



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. IX, No. 2 September 21, 2001

Next Meeting: Elena Tsareva on Origin of Turkmen Motifs

Our next speaker will be the notable Russian rug scholar Elena Tsareva who has for many years been the curator of the Russian Ethnographic Museum's Central Asian department in St. Petersburg. She is perhaps best known as the author of *Rugs and Carpets of Central Asia*, one of the seminal books on the subject (Editor's note: this book bears much of the blame for my case of terminal Turkomania). Elena has sent us the following summary of her talk:

My lecture is titled *Six thousand years of development of Turkmen carpet ornament* and tells about the patterns and images which form the archaic stock of Turkmen carpet designs. Most early representations of that kind are found on late neolithic (chalkolithic) South Turkmenistan ceramics of the 4th-3rd millennia BC, and are usually named 'carpet ornaments' by archaeologists. All these motifs can be seen on Turkmen carpets of the 16th-19th centuries. It is an amazing pleasure to compare a Salor 'wheel of Universe' (*charkhpalak*), or a 'stepped' (*hamtoz*) motif with their neolithic forefathers and to find no difference in their iconography. Archaic patterns were rendered in geometric style; they are not many: 17 only. In carpets they were popular as border ornaments mostly, though several were used to decorate the main field as well.

It was the period when people traced themselves to animals, fish or trees, which choice depended on their main occupation: hunting, fishing or agriculture. Totemic ideas were so strong that most modern populations still know their totems (for my ancestors it was a bear, for example). Naturally, depictions of tribal and clan totems composed an important part of ancient representative art, which practice is continued by Turkmen carpet weavers until now.

Next Meeting Details

Date: Wednesday, October 10

Time: 7:30PM

Place: Bemis Hall, Bedford Road, Lincoln

Note: \$10 guest fee for non-members

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.

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.

Parking:

On Bedford Road, plus Parish Hall parking lot across the street.

The early Bronze period brought new ideas and images, as seen on metal plaques and stone-carved seals with representations of mythological personages of both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic character. They demonstrate clear links with Sumerian and Egyptian culture, Margush settlement archaeological findings to be named specially. As we shall see, some of the Bronze Age mythological images survived in Turkmen carpet ornaments.

Later times enriched Turkmen carpet vocabulary with numerous motifs and compositions, which reflect the brilliant spiritual ideas

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Next Meeting

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of our ancestors, but this is a topic for further discussion, which we will probably continue one day.

Elena has also provided us with the following biographical notes:

As to myself, I came to the Orient taking a very romantic path. Initially I was interested in Ancient Greek art, Hellenistic period especially, which means Alexander the Great in particular. I encountered him and his troops in Iran and Central Asia, and similarly to him fell in love with local culture. I entered the Oriental faculty of the St. Petersburg University (at that time Leningrad), department of Iranian philology. After graduating I was invited to work as a curator of the Central Asian department of the Russian Ethnographic Museum (State Museum of Ethnography at that time). The museum has a fantastic collection of Turkmen carpets, which I admired so much, I have lived

with this feeling for 30 years already, though my sphere of interests has expanded enormously, as for years I studied Central Asian textiles, embroidery and felts. My son, who is an archaeologist and works at the Hermitage, involved me in archaeological matters as well (Pazyryk, Noin-Ula, etc.); recently I 'moved' to the Caucasus, and studied our museum's Caucasian collection. During the last few years I became more and more interested in the history of patterns and their meaning, which means ancient history and mythology. My degree work was devoted to Turkmen carpets as sources of historical information.

Attendees are encouraged to bring examples of outstanding or unusual Turkmen textile objects, not only rugs: trappings, felts, embroidery, garments, etc., But not too many, otherwise show and tell can last for hours.

This evening promises to be a most interesting event for all of us, Turkomaniacs or otherwise.

A Role for the NERS Beyond Just Loving Rugs Editorial Comment By Mark Hopkins

One of the chilling byproducts of the rage that America harbors from the awful September 11 tragedies is the blatant prejudice now being witnessed in some quarters toward Muslims and others of Eastern origin. As a group dedicated in its interests to an important sector of Islamic art, I suggest that we have a special responsibility: we need to help the uninformed comprehend the difference between Islamicist terrorists and Muslims as a whole.

The Boston Globe stated it well in a September 14 editorial entitled *Misplaced Anger* when it said (in part):

"Americans who wish to take a stand against the blind, irrational cruelty of terrorism can begin by opposing the blind, irrational scapegoating of ordinary Arabs and Muslims in this country. The terrorists who coldly plotted mass murder for months or years cannot be allowed the triumph of provoking ethnic and religious hatred in America."

"The lesson to be taught over and over is that entire peoples or religious faiths must not be blamed for the crimes of particular individuals or political organizations. Americans must now learn about the enemy who has perpetrated this atrocity—and about all the Arabs and Muslims who share America's abhorrence of that enemy."

"If, as preliminary evidence suggests, the wealthy Saudi fundamentalist Osama bin Laden was behind Tuesday's suicidal hijackings, it will be crucial to explain to the American public that he and his fellow travelers are not at all representative of Islam or of the Arab world.

