

SILK SCARVES OF AGALCI

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For centuries Armenians in the villages of Agalci, in Western Armenia, cultivated silk. With it they wove fine carpets and flowing scarves that were traded all along the Silk Road from China to Europe. As a result of the Genocide of Armenians, the Agalci Armenians were killed by the Turks and the village was inhabited by Kurds. Several years ago the mayor decided to revive the ancient Armenian craft. He was inspired by his wife, the daughter of two Armenians rescued as children by Kurdish neighbors in 1915. But all that had remained from the Armenian heritage were a pair of gnarled mulberry trees planted by Armenians long ago. Thanks to the European Union, a big grant was given to Agalci to plant mulberry trees, silkworms and looms. Some 15 girls were trained to spin, weave and dye the silk. At \$35 each, the scarves cost far more than those of competitors in China and India. "They use machine spun silk, our girls make everything by hand. Just like the Armenians," said the mayor.

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