



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



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April 27 Meeting Preview: Tom and Peggy Simons on Indus Valley Textiles



Peggy and Tom Simons

On Friday, April 27, NERS members Tom and Peggy Simons will present "From the Hindu Kush to the Arabian Sea: Traditional Textiles of the Indus Valley."

Now living in Cambridge, the Simons spent thirty-five years in the U.S. Foreign Service, ending up in Pakistan in the late 1990s. There, Tom's recreation as Ambassador was to leave his 6000-pound armored car and gunman outside and sit with dealers to learn about the incredible richness of the area's textile traditions. This presentation is one result.

Tom and Peggy will show and discuss examples representing the four distinct textile traditions of the Indus Valley, which runs from the high Hindu Kush to the Arabian Sea. Moving from south to north, they will begin with Sindh, proceeding to the Baloch (Baluch) and Pashtun tribal areas; the western, Pakistani half of historical Punjab; and finally Indus Kohistan, the stony regions on the road to Central Asia. Nothing about these textile traditions is simple, but in Tom's words, "We will try not to over-complicate."

Many of the Simons' pieces, which were exhibited at the Worcester Art Museum in 2007–8, are spectacular. For an enticing preview, see the press release from that exhibition: <http://www.worcesterart.org/information/PR/Past/8-24-07.pdf>.

April 27 Meeting Details

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Durant-Kenrick House, 286 Waverley Ave.
Newton, MA, 02458

Directions: From Boston and east, take Mass Pike to exit 17 and follow signs for Boston/Newton Centre, making a U-turn over the Pike. At Newton Centre sign, go RIGHT on Centre St. for 0.1 miles. Go LEFT on Franklin St. for 0.3 miles. Turn RIGHT on Waverley and go 0.2 miles. House is on LEFT.

From Rt. 128 and west, take Mass Pike to exit 17, turn RIGHT onto Centre Street and follow directions above.

From Watertown Square: Take Galen Street (Rt. 16) toward Newton Centre for 0.4 miles. Continue to Washington St. toward West Newton/Newton Centre, making a U-turn over the Pike. At Newton Centre sign, go RIGHT on Centre Street and follow directions above.

Parking: On Kenrick Street. Parking places at the end of the Durant-Kenrick House driveway may be used for dropping off people or supplies, but **NOT for parking during the meeting.**

Food: Provided by members whose names begin with R through Z. Please arrive before 6:45 to set up, and plan to stay afterwards to clean up.



**Guj (full-length wedding dress),
Thano Bula Khan,
Sindh**

May 20: NERS Annual Picnic, with Moth Mart and Show-and-Tell



Moth mart (top) and show-and-tell at the 2017 picnic

The annual NERS picnic, the final meeting of the 2017–18 season, will be held on Sunday, May 20, at Gore Place, the lovely grounds of the former governor's mansion in Waltham. We'll again have a huge, enclosed tent with water and electricity, adjacent bathroom facilities, tables and chairs for all, and plenty of lawn space for mingling and spreading out rugs. Supply your own picnic lunch, and NERS will provide soft drinks, tea, and coffee.

Lunch will be preceded by the ever-popular moth mart; we invite all members (dealers or not) to bring things to sell, swap, or give away. Past offerings have included rugs, bags and trappings, kilims, and other textiles; books and periodicals; and even tribal jewelry and clothing.

Following lunch, there's the last show-and-tell of the season. Bring one or two of your treasured items to share with fellow members—mystery textiles or rugs, exotic specimens you think we should know more about, or wonderful new acquisitions you want to show off.

Picnic Details

Date: Sunday, May 20

Time: Noon to 4 p.m.

Place: Gore Place, 52 Gore Street
Waltham, MA 02453

From the Mass Pike: Take exit 17 and follow signs to Rt. 20 westbound (Main St. in Watertown). After 1.5 miles, turn left onto Gore St. at the second of two adjoining traffic lights (Shell station on right). Proceed 0.2 miles on Gore St. Turn left (through center island) to Gore Place entrance.

From Rte. 128: Take exit 26 onto Rt. 20 eastbound (it starts out as Weston Road and becomes Main St.). After 3.3 miles turn right on Gore St. at the first of two adjoining traffic lights (Shell station on left). Proceed on Gore St. as above.