"On the contrary, bin Laden and his radical Islamicist cohorts have as their ultimate political objective the overthrow of nearly all the Arab governments, which they consider too secular or too complicit with infidel enemies of Islam. Under the

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Finding The Right Rug Isn't Easy – So Join The NERS Lead-Forwarding Email Program! By Tom Hannaher

Many NERS members spend a lot of time looking at rugs and textiles—at auctions, at antique shows, in dealer showrooms and on the internet. And frequently members find pieces that are quite wonderful—but not what they collect. For example, I recently ran across two Baluch “bird” bags—something I rarely see at all—in a one week period. And while I think these things are pretty cool, I don’t collect them. I collect pre-Columbian textiles. But I know that Mark Hopkins collects Baluch pieces. I even know that he’s fond of “bird” bags. So I emailed him information about the dealer in Connecticut and the dealer in New York that had the bags.

As it turns out, Mark didn’t like either bag well enough to buy it. But an idea was born. So we are inviting fellow NERS members who would like to participate, to submit a brief description of their “collecting focus,” along with their email addresses. We will then compile the list and distribute it to all other NERS members who have submitted their email ad-

resses for use in this program. Once that’s done, you’ll know that others are keeping an eye out for pieces you might be interested in. And you’ll be able to help others out too.

If you’d like to participate in this program, send an email with your name and collecting preferences to NERSLeads@aol.com. Try to be specific. Mention a price range if it’s important. Try to keep the description under 50 words. I’ll compile a list and then send it to all participants.

An important note about privacy: it is extremely important that we safeguard the privacy of NERS members. By participating in this new Lead-Forwarding Program you agree not to share NERS member email addresses that you obtain through this program with any outside parties. And you have our promise too. We look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions, email me at NERSLeads@aol.com.

A Role for the NERS

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banner of their nostalgia for the seventh century, they have gone to war against the regimes and the mainstream Muslims of many countries. Particularly in Egypt and Algeria, they have committed the most gruesome crimes against Arabs and Muslims who get in the way of their political ambitions.

“It is important for Americans to know about these enemies so that they will not be confused with the Pakistani candy store owner in East Harlem or the Arab-American worshippers at a Texas mosque. [Or, we can add, the oriental rug dealer on Main Street.] This is a time for unity, not for lynch mobs.”

We need to explain that the rug world owes much of its momentum and richness to practitioners of Islam who are the honest, hardworking weavers and merchants upon whom the integrity of the rug business depends. We need to stress that their Koran forbids virtually all the horrors we witnessed on September 11, especially suicide and the killing of inno-

cents.

Most of all, we need to explain that the beliefs of Islamicist fundamentalist terrorists are in dire contrast to those of mainstream Muslims. Osama bin Laden’s latest *fatwa* (religious decree) declares: “To kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim who is able, in any country where this is possible.”

To further quote the Boston Globe (9/13, p. A10): “Such decrees are seen by Muslim scholars as a perversion of Islam, and adherence to such interpretations exists only on the farthest fringes of the faith, they say. But to bin Laden, these decrees help unify his disparate followers.”

These are difficult times, and the wounds will heal slowly. I pledge to do my part, and I hope that all of us can make ongoing contributions toward fostering the understanding that our country needs if it is to cope rationally and compassionately with the challenges that lie ahead.



Odds and Ends

Last meeting cancelled: we regret that our last meeting had to be cancelled. The disruption in transportation caused by the terrorist attacks made it impossible for our scheduled speaker, Bertram Frauenknecht, to come to Boston. We hope that we can reschedule him at some future time under happier auspices.

Fifth OCTS available to members at discount: the Fifth *Oriental Carpet & Textile Studies* has now been published in a two volume series, documenting many of the papers that were presented at the Eighth International Conference on Oriental Rugs (ICOC VIII). Because the NERS is an ICOC donor, all NERS members can purchase one or both volumes at a 20% discount.

Volume I presents most of the Philadelphia ICOC papers, many richly illustrated in color. Volume II compiles the papers from the special (and very memorable) session on "Salting Group" carpets.

For those of you who subscribe to *HALI* magazine, Walter Denny has written a detailed review in the latest issue (*HALI* 117) on Page 61, giving the two volumes high grades.

NERS's discounted prices are \$52 for Volume I and \$36 for Volume II. Shipping is extra: \$5 for the first book and \$3 for each additional book. Complete information on the books and how to purchase them is available through the ICOC Web site, www.icoc-international.org.

Our members will also enjoy 20% discounts on the forthcoming OCTS 6, documenting the Milan papers, when it is published sometime in the future.

We welcome the following new NERS members: Laura Beth Foster and Daniel Klubock.

Last copies of *Through the Collector's Eye*: Only three copies remain of this book. It is the fully illustrated catalog of the rug exhibition held in conjunction with ACOR 1 in 1991. Most of the rugs are from NERS members' collections, and the book also contains great essays by its two authors—our own Julia Bailey and Mark Hopkins. Call Janet Smith at 978-443-3365 if you'd like to purchase a copy. The price is \$48.

Correction: the prayer suzani shown at last season's Show & Tell (Figure 6 in the last Bulletin) belongs to Selma and Ron Newburgh.

