



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. XI, No. 2 November 1, 2003

www.ne-rugsociety.org

Next Meeting:

Peter Stone on the Development of Tribal and Workshop Design Motifs

Rug motifs vary and devolve over time in moving between urban centers, villages and tribes. They also change in moving between generations of weavers. In this talk, Pete Stone explores and illustrates this variation. He presents generalizations describing the variation and devolution of tribal and village pile rug motifs of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This lecture promises to infuse reason and factual information into a field that is often beset by mere speculation.

Pete is a former President of the Chicago Rug Society. He has occupied the last four years of his retirement with research and work on a book entitled *Tribal and Village Rug Motifs* to be published in 2004 by Thames & Hudson. This talk is based, in part, on his research for this book.

Pete first became involved with oriental rugs in 1978 when he purchased a Caucasian rug badly in need of repair. Since the cost of repairs was prohibitive, he decided to learn rug repair and do the work himself. Although he never completed repairs

Next Meeting Details

Date: Friday, November 14

Time: 7 PM. **Please note early start!**

Place: Skinner, Heritage on the Park,
63 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

Pkng: Street and neighboring lots and garages

on this first acquisition, he was inspired to write a widely respected book on the subject, *Oriental Rug Repair*. He has been a student of oriental rugs ever since. A tangible result of his studies is the publication of his book *Oriental Rugs Lexicon*, an indispensable component of every rug enthusiast's library. He is also the author of *Rugs of the Caucasus: Structure and Design*.

Attendees who arrive early will be able to preview the rugs that will be auctioned off in the following day's Skinner sale.

September Meeting:

John Collins Exhibition and Lecture on South Persian Tribal Rugs

By Jim Adelson

On September 21, John Collins kicked off this year's NERS season with a session that he generously hosted and led in his Newburyport gallery. Mark Hopkins introduced John as, among other things, "a mainstay of support for NERS from the very beginning." And John has been a passionate student of the meeting's topic—Khamseh, Qashqa'i, and Afshar weaving—for even longer. For his talk, John had put many pieces up on display in the gallery, including many from his current inventory and some that he persuaded local collectors to lend back for the exhibit. As part of the event, John had produced and distributed for attendees a spiral-bound

set of notes on the Afshar with about 60 high-quality color illustrations—another element that made this an excellent meeting.

John started his session with a brief ethnohistoric introduction to the three "tribes." The Khamseh take their name from the Persian word for "five," so designated because the Khamseh Federation was formed from five different tribes in the 1860s by the then Shah. The Shah was motivated by his desire to counterbalance the Qashqa'i who were both powerful and resentful of central authority.

The Afshar and Qashqa'i are also mixtures of

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Report on October meeting coming up in next issue



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diverse peoples, though less frequently referred to as federations. The Afshar are the most varied, with both Arab and Turkic peoples in the group. In turn, Afshars intermarried with Persian villagers, who then labelled themselves Afshars, leading to an even more heterogeneous tribe. The Afshars, like the other tribes, were sometimes forcibly moved around within the country as part of government efforts to control their power or balance that of other groups.

