CHAPTER 6

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF CARPET TRADERS IN KASHAN CITY

Like other Islamic cities, the city of Kashan has a main bazar located in the centre of the city. Hundreds of shops are linked with each other and various commodities are on display. In the main route of the bazar there are many rug shops which exhibit their ware. The main cells of rug transactions are located in caravanserais and subordinate branches inside the bazar dealing with wholesale rug. Those shops in which the raw materials such as different kinds of threads are sold are located in the main route of bazar. Many of these shops deal in fibers, threads, designs, etc. Since long time Kashan's rug is a fine and beautiful one, it seems that the main business in the bazar is transaction pertaining to rug.¹

There are many mosques and the researcher observed a place of pilgrimage inside the bazar. When the time for noon prayer arrives, traders and sellers go to one of these mosques preferably to the nearer one to attend in collective prayer. Mosques are clean, their floor is covered with beautiful carpets, walls have scrolls of some Quranic verses which show beautiful designs of Arabesque. As such, prayer niche has been decorated with

¹ This point has also been suggested by scholars on the subject. “The bazars of Tehran, Isfahan, Kashan, Kerman and Tabriz have specialized in the carpet trade”. As the city of Kashan has not been classified with big cities, the carpet making has remained a considerable commodity in the city. “The bazar of Kashan, which did not encounter any significant competition from the new shopping centres, maintained its commercial dominance, thanks to a relatively low rate of urban growth and the continuing vigour of the carpet trade”. (Ehsan Yarshater. Encyclopaedia Iranica, vol. IV, Routledge and Kegan Paul. London and New York, 1990, p.33).
Arabesque, Khaee motifs and Shah Abbasi flowers. The very designs that the researcher had seen on different rugs, were observable in the mosque in prayer niche-qibla- and walls as well. Between two sessions of collective prayer sometimes there was a lamentation derived from the Shia hagiography. When this section of the programme was going on, a trader or seller begins to collect charities of attendants in the collective prayer.

Lamentations and processions in the months of Moharram and Ramzan are considerable in the bazar of Kashan. In the month of Moharram the days of Tasooa and Ashoora whole shops in the area of bazar and elsewhere are closed and everybody attends the lamentations. Willem Floor says that "special gatherings were organized by the bazaris for the Moharram processions. These could take the form of participation in the flagellation processions (Sina-Zani, qama Zani) and the tazia processions, where bazaris (sometimes particular guilds) with special banners to commemorate the martyrdom of the imams. To that end the bazaris also maintained special standards (alams), stored in the bazar, as in the Kashan to this days".2

With regard to market place in cities of Iran especially in Kashan, it is not incidental that many of the bazaris go to Mecca for Haj pilgrimage. It is because they are traditionally more concerned about their religious obligations than those rich people who are not classified as bazaris.3 Since the traders of the bazar are rich they are under Quranic obligation to go to Mecca.

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2 Ibid., p.29.
3 In the interaction between religion and commerce, as we mentioned earlier in some verses of the Quran God has spoken with man in a commercial language. Ahmad Ashraf quotes a passage from C.C. Torrey which says that "the mutual relations between God and man are of a strictly commercial nature. Allah is the ideal merchant. He includes all the universe in his reckoning. All is counted, everything measured". (Ehsan Yarshater, op.cit., p.30).
The centre for selling carpet production in the whole area of study is *bazar* of Kashan. After finishing long process and producing the rug it is to be brought to the *bazar* for selling purpose. Although it may happen that when the rug is ready for sale the trader himself goes to the home either in the village or city itself. He settles the price of rug and after coming to an agreement, the trader will collect the rug. Transactions are usually based on cheques drawn on one of the banks in the city. In case of wage labour rug, there are a few official connoisseurs in the *bazar*, who are themselves traders also. They settle the wage of the weaver of rug. In this case the master or employer is usually himself carpet trader in the *bazar*.

