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Seistan Rug

Welcome, **Joel Greifinger**.
You last visited: October 26th, 2013 at 08:58 AM

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Virtual Show and Tell Just what the title says it is.



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September 30th, 2013,
03:54 PM

#17

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60



Hi James-

Quote:

Originally Posted by **James Blanchard** 

Here is another sub-type that I would include in the "M" group. Do you agree?



Knot? Weave? Wefting?

Tx,

Henry



September 30th, 2013, 03:05 PM

#16

[James Blanchard](#)
Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky**
Hi James-

I think the above is overly restrictive. For example, Rich's piece in post #6 is very likely M-Group (more details needed), but falls outside the above. I wonder if you are focusing too closely on the 'electric' subgroup of M-Group?

I will work on putting together a portfolio of pieces i think are M-Group. We might then consider together whether that set seems sufficiently coherent as to warrant closer examination for common features. Sound good?

Henry

Thanks, Henry. It seems to me that the Rich's piece does fit, but perhaps I have given an overly restrictive set of criteria on the colour profile of this genre.

Here is another sub-type that I would include in the "M" group. Do you agree?

James



September 30th, 2013,
02:44 PM

#15

[Henry Sadovsky](#)
Registered

A good start

Join Date: Oct 2012

Hi James-

Posts: 60

Quote:

Originally Posted by **James Blanchard** 

Count me "in" with regard to the designation of a definable "M Group". It is not "Mushwani" per se, and it is definitely not the symmetrically knotted "Bahluli" group.

Common features include:

- 1. A wide range of colours, with a particular predilection for vibrant oranges and greens, with a range of blues and purples. Yellow appears as a secondary colour, but seems to be mostly used to create greens (and some oranges).*
- 2. Soft, lustrous wool, which is often fine.*
- 3. Asymmetric knotting (open left), usually on quite a flat warp structure.*
- 4. Light brown wefts, with ivory warps (sometimes plied with light brown or tan wool).*
- 5. Balishts and smaller pieces are much more common than rugs and carpets, which tend to be long and narrow in dimensions.*

I think the above is overly restrictive. For example, Rich's piece in post #6 is very likely M-Group (more details needed), but falls outside the above. I wonder if you are focusing too closely on the 'electric' subgroup of M-Group?

I will work on putting together a portfolio of pieces i think are M-Group. We might then consider together whether that set seems sufficiently coherent as to warrant closer examination for common features. Sound good?

Henry



September 30th, 2013,
02:08 PM

#14

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59



Henry,

Count me "in" with regard to the designation of a definable "M Group". It is not "Mushwani" per se, and it is definitely not the symmetrically knotted "Bahluli" group.

Common features include:

1. A wide range of colours, with a particular predilection for vibrant oranges and greens, with a range of blues and purples. Yellow appears as a secondary colour, but seems to be mostly used to create greens (and some oranges).
2. Soft, lustrous wool, which is often fine.
3. Asymmetric knotting (open left), usually on quite a flat warp structure.
4. Light brown wefts, with ivory warps (sometimes plied with light brown or tan wool).
5. Balishts and smaller pieces are much more common than rugs and carpets, which tend to be long and narrow in dimensions.

James



September 30th, 2013,

12:34 PM


#13

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012

Posts: 60

 **M-Group is not Bahluli (by definition).**

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Joel Greifinger** 

Does your 'M-Group' include all pieces that feature variants of the 'Mushwani' design from all 'Baluch' groups?

No.

The **symmetrically knotted** pieces with that type of gul are different in many respects from what i think of as M-Group. First- they are symmetrically knotted. **Every piece i have encountered that i have thought be to M-Group has been ASL.** Second (and no less important), their seems to me to not be much overlap between wool/texture/color characteristics of the Sy knotted group (generally), to those of M-Group (generally).

Parenthetically, why some Bahluli pieces feature the M-Gul is a most interesting question (that i do not wish to address at this point in the thread).

Quote:

Does it include some pieces from these groups that don't feature this design?

As i have extracted your question from its context, allow me to restate it as: "Do all M-Group pieces sport the M-Gul?" M-Gul being my (tentative) name for the "Mushwani" design.

