



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. X, No. 1 September 1, 2002

www.ne-rugsociety.org

Next Meeting: Monisha Ahmed on Ladakhi Textiles

At our first meeting of the 2002-3 season on September 20, Monisha Ahmed will discuss the weaving traditions of the people of Ladakh. A field anthropologist based in Bombay, India, Monisha will share with us intimate insights into the lives of these textile-weaving pastoral nomads and the textiles they weave. Her talk will be illustrated with many slides and samples of Ladakhi weavings

Situated in the high reaches of the Himalayan and Karakoram ranges, Ladakh has a textile tradition largely based on its own local resources of wool and pashmina. Weaving is widely found throughout Ladakh, but the practice is not uniform and differences are recognized. The contrast essentially lies between villages in central and western Ladakh and Changthang, which lies in the north-east of Ladakh and is largely inhabited by nomadic pastoralists. In the former, weaving is exclusively men's work and a foot loom (treadle loom) is used. In fact, in these same areas women are not permitted to weave. This is unlike Changthang where both men and women weave, each on a different loom.

It is apparent that the textile tradition prevalent in Ladakh is enmeshed in the lives of the people who

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Next Two Meeting Details

Dates: Friday, September 20 (Ahmed)
Friday, November 1 (Nekrassova)

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

Following Meeting: Natalia Nekrassova on Ersari Rugs

Our second meeting of the season, scheduled for November 1, will feature an in-depth review of rugs of the Ersari tribal group and how they relate to other Central Asian weavings.

The speaker is the widely respected expert Natalia Nekrassova, whose talk on this subject was one of the recent ACOR's highlights.

Natalia has a Master degree in the History of Art. She was curator of the rug and decorative art collections in the State Museum of Oriental Art in

Moscow for 24 years. She has organized more than 30 exhibitions and has publications on Oriental rugs and textiles: her articles and catalogues of prayer rugs, Turkmen rugs, Kaitag embroideries, and Kirghiz textiles were published in Russia, Turkey, England and Jordan. She took part in 17 ethnographical expeditions to Central Asia and the Caucasus, organized by the Museum where she worked. Now for two years she has been a guest curator in the Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto.

She tells us that it would be very nice to have Ersari Turkmen rugs and articles brought by NERS members for discussion.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!
Please send your dues by September 6



The NERS On-Line Exhibition of Prayer Rugs and Textiles

We need your participation in another groundbreaking venture for the Rug Society! We're planning on augmenting our top-notch website with a series of on-line, themed exhibitions, showcasing some of the wonderful pieces in our members' collections. Our first exhibit is devoted to prayer rugs and textiles, timed to coincide with an exhibit on this subject at Harvard's Sackler Museum this fall. So, if you've got one or more pieces that you'd be willing to share with the world, here's your chance!

Here's how it will work. On our website, we'll display images of prayer rugs and textiles, each piece shown on its own page accompanied by notes and structural analysis from the owner, plus (if available) additional detailed images. The pieces will be either credited to the owner or displayed anonymously, based on the owner's preference. There will be a button enabling viewers to send an e-mail to the owner, again if the owner is willing. The system will keep the owner's regular e-mail secret by using an alias through the rug society.

In our first exhibit we will include rugs and textiles with designs (usually a prayer mihrab) that indicate their purpose was for prayer. We intend to include any pieces that members want to submit, subject possibly to limits based on the time available to prepare the exhibit material if we get a large response. If you've got one or a couple of prayer-oriented pieces you're willing to share, we'll welcome them for the exhibit.

This exhibit is made possible by commitments from Bob Alimi in getting the materials on to the website, from Yon Bard for rug photography and editing, and from Jim Adelson and Jeff Spurr in helping organize the exhibit. We're very lucky to have this talent. Now what we need is for you to contribute the pieces!

This exhibition is scheduled to open around

October 20, so be sure to visit our website www.ne-rugsociety.org around that time. Pieces submitted by October 1 should be displayed at that time. Later submissions will be added as soon as possible.

