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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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 October 19th, 2013, 09:22 AM

**#217**

[Chuck Wagner](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 9



Hi,

Though the Miracle of Modern Technology, we can find Bellew's book (From the Indus to the Tigris) online:

<http://archive.org/details/fromindustotigr00bellgoog>

For some additional info on the region and populations in particular, see:

The Cyclopædia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia, Commercial, Industrial, and Scientific; Products of the Mineral, Vegetable, and Animal Kingdoms, Useful Arts, and Manufactures.

Surgeon General Edward Balfour  
Volume II, Third edition.

The Oriental Rug review has a nice reference page for Baluch

reading:

<http://www.rugreview.com/orr/9-2-35.htm>

And for those with archaeological interests: Archaeological studies in the Seistan Basin of southwestern Afghanistan and eastern Iran. Anthropological papers of the AMNH

<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j...54934254,d.b2I>

And, by the way, Ferrier spent some time, and some page space, with the Baluch...

Quote:

When encamped they lead a life of complete idleness ; the women and children only are occupied in tilling the ground and looking after the flocks, from which they make considerable profits. They sell the wool of the sheep, and spin the goats' and camels' hair to make clothes and tents ; the cloth from these materials is so closely woven, that they make bags of it in which they carry milk, water, and other liquids, without losing a drop ; their clothes made of this material are worn in the rainy season.

Regards  
Chuck Wagner

*Last edited by Chuck Wagner; October 19th, 2013 at 10:07 AM. Reason: Update with quote*



October 19th, 2013, 02:28 AM

#216

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009  
Posts: 82



QUOTE=Philip Loftus

"..The best line in the book is when he says he was in disguise 'more to hide myself from the British & Russian ministers than anyone else...."

Hi Philip,

Yes, and the funny thing is that O'Donovan who officially was war-correspondant for an important newspaper (but probably a spy for the Foreign Office), met Steward in Khorassan, but did not see through his disguise!

Unfortunately my reading of Ferrier, Steward, O'Donovan, Sykes etc.. focussed on informations about the Turkmen and about rugs & dyes. Due to this tunnel vision, I did not pay too much attention to general infos about other ethnic groups living in the area, except in their dealing with the Turkmen or when their rug weaving activity was mentioned.

Regards  
Pierre



October  
18th, 2013,  
10:54 PM

#215

[Philip](#)  
[Loftus](#)  
Members



Join Date: Apr  
2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56

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One could probably identify these (aimak-) «Hazarah» raiders with the «Baluch» tribes, mentioned by Ferrier himself and several later visitors of Khorassan, including Steward in 1881 (2), who, mounted on racing camels, routinely penetrated deep into Khorassan. Contrary to the Turkomans, market leaders in the man-hunting business, who killed their prisoners whenever they could not bring them to the slave markets, those «Baluchi/Hazarah» rarely killed and specialized instead in striping their victims down to the minimum of clothes required by Muslim decency, before letting them go. These (probably Sunni) nomads must have lived comparatively well from pillage and animal husbandry, since they could afford camels which easily out-run the competition. They can therefore be seen as potential rug weavers.

