



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. IX, No. 5 March 5, 2002

Next Meeting: Al Saulniers on New Opportunities in Moroccan Tribal Weavings

At our next meeting, NERS member Al Saulniers will address the issue of what's "hot" in Moroccan rugs and textiles on several levels:

For the complete neophyte in Moroccan affairs, the lecture will provide a brief overview of the topic covering—among others—urban/rural and Arab/Berber distinctions, socio-economic dimensions of Moroccan weavings, geographical influences on carpets, and tribal differences.

For the more knowledgeable about Moroccan rugs, the lecture will cover the "hottest" topics including: textiles, rugs from recently researched tribes, a return to pre-World War II international decorator items; and the search for prehistoric rug roots.

For those with an investment or economic interest, the lecture will address the recent—since 1995—strong rise in Moroccan carpet and textile prices.

Al has provided us with the following biographical note:

"I am an economist—PhD from the University of Wisconsin with a number of economic and privatization-related books and articles.

"I previously taught at Catholic University in Lima, Peru; National University of Zaire in Kinshasa; and the University of Texas at Austin.

"I lived in Morocco for 12 years as economic adviser to the Moroccan government.

"My wife, Suzanne, and I bought our first Moroccan rugs in 1975; we built up a major collection while living there after 1986; and we began working in the rug-related research area at the suggestion of Wilfried Stanzer prior to the First Marrakech Conference in 1995. In 1997, some of our runners discovered the weavings of the Ait Bou Ichaouen tribe and we have spent much of our time researching and

Next Meeting Details

Date: Friday, March 22

Time: 7:30PM

Place: Bemis Hall, Bedford Road, Lincoln

Note: \$10 guest fee for non-members

Directions:

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

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

Parking:

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

writing about their textiles."

In addition to several articles in *HALI* and *Gereh*, Al and Suzanne have authored a book entitled *Ait Bou Ichaouen, Weavings of a Nomadic Berber Tribe* which is about to be published by Wheatmark Press. Al has also lectured extensively at ICOC and other venues around the world.

Attendees may feel free to bring in any Moroccan rugs or textiles for comment. Items from the Saulniers collection will also be there.

Visit our website at
www.ne-rugsociety.org

ACOR 6 Registrations still accepted!

See page 7 for details



Member Profile: Tom Hannaher By Sheryl Read

Tom Hannaher waited until what he thought was a propitious moment to inform his wife, Ann, about his latest textile purchase, a(nother) pre-Columbian coca bag.

“Hannaher,” Ann said, “don’t make me kill you.”

Although she denies saying anything of the kind, Ann does admit that she enjoys Tom’s textile collecting and even does some collecting of her own. She has several ikebana baskets in her dining room (they have a son who lives in Japan) and collects ceramics from a potter in Red Wing, Minnesota. Ann confesses, however, that it’s Tom who has the real aesthetic sense in the family.

Tom’s love of textiles started with a love of oriental rugs. He had his own advertising agency in the early 1980’s and did all of Tweeter’s advertisements. Tweeter’s ads appealed to the owner of Dean’s Carpets and he asked Tom to create advertising for his carpet store in New Hampshire. Tom wasn’t overly enthusiastic until he spent some time in the store and got a taste for the rugs. After that, he agreed to a half-cash, half-trade compensation deal. “The New York dealers would come up yearly for a big sale and I’d wait until they’d come to have my pick,” he says. One thing led to another and soon Tom was promot-

ing carpets for other retailers and spending hours reading and learning about rugs and textiles. He eventually closed his agency and went to work for Cambridge Soundworks, where he is employed today.

Tom started haunting antique stores in New England but often found that New Jersey dealer Ronnie Newman had been there ahead of him, buying up the good oriental rugs. Tom says, “I finally called him and said I wanted to meet him. I went to visit and that’s where I saw my first pre-Columbian textile. It was a small strip of cloth for \$800 and I was hooked.”

