



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. XII, No. 1 September 2004

www.ne-rugsociety.org

September Meeting:

James Douglas on the Weavings of the Baluch

In past years the NERS has heard in-depth surveys of almost all the major types of oriental rugs. A notable exception has been the Baluch—those mysterious weavings whose austere exterior often hides a unique beauty of wool, color, and design. This omission is to be finally rectified at our first meeting of the new season, when James Douglas will survey the wide geographical and esthetic gamuts covered by these weavings, both pile and flatweave. His talk will be a particular treat because his illustrations will not be slides, but rather actual pieces from his own extensive collection—including, for contrast, some non-Baluch pieces.

James Douglas has been a naval officer, college instructor, and freelance writer among other pursuits. He now lives in St. Louis and collects rugs.

Next Two Meetings Details

Dates: Friday, September 24 (Douglas)
Friday, October 22 (Poullada)

Time: 7:30PM

Place: First Parish, Bedford Road, Lincoln

Note: \$5 guest fee for non-members

Directions: See page 14

He has been actively involved with recent ACORs, having curated the Baluch exhibition and hosted gallery tours at ACOR 6, and having been a speaker at ACOR 7.

Attendees are encouraged to bring some of their own Baluchis for discussion after the lecture.

October Meeting:

Peter Poullada on Nomadic Life in the Hindu Kush

A basic understanding of nomadic life contributes to a greater appreciation of the woven treasures that we collect. We are fortunate, therefore, to have Peter Poullada discuss the migratory tribes of Afghanistan and their way of life. Peter's personal experience has made him well equipped for the task: he first came to Afghanistan in 1954 when his father was appointed to be the economic officer at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. He returned to live and travel throughout the country in 1967-68, 1974 and 1975-76. He has visited 28 of the 29 provinces of Afghanistan and made several trips to central Asia in the 1980s and 1990s. In May 2001 he spent three weeks driving 2000 miles through Chinese Turkestan. He has a degree in Middle Eastern History and Languages from Princeton University and wrote his master's thesis on the economic development of Afghanistan at the University of California-Berkeley. He has been

an avid collector of central Asian tribal weavings for over 20 years and is currently doing research on the ethnogenesis and history of the Turkmen and Uzbek peoples of central Asia based on Islamic and Russian primary sources from the 13th to the 19th century. He is president of SFBARS, the San Francisco rug society.

Peter sent us the following summary of his talk:

“My talk will be based on the collection of almost 1000 slides of Afghanistan taken by the Poullada family over the course of three decades. I will use about 100 slides, mostly from the early 1950s, to illustrate the transhumant life-cycle of the nomadic pastoral tribes of Afghanistan, showing their migration from winter to summer pastures in the Hazarajat, the high mountainous region of the western Hindu Kush. I will show scenes of the landscapes

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Please don't forget to send in your membership renewal form by 9/10!



President's Year-end Review

The New England Rug Society has finished out its 19th year in good cheer and fine health. Our membership is at a peak of 177, our finances are sound, and another year of worthy events and memorable meetings is on the planning table.

It was a year of well-attended and well-received meetings. The season kicked off with a Sunday afternoon reception and lecture at the Newburyport gallery of longstanding NERS patron member **John Collins**. John's particular area of expertise, along with Persian Bijars, is the whole gamut of South Persian weavings, and his review of that area, with an emphasis on Afshars, was both informative and compelling.

The next month saw a bit of a departure from our usual fare. Textile artist **Betsy Sterling Benjamin** introduced us to what proved a totally new area for most NERS members: Japanese resist-dyed textiles. After walking us through the extremely sophisticated ancient process, she presented a review of contemporary work being done in the medium, including many of her own spectacular creations.

In November, it was back to the familiar, but in the context of a new and different perspective. Rug book author **Pete Stone** was the featured speaker at our annual joint meeting with Skinner Inc., held in conjunction with their fall carpet sale. His talk, which was based on his forthcoming book on the subject, explored the origins and evolutions of design motifs in oriental carpets and tribal weavings.

In February we had the pleasure of hosting the renowned Turkish antique textile dealer **Seref Özen**, who gave us an insightful overview of the kinds of rugs and textiles now funneling through Istanbul from Central Asia on their way to the western markets. The incisiveness with which he identified and evaluated a rich variety of show-and-tell pieces after his talk gained the admiration of all.

In March we were privileged to welcome one of the contemporary oriental rug world's most influential figures, **Dr. Harald Böhmer** of Marmara University in Istanbul, founder of the DOBAG project and a leading expert on dye technology. His overview of natural dyes in oriental rugs helped all who

attended to understand the complexities of this ancient craft.

Our last lecture meeting of the season, held at ALMA (The Armenian Library and Museum of America), featured two of our own—seasoned Turkmen-collectors **Jim Adelson** and **Yon Bard**—who presented a well-composed PowerPoint review of the Turkmen tribes and their weavings, followed by a hands-on presentation of pieces from their own collections. We thank NERS member **Gary Lind-Sinanian**, ALMA's curator, for hosting the meeting.

