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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 8th, 2013, 01:23 AM

#97

[Philip Loftus](#)
Members

Join Date: Apr 2012
Location: Tokyo
Posts: 56



Just to expand a bit on my last post the pieces that fit into the highly saturated group must come from a weaving group who used the wool of animals living in the uplands or mountains. That group had access to superior dyers or themselves were those dyers. They may have been living in the mountains themselves or they may have purchased or had the wool brought to them. In either case they would also be located close enough to benefit from superior water quality.

Philip



October 8th, 2013, 12:47 AM

#96

[Paul Smith](#)
Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 11



Joel,

While we're on the subject of random thoughts, was that first kilim you posted in the onslaught of colorful Baluchi kilims mine? It is a dead ringer for my kilim, maple floor, and arts-and-crafts rocking chair, and I think I posted it here in Turkotek years ago. I wish these folks had woven more pile pieces with these colors, I have to say. The abrash in that kilim takes that green on one end, through several shades of darkening emerald shades, finishing off in the deepest surmey indigo. I would love to see that palette in a prayer rug. Whoever brewed these dyes had chops, as we say in the music biz...

Paul



October 7th, 2013, 11:18 PM

#95

[Philip Loftus](#)
Members

Join Date: Apr 2012
Location: Tokyo
Posts: 56



At the risk of stating the obvious the dye and mordants and the water quality are all responsible for the electric colours and wool sheen. In addition the sheep producing this kind of lanolin rich wool can't have been scrabbling around any dusty and arid plains. Just a random thought.

Philip



October 7th, 2013, 07:30

#94

PM

[Marla Mallett](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 5

Since this discussion is focusing on COLOR, I wonder what you all might think of Jerry Anderson's ideas on the subject. Several blanket statements in the 1994 HALI article raise red flags for me, and I also find his commentary on color palettes strange--that dark, somber tonalities are a sign of maturity, while strong colors are a sign of immaturity.

"HALI: What accounts for the dark, 'sombre' tonality of Baluch group rugs?

JA: Maturity. Sistan had a very developed culture. The Turkoman used to be like that, but then they began raiding northern Iran, rampaging, pillaging and looting, showing off. Thus they made these strongly coloured rugs. The redder the better, very immature. The Baluch, who live in the desert, like the darker colours, and of course the dyestuffs available to them yielded those shades. There were exceptions among the groups located further north where Turkoman influence was greater, thus the rugs are sometimes redder, as in the Salar Khani rugs of northern Khorasan."

October 7th, 2013, 04:46
PM

#93

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Joel Greifinger**

Hi James,

I've been assuming (for all of the usual, suspect reasons) that this type of ('POG'?) kilim generally labeled "Sistan" is distinct from the Zagar Mengal pieces that Konieczny shows in his book and sold to the British Museum. Do you suspect that despite the stylistic differences that they were made by the same group in the same region?

Joel

Hi Joel,

I have been thinking about these, and realize that they seem to share technical and design details with the Zagar Mengal pieces illustrated by Koneieczny. I think that the principal difference is the use of somewhat more vibrant colours, though with the same basic palette. It perhaps speaks to Marla's point that we might be wise not to put superficial boundaries on the weaving area(s).

James

October 7th, 2013, 04:31
PM

#92

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Marla Mallett**

Part of what confuses these discussions seems to be that different individuals use the term "Seistan" or "Sistan" to identify different areas--not only southeastern Iran, but also parts of southwestern Afghanistan and western Pakistan. How inclusive the terms are seems to vary depending upon who is drawing the maps. The same with "Baluchistan." When reading old accounts that talk about rugs from "Baluchistan", we need to keep in mind also that Iran's large southeastern province is actually named SISTAN AND BALUCHESTAN PROVINCE. I've even read references to "Zabolistan," which presumably refers to the northernmost part of this area, since Zabol is nearly on the Iran/Afghan border. I wonder how important the modern political borders actually are to these discussions... I would also like to know where most of the rugs being discussed have been marketed.

Marla

This is a good point, Marla.