Today Tom collects almost exclusively pre-Columbian pieces and has an extensive collection of coca bags, headbands, tunic fragments and more. He is intrigued by the age and the mystery surrounding these textiles. “There is no written record explaining what these pieces are or where exactly they’re from,” he explains. “I remember reading an article in *HALI* about a couple who collected Impressionist art and oriental rugs. They said they liked the Impressionist art because it reminded them of a familiar lifestyle. They were fascinated by the oriental rugs, on the other hand, because it was a lifestyle with which they weren’t familiar. It’s the unknown, the unfamiliar, that I find so interesting.”

Tom’s collection includes pieces like a Paracas headband fragment from 400 BC; a Nasca band, decorated with hummingbirds, of unknown age; and his favorite piece, a Tihuanaco coca bag dating to 200 AD. He’s got two published pieces, an early Nasca ceremonial sling with bicephalic demons and an Arica coca bag with zoomorphic figures.

His collection has been augmented by the advent of eBay and Tom says he’s still able to find good deals on the Internet. He not only buys pre-Columbian textiles on the web, he also buys rugs. “I bought the Gabbeh in my hallway on eBay and just bought a Tibetan carpet online.” He suggests buying from dealers that are already known to you to ensure that you know what you’re getting.

He’s also found some good deals at auctions.

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Arica coca bag with warp-faced design of zoomorphic beings, c. 1000-1300AD



Collectors' Fragments Edited by Ann Nicolas

Introduction: This is the first edition of an occasional new column for the newsletter. It will contain stories from NERS members about collecting. We will garner these stories via short interviews at meetings and contributions from the members. Share your experiences via email (ann.nicholas@bms.com) or bring them to our meeting. We will use the same question for the next newsletter and the deadline for contributions is March 22. We're looking forward to contributions from our many newer members as well as the old-timers.

QUESTION: Can you share a memorable experience that influenced you in collecting rugs or textiles?

We built a new house in 1983-1984, and had always planned to put a couple of oriental rugs on the floor—neither of us had extensive family history with orientals. We looked in several stores, and purchased a Mina Khani Indo-Bijar from a Newton dealer. While looking around, we went to John Collins's shop, where the "hook" was first planted. We observed that, at least for certain choices, antique rugs weren't that much more expensive than new rugs. Within a year, we'd replaced that Indo-Bijar with a real Bijar of the same design, and much more interesting color and border. We also realized the importance of where and how to shop when we saw a rug with John Collins and that same rug at the Newton dealer a few weeks later for twice the price!

Jim Adelson

We hired a cab for the entire first day in Vienna attending the 1986 ICOC. The driver made our efforts to visit all the rug dealers much easier. One dealer had a beautiful, but "pricey", Moghan reverse soumak in the shape of a Mafrash side panel.

The dealer said, intimidating us, that two foreign dealers were interested in it and were coming back to buy it, AND...."Here they come now!!" As Arky Robbins (San Francisco) and Clive Loveless

(London), good friends of ours, came in the door, we quickly said, "We'll buy it!" leaving the two foreign dealers stunned.

We've never regretted our coup. He who hesitates...

Mitch and Rosalie Rudnick

In 1972, I was a student travelling in the Middle East. Rugs, textiles and collecting were the furthest things from my mind, yet I was looking for something memorable that I could bring back to family and close friends from my travels. Wandering through the Isfahani bazaar one day, I stumbled across a little shop selling antiques. In one corner sat a huge pile of textiles. I looked at a couple and quickly found myself sitting with the young proprietor on little stools, going through them all. Those that interested me stayed on my lap, the others ended up in a pile to my right. We haggled over each one in turn, a number which eventually totaled 24, ranging up to about 6 x 10 feet in size, I being first treated to chai, later to a hookah as things got serious. The total was somewhat beyond my reach. Rather than discard a couple, I initiated one last haggle. I purchased them all (18th & 19th c. pieces) for the grand sum of \$120.00, equal exactly to my average monthly expenditure for food, lodging, travel, etc. on that trip. I was rewarded by the happy vendor to a chelo kebab lunch. I had to sell every piece of clothing I did not absolutely require in the Shirazi bazaar in order to carry these textiles in my large orange backpack, the smaller pieces placed at the bottom, the larger rolled up in a large plastic bag that rested on top of the pack.