From Newton: Go north on Crafts St. Turn right (at traffic light) on North St. Cross the Charles River and go straight. The street eventually becomes Gore St. Entrance to Gore Place will be on right.

Parking: Use the parking area on the estate grounds.

March Meeting Review: Louise Mackie on Luxury Textiles from the Lands of Islam



1. Louise signs Lloyd Kannenberg's copy of her book, witnessed by Susan Lind-Sinianian and Julia Bailey



2. Prince's coat with ducks in roundels, silk samite, Eastern Iran or Soghdia, 8th century, Cleveland Museum of Art

On March 23, at the Durant-Kenrick House, Newton, Louise Mackie shared with NERS members some of the key themes and examples from her award-winning 2015 book, *Symbols of Power: Luxury Textiles from Islamic Lands, 7th–21st Century* (1). Louise delivered her presentation with the gusto she so clearly feels for her subjects. Her starting words were, “Let’s admire some gorgeous textiles!”

She explained that she’d written her book because there was nothing similar in print, even though textiles were longtime symbols of power, wealth, and status in the Islamic lands. In 750 AD, these lands were one vast empire, ruled from Baghdad. The fall of Baghdad to the Mongols, in 1258, finalized the breakup of the empire into regional states. In her talk, Louise roamed caravan-like through these different realms, from Islamic Spain and Morocco to Uzbekistan.

Throughout this vast territory, Louise said, “Textiles set standards of beauty and drove economies.” Their importance extends even to the present day: she showed a 1984 photo of King Hassan II of Morocco welcoming the ambassador of Brazil to Fez by laying out more than 500 carpets for the ceremony, and another of the Ka’ba, in Mecca, covered with the *kiswa*—a lavish set of black and gold-and-silver-embroidered silk textiles with Qur’anic inscriptions.

The use of glamorous materials, designs, and colors extended also to garments, whose styles, whether loose or fitted, were similar for men and women. As one of many examples, Louise showed a fourteenth-century silk-tapestry roundel, itself depicting courtly figures in gold-patterned

kaftans. (See *HALI* 85 [Mar./Apr. 1996], cover and pp. 80–87, for images and a discussion of this superb Mongol-period roundel, which is now in the David Collection, Copenhagen.) Clothes-conscious rulers set new fashion trends that others sought to emulate. Their luxury textiles generally were made in just a few locations, often under royal auspices.

Weddings and special celebrations were major stimuli for the production and wearing of these luxury textiles. Garments also served as premier diplomatic gifts; Louise illustrated a splendid robe given in 1541 by Ottoman Sultan Suleyman I to visiting dignitary Siegmund von Herberstein. In the 1600s, Iran even bestowed robes-of-honor on Europeans in order to bolster western markets for their raw silk.

Silk was the preferred luxury material in the Islamic lands; sericulture especially thrived in Iran and Islamic Spain. Export of raw silk, rather than of silk textiles or garments, was a major contributor to the Iranian economy.

Despite their variety, Louise’s research revealed that “Islamic silks were woven in surprisingly few structures—only seven.” Two of these structures, tapestry weave and samite, have a single, continuous surface dominated by wefts. Three—damask, plain weave with supplementary wefts, and lampas—have contrasting surfaces created by dominant warps or wefts. The final two have areas of two solid colors (double cloth) or three-dimensional cut pile (velvet). Louise showed a splendid example of samite with paired ducks in roundels, used for an eighth-century prince’s coat (2) and boots. She also illustrated a prince’s damask coat and trousers imported from China at about the same time.



3. Mantle of King Roger II of Sicily, silk samite with embroidery, pearls, and gems, 1133 CE, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



4. "Cloth of gold" (detail), silk-and-gold-thread lampas, Northeast Iran, mid-13th century, Cleveland Museum of Art



5. "Prisoner" silk (detail), metal-brocaded lampas, Iran, mid-16th century, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Moving west, to lands where there was enormous wealth from the ninth to the twelfth century, Louise showed a Yemeni ikat with *tiraz* inscriptions in gold leaf, dated to 961 CE, in the Cleveland Museum collection. Then, with the rhetorical question, "How spectacular can spectacular be?," she turned to Sicily, where a brilliant red-and-gold mantle, made in 1133, was produced in an Arab-founded royal manufactory for Norman king Roger II (3). This garment, with its lion-and-camel imagery and lavish materials (including hundreds of pearls), became the coronation robe of the Holy Roman emperors.

