



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



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March 1 Meeting: DeWitt Mallery on Baluch Rugs

At the next NERS meeting, at Lincoln First Parish, DeWitt Mallery will present "Baluch 101.5": a general overview of pile weavings labeled "Baluch." He will address such basic questions as when and where these rugs and bags are from, how they may be grouped, and how they came to be identified as Baluch. Using slides and actual examples, he will comment specifically on various more-and-less familiar types, and he encourages NERS Baluchophiles to bring outstanding pieces from their collections for what he hopes will be a reasonably interactive discussion.

DeWitt has collected Baluch pile rugs (among others) for many years. He has presented material on Baluch-related topics at various ICOCs and ACORs (including Boston 2006), at a Baluch symposium in Liestal, Switzerland, in 2003, and at assorted rug-society meetings. He is a Contributing Editor of HALI and has written articles on Baluch- and other carpet-related subjects.



DeWitt Mallery.



Bagface from DeWitt's collection.

March 1 Meeting Details

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: First Parish, Bedford Road, Lincoln

Directions:

From Rt. 95 (128), take exit 28B, Trapelo Road West. Proceed west about 2.5 miles to a stop sign at the five-way intersection in Lincoln (there's a white planter in the middle of the intersection). Go right on Bedford Road for 0.1 mile to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on the right. First Parish is on your left.

From Rt. 2, take Bedford Road, Lincoln Center exit (eastbound, turn right at the light; westbound, go through light, turn right, and circle 270° to cross Rt. 2 at the light). Proceed 0.9 mile to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on your left. First Parish is on your right.

Parking:

Park in the lot behind the parish house, along the street, or in front of Bemis Hall if that building is dark and not in use.

March 22 Meeting: Sarah B. Sherrill on Bakhtiari and Qashqa'i Weavings

On Friday, March 22, at Lincoln First Parish, Sarah B. Sherrill will present a slide-illustrated lecture, "Twilight of a Tradition: Weavings Made and Used by the Bakhtiari and Qashqa'i Nomads and Villagers of Western Iran."

In the mid-1970s, Sally, as she is known, did field work on tribal and village carpets and related weavings in Turkey and Iran, recording the twilight of these traditional crafts in the waning years of the way of life in which they were made and used. Her presentation for NERS will focus on her work among the Bakhtiari and Qashqa'i nomadic tribespeople and settled villagers in western Iran.

Sally has published many articles on Eastern and

Western carpets and has lectured frequently in this country and abroad. Her book *Carpets and Rugs of Europe and America*, published in 1996, stresses the influence of the East on Western carpet design and carpet weaving.

A graduate of Smith College, she recently retired from the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, where she taught courses on oriental and European carpets and was the editor of the BGC's scholarly journal. She was president of the New York Rug Society for twenty-five years and is a member of the board of the Hajji Baba Club.

Attendees are encouraged to bring examples of Bakhtiari and Qashqa'i weaving for a post-lecture show-and-tell.

March 22 Meeting Details

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: First Parish, Bedford Road, Lincoln

Directions:

From Rt. 95 (128), take exit 28B, Trapelo Road West. Proceed west about 2.5 miles to a stop sign at the five-way intersection in Lincoln (there's a white planter in the middle of the intersection). Go right on Bedford Road for 0.1 mile to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on the right. First Parish is on your left.

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Parking:

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Bakhtiari weaver at her loom.

Rug and Textile Events

Future NERS Meetings

Apr. 12, 7 p.m., MFA: Caucasian Rugs from the Rudnick Collection.

May 19, noon, Picnic at Gore Place, Waltham.

Exhibitions

Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Cambridge: "In Harmony: The Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art," through June 1.

The Textile Museum, Washington, DC: "The Sultan's Garden: The Blossoming of Ottoman Art," through Mar. 10.

Photo Sources

p. 1, DeWitt Mallary; p. 2, Sarah B. Sherrill; pp. 3–5, Doug Bailey; p. 6, Rich Blumenthal; pp. 7–9, Julia Bailey (figs. 3–5, 7, 9), Grogan & Co. (figs. 6, 8); p. 8, Julia Bailey.