So here's what to do: for each piece you wish to submit, send as many of the following items as you are able:

- A brief note about the piece, covering what the piece is, attribution, what's typical and what's unique, analogous examples, and anything else you'd like to say. This item is a must!

- Good color pictures of the entire piece, an interesting detail, and a closeup of a portion of the back. The pictures should be taken straight on, i.e., have no distortion due to perspective. Pictures may be submitted as prints, 35mm slides, or digital images. **If you don't have a suitable photo, please contact Yon Bard** at the address given on the bottom of page 7 to arrange for a shooting session. Pieces must not exceed 70 inches in width and length. Digital camera images will be taken free. There will be a nominal charge to cover expenses if you want slides made, or if slides need to be taken because the digital camera images are inadequate.

- A structural analysis of the piece.
- Indication of whether you'd like your piece(s) to be credited or labeled *anonymous*, and also whether you'd be willing to receive e-mail from viewers.

These items should be sent by e-mail to Bob Alimi at ralimi@ne-rugsociety.org

This will be another terrific milestone for NERS, providing pleasure for members and guests alike. Please be willing to share an interesting prayer piece that you've got. If you have questions about any aspects of the exhibit, and also if you have ideas for future exhibits, please send them to Jim Adelson (jamesadelson@charter.net). Thanks!



ONE-WOMAN, ONE WEFT

Recent Rug Exhibit Reviewed by Ann Nicholas

Editor's note: Rug dealer Tad Runge, a longstanding NERS member, hosted an important exhibition of Hamadan rugs at his Yarmouth, ME, store in June. Ann Nicholas was there and filed this report. See page 9 for another opportunity to see many of these rugs.

When Tad Runge discovered Clara Edwards's letters written from Hamadan in the early 1900's, it was the happiest of accidents. Planning an exhibition on Hamadan village rugs, Tad had been acquiring exceptional early 20th century examples for more than six years. Clara's letters provided vivid vignettes of life in the region at the time his exhibition rugs were being woven. It would be three more years before the exhibition was held, as its catalogue grew into a book, an article in *Hali*, and even an interview on Maine Public Radio.

Clara Edwards and her husband Cecil (who became one of the rug world's most respected mid-20th century dealers) lived in Hamadan from 1912 to 1923. Cecil worked for the British carpet importer and manufacturer OCM, setting up workshops for carpet production in Hamadan and purchasing village rugs for export to Western markets. Clara, a young wife and recent graduate of Bryn Mawr, wrote many letters home describing their experiences. Her family later donated the letters to the Bryn Mawr College Library where they were stored for many years. A friend of Tad's, a librarian at the Library of Congress, was helping him research information for his catalogue and found the referenced letters in the Library of Congress catalogue.

Articulate and newsy, the letters were full of information about the Hamadan weavers, their life, and the rug trade. In one letter Clara describes visiting a mud-walled village. Each house had a courtyard and a few rooms; one room often contained a very primitive loom made of crooked poplar beams. In another letter she relates how village women wove rugs during the winter when the crops did not need tending and then sold them in the spring near the time of the Persian New Year. The proceeds were used to

buy new clothes, shoes, and sweets for the family. Other letters discuss how world events such as World War I and the Armenian genocide impacted the rug trade and village life. While Clara's nearly forgotten letters are her contribution to the rug world, Cecil's contribution is his classic reference book *The Persian Carpet*, published in 1953.

Tad wanted to demonstrate through the show and his writings that Hamadan village rugs woven before World War II don't always rate the lowly status they have acquired in the oriental rug hierarchy. To challenge this stereotype, Tad displayed 75 rugs that were creatively designed and attractive, and featured excellent dyes and fine wool.

Tad collected the rugs over a ten-year period and spent three years writing the book, which has full page color plates of all 75 rugs with detailed technical analyses done by NERS member and rug restorer Holly Smith. Most Hamadan rugs share common structural characteristics—robust single-wefted wool pile with symmetric knots. In the first quarter of the 20th century, a cottage industry developed in the villages around the ancient city of Hamadan producing scatter-sized rugs for export to the West. Cecil Edwards estimated that perhaps 100,000 rugs per year were woven at the height of its production. A woman in her home wove a rug each year on a simple, often crude, loom. Thus the book's title, *One Woman, One Weft*.