And finally, we gathered once again in May for our annual Saturday picnic and show-and-tell at the Concord farm of NERS member **John Bordman**. Despite cloudy skies and the threat of rain, the event was the usual success, this time with an indoor "moth market" as well as our usual treasure-laden show-and-tell. The latter event, it was interesting to note, featured at least three ethnographic textiles for every pile carpet, a telling indication of the extent to which collectors are broadening their horizons to find new and different collecting opportunities as the supply of noteworthy pile weavings wanes.

NERS's other major achievement of the year happened just as we entered 2004: the grand opening of our online exhibition of ethnographic transport and storage bags. Although it looks easy to the outsider, bringing off one of these events is anything but; it's a major undertaking. But a lot of team effort over the course of eight months, combined with the usual intense arguments that always (since we indulged in them by email) stopped short of fistfights, made it all work in the end. If you haven't yet seen it, go to www.ne-rugsociety.org, click *gallery*, then click the "To Have and To Hold" icon.

For their special efforts in that undertaking, our thanks go to **Yon Bard** (photography), **Holly Smith** (technical analyses), **Mike Tschebull** (the main essay), and **Jim Adelson**, **Al Saulniers**, **Bethany Mendenhall**, and **Jeff Spurr** (individual captions). **Beau Ryan** provided us the facilities in which to do analyses and photography. The biggest thanks of all, however, go to **Bob Alimi**, who successfully executed

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the prodigious task of putting it all together into a handsome, beautifully organized online exhibition. If you've missed seeing the glowing public reaction to this undertaking, go to the Gallery and click Guestbook to read some well-earned praise.

In the rug world proper, the principal ruggie event of the past year took place in April, when the 7th American Conference on Oriental Rugs (ACOR 7) was held in Seattle. Despite the distance, some 30 NERS members were in enthusiastic attendance. Also, NERS was heavily involved in the planning and execution of the event. Conference speakers included NERS members **Lawrence Kearney, Mike Tschbull, Holly Smith, Kate Van Sciver, Bethany Mendenhall, and Charles Lave**. And society members who had booths in the conference's popular Dealers' Row included **John Collins, Peter Pap, Holly Smith, Tom Caruso, Beau Ryan, and Thom Mond**. In addition, members who were actively involved in the planning and management of ACOR 7 included ACOR Treasurer **Bethany Mendenhall**, outgoing ACOR Board member **Mae Festa**, and myself.

As usual, I have the pleasure of thanking that gang of loyal members called the Steering Committee without which the New England Rug Society just plain wouldn't work. The group, as ever, worked like clockwork to make things happen: **John Clift, Tom Hannaher** and **Gillian Richardson** handling food and refreshments at all the meetings, **Yon Bard** doing the newsletter with the able assistance of **Jim Adelson** and **Jeff Spurr, Julia Bailey** helping to coordinate the speaker arrangements, **Bob Alimi** building and administering our website, and **Janet Smith** handling the logistics of mailings, nametags, and other indispensable clerical tasks.

Others who pitch in meeting after meeting comprise our audio-visual team: **Buzz** and **Louise Dohanian** who manage the projector screens, and **Lloyd Kannenberg** who does our sound system. Our thanks to them as well. A word of thanks also goes to those members who made valuable contributions to our newsletter: in particular **Ann Nicholas** and

Amanda Phillips.

For the upcoming season we're very pleased to welcome longtime member **Jo Kris** to the Steering Committee. Jo, as most of you know, was for years the oriental rug expert at Skinner Inc. Now that she's retired from Skinner and remaining in the field as an appraiser and consultant, she's looking to devote more time to the NERS, and we're pleased to have her energy and expertise at our disposal.

Special thanks to these members whose extra generosity helped us round out such a successful year:

Patrons: Jim Adelson & Debbie Sheetz, John Collins, Jeremy & Hanne Grantham, George Grillo, Michael & Nancy Grogan, Tom & Ann Hannaher, Lloyd & Susan Kannenberg, Mark Hopkins, Jo Kris, Elaine Mosesian, Mario & Caroline Ratzki, Sheryl Read, Beau Ryan, Peter Walker.

Supporting Members: Richard Belkin, Buzz & Louise Dohanian, Tom & Virginia Gasho, Daniel Lahoda, Phil & Sharon Lichtman, Peter Pap, Gillian Richardson, Mitch & Rosalie Rudnick, Klaudia Shepard, Tom Stocker & Jim Alexander.

Two recent developments in particular have improved our financial health. The necessary decision to eliminate wine and beer at our meetings owing to rules of First Parish (and most other public venues these days, we find), have greatly reduced out per-meeting food and beverage outlays. (And judging from the total silence on that issue, nobody seems to have missed it.) Also, electronic messaging, in that 48% of our membership now takes our newsletters and meeting announcements via email, has saved us a bundle. (If you haven't yet decided to take your newsletter by email, keep in mind that every member who does so saves us about \$10 year, and gets to see many of the illustrations in full color!) So despite rising costs in other areas, we are quite able to leave our dues unchanged for yet another season.

