



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



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www.ne-rugsociety.org

May 31 Show-and-Tell Meeting: Flat Weaves!

Bring your non-pile weavings—patterned-on-the-loom textiles known by such terms as kilim, sumak, cicim, jajim, zili, verneh, etc.—to this friendly, in-person show-and-tell meeting!

After food and refreshments (provided by NERS), we'll turn to your offerings—big or small, antique or more recent—about which we encourage your comments, not just on where and when you believe your examples were made, but also about what attracts you to them.

Meeting Details

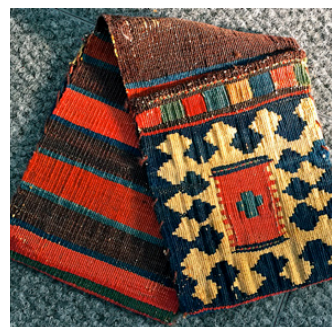
Date and Time: Saturday, May 31, 3 p.m.

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

Getting there: Follow your GPS directions.

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: Courtesy of NERS



A representative sampling of flat-woven items shown by members or presenters at past NERS events: What are they? And will any of them return to our May 31 meeting?

August 10: NERS Picnic, with Moth Mart and Show-and-Tell



Picking and picnicking in August 2024: the moth mart and a catered Middle-Eastern lunch

Please join other members (and guests) for a late-summer NERS picnic, to take place this year on Sunday, August 10.

We will convene at Gore Place, the lovely grounds of the former governor's mansion in Waltham, with plenty of lawn space for mingling and spreading out rugs, tables and chairs for all, and adjacent bathroom facilities. Should rain threaten, there's a huge tent with water, electricity, and side panels that open for ventilation. NERS will again cater lunch and provide water, soft drinks, and coffee.

Lunch will be preceded by the ever-popular moth mart; we invite all attendees (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.

Show-and-tell will follow lunch. Bring one or two of your treasured items to share with fellow attendees—mystery textiles or rugs, exotic specimens you think we should know more about, or new acquisitions you want to show off.

Please come! We welcome all who can attend this relaxed, convivial, and rug-rich event.

Picnic Details

Date: Sunday, August 10

Time: Noon to 4 p.m.

Place: Gore Place, 52 Gore St.
Waltham, MA 02453

Getting there: Set your navigation system to the address above.

Parking: Use the parking area on the estate grounds.

RSVP: By August 3, send your name and the names of guests coming with you to Jim Sampson: jahome22@gmail.com.

December Webinar Recap: Kenneth Hayes, “Konya Prayer Rug of a Seljuk Sultan”



Kenneth Hayes

On December 7, independent Canadian scholar Kenneth Hayes presented “Konya Prayer Rug of a Seljuk Sultan,” the study of Konya Ethnographic Museum (KEM) 1089/90, a fragmentary rug found in 1928 in a Seljuk dynastic tomb in the courtyard of Alaeddin Cami, Konya.

The rug field’s partial “frame” and stacked arches **(1)** are composed of small squares containing pseudo-Kufic motifs—paired *lāms* separated by a hump **(2)**, interpretable according to Kenneth as shorthand for “Allah.” The overall design scheme of the rug, he argued, echoes these pseudo-Kufic elements on a macro scale. Prominent hexagonal motifs surrounded by smaller forms occupy and flank the arches of the rug **(3)**.

Having described KEM 1089/90, Kenneth then proposed for it a Sufi interpretation connected to the great mystic poet Rumi, who lived in Konya during the mid-thirteenth century. According to Rumi’s fourteenth-century chronicler Aflaki, Rumi and other Sufis cultivated *dhikr*, or mantra-like prayers repeated hundreds of times. Rumi’s formula was “Allah, Allah, Allah . . .,” a repetition reflected in the rug.

The hexagonal motifs, Kenneth argued, represent lamps; he associated their multiple appearance on the rug with a beloved Sufi prayer that repeatedly, in the manner of *dhikr*, refers to light. He interpreted the small forms surrounding each lamp as sun motes: impurities through which divine light is manifested.