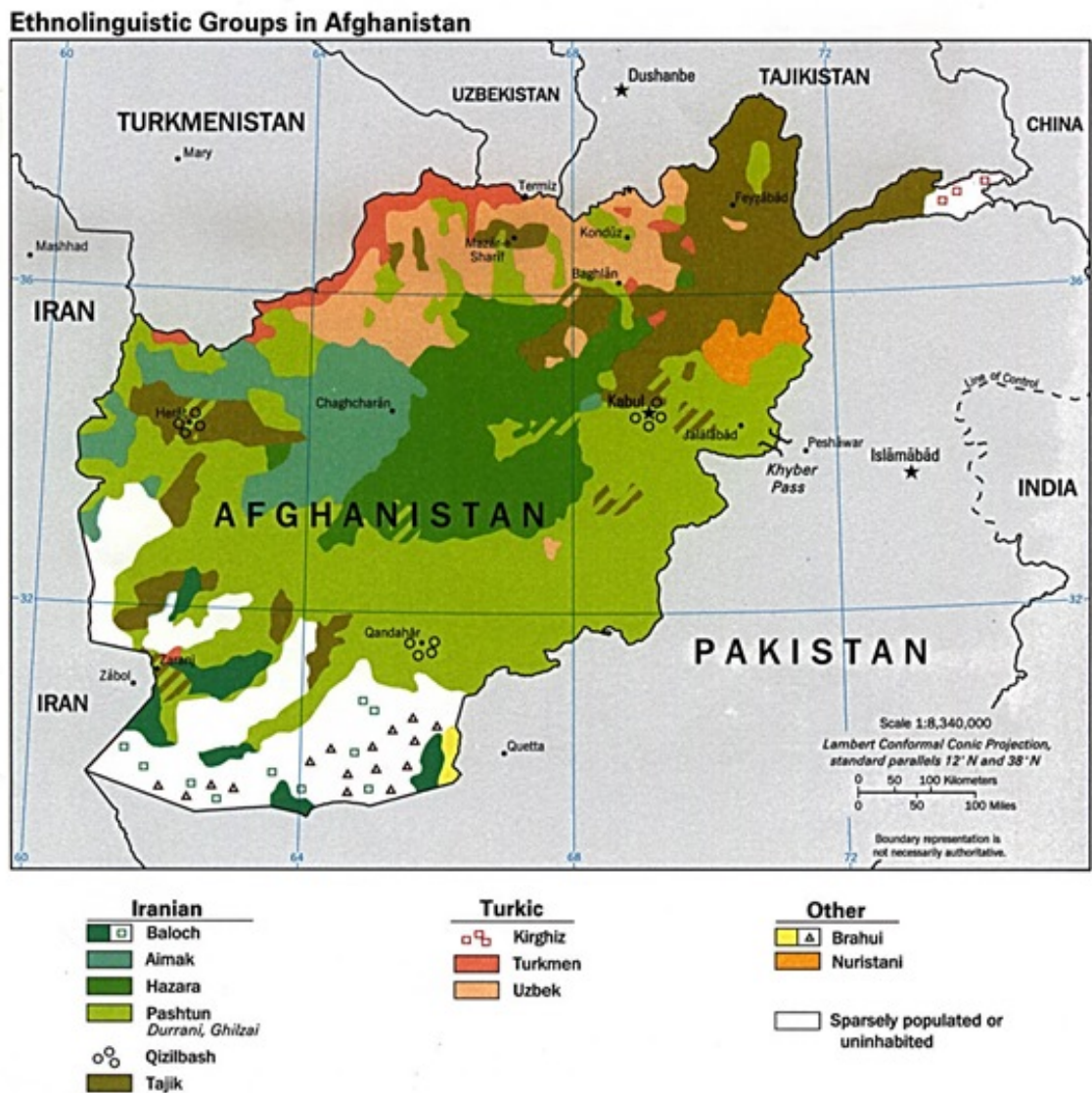
Hi Pierre

Thanks for the synopsis and links ( clearly I was confused and it wasn't Ferrier who noted the possible engsi with Shia'a weavers. I'll try find the source for the info. Sorry to make you check Ferrier! And to be fair it adds nothing to the Seistan POG Hazarah subjects of the thread. Unless we wanted to diversify a bit of course...

Ferrier is interesting. I agree that aimak Hazarah are a possible source for weavings. I wonder what you thought of Stewart's words about the Chahar Aimak on p 369?

The best line in the book is when he says he was in disguise 'more to hide myself from the British & Russian ministers than anyone else.'

The map is modern but maybe helpful as a ref. If Stewart is right I wonder when did the aimak become the Aimak!



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PS if we could find a source identifying Dahi Zangi as nomadic/aimak Hazarah who took part in highway thievery we could take a step towards substantiating Harlon's reference to yellow rug production.

Rgds

Philip

*Last edited by Philip Loftus; October 19th, 2013 at 12:19 AM.*



October 18th, 2013, 04:21 AM

#214

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009  
Posts: 82



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Philip Loftus**

*I think Ferrier mentions rugs once. He states they wove 'luxuriant' rugs to be placed over the house. Could he be referring to Engsi? The name he used was something starting with 'D' a group of Shia'a who were also identified by Bellew in his Ethnography of Afghanistan(not Ethnicity, sorry).*

I might have overseen this note about (Sistan?) rugs in J.P. Ferrier's book. Will give it another look asap. According to my notes, his only significant mention of rugs, is in pages 124-125 (1) : During his stay in the Meshed region Ferrier noticed the beautiful rugs manufactured in the city «perhaps unequaled for color, wear and beauty in the world». He was obviously alluding to the production of urban workshops and not to rugs made by Turkoman- or Baluch nomads leaving near-by. Shortly after his passage in 1844, political trouble impoverished very much the city. Less than 40 years later, both O'Donovan and Steward mentioned that the Turkoman carpets were much more beautiful «than anything made in Persia», which seems to confirm the quick decadence of Meshed.