Whenever it is able, the NERS endeavors to support other organizations and undertakings that we believe are of vital importance to the world of antique oriental rugs and textiles. This past year we

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were able to make modest donations to The Textile Museum in Washington, DC, the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto, the Armenian Library and Museum of America, and the Costume and Textile Department of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. In addition, we sponsored a second Anatolian textile in support of Josephine Powell's highly successful Adopt-a-Kilim program that is preparing her extraordinary collection for posterity in Istanbul.

Our membership continues to be as diversified as it is enthusiastic. Twenty four new members came aboard this year, many of them finding us through the internet. A breakout of our members' whereabouts follows:

Eastern Mass.	135
Western Mass.	17

Connecticut	5
Rhode Island	1
New Hampshire	6
Vermont	3
Maine	5
New York	1
Indiana	1
Illinois	1
California	2

Finally, many warm thanks to you, and to all the members of the NERS for such generous support over the past season, for pitching in when help is needed, and for contributing the enthusiasm and encouragement that is so vital to keeping our organization a healthy and rewarding one. We couldn't do it without you!

Mark Hopkins

Boston Will Host ACOR 8 In The Spring of 2006

Living up to the old adage that what goes around comes around, the NERS will once again play host to an American Conference on Oriental Rugs (ACOR).

The eighth such conference is scheduled for April 20-23, 2006, in downtown Boston. The sessions and exhibitions will take place at the Park Plaza Hotel and the accompanying dealers' fair will be held just across the street at Boston's popular antique and craft show venue, The Castle.

This will be a sort of "old home week" for ACOR, since Boston was actually its birthplace. The first conference, sponsored that time by our predecessor, the New Boston Rug Society, took place in January, 1992, at the Colonnade Hotel. It was tiny by today's standards; some 150 ruggies participated, about a third of the past few ACORs' attendance.

But its success kindled the fire that nurtured six more conferences: Chicago in '94, Santa Monica in '96, Denver in '98, San Francisco in '00, Indianapolis in '02, and Seattle this past spring.

Plans are now well underway to make ACOR 8 a memorable success. Mark Hopkins, a member of the ACOR Board of Directors, has agreed to be conference chair, and the word from him is, "There's a ton of work coming along, and we'll need plenty of volunteers starting in about a year. So those of you who can afford the time, please do plan to pitch in and give us a hand. We'll be putting out the call probably in early fall of next year."

If your calendar goes that far ahead, be sure and reserve the dates now. Judging from the great success of past ACORs, it's going to be a "definitely don't miss" event.

Hard Copy Version of NERS's Online Bag Exhibition

We expect that the hard-copy version of our online 'To Have and to Hold' exhibition will be ready by the time of our first meeting (9/24). Those who have already put a deposit on the book will be able to pick up their copies at the meeting, and additional copies will be

available for purchase. If you can't make it to the meeting, call Judy Smith at 617-277-8233 or email her at jasmith@heidrick.com to order or make arrangements for delivery



April Meeting on the Turkmen and Their Pile Weavings

By Jim Adelson and Yon Bard

On April 14 we presented at the Armenian Library and Museum a combination lecture and show & tell session devoted to the Turkmen and their pile weavings.

Part 1: History and the Matrix, by Yon Bard

History and geography. The Turkmen are descended from the Oguz, a federation of Turkic tribes that settled in the area of present day Turkmenistan late in the first millennium AD. Following the incursions of various conquerors such as Genghis Kha, Tamerlane, and Nadir Shah, the tribes lived for centuries under no central political authority. They moved about in response to grazing needs and to pressures from neighboring people. The men herded their flocks and sometimes supplemented their incomes by raiding villages in surrounding areas and selling their inhabitants into slavery. In the meantime, their wives and daughters wove the rugs that we are so fond of. All this changed in the late 19th century, when, as part of the “Great Game”—the British-Russian struggle to control the approaches to India—Russia annexed much of Central Asia. When attempts to gain independence following WWI and the Russian Revolution failed, the Turkmen territories were incorporated in the SSR of Turkmenistan. The latter became an independent republic following the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991.

The bulk of Turkmenistan is covered by the Kara Kum desert. The country is bounded on the west by the Caspian sea; it is separated from Iran on the south by the Kopet-Dagh mountains, and from Uzbekistan on the east by the Amu Darya river. On the north is Kazakhstan.

The rugs. In the 13th century, Marco Polo passed through this area and reported that they wove the world’s most beautiful rugs, but he didn’t describe them; nor do we have any other documentation to tell us anything about the weavings.

The earliest rugs that survived have been carbon-dated to the 17th century. Although incorporating some “archaic” elements, they are immediately recognizable as Turkmen. The bulk of collectible Turkmen rugs dates to the 19th century, with some attributed to the 18th century. In the course of the 19th century rugs were in-

creasingly woven for commercial purposes, being sold in the bazaars of Bokhara—hence the “Bokhara” appellation by which they became known in the West. In the late 19th century, the use of chemical dyes made its inroads, and following the Russian annexation the tribes began to settle down and lose their identities. Hence, 20th century weavings have lost the distinctive characteristics associated with the various tribes. Rug production shifted to state-sponsored “factories” that produce standard “Bokhara” style weavings.

