



Sacred Scraps

Quilt and Patchwork Traditions of Central Asia

Christine Martens



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Traditions of
Central Asia

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UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln



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International Quilt Study Center & Museum



FOREWORD

Leslie C. Levy, J.D.

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Curator of International Collections

The International Quilt Study Center & Museum (IQSCM) is pleased to present *Sacred Scraps: Quilt and Patchwork Traditions of Central Asia*. The exhibition, its companion catalog, and website are the fruits of eight years of collaboration between ourselves and guest curator Christine Martens. Since 2009, Ms. Martens has traveled to Central Asia on numerous Museum-sponsored research and acquisition trips, helping us build a world-class collection and contributing immeasurably to our scholarly endeavors. As the only public institution devoted to studying and displaying global quilt traditions, we value our relationships with experts, who generously share in-depth knowledge, as well as intrepid travel and collecting skills. Representing the broad scope of worldwide quilts is truly a team effort.

Patchwork and quilts are integral parts of Central Asia's long and rich history. A genuine "crossroads of the world," this vast region has historically hosted diverse peoples from across Eurasia, who exchanged their ideas, values, and beliefs, whether through peaceful means such as trade or through war and invasion. The Silk Road and other merchant

routes that traversed these lands insured that materials and goods also changed hands, and the textiles of the area accordingly reflect a broad range of influences. Indigenous beliefs in the power of amulets to ward off evil spirits play a strong role, as well, especially in the creation and use of patchwork, an art form that Central Asian women have been engaged in for generations. Used during special occasions such as weddings but also in daily life, pieced and quilted cloth represents the potent nature of textiles to embody the hopes, fears, and dreams of its makers.

Sharing the history and beauty of diverse quilt traditions with local and global audiences constitutes a primary component of the IQSCM's mission. We hope that *Sacred Scraps* will inspire you to learn more about this fascinating part of the world—its people, cultures, and vibrant textiles.

Page 1: Uzbek or Afghan patchwork and embroidered wall hanging (detail), mid-20th century.

Opposite: Patchwork hanging, Fergana Valley, Uzbekistan, mid-20th century.



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From the author:

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Special Note:

Unless otherwise identified under Credits (page 76):

- All objects in this catalog are part of the IQSCM collection—purchases made possible by the Robert and Ardis James Foundation.
- All object photography was performed by IQSCM.

Opposite: Patchwork hanging (*tushtuk*), southern Kyrgyzstan, mid-20th century.



PREFACE

Sacred Scraps, Sacred Space

Across Central Asia, people tie fabric, scarves, strips, and patches onto bushes and trees that dot the expansive landscape. Each small scrap of fabric, sometimes called *älem*, serves to ward off destructive forces.

Especially prevalent at shrines (*mazar*), these colorful fabrics mark sacred sites believed to be the graves of heroes, saints, ancestors, or legendary figures, although certain natural phenomena such as streams, waterfalls, and mountains are considered to possess a similar miraculous power. Shrine visitation, a longstanding element of the local pilgrimage tradition (*ziyarat*), continues to be an integral part of everyday life.

One example particular to Turkmenistan is the *chile agach*, which may be a tree limb leaning against the wall of a shrine, a freestanding wooden construction, or a hurdle built close to the ground. *Chile* relates to a forty-day period associated with specific events such as childbirth in which negative forces abound. It is believed that by passing through, under, or around this hurdle tied with colorful fabrics that danger will be averted and ailments will remain with the fabric strips tied on the *chile agach*.¹

Opposite: Woman tying fabric scraps (*älem*) at shrine of Seyit Jamal-ad-Din, Anau, Turkmenistan.
Right: *Chile agach* at the Ismamut Ata complex, Georogly, Dashoguz region, Turkmenistan.





INTRODUCTION

*May my daughter learn to sit
May she wear a thimble
On a white felt carpet may she sit and sew*

—Turkmen lullaby²

The art of the quilt has been known in different forms throughout ancient and modern civilizations, and it takes on a unique expression at each point on the globe.³ In Central Asia, it is patchwork that is ubiquitous. Tajiks as well as all Turkic speaking people of the region use the term *kurak* and *kurama* to describe their patchwork tradition.⁴ Scholars surmised that because these terms were transmitted to Farsi-speaking Tajiks by Turkic-speaking people, they were of Turkic origin. Indeed, *kurma* and *kurmak* in contemporary Turkish means to set-up, build, put together, to create; and *kura* and *kurama* in Kyrgyz are defined as combined, composite, or made of separate pieces.^{5 6}

We know little of the origins of patchwork in Central Asia, although there are two theories. One small group of Kyrgyz ethnographers suggests that of all the traditional arts, *kurak* is one of the most ancient, based on the discovery by archeologist K.Tabaldiev of a petroglyph in the Kochkorskaya Valley, dated to the eighth century. It pictures riders on horseback with traditional nomadic saddles, stirrups, bits, saddle-girths, and what is thought to be a *kurak* horsecloth.⁷ It is probable that *kurak* was originally constructed of animal skins or possibly felt.



A second theory, more broadly accepted among ethnographers, links the appearance and development of *kurak* to the expansion of trade with the Russian Empire. Turkestan was the main supplier of cotton to Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in turn became a large consumer of Russian factory-made cloth when it entered the bazaars of Central Asia. Silks, brocades, velvets, and embroideries were also used in both patchwork and whole cloth quilts—particularly in sedentary regions where the traditional costume of the elite, constructed of luxury cloth, denoted status.^{8 9} But fragments also found their way to the *kurak* of pastoral nomads. While raw materials and textile production varied, vigorous trade and constant movement along the Great Silk Road contributed to the evolution of the rich patchwork and quilt tradition we know today.

Opposite: Women artisans of the “Spring of Life” (*Onor Bulagy*) NGO, Kemin, Kyrgyzstan.

Above: Artist’s rendering of an 8th century petroglyph, Kochkorskaya Valley, Kyrgyzstan.





Opposite: Tajik woman with patchwork pillow, Garm, Bedak Village, Tajikistan, 1957.

Above: Women sewing quilts in Soviet co-operative (*artel*), Uzbekistan, c. 1930.



Above: The five Central Asian republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. Land-locked Central Asia is located in the heart of the Asian continent and is bordered by neighbors such as Russia, China, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Opposite (left to right): Kyrgyz yurt (*boz üy*), Issyk Kul region, Kyrgyzstan; Ismamut Ata complex, Georogly, Dashoguz region, Turkmenistan; Shah-i-Zinda Necropolis, Samarkand, Uzbekistan.



Geography and People

Grassy steppes, scorching deserts, perilous mountain ranges, and fertile valleys comprise the richly varied physical geography of contemporary Central Asia. This is the land of Silk Road caravans, nomadic empires, oasis kingdoms, dynasties, and khanates. The region was under Tsarist rule in the late nineteenth century until the Russian Revolution in 1917, when Central Asia became an integral part of the Soviet Union. Not until 1991 did the five Central Asian Republics gain independence.

The Kyrgyz live in the mountainous regions of Tien Shan and Pamir-Alai, while the Tajiks occupy the territory to the south of Kyrgyzstan and comprise large communities in the Uzbek cities of Bukhara and

Samarkand. In the far west of Uzbekistan, situated on the Aral Sea, is the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan. To the south lies Turkmenistan, bordering Afghanistan and Iran, home to both sedentary and semi-nomadic peoples.

Landscape, language, and cultural traditions provide enormous diversity, yet there is also a commonality provided by cross-cultural fertilization, evident in the vibrant quilts and patchwork of Central Asia. The merging of motif and meaning, developed over centuries, contributes a fundamental life-force to this living tradition.



Amulet and Talisman

Through the unique history of North America, as well as that of Great Britain and other western European nations, we are familiar with quilts that mark historical, political, social, and religious events, as well as those that connote birth, marriage, and even death. But historically, the primary role of patchwork in Central Asia has been that of a protective charm or amulet used by brides, new mothers, and children to guard against sorcery, sickness, and malevolent spirits.

In both Turkic nomadic culture and that of the sedentary Iranian world, oral traditions containing mystical elements of pre-Islamic beliefs, Zoroastrianism, and Sufism represent deep-seated cultural and religious values regarded as Islamic by the majority of the local Muslim population. In times of difficulty and uncertainty, whether from illness, war, or the inexplicable, people sought answers through a variety of rituals that employed amulets and talismans.

In the Central Asian Republics, people made amulets (*tumar* or *doga*) in the shape of a triangle using felt, cloth, or silver and used these talismans in a variety of settings.¹⁰ The nomadic population attached them to clothing and animal trappings in order to appease supernatural elements, protect against harm, and keep the mystical forces of nature in harmony.¹¹ The *tumar* came in a variety of sizes, were frequently embroidered or embellished, and often contained a few grains of salt or a verse from the Qur'an.



The triangle was also used in multiple combinations, forming large-scale patchwork hangings and bedcovers. In addition to talismanic functions, they provided rich architectural furnishings in both nomadic and sedentary homes, merging aesthetic and cultural traditions while enhancing the social status of the family.

Opposite: Kyrgyz tent hanging (*tush ki'iz*), Jirgital, Rasht Valley, Tajikistan, mid-20th century. This is an unusual form, as the lower edge is usually unembellished.

Above: Amulet (*tumar*) of the Yomut people, Turkmenistan, c. 1930-1950.



Above: Yomut wedding palanquin (*kejebe*), Turkmenistan, c. 1930-1950.

Below: Yomut *kejebe* bunting (*gyra bezeg*), Turkmenistan, c. 1930-1950.

Opposite, above: Salor wedding procession with multiple palanquins (*kejebe*), Merv, Turkmenistan, 1884.