After the Mongols conquered Iran and Iraq in the thirteenth century, their preferred textiles were dazzling

cloths of gold. Louise's examples included a silk-and-gold-thread lampas from Northeast Iran with felines in roundels and double-headed eagles in the interstices (4, and, in this newsletter, p. 13, fig. 3).

The Safavid dynasty in Iran introduced clothing and textiles with human as well as animal figures. One of Louise's examples celebrated Shah Tahmasp's mid-sixteenth-century victories in Christian Georgia by depicting Safavid riders leading tethered Georgian captives (5). The Safavids also produced spectacular multicolored velvets, exemplified by a piece from a mid-sixteenth-century robe picturing falconers in a latticework of lion heads and dragons.



6. Louise with the Cleveland Museum's splendid Qajar tent

Safavid religious textiles lacked such human-and-animal imagery, instead utilizing calligraphic pattern: Louise's final example was a seventeenth-century tomb cover with repeated Shi'ite invocations and Qur'anic verses.

Tents were also symbols of royal power, expressed and enhanced through textiles. Louise showed views of the Cleveland Museum's mid-nineteenth-century Qajar tent (6), made in Rasht, with elaborate inlaid and embroidered designs on the interior sides and roof. She compared it with a similar tent shown in a sixteenth-century manuscript, underscoring the point that these gorgeously decorated structures were desired and produced for centuries. Yet another example—an entire tent complex given to a Russian Tsar around 1893 by the Emir of Bukhara—incorporated panels of velvet ikat, gold-embroidered velvet, silk-embroidered silk, and cotton appliqué.

Louise pointed out that prestigious Islamic textiles often reflected not only artistry but also complex economic trade relationships. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for example, raw silk originating in Iran was shipped to Ottoman Bursa, where it was graded, taxed, and sold to Italian silk merchants. Subsequently, many Italian-made velvets adorned with Ottoman designs were exported from Italy to Turkey to meet a huge demand from the Ottoman court (7).



7. Ottoman robe made from Italian velvet, 3rd quarter 16th century, Topkapı Saray Museum

While Louise focused mainly on textiles, she noted that imperial rugs sometimes demonstrated similar ultra-luxurious characteristics. Jeweled silk carpets with gemstones were woven in Iran for Ottoman sultans, and, in a more recent era, an Iranian silk carpet with pearls, tourmalines, and other gems—drilled and attached via silk thread—was given in 1907 by the Qajar shah to President Teddy Roosevelt.

Imperial fortunes may have declined in Islamic lands, but the designs of luxury Islamic textiles have lived on in modern times, adopted by European and American textile and fashion designers. Around 1920, for example, Italian designer Maria Monaci Gallenga produced a velvet tea dress closely modeled on a mid-sixteenth-century Ottoman velvet in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Splashy patterns inspired by Central Asian ikats adorn dresses from Gucci's Spring 2010 runway collection.

Our hearty thanks to Louise for showing us sumptuous Islamic textiles spanning an impressive range of time and geography. We're particularly appreciative of her sharing the holdings of many museums, allowing us to view treasures otherwise unavailable to us as collectors.

Jim Adelson

Adventures in Azerbaijan: Jeff Spurr Reports on the Baku Symposium



1. The Azerbaijan Carpet Museum, Baku, completed in 2014

I have always considered Baku one of those appealing but distant places that would be great to visit, but that I was also resigned never to see.

