

Khorjin - what is the right way to spell the word?



My love story with Turkmen rugs is a classic one. The rich and warm colors, the beautiful abstract geometrical patterns, the designs and motifs which reflect the presence of the vivid yet practical nomad culture behind them, the multi-layered sophisticated weaving techniques,... with all of this, it is of no surprise that our roman is full of passion and desire.

At some point of every romantic melodrama the good soles whose duty is to look ahead and warn the heroes against all kinds of difficulties come on stage with their readymade replicas: "this great happiness is bound to find its end because the **lovers have different cultural backgrounds**" is a recurrent motif. In my oriental rugs love story, such an argument looked at first completely ridiculous. Of course, I said to myself, I am not going to pretend that I was born on a back of a camel in the middle of the road from *Herat* to *Kandahar*, but, cultural differences? Hey, isn't it the key to the charm Turkmen rugs exert on me??

Yet these good soles, old aunties, unfortunately, had a point. A small cloud did appear in the sky. Difficulties did arise when I started reading the Turkmen rug's text books and visiting the oriental rugs collectors' sites and forums, trying to learn the terminology and nomenclature of this world. At the beginning I thought that it is just the usual hard time of pronouncing names and words that come from languages I am not familiar with, but then I discovered that it was more than that. There are real ambiguities. For example: the long pillow which is part of the Turkmen's bedding - some people call it *Bolesht* others call it *Balisht* while others call it *Pushti* ... this is no laughing matter - I mean, how can you courtship a lady if you are not certain what is the correct way to pronounce her name, or even worse than that, what is her name?

Well, I was educated that expressing frustration is not adequate if you do not do something about it, so I decided to collect and publish in this dedicated page, any piece of information which is relevant to the nomenclature of Turkmen rugs. I hope that this source will help you putting order into the linguistic chaos and will give you some alternate names when you are looking for more information about Turkmen oriental rugs.

[Have a question or comment? - Call](#)

I invite all oriental rug lovers to send me their remarks, comments, highlight of nuisances and references and I promise to publish all relevant material/links which will be beneficial the community of Turkmen rug collectors worldwide and reduce the level of nomenclature confusion.

Turkmen Rugs - Terminology, Transcription, Pronunciation, Spelling and Nomenclature

מהמעט שקראתי, החיים בטורקמניסטן נראו לי תמיד בלאגן לא קטן. עמים נודדים, אימפריות כובשות, מלחמות בין שבטיות אין סופיות - ובתוך כל זה, יופי מדהים ושפע פורץ של אמנות אלמונית חוצת גבולות. אמנות אריגת השטיחים של שבטי הנוודים בטורקמניסטן נתגלתה לעולם המערבי בתחילת המאה העשרים בתקופה שבה היה האיזור נתון לשליטת ברית המועצות הסובייטית. הספרות המחקרית שהתפרסמה אז על חייהם ויצירות האמנות של השבטים הטורקמנים הייתה ברובה ברוסית, והחוקרים המערביים, שהשלטון הסובייטי הקשה עליהם את הכניסה לטורקמניסטן, נאלצו לבסס את עבודותיהם על הטרימינולוגיה והתיאורים של המקורות הרוסיים. הוסיפו לזה את שפע הדיאלקטים המקומיים, תנאי השטח, הפיצול, רב התרבותיות והמעורבות הגדולה של סוחר השטיחים במרכזים העירוניים בפרס [\[באפגניסטן\]](#) ותקבלו, בליל שפות, שמות ומושגים קשה לעיכול. החלטתי לרכז בדף זה מעט מן הדעות הנשמעות בחוגי אספני השטיחים הטורקמנים בקשר לשמות, הגייתם והתעתיקים שלהם לאנגלית. כל מי שיכול להאיר את עיננו בנושא זה מוזמן לכתוב לי ואפרסם הערותיו כאן.

The "Keep it Simple" approach

Henry Sadovsky - a *Baluch* collector and a veteran member of the [Turkotek salon](#) is trying (in a post on 06-05-2003) to give simple names to the plethora of Turkmen bags. To his opinion there are two common obstacles: 1. using words in languages which are unfamiliar to most Turkmen rugs collectors 2. Using names in English which are based on what the bags contained or where they were used *in situ*.

"...As there seems to be disagreement over what the people in the area of where these things are found call them, perhaps we should make no assumptions and simply call:



- A square (single) bag - **A square bag**
- One of a pair of *Khorjin* - **A pannier bag** (leaves more to the imagination than "Donkey Bag")
- A bag previously known as *Balisht* - **A long bag**
- An especially long *Balisht* - **An extra-long bag**



Henry Sadovsky ends his recommendations with the following optimistic vision:

"...However, if a field is to advance, clarity and consistency are essential. Anything short of that invites confusion, miscommunication, and the ignoring of what we think we have learned by the following generation."

I vote for Henry.