When people put me up in their homes as I traveled, I would present them with a textile; I finally freed myself from the rest by sending them home from Germany months later. I still own a couple of them and they clearly prefigured an ardent interest that wouldn't overtake me for another seven years.

Jeff Spurr

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The San Francisco Tribal Arts Fair by Judy Smith

The San Francisco Tribal Arts Fair every February is one of my favorite “rugging” experiences. Actually it’s more about textiles, jewelry, basketry, beadwork,...., all kinds of functional items expressing the traditions and needs of peoples around the world.

The show “feels” very local and very cosmopolitan at the same time. There is a warm spirit among the dealers and the visitors. Of the 87 exhibitors 23 were from San Francisco and 23 from overseas. Among the locals, Andres Moraga had two stunning Moroccan shawls similar to the cover of the recent *HALLI*; Steve Berger had his usual assortment of pre-Columbian intricately woven textiles; Vicki Shiba specializes in Asian pieces including a Tibetan silk 18th century patchwork square that is now hanging in my son and daughter-in-law’s house.

Five dealers were from Italy, including Alberto Levi who had a wide assortment of excellent rugs and a very unusual complete Gabbeh bag with long, wonderful wool and a pattern of triangle shapes in handsome colors. The two Turks, Seref and Mehmet, had their usual outstanding display of primitive

Kaitags, Central Asian suzanis and ikats. John Collins from Newburyport and Nicholas Wright from Williamstown were the only Massachusetts dealers exhibiting.

Cathy Cootner, former head of Rugs and Textiles at the De Young Museum in SF, led a two hour “walk through” of the show before it opened to the public. Her enthusiasm, energy, great knowledge and humor inspired newcomers and serious collectors to open their eyes, minds, hearts (and pocketbooks) to all kinds of great examples of folk art. She extolled the virtues of a Japanese fireman’s robe, a Philippine basket-woven backpack, a Turkmen bracelet with enamelwork now hanging from my sister-in-law’s wrist; an African small carved wooden pole notched to represent a ladder designed to be a protective item; and everything in Sam Coad’s booth. I encourage all of you to hear Cathy speak at ACOR in April.

The second weekend in February 2003—The San Francisco Tribal, Folk and Textile Arts Show will begin again. Be there! You’ll love it.

Collectors’ Fragments

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Early in our collecting career Dora and I went to local auctions and bid on some Caucasians that we liked. There was always a certain dealer present who invariably outbid us. I figured that if we became his customer he might not bid against us so eagerly, so we went to his shop and looked around.

Turned out he didn’t have any satisfactory Caucasians, but he did have a nice Turkmen—the first one I had seen in the flesh. We bought it and I was hooked ever after!

Yon Bard

To be continued in the next newsletter....

Member Profile: Tom Hannaher

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“I was at an American Indian auction preview and coincidentally noticed a bunch of pre-Columbian pottery and textiles that no one was paying attention to. My heart was racing and I tried to get one of the ladies who worked there to keep it behind the counter for me until the auction started! My heart fell, however, when I ran into Andy Weinstein (another pre-Columbian textile collector and former NERS mem-

ber) at the same preview!” In the end, Tom and Andy each got some of the pieces.

Although they have three children (one of whom is still at home), a dog, a cat and a bird, Ann says they can always find room for more beautiful textiles. “It’s really a treat to pull Tom’s collection out and go through it. I always see something I hadn’t noticed before. It’s like looking at it for the first time all over again.”



Last Meeting: Raoul “Mike” Tschbull on Kazak Rugs

By Jim Adelson

On March 1st, eighty NERS and Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) members gathered to get a comprehensive view of Kazak weaving from Mike Tschbull. Mike published the first and only book exclusively focusing on this popular weaving group thirty years ago, and he shared some of his research and observations since that time.

Mike began with a comment on the word “Kazak” itself, expressing thanks to Jeff Spurr for help with the research. There are many variations of the word, including the Kazakhs of Kazakhstan, the Turkish Cosaks, and the Russian Cossacks. According to Mike, all these terms probably stem from Timur’s time, when ‘Kazaks’ were characterized as brigands and outriders. There is no specific ethnic identity for Kazaks—the unifying trait seems to have been behavioral. Mike also noted later in the talk that the names of Kazak designs have no geographic grounding—either there is no place in the area (e.g., Fachralo or Karachoph) or there’s no proof that the weaving came from the area whose name it takes.