When Rich and I visited the show, Tad discussed several of his favorites. A large scatter rug from Mehraban with a vegetal medium pink background and an open floral design in blues, green, and brown is depicted on the book's cover. The dye saturation, felicitous design, and background abrash all combine to make this a memorable rug. Other favorites used the green, yellow, blue, and the ubiquitous Hamadan pink vegetal dyes to create well drawn, and sometimes powerful, designs. Herati variations, floral motifs, or simple geometric patterns are common designs. A favorite of mine is a pictorial rug with

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ACOR 6 Impressions

Cathy Cootner, a long time collector and former curator at the De Young Museum in San Francisco, gave a thought provoking and amusing talk entitled *Money is Not Enough, Indigence is No Excuse*. She showed slides of many outstanding examples of rugs, textiles, and tribal artifacts. Equally interesting was her advice to any collector—the questions to ask yourself each time you are considering a purchase:

- Do I really love this rug?
- Is this an outstanding example?
- How rare is it? How many other examples are there?
- What is the opportunity cost?
- What does it mean to my collection?

Finally, she gave one serious piece of advice: Don't even look if it's not remotely possible to buy it—unless, of course, you are willing to mortgage the house.

Ann Nicholas

ACOR 6 was excellent in every way. Tough to elaborate, however, one of the best things for us was Dealers' Row. A lot of very good pieces, and many dealers. Lots of fun to see a lot of good rug-dealer friends all in one place. Most of the talks were excellent, particularly, the *Out of the Cedar Chest* focus sessions. Gerard Paquin was soooo good, mainly because his things are wonderful and because he knows his stuff! Seeing old friends from past ACOR conferences is always fun.

Food was good and plenty of it. The costume contest was a lot of fun, especially since I was one of the judges. It was an honor to be asked in the first place, especially since I was on a panel with very illustrious and fun people.

The Indianapolis group did a marvelous job of keeping the whole group of attendees headed in the right direction. It was a great experience.

Rosalie Rudnick

Editor's note: the Warp-Faced Bands from Tribal Iran exhibition from the Fred and Kathleen Mushkat collection must have been truly wonderful,

since we received not one but two separate reports on it. Rather than choosing one or the other, we decided to print them both. We hope to have Fred as a speaker next season.

About three dozen pack animal and tent bands, many woven by the nomadic tribes of Persia, were exhibited at ACOR. Pack bands were used to attach bags and other loads to the camels, horses, and donkeys during the migrations, although the Bakhtiyari wove some purely decorative animal bands. Some tent bands were woven for decoration, while others were an integral part of the tent structure stabilizing the tent frame.

Bands used on the pack animals displayed tribal identity, an important aspect of nomadic culture. Woven for utilitarian purposes, there was probably little, if any, commercial influence in their design. The unusual and extraordinary iconography probably represents a long tradition of images unique to each tribal group. Since these nomads left no written history, these weavings may be the closest we can come to understanding the last two centuries of Persian tribal life.

Some bands were woven with repeating geometric patterns, while others had pictorial images. There were events from rural life—a snake sneaking up on a chicken, a cow biting the tail of the cow in front, birds in a tree, a person leading a camel, a woman with two small girls by her side, and even people with stylized genitals standing foot to foot. A most amusing Qashqua'i band had a woman with a big tuft of pink synthetic dyed wool for hair. It represented either a very bad hair day or the seemingly universal desire for different hair.

One fascinating Qashqa'i pack animal band from the late 19th century was woven on a blue wool field with white cotton motifs and edged with a green and coral border. The band had male and female figures and an amazing repertoire of animals—cattle, goats, camels, chickens, and a rooster sitting on a tree. Since animal pack bands received frequent use, most did not last for more than ten years. Thus this amazing piece must have been made for a special use and

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ACOR 6 Impressions

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then stored away.

I was lucky to walk through the exhibit with Fred Mushkat. He discussed the images as well as the weaving structure and the buckles, all important determinants of tribal identity. The bands are a truly fascinating and unique part of the tribal weaving tradition.