The "Let's Do It Right" approach

A totally different approach is presented by [Seyitguly Batyrov](#) a veteran rugs and carpets dealer from Turkmenistan who is emphasizing the correct meaning, spelling and pronunciation of the words which are used by the Turkmen for calling their rugs, bags and other types of textile daily items and trappings:



- **Chuval** instead of *Juval*
- **Asmalyk** instead of *Asmaldyk* or *Osmolduk* (*Asmak* means "To Hang" in Farsi so the literal translation is "a thing to be hanged")
- **Gapylyk** instead of *Kapunuk* (*Gapy* means "Door" in Farsi so the literal translation is "a thing intended for the door")
- **Duye Dizlik Ayatlyk** - weaving intended for funeral ceremonies
- **Sallanchak** instead of *Salatshak* so the rug used on a *Sallanchak* should normally be *Sallanchaklyk* (*Sallanchak* means cradle)
- **Namazlyk** is a prayer rug
- **Torba** instead of *Turba*
- **Ensi** instead of *Engsi*
- **Oy** instead of *Yurt*
- **Gol** instead of *Gul* or *Gull* for example *Gurbaga Gol* and *Chemche Gol*
- **Khallyk** - a curtain to hide the bride in her *Kejebe* on the bridal camel
- **Germech** instead of *Germetch*
- **Gochanak** instead of *Kochanak*
- **Ortmen** instead of *Ertmen*
- **Atabay** instead of *Atabei*
- **Japarbay** or *Jafarbay* instead of *Jaferbei*
- **Yilan Beshir** or *Beshir Yilan* instead of *Ersari* or *Beshir* Cloudband (*Yilan* means snake in Farsi)
- **Gushly Gol** - the genuine name of the main *Teke Gol*
- **Gabsa Gol** instead of *Kepse gul*
- **Bukcha** instead of *Bokche*
- **Ayna Gol** instead of *Aina gul*
- **Towuk Nusga** or simply *Towuk* or *Tauk Nuska* - (I wonder whether *Nuska* comes from the Turkmen word *Nusga* which means "Cartoon" or from the Russian word *Nozhka* which means "Leg")
- **Ashyk** border instead of *Ashik* (which translates literally to "Knuckle-Bone")
- **Khorjun** instead of *Khorjin*
- **Chyrpy** instead of *Cherpi* or *Chirpi*



Seyitguly has also some important corrections and notes regarding the spelling and pronunciation of the names of the Turkmen main tribes as follows:

- **Salyr** instead of *Salor* or *Salur*
- **Garadashly**
- **Chowdur**
- **Ersary** instead of *Ersari*
- **Teke** instead of *Tekke* - *Tekke* is so widely used that it is going to be very difficult to start adopting this correct spelling
- **Yomut** instead of *Yomud*
- **Saryk** instead of *Sariq*
- **Alili** - might have originally been Ali Ili but the modern spelling is Alili
- **Ogurjaly** - I have never heard of this tribe in modern Turkmenistan, it seems to have disappeared but there are some *Yomut* "dervish" tribes coming from the Caspian *Ogurja* islands
- **Gyzylayak** or *Gyzyl-ayak* instead of *Kizil-ayak* - a sub-tribe of the *Ersary*
- **Arabachy** instead of *Arabatchi* - a very small minority which lives among the *Ersary* and maybe in Uzbekistan
- **Igdir** instead of *Igdyr*
- **Abdal Ata** - of mixed Turkmen/Arab descent
- **Shikh** - of mixed Turkmen/Arab descent
- **Hoja** - of mixed Turkmen/Arab descent
- **Magtym** - of mixed Turkmen/Arab descent

I also vote for Seyitguly.

Typical Types of Baluch Rugs (based on *Pile Rugs of The Baluch and Their Neighbors* by Dr. Dietrich H. G. Wegner - measures are given in cm):

- **Ghali** - tent rug, often flat-weave, 115-215 x 230-350
- **Ghalitshe** - floor and tent rug, pile-weave, 85-127 x 140-226
- **Germetsh** - small tent rug, pile-weave, 65-75 x 120-130
- **Dja-Namaz** - prayer rug, pile-weave, 75-110 x 90-260
- **Daliz** - runner, pile weave, 110-125 x 250-480
- **Sofre** - tablecloth, flat-weave with pile-weave parts, 80-100 x 150-200
- **Korssi-Dane** (Ru-korssi) - korssi cover, flat weave with pile-weave parts, 120-130 x 120-130
- **Poshti** - back pillow, pile-weave mostly made in pairs, 65-75 x 85-95
- **Balisht** - head pillow, pile-weave usually made in oblong format, 40-50 x 65-107
- **Khordjin** - big saddle bags, pile-weave made in pairs, 65-95 x 68-98
- **Khordjin** - small saddle bags, pile-weave made in pairs, 35-55 x 50-60
- **Torbak** - small belt purse and shoulder-strap bag, pile-weave, 23-30 x 20-30

- **Sine Asp** - saddle blanket for horses, pile-weave, 45-80 x 60-65



References:

[A Call for Standard Terminology - Yaser Al Saghrjie](#)

[Pile Rugs of The *Baluch* and Their Neighbors - Dr. Dietrich H. G. Wegner](#)

[The *Baluch* Rugs Weaving - Origin & Weaving Culture](#)

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