

Art of Central Asia – Motifs and Their Meanings

Motif: (n) A prominent and distinctive component of design

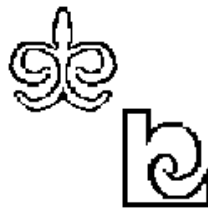


#This is not a hashtag.*

Many common motifs can be found within Central Asian Textiles which help to tell the story of those who made and used them. These motifs were primarily displayed in rugs (which served dual duty as seats, dinner tables, beds, etc. for nomadic people), but also found on clothing and accessories, jewelry, and other household goods.

* **Double Cross** Rib and Spinal Column; strength and support

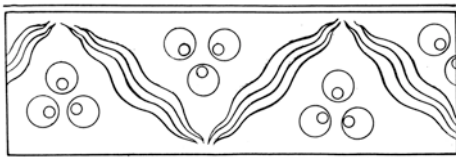
Ram's Horn: Most prominent, particularly in Kyrgyz and Kazhak felting and applique.



Hen:

(Peacock or bird.)

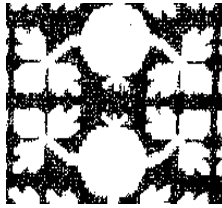
Chintamani: (AKA 'Badge of Tamarlane') – Ottoman, groups of three balls (that resemble olives, eyeballs*) interspersed with diagonal lines (bacon, tiger stripes...*)



*Ask students to discuss what they see to represent differing perceptions and range of associations. *Fun fact – though we usually see this pattern on tiles, this motif was often embroidered into leaders' underwear!*

Stylized Flowers – In Turkish society, flowers were not seen as “feminine”. Turks appreciated flowers for their beauty and symbolism.

Pomegranate: Wealth, plenty, fertility



Tulip:

Carnation:



Running Dog:

Spirals: Flowing water, fresh start, life source



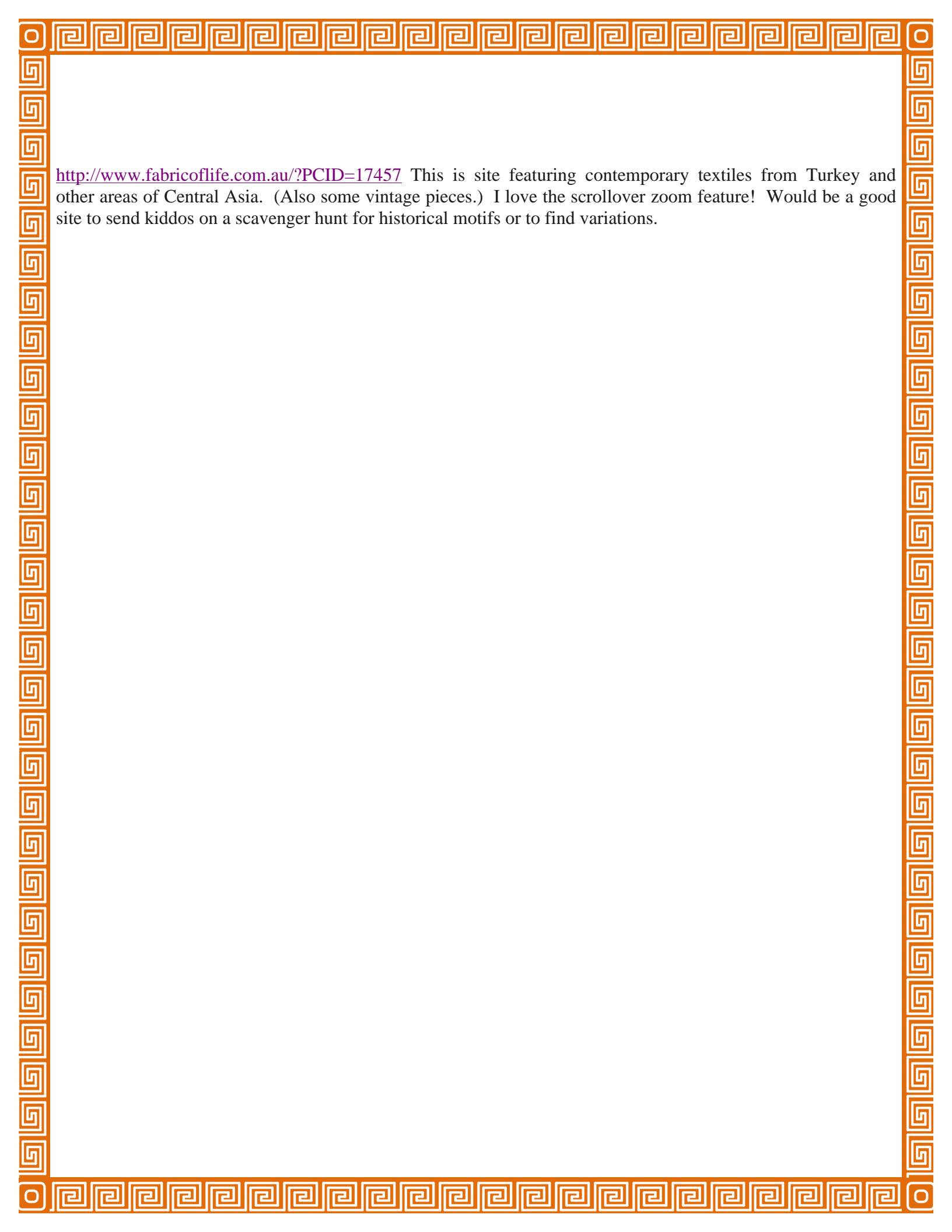
Solar Disc

(Possibly influenced by Noroastrians, who placed great emphasis on the sun and fire as life-giving force, strength)

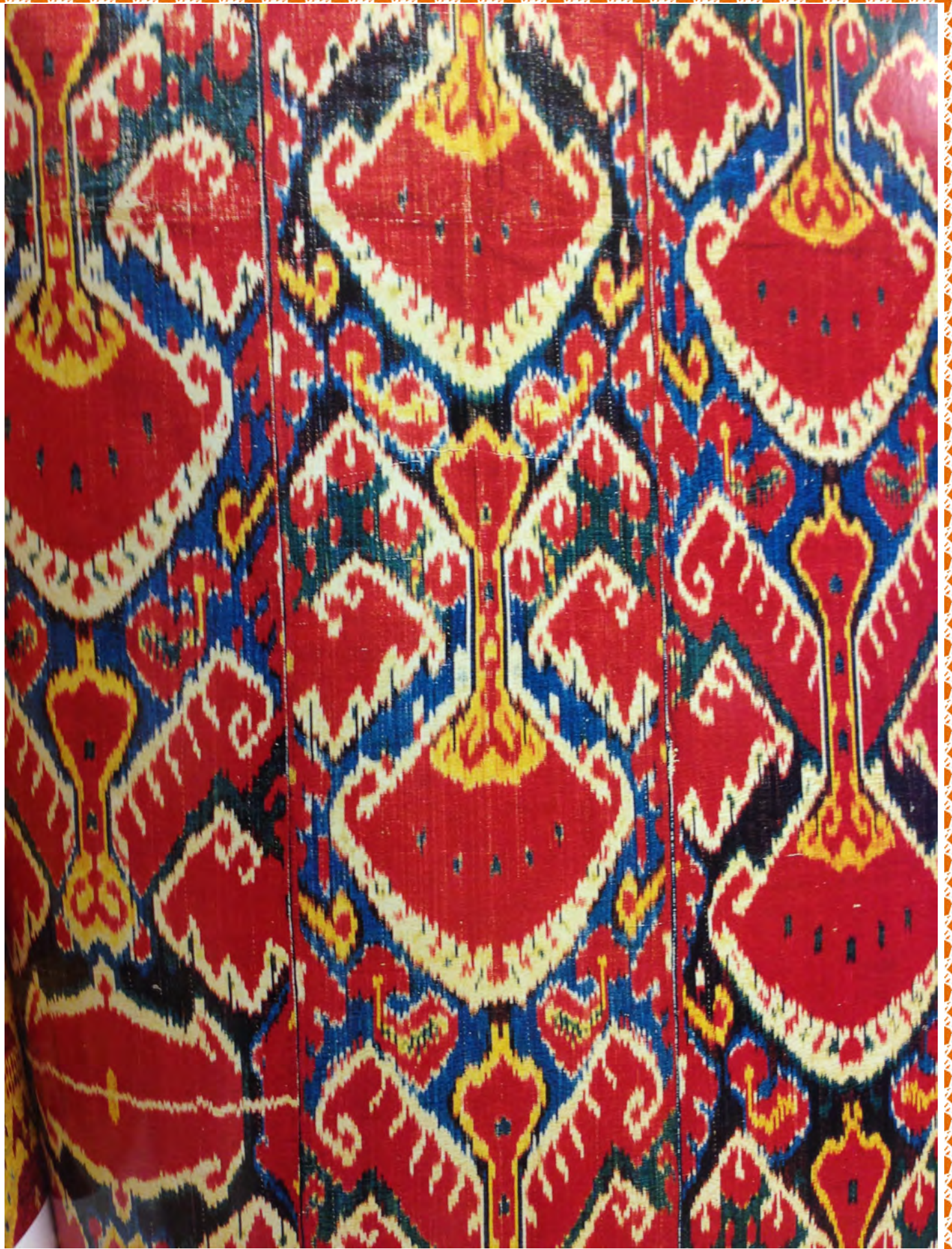


Tree of Life:





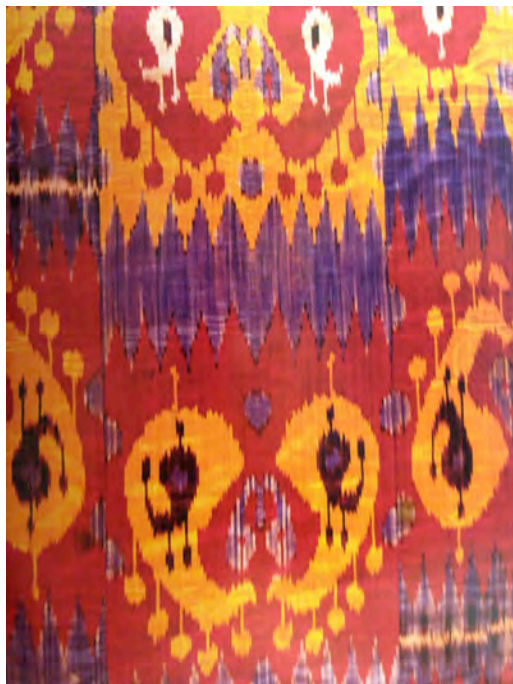
<http://www.fabricoflife.com.au/?PCID=17457> This is site featuring contemporary textiles from Turkey and other areas of Central Asia. (Also some vintage pieces.) I love the scrollover zoom feature! Would be a good site to send kiddos on a scavenger hunt for historical motifs or to find variations.



Central Asian Textiles: Silk Ikat



You may recognize these types of colorful patterns from modern clothing and home decor, but did you know they are actually reproductions from a very special type of early fabric? Ikat cloth, made of silk, was produced through a very unique and laborious process. Rather than weaving cloth first and then using dye to print or “paint in” the pattern, the threads are dyed while still loose and subsequently woven together. The name “ikat” refers to the cloud-like edges – hard lines would be nearly impossible to achieve! Flowers and their vibrant colors were not associated with gender. Men wore these to show power!





Tie-dyed silk warps before and after weaving

The technique requires precision in tying and wrapping silk threads before dyeing in order to create a desired pattern. The number of times threads are tied and wrapped depends on the complexity of the ikat pattern and the number of colors involved in the design. Unlike carpets and flat weaves, the design of an ikat fabric is mapped on the yarns before weaving begins. Ikat weaving involves 37 steps including dyeing the silk warp yarns multiple times.



Velvet ikat weaving



1) Loops are created in the velvet fabric by weaving in extra metal rods (the large circles)



2) The rods are removed after cutting the woven loops on top of them



3) The soft velvet surface come out as in 3 dark piles shown in diagram



Silk adras ikat (Silk woven onto cotton)



Silk velvet ikat



<http://www.smith.edu/hsc/silk/papers/jacobs.html> Report on Ikat history and process - great photos and descriptions.

Additional Ideas

Water color faux Ikat painting (Easy, fun, and mimics the “cloudy”)-
<http://www.hellohydrangea.com/2013/06/watercolor-ikat.html>

Here’s a YouTube tutorial of a similar idea:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsPOfvAkMZ4>

Weaving Activities

Having students do a simple weaving activity (cardboard loom, etc.) can help give an appreciation of the magnitude of labor and skill required to weave in each separate color in these designs.

All you need is cardboard and yarn! Find cardboard weaving here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbtKnvc_9No

Dying

Use natural dyes (Pomegranate bark, red onion, saffron, tea...) to make it more authentic. Incorporate chemistry and bring in the science teacher! <http://teachmefoodandfarms.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/Lesson-5-Activity-AC-Template.pdf>

Art of Central Asia

Papermaking

Papermaking was happenin' along the Eurasian exchange, and it's still done today. This video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxOhKWt6yms> shows the process at the contemporary Samarkand Paper Mill Part, which is available for tours today.