Opposite, below: Bride riding in a *kejebe*, Turkmenistan, 1924. Inscription: "Wedding Palanquin of the Yomut."





rites of passage

The Wedding

The Turkmen bride was traditionally carried to the home of her future husband perched high atop a camel in a palanquin (*kejebe*) elaborately decorated with patches, strips of cloth, and auspicious symbols draped over a domed framework of slender tamarisk branches bent diagonally from corner to corner, representing a trellis tent (*yurt*), the traditional Turkmen dwelling. A grand procession of family members on richly outfitted camels followed.¹² Among the Yomut tribes in the Akhal and Balkan regions, there were three types of *kejebe*: one to carry the bride (*dik kejebe*); one for the relatives, companions, and dowry (*yan kejebe*); and one in the shape of a heart (*yürek kejebe*).¹³





In addition, Turkmen used a special, often large covering for the neck and head of the camel. This main trapping (*düýe başlyq*) was constructed of felted wool, broadcloth, and occasionally *ikat*.¹⁴ A network of talismanic diamond patches connected only at their points formed a lattice-like pattern called *tor köz* (network). Lacking such a cover, they substituted a patchwork quilt. The central panel of the *düýe başlyq* often featured swatches of children's hair or eagle-owl feathers to assure healthy and numerous births. The *düýe başlyq* was hung in the place of honor at the rear of the wedding tent (*tör*) and remained in the possession of the younger son of the husband's family after the festivities until needed by the next family member.¹⁵ Camel trappings also included camel knee-



pads (*düýe dizliq*) and side panels (*kuroma*) that covered the flanks, also composed of a network of diamond patches, some of which were embroidered.¹⁶ The Kyrgyz decorated a bridal horse with a patchwork cover called *kurak at jaboo*.

Opposite: Main camel trapping (*düýe başlyq*), probably Yomut people, Turkmenistan, c. 1930-1950.

Above, left: Yomut palanquin (*kejebe*) atop horse cart, Turkmenistan, c. 1950.

Above, right: Turkmen family with camel trappings hanging on wall of yurt, Turkmenistan, 1911.



In the heart of the vast Karakum Desert of Turkmenistan, surrounded by rolling dunes and blowing sands, sits Damla, a small village of the Dashoguz Yomut, (Öküz clan), consisting of fifty simple dwellings and no traditional road access. Yet, weddings are festively celebrated here, as they are throughout the country, with innumerable guests, dozens of sheep, huge vessels of *plov* (a spicy rice and meat dish), and endless cups of tea.¹⁷ The bride, after arriving at the home of her new husband, sits on a patchwork pillow for two days in the company of women and children who travel from afar to welcome her into the community.

If a bride takes the first step into her new home with the left foot, local beliefs dictate that illness and quarrels will follow and she will be on bad terms with her new family. While surrounded by guests at the threshold, she bends to touch flour, oil, and honey, symbols of prosperity and well being. Flour is brushed across her forehead, and the auspicious herb *üzärlik* is burned to protect her from harm and purify the space.¹⁸



Opposite: Turkmen bride seated on patchwork, Damla, Turkmenistan.

Right, above: Yomut camel knee trappings (*düyýe dizlyk*), Turkmenistan, c. 1950.

Right, below: Yomut camel flank trappings (*kuroma*), one of a pair, Turkmenistan, c. 1950.





Dowry

Wedding Curtain

Another significant dowry article of the Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Tajiks, and Uzbeks was the wedding curtain (*köshögö, shymyldyk*), usually made by the mother of the bride.¹⁹ It hung first in the home of the bride and then transferred to the home of her husband, where it cordoned off an area of privacy for the young couple. Customs varied but it was here that the newlyweds would spend their first nights. In Karakalpakstan, the curtain hung for forty days symbolizing the forty invisible sages supporting humankind and forty days of seclusion (*chile*).²⁰

Tajiks frequently made the wedding curtain of *kurak* long before the wedding, sometimes even before the girl received a marriage proposal. The Kyrgyz of Djirgital, Tajikistan, prepared it only two weeks before the wedding and called for *hashar*, a communal coming together for work and socializing, much like the quilting bees of nineteenth-century North America. The family preserved it for future weddings, as well.²¹ Inhabitants of the Alai Valley of Kyrgyzstan used it to block evil spirits from entering the room.

A unique example of a wedding curtain (*shumuldıq qas*), in the Savitsky Karakalpak Art Museum in Nukus was made by Gulzar Yusupova of Shimbai to commemorate the wedding of her son. A devoted Communist party member, she also honored the meeting of the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, by adding text along the top border celebrating both events.²²

Traditionally, Tajiks of Samarkand prepared a tablecloth (*dastarkhan*) of *kurak* and a quilt (*kurpacha*) of *kurak* to set before the bride and the groom in the wedding tent (*chadyr*), symbolizing numerous children and well-being. The tablecloth, filled with sweets, breads, and colored eggs, was transported to the groom's home. After the birth of the first child, it was placed in front of the cradle for protection and prosperity.

Opposite: Patchwork with embroidery (*kurak saima*), southern Kyrgyzstan, c. 1950-1960.

Above: Wedding curtain (detail) with Cyrillic text, Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan, 1971.



Bedding Ensembles

In both nomadic and sedentary regions, the bride's dowry consisted of a number of important *kurak* articles. Long rectangular mattresses (*korpecho*, *korpa kurak*, *juurkan*) stuffed with cotton for sitting and sleeping, were made of patchwork and quilted. Pillows, included in the bedding set, were flat and rectangular and consisted of a patchwork strip twelve to twenty inches long and six to eight inches wide, sewn to a plain piece of cotton. In order to prevent evil spirits from entering, the patchwork was folded in half so that the decorative edge of the pillow would always be visible.

In the nomadic tent, this richly patterned and colored bedding pile (*jük*), when not in use, was stacked on the floor, or piled aesthetically on a decorative metal or wooden trunk (*sunduk*). These details contributed to a specialized system of interior architecture, both in the nomadic tent and permanent homes.²³

Women from wealthy families produced *kurak* quilts of luxurious silks and satins demonstrating exquisite craftsmanship, almost a courtly art. The Soviet ethnographer Antonina Konstantinovna Pisarchik, in her book on the traditional clothing of the Tajiks of Nurata, recorded a list of dowry articles belonging to brides born at the end of the nineteenth century. Entries included *kurak* examples similar to those in Samarkand and Tashkent museums, as well as in the IQSCM collection. She noted patchwork components of *bakhmal* (velvet of cotton warp/silk pile and weft), silk (silk warp and weft), *adras* (silk warp, cotton weft), and *bekasab* (cotton/silk striped), in addition to Russian luxury cloth and metallic

brocade. These alternated with embroidered squares, the design of which frequently echoed the pattern of the patchwork. Tajiks believed the elaborate arrangement and numerous seams would confuse and entangle negative spirits that would otherwise harm their family.²⁴

During the day, urban dwellers also placed bedding in a pile and covered it with large sheets of patterned silk or embroidery. They stacked bolsters in a similar fashion, and draped the walls, doors and the contents of arched niches with a variety of handwoven, quilted, and embroidered textiles, presenting the most beautiful examples in the reception room for guests. This demonstrated the wealth and status of the family, in addition to the talent and craftsmanship of the women.

Opposite: Family in front of patchwork, *ikat* and printed quilts in stacks of bedding (*jük*), southern Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan, c. 1930-1950.





Opposite: Woman in front of dowry quilts and pillows piled on chests (*sunduk*), Batken, Kyrgyzstan.

Above, left: Quilted brocade (*kundul*) mattress (*korpecho*), Bukhara, Uzbekistan, c. 1920.

Above, right: Mattress (*juurkan*) made by Kyimat Abdukadyrova, Karabulak village, Batken, Kyrgyzstan, c. 1960-1970.





Tent Hangings

The *tush ki'iz*, a focal point of the Kyrgyz trellis tent (*boz üy*) known in the West as a yurt, is a large-scale patchwork or embroidered panel. It traditionally hangs on the back wall of the yurt opposite the door, or if there are two, left and right of the *tör*, creating a striking and beautiful backdrop for the *jük* and its pile of bedding and quilts. The bottom edge of the Kyrgyz *tush ki'iz* frequently has a ruffled edge although more often it is left unfinished. It is an important dowry article, made by the bride under the tutelage of her mother or a revered ancestor. The characteristic Kyrgyz form is a horizontal rectangle, eight to twelve feet wide by six to nine feet high, with a patchwork or embroidered panel along the top and both sides.

A defining feature of the Kyrgyz *tush ki'iz* is the incorporation of one or more triangular amulets that extend from the lower edge of the horizontal band onto a solid center field of unembellished cotton, velvet, or silk. Thus, alongside its practical use as a focal point of tent architecture, and its capacity to denote status to those who sit under it, it can also be regarded as a kind of family talisman. Makers frequently incorporated ancestral fragments into new *tush ki'iz* either on its face, its facing or its lining, illustrating the handiwork and motifs of three or more generations. This is one reason that these textiles traditionally remained within the family.²⁵

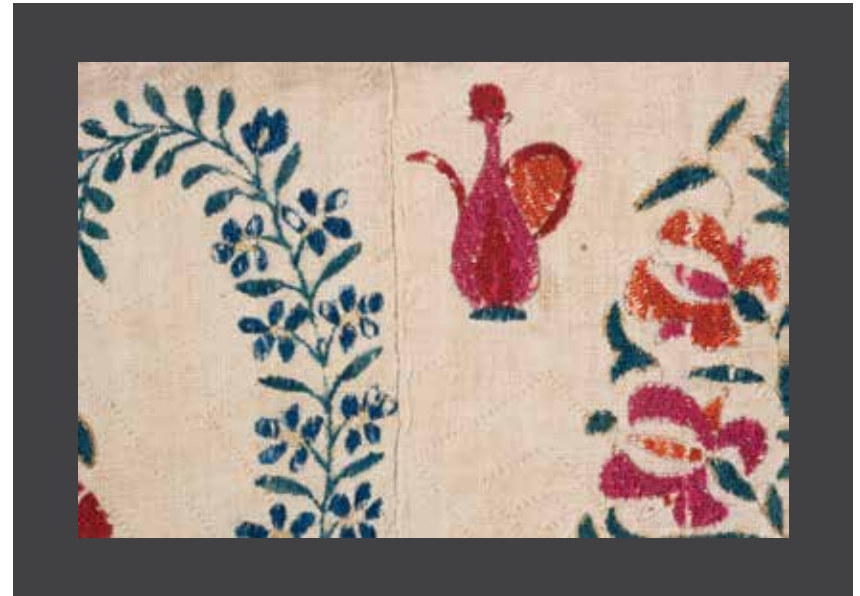
Opposite: *Tush ki'iz*, Osh, Kyrgyzstan, c. 1960.