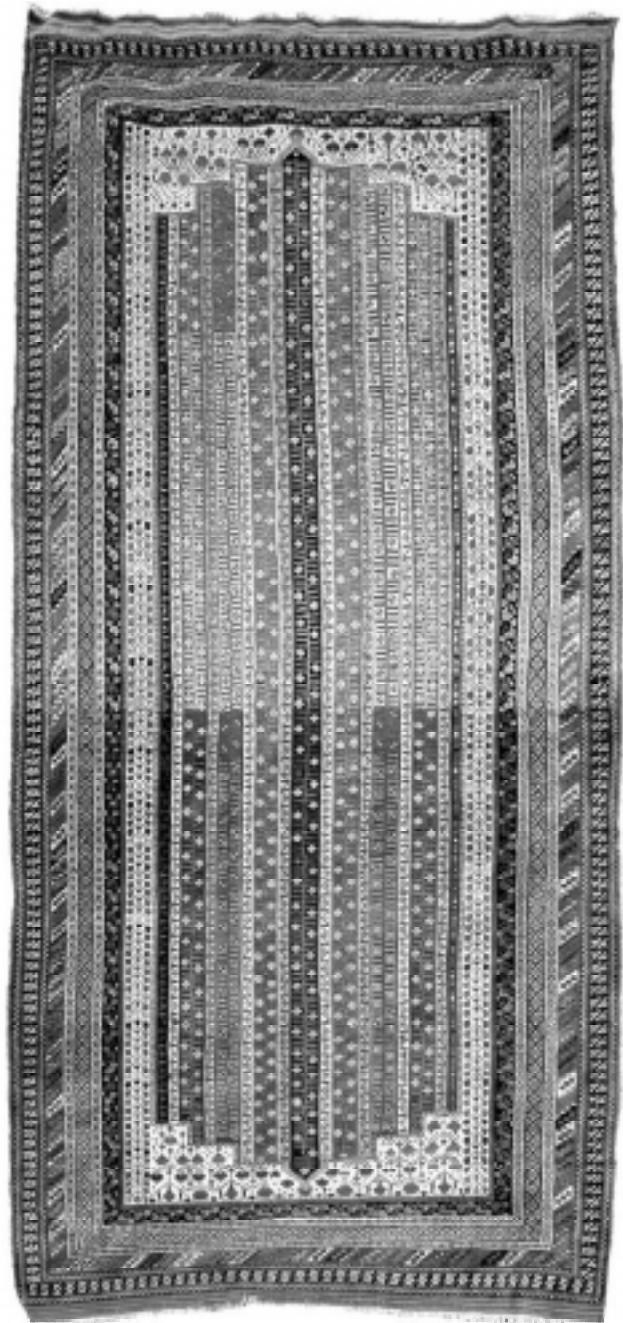
While the Afshar are the most diverse ethnically, their weaving has the most structural consistency. Afshar weavers usually use ivory woolen warps and two-shoot wefts, typically colored orange or red. They lavish attention on the end finishes which take many different forms, starting from a simple, though rare, plain red kilim. Moving up one level from this most basic end finish is the use of extra weft designs to decorate the kilim ends. Fancier pieces have a lengthier kilim end done in a striped pattern or supplementary weft design (in contrast to the Qashqa'i, who sometimes use complementary weft brocade). Some pieces use twining techniques, and some have so much end finish decoration that an entire end panel gets created for it. The warps themselves are sometimes handled decoratively, with groups of warps twined together into long braids. Some pieces combine several of these end treatments: John showed an example with twill finish and with supplementary weft through the middle of the end finish as well. These end finishes are not only very decorative—they're also very durable.

Afshar weavings have other known variations. Afshars use one of several side finishes, from the simplest with two groups of warps wrapped in red, to blocks of color in the warp wrapping—sometimes with random size and choice of color, and other times with two colors alternating. Afshars most frequently use the symmetric knot, although there are examples with asymmetric knotting. Most pieces are woven with a knot count between 80 and 120 knots per square inch, though there are some more finely wo-

ven examples that get to 150 kpsi or even higher.

John pointed out that many Afshar designs have an urban basis. The boteh, the vase, and other popular Afshar designs were used in Persian city weav-

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Afshar rug, third quarter 19th C, 6'x13'



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ing. But not all of the design vocabulary comes from an urban setting.

The ethnic heritage of the Afshars also affected their choice of weaving format. From their Turkic background, the Afshars wove a lot of pieces in the *chaval* (rectangular bag) format, while other South Persian tribes concentrated more heavily on the *khordjin* (square bag) format. John also talked about a puzzling small square format, approximately three feet by three feet; these pieces are typically more finely woven. He indicated that he'd been researching, discussing, and speculating about the purpose of this format for some time, including one hypothesis that these pieces were *sofrehs* (eating cloths), but very fine pile didn't seem a logical choice for such a use. According to John, at a recent ACOR conference the Persian author and scholar Parviz

Tanavoli said that, from his research, these pieces were used as seat carpets for distinguished guests.

