



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. XI, No. 4 April 1, 2004

www.ne-rugsociety.org

April Meeting:

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

At our next meeting, two of our resident Turkomaniacs will share their enthusiasm for the uniquely beautiful weavings produced by the Turkmen tribeswomen in their arid Central Asian surroundings. The presentation will start with a brief historical and geographical introduction. The “matrix,” i.e., the two-way classification of Turkmen weavings by tribe and by function will be discussed, followed by comments on the origin, evolution, and application of design elements, as well as general remarks on design creativity, collecting and other topics. Accompanying the talk, Jim and Yon will show selected pieces from their collections—chosen for their beauty and rarity—to illustrate points made in the lecture. Finally, pieces brought by attendees (limit of two per person, please!) will be examined and commented upon.

Both Jim and Yon are long-standing members of NERS and have been serving on its Steering Committee for several years. Jim joined NERS relatively early on, and moved the NERS newsletter from its initial, simple notes format to *Beyond the Fringe*. Yon, a retired computer scientist, is the present editor. Jim became interested in Turkmen weavings in the late 1980s, but has also collected a variety of

May Meeting: Picnic, Show & Tell, and Moth Market

On Saturday, May 22, our annual Show & Tell meeting will get underway at noon, starting with a picnic in a delightful outdoor setting. It will again take place in a finished old barn situated on an expanse of rural acreage adjacent to the Concord River in Concord, MA. It'll be a great setting, rain or shine. Here's how it will work:

Bring your own picnic. Pack up your own munchies, and we'll provide the beverages, including soft drinks, coffee, tea, beer, and wine. If you can, bring a blanket or a lawnchair or two to make things comfortable. We'll provide tables and chairs.

Next Meeting Details

Date: Friday, April 16

Time: 7:30PM

Place: Armenian Library and Museum,
65 Main Street, Watertown

Directions:

Go to Watertown Square (out-of-towners, get off the Mass Pike at exit 17 and follow the signs.) Take Main Street (Rte. 20) westbound (left turn if coming from the Pike). The first light is Church Street, and the Museum is on the righthand corner.

Parking:

Go right on Church Street and into the municipal lot on the right. Most meters are free after 6PM, but check to make sure!

other pieces along the way. Yon started collecting rugs upon his retirement in 1991. At first he inclined towards Caucasians but soon found the Turkmen more appealing. He has addressed both the NERS and the ICOC on the topic of “Design irregularities in Turkmen weavings.”

Participate in our moth market. We are inviting our members, dealers or not, to bring a few things for sale, and we'll hold our own small informal flea market (moth market in ruggie terms). In case of inclement weather, we'll move things indoors.

Share up to two of your treasures. Please limit yourself to two pieces for the Show & Tell session. That way we'll keep the event from becoming an overly-long marathon. **In addition, if some of your pieces are in our on-line bag exhibition, please bring them so we can see them in the wool!**

See directions on page 11.



February Meeting: Seref Özen on What's New in Istanbul

By Jim Adelson

On February 20th, Turkish academic-turned-rug-dealer Seref Özen spoke to a sizeable NERS audience about the Istanbul market and the vast array of new and fascinating Central Asian things to pass through it since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Seref's illustrations were augmented by the rich body of weavings brought in by NERS members for the show & tell portion of the evening.

Seref began his talk with what he characterized as "a short history of Central Asia." He commented that the region had a very long history, and that "the more you study, the less you feel you know." Pazyryk, site of the oldest known pile weaving (5th century BC), is located in the region. Later, Alexander the Great passed through Central Asia, adding Hellenic culture to the mix. There were many wars in the area ranging from those on a vast international scale to local tribal fights. Genghis Khan swept through the entire area in the 13th century, and his brutality is legendary. Timur, by contrast, remains a popular figure, though he was almost as brutal as Genghis Khan. However he liked artists and enlisted them in his service. Throughout history, many empires have coveted Central Asia. Most recently, the Russian empire took control in the 19th century and closed off most of it to the West in the 20th century.

As the Soviet Union dissolved, the outflow of people and textiles began. Seref commented that the Azerbaijanis were the first to make their way to Istanbul. Uzbeks came next. At that time, the border guards didn't really know textiles, only "Bukhara rugs" (Turkmen pile weavings). In some cases, the refugees literally came through Customs with rugs wrapped around their bodies. Beyond the Turkmen weavings, very little had been published—there was only one book on Uzbek weaving. This upsurge in supply prompted Seref to leave teaching and devote his full energies to traveling in Central Asia and ultimately to rug and textile dealing.