Suzani Embroidered Quilts

The term *suzani*, derived from *suzan*, the Persian word for needle, is primarily used to describe the embroidered panels of Uzbekistan and Khojand Province of northern Tajikistan. Traditionally, a woman began the work of embroidery at the birth of a daughter and continued with the help of family and friends until the girl's dowry was complete. The dowry of a bride from a well-off family in Nurata, Uzbekistan, was expected to include ten *suzanis* of different sizes and functions. They were used as covers and quilts for the bridal bed and brazier, as dividers between sleeping and living quarters, and for prayer rugs and wrapping cloths.²⁶

The language of embroidered motifs was the language of metaphor, which women understood very well. According to ethnographers, analyses of the symbolic meaning of *suzani* patterns and their general importance in the mid-nineteenth century, and probably earlier, demonstrate their role as amulets. Knives, lamps, ewers (*aftaba*), pomegranates, and almonds, in addition to solar and vegetal motifs, were prevalent at all weddings and circumcisions, when evil spirits were thought to do most harm.²⁷ Pictured among the floral motifs on the nineteenth-century Nurata *suzani* quilt in the IQSCM collection are nine ewers. As a sign of hospitality, a young woman or child poured water over the hands of each arriving guest from just such a vessel, as well as before and after meals.²⁸



Opposite: Quilted and embroidered *suzani* with ewers, Nurata, Uzbekistan, late 19th century.

Above: *Suzani* (detail).





The Shyrdak

The *shyrdak* felt carpet, constructed with a mosaic/inlay technique, is made only by the Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, and semi-nomadic Uzbeks.²⁹ The *shyrdak* master simultaneously cuts two pieces of felt in contrasting colors with a knife or scissors into a traditional pattern, and reassembles them with the positive of the first color set into the negative of the alternate color. She then joins the seams by hand, covering them with handspun threads resembling a braid.³⁰ Next, she attaches these to a base of coarser quality felt with a woolen thread in rows of running stitches that echo the lines of the design. Patterns and color combinations rooted in the nomadic past of the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs reflect their perception of the natural world. *Shyrdak* are traditionally passed down from mother to daughter.³¹

Opposite: *Shyrdak* felt carpet in a design from Kyrgyzstan's Chui region and six *shyrdak* seating pads made by Begimbaeva Zamirgul, Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, 2015.

Above: Upukan Junysheva Tuyakova constructing a *shyrdak*, Kyzyl-Tuu, Kyrgyzstan.





Tablecloths

For weddings and other ceremonies across Central Asia, *kurak* tablecloths (*dastarkhan*) made of brightly colored cotton were spread on the floor for meals. Eating a meal from a *dastarkhan* made of *kurak* was said to be pleasing to God and the longer you ate from it, the more your sins would be forgiven. Thus, such tablecloths would be worn out quickly.³²

Utensils

For baking bread in the deep traditional clay oven (*tamdyr*), the mother of the bride made a round, padded patchwork pad (*raffida*) to hold the dough and the accompanying glove (*ostincha*) that covered the upper arm when reaching into the fire. The young bride used these to make the first meal for her husband and relatives who, in turn, offered wishes for many children.³³



Opposite: Jobirova Khosiyat and Gulomova Zebo making bread with baking pad (*raffida*), Absharon Village, Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Above, left: *Raffida*, Tajikistan, late 20th century.

Above, right: Arzygul Kurmusheva setting out bread on tablecloth (*dastarkhan*), Chong Alay, Saray Mogol, Kyrgyzstan.



Above: Mirror holders (*oina khalta*), Uzbekistan, 20th century.

Opposite: Karakalpak flour and grain storage bags (*shanash*), Nukus, Uzbekistan, 20th century.

Storage Bags

The storage bags (*shanash*) of the semi-nomadic Karakalpak, in the Aral region of Uzbekistan, used for grain flour and other provisions also possessed amuletic functions. Appliquéd triangles, horns, and other auspicious symbols helped to assure a good harvest. Long and slender, with a narrow neck opening that widened at the base with short flat flaps along the lower edge, they hung on the walls of the trellis tent.³⁴

Mirror Holders

Additional dowry items included a *kurak* mirror bag (*oina khalta*) and a hairbrush bag (*shona khalta*), which might also hold soap, needles, thread, thimbles, or other sundries.³⁵ After marriage, the bride hung them in a prominent location to ward off evil spirits. Bags of different sizes for teapots, as well as potholders and patchwork shelves that served as storage units, hung from the lattice framework of the nomadic tent. Salt remained dry in *kurak* salt bags (*tuz bashtyk*) made of skins, since leather is not affected by hydrochloric acid.

Lobacheva suggested that long-standing cross-cultural influences of the Turkmen, Uzbeks, and Karakalpaks were evident in the household furnishings of Khorezmian Uzbeks. They included felts, flat woven rugs, elongated colored pillows and small quilts sewn of patchwork placed on the floor.³⁶





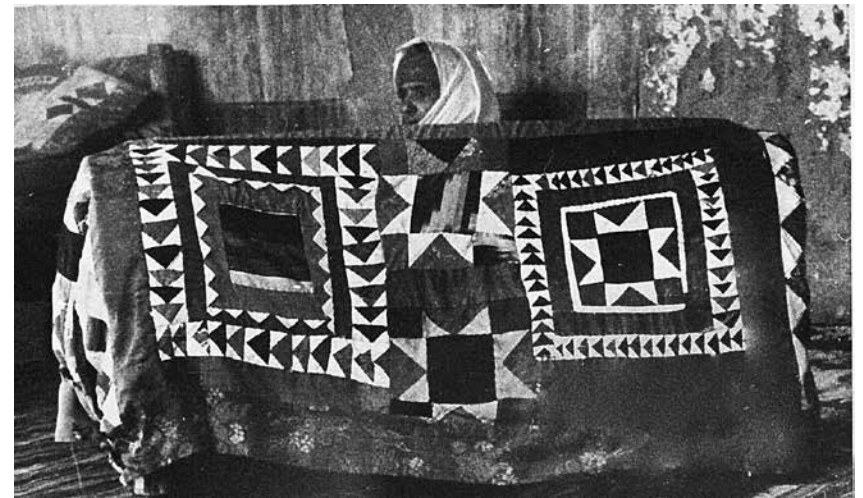
Birth and Childhood

Pregnancy and birth, an auspicious time in Central Asia, is celebrated for forty days with joy as well as trepidation, for fear of attracting malevolent spirits. Due to a high infant mortality rate, families performed multiple rituals to maintain the health and well-being of mother and child.³⁷ Tajiks did not permit a barren woman to visit a new mother unless she entered the room holding a piece of *kurak*, which was thought to keep evil spirits at bay. Women maintained this belief even though it was not sanctioned by Islamic authorities. Turkmen tradition considered it unwise to demonstrate joy at the birth of a child, especially if a male. In order to deceive the evil eye during the first few days of life, the family briefly placed a newborn outside the home, suggesting they did not value the baby. As further protection families could name the child *Italmaz*, translated as “even the dogs won’t take him,” a practice followed especially if previous births were unsuccessful or were girls.³⁸

Specific rituals took place on the first, third, seventh, ninth and fortieth day after birth in order to counteract supernatural forces that might take advantage of the delicate condition of mother and child during this vulnerable period. During the first three days, the family did not sleep but kept a fire burning to drive away evil spirits. In the Upper Zarafshan

Valley of Tajikistan, the family kept a light burning for forty days if the family was prosperous.³⁹ After this period, the child was said to “awaken from uterine sleep” and the mother was permitted to resume normal tasks of cleaning and cooking.⁴⁰

According to legend, forty days after the birth of her child—when the period of seclusion had ended—a Kyrgyz mother gathered pieces of cloth from forty neighboring yurts to make a talismanic shirt (*kyrk koinok*) for her child. Similarly, in parts of Tajikistan and Karakalpakstan, the mother followed the custom of collecting pieces of fabric “at seven doors” from families who were wealthy, had many healthy children, and where husband and wife had lived together until old age.



Opposite: Nomadic hammock cradle (*salantchak*) with textile fan (*yelpewach*) overhead, Mary, Turkmenistan, mid-20th century.

Right: Woman with cradle and cradle cover (*gahvora push*), Zeravshan, Tajikistan, 1965.



Above: Early 20th-century quilted ikat cradle cover with a contemporary cradle from Margilan Uzbekistan.

Opposite, above: Garment of a young child with amuletic properties (*kurte*), Turkmenistan, mid-20th century.

Opposite, below: Female religious figure (*otin oyi*) blessing infant and cradle, Margilan, Uzbekistan.