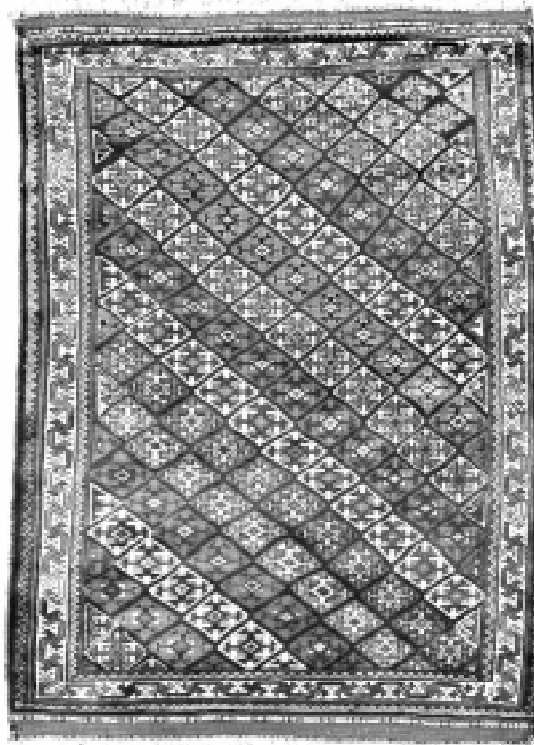
John moved on to a similar summary of *Khamseh* weaving. *Khamseh* pieces are usually woven on dark woolen warps (where the *Qashqa'i* usually used ivory woolen warps). Most *Khamseh* pieces are symmetrically knotted with wool wefts that are brown or brown and dark red. Checkerboard patterns are commonly used in the end finishes. The design vocabulary also draws on urban motifs, such as *botehs* and floral medallions. The designs can be particularly sophisticated, such as feathered *botehs* evolved from Kerman shawl designs, or the so-called "dragon island" *boteh* example on one wall in the gallery. Main carpets were fairly uncommon among the *Khamseh*. John observed that those main carpets must have been made for special purposes or commissions, because the quality of the main carpets is "pretty good" at the very least, and some are spectacular.

Turning to the *Qashqa'i*, John started by describing their weaving as "probably the fanciest production of all the South Persian ... probably related to the fact that they are so wealthy." *Qashqa'i* pieces are typically asymmetrically knotted. The foundation is sometimes silk, but mostly with warps of ivory wool and wefts with two shoots of red wool. Check-

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Khamseh rug, ca 1870, 5'-6"x10'-8"



Qashqa'i rug, ca 1890, 4'-2"x5'-8"



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erboard end finishes, either pile or non-pile, are fairly common. The design vocabulary is also sometimes on the fancy side, with the millefleur design, known from Mughal weaving, being one such example.

Lest our impressions be dominated by urban designs, John also took us through a number of tribal elements in the weaving of these three groups. For the Afshars, a gabbeh influence is sometimes present. John illustrated this point by means of an example with an open, camel-ground field, with a few devices, including botchs, floating in the space. This rug had a complex and varied set of end finishes with multiple stripes of kilim, complementary weft work, and braiding (see picture at right).

On the tribal side of Khamseh weaving, John presented a beautiful piece with many birds and peacocks. The piece had a number of Qashqa'i design elements, but the structure was classic Khamseh—dark warps, paired brown and red wefts. The piece had colorful open half-diamonds at the edge of the field, and four thin, single-color lines of border. John observed that by the time you get to 1900, the Khamseh weavings have less variation and a more amalgamated style, while the older pieces have more variation, and also more resemblance to Qashqa'i weaving.

John also highlighted the Khamseh love of stripes. The Khamseh used vertical stripes predominantly, with horizontal stripes only for borders that appear in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions. The Khamseh delighted in filling the stripes with their favorite border designs. In some cases, the stripes occupy the entire field; sometimes the weaver brings out the three-dimensionality by “floating” a medallion or other elements on top of the stripes (for a great example, John referred to James Opie's book *Tribal Rugs*, plate 11.14, found on page 205).

