

# CARVING A SPECIAL NICHE



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Left: Birds and flowers in a Naein designed by Pahlawaan Safei  
Right: The largest carpet ever made in Tabriz is now in Abu Dhabi

# CARVING A SPECIAL NICHE

**Today, Dawood Hossein Zadeh takes us to the fourth and last of the major carpet producing regions, Naein, where an industry was created from nothing at all to a major source of the finest carpets being made in Iran today. We take a look at the biggest precious carpet you can buy in the UAE, and Dawood dispels a myth about child labour involved in making rugs...**

by Joan van der Merwe  
Pictures by Abdul Rahman

**N**aein is a small town located in central Iran, on the border of the desert area Dasht-e-Kavir, and was for many centuries a thriving textile centre. The town was famous for its fine hand woven cloth and was in great demand for the Abba, the winter over-robos of the wealthy Middle Eastern man.

But the European industrial revolution, which had such a positive effect in so many ways on the carpet trade of Iran, was virtually a disaster for Naein's cloth

weavers because Middle Eastern countries started to import the machine-made woollen cloth from the mills of Yorkshire. The unemployed cloth weavers had to look outside Naein for employment, and they saw that weavers in Isfahan and Yas were doing very well making carpets, so once again it was the case of market forces creating a new carpet source: the Naein.

There was no gradual build-up into fine quality carpets from the Naein weavers. From the outset they knew what the market

wanted was "best sellers", and this is what they set out to produce. Because they were new to rug making, they had no preconceived ideas, they were totally open minded.

The first Naeins were all copies of other regional carpets, mostly Isfahan, but of course the colours were different, the desert terrain produced different vegetable matter for the dyes, softer more gentle shades.

Gradually the designs were modified and took on their own Naein characteristics, producing

a carpet that was uniquely their own. Traders soon discovered the Naein weavers and appreciated their ability to assimilate new ideas. They became a prime source for "specials", the large or differently shaped carpets.

The colours of the Naein are like no others, in particular their creamy beiges, the red that is clear but never harsh, light and dark blues and in recent years, they have perfected a beautiful, almost translucent green.

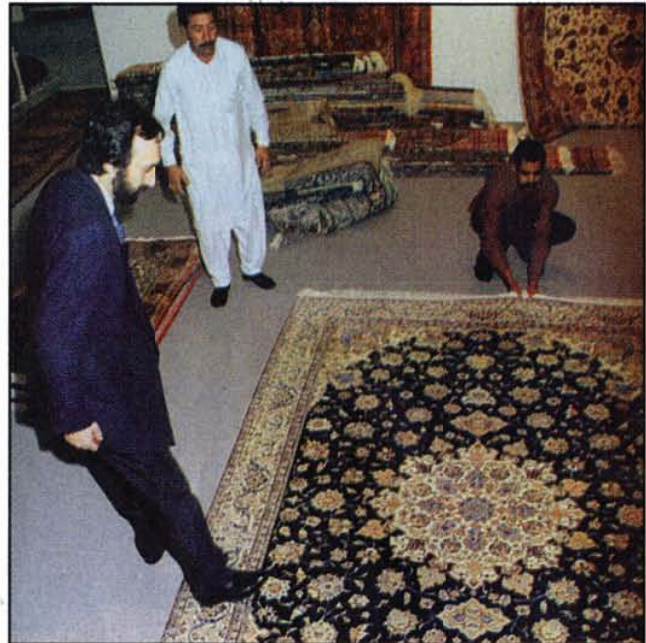
The best customers for the Naein come close to home, ➔





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Above: Dawood shows us a typical Naein Medallion and corners, with flowers  
Left: A Naein Shah Abbasi floral design

the Middle East customer who has always lived with carpets and who has appreciated the subtlety of the Naein. In Europe it is France where the Naein finds its largest market.

The willingness to try new things created an excellent market for Naeins in Japan, where square carpets are very popular, and the huge carpets so at home in the palaces, are likely to have been made in Naein.

The Zaromin changes its size when it comes from Naein in that it is longer, 2.2m. x 1.10m., and recapping from our first article, depending on its quality, it will cost between Dh.

1,800 to Dh. 7,000.

Talking of carpet sizes, the largest precious carpet the Hossein Zadehs have ever handled has just come for sale on consignment. It is a silk and wool Tabriz 25.5.m. x 15.25.m.

The largest carpet ever made in Tabriz, it is a brilliant Heriz design made with 100 per cent natural vegetable dyes.

This was a special order, and 15 weavers were working on it full time. Half way through the carpet, the customer pulled out, leaving the weavers with a half finished carpet and no visible means of income. They felt that the only thing they could do at

this stage was to finish it themselves. Not an easy task when you have to make other carpets in between for a living. But finally it was finished and they called on the Hossein Zadeh company to sell it for them.

Only by looking closely at the photograph (see main picture, previous page) can you judge the size of this carpet; look at the men handling it and the relative size of the lorry close by.

Next week we take a look at how these fine carpets are made and follow the story of Jalil Hossein Zadeh's own "special" carpet which took 15 years to complete. ■

If you would like to make up a small group to learn first hand more about this fascinating world of rugs and those who make them, you can contact Dawood at the Centre of Original Iranian Rugs in Abu Dhabi which is a treasure trove of modern, antique, historic and precious carpets. If you give him enough notice, he will arrange to take you on your own personal magic carpet tour.

## A MYTH DISPELLED

"One of the most long standing items of misinformation about Iranian carpets is that they could not be produced without the use of child labour. It is said that the tiny fingers were needed to produce the fine knots. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"It takes the most skillful and experienced weavers to produce fine carpets, and unskilled child labour just would not be good enough. In addition few people seem to know child labour was legally abolished in Iran after the Second World War. No recognised carpet centre could use children in their workforce.

"But before we become too judgmental, we all know that in third world countries,



A fine Naein: No child labour involved

child labour is still widely used, and sadly, it is sometimes the only alternative to starving. As a father I would not like ever to be placed in a situation where I had to make that choice.

"Who knows, perhaps in the more primitive tribes of Iran, where a carpet is made for family use or for barter, the father will still let his children work, and no legislation in the world will ever stop this. It will come through education.

"But we can rest assured that when we buy a fine Iranian carpet, we are not, in even the most oblique way, condoning child labour." ■

— Joan van der Merwe