November Meeting Report:



Banner created for the meeting by NERS member and graphic designer Martha Brooks.

On Sunday, November 11, NERS explored unfamiliar territory with a meeting in a new venue and format. In a panel session entitled “Three Collectors, A Dozen Pieces,” local NERS members and collectors Ed Berkhoff, Lloyd Kannenberg, and Richard Larkin shared with attendees the ideas and experiences that have shaped their collecting. To enrich the discussion and add to everyone’s enjoyment, the pieces they’d selected for discussion were hung in a mini-exhibition on the walls of John Collins’s Newburyport carpet gallery.

Ann Nicholas moderated the session, first asking Richard, Ed, and Lloyd (1) to describe their introduction to rug and textile collecting. Ed’s began when his parents retired to North Carolina in 1993; he went into an oriental rug store and was smitten. Lloyd related that his interest had emerged in 1980, when he attended a conference in the Caucasus. Although the conference sponsor was furnishing his home with American broadloom, Lloyd thought the Caucasian products much nicer. He also mentioned his first purchase at Skinner. He portrayed himself as a hesitant, sole bidder on a piece, coming to suspect, “I’m bidding on a dog!” Richard indicated that he’d first become involved when he lived in Riyadh, where he went to the market just for entertainment but soon found himself getting hooked on rugs—both the art and the acquisition. He noted, “I’ve been a bottom feeder my whole career.”

One of Lloyd’s selections for the meeting was a *kalamkari*, a hand-painted cotton textile produced in India, in this case in the first half of the nineteenth century for the Persian market (2). Lloyd talked about how these textiles, already commercially successful for their creators, became even more so when they were exported to Europe, where buyers appreciated the artistic medium, its relatively modest price, and its colorfastness. Lloyd himself got interested in *kalamkari* indirectly, through exposure to quilts, of which certain types include cut up-pieces of chintz, appliquéd.

Ed’s first example was an Afshar *chanteh*, a small South Persian pile bag that featured a quartered Turkmen gul in its central field, a Turkmen border motif, and an



1. Moderator Ann and panelists Richard, Ed, and Lloyd.



2. Lloyd's *kalamkari*.

abundance of green (3). He commented, “Condition is important, but sometimes I’ll forgive [wear] if the piece has so much going for it.” He noted that tactile qualities are critical—that he needs to be able to feel the rug before committing to it, not always easy in the Internet world.

Richard’s first selection was a Kula (Turkish) long rug (4), which he liked for its colorful and loose rendition of a traditional Kula design, as well as for its reasonable price. He noted that after getting the piece, he’d seen a similar one pictured in an early rug book, published in 1904.

Ann’s next question sought to bring out aspects of the panelists’ collecting history: she asked them what sorts of things they had collected when they were young. Ed mentioned seashells and pocketknives. He also indicated that he’d started antiquing with his parents when he was eight years old, and that he now lives in a 1709 house and relishes furniture and pottery in addition to rugs. Lloyd’s childhood collecting interests included stamps and arrowheads. Richard also described collecting stamps but added, “I didn’t even know I was a collector.”

Moving to the next round of selected pieces, Ed showed a recently acquired Baluch *chanteh*. He also displayed another Baluch *chanteh* that he had purchased earlier, for which his mother had done a repair. Both of these were lead-ins to the small South Persian bag that resulted in his collecting shift away from Baluches.

Lloyd then presented a Bidjov long rug, with a classic Zeichur border that he particularly liked. He pointed out the extent of color variation, including multiple reds and yellows. He compared and contrasted the long rug with a two-medallion Zeichur rug acquired from Skinner, featuring the same archetypal Zeichur border.

Richard returned us to Baluches, via a *mina khani*-design

carpet. He commented that he wasn’t a heavy-duty structuralist, but that he did like the cording of this particular piece, as well as its saturated colors. He also showed a smaller Baluch rug with the same design.