I think that in this context, with the fluidity of the populations and the changing boundaries over time, the use of the term "Sistan" or "Seistan" is probably best thought of as referring to a genre of weaving that is definable enough to receive its own categorization. One could still debate whether there is merit in linking this group to weavers in a region which is now "Sistan" (SE Iran), or to other weaving groups over a larger area in that region.

However, I don't think I've ever seen this category of weaving being attributed to any other major tribal weaving group or area, which is interesting in itself. I am aware that some have suggested "Hazara" for attribution, but I am still not certain how that was arrived at. These are not particularly rare weavings among dealers in that region, and yet Parsons didn't give them a passing mention in his book on the Rugs of Afghanistan. I would have thought that if there was a major source in Afghanistan of this particularly distinctive group of weavings, he might well have known and written about it.

James



October 7th, 2013, 04:30 PM

#91

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 49



Hi James,

I've been assuming (for all of the usual, suspect reasons) that this type of ('POG?') kilim generally labeled "Sistan" is distinct from the Zaggar Mengal pieces that Konieczny shows in his book and sold to the British Museum. Do you suspect that despite the stylistic differences that they were made by the same group in the same region?







Joel



October 7th, 2013, 04:15 PM

#90

[James Blanchard](#)
Members



Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky**

Hi James-

Do any of the snippets below seem to you to be inconsistent with a Sistan origin? Another way to put it is- do any of the snippets below (taking into account the medium we are using) not say 'Sistan' to you?

To facilitate communication, shall we say that the palette above consists of (sort of) 7 columns. So... column x, y from the top/bottom sort of thing...

Thanks,

Henry

Hi Henry,

They are just snippets, but overall I would say that pretty much all of them fit with the general palette that says "Sistan" to me.

There are a couple that I'm not so sure of based on the picture provided.

(column, row) (1,1) and (5,6).

James



October 7th, 2013, 03:37 PM

#89

[Henry Sadovsky](#)
Registered

Lots of color!

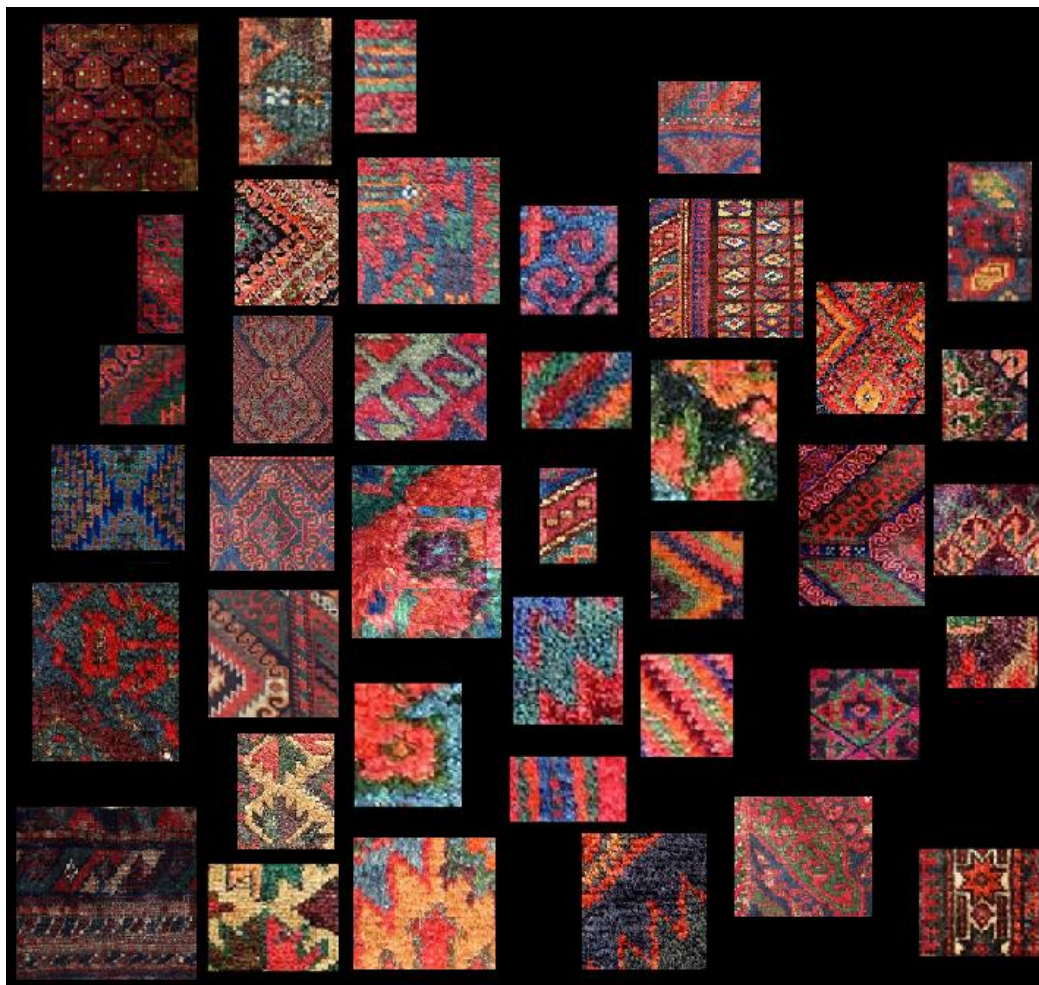
Quote:

Originally Posted by **James Blanchard**

I have had the opportunity to handle a fair number of weavings that are represented in Konieczny's group that is attributed directly to W. Baluchistan, Pakistan (Chagai district). Each time I encounter one, I am immediately struck by the palette and inclined to group them with the "Sistan" weavings.

Hi James-

Do any of the snippets below seem to you to be inconsistent with a Sistan origin? Another way to put it is- do any of the snippets below (taking into account the medium we are using) not say 'Sistan' to you?



To facilitate communication, shall we say that the palette above consists of (sort of) 7 columns. So... column x, y from the top/bottom sort of thing...

Thanks,

Henry



October 7th, 2013, 03:19 PM

#88

[Marla Mallett](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 5



Part of what confuses these discussions seems to be that different individuals use the term "Seistan" or "Sistan" to identify different areas--not only southeastern Iran, but also parts of southwestern Afghanistan and western Pakistan. How inclusive the terms are seems to vary depending upon who is drawing the maps. The same with "Baluchistan." When reading old accounts that talk about rugs from "Baluchistan", we need to keep in mind also that Iran's large southeastern province is actually named SISTAN AND BALUCHESTAN PROVINCE. I've even read references to "Zabolistan," which presumably refers to the northernmost part of this area, since Zabol is nearly on the Iran/Afghan border. I wonder how important the modern political borders actually are to these discussions... I would also like to know where most of the rugs being discussed have been marketed.

Marla



October 7th, 2013, 12:53 PM

#87

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Richard Larkin** *Hi James,**I'm reminded that a familiar refrain in the literature through the years is that the rugs often called "Baluchistan" (several spelling variations, of course) weren't actually woven there, but that the region produced flatweaves. Frequently, there would be a throwaway comment to the effect that the stray pile woven piece from the region would be of poor quality. However, I don't ever recall seeing, either in the wool or in published image, an example of the craft. How about you? I always imagined something in about three dark, muddy colors, poorly drawn, with about 20 kpsi. But maybe not!**Rich*

Hi Rich,

I suppose it's possible that I've seen or handled a pile-woven piece from that region, but how would I have ever known? Most of the knotted-pile pieces with that palette have been quite well made, with good drawing and proportions. I've seen plenty of crude knotted-pile weaving from that general region (Afghanistan, E Persia, etc.), but never with the GOP palette.