Continuing his introductory remarks, Mike noted that there are no Kazak rugs identified from earlier than the end of the 18th century. However, there is a comment in the literature from 1403 on weaving in the area, leading Mike to speculate that weaving had been underway for a very long time, but that the older rugs have not survived. The rugs that we label as Kazak were woven in an area of the Caucasus between Tbilisi and Yerivan. This area has a mixed ethnographic population, including Armenians and Azeris, with different balances of population at different times. The first example of specific identification of Kazak rugs came in a book published in 1884, but even here there was very little ethnographic documentation.

Mike noted that “weavers who make rugs are almost always at the bottom of the economic ladder.” He showed slides of the cuisine of the area (contemporary slides, but likely not much changed), depicting very little meat in the diet. The weavers were either completely settled or semi-nomadic.

Weavers and others typically lived at elevations between 3,500 and 8,000 feet since, according to Mike “lower you’ll contract malaria, and higher it’s too cold.”

The rugs themselves resemble Turkish rugs, with red wefts and symmetrical knotting. The most common format is approximately 5 x 7 feet. There were also smaller rugs, which Mike felt were probably bedding rugs for the well-to-do. In that area people slept on the floor, which was awfully hard and cold.

Mike showed a slide of a rug dated 1807, and commented that the oldest dated Kazak rug is from 1797. Mike felt that there was a long history of weaving that wasn’t documented, or another possibility was that the rugs and any records of them were dispersed by the Russians when they conquered the area.

Comparatively speaking, there were very few rugs made in the early Kazak weaving period. The known examples fall into particular design clusters. One of the earlier designs uses large latch hooked medallions and half medallions (see example on page 8). A second design features a single central medallion with a smaller palmette-type element above and below the medallion. [Reporter’s note: these two designs are referred to as Borjalou and Lori Pambak, though Mike didn’t use these terms in this part of the talk.] Mike felt that these designs go back to hooked medallions seen in Turkmen and Turkish weavings.

Mike commented that, in his opinion, the best production probably came around the 1860s. By this time, there was enough demand to stimulate weaving and a large enough weaving population, but it was before commercial pressures and synthetic dyes brought about a decline in weaving quality. Mike argued that older doesn’t necessarily mean better, and that the pure increase in number of weavers between 1840 and 1880 meant a much larger number of weavings, with many superb rugs. The increase in demand from the West did prompt a change from a loose weave to a tighter one that would be more durable on the floor.

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Last Meeting

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Mike moved from the early Kazak designs to review a number of the major design families. He showed a so-called Karachoph rug, with the archetypal 2-1-2 medallion format, and also an earlier Cairene rug with the same format. This design remained popular for a long time, as illustrated by a piece from dealer Vojtech Blau that was wonderful but probably not earlier than 1890.

Mike proceeded next to the design that is usually labelled Lori Pambak, which he personally found more interesting. He felt that the earlier pieces in this design were made by Muslim weavers, while the later ones were woven by Armenians who had moved in and become more numerous. Mike called the design “Bug Rug,” and indicated that it could be found as far west as Kars in Turkey. He theorized that, as the Kazak rugs became more popular, many more groups wove them, and they were produced across a much wider area than 50 years before. Armenian rugs were distinguished by a particular design repertoire, color palette, and even wool type.

Mike showed a rug that came over with his grandparents. The rug was supposedly antique at the time of the trip. It was this carpet, among others, that sparked his own interest in rugs.

He finished his remarks with a group of Kazak weavings that have attracted more of his attention of late. These rugs displayed a number of fairly unusual, very high quality designs; had wool warps and cotton wefts; and were fairly large compared to other Kazaks. He thinks the group may have come from Shusha, but probably not Yerivan. Some members of this weaving group have cypress tree designs, which trace their origin back to earlier Safavid weaving.