The answer to that is a definitive "no." **Not all M-Group pieces sport the M-Gul.** What then makes them M-Group? Well, that is what we are currently exploring.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Joel**

Is the 'electric' group based solely on the brilliance and lustre of the colors?

Yes.

Please note that my dominant interest is in defining and identifying M-Group. That a sub-group of M-Group has 'electric' coloring is merely an interesting aside.

Please also note that 'electric' is highly subjective. I could well understand some thinking James's piece doesn't quite have 'electric' color. No problem. 'Electric' as i am using it is merely descriptive. It should not be inferred that the descriptor implies desirability. Some like that type of color, some don't.

Quote:


Would some symmetrically knotted Bahluli pieces fall into this ('electric') category(?)

I have used the term 'electric' in previous postings in this thread to categorize a small-ish sub-set of M-Group pieces. No **non**-M-Group piece, by definition, could be considered for inclusion in **any** subgroup of M-Group. Nevertheless, if one wanted to describe such a Bahluli piece's color as 'electric,' i would have no problem with that whatsoever. 'Electric' with regards to coloring is merely a descriptive shorthand.

Good questions. Thanks,

Henry



 September 30th, 2013,

11:15 AM

#12

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
 Location: Massachusetts
 Posts: 49



Quote:

Would some symmetrically knotted Bahluli pieces fall into this category, or only those with a palette that suggests Sistan?


Hi James,

Yes, it's clearly not from Seistan; that was part of my point. Since Henry posited an 'electric sub-group', but not explicitly a "Seistan Electric Company", I was inquiring whether the group he is delineating crosses the Seistan frontier, or is an exclusively Seistan category within the 'M-Group'.

Quote:

the defining feature of this group is the use of brilliant secondary colours, particularly vibrant greens and oranges.

If this is the case, then non-Seistan electric colors (for example, Bahluli) obviously don't apply.

In any case, he can have it any way he wants - after all it's his taxonomy. 

Joel

Last edited by Joel Greifinger; September 30th, 2013 at 12:34 PM.



September 30th, 2013,
 10:49 AM

#11

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
 Posts: 59



Hi Joel,

I would not put that rug in the "Seistan Electric Company". For me, the defining feature of this group is the use of brilliant secondary colours, particularly vibrant greens and oranges. They also often use some wonderful purples, that are not usually seen in other weavings from this region.

James



September 30th, 2013,
 10:24 AM

#10

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
 Location: Massachusetts
 Posts: 49



Dial 'M' for taxonomy

Hi Henry,

Could you clarify your categories a bit?

Does your 'M-Group' include all pieces that feature variants of the 'Mushwani' design from all 'Baluch' groups? Does it include some pieces from these groups that don't feature this design?

Is the 'electric' group based solely on the brilliance and lustre of the colors? Would some symmetrically knotted Bahluli pieces fall into this category, or only those with a palette that suggests Sistan?

For example, is this 'Bahluli' in the 'electric group'? If not, is it because it lacks electricity, or because it has the wrong electric colors, or perhaps both?



Joel



September 30th, 2013,
09:28 AM

#9

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

 Electric

Hi Henry,

Here is an unusual piece that belongs somewhere in your grouping. It has very soft wool, but is less fine and has a "meatier" handle than the rug in the original post and several other pieces I have seen in this genre of "balisht".

James



September 30th,
2013, 05:55 AM

#8

[Henry Sadovsky](#)
Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

Interesting...

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Rich Larkin](#)
... *khorjins, of the ilk in the thread I think...*

The palette appears very similar to a few posted on this thread.

...

I acquired this in about 1980.

Hi Rich-

I like your piece.

I got interested in tribal weavings of Khorasan in 1990. Between then and my 1st ICOC (1996), i became quite familiar with weavings similar to the one you have presented. Neither that direct experience, nor my looking through as many books and HALIs as i could get my hands on, prepared me for the 'electric Baluchs' i was introduced to at the Philadelphia ICOC. I do not see your piece as being part of the 'electric' group.