Who might have made KEM 1089/90? Kenneth noted the rug’s dissimilarity to large Seljuk-era carpets and proposed that it was a product of neither court nor market. Rumi advocated that Sufis pursue trades; the name of one of Rumi’s inner circle, Hajjaj al-Nassaj, suggests that he was a weaver. Although Aflaki never specifies what *sort* of weaving Hajjaj al-Nassaj practiced, Kenneth maintained that Aflaki’s text supports Sufi craft production and allows for a type of rugmaking that was urban, small in scale, and grounded in Sufi culture and community.

Rather than a royal commission, Kenneth thus preferred to regard KEM 1089/90 as the spiritually charged, blessing-laden gift of a Sufi to a sultan—perhaps to Sultan Kayqubad I (r. 1220–1237), who had convinced Rumi’s preacher father, Baha al-Din Walad, to settle in Konya and had publicly mourned his death. Acknowledging that this rug-origin hypothesis was unprovable, Kenneth concluded by underscoring KEM 1089/90’s poignancy, during its centuries in a dark, silent tomb, of symbolically radiating sacred light and sound.



**1 (left).
KEM 1089/90**

**2 (below).
Detail
showing
Kufic-based
motifs**

**3 (right).
Detail
showing
a hexagonal
motif and
surrounding
small forms**



February Webinar Recap: Paula Krugmeier, “Introduction to Ottoman-Era Silks of the Levant”



Paula Krugmeier

On February 1, in a webinar hosted by NERS and co-sponsored by TMA/SC, California architect and dedicated textile collector Paula Krugmeier presented two types of silk weavings made in the Levant, or eastern Mediterranean area, during the late period of Ottoman rule.

She first considered small-scale accessory pieces from Mount Lebanon, and then turned to overgarments known as abaya, mostly produced in Syrian urban centers.

Mount Lebanon, a coastal portion of today's Lebanon, was predominantly populated by Maronite Christians and Druze. Virulent hostilities between these groups led to intervention by the French and the English, who pressured the Ottoman regime into designating Mount Lebanon a semi-autonomous region and replacing the Muslim leader (*mutasarraf*) with a Christian governor. In the ensuing, relatively peaceful era from circa 1860 to the onset of World War I, a silk-weaving cottage industry, centered in the village of Zouk Mikhael, thrived. On home looms, using cotton warps and regionally produced-and-dyed silk wefts—men wove the diminutive, slit-tapestry components of purses, caps, and slippers (1). These components, made in pairs (2), were then sent to Aleppo, where they were cut to shape

and assembled with such finishings as linings and tassels. The market for the exquisite articles was apparently not Mount Lebanon; Paula surmised that they might have been destined for Europe. Focusing particularly on purses, she showed an array of representative items from her own and others' collections.

Unlike the Mount Lebanon accessories, abaya were produced in urban workshops, mainly in Damascus and Aleppo (3). Wealthy individuals commissioned these costly cloaks for special occasions or as gifts to dignitaries; both men and women wore them. Woven of weft-faced silk and metal-wrapped threads on cotton warps, each abaya was made in two panels (4); the one that would drape the shoulders was more elaborately embellished than the other. After the panels were sewn together, embroidered details might be added. Aleppo abaya were typically more colorful—Paula showed examples in various shades of blue, green, red, and purple—than the more sober black and brown ones from Damascus.

These luxurious garments seem to have found international favor, being either exported to or copied in, for instance, Persia: Paula's introductory and concluding slides had in fact shown the painted portraits of two Qajar Persian noblemen, one a prince and the other a noted diplomat (5), both regally clad in brilliant blue abaya.



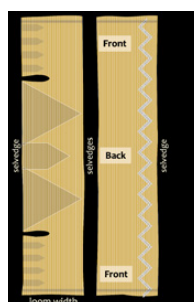
1. Mount Lebanon purse, cap, and slippers, speaker's collection



2. Two sides of a purse as they came off the loom, example courtesy of Robert Bell



3. Aleppo abaya (front and back), Metropolitan Museum C.I.41.86.10



4. Diagram showing abaya components as oriented on the loom

5. Abu'l Hasan Ghaffari, portrait of Qajar ambassador Farrokh Khan Amin al-Dawleh, ca. 1851, Sotheby's London, Apr. 9, 2014, lot 93

March Webinar Recap:

Stefano Ionescu, “Gems of Ottoman Classical Rugs: A New Perspective”



Stefano Ionescu

Celebrating the launch of his new book, *The Transylvanian Heritage: Ottoman Carpets 1450–1750—A New Perspective*, Stefano Ionescu devoted his March 1 webinar to three types of small-format rugs examined in the book: Lottos, small-

medallion Ushaks, and Transylvanian prayer rugs.