Following the annexation, Russian collectors and ethnographers such as Bogolyubov and Dudin descended on the region and began studying and acquiring Turkmen weavings, laying the foundations of the great collections in the Russian museums. But true understanding of the significance of structural analysis in the classification of Turkmen weavings was not reached until almost a century later with the work of Thompson, the Pinner, the Rautenstengels, and others.

The matrix. Turkmen weavings are classified in two ways: by tribe of origin and by form. Thus, we can construct a table, or “matrix” as it is known to mathematicians, a row for each form and a column for each tribe. Any specific weaving can be placed in the proper cell of this matrix. It should be noted that not every form was woven by every tribe; thus, some of the cells remain empty.

The tribes. Weavings are most reliably attributed to tribes on the basis of structural analysis, but design and palette can also be used for classification. While it is true that many design elements are common to several tribes, others, either singly or in combination, are unique to one tribe or another. Though some pieces are difficult to attribute, in the vast majority of cases the tribal origin can be identified at a glance.

For attribution purposes, we distinguish between three groups of tribes:

1. The Tekke, Saryk, and Salor create weavings that are typically tightly woven and bright in color. Structurally, Tekkes are always woven with asymmetric knots open to the right, Saryk usually symmetric, and Salor almost always open to the left.

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Jim Adelson and Yon Bard on the Turkmen and Their Pile Weavings

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2. The Yomud, Chodor, and Arabachi weavings are more loosely woven and typically darker in color. Yomuds are usually symmetric, Chodor open to the right, and Arabachi open to the left.

3. The Ersari, or “Middle Amu Darya Valley” weavings are created by the relatively sedentary population of that area. These are classified into “Kizil Ayak” which adhere to traditional Turkmen themes, and “Beshir” which incorporate non-Turkmen designs such as botchs, mina-khani, and ikat-derived motifs.

The forms. The forms that Turkmen weavings take can be divided into several classes:

1. Floor coverings: main carpet, small rug, prayer rug
2. Storage bags: chuval (large), torba (wide), mafrash (small)
3. Animal trappings: asmalyk (camel flank decoration), khalik (breast decoration)
4. Tent furnishings: tent band, ensi (door cover), kapunuk (door surround)
5. Miscellaneous: personal bag (for spindles and other small objects), ok bash (tent-pole cover), bokhche (a square container).

The above lists are incomplete; there are quite a few other forms.

Part 2: Design and Collecting, by Jim Adelson

Turkmen design. The classic Turkmen design format consists of a field with major and minor guls, surrounded by major and minor borders, and flanked by one or two elems (skirts). Most main carpets and smaller rugs, most chuvals, and some torbas and mafrashes strictly adhere to this layout. The major and minor guls often follow a grid layout. In some pieces—as in a Tekke main carpet—the grid is accentuated with actual lines that connect the major guls and the minor guls in a rectangular lattice. In some other cases, the grid is implied, as in a Tekke torba, where the weaver seemed to play with the precise placement of the major and minor guls by having the diagonal arms of the Chemche minor guls run right up to the major guls, creating a second grid system on a 45-degree angle to the primary grid layout.

But most commonly, the grid is on an open field without connecting lines. Two other fairly common field layouts are a compartment style, as in the Tekke aina gul; and an arrangement of motifs in diagonal rows with alternating color schemes.

For many other types of pile pieces, Turkmen weavers followed some but not all elements of the layout previously described. The most common ensi format utilizes a quartered field that is unique to this type of piece, but includes familiar design motifs within the quarters of the field in diagonal rows of color. Ensis often use the major/minor border elements, and have two elems, most frequently together at the bottom of the piece, but sometimes split one above and one below. Examples that deviate the most from the “standard” layout, in part because of the unique form of the weaving, include asmalyks that are most frequently pentagonal. They often use lattice arrangements of design motifs in the main field that are only rarely seen in other Turkmen formats. Tentbands often have a major/minor border arrangement, but the design vocabulary in the main field is much more varied, including some motifs found almost exclusively in tentbands. Ok bashes are often similar to other small pieces, but offer extra opportunities for design variation because of the triangular flaps that come together to form a point and close off one end of the piece.

Origins of Turkmen design motifs. The Turkmen had been exposed to many other cultures in centuries of moving through Asia. Jon Thompson traced the classic Turkmen gul from Chinese porcelain designs to Anatolian carpets before its evolution into the many Turkmen gul forms in use in 18th and 19th century weaving. More recently, Jim Allen has suggested that certain Turkmen designs stemmed from Mughal weaving, as seen in his comparison of a Mughal prayer rug and a quite similar design in a Yomud main carpet elem. However, a similar motif appears in one of the earliest known Yomud carpets that would have been roughly contemporaneous with Mughal weaving, calling into question the nature and direction of the design flow. Next, there are no identified sources for the Chodor Ertmen gul in the lit-

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Jim Adelson and Yon Bard on the Turkmen and Their Pile Weavings

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erature, and if this particular gul was a creation of the Turkmen people themselves, isn't it possible that other motifs were as well?