Ann Nicholas

Warp-faced pack and tent bands woven by Iranian nomads are a little studied and hardly collected corner in the diverse universe of southwest Asian ethnographic textiles. But that may be about to change.

Organized as a single owner exhibition by Fred Mushkat, *Warp-faced Bands From Tribal Iran* was the first specialized show of such bands. The exhibition took place in a long narrow conference room on paper-covered display walls, well-lighted by ACOR-provided halogen lighting. Twenty seven pieces in the show were Iranian, with another five from Turkmen, Caucasian and pre-Columbian cultures. The bands ranged up to 35 feet in length.

Pack bands—preferable to ropes, which would have more easily caused skin burns to the transport animal, and much more decorative—were (and are) essential for nomads to tie loads onto camels and donkeys during migration; narrow tent bands (as opposed to wide Turkmen tent bands) stabilize struts in felt-covered yurts. The Iranian bands in the show, almost all from an area described by the arc of the Zagros Mountains in western and south central Iran, are warp-faced, woven with dark blue and ivory or yellow patterns, and often with narrow red and green borders. They look enough alike so that it is hard to avoid the impression that they have common ancestry. That ancestry may trace back almost 8,000 years, the time period during which nomadism has been practiced along the Zagros. Given that these bands have had little commercial or art value until recently, and therefore have come under no commercial pressure, it is possible that the individual motifs on them

date from very early times.

The most common type of Iranian pack or tent band is woven with a technique called *warp twining* (See Mallett, Marla, *Woven Structures*, 1998, pp. 108-113), but a large percentage of the survivors in Western collections are in *one warp double cloth*. These double-faced bands are complex weavings, with two-color designs mirroring each other on opposite sides in color reversal. Most are thought to date to the end of the 19th century or earlier, and are generally not smoked, stained or worn. It is probable that such pristine bands were hardly ever used.

The exhibition concentrated on the bands of the major tribal groups Shabsavan, Bakhtiari, and Qashqa'i. Among the most interesting were a very finely woven northern Shabsavan double-faced band with red cochineal dye; a blue and yellow Saveh Shabsavan double-faced band with ashik forms as decoration, and a finely woven Qashqa'i band with mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and snakes attacking chickens. In other bands, there are cattle nipping at each other, human forms that may be meant to emphasize fertility, men in balloon trousers leading camels, and everywhere, horned animals looking like they stepped right off 3,000 year-old unglazed Iranian pots.

Buckles used to secure pack bands are almost a separate art form, and are sometimes collected separately. Some are made of forged iron, some of brass, but the most interesting are wooden. These are carved from heavy, light-colored, fine grained hardwood, probably pear or quince, and have some of the color and texture of Neolithic ivory and bone fetishes (see illustration on page 8).

There is much for a collector to love here—from the archaic woven motifs on warp-faced grounds, to the lack of commercial influence, the window on the technology of nomadism, and finally, the wonderful shape, color and texture of the buckles. Fred Mushkat is to be congratulated for curating a show that both broke new ground and was extremely artful.

Mike Tschbull



In Memoriam: Cos Papaliolios

Longtime NERS member Costas D. Papaliolios passed away on June 6 at the age of 71 after a brief battle (he was a non-smoker) with lung cancer.

Those of us who knew him will not forget his beguiling grin, outgoing friendliness, and ability to relate intriguing stories about the weavings he shared during show-and-tells.

Cos's interests reached far beyond rugs. For more than 35 years he served on the faculty at Harvard, where his specialty was astrophysics. During his tenure he achieved wide recognition for his achievements in astronomical observation and laboratory innovations.

He was also a highly respected teacher. Quoting from his obituary in the Boston Globe: "He was among the few professors to be given praise by Harvard's student-produced *Confidential Guide to Courses*, which lauded him for his willingness to answer questions and his overall friendly manner."