The great outpouring of Central Asian weavings began to present rug aficionados in Istanbul with new types they had never seen before, and with new information on types that had been misattributed pre-

viously. Seref started his slides with a Memling-Gul rug—this type used to be labeled Kirghiz or Karakalpak, but is now believed to be Uzbek. This design is used by a multitude of tribes over a wide geographical area.

Seref went on to show a large number of slides—many of pieces that originally bewildered those in Istanbul and elsewhere who were trying to make sense of them. Over the years since the torrent of Central Asian weavings first hit the shores of the Bosphorus, ruggies have put together many different "clues" to lead to the present attributions. Seref did not lay out a comprehensive framework for attribution, or even give a strong set of characteristics associated with a particular set of weavings, but he did cover some of the many elements that have proven useful to those studying the weavings.

Design repertoire, while fascinating, is not very definitive for these weavings. Certain design elements are shared across many groups, such as the Tauk Nauska gul, which appears in many Turkmen and non-Turkmen Central Asian weavings. In this case, Seref stressed that one rendition may be different from another; he had a piece that he labeled Uzbek, noting that the guls were particularly large, and that the animals within the gul were drawn in a particular way. Also, a number of designs cross different media, and may cross tribes in the process. Seref showed another piece that he attributed to Uzbek weavers in spite of a design drawn from Kirghiz reed screens.

Structure is a useful dimension to consider as well, and there are certainly some differences from one group to another. For example, Kirghiz pile weavings are more likely to be single-wafted. Or, to pick a non-pile example, Kirghiz felt is typically thicker than Uzbek felt. But if there is a consistent association of structure with weaving groups, like those for most Turkmen pile weavings, it either has not yet emerged or Seref didn't articulate it that way.

Another useful distinguishing element for attribution is the weaving format. In a number of cases,

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February Meeting: Seref Özen on What's New in Istanbul

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Seref ruled out a particular group as the source for a weaving, commenting that the group did not tend to weave in that particular format. For example, a large botteh rug, once likely to have been labeled Karakalpak, was more likely Uzbek, because in Seref's experience, the Karakalpak only wove small pieces. One should be careful, though, about interpreting the weaving formats too strictly. For example, "bokches," a kind of pouch that is sometimes believed to have served as a Koran bag, were (according to weavers that Seref had talked to) used as jewelry bags, or even to carry bread.

Of course, the most direct form of attribution is to ask either the weavers or the pickers where or by whom pieces were woven. These sources aren't always reliable, but Seref related one humorous story where he and George O'Bannon had a coat that they believed to be Chodor, an opinion that was confirmed when they separately asked a Tekke and a Yomud woman in Ashkabad about the piece's origin, and each woman quickly characterized the piece as "Chodor dung."

The pieces that members brought for the show & tell reflected the great variety—most Central Asian but a few other origins as well—that have passed

through Istanbul on their way to the West. Turkmen weavings were well represented, with an Ersari/middle Amu Darya trapping, a Beshir trapping or torba fragment, a Tekke chirpy fragment, a tent band (most likely also Tekke), a Tekke torba fragment, a Yomud camel knee cover, an Arabatchi chuval, and a piece whose Tekke attribution was easier to arrive at than any definitive idea of its function. Non-Turkmen Central Asian examples included several suzanis that Seref believed were from Samarkand; a number of Lakai objects such as several mirror covers, a number of belts, and a pair of cross-stitched silk boots; and a couple of Uzbek main carpet fragments. There were also pieces that had originated much closer to Istanbul, including 18th-century Ottoman embroideries and covers, a couple of Melas rugs, a central Anatolian prayer rug, and a Shahsavan mafrash end panel. The terrific assortment for the show & tell was a welcome reminder that our members' collections are a fabulous resource for almost any weaving topic.

Our thanks to Seref for all of his efforts over the years to increase our understanding and our access to these pieces from Central Asia, and for his willingness to share both thoughts and samples half-way across the world in New England!



Seref is discussing Arabatchi chuval held by Mark Hopkins and Len Soltzberg (left)

Mark Hopkins is holding up an Ottoman embroidery (right)





Along the Silk Road by Sewing Machine By Susan McCraw

Editor's note: I met Susan McCraw, a talented art-quilt maker who lives in Belmont, MA, at a recent show where some of her creations were exhibited. For reasons that should become obvious I thought that our readers would be interested in the story behind these quilts, and she graciously consented to write it up. More of her quilts will be exhibited throughout the month of June at the Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street, Newton, MA.