The more tribal side of Qashqa'i weaving combined some of the elements found in Khamseh weaving with the products of Qashqa'i prosperity. The design repertoire shares several aspects with the



Afshar rug, ca 1900, 4'-2" x 5'-10"

Khamseh, including the extensive use of borders, even to the point where the main field is completely filled with border motifs. Silk, too, appears in these rugs, sometimes in the foundation materials, and sometimes in silk flowers in the field.

After John completed his remarks, the attendees milled around the gallery, examining pieces, talking, and prolonging the enjoyment. Ruggies interested in seeing more of these fascinating weavings should visit the Collins Gallery (for further information call 978-462-7276, e-mail info@bjar.com, or visit website www.bjar.com).

Our sincere thanks to John for organizing, preparing, and delivering this great start to the NERS 2003-2004 season!



The Washington ICOC

Editor's note: because of lack of space in the previous newsletter this report is being printed now. The Tenth International Conference on Oriental Rugs took place in Washington DC on April 17-21 2003.

Textile art of Southwest Persia, an exhibit at ICOC. The ICOC in Washington included at least nine special textile exhibits. Most of the exhibits surveyed a specific textile area and displayed representative pieces, many of which were very memorable. One exhibit, *The Textile Art of Southwest Persia*, curated by John Wertime and Wendel Swan, was a comprehensive survey of the weavings of that area. The sixty exceptional pieces ranged from some very early Southwest Persian rugs to gabbehs, bags, horse covers, animal bands, trappings, and kilims. Among the design elements were very early flower patterns that were reminiscent of Mughal patterns, rugs with people and animals, colorful latch-hook diamonds, and many variations of botchs.

Pieces that left lasting memories were a Khamseh pile saddle piece with two chickens on a dark blue background in an unusual prayer rug format; a Lori soumak bagface with rows of very archaic looking horses in red and blue wool; a marvelous Khamseh pile carpet with mother and child botchs on a white ground; a Bakhtiari kilim with the main border of thirteen unique panels on each side showing the Bakhtiari design vocabulary of animals, people, and geometric figures; a splendid very early pile rug with a center medallion with pendants surrounded by rows of flowering plants; and a Qashqa'i flatwoven chaval whose kilim was sprinkled with colorful latchhook diamonds.

We had seen about half of the pieces in earlier exhibits or illustrated in rug books. Yet it was a pleasure to revisit these great weavings again as well as see others for the first time. Seeing this exhibit is similar to attending ICOC—it was fun to see old friends again and to meet others for the first time.

Ann Nicholas

ICOC Impressions. The ICOC took place in Washington during cherry blossom time; the conference's events thus had tough competition from nature's bounty. The proximity of Washington's zoo

with its famous pandas also proved to be a distraction. Nonetheless, I managed to visit most of the accompanying exhibitions (many, many beautiful rugs!), meet in person various people whom I had known only as contributors to on-line forums, attend the reception at the Uzbek embassy (many beautiful suzani!) and meet the ambassadors of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, covet various pieces on sale at the Carpet Fair, attend a few lectures, and even deliver my own (on design irregularities in Turkmen rugs, what else?). Many of the speakers suffered from malfunctioning projection equipment. One of the main things to be learned from the conference is that slide shows will soon be history and Power Point will rule the world.

Of the talks that I heard, the one that stands out in my mind was delivered by Jürg Rageth of Switzerland. His title was *Radiocarbon Dating in Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies*, but he confined himself to the story of the famous dragon and phoenix fragments including one that surfaced recently and was accepted as genuine by all experts. Carbon dating has confirmed the earlier ones as originating in the 14-16th centuries, but the last one was dated to the 1700-2000 (or something like that) period. Subsequent analysis has shown that its dyes are all synthetic! So much for the experts. Another talk that left an impression was Peter Bichler's *Textiles and Rugs on Etruscan Murals, 800-350 BC*. It made me resolve to visit at the earliest opportunity the Italian sites where these wonderful murals are found!

Yon Bard

Post-ICOC NYC Tour. After the ICOC in Washington, the Hajji Baba Club of New York hosted a two day extension of the conference. The DC ICOC was jam-packed with events, but NY was a whirlwind!