Page 139, Ferrier brings an information which is perhaps relevant to our discussion:

The plains East of Meshed along the Heri rood / Tejen, when it flows towards the North are fertile, but remained unused by the Persians, due to the presence of Turkoman- (the Tekes and

Salors, down-river around Sarakhs) and **Hazarah**-raiders. One could probably identify these (aimak-) «Hazarah» raiders with the «Baluch» tribes, mentioned by Ferrier himself and several later visitors of Khorassan, including Steward in 1881 (2), who, mounted on racing camels, routinely penetrated deep into Khorassan. Contrary to the Turkomans, market leaders in the man-hunting business, who killed their prisoners whenever they could not bring them to the slave markets, those «Baluchi/Hazarah» rarely killed and specialized instead in stripping their victims down to the minimum of clothes required by Muslim decency, before letting them go. These (probably Sunni) nomads must have lived comparatively well from pillage and animal husbandry, since they could afford camels which easily out-run the competition. They can therefore be seen as potential rug weavers.

Ferrier was a French petty officer. Instructor of the Persian army during four year. Fluent in Farsi. He explored Afghanistan, in particular around Herat and Kandahar, as well as the Sistan province in Persia. His level of education was no match to O'Donovan's, his stories (often hearsay) lack the acute challenge of O'Donovan's scientific mind, but he was a good observer. Not in the least interested in rugs, alas.

(1) J. P. Ferrier. Caravan journeys and wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan, and Beluchistan. 1844-45. (Published 1857), pages 124-125 and 139.

\*<http://archive.org/details/caravanjourneysw00ferrich>

(2) C.E. Stewart. Through Persia in disguise Part II. Near the Turkoman area 1880-1882. Page 369.

<http://archive.org/stream/throughper...e/n12/mode/2up>

Regards  
Pierre



October 18th, 2013, 12:23 AM

#213

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56



Hello Rich

The rest of the Hazarah, the Sunnah branch were in Ghor province also central Afghanistan so the yellow rugs would

have been woven there if the Dahi Zangi did weave anything.

Jerry Anderson equated colour usage with maturity in a quote from the Cole interview in a previous post. It sounded a bit off-the-flipping-wall to me but that doesn't mean we should toss everything he said, correct? Can we think of Harlon and Anderson as nice interesting old rugs with a touch of synthetic here and there which we may lament but it doesn't mean we throw the rug out.

The point about Harlon may be that being the 'Khan' of the Hazarah was akin to being a white officer in charge of 'negro' troops in the American civil war- not exactly a sought after post. Maybe he wanted to talk it up. And both groups were famous for fighting qualities to extend the analogy.

Rgds  
Philip



October 17th, 2013, 11:22  
PM

#212

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56



Joel

Sources are the mid 1960's in your link. Previously you mentioned that Bob Pittenger's researches had uncovered other references to Hazarah weavings and that Harlon's drunken ravings...sorry I mean account of the yellow Herati copies sold nationwide was simply the earliest. Mate I have to call you. Quite apart from the fact that I'm more than interested in reading 'em!

You are quite right about one of the differences in attitudes to religion in Afghanistan as opposed to Seistan. Burnes noted a group of disgruntled clerics organizing a small riot in 1831 in 'Cabul': their name, the Taliban!

However all 4 sources make clear that in Afghanistan proper the Shia'a were congregated around Bamiyan province in central Afghanistan. Other than the splinter group (the 1 detachment of the 10) who may have moved but no ref to that happening yet.

Pierre

I only scan read Ferrier's book and it was in translation so I maybe wrong about this info but I think Ferrier mentions rugs once. He states they wove 'luxuriant' rugs to be placed over the house. Could he be referring to Engsi? The name he used was something starting with 'D' a group of Shia'a who were also identified by Bellew in his Ethnography of Afghanistan(not Ethnicity, sorry). I'll find the name when there's time.

Regards  
Philip



October 17th, 2013, 10:32 PM

#211

[Rich Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008  
Location: Massachusetts  
Posts: 36



Hi Philip,

Quote:

Harlon was American so spelling probably wasn't his strong suit.