The accompanying illustrations (see next page) are best seen in color, which you can get in the on-line (www.ne-rugsociety.org) version of this Newsletter.

Opening an issue of *HALI* changed my life. I first saw it on a weekend visit to a friend in 1993, and came home resolved to re-invent myself. I resigned my partnership in a large Boston law firm and became a fabric artist. My primary inspiration comes from antique and modern rugs and other weavings made from Africa through the Middle East, Central Asia, the Far East and the Pacific.

For several years I studied the images in my carefully preserved issues of *HALI* and in rug books from the Harvard Art Library, building a mental vocabulary of design that I could draw upon for my art. I wanted to create something fresh that would carry the flavor of tribal works without simply recapitulating them.

A “eureka” moment arrived when I realized that in order to bring those images to bear on my work in an effective way, I would have to cut them out of *HALI*'s pages and reorganize them not by place or time of origin, but by their fundamental visual characteristics. Now I have loose-leaf binders full of vinyl pockets labeled “zigzags,” “parmakli,” “soffreh,” “checkerboards,” and the like. West African resist-dyes snuggle up against gabbehs, Middle Atlas rugs and Tibetan thanka. How better to see the truth of the fundamental connectedness of indigenous arts?

I am creating in modern fabrics—some hand-dyed, some commercially produced here or in Ja-

pan, Africa or Indonesia—tributes to the textile art heritage of many cultures. My medium is fabric collage. My works are “sandwiches” composed of layers of cut-out fabric applique, a thin cotton batting, and a backing of uncut fabric. The top surface is embellished with embroidery and with lines stitched through all of the layers. The stitching creates a relief design on the surface of the work, and traces one or more secondary motifs over the applique.

A sampling of my work over the last five years includes:

“**Glory,**” a treatment in bright hues of a typical sort of Tibetan rug, composed of horizontal stripes accented with motifs that resemble the “thunderbird” shapes one sees in Native American textiles;

“**Ancient Icons,**” a checkerboard design consisting in part of cross and diamond shapes from a Caucasian bagface, and in part of stepped triangles similar to those in pre-Columbian weavings;

“**Karabagh,**” a rendition of the design of a Karabagh khorjin, featuring “tree of life” or “stupa” shapes on a dark background;

“**Vessel,**” a stylized female “arms akimbo” figure against a checkerboard background of many colors from a southwest Persian gabbeh; and

“**Calligraffiti,**” a piece featuring patterns resembling Ersari motifs, rendered as the calligraphic decoration that appears on pieces from both Islamic and Far Eastern cultures.

I love what I'm doing now. I've learned the geography and history of what was, to me, a vast terra incognita. I've studied art history, archaeology and ethnography. I've become fascinated with the infinite variety that “simple” people have created over generations. I know that in cutting out the pictures I've destroyed my *HALI* magazines' (sometimes considerable) value. But doing so has made my new pursuit possible and enriched my life enormously.

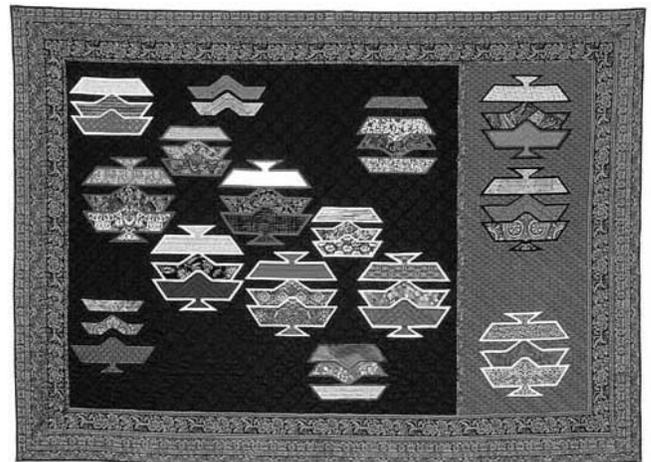
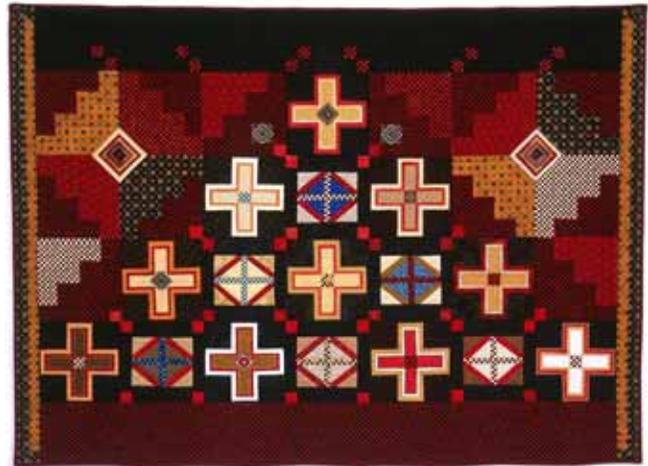
A year ago my friend and host of 1993 gave me his entire collection of *HALI*, all the way back to Issue No. 2. I see that not only as generous friendship, but as virtue rewarded.