Ann asked the panelists what drew them to collecting rugs and textiles, and the answers contained some common themes. Richard said, “They do grip you,” and referenced texture and the tactile experience. Ed pointed to the feel of the wool, the colors, and the variety of designs. In Ed’s case, these attractions were strong enough to survive a disappointing first purchase—“I was swindled.” Lloyd commented that stamps are small, and as your eyes begin to go, you graduate to bigger designs. Lloyd also cited the tactile experience peculiar to rugs and textiles. Ann noted that an attraction for her was the fact that “rugs all have a uniqueness.”

Richard led off the next round of examples with a Kurdish carpet employing the *mina khani* design. He cited the extremely good wool and the free-spirited color and design of Kurdish weavings as generally appealing characteristics seen in this piece. In recounting how he’d acquired it, he described his collecting strategy of frequenting general-purpose antique dealers, who don’t tend to know that much about rugs, and offering to tell them about their pieces. Since this example used the same



3. Ed’s Afshar *chanteh*.



4. Richard’s Kula long rug.

pattern as a Baluch carpet he had shown earlier, Richard also supplied insight into what he liked about the design itself: that it's not too demanding, has varied colors, and includes a prominent five-lobed flower that he finds particularly pleasing.

Ed showed a pair of Afshar *chanteh* that illustrated another of his preferences; the handle, which as he put it, "has to be kind of like a towel." He also mentioned that he'd wanted, but couldn't afford, a bird rug that had been published in Jim Opie's book on South Persian weaving; happily, he saw and acquired a more recent copy, made in Afghanistan, that Opie had actually commissioned.

Lloyd then showed a Caucasian Karagashli long rug (5), which he said had been in terrible shape when he got it. "This was once a noble rug, but it's fallen on hard times." He followed this up by illustrating one of his all-time favorite Karagashli rugs, a piece formerly in the Rudnick collection.

Ann next asked the panelists what had made them realize they'd become rug collectors. Ed replied, "I bought my first cedar chest!" Lloyd said he had experienced a common indicator: "I had more rugs than I had floor space." Ann chimed in, noting that she found herself trolling through *Rugrabbit* for the day's new listings.

Lloyd led off the final group of pieces with an ikat panel. He described how he'd initially been enamored with ikats

after seeing the 1997 exhibition of the Guido Goldman collection at the MFA. It had then taken him another seven years to find an ikat that he liked a lot and could purchase. Lloyd also showed slides of a couple of his ikat favorites outside of his own collection—a velvet fragment and a *chapan*.

Richard went next, saying that he asked himself the question, "What was I going to focus on, given my resources?" He decided that reasonably priced Anatolian *yastiks* were available, and showed an East Anatolian piece, probably from southeastern Turkey.

Ed completed the tour with a Khamseh *khorrjin* from his collection (6) and described another satisfaction that rug collectors sometimes get: the experience, with articles woven in pairs, of finding the "twin." After acquiring his bag, he'd seen the matching one.

Ann concluded the session by asking the panelists what advice they would give to a new collector. Richard recommended handling as many rugs as possible, particularly good ones. This helps the would-be collector understand the range of what's out there, and where a particular example fits in. Ed suggested getting rug books, which provide relatively inexpensive exposure to a lot of rugs. Lloyd noted, "You've got to love it first." Ann echoed this sentiment in advising, "Make sure you enjoy it; if so, collecting rugs and textiles can be a great experience."

Our heartfelt thanks to our panelists, Ed, Lloyd, and Richard, for sharing their pieces and thoughts with us, to Ann for organizing and moderating the session, and finally to our host, John Collins!

Jim Adelson



5. Lloyd's Karagashli.



6. Ed's Khamseh *khorrjin* face.

Grogan and Company: Fine Oriental Rugs and Carpets, January 20

More than half the lots in Michael Grogan's January 20 sale of oriental rugs, carpets, and textiles came from the collections of Aram Jerrehian of Philadelphia, Erik Risman of Zionsville, Indiana, and James Opie of Portland, Oregon. (Erik had shown some of his Turkmens at a past NERS meeting: see Yon Bard's comments to follow.)

Partly because of the known provenance, and partly due to Michael Grogan's astute generosity in treating previewers to a reception and lecture the day before the sale (see Ann Nicholas's comments below), auction attendance was high, and phone and Internet bidders had to compete with a roomful of enthusiastic would-be buyers, resulting in over eighty percent of the offered lots being sold.