As it was to be mentioned earlier, in the main route of the *bazar* there are various shops in which carpet selling is in circulation. Shopkeepers or traders buy the rugs from weavers and sell them to different customers. At the same time, the chambers of those traders who deal with wholesale carpets are located in caravanserais and subordinate branches. In these cells usually the transactions are conducted with capital city of Tehran or other cities and even with countries outside of Iran.

When the researcher was entering into these shops to interview shopkeepers and traders many woven signboards were drawing the attention. The woven signboards usually have been hung right above the table of trader or elsewhere on the wall. They had Arabic inscriptions with a beautiful designs; one of the inscriptions that researcher read was “This is out of the grace of my God”. Another was an inscription of *Quramic* verse about evil eye.
Since the prices of carpets woven in *Kashan* are at a high level, in fact, *bazaris* seek foreign outlets. This is why we may come to the point that these *bazaris* have interaction with other countries for the purpose of carpet transactions. Charles W. Jacobsen one of the carpet experts says that "In London, we find many more *Kashans*, so called European *Kashans* in dozar sizes and carpet sizes approximately 9×12 ft., 7×10 ft., and 10½×14 ft. The London dealers actually control most of the weaving in *Kashan*. This came about over a period of many years. The *Kashan* is a thin to medium nap rug and New York importers found their best success with the chemically washed types."⁴

**Field Work Tables**

In this chapter a theoretical framework has been given in order to study the Islamic economy with special reference to traders in the city of *Kashan* and the adjoining villages. A few tables are placed below for giving a quantitative outlook on the traders.

**Table No.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>30-40</th>
<th>41-50</th>
<th>51-60</th>
<th>61-70</th>
<th>71+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>1²</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1(6.25)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9(56.25)</td>
<td>6(37.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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² This respondent was son of a trader in the market but himself was also working as a trader.
The above table shows that out of the total sample of 16 traders, 1 trader is found to be in the age group of 30-40, 9 are found to be in the age group of 51-60 and 6 traders are found to be in the age group of 61-70. An important feature of the table is that there is no trader above age of 71 and it shows that majority traders in the sample are in the age group of 51 to 60.

**Table No.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traders and Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table examines the level of education of the traders. As a matter of fact there is no trader who is completely illiterate and 11 traders have primary education. 3 traders have secondary education, 1 trader has high school education and 1 trader is a graduate. According to this table majority traders of the sample have primary education.

**Table No.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traders and Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No.3 deals with the experience gained by traders in the sphere of carpet industry. Accordingly, 1 trader is found to have 1 to 10 years experience.
3 traders have 11 to 20 years experience, 2 traders have 21 to 30 years of experience, 7 traders have 31 to 40 years experience and 3 traders have 41 to 50 years experience. A good number of them have 31 to 40 years experience and it enables them to do a good job in the art of trading carpet product.

Table No.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father's Profession</th>
<th>Carpet tradesmen</th>
<th>Farmer</th>
<th>Weaver</th>
<th>Warp Layer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7(43.75)</td>
<td>3(18.75)</td>
<td>3(18.75)</td>
<td>3(18.75)</td>
<td>16(%100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table examines the profession of the trader's fathers. It is found that 7 fathers of these tradesmen were in the carpet product. Three fathers were farmers, 3 fathers were weavers and 3 other fathers were warp layers. A good number of fathers were traders dealing with carpet product and one finds some kind of tradition in this respect. In the case of fathers whose profession was farming, taking up a new job assignment such as trading in carpet product was altogether a different step in this case as these traders had to learn this profession fresh.

Table No.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working hours a day</th>
<th>7 hours a day</th>
<th>8 hours a day</th>
<th>9 hours a day</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6(37.5)</td>
<td>8(50.00)</td>
<td>2(12.5)</td>
<td>16(%100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to above table 6 traders work 7 hours a day, 8 traders work 8
hours a day and 2 traders work 9 hours a day. That means that 50 percent of the sample have normal working hours that is they work 8 hours a day.

Table No.6

Attitude Towards Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More struggle or predestined daily bread</th>
<th>More struggle</th>
<th>Predestined daily bread</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10(62.5)</td>
<td>6(37.5)</td>
<td>16(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No.6 shows some interesting aspect of their attitude about work. Thus, 10 traders said that they believe in more struggle in the field of trading so that they can have better income and better life. At the same time, 6 traders stated that they do not believe in more struggle because they will get their daily bread by doing normal work.