Susan McCraw's Quilts



Calligraffiti (above), *Vessel* (below)



From top: *Glory*, *Ancient Icons*, *Karabagh*



My Year in Turkey By Amanda Phillips

I spent a year in Turkey, from fall of 2002 to fall of 2003, on a Fulbright Fellowship. My project focused on the group of so-called Ottoman kilims (Belkis Balpınar and Udo Hirsch; *Flatweaves of the Vakıflar Museum, Istanbul*. Wesel, Germany: 1982. Plates 112-119), and their links to village weavings from the late 18th and 19th centuries. I had hoped to examine the objects myself, and identify other kilims, and perhaps other types of weavings, that could be linked to this group by motif or structure. In creating a larger and more diverse subset of court-influenced kilims, I hoped to trace motif mutations, flux in format and material, and to suggest patterns in trade and in cultural and economic influence.

As most Turkish-textile enthusiasts know, the kilim section of the Vakıflar Museum (located below the Sultanahmet Mosque) has been closed for almost fifteen years. To the best of my knowledge, no one has seen the kilims during this time. The museum did not make an exception for me, despite my highly official research permit, letters of introduction and permission, and documents from the Fulbright Commission. I resorted to sitting for hours in the chilly vestibule of the museum, imbibing endless gallons of sweet tea, and providing several kilos of chocolate-covered Turkish delight to the guards. Eventually, during my last month in Istanbul, I was permitted to go through the inventory records. As there are no computers at the museum, I sat in the director's office with an enormous ledger on my lap, under the watchful eyes of the ubiquitous Atatürk. The ledger contained not only a short description of each object, but a photo. While the most striking of these kilims are well known, there are some that remain unpublished. The museum never did relent, and I had equal difficulties at the Ankara Ethnographic Museum, which has excellent and mostly unpublished holdings, and at the ethnographic museum in Erzurum. Happily, museums were not my

only resource.

The most successful aspect of my time in Istanbul was simply the chance to talk to local experts. I spoke most often with Josephine Powell, who was able to provide me with photos and her opinions about possibilities of geographical origin. She was also kind enough to let me use her extensive library, and to introduce me to other experts. Dealers, curators and collectors were also generous with their time and attention. Coincidence played a large role: in Sivas, a friend's uncle showed me a photo of a carpet, unpublished, which was located in museum storage; and, by chance, I arrived in the town of Bayburt during a crafts fair and saw some old kilims on temporary display at the city hall.

I traveled the northeast to look for any kilims that might remain in local ethnographic museums. Although there were suggestions that part of the latter group was manufactured in the mountains of the central Black Sea coast, I was unable to confirm this. Traveling to Susehri, Kars, Trabzon, Sivas, Divriği and other smaller towns required working knowledge of Turkish, a willingness to endure long and uncomfortable bus rides, and lodgings of dubious quality.

Despite setbacks, and the occasional outright failure, I emerged from my year with a critical mass of examples from court and court-influenced looms. Although it is vexing that I have no publishable photos, and in many cases incomplete structural information, I did find, buried in the inventory records two very large-scale kilims with floral repeat pattern motifs. These, I believe, provide a partial answer to the puzzle as to why the phenomenon of the Ottoman kilim seems to emerge ex-nihilo, and to disappear equally mysteriously. And someday, perhaps, when the kilim portion of the Vakıflar Museum opens again, we will all be surprised at the treasures therein. Inshallah.