I hear it's becoming epidemic in several countries. 🐼

Just joshing, my friend, and taking a stand for the home country. But I give you high marks for coming up with the Dahi Zangi. I certainly haven't pinpointed Dye Zungee in any of my several atlases and gazeteers. But I don't think that lays a glove on the proposition that Harlan stumbled upon an interesting (to us, or at least, me) local rug production that begs further explication. What else can you make of his comments? If you can't give those notes some basic credence, you have to throw out everything he wrote. It's not as though he claimed to have found Shangri-la, or the fountain of youth, or something, but he can't disclose the location for security reasons. He's talking about a presumably small local industry. One can conceive of a thousand ways that rug production could co-exist with the other circumstances of the regional populace. Of course, it doesn't say much *per se* about the (alleged) topics of this thread.

Rich





October 17th, 2013, 09:18 PM

#210

## [Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009  
Posts: 82



[QUOTE=Joel Greifinger;15664]  
*I think that the Hazarah that live in central Afghanistan are Shia, while it is the substantially less numerous Sunni Hazarah (sometimes cited as a constituent of the Chahar Aimaq)*  
[/QUOTE]

Hi Joel,

Your explanation makes a lot of sense to me: the Sunni Hazarah minority makes indeed more credible nineteenth-century pile weavers than the Shia main Hazarah group. Belonging to the local mainstream religion they were probably less harassed by the other ethnic groups and less poor, thus more likely to be able to afford wool and dyes. Especially if some of them were part of the feared and successful Baluch raiders, mentioned by Ferrier and other European travelers, who, mounted on speedy F1 camels, regularly attacked and stripped to their Unterhosen (Shia-) pilgrims on their way to Meshed.

Hi Philip,

I don't think that my friend has information about the Hazarah weavers much older than the time of his own arrival in the region of Kabul, some thirty years ago, but I'll ask him.

Pierre

*Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; October 17th, 2013 at 09:35 PM.*



October 17th, 2013, 07:53 PM

#209

## [Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56



Pierre

Nice explanation. And one I totally buy into as long as someone can demonstrate a second source to back up Harlon's

'yellow rug' claim.

Does you Afghan rug producing friend have any thoughts concerning 19th c rug production by the Hazarah? The govt progamme you mentioned has insisted on them using traditional designs from the known antique Hazarah repetoire? That would be a step towards definitive.

Regards

Rich

Harlon was American so spelling probably wasn't his strong suit. And to be fair 19th c spelling of foreign words could vary a bit although all four Brits used the same spelling in their books even spaced by 80 odd years and facing the same difficulties!

I think that Harlon's 'Dyee Zungee' is not a place. I think it is a tribe, the Dahi Zangi. ( Even if you wish to use your compatriot's spelling I still think it is a tribe.) Remember that the word Hazarah is a bit like other racial and ethnic slurs, it seems to have had pejorative connotations to those it refered to. Go figure. Which is why the Hazarah themselves always referred to each other by their tribal name(Stirling). Why Harlon would use the word (other than the fact that he was unaware of the implications of doing so) is unclear considering he was their 'Khan' for 'a few months'.

If you find a map of the time do you see any place called 'Dyee Zungee'? Are their maps in your copy of Harlon's book?

However the Dahi Zangi are placed by Bellew in Ethnicities of Afghanistan at Ghor, a place which 100 odd years later Parsons identifies as producing a floppy weave tribal 'mat'. How was it knotted? Mine is symetrical.

Let's assume that Harlon is right about Hazarah rug production. We then have the problem of accounting for their widesread and well documented apparent poverty. Are you saying they hid their assets and even though successful rug producers they kept on reporting for snow shoveling? Because they were worried about Inland Revenue? The Hazarah were tax cheats? They were keeping their assets off- shore?

Why this digression into the Hazarah? Because this name gets

bandied about pretty freely by all sorts of dealers and collectors. Until Joel (or someone else) surfaces with supporting quotes for their production of rugs in the 19th c we are without any real evidence to justify the use of the name. In fact it flies in the face of common sense based on well researched 19th c reports of their widespread and dire poverty.

Rgds

Philip



October 17th, 2013, 07:48 PM

#208

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008  
Location: Massachusetts  
Posts: 49



Quote:

A friend of mine operating a dyeing / weaving workshop in Afghanistan, told me that Hazarah from central Afghanistan (Bamiyan etc..) provided, at least for the past 40 years, competent weavers, working with the symmetric knot, unlike the ethnic Turkmen-, Uzbek- or Tadjik weavers of the area. Do your sources confirm this info?