Cos's rug world activities reached farther back than those of most NERS members; he loved to recount tales of frequenting the shops of Boston's legendary dealers back in the days when wonderful rugs were everywhere, offered at prices unbelievable by today's standards. He added much to our society, and we will miss him

Next Meeting

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inhabit that region. From the woolen cloth that women weave to make the garments that adorn their bodies, to the red felt cape thrown across a woman's shoulders, or the striped pattern a man weaves on a saddlebag tied around a goat's back—each textile crafted in Ladakh, apart from being functional apparel or useful container, is also a silent storehouse of information. Its color, form, function, the fibers it is made from, and the designs it is embellished with, speak about life in Ladakh.

This presentation will look at traditional weaving systems in Ladakh and their symbolic representations and interpretations in Ladakhi life. It will examine the historic development of weaving in the region, as well as the various kinds and uses of wo-

ven textiles made there. Apart from the textiles woven in Ladakh, several fabrics also entered the re-

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Ladakhi women in traditional finery

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 mopkins@netway.com.

Website www.ne-rugsociety.org

NERS 2001/2 Steering Committee:

Mark Hopkins (President)

Jim Adelson

Robert Alimi

Julia Bailey

Yonathan Bard

John Clift

Tom Hannaher

Sheryl Read

Gillian Richardson

Janet Smith

Jeff Spurr



From the Editor's Desk

New Newsletter Schedule. At the beginning of last season I announced my intention to retire from editing the Newsletter, the main reason being the relentless pressure of deadlines: a new issue had to be produced about three weeks before each NERS meeting. As nobody volunteered to take over the job, I have decided to stay on but on a reduced schedule: only four issues will be produced each season, not necessarily tied to the meeting schedule. If a timely announcement cannot appear in a Newsletter for a given meeting, notices will be sent out to members by postcard or e-mail. We will still review all meetings and provide all the usual features such as callendars of rug-related events and member profiles. We still ask each and every one of you, dear readers, to send us material for publication. We expect the next issue to be published in mid-November.

Electronic Newsletter Distribution. In this year's NERS membership renewal form we asked whether you wanted to receive the Newsletter and other notices by regular or e-mail. The latter option clearly saves NERS money, gets the Newsletter to you faster, and avoids the physical mutilation that sometimes occurs in the mail. We note that among early registrants, more than half have opted for e-mail. Because our registration information is not yet complete, and in order to give everybody a chance to test the system, we shall mail everyone a physical copy of this Newsletter, and also an electronic one to those who opted for it. No hard copies of subsequent Newsletters will be sent to electronic subscribers.

Remember that to read the electronic Newsletter and/or print it on your printer you need to have the Acrobat Reader software installed on your computer (downloadable for free from www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html). If you have any problems with the electronic Newslet-

ter please contact me at the address on the bottom of this page.

Our Sister Society in the UK. Searching for "NERS" on Google (the Internet's most popular search engine) brings up our website as about the sixth or seventh entry. Way ahead of it, though—in first or second position—one encounters the *North of England Rat Society* at www.neratsociety.co.uk. We hope that any of our members who find themselves in Longbenton (a place in Northern England, no doubt) will attend one of their monthly rat shows and report their experiences in these pages. Incidentally, finding our website on Google indicates that we have arrived. Statistics kept on the site indicate that we have been averaging over 1000 visits per month. Kudos to **Bob Alimi** for all his hard work on the site!

Julia Bailey's New Job. Julia has accepted the position of managing editor of *Muqarnas*, a journal of Islamic art and architecture published by the Aga Khan Program at Harvard University. She has previously been with the Islamic Arts Department at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. She is a longtime member of NERS and has served on its steering committee for several years. We wish Julia all the best in her new assignment, but we will definitely miss her guided tours through various MFA exhibitions!

Amanda Phillips Receives Fulbright. Amanda, who is largely responsible for the current prayer carpet exhibition at the Sackler Museum, has earned further laurels by receiving a Fulbright Fellowship. She plans to leave for Turkey in mid October to investigate the technical links between the classical 17th century kilims found in the major European collections, and later Anatolian tribal kilims. Congratulations! And we do hope that Amanda will report to us on her Turkish adventures.