Table No.7

Traders and Pilgrimage to Mecca

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pil.</th>
<th>Mecca</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2(12.5)</td>
<td>10(62.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table brings to light that 2 traders never visited Mecca. 10 traders visited only once. 3 of them visited this holy place twice and one trader visited three times. In fact, 2 traders could never visit Mecca due to one reason or other and it seems being young in this trade, they do not have sufficient financial resources in order to visit the holy place of Mecca.
Table No.8

**Traders and Pilgrimage to Karbela**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pil</th>
<th>Karbela</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15(93.75)</td>
<td>1(6.25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows that 15 traders never visited to the holy place of Karbela and one trader visited Karbela only once. The paucity of pilgrimage to Karbela is mainly because of political reasons. It may be understood here that this pilgrim centre was accessible only intermittently even during the period of Shah. During Iran-Iraq conflict, this holy pilgrimage centre was closed for the pilgrims of Iran. Now for the least one year it has remained open based on special conditions.

Table No.9

**Traders and Pilgrimage to Mashad**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pil</th>
<th>Mashad</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5-6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1(6.25)</td>
<td>2(12.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to above table, one trader never visited the holy place of Mashad. 2 traders visited 5-6 times, 2 other traders visited 7-8 times. 6 of them visited 9-10 times and 5 traders visited holy place of Mashad 11 times or above.
Table No.10

Traders and Pilgrimage to Qom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pil.</th>
<th>Qom</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>Twice a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13(81.25)</td>
<td>5(18.75)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table no.10 reveals that 13 traders generally visit once a year this holy place of Qom, and 3 traders visit 2 times a year.

Table No.11

Traders and Pilgrimage to Syria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pil.</th>
<th>Syria</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5(31.25)</td>
<td>11(68.75)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to above table 5 traders of the sample never visited the holy place of Syria-Zainabiyah- and at the same time 11 traders of the sample visited this pilgrimage only once in their life time.

Table No.12

Traders and Blessedness of the Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blessedness of Work</th>
<th>Yes it has blessedness</th>
<th>It has little blessedness</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14(87.5)</td>
<td>2(12.5)</td>
<td>16(%100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table refers to traders belief about the blessedness of their work and 14 traders said that their work is blessed by God. At the same time, 2 traders stated that their work has gained little blessedness from God. It clearly shows that majority traders of the sample expect blessing from God, and it brings to light the latent spirituality.

Table No.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of Pleasant</th>
<th>Much</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4(25.00)</td>
<td>10(62.5)</td>
<td>2(12.5)</td>
<td>16(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No.13 examines trader's attitudes towards God's satisfaction and pleasant with them. Accordingly, 4 traders said that God is pleased with them very much, 10 traders suggested that God is not much pleased with them, may be normal. Moreover, 2 traders said that God is pleased with them very little. After producing some preliminary information about rug traders in the bazar of Kashan, we now proceed to be informed on non-formal interviews which were conducted in Kashan city.

Interview

1. Researcher interviewed with one of the traders in the famous caravanserai in the bazar. He asked a general question about the carpet production in the city of Kashan. Haj Mohammad said that, since farming
situation of the area is not well, the women weavers approach the trader to obtain raw materials for carpet making. The woven carpets are then supplied to the trader for securing the wage. On the other hand, the position of society of Kashan along with adjoining villages is of religious one. Therefore, women prefer to work in their home. Thus carpet production is traditionally conducted inside the house. Each woman in her house has her own loom and during her leisure time weaves alone. She is not ready to come out of house to work, that is the reason why group weaving has not succeeded in this area, the trader said.

As Haj Mohammad was an official expert in the bazar he explained about those factors which lead to the determination of wage labour. He said that a good rug has many factors. First, to use good raw materials; second, to accomplish proper and systematic weaving; third, proper weaving. Then the trader said that different sections in the area of Kashan are to be distinguished from each other. He said that if a pious clergyman has resided in a certain village, under his teachings, the people in that village maintained good conduct. Many villages such as Bidgol or Mohtasham quarter were distinguished.