Before dressing the infant in the patchwork shirt with wishes for longevity and good fortune, the mother baked forty traditional loaves and bathed her child in a tub of water with salt, earth, meat, wood from the juniper tree, sugar, and gold, to assure all earthly needs would be met. Earth symbolized plentiful crops and grazing, meat assured large herds, and juniper provided healing and protection, while sugar and gold represented sweetness of life and untold riches.^{41 42}

Central Asian people also incorporated Islamic beliefs into these traditions. According to Soviet ethnographers Shirokova and Pisarchik, an old woman from a Karategin village in Tajikistan was said to make a patchwork shirt for a baby while sitting in a mosque during *Kurban Bayram* (Festival of the Sacrifice of Ismail) so that her blessings and prayers would be transferred to the child and assure a long life.⁴³

The Cradle (beshik)

The birth of a child is still one of the most joyous events in the lives of Central Asian families. The festivity, *beshik toi*, celebrates placing the baby in the cradle (*beshik*) for the first time, seven, nine, or eleven days after birth. Relatives of the mother purchase the richly decorated cradle constructed of mulberry and willow and deliver it to the son-in-law's home with all accessories, toys, food, and gifts. Accompanied by musicians, the paternal grandfather takes the cradle on his right shoulder and transfers it to the right shoulder of his son, who then carries it to the mother.





The entire process of the first swaddling and placing the baby in the cradle is conducted in the presence of elderly women, accompanied by the recitation of Qur'anic verses. Anna Leonidovna Troitskaia, in early twentieth century Tajikistan, described the cleansing and fumigating of the infant with fire, a process in which the mid-wife set fire to a rag, passing it around the cradle three times, while saying "let my hand and not trouble touch you; not my hand but the hand of the saints." The midwife purified the space and banished malevolent spirits by passing a tray of smoking herbs (*ispand*) over all guests, each of whom threw one thread from their clothing into the fire. The infant was then carried around the burning grasses three times and the remaining ashes placed in a pot under the cradle. In this way each of the healthy guests was able to contribute a token of their strength and longevity to the infant.⁴⁴

The baby is bound to the cradle with broad bands of cloth (*dastband* for arms and *poband* for legs), to ensure safety when the cradle rocks. At the end of the ceremony guests throw sweets and sugar cubes into the *beshtik* and offer their gifts. Children that follow the firstborn are often laid in the same bed. Thus, one *beshtik* can cradle many generations of a family. It is considered sacred and kept long after all of the children have grown.⁴⁵

Samarkand Tajiks frequently used their patchwork wedding tablecloth (*dastarkhan*) as a cradle cover (*gavarah posh*—Tajik; *beshtik push*—Uzbek) for their first child, which provided protection long after the ritual. Women sewed variously colored *kurak* covers and mattresses for infants. A two-part quilted cover made specifically to fit over the cradle, shielded the child from dust and light.

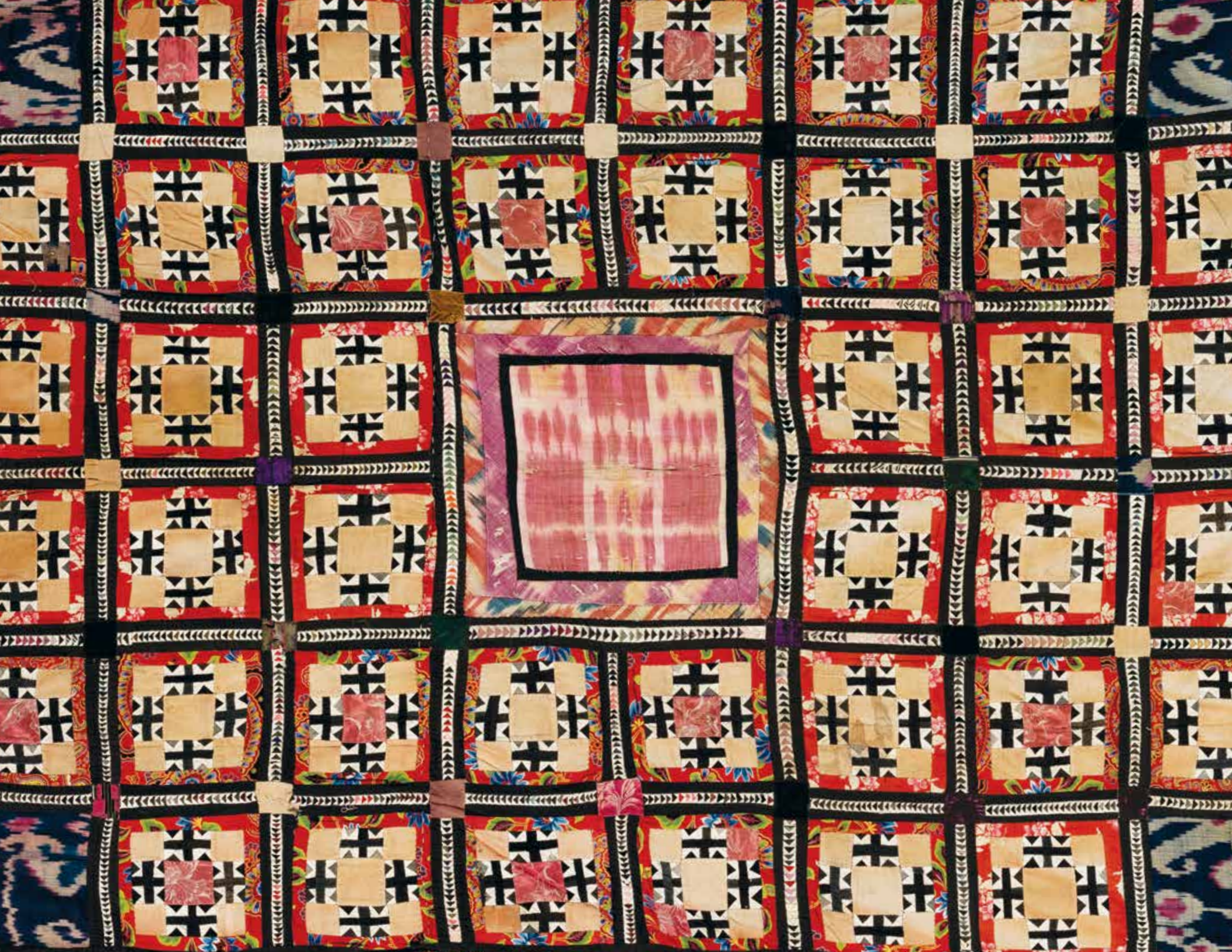
Uzbeks quote Avicenna's (also known as Abu Ali ibn Sino) *The Canon of Medicine* on the care and upbringing of infants, which suggests that gentle rocking and traditional lullabies induce sleep and strengthen the constitution.⁴⁶ The cradle's design included an ash-filled felt bag suspended from an opening at the base, into which the infant's urine flowed through a hand carved wooden or plastic pipe-like tube, eliminating the need for diapers.⁴⁷ Eventually a ceramic vessel replaced the felt bag. The child must be securely bound in the cradle for this method to be effective.

Circumcision

Another opportunity for quilts to enter the life-cycle tradition is as part of the circumcision ceremony (*Sunnat toi*), which takes place during the boy's third, fifth, or seventh year. Long before the actual ceremony, however, family and friends participate in the ritual of sewing quilts and pillows for the event.

After reading from the Qur'an in the presence of an Imam, old men, and relatives, blessings are offered and the celebrant, who is dressed in richly embroidered clothing brought by family and friends, receives many gifts. A small ritual follows—"the stowing of pillows and quilts in the chest"—performed by a mother of many children.

Opposite: Woman in front of dowry quilts and pillows stacked on chests (*sunduk*), southern Kyrgyzstan.



Illness and Death

Throughout the Soviet period, the government prohibited recitation of Muslim prayers at funerals, but because of the syncretic nature of religious practice in Central Asia, domestic rituals and folk traditions did not appear directly connected to Islam. The population attempted to outwardly incorporate Soviet dogma into daily life while maintaining their indigenous beliefs.⁴⁸

In the Karategin region of Tajikistan, a person who was ill was wrapped in *kurak* and at death, placed upon a mattress and cushion made of *kurak*—another instance in which an act involving *kurak* was said to be pleasing to God. Elders recalled the burial rite of tying a small flag or handkerchief of *kurak* to the grave pole, but little information remains.⁴⁹

Karmysheva wrote that the Uzbek Lakai would cut the clothing of their deceased into strips and distribute it to the community.⁵⁰ Women collected fabric in this way, sharing remnants of cloth and festive food with family members unable to attend so they would also be blessed.

According to Kyrgyz research of the 1920s, relatives and friends of the deceased often helped defray the cost of performing traditional funeral rites with donations of money and cattle. If the deceased was an adult, the donors were given gifts in response. Old men might receive money, while women received pieces of red, white, or black fabric called *jyrtys* in Kyrgyz or *jyrtys* in Kazakh.⁵¹ At the funeral of a woman in northern

Kyrgyzstan, the family of the deceased presented mourners with a needle, thread, and soap wrapped in a small package made of cloth.⁵² These gifts were also meant to eradicate debts of the deceased.

Although *kurak* was related to an increase of wealth and prosperity, a *kurak* tablecloth was prohibited at a funeral meal in the Upper Zerafshan region of Tajikistan, where it was feared to increase the number of deaths.⁵³

When an old, respected man died in Kyrgyzstan, relatives placed a set of his clothing and horse trappings on a wooden cross-piece (*tul*) in the place of honor (*tör*) in the yurt or where the old man slept.⁵⁴ When it was time for the family to move to another pasture, they mounted the *tul* on his best horse and carried it along ceremoniously. This served as a reminder of the deceased until seven to ten days after the commemoration event (*ash*), when his horse was sacrificed and the clothing placed in the family chest (*sunduk*). In some villages families draped the clothing on a patchwork pillow. This custom was prevalent when nomadic traditions were stronger in the early part of the twentieth century.

Opposite: Patchwork hanging, Fergana Valley, Uzbekistan, mid-20th century.



Left: Quilted brocade (*kundal*) robe (*chapan* or *khalat*), Bukhara, Uzbekistan, c. 1880-1900.

Opposite, above: Quilted striped (*bekasab*) robe (*chapan* or *khalat*), Khorezm, Uzbekistan, early 20th century.

Opposite, below: Quilted *ikat* (space dyed) robe (*chapan* or *khalat*), Bukhara, Uzbekistan, c. 1900.