Sometimes the design origins were less uncertain—the weavers only had to look “next door.” In some cases, weavers from one Turkmen tribe used a design motif found in the weavings of another Turkmen tribe: e.g., a Yomud chival with major guls adopted from a Tekke torba gul, complete with center rosette. Weavers were also known to take design motifs from other art forms, e.g., the adoption of ikat-originated designs in Ersari weaving. Finally, there are connections of motifs with other weaving groups, sometimes immediately adjacent to the Turkmen and sometimes some distance away, such as the *syrga* border in Yomud work, also found in both South Persian and Shahsavan weaving.

Evolution of Turkmen design over time. Certain motifs were more or less popular at different times. A set of examples from Mackie and Thompson of an 18th-century Caucasian floral original, through a 19th-century Yomud boat border, to a mid-20th century, Soviet-era carpet with battleships and airplanes forming the border, illustrate how a particular design evolved over a span of 200 years! The evolution of motif spacing was demonstrated with Yomud chivals from my own collection. The last one dated from around 1900, with preceding chivals each a generation or two earlier. Generous spacing between major and minor guls gave way to the crowded handling at the end of the 19th century. Also, the popular “running dog” border became crowded and spindly by the end of this period, while a generation earlier the spacing was more open, and the earliest examples have a much more curvilinear or wavelike form of the design.

Turkmen collectors appreciate the weavers' ability to be inventive, or even playful, within the relative formality of the design constraints. This was demonstrated by a Yomud chival where the weaver's choice of unusual design elements—uncommon minor guls and major borders—added particular interest to the piece. In another example, an Ersari chival, the weaver artistically varied each individual rendition of the Chemche

minor gul, creating a feeling of much greater variety than the format would suggest. Finally, many Turkmen examples really seem to have intentional errors—Yon spoke to NERS several years ago on this topic, under the heading of the “internal elem” theory.

Collecting. In the concluding remarks I summed up some of my own feelings, as well as the current state of Turkmen collecting. There has been a market bifurcation: the most esteemed pieces command very high prices, while just below that level a number of very good pieces are relatively reasonably priced, as demonstrated by a couple of my favorite Turkmen weavings to appear on the market in the last few years: a Tekke or Salor chival sold at Rippon Boswell in 2003 for \$30,000+, and a Tekke torba sold privately, reputedly for about \$20,000. I would have loved to have either piece, but my wife and college-approaching kids didn't share the same feelings about the expenditure of a year's tuition. But a couple of pieces that I have bought, each at less than 5% of these top items, offered some of the same qualities of the very best items, but were more attainable because of less popular style, fragmented and/or worn condition, or other characteristics. I presented three other examples—a Yomud and a Tekke chival from my own collection, plus a Yomud ok bash that had sold on e-Bay—all of which were of collector interest but had sold for less than \$1,000 within the last few years. So you don't have to be either incredibly rich or incredibly fortunate to collect Turkmen weavings of artistic merit and significant appeal.

After concluding the talk, Yon and I took the audience through a dozen or so pieces that we had brought from our collections. The audience got the chance to see directly many of the points made in the talk, and to appreciate for themselves the weavings that have obviously given us so much enjoyment. Members of the audience had also brought a few pieces which they shared, including a Yomud camel harness (see page 10), and even a Baluch weaving with Turkmen design elements.

Thanks again to ALMA for hosting another combined meeting in their Watertown museum.



Last Meeting: Picnic, Moth-Market, and Show & Tell

By Jeff Spurr

Unlike some very beautiful days that have smiled upon our annual picnics, this year's was on the chilly side (48 degrees at 2 PM). Still, it neither snowed nor sleeted. Indeed, the chill drove everyone into the lower room where examples of members' bags presently in the exhibition on our web site (*To Have and to Hold: Art and Function in Transport and Storage Bags*) were on display and the moth market was in full swing. The market seemed livelier than usual, doubtless because of a semi-captive audience. Along with the usual suspects were such more arcane items as Aymara weavings, two "Marash" (actually Malatya) embroideries (ethnic Armenian dowry goods)—both yastiks, and a Wodaabe (Bororo) young man's embroidered tunic.

After lunch, Judy Smith announced the creation of a hard copy exhibition catalogue for *To Have and to Hold*, an initiative which has already led to some hasty rewrites of sundry parts of the web text—we want it right for posterity. Discounted orders were being taken at the picnic. Anyone else interested should contact Judy (*see note on page 4*).