Further, trader said that progress of Islam was not by force, rather, it was through well morality. Prophet had a certain ethic. As such, the role of Imams was significant. Since in his cell the trader had many rugs with religious designs, researcher asked him about these kinds of rugs and especially about

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Proper weaving means that the carpet does not have double knot, does not become curved and coarse, does not to mingle the design, proper warp laying, proper knotting, quality of woof giving, does not cross out (omit) certain parts of the design, etc.
one big rug with picture was hanging on the wall. Haj Mohammad said that
signboards have an artistic aspect and nobody buys them for daily use. Their
numbers are few and are woven in the city. On the big signboard rug with
picture he said it is to be said that it shows Abraham-Hazrat-e-Ibrahim, even
though religiously it is not so legitimated.

Researcher asked the trader about humming during weaving, he replied,
it is a phenomenon that is not noticeable amongst the weavers. In the past, a
weaver who desired to become refreshed in spirit used humming and chanting,
but today it is not there any more. 7

II. The interview conducted with the second trader was in the other
caravanserai. Researcher asked from Haj Abbas Bani Kazmi on the profit of
wage labour carpet. The profit of wage labour rug is very less, trader said. For
example in 9 meter/64 square/inch rug we pay $370 as wage labour, $235 for
preparation of raw materials. Then $370+$235=605, total expenditure for soft
wool rug. Then the trader said that it can be sold hardly at the rate of $940,
while the money is invested for a period of one and half year and that is the
time for weaving the rug. He also added that rug seller should sell the rug soon
to get his money back and profit. He emphasized that obviously the seller of the
rug will sell it at a cheaper price. The trader said that one problem about
Kashan carpet is custom duty on it which is heavy; it has been responsible for
this product remaining within Iran. Since the price of this rug is high there is a

7 This can be contrasted with carpet making in Kashmir in India where the weaving is
accompanied by Qur'an recitation.

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slump in the market due to insufficient sale.

Researcher asked about those large scale organizations which invest in rug manufacture. The trader replied that today Ministry of Creative Holy War, Institution of Martyr, Help Committee of Imam Khomeini are contributing and providing materials and designs. He also said that the Company of Isar which is affiliated to the Institution of Martyr prepares raw materials, woof, design or little bit money; once the process of rug weaving is completed the company buys the rug at current price, and does not take any profit for itself, rather, it is merely to help the martyr’s family. Haj Abbas said that the Company of Isar is only for martyrs’ families but its work is not good; however, it seems that day by day it is improving. He said that the central location of the company is in the small city of Aran, 5 Km. far from Kashan but it has numerous looms in various parts of the country. Haj Abbas said that now they have improved but our rugs are 30 percent better than that of them. When the researcher asked on what occasions they close the cell the trader replied that on customary days when the whole market is cut off.

On the question of encouragement of religious precepts toward large income the trader said: “we have not followed work for large income. rather, it was our love of this job that we have remained in”. He said the livelihood of many people is in this work. The researcher outlined a question about the kind of approach towards the world with the aim of salvation in the other-world. “One should work hard” the trader said: “and I think the man should be careful
about salvation in the other world”. He added: “therefore I should not sell the rug of two colours but show its real worth and for earning legitimate profit.” Haj Abbas said that I try to buy good rug for the one who needs”. The researcher asked the trader whether God was pleased with him. The trader said: “we are attached to His mercy and we are hopeful. God is great and I think He is well pleased with me.”

About weavers of Kashan the rug trader explained they are mostly honest weavers. When the researcher asked about weaving in double knot, the trader replied “yes they weave in pair, how much profit do they take yet that we expect they do not weave in double knot”. He also told that in Kashan generally the work of weaving is good. On the money earned from rug Haj Abbas expressed the view that this money is legitimate and it is not usury or money exchange. He said: “after the revolution usury is very little. It is our love that has caused to remain in this work.”

