

Carpet Trade at Tabriz in the Nineteenth Century

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Tabriz was one of the most important entrepôt of export and import trade in the Qajar Iran. The main export good was silk until the latter part of 1860s. Wholesale dealers at Tabriz energetically purchased a large amount of silk for export from the Caspian regions, especially Gilan.

However, as a consequence of silkworm disease, silk trade completely declined. Another export good substituted for silk. After 1870s, Both Iranian traders and European merchants tried to develop the carpet trade successfully.

They endeavoured to produce carpets in great quantities based upon the commercial point of view. Around 1874, Ziegler & Co., European enterprise for carpet industry, was established at Sultanabad at the central part of Iranian plateau. Since that time, Sultanabad became the most productive center for carpet industry. Secondly, at the end of the 19th century, Iranian native bourgeoisies started to manufacture carpets centered on the city of Tabriz and Kerman. They generally did not have carpet factories, but handed over the weaving materials to labourers and made them weave carpets at their home, indicating a model of design and colours.

Iranian native traders exported carpets to European countries and America by way of Turkey. Istanbul played an important role of transit entrepôt in carpet trade between Iran and Europe up to the World War I. We discuss some aspects of carpet production and trade centered on Tabriz.