Hi Pierre,

I think that the Hazarah that live in *central* Afghanistan are Shia, while it is the substantially less numerous Sunni Hazarah (sometimes cited as a constituent of the Chahar Aimaq) that are credited by some with producing some of the pile weavings we have been discussing live in "Afghanistan, central part of Badghis province (Qale-ye Nou). Some small groups live as far as eastern Balkh province (districts of Shulgara and Chahar)." <http://www.nativeplanet.org/indigeno...nihazara.shtml>

As far as I can tell, the primary proponent of the Hazarah as a source of pile weavings in general, and POG pieces in particular, is Michael Craycraft. He currently has nine pile weavings on his website that he attributes to the Hazarah. All are asymmetrically knotted, open left. At least two could be categorized as falling into the POG category, non-electric.

I don't know his rationale for these attributions.

Joel



October 17th, 2013, 05:23 PM

#207

[Rich Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008  
Location: Massachusetts  
Posts: 36



Hi Philip,

I don't think there's anything in Harlan's report that is inconsistent or incompatible with any of those other people. Are you suggesting that Harlan must have been wrong about a local rug industry in the vicinity of Dye Zungee because other reports had the Hazara too poor to be weavers, or something of that nature? Furthermore, I don't think his snippet (but it's a book compared with most others' reports!) solves the Great Seistan Question, or the electric dye mystery. I do think it is highly likely there was a notable rug production in that area that conforms reasonably accurately to his description. What possible reason would he have had to make that story up? I'm not sure the Dye Zungee rug would pass for "greater Baluch" as we understand the category, but I believe the animal existed.

Rich



October 17th, 2013, 01:52 PM

#206

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009  
Posts: 82



Hi all,

**Was yellow actually camel? Was Harlan color-blind? Well, not necessarily.**

The usual natural yellows for rugs are mostly less light-fast than the usual natural reds and blues. Only the lightfastest natural yellows keep their yellow shades reasonably constant (saturated and bright), even after a century or two of exposure to light: Essentially those containing enough «luteolin» as main dye (from dye-plants such as Reseda lutea, Genista tinctoria, Salvia triloba...). Most traditional natural yellow dyes,

especially those containing mainly «quercetin» (Sophora japonica, Allium cepa, buckthorn, Datisca cannabina etc...), «emodin» (Rumex...), «fisetin» (Dyer's sumac...) or «berberin» (Berberis crataegina,...), turn less saturated and duller (more beige) over time and some even turn brown .

Good ol' Harlan might have truly seen yellow areas, but in rugs fresh from the weaving. They had turned beige, camel or brown by the time they graced your floors and bunkers 🤔.

This remark is not supposed to increase further the general puzzlement on board 🤔.

Regards  
Pierre



October 17th, 2013, 10:15 AM

#205

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56



Rich

Does Harlan's info about Hazarah rug production be it yellow or camel jibe with Burnes, Stirling, Bellow and Landor's more general info about the Hazarah?(Even this yellow/camel snippet we have to twist to try and make it fit) If you feel the answer to that question is 'no' then who should we believe?

Do you think that because Harlan lived with the Hazarah and he specifically mentions a pile rug that he claims they wove and successfully sold not only across Afghanistan but also exported then should the fact that it is specifically rug related mean that we should ignore the other non rug related info simply because rugs are our area of interest. Are we that desperate? Or are you suggesting other factors are not worth looking at in terms of determining who made rugs?

We ought to look for a second or third source which confirms info we may find a bit unusual- as in this case. Hence we deserve better than to be asked to accept such a surprising piece of info without a least one other source.

Lets remember that Burnes set off in 1828 and Landor's in 1902. So we can understand the socio-economic conditions the

Hazarah experienced through the better part of the 19th c.

I edited my previous post because although it basically said the above it did so in a less serious way.



October 17th, 2013, 08:43 AM

#204

[Richard Tomlinson](#)



Members

Join Date: Jun 2012  
Posts: 9

i hope someone writes a succinct summary if and when this thread ends .... yawn ....



October 17th, 2013, 08:37 AM

#203

[James Blanchard](#)



Members

Join Date: Jun 2008  
Posts: 59

Hi Rich,

The rug I posted is most definitely yellow, with a variety of shades and a resulting abrash.

As Pierre notes, with so much green in the "Seistan" palette, they must have had a fair bit of yellow. I haven't seen much yellow in Baluch rugs (other than some sparing use of the murky yellows in Salar Khan types) except in rugs that are said to be from Seistan. Clear, bright yellows do not feature much in most types of "Baluch" weavings (or Turkmen for that matter). Some older Ersari and "Beshir" (MAD) rugs do have some nice buttery yellows and greens, but the yellows are certainly not prominent.