CLOTHING

Adult Clothing

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the traditional clothing of Uzbek men, women and children was all fairly similar. One exception was a woman's outer robe (*munisak*), which was flared at the hem because of gathering at the bust or the addition of gores.⁵⁵ Robes in general (*khalats* or *chapans*) were long and spacious with a front opening, often lined with printed fabric and commonly faced with *ikat* or bias-cut *bekasab*. There was a great variety in the quality of the fabric, which ranged from silk velvets and metallic brocades to silk, *adras*, *ikat*, *bekasab*, and cotton. Khorezm robes from the north of Uzbekistan were known for their machine quilting (*kavik*) in finely spaced vertical rows, which produced an iridescent sheen as light hit the surface of the silk and cotton striped *bekasab*. Kyrgyz men and young boys wore and still wear heavy, padded and quilted velvet *khalats* lined with printed cotton in the style of the Uzbeks and the Tajiks.⁵⁶ Gunnar Jarring, the erudite and adventurous Swedish linguist and diplomat, recalled his first visit to Kashgar, a city along the southern rim of the Taklamakan Desert in 1929. A book and antique dealer was eager to trade valuable manuscripts for a kilo of old Swedish newspapers, which he immediately turned over to a local tailor for use as interlinings of the quilted *chapans*, preventing penetration of the strong desert winds.⁵⁷





Above, left: Dress with Tajik *kurak* elements, possibly Afghanistan or Pakistan, mid-20th century.

Above, right: Pants with Tajik *kurak* elements, possibly Afghanistan or Pakistan, mid-20th century.



Above, left: Apron skirt (*beldemchi*), Pamir Alai region, mid-20th century.

Above, right: Woman crossing stream wearing a *beldemchi*, Pamir region, Kyrgyzstan.

A unique article of Central Asian clothing is the Kyrgyz and Kazakh apron-skirt (*beldemchi*), most often embroidered, but also pieced. Made by the mother of the bride as part of the dowry, it was richly ornamented in wealthy families. After one year of marriage and the first child, a new bride would exchange her marriage headdress for a *beldemchi*, signifying her transition into the community as a mother.

Women wore the *beldemchi* over their dress and trousers during celebrations and when visiting friends and relatives. Fastened with pieces of cloth around the hips, it was often lined with wool and padded with cotton

batting. In the southwest region of Kyrgyzstan, it was made of narrow strips of fabric, while in villages close to the Uzbek border *beldemchi* were made of brightly colored fabric purchased from the Uzbeks. The pieces of cloth tied around a woman's hips at burial is also called *beldemchi*, signifying its ancient origins.⁵⁸

In the past, the underarm gusset of a Tajik woman's dress was made of a different color. Even dresses made of expensive fabrics sometimes had random pieces of additional patches, although they were not necessary.⁵⁹



Above, top row: Young children's garments with amuletic properties (*kurte*), Turkmenistan, mid-20th century (left, middle), late 20th century (right).

Above, bottom row: Young children's bibs with amuletic properties (*kirlik*), Turkmenistan, mid-20th century (left, middle), child's hat, Urgut, Uzbekistan, c. 1950-1975 (right).

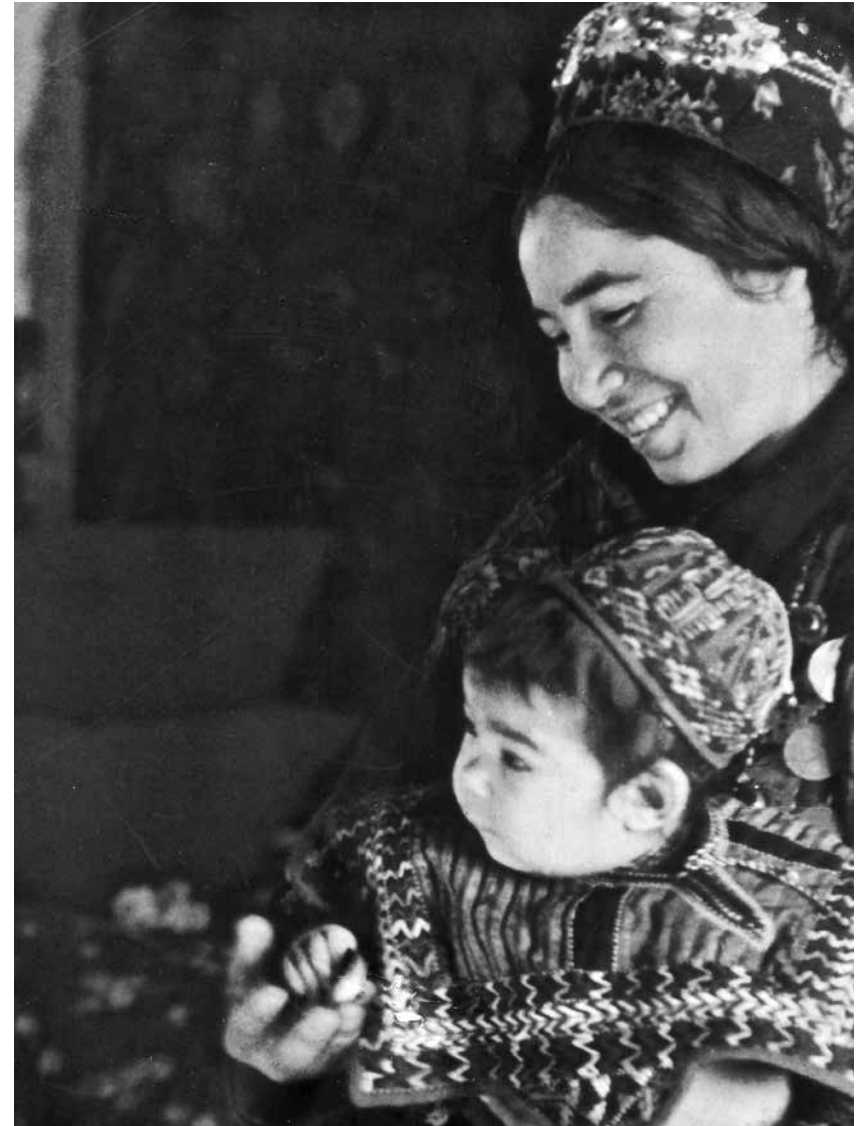
Opposite: Tekke mother holding child wearing kirlik, Turkmenistan, c. 1950.

Children's Clothing

In Turkmenistan, mothers sewed short-sleeved garments (*kurte*) for their children using multicolored pieces of cotton fabric with thick, heavy thread so that the life of the child would be strong and long, while hems remained raw so as not to stunt the child's growth.⁶⁰ As in textiles of antiquity, where charms and amulets functioned magically to ward off evil, the triangle (*tumar*), considered an amulet in itself, was placed on the shoulders and back of garments to protect against an attack where the child is most vulnerable.⁶¹ Children also wore a *kirlik*, a bib-like garment composed of patches, appliqué, embroidery, or a combination, over the *kurte*, which provided additional protection.

Lobacheva describes the special dress *elek*, worn by young children in Khorezm, Uzbekistan, made of multicolored materials with triangles in place of sleeves and decorated with buttons or fringes. She suggests that some ritual in the childhood cycle was associated with this garment, an interpretation favored by the numerous amulets attached. Children's quilted hats were traditional in this region, as well.⁶²

A child's first haircut at one year is an important ritual in Central Asia and mothers often attached the hair of an older, healthy child to a newborn's garment as a good luck talisman, especially if a previous infant had died.⁶³





DESIGN

Tools and Equipment

Traditionally, women sewed by hand, utilizing only a needle, thread, scissors, thimble, and a pin. It was only between 1907-10 that Singer Sewing machines appeared in Khorezm, Uzbekistan, but they quickly spread throughout the oasis. Seamstresses were called *tiküchi* but the expression *mashinchi* soon came into use for those who dared to use the new invention. It was such a radical change that those who used sewing machines were labeled unbelievers. Nevertheless, their popularity grew and a special guild was established with its own patron saint.⁶⁴

Opposite: Hammida Uzokova sewing *kurak* bridal pillows, Isfara, Tajikistan.

Right: Inobatkhon Qosimova with daughter Robiyakhon Mirzaakhmedova preparing pieces for patchwork, Margilan, Uzbekistan.





Pattern

Most patchwork (*kurak*) items can be divided according to pattern:

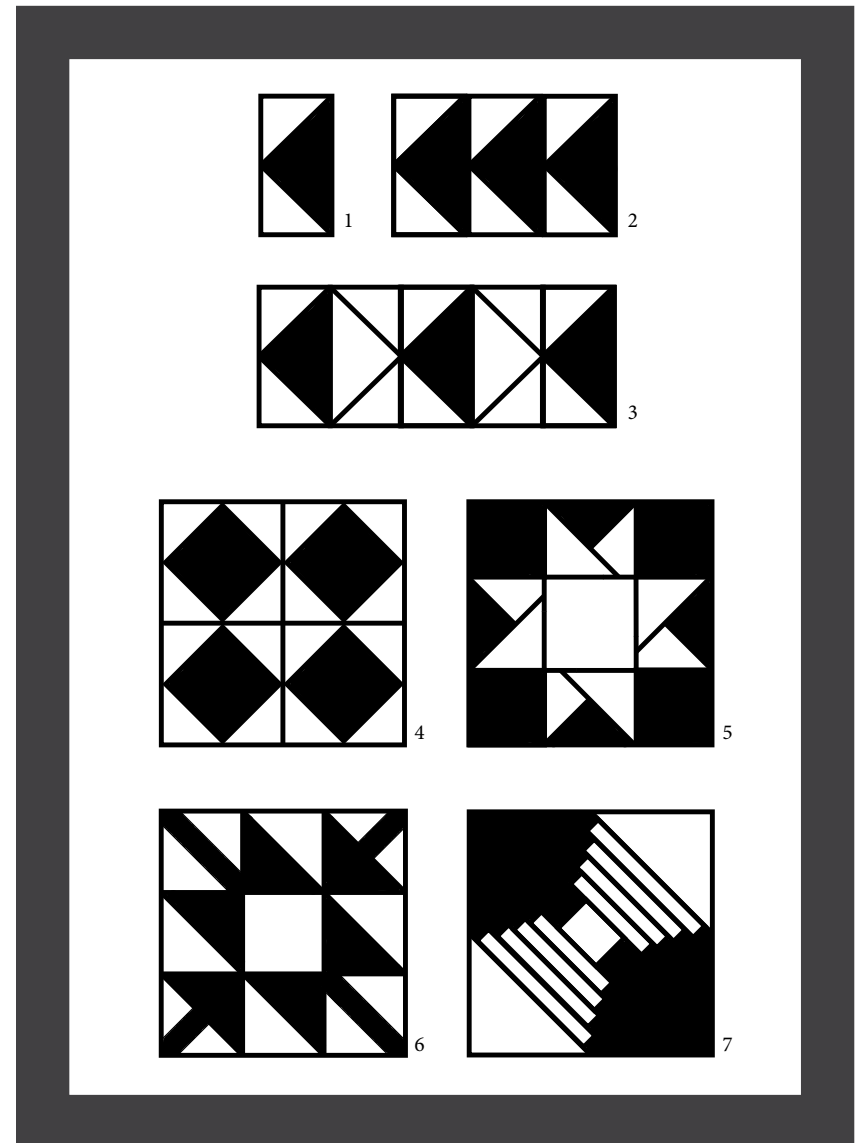
- 1) multicolored squares and triangles, which when combined in various ways, form strips and medallions of patterns that are assembled to make larger patterns
- 2) long narrow strips of fabrics of different colors

The majority of patterns, however, are formed utilizing combinations of triangles and squares. The most common examples are black (or sometimes colored triangles) on white, which are called by many names: red-footed falcon, little amulet (*tumorcha*), crane (*turna*), and butterfly (*pasha parak*), to name a few. Black triangles on a white background were most common in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. A symbol of feminine fertility, the triangle or *tumar* is evident in all areas of applied art.

In Kyrgyzstan, embroidery was frequently placed directly in the center of the composition, surrounded by bands of *kurak*. If embroidery was not available for the central section, an old *tush ki'iz* fragment was used with symmetrical patterns arranged around the perimeter.

Opposite: Patchwork and embroidery hanging (*kurak saima tushtuk*), southern Kyrgyzstan, mid-20th century.

Right: Typical Central Asian patchwork patterns (translations in Tajik, unless otherwise noted): 1. Falcon tail (*dumaki bosha*) or little amulet (*tumorcha*–Kyrgyz), 2. butterfly (*pasha parak*) or line of cranes (*turna kator*–Kyrgyz), 3. bride and mother-in-law (*kelinu khushdoman*), 4. four eyes (*chorgula*), 5. cotton (*guli guza*), 6. key (*kalidkurok*) or scissors (*kaichikurak*–Kyrgyz), and 7. star (*sitorashavak*).







Opposite: Patchwork hanging (*tushtuk*), Kyrgyzstan, mid-20th century.

Right: Patchwork hanging (*tushtuk*), Bukhara, Uzbekistan, mid-20th century.





Opposite: Patchwork hanging (*tushtuk*) repurposed from two old *tush ki'iz*, Kyrgyzstan, mid-20th century.



Above, left: Uzbek patchwork and appliqué hanging, possibly Afghanistan, mid-20th century.

Above, right: Uzbek patchwork and appliqué hanging, possibly Afghanistan, mid-20th century.



Color

The introduction of black and red factory cloth originating from the Russian annexation of Central Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is probably a key factor in the development of the *kurak* form we see today.⁶⁵ In remote Tajik villages women bought white fabric and dyed it black until the mid-twentieth century.⁶⁶ It was thought that each color had its own individual meaning but the most powerful combination against the evil eye was black and white. Black and white patterns in Tajikistan are called *balodurkunak*, meaning “making evil far away.”

In the Tajik village of Nushor, however, it was said that *kurak* made of many colors was better able to protect against difficulties and disease. Yellow hues were believed to protect from jaundice, blue from whooping cough, and red was thought to have good properties as well, although the reasons were unclear.⁶⁷

While scant information exists on the symbolic meaning of color in Central Asia, it has been suggested that red personified the source of life, joy, victory, and fertility and yellow was the symbol of well-being, wealth, and ancestral spirits. Some linked yellow to the sun, fire, and ancient solar deities. There were more variations in the combinations of colors in the north, while black and white with yellow predominated in the south.

Opposite: Patchwork and embroidered hanging, Uzbekistan, c. 1870-1880.

Right: Patchwork hanging, Uzbekistan, mid-20th century.





27
20.2

20
20.5

30
21.1

40
21.6

124
24.0

Fabric

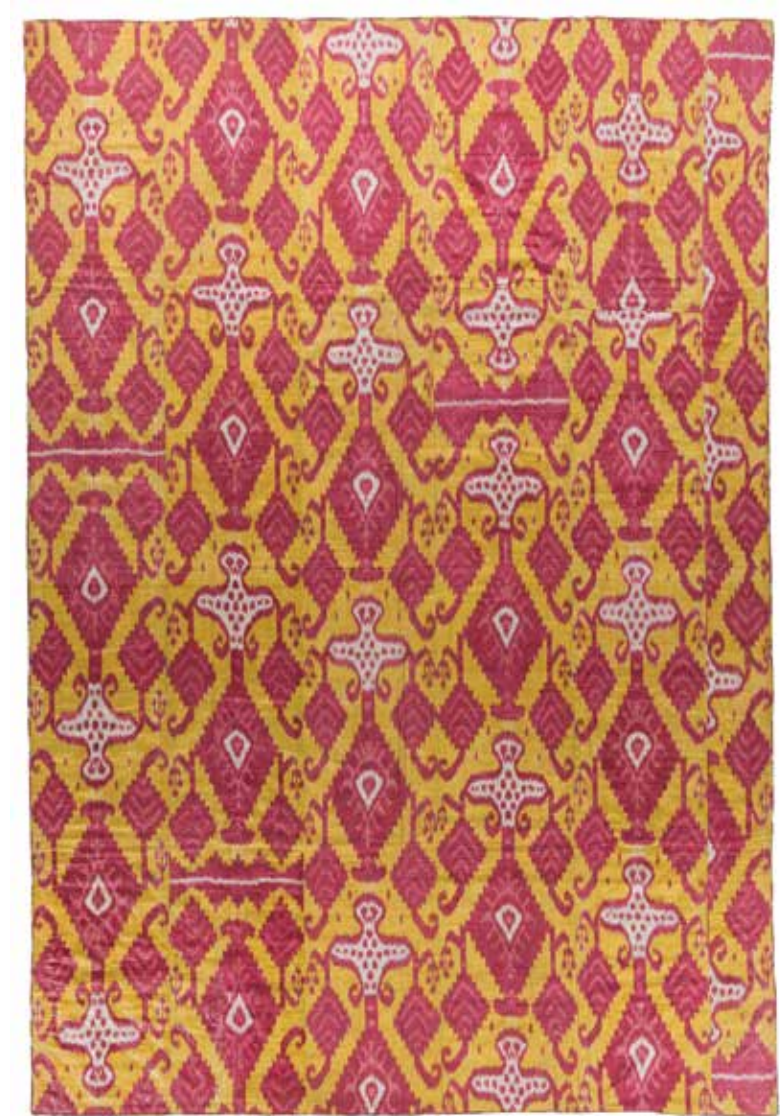
Fabric for *kurak* was seldom bought. At important family events, such as making an agreement, an engagement, a cradle ceremony, a child's first haircut, or the funeral of very old people, it was customary to distribute pieces of fabric to those in attendance. According to commonly-held beliefs, the magical properties of the fabric would help the recipient to achieve the same success as those who gifted the fabric or to live a long life as the person at whose funeral one received the fabric.

Cotton (*karboz*) was the most common fabric used for patchwork. However, silk, *ikat*, velvet, *bekasab*, felt, and embroidered silk or cotton were also used. Cotton was hand-woven before factory cloth was imported from Russia, and indeed many of the early *suzani* quilts were embroidered on hand-loomed cotton. At the beginning of the twentieth century, women operated looms in most households, producing *beyz* of raw cotton and striped *alacha*, which might have been all cotton or silk warp and cotton weft.⁶⁸

Ikat is a resist-dyed textile in which the design emerges from warp threads that are tied and dyed in pre-determined patterns prior to weaving. The densely spaced silk warp and cotton weft produce a warp-faced fabric. Called *abr* in Central Asia, derived from the Persian meaning "cloud,"

Opposite: Selling cotton batting for pillows, quilts and mattresses, Osh Bazaar, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Right: Quilted *ikat* hanging, Uzbekistan, mid-20th century.





it signifies the blurred edges of the motifs. It is an arduous process that requires thirty-seven steps from cocoon to finished product.

Family-based workshops, which were disbanded during the Soviet Era, began to flourish after independence in 1991. The main center of *ikat* production today is in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan. *Ikat* was used extensively to make quilts, wall hangings, and other interior products, as well as clothing. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, specific patterns and weaves were indicators of status.

