



# View from the Fringe

## Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. XVI, No. 2 October 2008

[www.ne-rugsociety.org](http://www.ne-rugsociety.org)

### November Meeting: Daniel Walker on Great Carpets of the Mughals

Classical Indian rugs of the Mughal Empire (1526-1857), ranging in date from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to about 1800, can be counted among the greatest Oriental rugs ever produced. Initially drawing inspiration from Persian models, as did many aspects of Mughal court culture, Indian carpets soon developed a distinctive style of their own. This talk will survey highlights of Indian carpet production, with special emphasis on original contributions made by Indian designers and weavers, who learned to use wool the way painters use pigments.

Daniel Walker has been Director of The Textile Museum in Washington, DC, since May, 2005. He came to Washington from New York City, where he was head of the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for seventeen years and held an endowed chair named for donor Patti Cadby Birch from 1997 to 2005. From 1975 to 1988 he was Curator of Ancient, Near Eastern and Far Eastern Art at the Cincinnati Art Museum. He has degrees from Bowdoin College (A.B. 1967) and Harvard University (A.M. 1973), and his military service included Persian language training and a two-year assignment as an Army officer in Iran.

Over the thirty-three years of his museum career, Mr. Walker has published and lectured widely on diverse topics related to Islamic art, particularly carpets and textiles, and museology. He has personally organized twenty exhibitions, including *Flowers Underfoot: Indian Carpets of the Mughal Era*, named one of the best exhibitions of 1998 by the New York Times, and

#### November Meeting Details

**Date:** Friday, November 14

**Time:** 7:30PM

**Place:** First Parish, Bedford Road, Lincoln

**Note:** Non-members welcomed for \$5 fee

#### Directions:

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

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

#### Parking:

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

*Textiles of Klimt's Vienna*, recently on view at The Textile Museum.



**The Widener Animal Carpet**  
Mughal era, ca. 1590  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, DC

**Note:** Because of the shortness of time, the review of the October 24 meeting will appear in the next issue, around February 1.



## September Meeting: Harald Böhmer on Turkish Nomads Reviewed by Jim Adelson

On September 5<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Harald Böhmer opened this NERS season with a talk on his research on Anatolian nomads, a subject on which he had just published a new book. His talk drew upon field interviews and photographs taken in the past 40 years—in many cases, with the late Josephine Powell, as well as on his own.

Harald set the stage with maps depicting the different major nomad groups in Turkey, and the areas they frequent. Yürük nomads can be found in a number of places in western and central Turkey; Turkmen nomads predominantly in central Turkey; and Kurdish nomads primarily in eastern Turkey.

Harald focused first on the Karakoyunlu nomads. The name means “the tribe of the black sheep.” This group migrates in May to its summer pasture or yayla, at about 2,500 meters in the Taurus Mountains. He showed a picture of a woman warping a kilim, and then another picture of a completed kilim with artificial dyes. In another picture of kilim weaving by this group, you could clearly see a woman using another kilim as a model. Harald commented that the weaving is done from memory, without cartoons. He also showed a picture of a new kilim woven with naturally dyed wool that he had provided to the weaver. Kilims are only woven in the summer.

Another picture displayed a felt carpet on the floor. Felt weaving is an even older technique than either

flatweave or pile weaving. Karakoyunlu felt carpets use only black and white wool. Harald also showed a photo of women rolling material to make a felt carpet, a physically demanding task. In addition to carpets, the Karakoyunlu have other felt objects. For example, another photo captured a Karakoyunlu felt shepherd’s coat. The felt is very practical for such coats, producing warm and waterproof garments. The shepherds can even sleep underneath their felt coats.

Other pictures showed how the pillows and bedding bags were arranged within the tent. Sometimes bedding bag piles were used as dividers within the tent, although Harald commented later that many tents are small and undivided.

Among the Karakoyunlu both men and women spin wool. In another picture, Harald showed a woman pre-

**Continued on page 3**



**Left: Mark Hopkins displaying Harald Böhmer’s book, with Harald looking on**

**Right top: woman weaving a kilim on a vertical loom inside a karakoyunlu tent**

**Right bottom: Joseph Beck and Shahin Afshin-Kia examine a woven band; mafrash in background**







## September Meeting

### Continued from page 2

paring wool for spinning. The Karakoyunlu don't use a carding tool; all the work is done by hand.

Harald showed a photo of a cemetery in the summer pasture, with stones and poles marking the graves. Some of these nomads own concrete houses in their wintering areas. Some have also become vegetable farmers on the south coast of Turkey.

Historically, the Karakoyunlu migrated mainly in the region between Van and Tabriz. The Akkoyunlu ("the tribe of the white sheep") operated in the area between Van and Diyarbakir, further to the west. At one time, the Akkoyunlu were the stronger tribe, but were eventually surpassed by the Karakoyunlu.

