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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 6th, 2013, 08:06 PM

#77

[Rich Larkin](#)
Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 36



OK, I'll shut up already. Just one more point. Regarding the so-called M gul, I note that it tends to employ three different designs used as outlines to set off the concentric elements that make it up: the angular hooked line, as in James' opening image; the softer hooked line with more rounded elements; and the zig-zag line. It seems the choice and arrangement of these lines in different examples may be deliberate. Any agreement, and does anyone think the choice may be diagnostic as to provenance?

Rich

P. S.: I think a decent speculation can be launched to the point that this general design has Anatolian antecedents.



October 6th, 2013, 07:52 PM

#76

[Rich Larkin](#)
Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 36



Hi Folks,

The following may be slightly off topic, but in case we make any headway on the Seistan question, I would like to put up two examples of a type I would consider to be known as Seistan types in the trade.





Sorry not to have a picture of the back for structure, but the rug isn't available just now. One can see that the wefts are light brown from the "portal" created on the front from modest corrosion of the brown. 🤔 I acquired the rug in about 1966 in this condition. I would guess that it is about 80 KPSI.

This next one is problematical in that a couple of the colors that are not lurid will run like Kool-Aid in contact with water. But I consider it to be from the same group.



It is balisht size, rather fine for the type (approx. 135 kpsi), and utilizes very soft and glossy wool.

Anyway, I wonder whether they fit into the Seistan category.

Rich



October 6th, 2013, 06:37 PM

#75

[Rich Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 36



Hi Folks,

I'm weighing in on this late, my apologies. I was hitting it in brief takes and having trouble getting the primary gist of it. Reading it through, I'm still wondering how the disparate themes mentioned relate to one another.

- There's mention of an 'M' group, which is presumably the range of rugs ordinarily and somewhat shakily called "Mushwani."
- There's mention of Seistan and "the Seistan hypothesis," and the question raised whether it is dead, though the readers are not sure what it is.
- There's mention of Baluch rugs with a particularly dynamic palette (aka "electric"), and the implication that it may occur in either Mushwani rugs, or Seistan rugs, or both, unless they are the same thing.

I'm aware of all of these issues, and that each of them carries implicit questions. After seventy plus posts, it doesn't seem there has been much illumination, or even a sharpening of the questions. For my own part, I've always thought the "Mushwani" category was somewhat dubious. There may well be an ethnic group bearing the name that weaves, but it seems doubtful they could have been responsible for all of the weavings often attributed to them. Of course, that phenomenon is not unusual in the lore of rugs, where one particular group has come to be the figurehead for several groups whose weavings have points of similarity.

"Seistan" is a name I take to have been abused in a somewhat different way. It has been commonly used to describe Baluch type rugs with a lighter, possibly brighter palette than the usual. I have believed for a number of years that a broader range of rugs have been attributed to Seistan that should have been only because they exhibited coloration more varied and lighter than what presumably came from Northern Khorassan. I did believe, however, that there probably was a core of rugs that did come from the Seistan area. Now, in this thread, I take it Henry is suggesting that provenance is inaccurate, but that perhaps Seistan served as a collection center similar to the way other places gave their name to rugs from other locations by reason of the rugs having been shipped out of them. If that is so, I'd like to have some evidence for the claim.

Henry, you posed this question:

Quote:

Focusing only on the types of old rugs we are examining in this thread, is anyone here aware of anything other than hearsay to bolster Tom Cole's tentative pronouncement of the Sistan Hypothesis 15 or so years ago?

Perhaps my response is naïve, but the following item from Edwards' *The Persian Carpet* should be worth something:

Quote:

An inferior type of Baluchi rug is woven by nomad Baluch tribes—and in lesser degree by villagers—who inhabit the Zabol (Nasratabad) area of Seistan, and the Helmand delta. They are generally lighter in colour than the Baluchis of Northern Khurasan, the principal ground shades being a light reddish brown or camel. Thus they lack the richness and depth of colour of the true Baluch. The deeper shades of blue and red are, however, fairly common in the older pieces. The rugs have single wefts and the Persian knot is used.

I think he was wrong about the predominance of single-wefted construction among this or any other type of Baluch group rug (I own one single-wefted Baluch group rug), and it tends to undermine his credibility on the general subject, but Edwards was a man who spent his entire adult life in the oriental rug business, a substantial part of it in country. He was reporting on what he observed in the 1940s and earlier. I find it convincing, especially in light of the widespread use in the business of the term "Seistan" to describe this class of rugs. I recall a repairman in Beirut telling me in about 1967 that one of them was from Seistan (an attribution theretofore unknown to me at the time). I'm confident he hadn't read Edwards' book.