On Monday, April 21, most people attending were at The Roger Williams Hotel on Madison Ave at 31st St. in the rug district. Our first event was held that evening at the Gail Martin Gallery, 310 Riverside Drive at 103rd St. This textile gallery had so many beautiful forms of textile art on the walls

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NERS Member Mini-Profiles

By Ann Nicholas

Editor's note: with this article Ann Nicholas inaugurates a new feature: brief interviews with NERS members, especially relatively new ones. We thank Ed Berkhoff for the accompanying pictures.

Ed Berkhoff

I have many interests, most notably rug collecting! I live in Cambridge. To make enough money to buy rugs I work as a medical writer for the biopharmaceutical industry (Biogen in Kendall Square).

How do you characterize your involvement in rugs/textiles?

I am a collector, not so much a pile-kicker but definitely a rug flipper!

What kinds of rugs/textiles are you most interested in? What is it about them that appeal to you?

I collect Baluch pieces. I suppose it's the simplicity of design and overall penumbral look that attracts me most to these rugs, although I have recently been seeking out those rare and beautiful colorful Baluchis. I have recently also begun to focus on

Baluch rugs utilizing the boteh design, mostly because I love the design. However, I am fascinated by how this urban design "infiltrated" the Baluch nomads; and also how they interpreted it.

How did you first get interested in them?

About ten years ago I entered a rug shop for the first time. Before that I had never even looked at rugs. I bought a modern production Afghan rug that day and the rest is history.

What brought you to the Rug Society and how long have you been a member?

I moved to Massachusetts four years ago and immediately looked up the local rug club since I had been a member of the Triangle Rug Society in North Carolina prior to moving here.

How has being a member influenced you?

Meeting so many knowledgeable people. I have learned so much and my collector's eye has improved so much since joining. Basically, I have become a more discerning collector by joining this group.

Lloyd Kannenberg

I am a physicist on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts, Lowell Campus. Besides teaching and theoretical research, I enjoy studying the history of physics and mathematics.

Interviewer's note: Lloyd's wife, Susan, often attends our meetings. Her interest is in beautiful and useful textiles—notably quilts.

How do you characterize your involvement in rugs/textiles?

You could characterize me as an "enthusiast and accumulator," but on a pretty small scale.

What kinds of rugs/textiles are you most interested in? What is it about them that appeals to you?

I started with Caucasian rugs, but have widened horizons a bit, with a couple of Anatolian pieces and a few bags and bag faces.

How did you first get interested in them?

I was on an exchange with Tbilisi State University



Ed Berkhoff

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NERS Member Mini-Profiles

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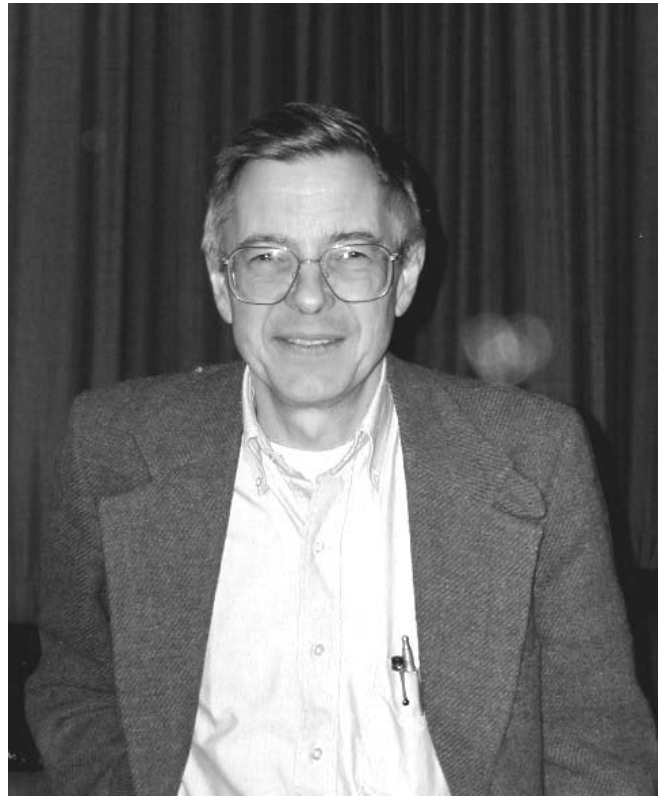
in (then Soviet) Georgia in 1980, saw beautiful things there, and also while on a “komandirovka” to Ashkabad, Tashkent, and Samarkand. We visited the carpet factory in Ashkabad, and also noted that the Lenin Monument there (every Soviet city had a Lenin Monument) was decorated with ceramic tile representations of Tekke carpets!