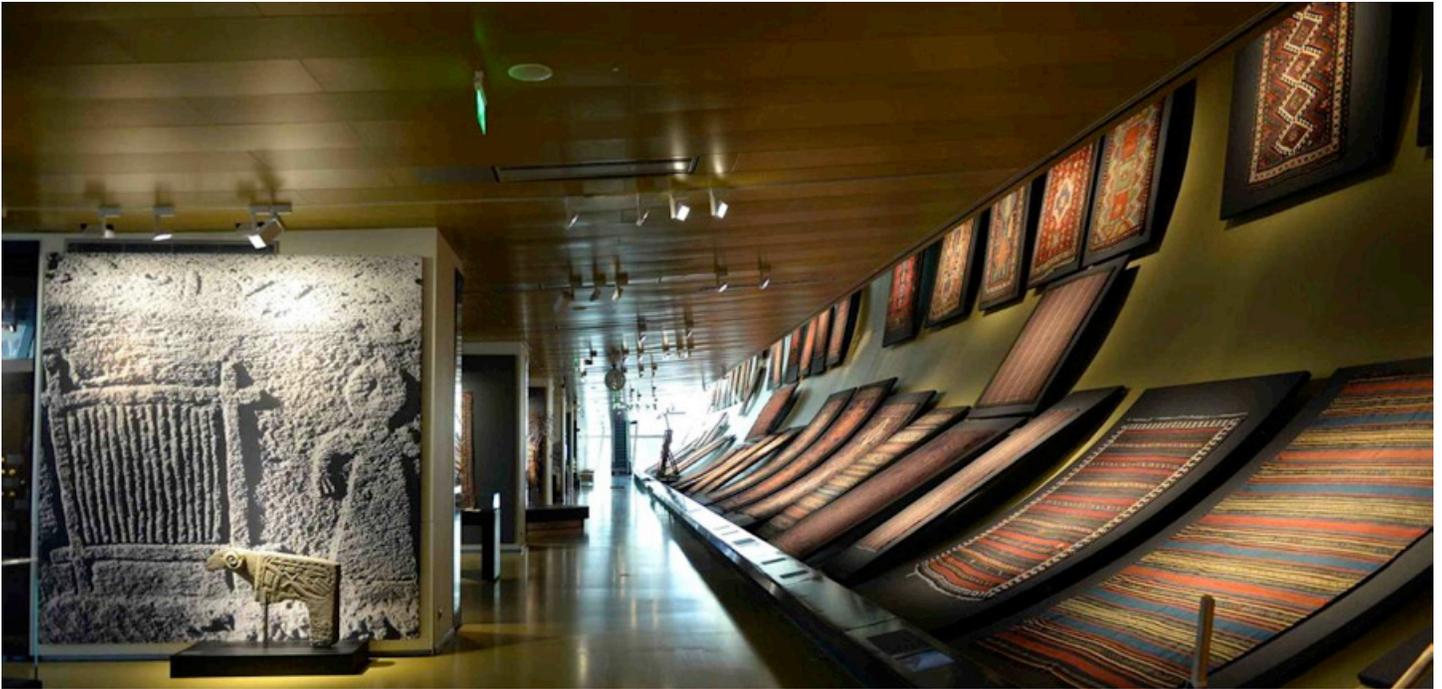
The city was the site of the world's second great oil boom (after Pennsylvania), getting underway in earnest by the late 1860s. Vast fortunes were made by, for instance, the Nobel brothers and Sarkis Gulbenkian (father of the now-more-famous Calouste of the great classical carpets in Lisbon), but also by locals, and as a result the late-tsarist city is filled with handsome public and private buildings, all in the same stone. Though some are in what might be called Islamic revival style, the dominant idiom is Renaissance neoclassicism, straight out of Florence.

Why was I in Baku? During a meeting back in April with Ben Evans and Danny Shaffer of *HALI*, Ben had mentioned the Fifth International Symposium on Azerbaijani Carpets coming up in October, and said that I should give a paper. Till then, the possibility of my participation had never occurred to me. Ben also noted that the museums there contained many Kashmir shawls and much shawl cloth about which the curators knew little, and that I could offer my help. He connected me with Dr. Shirin Melikova, the director of the Azerbaijan Carpet Museum, and she readily agreed to my proposed visit. Alberto Boralevi later connected me with the assistant director of the National History Museum.

Though the Kashmir shawl in Persia has been a sustained research topic for me for many years, and I had been interested in the manner in which Kashmiri imagery had been appropriated for other design purposes, I needed to undertake a forced march through the Caucasian rug literature in order to justify any assertions I might make in a talk, which reading left me feeling nearly as confused as enlightened concerning certain basic facts of the tradition. Aside from three mentions of the *buta*/boteh/paisley motif, this question had never been addressed; indeed, one scholar revered in Azerbaijan had described the *buta* as an ancient Zoroastrian fire symbol. So there was a purpose to my talk, which I entitled "Creative Encounters: The Adoption of Kashmir Shawl Imagery in Caucasian Rug Design before and during Its Nineteenth-Century Commercial Revival."