Yon Bard

Newsletter contributors and helpers: Yon Bard (editor), Jim Adelson, Dora Bard, Mark Hopkins, Ann Nicholas, Rosalie Rudnick, Janet Smith, Mike Tschebull

Comments/contributions/for sale ads to: Yonathan Bard, 6 Holland Street, Newton, MA 02458; telephone (617) 244-7688, fax (617) 965-2897, e-mail (the preferred venue!) doryon@rcn.com



Skinner Inc.'s New Rug Policy

We have received the following notice from Skinner:

As most of you know, Skinner, Inc., based in Boston, is one of the nation's leading auctioneers and appraisers of antiques and fine art and a major force in the sale of Oriental rugs and carpets at auction. Skinner's Oriental Rugs & Carpets auctions include fine 17-19th century carpets, rugs, weavings, and other textiles from Europe, Asia, and the Far East. Skinner has also been a long-time partner and supporter of the New England Rug Society and we appreciate the support it has given us over the years.

In the past year, Skinner has changed its rug auction schedule and we've received a few inquiries as to the revised schedule and catalogue subscriptions. The following should hopefully clear up any confusion:

Skinner is currently hosting one major rug auction per year, typically held in the spring, with a secondary rug auction held in one of the summer months. Rug catalog subscribers receive both of these catalogues for a cost of \$50.00. Skinner's rug catalogues

feature full descriptions and photographs with conditions and estimates. It is important to note that upon changing the rug auction schedule, Skinner automatically extended all existing subscriptions to be sure that customers were receiving the same number of catalogs that they had originally paid for.

Although not included in a rug catalog subscription, rugs and carpets are almost always included in our American Furniture & Decorative arts as well as in our European & Continental Furniture & Decorative arts auctions held throughout the year. Customers interested in viewing the rugs in these, or any other sales, can visit our website at www.skinnerinc.com. Skinner's newly revamped site features color images of all rugs with full catalogue descriptions and estimates. Rug customers can also request condition reports and order single catalogues or full subscriptions on the site as well. For more information on subscriptions or any rugs that are offered, contact Skinner at 978-779-6241 or via email at rugs@skinnerinc.com, or visit our web site at www.skinnerinc.com.

Next Meeting

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gion through trade: carpets from Tibet, cotton from India, silk from Yarkand, saddle-covers from Bhutan, brocade from Benaras and China. Ladakh's trade in textiles will also be described here, as well as the various uses of these imported fabrics.

Monisha Ahmed received her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from Oxford University in 1996. The subject of her dissertation was the weaving traditions

amongst the nomadic pastoralists of Rupshu in Eastern Ladakh. This work is being published as *Living Fabric: Weaving among the nomads of Ladakh Himalaya*. At present she is working on a project to document the textile arts of Ladakh, which is funded by a fellowship from the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. She divides her time between Bombay, where she is a visiting lecturer at the University of Mumbai and National Institute of Fashion Technology, and Ladakh, where she is co-founder of the "Ladakh Arts and Multi-cultural Outreach Trust" that works with arts education and women's weaving organizations in the region.



**Wooden packband buckle from the collection of Mike Tschbull
Probably pear or quince
Fars nomads, possibly Qashqa'i
(see article on pp. 4-5)**



Upcoming Rug Events

NERS 2002/3 Meetings:

9/20/02: Monisha Ahmed on Ladakh nomads and their textiles

11/1/02: Natalia Nekrassova on Ersari rugs

12/7/02: Visit to Sackler Prayer-Textile exhibition

2/7/03: Bethany Mendenhall and Charles Lave “Out of the Cedar Chest”

3/14/03: Ekaterina Ermankova on Central-Asian textiles

4/4/03: Bertram Frauenknecht “Recollections of an International Dealer,” joint meeting with Skinner

5/10/03: Annual picnic in Concord.

Auctions:

Christie’s, London, 9/18, 10/17

Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 9/28, 11/16

Sotheby’s, New York, 10/1, 12/3

Sotheby’s, London, 10/16

Nagel, Stuttgart, 11/5

Christie’s, New York, 12/18

Skinner, Boston, 4/5/03.