BTW, Henry, you asked me about my experience with this group of weavings back in post #8 of this thread.

Quote:

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?

Sorry, I missed that question the first time through. In fact, I don't really recall having seen many of them in my early forays into rugs. My experience in the fields has largely been in two different periods: mid-60s to about 1990 or so; and ca. 2000 to the present. (Rugs were on the back burner for about ten years while my kids were growing up.) Anyway, it was only in my second incarnation that I began to see the strongly colored ones in any numbers. I would like to know what is what with that group of rugs, and whether they form a discrete group, or whether there are different groups that produced such things. Indeed, in this thread, there doesn't seem to be assurance among the readers of the thread about what rugs belong under the rubric ("electric" or "dynamic", if those two terms cover the same ground) and where to draw the line. As far as the thread is concerned, as you suggested yourself, I think photographic influences make it very difficult to compare pieces in terms of the vigor of the palette.

Finally, though Tom Cole doesn't need me to defend him, I would suggest his remark of fifteen years ago that certain lighter palette rugs were "apparently" from the Seistan region simply reflected his awareness of the general understanding of that fact in the business; and that it was not an announcement of his intention to fully explicate that question.

BTW, Henry, I find your comment about Jerry Anderson bemusing.

Quote:

Quote:

Quote:

For what it's worth, Jerry Anderson suggested...

I think it is worth pretty close to 0.00 +/- .005. Just my opinion only, of course.

I *do not* mean to start a Jerry Anderson retrospective here, which can be extremely hazardous, but he was someone who spent many years on the ground in the region, spoke several local languages, knew the culture intimately, and was interested. That entitles his statements to some respect, I would think.

Rich

Last edited by Rich Larkin; October 6th, 2013 at 07:37 PM.



October 5th,
2013, 07:48 PM

#74

[Chuck
Wagner](#)
Members

Join Date: May
2008
Posts: 9



Hi all,

Here's a bag that showed up in an earlier TTek discussion with Tom Cole participating, that was generally accepted to fall into his Sistan bin.

I think the piled shoulders - in combination with the green - are an additional criterion for this determination. Tom would have to verify; I have no direct knowledge.

It has some of the weft substitution work Marla seeks. And likely, some unnatural dyes.

Regards
Chuck Wagner





October 5th, 2013, 06:03 PM

#73

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Marla Mallett**

I must admit that I am quite mystified by this thread. I've read lots of speculation, but not a shred of concrete evidence. I've not heard of a single person "in the field" who has been able to state that he actually encountered one of these "Sistan" rugs or yastiks in a Sistan household. Labels slapped on exhibited or published rugs does not constitute evidence, nor does conjecture by merchants who feel obliged to attribute some kind of provenance to their pieces.

Does it not seem odd to anybody that with all of the Baluch weft-substitution weavings known to be from Sistan/Baluchestan Province in Iran and across the border in southeast Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan--endless bags, trappings and kilims--that we cannot find a single example of this structure on one of the tentatively labeled "Sistan" knotted-pile rugs and yastiks shown on this thread? When weft-substitution details appear routinely on the kilim ends of thousands of knotted-pile Baluch rugs?

Marla

Hi Marla,

Though it hasn't been a focus of this thread, I don't agree that there are no examples with weft-substitution technique on knotted-pile pieces of this genre. I think that the lack of examples stems partly from the fact that many of these articles have had their flat-woven backs removed before they make it to the market for some reason. Also, there is a relative paucity of examples in the rug format, particularly with extant kilim ends.

Here are a couple of examples from my own pile.





What I found somewhat interesting was the similarities to the designs we see on flatwoven articles from Baluchistan province (Pakistan), particularly the parallel rows of triangles linked to a central line.

I agree that first-hand evidence would be best, but we don't have that yet, and for old pieces we likely never will. In that case, if we agree that there is a distinct genre then our only alternative is to just say that we have no idea where this group of weavings comes from.

James



October 5th, 2013, 05:34 PM

#72

[Joel Greifinger](#)
Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 49

Quote:

Does it not seem odd to anybody that with all of the Baluch weft-substitution

weavings known to be from Sistan/Baluchestan Province in Iran and across the border in southeast Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan--endless bags, trappings and kilims--that we cannot find a single example of this structure on one of the tentatively labeled "Sistan" knotted-pile rugs and yastiks shown on this thread?

Hi Marla,

It does seem odd, but only because now you've pointed it out.

