As he reviewed our division's quarterly report, my eyes drifted downward captivated by the patterns in his carpet. I noted depictions of pyramidal cells with golden nuclei and darkly stained nucleoli. A microscope light glowed through their cytoplasm and dendrites. I traced their axon branches ending in synaptic boutons poised to release their vesicular contents. I perceived that the carpet's center panels displayed caricatures of Golgi stained, bifurcating motor axons terminating on muscle fiber endplates.
What had the carpet weaver intended to symbolize? Date palm trees or perhaps native flowers?

The soft sound of surprise emitted when he turned to the last page of the document interrupted my speculations. The bottom line was printed in black, not red this time. This symbol, with its own multifarious meanings and explanations, triggered a smile and his future expectations.

I mused that this unforeseen finale might have a slightly greater probability of repetition than the likelihood that the carpet weaver had anticipated that this carpet would one day lie in a neurology chairman’s office.

Figure: Carpet pictured was purchased in a market in India by J.T. Kissel, MD. The creator/artist is unknown. Photograph of the carpet was taken on March 27, 2017, and shared with the verbal permission of Dr. Kissel.

Footnotes:

1. Dedicated to the memory of E.P. Richardson, MD (1918-1998), neuropathologist, who inspired generations of Massachusetts General Hospital neurology residents and fellows to appreciate the beauty and complexity of the nervous system while looking at stained tissue sections through multiheaded microscopes.
Carpet Neurons and the Bottom Line
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