I was due for an appointment at 10 a.m. on my very first morning in Baku. It was bright but chilly as I headed out of the nearest gate in the walls of the Icheri Sheher (Old City) and down a handsome terraced garden walkway toward the Caspian. One of the features of the esplanade is the new Carpet Museum, designed as a carpet just beginning to unroll (1).

Upon arrival, I was ushered into the office of the young and gracious director and was introduced to a universal Azerbaijani custom: tea and sweets before anything else.



2. Museum interior, with flatweaves, the ram cenotaph, and a photo detail of the woman-and-loom cenotaph on the first floor, and pile rugs on the floor above

Dr. Melikova then took me on a tour of two of the three floors of exhibition space (the third largely devoted to contemporary weavings). These spaces are lucidly laid out, with lots of explications via diagram, text, and video. To accommodate the curved walls, the rugs and carpets have rigid supports, some held in place by wires attached to each corner. It is an open system, so that one can see the rugs on the second floor from below (2), and vice-versa.

The museum has a quite comprehensive representation of the sundry types of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century rugs woven in the Azerbaijan region, but it must be said that most of the best and earliest examples long ago left the scene, having been exported for sale or collected. So there's some catching up to do. The museum has purchased a couple of large-format rugs antedating the nineteenth century, but future additions will probably be determined by the price of oil.

Interior spaces away from the curving walls are broken up for special displays of varied smaller items, making it clear that objects other than pile rugs and flatweaves are featured there. I was particularly taken by two medieval cenotaphs, one in the shape of a ram, the other with relief carving that showed a weaver next to her loom.

After this tour, Dr. Melikova took me down to storage, where her staff had pulled out anything having to do with Kashmir shawls, shawl cloth (what the Indians call *jamawar*—

clothes pieces—woven to shawl length in striped or all-over patterns and intended for use as yardage), or *termeh*—nineteenth-century Persian weaving from Kirman emulating the Kashmiri stuff for the down market. (Items of apparel featuring *jamawar* or repurposed shawl pieces were also exhibited on the floors above.) As we went from one item to the next, I would date and identify the cloth while a young woman with excellent English took notes. There were also drawers filled with caps, little bags, and containers of all sorts: for kohl, tobacco, watches, or *mohrs* (little tablets made of clay from the Shi'ite holy sites of Karbala and Mashhad to which the Shi'a press their foreheads in prayer). There were even men's mustache protectors (for use while sleeping). All these were made out of Kashmiri *jamawar* embellished with metal-thread embroidery.

The next day, I performed a similar survey at the National History Museum, in its department of decorative arts. That museum is housed in the phenomenal palace of one of the greatest local oil magnates of Tsarist times, Zeynalabdin Taghiyev. He was also a philanthropist, whose many benefactions included the first high school for Muslim girls in the Islamic world. I had been in correspondence with the assistant director but was an unknown quantity to the curatorial staff. Still, it only took a few minutes for everyone to relax after I rejected looking at images on a computer and we began to tackle hundreds of pieces, all rolled in white cotton.



3. Jeff (in blue shirt) discussing *jamawar* with (left to right) Ruslan Huseynov, Natavan Aliyeva, Fuad Jabrayilov, Csenge Rozse-Jäger (a Hungarian scholar living in Vienna), and a Natavan Gallery assistant

We worked right to the end of the day, until we were all ready to drop, but didn't quite finish. I was impressed by what the Carpet Museum possessed, but it was as nothing compared with the History Museum, whose holdings included whole shawls alongside all manner of covers and wrapping cloths made of *jamawar* or Kirmani *termeh*. The museum staff had not distinguished one from the next, calling it all *tirma*; thus one of my principal tasks was to clarify the difference between the two traditions.

It was abundantly clear that the old Azerbaijani elites knew what was the good stuff, for, at both museums, all save one of the little articles and items of apparel (not so the larger covers) fashioned from yardage were made of Kashmiri *jamawar*, thus confirming my supposition, based on Persian painting, that tons of the stuff was imported from Kashmir. The alternative for the Azerbaijanis was velvet, not *termeh*.

The National Art Museum also contains an extensive collection of Kashmiri textiles, but I ran out of time to arrange a visit to its stores. The other textile collection I had hoped to see in Baku was created by two twenty-five-year-olds, Fuad Jabrayilov and Ruslan Huseynov, one of whom had become interested in the collection and preservation of traditional

Azerbaijani textiles at the ripe old age of twelve or thirteen, the other at sixteen. They had met in art school and decided to pool their endeavors, and had been featured in a short piece in *HALI* (Asli Samadova, "Hidden Gems of Baku's Inner City," Issue 191, Spring 2017: 36–37) that Ben had pointed out to me. Their collection of textiles and clothing of every description now numbered 3,500 pieces! I had tried to reach them in advance, also to no avail.