Samy Rabinovic reported on Alberto Boralevi's guided tour of the rugs of Transylvania (Romania), the famous Western Anatolian exports that fetched up in such numbers in the churches of that region and have largely been preserved there to this day. Most were viewed in the churches, many were brought out of storage expressly for viewing by the tour. Over 200 such rugs seen were described as being from the 15th-18th centuries. Most of those participating in this tour—aside from Marilyn and Marshall Wolf, were Italian collectors. Samy is planning a similar tour for the fall, with a possible side trip to Budapest (*see page 13*).

We were then treated to a display of Turgay Ertuk's virtuoso playing on the saz, a traditional Ottoman/Turkish stringed instrument. He described the three major types of music: Ottoman classical music, Ottoman pop music, and Turkish village music, the latter being essentially outside the court tradition altogether, created for dancing. His playing was greatly enjoyed and we hope to make it a regular feature of these annual events.

Then came the show-and-tell, with the usual remarkable array of (mainly) woven artifacts for all to enjoy. An American friendship quilt commenced the show, dated 1855 and made for Mary C. Kingsley upon her graduation from the Whitestown Seminary of Utica, New York. This featured a wide array of calico fabrics and acrostic poems written in. There followed a fragment of a curious carpet with processions of large boteh rather rakishly on the slant, much as in some 19th c. Kashmir shawl fields. It had a curious hemp-like foundation and it was conjectured that it might have come from India despite bearing no visual relation to any Indian rug I am acquainted with. Then came a vivid Afshar bag-face from the Kerman area, another with a particularly "awesome border" as one member said. Then came a polychrome Baluch main carpet featuring a strong and varied palette, a Yomud main carpet "boat" border and a mina khani variant field. Following this was a Khamseh rug with huge botehs in the field and latch hooks surrounding it.

A huge and interesting Kirghiz embroidery was a novelty to most in the audience. It was created for the yurt and employed on the occasion of a marriage to separate the newlyweds from the rest of the family. It was like an amplified version of those large embroidered panels that the Kirghiz hang in back of their sofas. Also shown by this collector was a very early Akhnif cape showing wear befitting its age—but a very nice piece indeed. These amazing garments are woven by the Ait Ouaouzguite Berbers of the Atlas Mountains.

In a different vein was an 18th century Ioannina embroidered yastik (cushion cover) from Epirus, employing the distinctive nubblly embroidery of this provincial Ottoman tradition. The same collectors showed a very fine and distinctive Lakai mirror bag or ilgitsch, in cross-stitch with an uncharacteristically fine and elaborate design, including a main border filled with cartouches containing a pseudo-kufic design of sorts and a distinctive red central floral medallion. Although otherwise embroidered in silk, it also contained the crimson wool found in some em-

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broideries by settled Uzbek peoples in the latter 19th century.

A large embroidered cape was also shown, originating in the Southern Afghanistan-Western Pakistan area, purportedly created by a small, obscure nomadic group related to the Gypsies. It was embroidered in silk (mainly yellow with other highlights) in abstract, principally floral-inspired designs on an inexpensive black cotton ground. It also featured large, dangling mother-of-pearl buttons and fine glass beads sewn onto the upper edge of the piece, which was evidently worn chyrpy style, suspended from the head. The same collector showed a Yomud Turkmen felt saddle blanket with elaborate appliquéd trade cotton, creating nice, graphic designs. It also featured the careful edge finish characteristic of good old felts from Central Asia.

Despite the presence of numerous rugs, clearly the day belonged to embroideries. The pieces that stimulated the most discussion were a group of three Ottoman embroideries of a hitherto unknown type, rectangular and perhaps a bit larger than a standard yastik (and not made of materials particularly appropriate to that purpose) but not square as one would expect of a bokhcha. All of them featured cintamani designs but arranged differently in each, one reflecting designs seen in some Iznik tilework where the forms are laid out in a lattice. All employed silk on silk and each was two loom-widths wide, two on white grounds, one on a light yellow ground. Distinctively, two had openwork on their lateral sides—unlike the common appearance of openwork ends on more well-known classes of Ottoman embroideries on cotton or linen. The palette was limited with lots of blue and red, all madder except for a limited use of cochineal on one. Two appeared to be somewhat more refined or “classical” looking than the third. The advent of these pieces is an astonishing development, particularly given the departures in materials and techniques from known types of Ottoman embroideries and the fact that they are clearly urban products rather than provincial stuff like the Kaitag embroideries.

My apologies for any failure to mention pieces displayed or for any imperfect description thereof. However, imperfect this report of the proceedings, it is safe to say that everyone enjoyed themselves, got to experience an abundance of visual—and auditory—stimulation, and another fineseason in the New England Rug Society was brought to a close.



Sheryl Read's TJ with saddle bag



Turgay Ertuk entertaining the gathering



Clockwise from top left: Jim Adelson showing Yomud chuval; Al Saulnier's Yomud camel trapping; Ed Berkhoff modeling Niger robe; mysterious boteh fragment; detail of Khirgiz embroidery; Jeff Spurr and Mark Hopkins holding Afghan embroidered cape





Member profile: Kate Van Sciver

By Ann Nicholas

At the ACOR in Seattle I had lunch with Kate Van Sciver, a founding member of the New Boston Rug Society, predecessor of the NERS. She operates Textilian®, a rug restoration business, and with her husband, Jim Croop, is a rug collector. This gave me the opportunity to interview her for our newsletter.