Lotto rugs, named for their depictions in the works of Lorenzo Lotto (ca. 1480–1556) but shown in many other paintings, feature overall field patterns, the three styles of which carpet scholar Charles Grant Ellis classified as “Anatolian” (1), “kilim” (2), and “ornamented” (3).

According to Stefano, these Lotto field variants were deliberately designed and are indebted to various arts of the

Timurid period (ca. 1370–1507): manuscript illuminations, paintings, and bindings; metalwork; and architectural decoration. The many Lotto border designs—at least forty—also suggest origin in court arts. On no extant Lotto rug borders are the corners resolved. Lotto production ended around 1700 and left no trace in subsequent village rugweaving.

Stefano next turned to small-medallion Ushaks of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (4, 5). The field design of these rugs includes a central medallion and quarter-medallion corners—a scheme that derives from the arts of the book, especially Timurid and Ottoman manuscript bindings (6). Although the “pronged” central fields of many small-medallion Ushaks (e.g., 5) might suggest animal pelts, that visual impression is due to the indentations on the quartered-cruciform corner motifs and does not suggest “nomadic” influence.



1–3. Lotto rugs with “Anatolian,” “kilim,” and “ornamented” field patterns, from, respectively, the Arkas Collection inv. 307, Matthys Mansion, Izmir; the Zaleski Collection, International Museum of Antique Carpets, Brescia; and Christie’s London, April 16, 2007, lot 147



4, 5. Two small-medallion Ushak rugs, from, respectively, Mirco Cattai, Milan, and the Bardini Museum, Florence

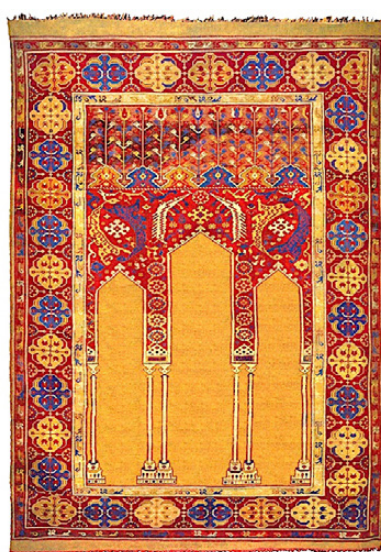
6. Tooled leather inner cover of an Ottoman manuscript dated 1476, Keir Collection loan to Dallas Museum of Art inv. K.1.2014.37

Transylvanian rugs, so called because of their survival in that region of Romania, constitute the largest group of early Anatolian rugs. Those in prayer-rug format (7) are always woven “upside down,” with their arches oriented downward on the loom. Stefano contested anthropologist Schuyler Cammann’s theory that this weaving convention was adopted to allow worshippers using such rugs to slide their hands forward more easily during prayer. Rather, Stefano argued, the orientation better allowed village weavers to achieve the complex designs of spandrels and mihrab arch.

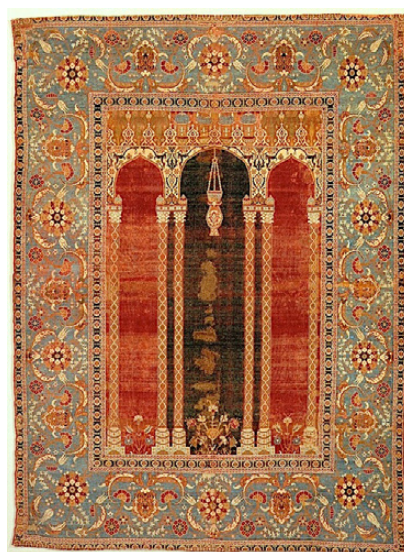
Among Transylvanian prayer rugs are a subset depicting tripartite arches with coupled columns (8)—a design scheme derived from sixteenth-century Ottoman court prayer rugs (9). (Stefano noted that the architectural use of coupled columns could be found not just in faraway Andalusia but also in Seljuk and Armenian buildings in Ottoman lands.) Details of the luxurious coupled-column Ottoman court rugs lived on in their Transylvanian descendants and in a host of later, increasingly stylized Anatolian-village variants.