Happily, the conference included a session on collecting, and there they were, accompanied by a young woman acting as translator. I introduced myself, and they proved eager to get together the next afternoon. Skipping the final conference session was well worth it. The young woman, Natavan, was a gallerist in the Icheri Sheher; her gallery now principally features contemporary fashion rather than artworks, and she had agreed to allow her friends to mount selections from their collections in her space for a *HALI* tour that Saturday (*HALI* having organized a tour of Azerbaijan and Georgia coordinated with the conference). So that is where I spent the afternoon (3). When the guys discovered that I could really tell them something, they



4. Jeff, with Beirut carpet dealer and scholar Hadi Maktabi, on the *HALI* tour of the Icheri Sheher (Old City)

rushed off to their respective abodes, coming back with more stacks of stuff. The usual tea and sweets were served, and we all had a lovely time. Natavan herself had brought out her own private collection of those incidental objects I have already described, about half of them with velvet grounds and the others employing *jamawar*; from her I learned more about their functions.

I had to depart the gallery for the conference finale and the gala dinner to follow. The dinner was held in a magnificent late nineteenth-century stone palace owned by contemporary Azerbaijan's rug-weaving tsar, Vidadi Muradov. Walking into the large courtyard, one could already see antique Caucasian rugs hung everywhere, and even more inside. It became clear that his collection was in certain respects superior to that of the Carpet Museum—a somewhat awkward business, hopefully to be rectified by an eventual gift.

The dinner may have brought the conference to an end, but I had been invited to join the first day of the *HALI* tour, which provided my only real exploration of the Icheri Sheher (4). While there, the group visited Natavan Gallery to see Fuad and Ruslan's exhibition; everyone seemed to appreciate what they had to offer about the objects and themselves.

Late in the day, the bus took us deep into the countryside to see a weaving workshop. It seemed fitting that we should encounter an aged, staff-carrying shepherd with his flock in the greensward directly opposite our destination. Here, completely traditional rugs modeled on nineteenth-century types were being woven as we looked on. Strangely, it was my first opportunity to directly observe this sort of work being done, and I could not help but be impressed by the speed of the women (and men) who were doing the knotting. The main draw, however, was the output of a local artist, Faig Ahmed, who has used technology to design rugs with what someone has called “glitched out” designs (5). The two on view there were seriously wild, challenging the essential principles of rug weaving. They are evidently very popular far outside Azerbaijan, and have been exhibited in New York.

After dinner, we made a second visit to the National Art Museum, to view an extraordinary exhibition of Azerbaijani and Daghestani (Kaitag) embroideries mounted for the occasion of the conference, with major loans from the Victoria and Albert and the Washington Textile Museum, among other Western institutions. The National Museum



5. One of Azerbaijani artist Faig Ahmed's "glitched-out" rug creations

staff had only recently found splendid pieces in some obscure spot in their own storage areas, including a group of excellent Kaitag embroideries. This viewing was preceded by a lecture on the history of textile production in Azerbaijan, illustrated with historical photographs that made me long for a return visit.

While at the Natavan Gallery for the second time, I agreed to meet with my new friends again on Sunday. Upon arrival I explained that I had wanted to see the galleries at the History Museum, missed when I was laboring away in the storage area. Fuad, who spoke some English, volunteered to accompany me. Fortunately for me, he knew the staff, and introduced me to two of the senior collections-management people. After another nice chat with tea and sweets, one of them offered to give me a comprehensive tour. Unexpectedly, this included a loving description of every aspect of the building, which she seemed to know cold, along with discussions of the exhibitions. These were all interesting, covering many aspects of political, social, and cultural history; several included more of those Kashmiri textiles adapted for local uses. They were everywhere!