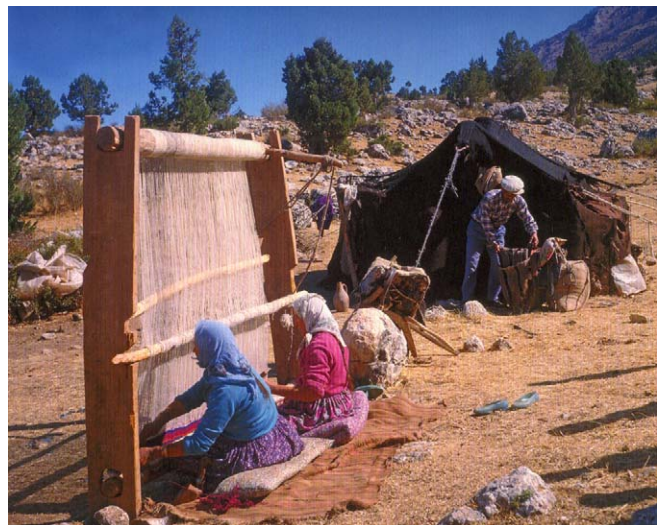
Focusing on the migration itself, Harald showed a picture of a camel, with a felt pad filled with straw, and loaded with saddlebags. In another picture, the camel's load was covered with a plain kilim, held on by bands. He had another picture of a family in migration, with the oldest unmarried girl walking at the front with her mother. Men and boys can sometimes ride horses in the migration. Babies and younger children ride at the top of the piles on the camel. Small babies are sometimes transported in felt carriers by the mother.

Harald had a photo with a goat hair weaving on the floor. Another picture showed a felt carpet which had been purchased in Konya. This Konya felt had a different design and a larger color palette than the nomads' own felt carpets. In the winter nomads weave outdoors when it's not too cold. In summer, they also weave bands, but without the use of a loom, which they leave in their

winter quarters.

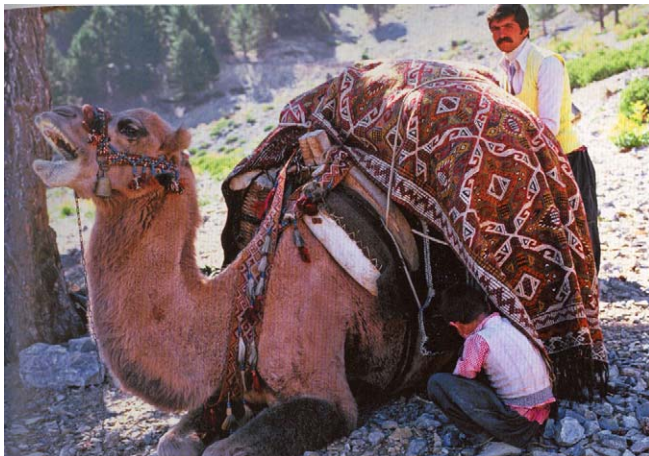
Harald used additional pictures to illustrate the process of setting up the tent. First, the nomads line up their storage sacks that will be within the tent. In the photo, there were both decorated and undecorated chuvals, plus bedding bags. Next, they put up the tent roof, with poles to support it. Then they fix sidewalls to the roof with wooden needles, to complete the structure.

**Continued on page 4**



**Top: kilims woven by family members in the Anamas Yayla over ten years displayed on balcony of their house near Antalya**

**Bottom: kilim weaving in front of a Karatekeli Yürük tent**



**Left: camel from a caravan that had just returned from the Yayla, decorated with a brocade cover and woven bands**





## September Meeting

### Continued from page 3

By contrast, other tribal groups have different styles of tents. The Yürüks have tunnel tents—a different and smaller construction. Turkmen nomads use round yurts in Anatolia, similar to the tents used by Central Asian Turkmen. Harald showed a picture of the wooden yurt frame. He told a story about how he and Josephine Powell had bought a wooden yurt frame, and put it on top of her VW bus. They were stopped in Ankara and asked what the frame was for, to which Josephine replied “camping,” and the police let them through.

Kurds had very large tents, up to 20 meters long. The tents had felt roofs, with reed screens serving as exterior walls all around, and woven dividers inside. Kurds had flocks of primarily brown sheep. The Kurds have been restricted in their migration by the Turkish government. In settled areas, the Kurds occupy stone houses. They still weave storage bags, even if they don't need to use them for migration.

All the migrating tribes are Muslim, but Harald did not find them to be very observant. Only the men prayed, and did so infrequently. The nomads continue some shamanistic practices, but in some cases these have been forbidden by the government.

After completing his talk, Harald commented on a number of Anatolian weavings brought by NERS members. Some of the pieces were nomad weavings, while others came from village weaving areas. There were several yastiks (pillow covers), a format used in nomadic as well as settled settings; a grain sack face of mixed technique, both soumak and split-weave tapestry; several kilims; and a band used inside the yurt, for both structural and decorative purposes, like the Turkmen tent band. Examples of Turkish village weaving included 1) a yellow-ground Konya carpet with Memling guls, 2) a Melas heybe (saddle bag), 3) a Kirsehir carpet with striped field, and 4) a Kurdish carpet, with high sheen wool.