7. Transylvanian single-niche prayer rug, Brukenthal National Museum M 1626 (AD 385), Sibiu



8. Transylvanian coupled-column prayer rug, Arkas Collection inv. no. 386, Matthys Mansion, Izmir



9. Ottoman court coupled-column prayer rug, ex-Ballard Collection, Metropolitan Museum 22.100.51

Author/Editor’s note: In this and future issues, readers of *View from the Fringe* will notice that webinar reports (now titled “recaps”) are much condensed. One benefit of NERS membership is free access to the recordings of *all* our webinars, throughout their five-years-and-counting history. (Recordings include the often-enlightening Q&A sessions that follow speakers’ presentations.) To enjoy and learn from each of our webinars in its entirety, we encourage you to initiate or continue your membership in NERS.

Upcoming Rug and Textile Events

Auctions

- May 6–16, Marlborough, MA (online only)
Bonhams Skinner, Fine Carpets & Rare Textiles
- May 17, Vienna, Austria Auction Company
Fine Antique Oriental Rugs 41
- May 20, Philadelphia, Material Culture
Oriental Rugs from American Estates 74
- May 31, Wiesbaden, Rippon Boswell, Spring Auction
- June 24, Philadelphia, Material Culture
Oriental Rugs from American Estates 75

Conference

- May 14–16, Buellton, CA, Santa Ynez Valley Marriott
Carpet & Textile Forum

Exhibitions

- Until June 14, Washington, DC, GWU/Textile Museum
Intrinsic Beauty: Celebrating the Art of Textiles
- Until June 29, London, British Museum
War Rugs: Afghanistan’s Knotted History
- Until July 28, Paris, Louvre
Mamlouks, 1250–1517
- Until Nov. 9, Riggisberg, Abegg-Stiftung Museum
Flourishing India: Textiles from the Mughal Empire
- May 9–Jan. 4, 2026, Saint Louis, Saint Louis Art Museum
Patterns of Luxury: Islamic Textiles, 11th–17th Centuries
- Aug. 16–Dec. 20, Washington, DC, GWU/Textile Museum
Enduring Traditions: Celebrating the World of Textiles

President's Report: The 2024 Season

By Joel Greifinger

Programs Past and Future

Since my last report, our excellent NERS webinars have included Maggie Squires's "Piece by Piece It Disappeared: Reconstructing the Chehel Sotun Carpet," Alberto Boralevi's "Exciting Carpet Finds in Italy: Forty Years of Hunting for Unpublished Masterpieces," Walter Denny's "What's Next? New Frontiers in Carpet Studies," Deniz Coşkun's "Varsak Kilims: Unraveling Their Anatolian Turkmen History," and Kenneth Hayes's "Konya Prayer Rug of a Seljuk Sultan."

Coming up in February and March of 2025 will be Paula Krugmeier's "Introduction to Ottoman-Era Silks of the Levant" and Stephano Ionescu's "Gems of Ottoman Classical Rugs: A New Perspective."

Join us for these and future webinars, and take full advantage of your member benefit to access the recordings for all NERS-hosted sessions! Once again, we're extremely grateful for Jean Hoffman and Julia Bailey's leadership, expertise, and dedication in lining up speakers and topics and undertaking the extensive preparation needed to make each webinar a success.

Our in-person meetings have continued, albeit less frequently than before the COVID pandemic. In May, I presented "All Tradition is Change," which featured about forty-five late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scandinavian peasant textiles from my collection. In October we had a very successful show-and-tell meeting, "Persian Pile Weavings from City, Village, and Tribe." In addition to the traditional moth mart and show-and-tell, our August annual picnic featured a sumptuous, fully catered Middle Eastern repast.