III. The researcher has pursued the work of interview and has outlined questions with another rug trader in the bazar of Kashan. The trader said that today a rug that should be woven in a measure of 9 meter is to be woven in 12 meter. He added that it is because of high cost and people do not know that how to work. He also said machine-made carpet caused a loss to the Kashan rug. The trader said that in the past good material was used and rug was in a symmetrical colour. On the kind of design he said that medallion and altar is a fashionable one and most of the weavers wish to weave that kind of design.
Once the researcher asked him mention the weaving centres elsewhere which produce good carpets. The trader said that two areas of Ravand and Tahirabad are weaving good carpets but weavers in the district of Fin are weaving double knot.

IV., V. In the next interview the researcher has talked with two rug traders together. The first question was about capital, the first trader told: “we have a certain amount of capital through which we carry on a few business of rug.” The second trader said: “we have accumulated the capital from the past and now buy the rug and send it to the Tehran or elsewhere.” The next question was about the participation in different elections. Here the first trader said: “whenever people go and vote, it may be necessary sometimes or other. But people do not have good idea about members of parliament. Some people participate in elections till their identity certificate to sealed. On the same question the second trader said: “somebody goes for vote since it is religiously obligatory, but today it has become decreased.

The next question was on the participation in religious ceremonies. The first trader said that majority of the population in Kashan participate in these ceremonies. In the month of Ramzan at Qadr nights or martyrdom of Imam Ali people get together in mosques and they have different ceremonies. As such, in the month of Moharram they contribute in lamentations especially at the days

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Researchers have selected these areas for his field work.

It should be remembered here that this question was projected because after Islamic revolution majority of the people were participating in different elections. According to the opinion of Islamic leaders it was an obligatory duty.
of *Tasooa* and *Ashoora*. The second trader on the same question said that rug sellers do not belong to a specific group, the people go to different places to the purpose of participation in Moharram procession.

On the question of statements from religious leaders the first trader quoted *prophet’s hadith* that said “Tradesman is friend of God”. The second trader also quoted a *hadith* from one of the infallible *Imams* that “to seek daily bread is to be rewarded”. On the question of Role Model both of the respondents said that they follow *Ayatollah Bahajat* and also they have his book. On the next question that whether work is worship both the rug sellers stated that to earn legitimate daily bread is worship and the second trader added that, nowadays especially it is a difficult job. The other question was that who is the nearest to God. Here the answers were different and each of the traders had their own specific opinion. The first trader replied that the one who suffice to legitimate daily bread is the nearest servant to God. However, the second trader expressed the view that the one who does hard work is the nearest servant to God. On the next question that whether religious precepts have contributed to large income. again each of the traders answered in a different way. The first one said that they have facilitated very less while the second one said that they were beneficial and he quoted the *hadith* from prophet as evidence in which prophet told “the tradesman is friend of God”.

The last question that the researcher projected for two rug traders was about *Khoms* -one fifth of net profit that have to be paid as religious tax-. Here only one of them said that the government takes tax to such an extent that nothing remains to pay for *Khoms*. When the interview was about to finish one
of the traders said that government takes lot of tax and it does control every things. In carpet affairs if there is undue interference, weavers do not weave properly, there is no supervision on the work, dyer does not dye in a proper manner. the belief of the people has weakened, while weavers weave double knot and say that they do not do so.

VI. The researcher has had a short interview with one of the traders which asked him a few questions. The researcher asked about usury - riha. The trader replied “I think traders take usury and from religious point of view they are not in a right position.” The next question was on religious tax. He answered that so far as he knows and understands they do not pay their religious tax.

VII. The next trader was a person who has come to the village of yazdel to buy a carpet when the researcher also was in the same village. In this interview the conversation was more about problems of rug as far as weaver and raw materials are concerned. The trader said that rug of the Kashan has suffered problems, weavers knot double and demolish the rug. The ministry of Jihad-creative holy war-did not supply high quality material and as a result of which, according to their version the rugs have become stagnated. Investigations in the marketing of carpet confirmed that the carpets can attract good money provided weaving is carried out properly. At the same time, the customers can separate out good quality rugs and the bad ones.