Our thanks to Harald Böhmer for sharing his re-

search with us, in both narrative and pictorial form!

*Note: some of the pictures accompanying this review are from Böhmer's book "Nomads in Anatolia." The others are by Michael Raysson.*



**Top: long tent of Kurdish tribal leader**

**Middle: large Karakoyunlu kilim with weavers, tent owner, and family**

**Bottom: Harald Böhmer, Gerard Paquin, and Len Soltzberg trying to fathom a mystery kilim**

Newsletter contributors and helpers: Yon Bard (editor), Jim Adelson, Dora Bard, Mark Hopkins, Ann Nicholas, Michael Raysson, Janet Smith.

Comments/contributions/for sale ads to: Yonathan Bard, e-mail [doryon@rcn.com](mailto:doryon@rcn.com)



## Upcoming Rug Events

### Future NERS 2008/9 Meetings:

**Feb. 20:** John Collins on *Persian Bags* (Collins Gallery, Watertown)

**Mar. 27:** Jean Burks on *American Quilts* (First Parish, Lincoln)

**Apr 17:** Raoul Tschebull on *Caucasian Rugs* (ALMA, Watertown)

**May 16:** Picnic and Show & Tell (Gore Place, Waltham).

### Auctions:

**Nagel**, Stuttgart, 11/4

**Sotheby's**, NY, 11/25

**Rippon Boswell**, Wiesbaden, 11/29

**Bonhams**, London, 12/2

**Skinner**, Boston, 12/6

**Grogan**, Dedham, 12/7 (including rugs), 1/12/09

**Christie's**, NY, 12/8.

### Exhibitions and Fairs:

**Oriental Rug Paintings by Tom Stocker**, OK Harris works of Art, New York, 10/18-11/15. Opening reception 10/18 3-5 PM. For more details email [okharris@okharris.com](mailto:okharris@okharris.com).

### Conferences:

**ACOR 9**, St. Louis, 4/30-5/3/2009. Reservations are now being accepted. For information visit [www.acor-rugs.org](http://www.acor-rugs.org) or contact Mark Hopkins at 781-259-9444 or [mopkins@verizon.net](mailto:mopkins@verizon.net).



### WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Submitted by  
Ann Nicholas

A 300 square meter carpet of flowers was recently created at the Grand Place in Brussels, Belgium. Craftsmen arranged it by hand, directly into the cobblestones using more than a million begonia flowers, grass, and tree bark to make the pattern based on a medieval carpet design.

**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, Student \$25. Membership information or renewal forms can be obtained on our website [www.ne-rugsociety.org](http://www.ne-rugsociety.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@verizon.net](mailto:mopkins@verizon.net).

### NERS 2008/9 Steering Committee:

Mark Hopkins (President)

Jim Adelson

Robert Alimi

Julia Bailey

Yonathan Bard

Tom Hannaher

Lloyd Kannenberg

Ann Nicholas

Gillian Richardson

Janet Smith

Jeff Spurr





## Mystery Rug Solicitation for ACOR 9

Dear rug enthusiasts and ACOR registrants,

For ACOR 9 in St. Louis in April 2009, once again I have been asked to chair a Mystery Rug panel, for which I would like to ask your help in making the session as interesting as possible.

I am searching for about 15 “mystery rugs” for the panel to examine and discuss. We are not limited to carpets and rugs. We can discuss any kind of textile from any region or culture.

The “mystery” could be any one or more of the following:

1. Where is it from?
2. Who made it?
3. What is its age?
4. Is it a fake or a reproduction or the real thing?
5. What is the function of the object?
6. Why does the object have its peculiar format?
7. Why is this one considerably different from others from the same people or area?
8. If the piece is a fragment, what did the whole object look like?

Clearly, there are other possibilities. If you own or have seen a rug, bag, textile or other weaving that you have always wondered about, or if you can think of one about which rug collectors generally would have unanswered questions, I’d love to hear about it.

Of course, if the object is beautiful or particularly old, that would enhance the discussion. We hope not to answer questions like: “Why would anyone buy such an ugly rug?”

I would like to have images of all the “mystery” candidates well before April. Please send images or suggestions to me at [wdswan@erols.com](mailto:wdswan@erols.com)

The session is tentatively set for Sunday, May 3, from 11 a.m. until noon. The panel needs to examine all the objects in the morning prior to the session.

Thanks for your help.

Wendel Swan

*Wendel Swan is an officer of the International Conference on Oriental Rugs (ICOC) and a well-known rug collector in the Washington DC area.*



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



### IN THIS ISSUE.....

November meeting	1
September meeting review	2
Upcoming events	5
Where in the world?	5
ACOR 9 mystery rug solicitation	6