What brought you to the Rug Society and how long have you been a member?

I heard about NERS when at the MFA for some event about five years ago, and after searching a bit found out how to contact Mark. So it’s really his fault that we became members! We had gone to a couple of “events” at Gregorian Oriental Rugs, but although these were enjoyable, they really didn’t have enough substance to satisfy my interest.

How has being a member influenced you?

Physics is a left-brain activity. Being an NERS member stimulates what’s left of my right brain! And of course I have learned a lot and met some really great people.



Lloyd Kannenberg

The Washington ICOC

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ranging from very, very antique to contemporary. An amazing evening!

Tuesday morning our first destination was the Hispanic Society Museum where we saw Hispano-Moresque carpets. The tour was led by European rug expert Sally Sherrill. From there we drove in four buses to Sotheby’s for a viewing of Marilyn and Marshall Wolf’s special collection of Central Asian Embroideries. The exhibit was beautifully hung and very well lit. A delicious buffet lunch at Sotheby’s was provided by the Wolfs for the over 160 attendees.

Then off to the Met (Metropolitan Museum of Art) where we were able to view Mughal and other rare rugs from the Frick Museum. The tour continued to the Ratti Conservation Department to view more rugs and conservation techniques.

In the evening the Hajji Baba Club Gala Dinner was held at the National Arts Club on Gramercy

Park. Rugs from club members were hanging everywhere, and dinner was elegant and delicious.

On Wednesday, the final day, we were off to the Brooklyn Art Museum where we saw many rarely seen rugs in an exhibition presented by curator Aimee Froom, Amy Poster, and Dr. Walter Denny. In the afternoon it was on to Soho where we first visited Ivelisse & Conan Brooks’ Antiquarius Gallery to view their own Baluch collection. We walked across the street to the new Mark Shilen Gallery to view yet another exhibition. This time it was classic Turkmen main rugs from the Munkacsi collection. Mark served us much food and drink provided again by the Hajji Baba Club.

This addendum to the conference was definitely very exciting! The Hajjis were generous beyond belief. The NY portion of the conference ran like clockwork with barely a glitch.

Kudos to all involved!!!!

Rosalie and Mitch Rudnick



Josephine Powell Kilims Exhibition in Istanbul

By Ronald and Selma Newburgh

While in Istanbul recently, we noticed several articles in the Turkish newspapers on an exhibit of Anatolian kilims in early September. To our delight the exhibit was of some 40 kilims donated to Turkey by Josephine Powell (see the September NERS newsletter).

The collection is truly staggering, both visually and aesthetically. The kilims were shown in three rooms, arranged according to their region of origin—western, central, and eastern Anatolia. The old rule of Turkish weaving was very evident: as one goes east in Anatolia, the palette goes from lighter to deeper, more intense colors. (Compare a Bergama or Milas with a Kurdish piece from Kars.) All the pieces were well displayed, mounted on boards, and labeled intelligently in Turkish and English with information about their structure. There were so many pieces that it is difficult to single out any. However, two Yüncüs with their strong graphics in blue and red and a classic Malatya stay in mind.

The exhibit did more than just show the kilims.

In two of the rooms they had placed actual black goat wool nomadic tents and in the third a yurt. Their walls were covered with kilims, showing their use against wind and cold. Stuffed kilim chuvals were scattered about, so that one saw the kilim as a utilitarian object. The exhibit thus went beyond presenting the kilims as aesthetic objects, out of context. Their importance as household objects, essential to nomadic life, was stressed as well. That everyday objects are made with such beauty says much about their creators.