VIII. The researcher has taken an interview with a seller of small rugs in the main bazar of Kashan. Inside the shop there was lots of signboards most of
them with a religious content. The rug seller said that some women sit behind
the loom and weave these signboards that are La Ilaha Illallah, Mohammad
Rasulallah, names of the God and the household of the Prophet, Allah.
Mohammad, Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hussain, some Quranic verses and
picture of Mecca, etc. The rug seller said that they are small designs and
weavers weave these designs in the end of their big rug on the loom. Because
sometimes when they finish the rug a part of the warp remains, on that section
of the warp they start to weave these signboards and as it is a small design they
finish it very soon. Then he said that it is about two months that market is
stagnant and he was of the view that weavers have to weave different designs
also. The man said weavers do not have new designs and they weave based on
their old designs that they have in their house.

IX.. X. The next shop that the researcher has taken interview had many
beautiful rugs some of which were religious signboards. There were two rug
traders father and son and they were well-informed about their occupations.
Since the traders were mostly dealing with signboards of religious content the
researcher started to ask on the same subject. Even traders themselves were
interested to talk about this issue and they were calling them as ‘sacred’
signboards. The first trader said that people purchase sacred signboards such as
La Ilaha Illallah as a gift and it is a current custom in the city of Kashan. The
expenditure to weave is little and soon it is completed. He also added that
nowadays weaving religious signboards is decreasing and people have gone
towards luxury; life style has differentiated. The trader said that signboards are
woven of additional portion of the warp and weaver wants to finish it very soon, since he/she wants to bring down the main rug from the loom. That is the reason why weavers make double knot even on the *Qur'anic* verses.

The trader said that today carpet weaving is to be seen as an industry and all are seeking their own profit; as a result of this materialistic quest, the weaver does not feel fulfilled in work. The second trader referred to other aspect that is interference of government. He said that the Ministry of Creative Holy War interferes in the work of carpet and it has occupied the place of old master. He mentioned that master's work was better, since he supervised the quality of raw materials, double knot, etc. Same trader said that today the centre for carpet market is not Europe but the USA and we have not access to that country and therefore, the rug market has suffered and demands have decreased.

On the donated rugs that researcher questioned the first trader said that on these kinds of rugs the attempt is to be made that the most religious and the best weaver be selected to weave. He also said that for the last twenty years they had many donated rugs and that they were still waiting for an opportunity to open the way to carry these rugs to the shrines in Iraq. The trader expressed the view that most of the rugs in *Shia* sacred shrines are donated ones.

The first trader expressed views on the sacred signboards that are considerably related to our subject. He said: "we sell lots of sacred signboards and my father is interested in and has contact with those good weavers of sacred signboards". He asserted that to weave *Qur'anic* verses may be initiated
from Kashan, we may face with sexy signboards in the cities like Tabriz.\textsuperscript{10} He stated that in Tabriz city sexy signboards may be woven for the market purpose but Kashan is different and the religious dimension of the city is distinctive. The same trader said that since good designers of the Quranic verses are available in the city of Kashan, Kashani weavers are able to produce sacred boards of better quality. In the city of Kashan the elegance and talent of the weaver is of the significant importance, the colouration of the rug is also of better quality.

Generally, Kashan has maintained its belief and one reason is that the genuine design of Kashan has maintained, that is medallion and altar. The second trader stated that one interesting point is on the woman picture. He said that formerly we had several rugs of woman face that have been hung in the front of shop but people objected and we took them off. People of the Kashan do not accept them, the trader said. Even if there is a signboard of Lili and Majnoon which has a historical dimension sometimes people come and object. The city has maintained its religious position, the first trader said. The second trader deduced that these are the reasons why the society has a limited potential for accepting migrants, who think that this city has a closed environment where they may not like to settle down.