It is readily apparent why you feel that your piece is "of the ilk" of other pieces in the thread (particularly

those with the 'Mushwani' gul). They certainly have a family resemblance about them. For the sake of this discussion, i will refer to the umbrella group that these belong to as 'M-Group.' ('M' as it is easy to remember given that many still associate the trade name 'Mushwani' with this larger group.) To be clear, i see the 'electric' group as a subset of M-Group. I see your piece as being in a different subset of M-Group.

You, Rich, got into this at least a decade before i. I am quite curious to know of your experience with the 'electric' group. Do you recall when you first started seeing such things? Do you recall your initial response to them? Have you noted any trend in terms of the number of such pieces you have been encountering over the years?

Thanks,

Henry



September 29th, 2013,
09:53 PM

#7

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Joel Greifinger**

Henry, you wrote:

"I have now seen a few examples of this type of thing that I am confident are very old."

Are there any that you have photos of, that you could post? I would love to both see them

...

Hi Joel

I'm sorry, but i do not have unpublished photos of (potentially) historic examples that would best receive their initial presentation here, at this time.

Henry



September 29th, 2013,
09:45 PM

#6

[Rich Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 36



Hi folks,

This item won't shed too much light on the subject, but I thought I'd slip it in. It is an intact and joined pair of khorjins, of the ilk in the thread I think, that has been turned into a single pillow. The backs and connecting section were bundled up inside with a lot of horsehair, or some other very stiff type of hair, and the two pile faces make up the two faces of the pillow. It is very firm and solid, not soft and pliable. It seems like a professional job.

The palette appears very similar to a few posted on this thread. BTW, though I've never taken it apart, a peek into the inside indicates the flatwoven part is solid color plainweave in the wine color that appears inside the jagged green outline of the central diamond.



Rich

This image shows the seam where the two faces are sewn together. It also demonstrates the palette pretty well.



I acquired this in about 1980.

Rich



September 29th, 2013, 07:33 PM

#5

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Thanks for the comments, Henry and Joel.

I am not sure how best to assess the age of this group. I have seen quite a number of smaller balisht of this genre, and I have a notion that they vary in age (based on the quality of weaving,

dyes, handle, etc.). There are some that seem a bit meatier and thick, that I think are more recent.

This is the first large pile-woven rug of this genre that I've handled. It does seem to be more akin to the smaller pieces that I tend to put earlier in the somewhat arbitrary age continuum. I've learned not to use condition as a criterion, per se, since I have found some very nice old pieces in almost pristine condition sourced from within the region (E Persia / Afghanistan). I think that there has been a greater tendency to preserve pieces in that region than in Europe and N. America.

My best guess for this rug is late 19th century, or maybe early 20th century. However, I think it could be older. I haven't seen very many analogies so it's a bit difficult to try to put it into a continuum.

James



September 29th, 2013,
11:49 AM

#4

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 49



Hi James,

First things first. I concur with Henry's revised evaluation: WoW! 🙌👏

While, as you say, the rug is a "known type", it is nonetheless a great deal less common to see this particular combination of designs (both field and borders) and palette on rugs than on either balishts or the distinctive "pile-shouldered" double khorjin of the Sistan region. (The example you posted from the Anderson-Cole interview that shares a minor border with yours is published as Black & Loveless pl. 37. Sorgato's pl. 33 has the common border from the double khorjin (seen in all but the second khorjin below), Adil Besim's *Myth and Mystique* pl. 23 has a *syrga* border.)

The border on your rug is especially common on Sistan balishts like this:



the minor border and central device on khorjin:




here's one with the 'pile-shoulders' intact:



Henry, you wrote

Quote:

I have now seen a few examples of this type of thing that I am confident are very old.

Are there any that you have photos of, that you could post? I would love to both see them  and get your assessment as to their greater comparative age to James's rug and others.

Joel



September 29th, 2013, 08:24 AM

#3

[Henry Sadovsky](#)
Registered

Hi again James-

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

I've been looking further at the photos of your piece. My last post was entitled 'Nice!'. I'm not happy with that.



..... **Wow!**

The beautiful condition suggested by the photos could lead to underestimation of its age. In writing before that i didn't think your piece is in the 'very old group' i was using 'very old' in the way most people use 'early.' It would have been better if i had used 'early,' as your piece may certainly be very old (however old that is).