And what about the conference? What about any conference? They are opportunities to see old friends and colleagues and make new ones. This one provided me the otherwise unobtainable opportunity to visit Baku. There were some fine talks, and some pretty lousy ones. Experience leads me to believe that the Soviet legacy has

not been good for scholarship in the arts, whether the speaker is from St. Petersburg, Tashkent, or Baku, and that rug scholarship generally attracts more than its share of dotty types with half-baked notions. The guy who took the cake offered up a waking fever dream about the swastika in Caucasian rugs, peculiar because there *are* no swastikas in Caucasian rugs. There are pinwheel motifs of sorts, but they are surely of floral origin. As most people know, swastika-like motifs have shown up in many places and times, notably in Tibetan and Navajo rugs, but they were not present here.

Other than initial confusion about whether the projectionist was in possession of my PowerPoint, my talk proceeded without a hitch. Happily, it was well received, though a Daghestani gentleman in high dudgeon approached me during the next coffee break, urgently desiring to speak to me. He spoke in Russian to a young man, who spoke in Azeri to a young woman, who, in turn, spoke to me in English. Despite serial translation, his question made perfect sense, in a manner of speaking: Didn't I realize that the *buta* is actually an ancient Zoroastrian fire symbol?

So, despite the occasional difference of opinion, all was well, and I couldn't have fonder memories of my time in Baku.

Jeff Spurr

Anyone interested in Jeff's complete report, with observations about Baku itself, its architectural history, food, etc., should send a request to him: jbspurr@gmail.com

14th International Conference on Oriental Carpets

Washington DC, 7-10 June 2018



In collaboration with the Textile Museum and the George Washington University Museum, the fourteenth International Conference on Oriental Carpets (ICOC) will be held in Washington, D.C., from June 7 to 10. Exhibitions will include ikats from the collection of Guido Goldman at both the Textile Museum and the Smithsonian Institution's Sackler Museum, other Central Asian carpets and textiles, and costumes of Chinese minorities.

Events begin on Thursday, June 7, with tours of exhibitions and local textile storage and conservation facilities, followed by an evening reception at the International Dealers' Fair. The academic program on Friday and Saturday will include sessions on Central Asian rugs and textiles as well as on modern trends in carpet and textile scholarship, new attributions, carpet discoveries and recoveries, and carpet and textile collecting and museums.

There will be a show-and-tell of collectors' pieces on Sunday, followed by a post-conference tour. The International Dealers' Fair will remain open from Thursday afternoon through Sunday afternoon. Favorable rates have been arranged for registrants at the prestigious Hamilton Hotel in Washington.

Registration is open. For further information and updates, see <http://www.icoc-orientalrugs.org/>.



Peter Pap Brings More “Artful Weavings” to Dublin, N.H.

From April 28 through June 30, NERS member and noted San Francisco-based dealer Peter Pap will present another “Artful Weavings” exhibition and sale at his Dublin gallery (1225 Main St., Dublin, NH 03444, tel. 603-563-8717). Featured this year are nomadic rugs, bags, and trappings from the collection of Smithsonian curator emeritus Dr. Robert J. Emry, plus selections from other private collections. For further information, email inquiries@peterpap.com.



Rug, Textile, and Related Events

Auctions

- Apr. 23, London, Sotheby's, Rugs and Carpets: Including Distinguished Collections [with 20 more Christopher Alexander carpets]
- Apr. 25, London, Sotheby's, Arts of the Islamic World
- Apr. 26, London, Christie's, Arts of the Islamic and Indian Worlds including Oriental Rugs and Carpets
- Apr. 30, Boston, Skinner, Fine Oriental Rugs & Carpets
- June 2, Wiesbaden, Rippon Boswell, Major Spring Auction
- June 3, Boston, Grogan & Company, The Spring Auction

Fairs and Conferences

- June 7–10, Washington, DC, Fourteenth International Conference on Oriental Carpets (see above)

Exhibitions

- Until May 7, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Portable Storage: Tribal Weavings from the Collection of William and Inger Ginsberg
- Until May 28, Saint Louis, Saint Louis Art Museum, Greek Island Embroideries
- Until Feb. 2019, Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Safavid Carpets from the Mahan Shrine: Sarajevo Fragments
- Feb. 24–Aug. 5, Washington, Sackler Gallery, The Prince and the Shah: Royal Portraits from Qajar Iran
- Mar. 10–July 9, Washington, Textile Museum, Binding the Clouds: The Art of Central Asian Ikat
- Mar. 24–July 29, Washington, Sackler Gallery, To Dye For: Ikats from Central Asia

