W. von Bode and E. Kühnel, *Antique Rugs from the Near East*, 4th revised edition, trans C. Grant Ellis, Ithaca, NY., 1984, 118-124, Figs. 86-88

striking contrast to the field, which is underscored by the rich red ground of the main border. The framing effect of the border is further emphasized by the golden yellow-ground minor borders of interlacing vines. A masterful use of rhythmic color and symmetry in the grand Tabriz tradition.