As a restorer, when working on someone's rug, do you ever wish it were yours?

When you work on a rug, you own it. Weaving has a visual rhythm to it. When I restore a rug, my mind photographs it and it stays with me—if it appeals to me enough. That way it is mine to keep forever in my head, and I don't miss it that much when it goes home.

How did you first get interested in rugs and rug restoration?

As a child I loved taking apart and fixing things—really anything old that needed it. And I have always enjoyed textiles. After getting a B.A. at the University of Pennsylvania, I attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. I took a materials and techniques course and discovered that one could learn to fix art, as well as make it. Later, I volunteered at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. They have a renowned collection of oriental carpets (*as many of us who attended the 1996 ICOC will remember.*) I became involved in preparing their carpets for photography. It was a wonderful experience. So it seems natural that I blended these interests and eventually became a rug restorer.

Can you help me understand the difference between rug restoration and conservation?

It's a little like the difference between a psychiatrist and a psychologist—a psychiatrist goes to medical school, completes post graduate training, and has a license to practice. A psychologist needs to have a practical knowledge of psychology and can train in a number of ways. Conservators get a Masters of Fine Arts and have additional training in ethics—their rules are very clear-cut. Restorers don't have to have any specific formal training, but must figure out how to reweave a rug. Some restorers



follow the same ethical rules as conservators, but they are not obliged to.

Conserving a rug means keeping its historical value by delaying its destruction by stabilizing and maintaining it. Conservation is focused on historical integrity and structural preservation more than visual enhancement, although that is often coincident with it. When restoring a rug, one often considers primarily how to make it more useable and visually appealing. Restoration generally treats an object as something to be used. Restoration and conservation can both include reweaving, maintenance and cleaning.

You operate a rug restoration business, Textilian®. What would be your ideal restoration job?

My favorite type of rug to work on is a Kuba. The rhythm of reweaving a Kuba is very similar to my natural weaving tendencies because of its specific structure—the way the warps and wefts relate to each other, etc. (*As she talked about Kuba weaving, her hands began moving as if knotting a rug.*)

What is it in a rug that speaks most to you? And how does that affect what you collect?

Whether restoring a rug or considering adding it to our collection, it is the wool quality—the wool really determines the character of the color through defining its intensity and quality. Jim and I collect mostly Kurdish and Bijar rugs. As a whole they are

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quirky rugs with a sense of funkiness, wonderful wools, and great, intense colors.

In the mid 1980s you were one of the founding members of the New England Rug Society. Tell us a little about the early days and what you hoped the rug group would become.

There were several of us who met over lunch to plan how to establish an active, vital rug society in Boston. Rosalie Rudnick, Judy Smith, Paula Alexander (who is no longer in the rug group) and I met at my house. We hoped that the rug society would become a mix of collectors, academics, and other interested people who would foster a good level of knowledge and collecting expertise. Besides talks on rugs, we wanted to provide the opportunity for members to share collections and understand each other's interests. In those early days the group was so small that our meetings were held in members' homes, often sitting on rugs. Now the NERS has grown to have more members than we expected and we no longer meet in our homes, but there is still a good mix of academics, serious collectors, and other interested people. I think this has fostered many lively interchanges at meetings and broadened everyone's understanding of both rugs and textiles.

What has being a member of a rug group

Hung Up at ACOR 7, by Judy Smith

I've found that great "rug experiences" often happen in the most serendipitous ways. For me the five hours spent climbing ladders, pushing pins, arranging lighting, rearranging "pieces," and adjusting signs for the special Michael Rothberg Exhibition of Turkomen weavings, was the highlight of ACOR 7 in Seattle.

Not knowing much about Turkmen, I felt free to experience them without comparison or context. As we unfolded the lustrous bags, trappings and rugs and spread them on the floor, I was able to feel their handle, pat their pile, follow their graphic patterns and scan for areas of silk.

Michael brought 60 pieces, which were hung in a small, specially designed, gallery. This created

meant to you?

I enjoyed seeing what other people found interesting and collected. Being a member expanded my understanding of rugs and exotic textiles. I think that the NERS has realized the founders' vision. Seven years ago Jim and I with our son Matthew moved to Indianapolis. We are now active in The Rug and Textile Society of Indiana and continue to attend the ACOR meetings.

If you had never discovered rug restoration, what might you be doing now?

Radio voiceovers might be fun—I have been told I have a warm yet authoritative voice. But more likely I would be doing what I do now when I'm not restoring: making hats, pillows and ottomans from the solid fragments of otherwise blitzed oriental rugs and textiles as well as jewelry that I sell at art fairs. Or I might kick it up a notch and open a boutique, called Ottoman Empire, which is the name I use for my line of objects for home and personal adornment. I used to restore gilt frames and china and glass, but you know, I'm glad I discovered rugs—rugs have infinite colors, but there are only so many tones of gold!