James

October 7th, 2013, 12:44
PM

#86

[Richard Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 6

Hi James,

I'm reminded that a familiar refrain in the literature through the years is that the rugs often called "Baluchistan" (several spelling variations, of course) weren't actually woven there, but that the region produced flatweaves. Frequently, there would be a throwaway comment to the effect that the stray pile woven piece from the region would be of poor quality. However, I don't ever recall seeing, either in the wool or in published image, an example of the craft. How about you? I always imagined something in about three dark, muddy colors, poorly drawn, with about 20 kpsi. But maybe not!

Rich

October 7th, 2013, 12:20
PM

#85

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Richard Larkin** *Hi James,**I don't want to be too distracted from my efforts in restoring Henry to health to miss your observations about the apparent similarity in the palettes of some of the flatweaves of Baluchistan proper (in Pakistan), à là Konieczny, to the so-called "electric" Baluches. You are right, and it is a very interesting observation. Those shades seem too distinctive for the resemblance to be coincidental in my estimation.**I find in general that it is difficult for me to make qualitative or comparative judgments about rugs in images on Turkotek when I don't recognize the images to be examples of things I've handled with some frequency. If I believe I do understand just what the thing is, it seems possible to adjust for differences on the screen that result from photographic anomalies, lack of sharpness, inaccurate color rendition, etc. (Thus, my hesitancy in judging the myriad of images in this thread, as there are several items about which I am unsure.)*

Anyway, my lack of direct experience with the kinds of things that appeared in Konieczny's book limits my ability to ratify your observation too confidently to the extent of connecting the two groups of weavings. I haven't handled a lot of the "electric" group, for that matter. Are you suggesting a connection in terms of provenance? Do you have a lot of experience with either group?

Rich

Hi Rich,

I have had the opportunity to handle a fair number of weavings that are represented in Konieczny's group that is attributed directly to W. Baluchistan, Pakistan (Chagai district). Each time I encounter one, I am immediately struck by the palette and inclined to group them with the "Sistan" weavings. In fact, when I first acquired a large kilim of the type from Konieczny in the British Museum, I erroneously attributed it to Sistan, since I couldn't match that palette to any other weaving group in Afghanistan, East Persia or Turkmen territory. The distinctive palette leads me to consider re-dubbing this the POG (purple, orange, green) group of textiles.

Below are a couple more, which I think are from the Pakistan portion of Baluchistan.



Based on Marla's earlier post, I am also keen to see if we can see any design links between the Pakistan Baluch flat-woven articles and the flat-woven elements of the "POG" group of pile weavings. I would welcome any examples to explore this further.

James



October 7th, 2013, 11:49 AM

#84

[Richard Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 6



Hi James,

I don't want to be too distracted from my efforts in restoring Henry to health to miss your observations about the apparent similarity in the palettes of some of the flatweaves of Baluchistan proper (in Pakistan), á la Konieczny, to the so-called "electric" Baluches. You are right, and it is a very interesting observation. Those shades seem too distinctive for the resemblance to be coincidental in my estimation.

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Rich



October 7th, 2013, 03:29 AM

#83

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

Who's talking about what?

Hi All-





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.