Membership

As of this writing, NERS has 151 memberships (totaling 183 members), of which twenty-three memberships are from outside the U.S. Worldwide access to our webinars no doubt prompts continued growth beyond our historical base; more than half our current members live outside the six New England states. Annual memberships now run for the calendar year; the money from memberships lets us provide you with our webinar and in-person programs, archive and make available all our recorded webinars, produce and distribute this newsletter, improve capabilities and access via our redesigned website, make available all

our past online exhibitions, communicate with you about our own and others' rug and textile activities, and more.

Special acknowledgment and thanks are due to our Supporting and Patron members, whose "above and beyond" generosity has helped maintain our financial health.

Supporting Members of 2024 are Richard Belkin and Meredith Laufer, the late John Clift, Walter Denny, Donna Dingle, Armen and Louise Dohanian, Thomas Harris, Elizabeth Herridge, Robert Joly and Nancy Hewison, David Scott Lawson, Richard Lerner, Gary and Susan Lind-Sinanian, Stephanie Kline Morehouse and Brian Morehouse, Ann Nicholas and Rich Blumenthal, Peter Pap, Gerard Paquin and Ann Benedict, Alex Rose, Timothy and Nina Rose, Michael Sampson and Tina Young, Sharon and Len Soltzberg, Julien Taibi, and Chuck and Theresa Wagner.

Patron members, who support NERS at the highest level, are Debbie Sheetz (Adelson), Doug and Julia Bailey, Shahyan Faroukh Dastur, Carla Fita, Hali Publications, Jean Hoffman, Ali Istalifi, Susan and Lloyd Kannenberg, William Luk, Charles Nargozian, Lena N. Nargozian, and Beau Ryan.

The Steering Committee and Their Contributions

As always, the Steering Committee helps keep NERS rolling along. Jim Sampson has continued his work as Manager of Membership and Treasurer. Richard Belkin is the liaison with our Newton meeting venue, Durant-Kenrick House. Lloyd Kannenberg and Richard Belkin handle in-person meeting tasks, from supplying equipment to providing beverages. Both are contributors to *View from the Fringe*. Jeff Spurr is our Secretary and a *View* contributor. Julia Bailey co-directs our webinar program and brings our newsletter to life as its editor and producer. I update our website, administer our Facebook page, and brandish the exalted title of President. Until his health rapidly declined, John Clift had taken up the Membership portfolio; he passed away on October 29. The Steering Committee and NERS will miss him.

Editor's Note: Mea culpa—the delay in publishing this report is in no way the fault of our "exalted-title-brandishing" President Joel, who submitted it in timely fashion in late 2024.

Photo Credits

p. 1: Julia or Doug Bailey **p. 2:** Julia Bailey **p. 3:** Zoom (inset); Kenneth Hayes **p. 4:** Zoom (inset); Paula Krugmeier **pp. 5, 6:** Zoom (inset); Stefano Ionescu

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Joel Greifinger (President), Julia Bailey,
Richard Belkin, Lloyd Kannenberg,
Jim Sampson, Jeff Spurr

The New England Rug Society is an informal, nonprofit organization of people interested in enriching their knowledge and appreciation of antique oriental rugs and textiles. Our webinars and meetings are held seven or more times a year. Membership levels and annual dues are: Patron \$170, Supporting \$110, Couple \$80, Single \$60, Student \$30.

For more information and forms for joining NERS or renewing your membership, go to <https://ne-rugsociety.org/membership/>



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In this issue:

May 31 Meeting Preview: Flat Weave Show-and-Tell	1
August 10 Picnic Preview	2
December 7 Webinar Recap: Kenneth Hayes on a Konya Prayer Rug for a Seljuk Sultan	3
February 1 Webinar Recap: Paula Krugmeier on Ottoman-Era Textiles of the Levant	4
March 1 Webinar Recap: Stefano Ionescu on Ottoman Classical Rug Gems	5
Upcoming Rug and Textile Events	6
NERS President's 2024 Report, Photo Credits	7