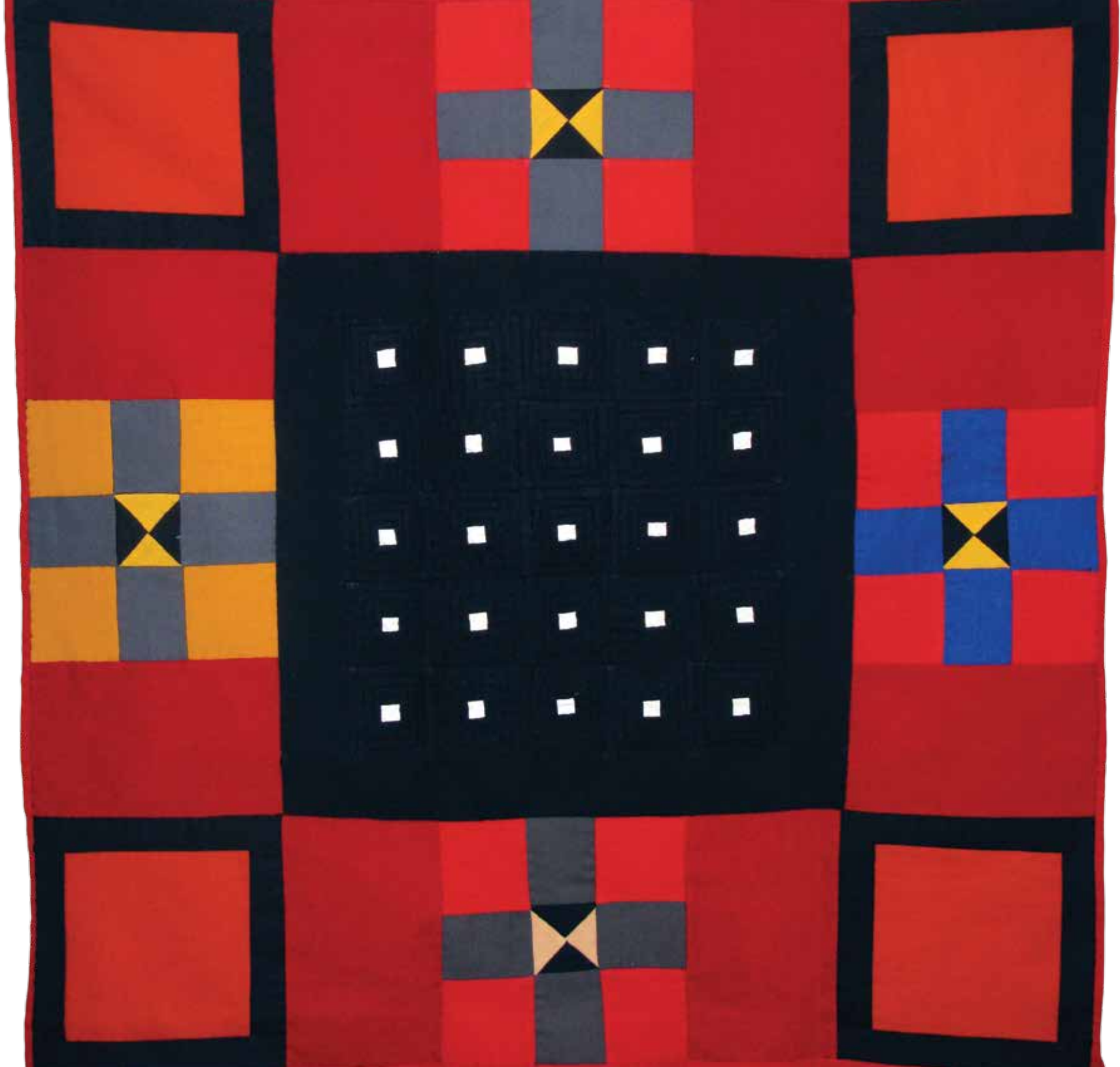
Ikat velvet is known as *a'lo baghmal* by Uzbek and Tajik people. There are two warp systems, one for the ground cloth and one for the velvet, which is a pile weave. In order to form the pile, the *ikat* warps are raised to form loops over a grooved wire. A razor is drawn through the groove, leaving a perfectly even pattern on the pile.

Felt was handmade from the wool of local sheep, sheared in autumn. The fleece was fluffed and separated, laid out in layers on reed mats, saturated with hot water, rolled, and wrapped tightly in heavy plastic. Rolling and kicking the roll along the road provided the agitation necessary for compacting and shrinking the fibers. After several hours, the fleece was unrolled and wet again. Women on their knees worked in rhythm, rolling the felt back and forth as they bore down with their arms, causing it to further harden and shrink.

Opposite: Patchwork hanging, Uzbekistan, late 19th century.

Right: Patchwork hanging, Uzbekistan, mid-20th century.





THE TRADITION CONTINUES

Patchwork is still made in Central Asia, both by traditional communities and by contemporary artists. Several organizations support these preservation efforts including Art Group Tumar, the South Tribes of Kyrgyzstan, and Central Asia Craft Support Association.

Art Group Tumar

Art Group Tumar, a leader in contemporary design in Kyrgyzstan, has been a presence in Bishkek for almost fifteen years, with galleries in both Bishkek and Almaty, Kazakhstan. The main purpose of the Art Group Tumar is the preservation and revival of Kyrgyz national applied art, and the development of a modern idiom through design and product development. Their goal is to unite artists, designers, and craftsmen throughout the country who create highly imaginative, well designed products based on the national crafts of Kyrgyzstan. Today the company employs 150 people, of which ninety percent are women, in nineteen private production workshops, with high-quality felt accounting for eighty percent of all production. Art Group Tumar now exports to both North America and Europe, greatly increasing their impact upon regional artisanal production.

Opposite: *Kurak tekche* (fabric shelf to hang on wall of yurt), Art Group Tumar (Emil Tilekov design), Kyrgyzstan, 2009.

Right, above: Floor pillow, Art Group Tumar, Kyrgyzstan, 2009.

Right, below: Kurak dress, Art Group Tumar, Kyrgyzstan, 2009.





The South Tribes of Kyrgyzstan

South Tribes is a small Kyrgyz company structured around women from the Leilek region of Batken. They are referred to as “internal migrants” because they move within the country in search of work. During the summer, they work mainly in agriculture, but in winter, they attempt to make a living through crafts. They use traditional patchwork (kurak) to create a variety of objects from pillows to large-scale quilts. All income goes toward the education of their children, medical care and clothing.



Aigul Diushenalieva

Aigul Diushenalieva’s workshop creates traditional *kurak* patchwork, the main element of a bride’s dowry in Kyrgyz culture. In the ceremony of *kyl uzatuu*, the bride gathers her dowry and bids farewell to her family as she moves to the home of her husband. Designs are improvised within a repertoire of traditional motifs. Aigul learned this art from her grandmother and inherited the family patterns, which she uses as a bridge to understanding her ancestral heritage.

Central Asia Craft Support Association

Great progress has been made through the efforts of CACSA, a non-governmental organization founded in 2000. The association reaches more than 5000 craftsmen in over 76 member organizations, from the five Central Asian Republics.⁶⁹

CACSA's goals and objectives include the preservation of the cultural heritage of Central Asian peoples and the protection of professional, civic, economic and social rights of Central Asian craftsmen. Within this construct, patchwork continues to be practiced on multiple levels, in many forms, both in village homes and in contemporary workshops.

Opposite, left: *Kurak* pillows and bedspread made by South Tribes of Kyrgyzstan.
Opposite, right: *Kurak* doorway hangings made by artisan Aigul Diushenalieva.
Right: Burul Dunganova, *kurak* master and CACSA member, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.





AFTERWORD

The great Kyrgyz filmmaker Aktan Abdykalykov related the unique poetry of *kurak* to the aesthetic of Kyrgyz cinema. He considered his best-known work, *Beshkempir*, to be a patchwork of his childhood, in that there were only fragments of memories, impressions:

It is not important if I assembled it in a correct way. Traditional craftsmen never over-analyze their designs. It's an unexplainable and spontaneous thing—it either flows along or not. I think this is the essence of kurak.



Opposite: Patchwork hanging, Kyrgyzstan, mid-20th century.

Above: Art Group Tumar artisan Nazira Japarkulova making *kurak*.