Weft-substitution seems to be, at the least, an unusual occurrence on these pieces. Here's what appears to be an exception:



On this, the chevrons might be weft-substitution but could also be slit-tapestry, as on James's rug:



Joel



October 5th, 2013, 02:53 PM

#71

[Marla Mallett](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008

Posts: 5



I must admit that I am quite mystified by this thread. I've read lots of speculation, but not a shred of concrete evidence. I've not heard of a single person "in the field" who has been able to state that he actually encountered one of these "Sistan" rugs or yastiks in a Sistan household. Labels slapped on exhibited or published rugs does not constitute evidence, nor does conjecture by merchants who feel obliged to attribute some kind of provenance to their pieces.

Does it not seem odd to anybody that with all of the Baluch weft-substitution weavings known to be from Sistan/Baluchestan Province in Iran and across the border in southeast Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan--endless bags, trappings and kilims--that we cannot find a single example of this structure on one of the tentatively labeled "Sistan" knotted-pile rugs and yastiks shown on this thread? When weft-substitution details appear routinely on the kilim ends of thousands of knotted-pile Baluch rugs?

Marla



October 5th, 2013, 02:08 PM

#70

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008

Location: Massachusetts

Posts: 49



Hi Henry,

I wish you a speedy and full recovery from your debilitating catarrh.



When vigor returns, I hope you will fulfill your promissory tidbit:

Quote:

Do you have any proposal for the origin of this group of rugs?

Yes. ;)

So, while I must admit that I share James's skepticism:

Quote:

I don't think we have much information about the origin of any old "Baluch" group weaving that is not based on hearsay, so even if we want to re-assign this group to another region or weaving group, I am having a hard time understanding how we might do that with any confidence.

and am persuaded by the reasoning in his last post, I nonetheless will reiterate my pleasurable anticipation of hearing your evidence for an alternative to "the Seistan Hypothesis".

Quote:

I will expand on this in due course.

Looking forward to it.

Again, I hope you feel better soon. ☺

Joel



October 5th, 2013, 01:02 PM

#69

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59



Henry,

I hope you are feeling better soon.

I don't think we have much information about the origin of any old "Baluch" group weaving that is not based on hearsay, so even if we want to re-assign this group to another region or weaving group, I am having a hard time understanding how we might do that with any confidence.

Even with the hearsay around "Sistan" weavings, it seems rather widespread. Much of my experience in sourcing these pieces comes from a dealer with decades of experience in Afghanistan, who doesn't read English. He consistently attributes this genre of weaving to "Sistan", and generally points to the palette (and particularly the extensive use of vibrant greens and oranges, and plenty of purple) as an important indicator.

I don't have a personal hypothesis on this, but I am generally swayed by the particular colour palette as a way of grouping these weavings. It might not be much stronger than "hearsay", but I have asked myself the somewhat rhetorical question: "where else in that region would you consistently find a palette that included these colours?"



This is from a kilim of the sort that Konieczny claimed was sourced in Pakistan's Baluchistan province, Chagai district. Thus far, I see no reason to re-situate those flatwoven materials from that region of Pakistan. If we consult a map, we find the following:



So, we now have adjacent geographic regions that seem to stand apart in in the region regarding aspects of their dye palette for woven woolen textiles.

So, simplistically, until we see further evidence contradicting the notion, I remain inclined to follow both the diverse hearsay and the colours to follow the "Sistan hypothesis". But I remain open-minded to persuasive arguments in new directions.

James



October 5th, 2013, 11:13 AM

#68

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Anything?

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky**
Sabahi, however unwittingly, collates information that casts grave doubt on both: the Sistan, and the Baluch, hypotheses. I will expand on this in due course.

Hi All-

I am fighting an upper respiratory infection (common cold) so merciless as to leave me in fear that this next paragraph or two will be my last act on Earth. Wet nurses have been called for.

Should i live to return to this thread, i would be delighted to see that the question (on the Sistan hypothesis) has already been settled. I take to my bed with this last question:

Focusing only on the types of old rugs we are examining in this thread, is anyone here aware of anything **other than hearsay** to bolster Tom Cole's tentative pronouncement of the Sistan Hypothesis 15 or so years ago? I would ask Tom myself but the wet nurses are here and i'm going to have my hands full.

:) and ;) and the emoticon for feeling miserable...

Henry



October 5th, 2013, 01:00 AM


#67

[James Blanchard](#)



Members
Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky** 
James-

Those are, of course, two seperate pieces (in my last two posts).

Henry

Yes, of course. I was referring to the first one you posted (with the corroded brown and purple / aubergine).