About rugs of Kashan the first trader said that although the carpet of Kashan has no variation of designs but it has its own customer. The trader also

\textsuperscript{10} The capital of eastern Azarbaijan, one of the northern provinces of Iran which is also famous in carpet weaving.
said that in *Kashan* the rate of wage labour is higher than everywhere. In the case of weaving of portrait the second trader said that in the city of *Kashan* there is no master to weave of this kind but in the city of *Tabriz* there are such master weavers.\footnote{As we mentioned earlier this aspect is significant from religious point of view. In Islam drawing picture is forbidden, since it was to be thought that any picture of living being may be similar to the God and it may be image of God. If we trace back the reason that why in the city of *Kashan* there is no master weaver of portrait we may come to the point that in such a circumstances where there is prohibition to draw the picture, naturally no master will come into the existence. Neither there is demand for picture nor the individual is ready to work in this line.}

When the researcher asked about truthfulness of the weaver the first trader replied that basically if the weaver it is told not to make the double knot certainly he/she will obey. Faith is very important in proper work, trader said. He also said that he had a rug that he could swear was devoid of any double knot; he personally know its weaver who was a faithful person; if the weaver was aware that making double knot was illegitimate, that task would not be carried out by them any more.

Researcher queried about the existing rugs and their favourite customers. The second respondent said that these rugs were eighty percent for the purpose of export and the rest for internal use.

XI. The next trader was the one who at the same time, was official in charge of settlement of rug price. The researcher asked him on religious tax. He said that in the past it was better and today it is not so good. He said that traders are faithful on the Moharram and the like, but it seems that nowadays
they do not pay very much religious tax - *khoms*. He said that today everything is expensive and inflation is high and there is no stability. The trader expressed the view that we are Muslim and clergyman has recited our agreement terms in the marriage ceremony and certainly his living also should be earned. It seems that today they are also in difficulty.

XII, XIII. The next shop that researcher selected for interview was located in the main route of the *bazar*. It had many sacred signboards such as *Quranic* verses and pictures. When researcher asked about signboards, the trader said that in the *Kashan* weavers cannot produce good picture, but they are masters in calligraphy. He also said that on the face weaving the city of *Tabriz* is number one. Researcher also asked about the design of the city and respondent said in this city the most current design is *medallion and altar*. He also said that recently they have started to weave some *scattered* designs. About picture design the trader said that in this city people object to them, I had a woman picture hung on the wall, the trader said, but people protested and he was compelled to take it off and substitute it with another rug. The trader said that social circumstances of the city is so that does not permit to these kinds of pictures.

The next question that researcher projected in his interview was about profit. The trader said that for the time being it is bad. The trader continued that raw material is not good and at the same time, it is not sufficient. therefore, there are very few good rugs available in the market. When researcher asked about
Khums - religious tax - rug seller replied that among the traders there are of course faithful persons who pay *khums*, but there are some who do not pay. When the interview was going on, another rug seller who was informed about interview came into the shop to participate in the discussion. While he came to know the issue he said that *Imam Ali* says when poverty enters from one door, the faith will go out from another door.

Then he added that today faith has gone. Government has interfered in all works including rug, the trader said. He also told the government has distributed a huge amount of money throughout the country and dissipated it without any result. On the dyeing he said that today dyer uses chemical colour while in the past it was botanic. Then he said that after a short period of time chemical colour loses stability. The same trader believed that carpet transaction, needs experts but today nonexperts have entered into it. He said that if a rug that would be sold at a price of $700 by a connoisseur, it would be sold at a price of $350 by an ordinary person. This fact will cause ruin the business. When the researcher asked about *khoms* - religious tax- same trader said that khoms is to be paid out of the surplus portion of property which except in a few cases it is not there. On the other hand, he said, the tax office, the municipality, etc. charge so much money that nothing remains to pay *khoms*.

Researcher asked about interaction with clergymen. The second trader said that our flesh and blood vessel are infused with spirituality. There are
some clergymen who are spiritual and pious in all their lifetime, the same trader said. About to be present in mosque to attend in collective prayer the trader said that at every noon and evening we attend mosque for collective prayer led by the clergyman. He also said that there is a programme on every Thursday night in the mosque in which some people participate. It was fully apparent that the trader was talking about his faith, and at the same time, he was uncomfortable about those matters. He stated that in the past people were attending mosques to commemorate Imam Hussain's procession with fervour, but today it has decreased; if food is not offered people will not welcome the programme.