Rug Resources on the Internet

The following list of websites was compiled by Washington DC area collector John Howe. We reprint part of it here with his gracious permission.

Introductory and/or Informational

eRug Gallery. A commercial site with a "Learn About Rugs" section that will be very useful to beginners. www.eruggallery.com

Jacobsen's. A commercial site with some good basic information. "Choose a topic" when you get there. www.jacobsenrugs.com

Marla Mallett. A very informative site, particularly on textile structures. Operated by Marla Mallett, who is probably the leading authority on the

subject. More serious analysis here. Marla is also a dealer. www.marlamallett.com

Netscape Open Directory. This is a sort of annotated bibliography of websites. The first URL is for antique oriental rugs in general, the second is for the subcategory, tribal rugs. dmoz.org/Recreation/Antiques/Rugs and dmoz.org/Recreation/Antiques/Rugs/tribal

Turkotek. Essays and discussions on specialized (and not so specialized) topics, with an assortment of resources (attribution guides, maps, extensive collection of links to other sites). We (i.e., the

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Upcoming Rug Events

NERS 2001/2 Meetings:

11/30/01: Saul Barodofsky on Anatolian carpets
January 2002: Tour of MFA's Persian textiles exhibition, hosted by Julia Bailey
February 2002: Jenny Wood on dyes
March 2002: Raoul Tschbull on Kazak rugs
April 2002: Al Saulniers on new opportunities in Moroccan tribal weavings
May 2002: Picnic and Show & Tell.

Auctions:

Phillips, London, 10/16
Sotheby's, London, 10/17
Christie's, London, 10/18
Bonhams & Brooks, London, 10/18
Nagel, Stuttgart, 11/6
Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 11/17
Skinner, Boston, 12/1
Christie's, New York, 12/12 , 12/18
Sotheby's, New York, 12/14.

Tours:

NERS member **Diana Altman's Specialty World Travel** offers tours of special interest to ruggies: **The Tribal Markets of Southern Morocco**, 10/18-30; **Exotic Bazaars of Turkey: Istanbul & Beyond**, 10/20-11/3. For details, call 617-332-1951 or visit the website at www.specialtyworldtravel.com.

Conferences:

The 2001 **Textile Museum Conference** in Washington, DC, is scheduled for 10/12-14; its subject is *Textile Treasures of Central Asia*. Call 202-667-0441 or email nevans@textilemuseum.org for more information.

ACOR 6 is scheduled for 4/25-28/02 in Indianapolis. If you haven't received your registration materials, call Mark Hopkins at 781-259-9444. Time is of the essence—space is filling up fast!

The next **ICOC** is scheduled for 4/17-21/03 in Washington, DC. A call for papers is out; see their website at www.icoc-international.org. Papers are due by 4/1/02.

Exhibitions:

Painted with Thread: The Art of American Embroidery, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, until 9/30.

From the Amu Darya to the Potomac: Central Asian Bags from Area Collections, Textile Museum, Washington, DC, 9/7/01-2/24/02.

Poetry of the Loom: Persian Textiles in the MFA, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 9/26/01-1/21/02. Organized and curated by our own Julia Bailey. **Note:** a tour of this exhibition led by Julia will be scheduled sometime in January.

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 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 hoppmoto@earthlink.net.

NERS 2001/2 Steering Committee:

Mark Hopkins (President)
Jim Adelson
Julia Bailey
Yonathan Bard
John Clift
Tom Hannaher
Sheryl Read
Gillian Richardson
Janet Smith
Jeff Spurr



Rug Resources on the Internet

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compiler) think it's pretty good, but are among the owners/managers/hosts of this site, so our opinions on it are not impartial. www.turkotek.com

Cloudband. A very extensive and informative commercial site, with discussion boards, articles, a calendar of events, and offerings by about 100 dealers. British, so the language barrier rears its head in navigation. What American would guess that "Listings" is the calendar, for example? www.cloudband.com

World Rugs. A multi-dealer commercial site that also has a rug discussion board called "Rug Fanatics." www.world-rugs.com

Rug Museums and Exhibitions

DeYoung Museum in San Francisco. Gradually putting its collections on-line. www.thinker.org/deyoung/collections/textiles.html

The Textile Museum in Washington, DC. www.textilemuseum.org

Symmetry and Pattern. A great site exploring symmetry and pattern in oriental carpets. A cooperative effort headed by Carol Bier, formerly Eastern Hemisphere Curator at The Textile Museum. forum.swarthmore.edu/geometry/rugs/carpets/index.html

Flowers Underfoot. A 1997 exhibition of Mughal weaving at New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art. The catalog for this exhibition is one of the most beautiful rug publications in recent years. www.metmuseum.org/explore/Flowers/HTML/cata_fs.htm

Silk and Wool: Ottoman Textile Designs in Turkish Rugs. A scholarly article by NERS member Gerard Paquin. jefferson.village.virginia.edu/~jmu2m/gp

Weaving Art Museum and Research Institute. A virtual museum, with some informative exhibitions mainly concerning the history of oriental rug weaving. www.weavingartmuseum.org



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