Ann Nicholas reports on the preview:

Many NERS members (1) were among the hundred attendees at the January 19 preview of Grogan's auction, where the 300-plus pieces on offer were artfully displayed.

James Opie (2), a well-known dealer and collector as well as the author of several seminal books and articles on South Persian tribal weavings, reflected on his forty-year career. "A successful oriental rug dealer must have a capacity to bargain, a love of travel, and an instinct for business," he observed, sharing memories of his childhood experiences with selling brass scraps to a metal dealer and seeing his uncle's photographs of Persia. "Great art comes in many forms, and talented weavers have created some of it... We need to remember that not all [great woven art] comes from the urban weaving centers, and that anonymous tribal weavers have created superb pieces."

After a brief introduction to tribal weaving, Jim focused on two of his favorite South Persian motifs: the bird designs

usually found on Khamseh pieces, and "animal heads," or "latchhooks." His discussion of these motifs was perhaps the best part of his talk: as he held representative rugs and pointed out their designs, his delight in and affection for South Persian tribal weaving shone through.

Special thanks to Michael Grogan for displaying (during the entire preview and at the auction) NERS membership posters and postcards designed by Jim Sampson and Jeff Spurr.

Yon Bard comments on the Turkmens:

The Grogan sale was rich in Turkmens: by my count there were upwards of fifty lots (some containing multiple pieces). Twenty-nine of these lots were from the collection of Erik Risman, who talked to NERS about his "Ersari" rugs (in the interests of simplicity, I will use that discredited appellation) in October 2005 (www.ne-rugsociety.org/newsletter/rug132a.pdf). In fact, some pieces he showed at that time were in the sale. It should be noted that much of Erik's collection had previously been offered at Christie's London on April 5, 2011. The lots at Grogan's were those that failed to sell at Christie's, so many of the best pieces were missing. Still, there was quite a bit to choose from. The Risman pieces were mostly labeled as "Lebab." Having missed Peter Poullada's NERS talk last April, I was somewhat flummoxed by this appellation until Jim Adelson



1. NERS members Richard Larkin, Ann Nicholas, and Joel Greifinger preview the Grogan carpet sale.



2. Speaker James Opie, in front of a huge Khamseh carpet from his collection (lot 78, sold for \$18,880).

reminded me of his writeup in *View from the Fringe* (www.ne-rugsociety.org/newsletter/fringe-v19n4-04-2012.pdf). It seems that this is the latest fad in naming the rugs we knew and loved as Ersaris and Beshirs, but were then shamed into calling Middle Amu Darya, or even (by Poullada himself) Left Bank or Right Bank Amu Darya. So now we must all rethink everything in terms of Lebabs, which I am too old to manage (accepting the Ali Eli was the last revisionary act that I was capable of).

I shall now discuss briefly those pieces that I found interesting for one esoteric reason or another. They are not necessarily the best, oldest, or most beautiful, but as everybody knows I am into things that are different from the norm.

Almost every Turkomaniac's ears perk up to the sound of the word "Salor," so as soon as I arrived at Grogan's I made



3. Lot 188, purported Salor trapping, sold for \$1,652.



4. Lot 42, Ersari (or Lebab) *chuval*, sold for \$7,080.



5. Lot 43, Ersari (or Lebab) *chuval*, sold for \$8,850.

a beeline to what was billed in the catalogue as a "Salor silk and wool trapping, 19th century" (3). It had a *shemle*-gul design and an estimated price of \$2,000–2,500, which is rather low for such a rarity. The piece turned out to be a bit puzzling: it had deeply depressed warps, and the pile was asymmetric open to the left (I think!), which bespeaks a Salor origin. However, one of the borders was of a type never found on other Salors (the Salors were extremely conservative in their border designs); the arrangement of the variously colored *shemles* was in diagonal stripes, typical of Saryks; and the quality of the weaving and of the colors was not up to Salor standards. I think it is a late piece combining various influences.