<http://www.uzbekjourneys.com/2011/09/samarkand-revival-of-papermaking.html> blurb about history/resurgence of production w photos

Zarif Mukhtarov is a ceramist by profession. He attended a UN conference in 1995 dedicated to lost culture in Uzbekistan. Samarkand paper was one of the topics, and he started to dream of rediscovering how to make it. After five years of experiments with cotton, rag waste and flax, he found technique of making best paper from the bark of the mulberry tree, which grows all over Samarkand.

How mulberry paper is made?

The leafless branches of mulberry tree are soaked and boiled to loosen the outer bark. Inner bark is stripped and then they are boiled for five hours then the bark fibre becomes soft. Bark fibre is put in a wooden hammer that is powered by watermill to make the bark further softer. Then bark is added in water to form loose pulp. The pulp is taken out with a strainer and water is drain through this process and then the paper is put under press for 24 hours. Finally, each sheet of paper is polished with a shell. Polishing paper sheet with sea shell is truly innovation of people from Samarkand in past because traditional Chinese paper was rough and not pressed and polished. South East Asian mulberry papers including from China, Japan and Thailand were rough paper because people wrote with a brush in these countries while Central Asia had tradition to use feather as Kalm (pencil) for writing that and this type of writing needed a soft paper therefore polishing of paper started in Samarkand.

Zarif Mukhtarov believes that paper produced by him has a lifespan of many centuries and can last even for 2,000 years. It is also protected from mice because mice cannot digest mulberry bark.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/02/uzbekistan-culture-silk-road-paper-craft> News story of Zarif – with good pics 😊.

www.teacheastasiacohort.wordpress.com Has a general papermaking lesson on history and development, but focuses on China.

<http://newsletter.handpapermaking.org/beginner/beg50.htm> Good brief general history with description of handmaking process.

PAPERMAKING RESOURCES

The Process:

*Note - newspaper makes easy pulp, but the dye will make an ugly gray.

Paper can be dyed natural products, like cloth!

MAKE PAPER

First you need to find some
CELLULOSE FIBER



CLOTH RAG
100% plant-based
(Cotton or linen works)



PLANTS
Bast, leaf, grass
or seed fiber

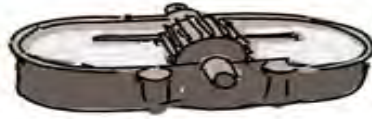


SCRAP PAPERS
Printing, watercolor or
drawing papers are best



Boil plants with caustic,
removing impurities &
leaving cellulose fiber

break down fiber to
MAKE PULP



**HOLLANDER
BEATER**

Necessary for rag, but
also works for plants &
recycled papers



**HAND
MALLET**

For Japanese style paper-
making with kozo, gampi or
mitsumata plant fibers



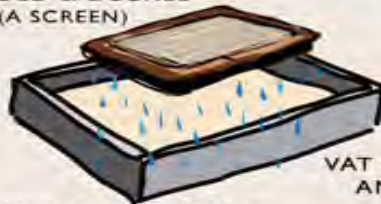
**KITCHEN
BLENDER**

For scrap papers. Cut
into inch square pieces,
soak, & blend with water

using
just

now the pulp is ready for
SHEET FORMATION

**MOULD & DECKLE
(A SCREEN)**



Lift the mould & deckle up
through the slurry; a thin layer of
pulp is left on the screen



COUCHING*
Transfer wet sheet from screen
to an absorbant surface
* Prounounced "coo-ching." Not a lie.

remove the water by
PRESSING

Use a sponge & brayer,
a book or flower press,
or a hydraulic press

&

the final step is
DRYING

Press onto a flat surface,
or use a papermaker's
stack dryer



PAPER SLURRY

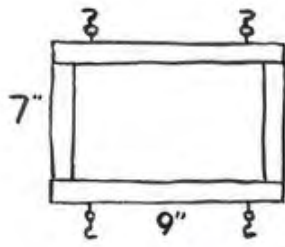
Keep exploring @papercooking!
Subscribe to paperslurry.com



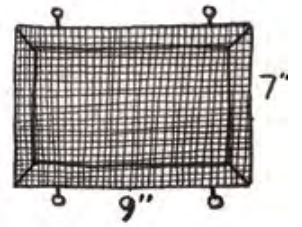
Make your own deckle boxes:

<http://paperslurry.com/2016/03/24/how-to-make-a-deckle-box-for-hand-papermaking-part-1/>

Another idea, from Makezine.com:



DECKLE



MOLD