James



October 17th, 2013, 08:30 AM

#202

[Rich Larkin](#)



Members

Join Date: Jun 2008  
Location: Massachusetts  
Posts: 36

Hi folks,

Quote:

Phil, to Paul:

I think we have a right to expect a higher standard than that!

Than what, Phil? And from whom? I saw your last post before it was edited, and it seems you were referring to the standard Harlan would (should?) have adhered to in reporting on the prevailing palette in the local rug industry, especially the "yellow."

Camel for yellow! It's a stretch, but it solves the problem. I was wondering whether that piece James posted a few frames up featured yellow or camel. Some camel-colored Baulch rugs do verge onto yellow. This is one of them I just happen to have on hand. It has a butter-cream look about it.





Of course, yellow is yellow, and if that isn't the answer, I go back to the question whether the rugs Harlan was looking at were what we would see today as "Baluch" types at all. He describes them as produced "...in imitation of the Herat manufacture...." One can only make so much of such comments, but taken at face value, the "Herat manufacture" would most likely be a Persianate style of rug. Some of the older authorities say that rug weaving in Herat ended completely around 1734, after a major military setback; but others refer to a local product that featured the herati pattern (natch!), fancy boteh, and medallion/corner formats. Of course, given the location of Herat, it is quite feasible that in the 1830s, someone like Harlan would have characterized general Baluch weaving as coming from Herat and vicinity. It is also quite feasible that there would have been a good quality workshop type of rug produced at Dye Zungee, that bore little resemblance to "Baluch group" work as we see it, that we



know nothing of today.

The more I trip over these stray little period nuggets of information about rug production before the "great boom" of the later nineteenth century, the more clearly I see that we don't know much. BTW, I have no doubt that Harlan was talking about real stuff. Phil, we can't lament over the fact that most of the travelers through the region couldn't be bothered with telling us anything about what the women were weaving (when they had time), then, when we find a guy like Harlan, who says a few things, pass him off as "fanciful," can we? 🤪

Rich



October 17th,  
2013, 08:01 AM

#201

[James  
Blanchard](#)  
Members

Green

Hi all,

Join Date: Jun  
2008  
Posts: 59

I am not sure what an "electric" green looks like.

Here are three different pieces that I think are from this "genre". They each have a somewhat different green. They all look like they could be natural to my eye, but I'll admit that is not based on anything empirical.

James







October 17th, 2013, 02:54 AM

#200

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
 Location: Tokyo  
 Posts: 56



Paul

I think we have a right to expect a higher standard than that! Maybe Joel has some confirmation from a second source about the rugs Harlon states the Hazarah made.

*Last edited by Philip Loftus; October 17th, 2013 at 06:50 AM.*



October 17th, 2013, 02:19 AM

#199

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
 Location: Tokyo  
 Posts: 56



Hi Pierre

Unfortunately I've not found any source writing in the 19th c who delved deeply enough into the subject to confirm the type of knot used. Maybe Joel has someone giving this info in the Pittenger list of sources.

However that being said your point about the assymetrical knots of the pieces v the symetrical knots used by Hazarah the last 40 yrs and possibly longer is well taken. I agree that it seems another point against Hazarah origin for the purple orange green group.

One piece I own shows the yellow-indigo flecking in the green clearly. That piece is picture 2 in my last post with pics. The others don't, in fact they are more uniform and more of a forest green in saturation and tone. Fwiw I think you are likely right again about the chance of them not being natural.

Philip



October 17th, 2013, 02:00 AM

#198

### Paul Smith

Members

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 11



I wouldn't be so quick to dismiss Harlan as "fanciful" (post #194)--apparently my earlier comment was overlooked, but in addition to serving Dost Mohammed...the guy was the Khan of the Hazaras. I'm thinking he might have picked up a little knowledge of the Hazaras on his way to that august position, even though he held it for but a few months. But, seriously, of all these guys, THIS westerner spent some quality time in the field. Also, could he be referring to the, uh, "camel color" that is common in "Baluch-group" weavings as being yellow? That would explain a lot. Probably not our candidates for the colorful pieces that are the focus of this wandering inquiry, but "camel," blue, and "crimson" describe an essential color scheme of the region.

Paul



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Virtual Show and Tell



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