NOTES

- 1 D. Tyson, "Shrine Pilgrimage in Turkmenistan as a Means to Understand Islam among the Turkmen," *Central Asia Monitor*, no. 1 (1997): 15–32.
- 2 Carole Blackwell, *Tradition and Society in Turkmenistan: Gender, Oral Culture and Song* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 150.
- 3 "Quilting and Patchwork – "Victoria and Albert Museum," accessed August 30, 2013, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/q/quilting-and-patchwork/>.
- 4 To simplify terminology we will use the spelling *kurak* and *kurama* throughout, despite variations in each of the local Central Asian languages.
- 5 Amantur Japarov and Kadicha Tasbaeva, *Atlas of Central Asian Artistic Crafts and Trades Volume III: Kyrgyzstan* (Bishkek: International Institute for Central Asian Studies, 2002), 103.
- 6 *Kurokduzi*, *gulakburi*, *gulakduzi*, *burishduzi* and *tarkduzi* were additional terms used for patchwork in Tajikistan, noted in research of the 1950s, but may now be extinct. N. A. Kisliakov and A. K. Pisarchik, *Tadzhiki Karategina I Darvaza* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1976), 203; Rachim Masov, Nelli Junusova, Larisa Dodhudoeva, *The Folk Art of the Pamirs* (Dushanbe: Donish Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography, 2009), 164.
- 7 Akylai Sharshenalieva, chief curator, Kyrgyz Historical Museum, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan to author, June 2011.
- 8 Turkestan was the term used to indicate the territories under Russian Imperial rule that would eventually become part of the Soviet Union (on the present territory of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as East Turkestan in northwest China, now known as Xinjiang).
- 9 Thomas Knorr and David Lindahl, *Uzbek: The Textiles and Life of the Nomadic and Sedentary Uzbek Tribes of Central Asia. Exhibition Catalogue* (Basel: Zbinden, 1975), 46. To insure that citizens did not wear clothing of a higher class, officials confiscated garments and imposed fines.
- 10 Aigul Pirnazarova, chief curator, Savitsky Art Museum, Nukus, Karakalpakstan to author, July 2008. In addition to the many symbolic references to the triangle, Pirnazarova linked the triads of fire, water, air and earth, sky, and rain to practices of ancestor worship.
- 11 "Turkoman Embroidery and Women's Magic - Anahita Gallery," accessed February 16, 2017, <http://www.anahitagallery.com/articles-on-art/turkoman-embroidery-and-womens-magic>; Susan Meller, *Silk and Cotton: Textiles from the Central Asia That Was* (New York: Abrams, 2013), 133.
- 12 A *kejebe* was also used on a horse drawn cart. In Kyrgyzstan there were also special *kurak* coverings for horses that carried the bride.
- 13 Anonymous scholar, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan to author, July 2013.
- 14 The *düýe başlyk* is hung at the *tör* in the yurt after the wedding, until needed by the next member of the family. It remains in the possession of the youngest son. Galina Artykova, senior ethnographer, National Museum of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan to author, July 2013.
- 15 Galina Artykova, senior ethnographer, National Museum of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan to author, July 2013.
- 16 Mügül Andrews and Peter A. Andrews, *Türkmen Needlework: Dressmaking and Embroidery among the Türkmen of Iran* (London: Central Asian Research Centre, 1976), 12.
- 17 *Plov* is the Central Asian national dish of rice, meat (usually mutton), carrots, onions and spices is usually made in a large cast iron pot (*kazan*). K. Shaniiazov, "On the Traditional Uzbek Cuisine," *Soviet Anthropology And Archeology* 12, no. 4 (April 1, 1974): 42.
- 18 Gurbanjemal Ilyasova and Amangul Karrieva, "Turkmen Wedding Rites, Popular Beliefs, and Wedding Songs," accessed February 16, 2017, <http://www.turkmenhost.com/documents/Journal2/wedding.html>. Üzärlik is known as *esfand* in Persia, *rue* in Syria (Peter Andrews to Author, May 2016.)
- 19 There are various spellings of the wedding curtain (*shumıldık*, *chimilik*, *chimildik*, *köshögö*)
- 20 Aigul Pirnazarova, chief curator, Savitsky Art Museum, Nukus, Karakalpakstan to author, July 2008. The *kyrklar*, in Sufi belief, are forty "hidden" or "lost" enlightened beings that supervise humanity (Andrews to author, May 2016.). Forty is an auspicious number in Islam.
- 21 Kisliakov and Pisarchik, *Tadzhiki Karategina I Darvaza*, 210.
- 22 The 24th Congress took place from March 20 to April 9, 1971.
- 23 Stephanie Bunn and Christine Martens, "A Tale of Two Tents: Tush Ki'iz and Tus Ki'iz of the Kyrgyz and Kazakh," *HALI; the International Journal of Oriental Carpets and Textiles*, no. 158 (2008): 77.
- 24 Kate Fitz Gibbon and Andrew Hale, *Ikat: Splendid Silks of Central Asia* (London: Laurence King, 1997), 142.
- 25 Bunn and Martens, "A Tale of Two Tents: Tush Ki'iz and Tus Ki'iz of the Kyrgyz and Kazakh," 79.
- 26 Gisela Dombrowski, "Susanis: Embroideries from Central Asia," in *Uzbekistan: Heirs to the Silk Road*, ed. Johannes Kalter and Margareta Pavaloi (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 263.
- 27 O. A. Sukhareva, *Suzani: Sredneaziatskaia Dekorativnaia Vyshivka* (Moskva: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 2006), 156–57.
- 28 Fitz Gibbon and Hale, *Ikat: Splendid Silks of Central Asia*, 105, 133.
- 29 Vladimir Basliov and Olga B. Naumova, "Yurts, Rugs, and Felts," in *Nomads of Eurasia*, ed. Vladimir Basilov and Mary Fleming Zirin (Los Angeles: Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 1989), 103.

- 30 Stephanie Bunn, "Kyrgyz Shyrdak," ed. Maxine Mcgregor, *Textile Museum Journal*, 1995-1996 34, no. 5 (1997): 75-91.
- 31 Christine Martens, "Feltmaking in Kyrgyzstan: A Resilient Tradition," *Surface Design Journal*, 34, no. 2 (2010): 12-19.
- 32 Kisliakov and Pisarchik, *Tadzhiki Karategina I Darvaza*, 210.
- 33 Kisliakov and Pisarchik, *Tadzhiki Karategina I Darvaza*, 212.
- 34 David Richardson and Sue Richardson, *Qaraqalpaqs of the Aral Delta* (Munich: Prestel, 2012), 398-400.
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- 40 Kh Esbergenov, "On the Struggle Against Survivals of Obsolete Customs and Rites (The Karakalpak 'As' Memorial Feast)," *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia* 3, no. 1 (1964): 14.
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- 42 Fedor Arturovic Fiel'strup, *Iz Obrjadnoj Zizni Kirgizov Nacala 20 Veka (Life Cycle Ceremonies of the Kyrgyz at the Beginning of the 20th Century)* (Saint Petersburg, Russia: Nauka, 2002), 67; Kadyrov, *Kyrgyzstan: Traditions of Nomads*, 13; Chinara Makashova, regarding customs in her birth village near Bishkek to author, n.d.;
- 43 Kisliakov and Pisarchik, *Tadzhiki Karategina I Darvaza*, 213.
- 44 A. Mardonova, "Customs and Rituals of the Childhood Cycle among the Tadjiks of the Upper Zeravshan Valley in the Past and Today," 42. This was taken from a compilation of research carried out in Tajikistan during the years 1926-27 and 1959-61.
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- 56 Klavdiya Antipina, Temirbek Musakeev, and Rolando Paiva, *Kyrgyzstan* (Milano: Skira, 2006), 32.
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- 69 Mukarrama Kayumova, Chairman of the International Fund for Artisans of Tajikistan, Vice-president of the Central Asia Crafts Support Association (CACSA) to Author, n.d.



"A Heroic Woman (*Gahryman Ayal*)," Geok Depe, Turkmenistan, Courtesy of the State Museum of the State Cultural Center of Turkmenistan.

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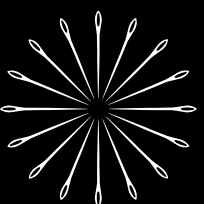
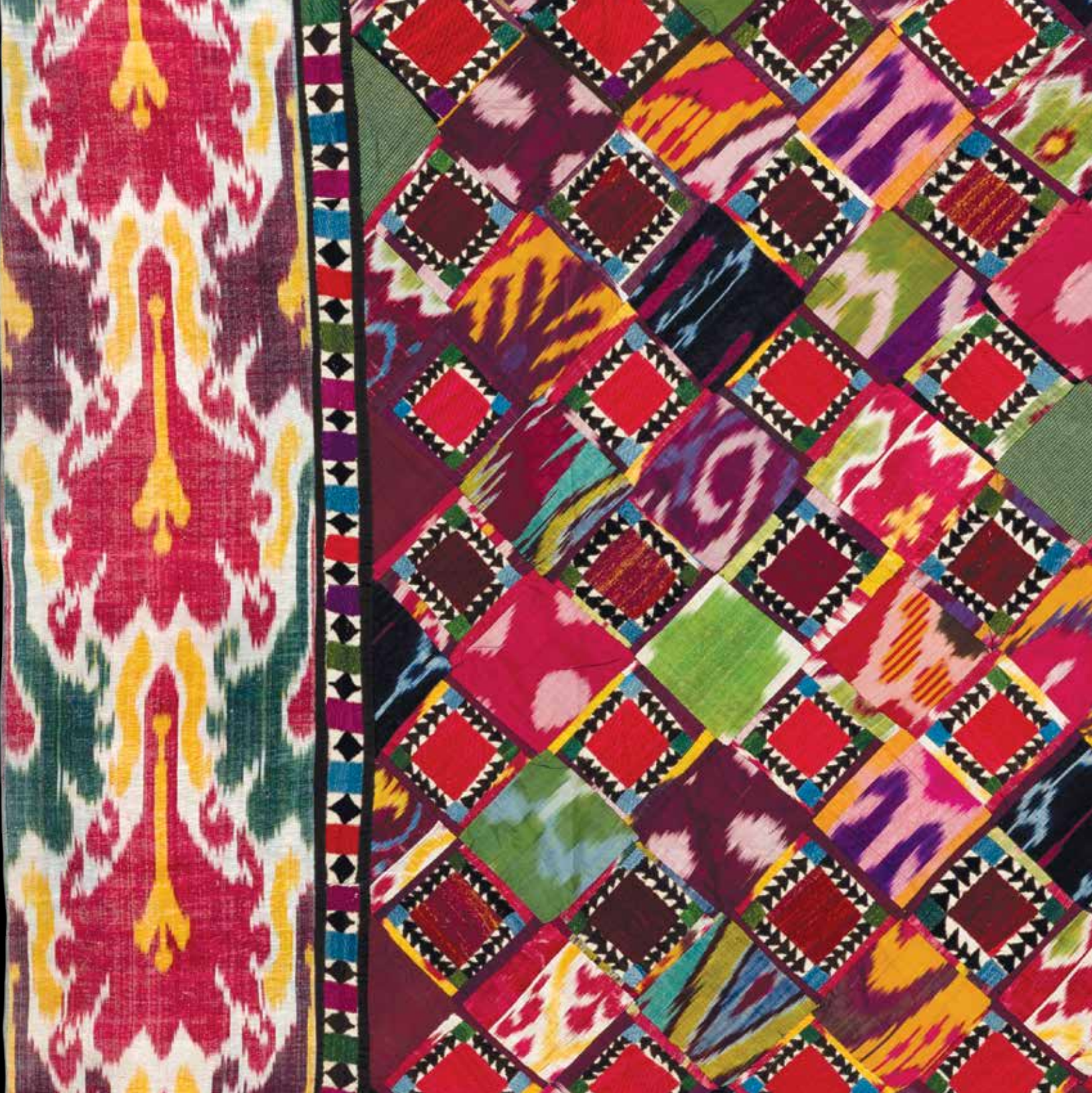
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