We are exploring the possibility and the logistics of producing our fabulous on-line bag exhibition in hard copy. We are planning to have a few sample pages for your review at the May picnic



NERS Member Mini-Profiles By Ann Nicholas

Ralph Bradburd

I am a professor of Economics at Williams College in Western Massachusetts.

How do you characterize your involvement in rugs/textiles?

I'm what I call a collector manqué, meaning that I'm about as fanatically keen on rugs as one can be, and far more than one should be. I have a collection with a few nice pieces in it, but I don't have the money to put together the collection that I would really like to have. I realize, of course, that nobody ever has the collection he or she would like to have, but I think most collectors with limited means will understand what I mean.

What kinds of rugs are you most interested in and why do they appeal to you?

I collect mainly Turkmen pile weavings, but I'll also buy Baluch or Turkish or other tribal pieces. Tribal bags/rugs are appealing for many reasons. First and foremost is that the good ones are visually arresting; they embody a distillation of refined design sense and combine this with the personal and quirky touches that derive from both the "field conditions" in which they were woven and the personalities of the women who wove them, and which give them character, individuality, and humanity. Second, great rugs have a wonderful feel to them—maybe there is some moth DNA in my genetic material. Last, of course, is the thrill of the chase. As my close friend and rug mentor, Alan Varteresian, once said to me, "It's not having the rug. It's not buying the rug. It's FINDING the rug."

How did you first get interested in rugs?

I bought my first rug at 19 while bumming around in North Africa. I thought I had bought an ancient treasure in the bazaar—in fact, it was about six months old. I made similar mistakes in Turkey and Iran several years later. But after some time my wife and I found a great Senneh kilim at an estate sale in Vermont for which we paid \$50. After that, I was hooked. I began reading about rugs, going to auctions, hanging out in rug stores and setting out on the road to ruin.



How did you get involved with the Rug Society?

I've been a member for long enough not to remember how I first joined. Being a member has forced me to learn to drive long distances when I am very tired. But the big benefits are: 1) the opportunity to learn from other people who know so much about rugs; 2) meeting very nice, very interesting people (some might say "weird" or "obsessed", but what do they know?); and 3) having the opportunity to get my hands on a lot of great rugs during meetings. The big drawback, of course, is that seeing all the great rugs that other people have makes you want to have more and better and older (and still older) rugs yourself. It's pretty easy to lose your sense of proportion.

Bob Alimi

I live in Westborough, MA, with my wife and 13 year old son. I work as a computer engineer for Fidelity Investments. In addition to learning about rugs, my interests include playing golf and listening to jazz.

How do you characterize your involvement in rugs/textiles?

I'd say that, since joining the rug society, I've turned the corner from being an enthusiast to being

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NERS Member Mini-Profiles

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a collector. In the past couple of years, the number of pieces I own has actually dwindled as I've gotten rid of more "mistakes" than I have made new purchases. But I feel that my collecting has become more focused, and the quality of the pieces I own has gotten better.

What kinds of rugs/textiles most appeal to you? How did you first get interested in rugs?

I first became interested in rugs when I lived briefly in New Mexico. I enjoyed visiting antique shops and I became interested in Navajo rugs, which all the local shops had in good supply. After I left the Southwest, I started visiting rug shops in hopes of finding some Navajo pieces. I didn't find too many Navajo rugs, but decided that the oriental rugs I kept seeing were actually more interesting, so I started buying oriental rugs and rug books.

I like Kurdish weaving, as well as South Persian pieces—particularly Afshar, but my primary interest is in Baluch weaving. The very first couple of pieces I bought were Baluch, and after dabbling in other areas, I've come full circle. I'm back to buying Baluch pieces.

You have been credited with bringing the NERS into the Internet age and you recently finished getting the NERS bag exhibit up on our web site. You did a great job. How do you envision that the Internet will change rug collecting and exhibiting in the future?

Thanks. I'm very pleased that the website and the online exhibits have been well received. I think the Internet can be an extremely useful tool for sharing information. It's a means for rug enthusiasts who live in more remote parts of the world to communicate with other collectors. It's a good place for novice collectors to see rug photos and read about rugs. Unfortunately, it's not such a great place to buy rugs; I think there's a lot of room for improvement. Dealers are not really taking advantage of the medium as much as they could. EBay can be fun, but for every interesting piece there are thousands of totally uninteresting ones.