Bravo!

Henry



September 29th, 2013, 05:43 AM

#2

[Henry Sadovsky](#)
Registered

Nice!

Hi James-

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

A psychedelic 'Baluch'! Did you find it in San Francisco? ;)

I first encountered this type of thing at the Philadelphia ICOC (1996). When I say 'this type of thing,' I am not referring to the 'Mushwani' design, but rather to the vibrant (in some cases, 'electric') palette. I had no idea what to think. I took one home to study. (Still have it.) Not long after that, I started to see MANY such things, mostly balisht and chanteh, on the market. I handled quite a few of them and was under the impression that most of them did not have much age. As an aside, in Zurich, I met a man who traveled regularly to Afghanistan. I am not exaggerating when I say that he had stacks of such things in his home. Nevertheless, there was something about the one I had which set it (well) apart from the abundant item that was evidently coming out of Afghanistan in large quantity coincident with cultural/population upheaval.

For a few years I was undecided about whether these things might be genuine cultural items, or were they, rather, trinkets for the market?

I have now seen a few examples of this type of thing that I am confident are very old. I would think, James, that your piece is not in the very old group. Most certainly, though, it is a far distance from the abundant type of item I referred to above. I think it is of the same era as the two balisht illustrated below (alongside 2 small images from your piece).



So, how old is that? The answer is clear (to me). Old enough. Old enough to be a genuine cultural artifact arising out of a very old tradition. A tradition that was isolated for a very long period of time. A tradition that has been devastated in the last few decades.

That tradition is not encompassed by the area of Sistan. Not nearly so. Consider the myriad of color palettes and differing 'angles' on the 'Mushwani' design pieces in the "Mushwani/Aimaq Baluch with a Yomud-style border" thread (<http://www.turkotek.com/VB37/showthread.php?t=2238>). Many of those pieces clearly have a 'family resemblance' to the piece you are now highlighting.

So, suggestions of:...

- very old tradition,
- widespread geographic distribution,

- cultural devastation in the past few decades.
This, in a tradition with ubiquitous use of 'mongol' (felt) designs.

What group might that be?

Henry

Last edited by Henry Sadovsky; September 29th, 2013 at 07:46 AM. Reason: Removed irrelevant P.S.



September 28th, 2013,
09:11 PM

#1

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

 Seistan Rug

Hi all,

Here is an interesting rug that is a known type in the "Baluch" group. It's the first Sistan pile weaving of this type and size that I have encountered.

The size is 96" x 46.5" inches (including kilim ends). It is knotted asymmetrically, open left (9h x 9v = 81 kpsi). There is minimal depression of alternate warps. Wefts are undyed light brown wool, 2 wefts per row of knots. Warps are two-ply, with one being light tan and the other white wool. Side finish is four cords, with the inner and outer goat hair (I think), with the middle two wrapped in dyed wool (red, green, blue). Kilim ends have coloured stripes and slit-weave tapestry.

Wool is lustrous and very soft. The handle is floppy and quite light.

The dyes all look good to me, including a "burning" orange and an interesting purple-red.

This is a known type, which has been generally attributed to the Seistan region. Jerry Anderson attributed a similar rug (plate 37 in Black's "Rugs of the Wandering Baluch") to the Shahraki Sarbandi tribe of the Seistan region (<http://www.tcoletribalrugs.com/article10JA.html>).



Others have suggested that rugs with some similar design features are the work of Hazara weavers in NW Afghanistan.

I have a few balishts, which are generally attributed to the Seistan region, which have a number of similarities to this rug in colour, wool quality and weaving.

As has been pointed out by Thomas Cole, this genre of rugs presents a particular "Baluch aesthetic", that differs from other rugs "in the Baluch tradition" (i.e. from NE Persia, W. Afghanistan) (http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00098/salon.html).

I have no real reference point for estimating the age of this rug, other than Thomas Cole's general guidance that rugs with lighter colours and less white tend to be older.

I'd be very interested in hearing opinions and see analogies. This is a genre of weavings that I think has been generally under-appreciated.

James







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