Kate can be reached at (317) 726-0811 or at textilian@textilian.com.

an intimate presence of rich Turkmen colors and designs arranged by tribe.

A few highlights were:

Tekke bird asmalyk—Full pile, very spacious, clear drawing

Chodor main carpet—Tons of Aqua/Blue color and space

Tekke tent band—narrow, lots of green, yellow and pink silk, very early and rare. Blew me away!

Two pieces he can't attribute to a tribe and considers one-of-a-kind.

Since Michael had never seen his pieces all together like this, and lit with direct lighting, it was a treat to share in his enthusiasm and pleasure. We can only hope he will publish these someday.



Upcoming Rug Events

NERS 2004/5 Meetings:

November 13: Val Arbab leading a rug identification and structure seminar

February 25, 2005: Sumru Krody on Anatolian carpets

March 18: Diana Myers on Bhutanese textiles

April 17: Ann Nicholas & Richard Blumenthal on South Persian weavings—a hands-on survey

May 21: Picnic and show & tell.

Auctions:

Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 9/25

Sotheby's, London, 10/11

Bonhams, London, 10/12,13

Christie's, London, 10/14

Bonhams & Butterfields, San Francisco, 11/3

Nagel, Stuttgart, 11/9

Skinner, Boston, 12/4

Christie's, New York, 12/15

Sotheby's, New York, 12/16.

Conferences:

ACOR 8: Boston, MA, 4/20-23/06. See page 4

ICOC Down Under: Sydney, 9/16-19/04

Indian Textile Traditions: Annual rug convention, Textile Museum, Washington, 10/15-17/04

World Batik Conference: Boston, Mass. College of Arts, 6/7-15/05. See www.massart.edu/batik for more information (the conference mentioned by Betsy Benjamin in her talk about Rozome last year)

Nomads, Homage to Josephine Powell: Traunstein, Bavaria, 10/15-17/04. For information email erber@erber-statik.de.

Exhibitions and Fairs:

Islamic Art, the Calderwood Collection: Sackler Museum, Cambridge, until 3/13/05

Floral Perspectives in Carpet Design: Textile Museum, Washington, until 2/6/05

Plainweave: Textile Museum, Washington, until 1/2/05.

Tours:

Transylvania & Budapest: Samy's Turkey and Central Asian Tours, 10/2-13/04. Specially designed for rug society members, includes viewing many of the antique "Transylvanian" Ottoman rugs. Call 800-820-6867 or email CentralAsiaTours@aol.com.

We welcome new members Douglas Stock and Elaine Mosesian

Newsletter contributors and helpers: Yon Bard (editor), Jim Adelson, Dora Bard, Ed Berkhoff (some of the photos), Mark Hopkins, Ann Nicholas, Janet Smith, Judy Smith, Jeff Spurr
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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. Its meetings are held six to eight times a year. Annual membership dues are: Single \$45, Couple \$65, Supporting \$90, Patron \$120. Membership information or renewal forms can be obtained on our website www.newenglandrugsociety.org, or by writing to **New England Rug Society, P.O. Box 582, Lincoln, MA 01773**, calling Mark Hopkins at 781-259-9444, or emailing him at mopkins@comcast.net.

NERS 2003/4 Steering Committee:

Mark Hopkins (President)

Jim Adelson

Robert Alimi

Julia Bailey

Yonathan Bard

John Clift

Tom Hannaher

Jo Kris

Gillian Richardson

Janet Smith

Jeff Spurr



October Meeting

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that the nomads pass through, as well as the farming villages, the bazaars and the religious sites they encounter on their journeys. My goal will be to demonstrate the symbiotic relationship that has developed between nomads and farmers, showing how they benefit from the practice of a mixed economy of pastoralism, farming, and trading. Using photos taken on their migration routes I will also try to delineate some of the nomadic tribal groups in western Afghanistan and discuss the role of military, political, and social forces in their ethnogenesis and historical development. Finally I will show views of their pastures and identify the differing types of tents used by the Turkcomongol, Chahar Aimaq, and Pashtun maldars. Textiles will be seen only in the context of their daily practical use.

“After the lecture I would welcome a Show and Tell and encourage participants to bring in their favorite examples of Afghan nomad weavings.”

September, October Meeting Directions

Directions:

From Rte. 95 (128) take the Trapelo Road West exit (#28B) in Waltham. Proceed west about 2.5 miles to a stop sign at the five-way intersection in Lincoln (there is a white planter in the middle of the intersection.) Go right on Bedford Road for 0.1 miles to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on your right. **The parish house is on your left.**

From Rte. 2 take Bedford Road, Lincoln Center exit (eastbound, turn right at light; westbound, go through light, turn right, and circle 270 degrees to cross Rte. 2 at the light.) Proceed 0.9 miles and you will see Bemis Hall, a large brick building on your left. **The parish house is on your right.**

Parking:

In back of the parish house plus along the street. It's OK to park in front of Bemis Hall **provided the building is dark and not in use.**



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