I believe that the NERS online exhibits have



been worthwhile contributions to the general rug content that's available online. Although we call them "virtual exhibits," I think of the online shows as being exhibit catalogs for shows that never got hung. It's a good medium because we don't really have to worry about production costs. The downside is that the viewing experience is not quite as satisfying as sitting on the couch with a good rug book. And, of course, nothing can really replace seeing rugs in-the-wool.

How did you get involved with the Rug Society? You've certainly influenced the rug group; how has being a member influenced you?

We moved from Sacramento to Massachusetts in May, 1999. I'm originally from New Hampshire, but had been out of the New England area for quite a few years. Shortly before moving to MA, I came across a reference to NERS on the Internet (TurkoTek, I think). I contacted Mark by email and he invited me to the picnic, which happened to be taking place the week I was moving out from CA.

I've learned a good deal from attending the meetings. I try to make every meeting, but unfortunately I usually end up missing a couple every year. From chatting with various NERS members, I've developed a better understanding of the whole rug subculture—dealers, auction houses, etc, which is sometimes as interesting as the rugs themselves.



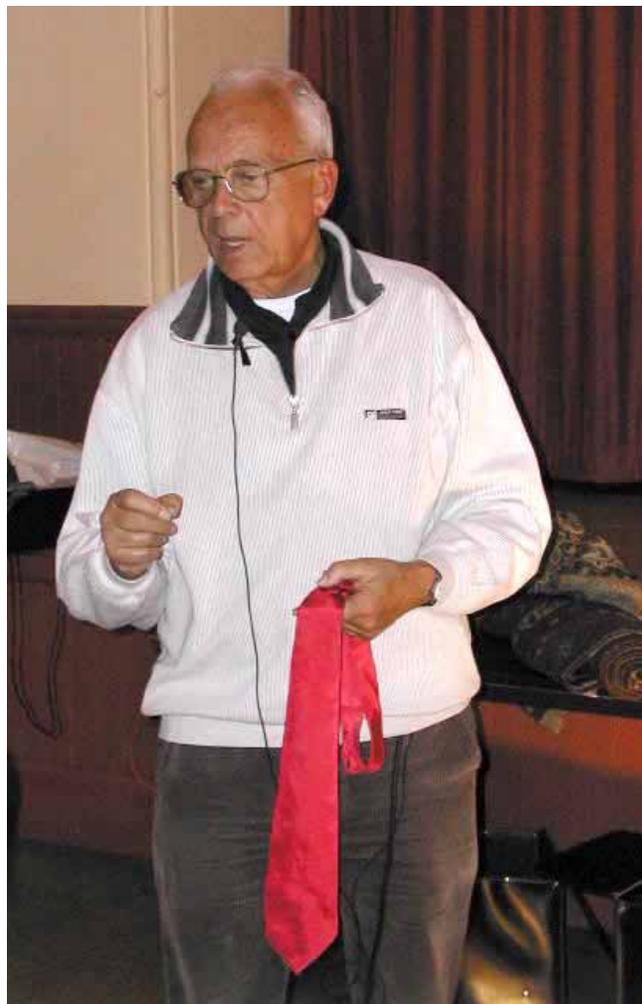
March Meeting: Harald Böhmer on Natural vs. Synthetic Colors and Dyes By Amanda Phillips

Dr. Harald Böhmer presented a concise, thorough, and well-illustrated introduction to the history of vegetable dyes, or *kökboya*, for the fifth meeting of the NERS. Dr. Böhmer is a chemist by training, and has dedicated the last twenty years to researching the history of natural dyes in Anatolia and around the world and to re-introducing these dyes and the attendant processes to weavers in rural Turkey.

Although *kökboya* was the exclusive topic of this discussion, Dr. Böhmer is also known as one of the few individuals with experience researching carpets *in situ*, namely in the Anatolian villages. His book, co-authored with Werner Bruggeman (*Rugs of the Peasants and Nomads of Anatolia*. Munich, 1983), helped launch an interest in nomadic and village weavings in the 1980s. More exciting, perhaps, is his latest book, *Nomads in Anatolia: Their Life and Their Weavings*, based on his experiences traveling in Turkey, often in the company of Josephine Powell. This book will be published this year in German, next year in English.

Dr. Böhmer began his talk with a nod to some of the oldest textiles, and dyes, extant. A photo of Roman ruins at Palmyra and a contemporary textile fragment demonstrated the long history of natural dyeing while emphasizing the strength and longevity of the colors. A series of slides of classical Turkish carpets, from Lottos to a typical Konya yellow ground carpet, showed the fastness of the natural dyes used in both workshop and cottage settings.