James



October 4th, 2013, 07:24 PM

#66

[Henry Sadovsky](#)
Registered



James-

Those are, of course, two seperate pieces (in my last two posts).

Henry




October 4th, 2013, 06:42 PM

#65

[James Blanchard](#)
Members



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky** 
Look what i found under teh bed!

Now... if i could only find the rest of it...

:)

Very intriguing.

Purple, saffron orange, typical gul -- must be Seistan! 😊

James



October 4th, 2013, 06:30 PM

#64

[Henry Sadovsky](#)
Registered

 ... and another...

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

.
. .
. . .



.
 .
 .
 Wait! I think i see more...
 ;)



October 4th,
 2013, 06:20 PM

#63

[Henry Sadovsky](#)
 Registered

Found one...

Look what i found under teh bed!

Join Date: Oct
 2012
 Posts: 60



Now... if i could only find the rest of it...

:)



October 4th, 2013, 05:35 PM

#62

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

Quote:

Originally Posted by **James Blanchard**

But there seems to be some evidence that there was the use of wool dyed with a palette including purples and fiery oranges, as we see in some of the flatweaves said to be from that region. I presented this thought in relation to your intimation that the aridity of the region might preclude such a range of dyeing colours.

Hi James-

Yes, that is a good point.

Btw, what can you tell us of the circumstances/locales where you have acquiring these things?

Henry



October 4th, 2013, 05:09 PM

#61

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky**
I have been led to believe that there is no tradition of pile weaving in Baluchistan. Do you know otherwise?

Henry

Henry

I personally don't know of any evidence of a long-standing tradition of pile weaving in Baluchistan (Pakistan). But there seems to be some evidence that there was the use of wool dyed with a palette including purples and fiery oranges, as we see in some of the flatweaves said to be from that region. I presented this thought in relation to your intimation that the aridity of the region might preclude such a range of dyeing colours. By logical extension, I thought that the proximity between that region of Baluchistan and Sistan might be interesting in terms of the palette of wool weavings.

James



October 4th, 2013, 04:58 PM

#60

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

Quote:

Originally Posted by **James Blanchard**
Do you agree that there is a definable genre of rugs embedded within this assembly of examples?

Hi James-

Do i agree with what i stated in post #2? Sure.

Quote:

Do you have any proposal for the origin of this group of rugs?

Yes. ;)

Quote:

For what it's worth, Jerry Anderson suggested...

I think it is worth pretty close to 0.00 +/- .005. Just my opinion only, of course.

Quote:

There is (a) genre of flat-weaves that tend to have a wide colour palette (greens and purples), with rather good dyes, which are said to come from rather arid areas of Baluchistan (Pakistan).

I have been led to believe that there is no tradition of pile weaving in Baluchistan. Do you know otherwise?

Henry

Last edited by Henry Sadovsky; October 4th, 2013 at 05:06 PM. Reason: To add smilie winkie face



October 4th,
2013, 04:42 PM

#59

**James
Blanchard**


Members

Join Date: Jun
2008

Posts: 59



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Joel Greifinger** 
Another discussion of flatweaves attributed to Sistan is in the "Symmetrical Baluch..." thread at posts #215-240:
http://www.turkotek.com/misc_00134/border.html

Joel

Thanks for reminding me, Joel.

Below is one of the colours that I see quite often in rugs that are attributed to "Sistan", and not so often in other rugs "in the Baluch tradition".

It is safflower, which Konieczny asserts is an important dye-stuff used in Baluchistan for wool weavings.

James



October 4th, 2013, 04:05 PM

#58

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky**

Hi All-

The Sistan Hypothesis:

*Tom Cole, HALI #97, focusing on **antique** "so-called 'Baluch' rugs" (subsequently referred to on his website as "Rugs Made in the Baluch Style"):*

James- I believe that the piece that inspired you to start this thread did not originate in S(e)istan. Neither (i believe) did any of the other pieces illustrated (in this thread). I have little doubt that some (or all) made their way to market via Sistan.

Henry

Hi Henry,

Very interesting. Do you agree that there is a definable genre of rugs embedded within this assembly of examples? Do you have any proposal for the origin of this group of rugs?

For what it's worth, Jerry Anderson suggested "Shahraki Sarbandi" tribes for one of this type of rug, from the Sistan region (<http://www.tcoletribalrugs.com/article10JA.html>).

There is another genre of flat-weaves that tend to have a wide colour palette (greens and purples), with rather good dyes, which are said to come from rather arid areas of Baluchistan (Pakistan). I've shown an example below. These have been attributed by Konieczny to that region.

James



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