Conferences:

The Eighth Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America will be woven around the theme, “Silk Roads, Other Roads.” Silk will serve as a primary thread of the conference, while other textile-related topics will be featured in concurrent sessions. The symposium will be held at Smith College in Northampton, MA, 9/26-28/02. For information contact co-chairs: Marjorie Senechal, 413-585-3862, senechal@math.smith.edu or Pam Parmal, 617-369-3707, pparmal@mfa.org; or visit the TSA website: <http://textilesociety.org/>.

The 25th Annual Textile Museum Rug Convention will take place in Washington, DC, 10/18-20/02. This year’s theme is *Origins and Influence: Six Centuries of Design in Anatolian Carpets*. For information, call 202-667-0441 or visit www.textilemuseum.org.

The tenth ICOC is scheduled for 4/17-21/03 in Washington, DC. A brochure will be mailed to you

shortly. Please note that the ICOC’s early registration fee—a considerable saving—is only available until October 1.

Exhibits and Fairs:

The Best Workmanship, the Finest Materials: Prayer Carpets from the Islamic World, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, 485 Broadway, Cambridge, MA, 8/3-12/15. This exhibit brings together prayer carpets from the eastern Islamic world and considers them from two perspectives: the structural design dictated by the weaver’s technique, and the decorative design governed by iconographic and aesthetic traditions. Drawn mainly from the Harvard Museum collection and from important collections in the New England area, the rugs in the exhibition date to the 18th and 19th centuries and represent a fine range of both technique and design. Together, they suggest the variety of aesthetic experiences possible within a single medium and type. The exhibition is organized by Mary McWilliams, Norma Jean Calderwood Curator of Islamic and Later Indian Art, and NERS member Amanda Phillips, curatorial intern, Department of Islamic and Later Indian Art. **There will be a special gallery tour for members of the New England Rug Society on December 7.** More details will be forthcoming.

One Woman, One Weft: Fifty rugs from Tad Runge’s Hamadan exhibition will be shown at Candle in the Wind, an oriental rug store in Brattleboro, VT, 9/6-30/02. For more information call 802-257-0471. See review of the original exhibition on page 3.

Rug Paintings by NERS Member Tom Stocker will be shown at the Copley Society of Boston, 158 Newbury Street, 10/31-11/23/02. Call 617-536-5049 for information. Some of these paintings can also be seen on Tom’s website, www.tomstocker.com.

The Classical Tradition in Anatolian Carpets, at the Textile Museum in Washington DC, is held in conjunction with the Museum’s Rug Convention (see above). The exhibition remains open 9/13/02-2/16/03.



One Woman, One Weft

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three carefully pruned grapevines full of purplish grape bunches. The deeply saturated blue background sets off the vines and fruit giving it a three-dimensional presence.

Reading the book after seeing the exhibition, I enjoyed revisiting the exhibit through the rug pictures and understood more about their structure though Holly's clear technical analyses. But it is the early chapters, often relying on Clara's letters, that distinguish this book from most rug books. I found myself reading and rereading them, thinking about Hamadan village life, the weavers, and the rug trade.

When the weaver sold her rugs, the buyers usually paid a set price for each rug size, irrespective of the quality of the wool or the attractiveness of the design. So it is not surprising that most Hamadan village weavers followed the norm, making mediocre rugs. Yet, as Tad demonstrates, some women

wove rugs of fine wool with pleasing use of color and design that rose far above mediocrity. He writes of those weavers, "In a culture and at a time where a woman's primary role was to work for and serve others, the way she wove a rug may simply have allowed her to please herself." It is these unusual women that Tad celebrates with his book and show. I count Clara Edwards among the unusual women.

Notes: Tad Runge's book *One Women, One Weft* is published and distributed by him (hardbound, 151 pages with 75 color plates and additional detail and archive photographs. Price \$90 plus handling). Tad can be reached by phone at 207-846-9000 or by email at runge@nlis.net. The article *Hamadan Village Rugs, a Reappraisal* was published in the *HALI* 122 (May-June 2002) pages 114-118. Tad's store is an easy two-hour drive from Boston on I-95 in Yarmouth, Maine. For more information on the store or book, see his web site at www.rungerugs.com.



New England Rug Society
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