These vibrant natural dyes were supplanted by the first group of industrial dyes during the second half of the 19th century. Dr. Böhmer illustrated his point with an anecdote about two carpets from the same mosque in the village of Ürencik: the villagers believed the faded carpet, which had fugitive dyes, to have greater age than an early 19th century carpet which retained its original pigments. The reverse was true; the natural dye had outlasted the commercial. The use of imported industrial dyes meant not only a change in the quality of the carpet, but also a change in the process: knowledge of materials and techniques used in natural dyeing became superflu-



Harald Böhmer holding tie dyed in first batch of kermes

ous, and were lost.

The Bayer factory was among the first to develop commercial dyes; it developed aniline and aniline-based fuchsine in 1858 and 1860 respectively. The latter is familiar to any textile enthusiast: fugitive to light, the initial red-blue color becomes an unattractive mousy gray-brown. Methyl violet, developed in 1861, turns from blue to a silvery gray. Indigo, an expensive and difficult natural dye to use, was isolated and imitated slightly later, as German chemists developed indigo sulfonic. It proved easy to work with, but washed out equally easily. What is

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March Meeting: Harald Böhmer on Natural vs. Synthetic Colors and Dyes

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called camel hair is often nothing more exotic than a green in which the indigo sulfonic acid has faded, leaving only the dun yellow of the *rumex* (dock) species.

Other misadventures in industrial dyes included the toxic ethyl family. Some might judge the use of the hot, bright colors of industrial dyes anachronistic when paired with traditional designs; that this is a collector's conceit is illustrated by a recent photo that Dr. Böhmer showed picturing an ethyl-dyed donkey bag slung over a motorcycle.

The DOBAG (Natural Dye Research and Development) project has been active for twenty years, and could safely be called the impetus for a renewed interest, among both dealers and artisans, in vegetable dyes. The research and administration of the project is done partly under the auspices of the Fine Arts Faculty at Marmara University in Istanbul, where Dr. Böhmer has been a faculty member for more than twenty years, and which received government funding to start the weavers' cooperatives in regions of western Turkey.

The project found early converts but little remaining local knowledge. Though madder had been used for thousands of years, during the 20th century it was known only as a weed in cotton fields. Dr. Böhmer and his wife Renata taught local weavers how to use plant and other products to dye wool; photos of women stirring what appear to be smoking cauldrons demonstrate that dyeing is no longer solely men's work.

Arriving at the correct chemical formula, and then identifying the plant material was only one part of the process. During this research, Dr. Böhmer dispelled a particularly lyric dye myth: saffron is, in fact, not used to dye textiles, as it is expensive, and doesn't wear well. Other formulae proved more elusive: by leaving some madder in a kitchen pot overnight, Josephine Powell discovered that a particularly mysterious and vibrant purple came from mordanting it with iron in cold water—surely a eureka moment, but in a different sort of bath. Dr. Böhmer has also made a more scientific study of

color fastness over time; as the first of the DOBAG carpets are now reaching maturity, his findings will be closely observed.

Although aesthetic concerns are perhaps a primary dictate in the use of natural dye—as Dr. Böhmer says, “With these colors, you cannot make a mistake”—there are also advantages in avoiding the toxicity of industrial dyes. The toxicity of ethyl dyes is one example, and a slide showing protective masks for dyers for sale at the Domotex Fair in Hannover is perhaps more chilling. Despite the fact that some natural dyes may rub off when the wool is over-saturated during dyeing, they are harmless. The Tuareg people of the Atlas Mountains in Algeria, for instance, have been called the Blue People due to the abundance of indigo that rubs from textiles onto their faces and hands.

The incursions of industrial dyes have been less severe in some other parts of the world. In Indonesia, the natural dyeing tradition continued, uninterrupted. In Gujarat, like Turkey, initiatives are underway to promote the use of natural dyes made from native species.