Photo Credits

p. 1: Tom and Peggy Simons **p. 2:** Jim Sampson **pp. 3–5:** Sallie Mackie (fig. 1), Cleveland Museum (figs. 2, 4, 6), Wikimedia Commons (fig. 3), MetMuseum (fig. 5), Mackie, *Symbols of Power* (fig. 7); **pp. 6–10:** HALI; **p. 11:** ICOC (top), Peter Pap (center); **pp. 12–13:** Lloyd Kannenberg (figs. 1, 7), Spuhler, *Pre-Islamic Carpets and Textiles from Islamic Lands* (fig. 2), Mackie, *Symbols of Power* (fig. 3), karalahana.com (fig. 4), romanicoaragones.com (fig. 5), rugrabbit.com (fig. 6), hubert-herald.nl (fig. 8)

Echoes of Power



1. Portuguese silk-on-silk embroidery with double-headed eagle in roundel, second half 17th c.

The double-headed eagle motif shown in the Portuguese silk-on-silk embroidery above **(1)** goes back at least to the eleventh century, and possibly earlier.* It is, for example, tempting to regard the frontally presented eagle in a seventh-century samite fragment from Central Asia **(2)** as a precursor of the motif (also note the skull!). The double-headed eagle was originally an Islamic symbol of authority and power, and rapidly spread both east and west **(3)**. We see the same motif in the Byzantine Empire; a fourteenth-century Golden Bull shows the Empress Theodora Kantakouzene of Trebizond wearing a brocaded robe with a double-headed eagle repeat **(4)**. In Central and Eastern Europe the motif descended from Byzantium to become the familiar double-headed eagles of the Habsburg and Russian empires. Some textiles found in Al-Andalus, either made there or imported from Byzantium, feature the motif as well: see, for instance, a detail of an



2. Samite fragment (detail), Central Asia, 7th century



3. Lampas (detail), Northeast Iran, 13th c. 4. Golden Bull (detail), Trebizond, 14th c. 5. Wall hanging (detail), Palencia, 11th c.



6. Rasht inlaid textile (detail), 19th c. 7. Plate, Pennsylvania (?), 1948 8. Hittite eagle, Sphinx Gate at Alaca Hüyük

eleventh-century wall hanging from the San Zoilo Monastery in Palencia (5). Shortly after the Reconquista (1492), the Habsburgs acquired Spain, and later Portugal as well (1580). In 1640 Portugal, led by João I of Braganza, rebelled against Spanish rule and finally, in 1668, won its independence from Habsburg rule.

The Portuguese embroidery (1), which echoes the Habsburg and Al-Andalus tradition, was almost certainly made in the revolutionary period of 1640–68. What purpose it was intended to serve I have no idea. Since the time it was made, the double-headed bird motif has continued to evolve in both East and West, appearing as a detail in an inlaid and embroidered Rasht textile (6) and, more remarkably, in a mid-twentieth-century commemorative wedding plate (7). Love conquers all!

Lloyd Kannenberg

*With all due respect, the notion that the “bicephalous” (love those \$20 words) eagle motif has descended in a continuous line from the ancient Hittites is tommyrot. While the motif has been traced from the Hittites back to Mesopotamian origins, the *forward* link could not be traced because it doesn’t exist. The Hittite Empire lasted from about 1600 to 1300 BCE; the Neo-Hittite kingdoms struggled on through the Bronze Age collapse and were finally extinguished about 700 BCE. Their double-headed eagles died with them. From 700 BCE to about 1000 CE there is *zero* evidence for the persistence of the motif.

Those who advocate a theory unencumbered by facts are free to do so, but they will have difficulty supporting their claims. The double-headed eagle was reinvented, in a slightly different form (Hittite double-headed eagles have extended wings (8); wings on the later versions are typically “inverted,” or tucked), probably in Iran or further east, in the tenth century.

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The New England Rug Society is an informal, non-profit organization of people interested in enriching their knowledge and appreciation of antique oriental rugs and textiles. Our meetings are held seven or more times a year. Membership levels and annual dues are: Single \$45, Couple \$65, Supporting \$90, Patron \$120, Student \$25. Membership information and renewal forms are available on our website, www.ne-rugsociety.org; by writing to the New England Rug Society, P.O. Box 6125, Holliston, MA 01746; or by contacting Jim Sampson at jahome22@gmail.com.



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