XIV, XV. There are another two traders in the bazar of Kashan who were interviewed by the researcher. Researcher asked about those who buy Kashan carpet. The first trader said that we sell the carpet to Tehran and sometimes to the other cities. He also said that some of the rugs which go to Tehran are used in the international trade. On the issue of profit the second trader said that nowadays rug selling does not earn much profit and we add only a certain percent as our profit and sell it. He said that today the rug quality is not so good and buyer purchases it at a low rate.

On the attending in religious ceremonies the first trader said that on the occasion of 21st of Ramazan and Qadr nights along with other people we also participate. He said that people receive these programmes with warm and enthusiastic welcome. On the occasion of the month of Moharram the same trader said that in the lamentation of Moharram of the days of Tasooa and
Ashoora, the presence of people is enthusiastic and they contribute with a warm welcome. As such, the second trader said that inhabitants of the city of Kashan are faithful people and they sincerely believe in these ceremonies in which they participate.

When the researcher asked two traders about some statements of God, prophet or Imams on work, the first trader said that Prophet Mohammad says ‘tradesman is friend of God’, and the second trader said that he does not remember a certain statement, however, he told ‘legitimate daily bread is in Kashb\textsuperscript{12} -trade-and it is blessed’. Then the researcher asked them about the role model which they follow. Here both of them replied that they follow Ayatullah Bahjat and they have his book also. On the question of the relationship between work and worship the first trader said that of course sound work is worship, and the other one said that if the man seek legitimate daily bread that is worship. On the issue of the relationship with clergymen both of them expressed the view that when they go for collective prayer they are led by the clergyman. They also said that in case of any religious problem they seek counsel from clergyman.

The last question which researcher asked was about encouragement of religious precepts that the first trader replied they have not been encouraged, however the second trader said that yes, they have been encouraged and he clarified that religion says “follow one’s livelihood”, this statement is

\textsuperscript{12} The word Kash is a Quranic term which means ‘gain’, ‘earn’, ‘work’, ‘trade’, etc. This is the word which is very known and useable among the tradesmen in Iran.
encouragement to work in the world. He also said that as such, there are many other statements. Finally the second trader said that there are many people who are involved in the work of rug production such as dyers, suppliers of raw materials, warp layers, weavers, and so and so forth. Basically, if these people pay attention to God, it motivates them to do proper work.

XVI. The last interview was conducted with one trader in his shop which was a big one located in the main route of the bazar and the trader was an old man. The researcher asked a question on quality of rugs in the market. The trader said that rugs are not so qualified and the reason is that weavers obtain fibres from market on credit, so that they have to finish the work early. The trader added that because capital is not totally from their own and they should pay the debt. He said that this kind of interaction between seller of raw material and weaver is current in the area of Kashan, even those who have enough money to arrange for fibres come to the bazar and acquire readymade fibres by credit and start weaving. The researcher asked a question on participation of traders in different mosques across the bazar. The trader said “almost all the bazaris participate in collective prayer in mosques in the bazar and as such, many other programmes may be held in mosque where we participate again, since we are Muslim and these programmes are Islamic rituals”. When the researcher asked about interaction between trade and religiosity, the trader replied that there is a close interaction between the two because according to Islam a faithful man must provide legitimate daily bread for his family. He also added that according to Islamic tradition, everybody
who follows a certain Kasb-trade-God likes him. On paying religious task the trader said that it is dependent upon man himself. But nowadays to earn livelihood is not easy and people work hard to meet their needs, the trader said. He continued that someone may be capable of paying Khoms, etc., but it is not such as before. On the question about different occasions that traders participate in religious ceremonies the trader said that on many occasions such as Ashoora and Tasooa in Moharram, and 19th and 21st of Ramzan bazar is closed and all the bazars including rug traders participate in these ceremonies.