Dr. Böhmer's talk was followed by a lively and informative question & answer session coupled with a show & tell. Several Kurdish carpets provided good examples of the use of cochineal, which became widespread mostly in Eastern Turkey during the second half of the 19th century. Native to Mexico, cochineal was traded through Mediterranean ports such as Aleppo. Harald also explained the difference between cochineal, lac, and kermes, which are all insect derived dyes, but are produced differently, and have different geographical ranges. A tiny and ancient striped coca bag from South America was the sole object from the New World; Dr Böhmer used this bag to explain that different species of the madder plant may be identified and used to pinpoint the geographical origin of the dyestuff. A large silk tie-dye from Uzbekistan proved that a shimmering gold worthy of a disco queen could be, and indeed was, natural: silk takes dye more easily and more thoroughly than wool.

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Upcoming Rug Events

Auctions:

Bonham's, London, 4/27,28

Sotheby's, London, 4/28

Christie's, London, 4/29

Skinner, Boston, 5/8

Bonhams & Butterfields, San Francisco, 5/11

Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 5/15 (including the Pinner Collection of Turkmen rugs)

Nagel, Stuttgart, 5/18

Christie's, New York, 6/30.

Conferences:

ICOC Down Under, 9/16-19, Sydney, Australia

ACOR 8, Boston, 2006!!!

Exhibitions and Fairs:

The LA Ardabil Carpet, until 5/11. Los Angeles County Museum of Art

International Tribal Antiques and Textiles Show, 5/15-17. Park Ave. Armory, New York

Rugs from the Caucasus, until 6/20. Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto.

HALI Fair, 6/3-13, Olympia, London.

Picnic and Show&Tell Details

Date: Saturday, May 22

Time: 12 noon to 4PM rain or shine!

Place: Barn at 418 Monument Street, Concord

Note: \$5 charge for non-members

Directions:

Coming from the East: From Rte. 95 (128) take Rte. 2 west. At the 2nd traffic light where Rte. 2 turns left, continue straight following the signs to Concord Center. Proceed until the Colonial Inn is directly in front of you. Turn right at the Inn onto Monument Street. Proceed over the Concord River bridge. After crossing the river, go past the fourth house on your right (no. 418) and turn into its driveway. Follow the signs for parking.

Do not park along the street!

Coming from the West: From Rte. 2 make the first left turn after Rte. 62, and proceed through Concord Center. Upon reaching the dead end at the Concord green, turn left. Where the road dead ends at the Colonial Inn, turn right onto Monument Street and proceed as above.

We welcome new members Bob Benedict, Sharon Deveney, Arthur Kazianis, and Movses Movsesian

Newsletter contributors and helpers: Yon Bard (editor), Jim Adelson, Dora Bard, Ed Berkhoff (pictures for meeting writeups, Bradburd profile), Mark Hopkins, Susan McCraw, Ann Nicholas, Amanda Phillips, Janet Smith

Comments/contributions/for sale ads to: Yonathan Bard, e-mail doryon@rcn.com

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



March Meeting: Harald Böhmer on Natural vs. Synthetic Colors and Dyes

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It is a predictable irony that Dr. Böhmer's talk was scheduled for the first anniversary of the American invasion of Iraq. In 2003, several tours to the DOBAG cooperatives were cancelled due to the war and its repercussions throughout the Middle East. The Christmas Sale, an annual event at the Crimean Church in Istanbul, was cancelled for 2003 because of the bombings of the nearby British Consulate and death of the British Consul, as well as assaults on two Istanbul synagogues and a British bank. In Indonesia, the local weavers are suffering for similar reasons: the bombing of a resort in Bali has resulted in a precipitous drop in tourists to nearby areas. The continuity of local artistic traditions, and the economic prosperity the resulting product can confer on underdeveloped regions, has always been a goal of DOBAG and projects elsewhere. But it is a goal that cannot be achieved without the unflagging support of the international community, which is sadly susceptible to the vicissitudes of political expediency.

Dr. Böhmer has had great success in bringing educated collectors and consumers together with the educated weavers and dyers; the continuity of this new tradition is well worth preserving, especially in difficult days.

Note: Harald Böhmer's important new book *Koekboya: Natural Dyes and Textiles* is being offered to all the members of Oriental Rug Societies for a special price of \$100 (+\$10 for packaging and shipping), a 25% discount. The book covers the botany, dyeing qualities, and cultural and historic importance of natural vegetable dyes.

If you are interested in natural dyes, want to understand the importance of color (especially in Anatolian carpets), or simply love rugs and textiles, this is the book to have.

To order: send a check or money order for \$110 with your mailing address to:

Samy Rabinovic
P.O.Box 187
Newtown, PA 18940



New England Rug Society
Post Office Box 582, Lincoln, MA 01773



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