Of the Risman pieces, I'd like to note the following:

Lot 42, a quirky Ersari *chuval* with two very large Ertmen-like guls, and Ertmen partial guls along the borders (4). Very colorful and somewhat messed-up design, which lends it charm. First half 19th c. (all date estimates are from the catalogue), estimated \$5,000–8,000.

Lot 43, an attractive "ikat" style Ersari *chuval*; mid-19th c., estimated \$8,000–12,000 (5).

Lot 52, a colorful and attractive Ersari *ensi*, with the unusual feature of a border consisting of motifs that look like deconstructed guls; mid-19th c., estimated \$3,000–5,000 (6).



6. Lot 52, Ersari (or Middle Amu Darya) *ensi*, sold (to an NERS member attending the auction) for \$5,605.



8. Lot 68, Turkmen *chirpy*, sold for \$2,950.



7. Lot 67, extremely wide Ersari (or Lebab) trapping, sold for \$6,490.



9. Lot 210, colorful Ersari *chuval*, sold for \$2,950.

Lot 53, an Ersari *ensi* with unusually dark coloration: navy blue appears as the dominant color. This was shown at Erik's NERS talk, but I had first seen it in Hans Elmsby's booth at the Philadelphia ICOC; it is featured in his catalogue, *Antique Turkmen Carpets III*. First half 19th c., estimated \$3,000–5,000 and sold for \$5,605.

Lot 62, a white-ground Ersari small rug, a format that is generally appealing; third quarter 19th c., estimated \$4,000–5,000 and sold for \$3,835.

Lot 63, an enormous (7'3" x 5'1") Ersari *ensi*, with unusual medallions scattered about a nice empty background; mid-19 c., estimated \$2,000–4,000 and sold for \$5,900.

Lot 67, an enormous (2'2 x 8'2") Ersari trapping with the usual design; mid-19c., estimated \$8,000–12,000 (7).

Other lots, not from Risman:

Lot 68, Turkmen yellow-ground *chirpy* (cloak), from James Opie's collection. Perhaps not the greatest of its kind, but very nicely decorated with embroidery; 19th c., estimated \$2,000–4,000 (8).

Lot 210, Ersari *chuval* of the "ikat" type, bold design and color (some would think it garish); 19th c., estimated \$1000–1500 (9).

Lot 238: Ersari child-size prayer rug; the size alone makes it endearing. Late 19th c., estimated \$800–1,200 and sold for \$1,888.

And that's it, folks.

Yon Bard

PS The auction itself brought no surprises, at least as far as these pieces were concerned. Lot 210 (the "garish" *chuval*) exceeded its estimate by the largest percentage, but not in an earth-shaking manner.



Lot 292, catalogued (despite its fine weave and short pile) as “Luri *gabbeh*, ca. 1900,” sold for \$5,900 to Jim Opie.



Lot 240, 19th c. Karabagh with a single cloudband medallion, sold (to an NERS member at the auction) for \$3,835.



Lot 226, Chinese “RKO” rug (one of a rare type so called by the ever-imaginative Charles Grant Ellis, referring to the RKO Pictures logo. Catalogued as first half 19th c., sold for \$23,600—the top lot in the sale.



Lot 200, tiger rug, catalogued as “Tibetan, 19th c.” but apparently Chinese, sold for \$7,375.

Contributors to this issue: Julia Bailey (editor), Jim Adelson, Doug Bailey, Yon Bard, Rich Blumenthal, Martha Brooks, Ann Nicholas. **Distributor:** Jim Sampson.

NERS 2012–13 Steering Committee: Jim Adelson, Robert Alimi, Julia Bailey (co-chair), Yon Bard, Louise Dohanian, Joel Greifinger, Mark Hopkins, Lloyd Kannenberg, Ann Nicholas (co-chair), Jim Sampson, Jeff Spurr.

If you haven't already done so, please renew your NERS membership now! You can pay online using a credit card: go to www.ne-rugsociety.org/NERS-paypal.htm and follow directions. Alternatively, you can mail your check, payable to NERS, to our Charlestown address (see the box opposite).

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 290393, Charlestown, MA 02129; or by contacting Jim Sampson at jahome22@gmail.com.



The New England Rug Society

P.O. Box 290393
Charlestown, MA 02129

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