Following his talk, Mike took a number of questions from the audience. The first person asked where the Kazak names may have come from, if not from geography. Mike wasn't sure, although he thought that Schurmann may have erroneously labelled the

various designs. In a follow-up question, another person asked how the “Star Kazak” design fits in. Mike responded that he felt it is a non-mainstream Kazak design, perhaps related to bird rugs from Western Turkey. He also added that the Star Kazaks are made in many different weaves, which is very confusing, and that they are not necessarily very old. Similarly, the Pinwheel Kazak design may originate from the center of “Bug Rugs,” or perhaps from earlier embroidery motifs. The pinwheel form is also seen in the center of “Cloudband” Kazaks.

In response to another question, Mike commented on the treatment of Armenians when Yerivan was part of a Persian Khanate. He stated that Armenians were highly regarded; that they occupied high positions, such as metalsmith and gunsmith; and that they were not discriminated against.

After the Question and Answer period, the audience was treated to a display of a few Kazak rugs, all but one from the ALMA collection. The first came from Lawrence Kearney, with a classic Kazak weave and a design derived from the Karachoph pattern. The second example was one that Mike had used in his slides. This piece had four latchhook medallions in the field, but a very sophisticated floral border with some resemblance to older Persian strapwork designs. The third rug was a very attractively colored piece, with three Memling guls on a green field. Mike dated this piece to approximately 1880. The fourth piece was a Zakatala, with design elements drawn from cypress trees. Zakatalas are very loosely woven. They also have less color saturation because less dye was used, presumably because of the expense of dye materials. The final piece had design elements that also appeared to have evolved from the cypress tree motif.

Our thanks to Mike for giving us a summary of both older and newer thinking on Kazaks. And thanks as well to ALMA for the use of their facility and for the pieces brought out from the stored treasures of their collection.



Upcoming Rug Events

NERS 2001/2 Meetings:

4/19: Saul Barodofsky on 'Small is Beautiful'

5/18: Picnic and Show & Tell.

Auctions:

Christie's, New York, 4/8

Christie's, London, 4/10, 25

Sotheby's, New York, 4/10

Skinner, Boston, 4/20

Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 5/1

Nagel, Stuttgart, 5/7.

Conferences:

ACOR 6 is scheduled for 4/25-28 in Indianapolis. **Registrations are still being accepted!** Refer to www.acor-rugs.org for information.

The tenth **ICOC** is scheduled for 4/17-21/03 in Washington, DC. Submit papers by 4/1/02— See their website at www.icoc-international.org.

Exhibitions:

Poetry of the loom: Persian textiles in the MFA, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, extended until 3/17/02. Organized and curated by our own Julia Bailey. **International Asian arts fair**, Lincoln Center, New York, 3/22-26.

Tours:

St. Petersburg, Russia, sponsored by the Textile Museum, 5/7-16. Tour of the city's many historical buildings and museums, including carpet and textile collections. The famous Pazyryk carpet (ca. 400 BC) will be seen. The trip leader is Elena Tsareva, the internationally renowned expert and curator of Central Asia collections at the Russian Ethnographic Museum, and recent NERS lecturer. Contact the Textile Museum at 202-667-0411 or email www.textilemuseum.org/trav.htm for information.

We welcome the following new members: Andre Hashem and Jack Tripp. Both of these discovered NERS through our new website and filed their membership applications online. Onwards and upwards with technology!

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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.

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Barry Jacobs, 1932-2001

We note with regret the passing of Barry Jacobs. Barry was well known in rug circles as a collector, author, and lecturer (he had given a talk to the New Boston Rug Society). He served as president of the Hajji Baba Club 1980-84. Professionally, he taught Comparative Literature at several universities, including Harvard. His specialty was Swedish, though he was also fluent in many other languages. He was noted both for his encyclopedic knowledge and his sense of humor. In the Hajji Baba Club Newsletter of 1/02, Posy Benedict illustrates the latter with 'the story of how he learned to identify the feel of Balouchi rugs while walking on them barefoot at night.'

The rug world will miss his presence.



**Borjalou Kazak rug,
Through the Collector's Eye, no.17**



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