As a footnote let us describe the site of the exhibit. It was in the Darp-hane, the imperial Ottoman mint, situated in the Topkapi complex between the Archaeological Museum and the church of St. Irene. The rooms still contain some of the machines used for coining that were imported from Birmingham, England, for the Ottoman monetary reform of 1844 under Sultan Abdul Mejid. As a background the old mint is quite charming.

NERS News

New members. We welcome the following additions to our roster: Forrest & Julie Forsythe, Tom & Peggy Simons, Lynn & Peter Smiledge, and Edward Stanley.

NERS on-line bag exhibition. At this time the pieces to be included in the exhibition have been

selected and photographed, and their structures have been analyzed. The introductory essay and many of the plate descriptions remain to be written and put on the website. We hope to launch the exhibition by mid December. We'll send out an e-mail notice when it's ready.

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@netway.com.

NERS 2003/4 Steering Committee:

Mark Hopkins (President)

Jim Adelson

Robert Alimi

Julia Bailey

Yonathan Bard

John Clift

Tom Hannaher

Gillian Richardson

Janet Smith

Jeff Spurr



Upcoming Rug Events

NERS 2003/4 Meetings:

February 20, 2004: Seref Ozen on Central Asian rugs and textiles

March 19: Harald Böhmer on the nomads of Anatolia and their weavings

April 16: Jim Adelson and Yon Bard on Turkmen weavings

May 22: Picnic and show & tell.

Auctions:

Bonhams & Butterfields, San Francisco, 12/17

Christie's, New York, 12/17

Nagel, Stuttgart, 11/4

Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 11/15

Skinner, Boston, 11/15

Sotheby's, New York, 12/2.

Conferences:

ACOR 7, Seattle, WA, 3/25-28/04. All NERS members should have received their information brochures and registration forms by now. This promises to be the greatest ACOR ever, so send in your registration soon—before the conference is filled up! For more information, visit www.acor-rugs.org (you can register on-line, too), or fax your questions to 317-635-4757.

Seminar on Central Asian Rugs & Textiles with Elena Tsareva and Tom Cole, 2/17-18/04 in San Francisco, immediately following the Tribal Arts Show (see below). Elena will discuss the language of the Turkmen weavers as it was passed down from culture to culture. She will also discuss new data on Pazyryk textiles. Tom Cole will discuss Turkmen embroideries. In addition, he will explore a comparative study of certain Baluch weavings, primarily balishts. Hands-on study will include unpublished, world-class examples of Turkmen, Baluch and non-Turkmen Central Asian carpets. Participants are encouraged to bring pieces from their own collec-

tions for further examination and discussion with Elena, Tom, and the other participants. Contact Lesley Gamble at lgamble@ufl.edu for more information.

Exhibitions and Fairs:

100 Weaves of India, a sale and exhibition of endangered textile arts, until November 16th at the Brookline Arts Center, 86 Monmouth Street, Brookline (call 617-566-5715 or visit www.brooklineartscenter.com for information). Organized by a team of Boston-area women with ties to India, the exhibition showcases weavings, embroideries and printed fabrics from different regions of India (see sample on page 10). The proceeds will help support FIRE: Funding Indian Rural Enterprise, an association for encouraging entrepreneurship among rural Indian communities and focusing on women's education and sustainable employment.

The Brookline Art Center also features photographs of India and Indian textiles in their native setting by Don Gurewitz. NERS members Christina Kasica and Basharat Sheikh are among the exhibition's organizers.

San Francisco Tribal and Textile Arts Show, 2/13-15. For information visit www.caskeylees.com.

Tours:

Kathy Green of the Toronto Rug Society is organizing the following Asian tours that might be of interest to textile lovers. The destinations are:

Central Asia, the Mysterious East: Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, 4/25-5/17/04, led by Natalia Nekrassova, our November 2002 meeting speaker

India: Northern Highlights, Rajasthan & Gujarat, 10/26-11/15/04.

For details, call 905-471-7381 or email to 102377.1463@compuserve.com.

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Blouse from the Rabari tribe, *100 Weaves of India* (see page 9)



New England Rug Society
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