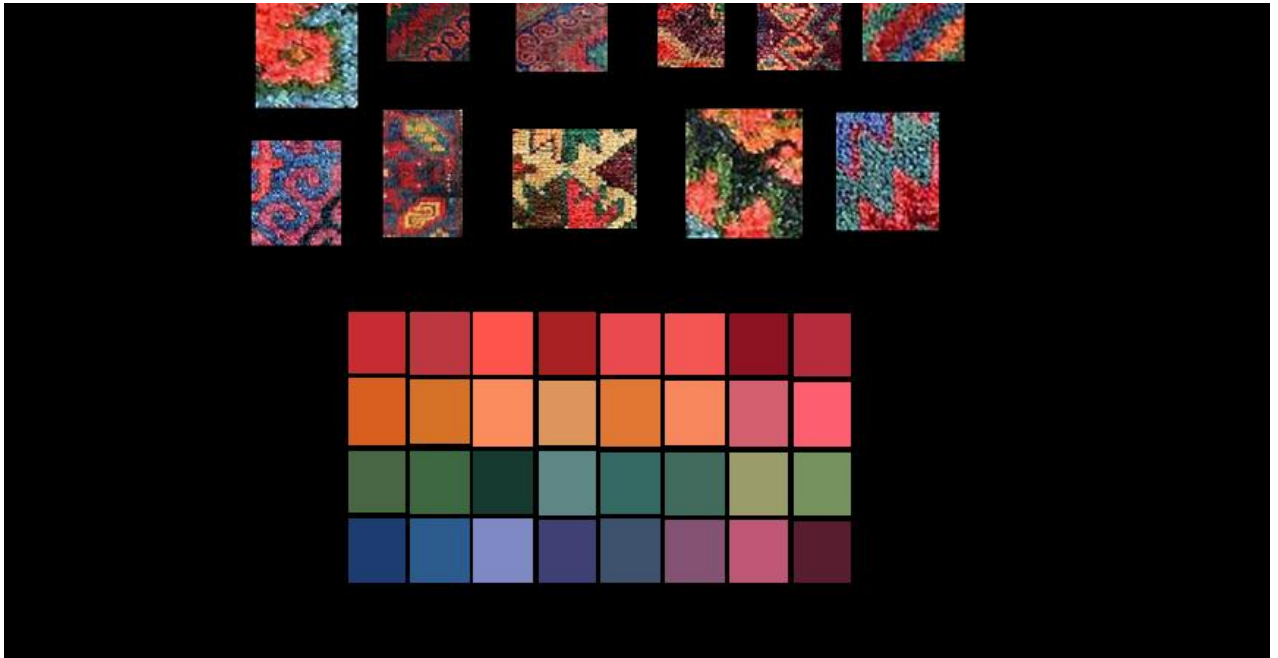
Cecil Edwards



The Sistan (southeast Persian) aesthetic is a different animal altogether, employing hardly any of the 'classical' themes of Khorasan and rarely echoing the Afghan renditions. Few if any Turkmen relationships are apparent; individual repeat patterns (perceived as continuing beyond the borders to infinity) are seldom used. On the other hand, the use of colour and space in abstract form may be the single most obvious characteristic of typical Sistan weavings.

Tom Cole





Now... to retrieve the half of my liver that i just coughed out...

"Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night."
 Bette Davis, as Margo Channing, in "All About Eve."

Henry



October 7th, 2013, 12:13 AM

#82

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
 Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Chuck Wagner**

Hi

Well, here's some bathroom reading assignments for you all...

http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00098/s98t2.htm, which is a thread from
http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00098/salon.html, where we all had at it several years ago.

Cheers
 Chuck Wagner

Thanks, Chuck.

Here is a tidbit that is relevant (from a post by Tom Cole)
http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00098/s98t2.htm:

Quote:

Re: #7, please refer to Rugs of the Wandering Baluch for a similar example, plate 37. These rugs are from Seistan region. How do I know? Because I have purchased them on the other side of the border in Pakistan from traders who have brought them from houses in villages located in Seistan. The traders bought them from the people whose families had woven them in Seistan, from people who had always lived in Seistan. These "main rugs" appear in the same long rug format, a main rug format that is not seen elsewhere in Baluch rugs

(rectangular or square shaped main rugs are more common among the other groups). Why are their carpets this shape? The weavers are a sedentary people who live in elongated mud houses; the rugs are made to mimic the shape of their rooms. How do I know this? Murray Eiland, who has traveled in Seistan told me of the shape of their houses as did Jerry Anderson, privately, subsequent to the interview in HALI 76 in response to this very query.

Perhaps it goes some part of the way towards answering Marla's concern about lack of more direct evidence about provenance.

Here is rug #7 to which he refers:



James



October 6th, 2013, 11:48 PM

#81

[Chuck Wagner](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 9



Hi

Well, here's some bathroom reading assignments for you all...

http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00098/s98t2.htm, which is a thread from http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00098/salon.html, where we all had at it several years ago.

Cheers
Chuck Wagner



October 6th, 2013, 11:26 PM

#80

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59



Hi Henry,

I'm happy to hear of your stabilizing health, and your continued engagement.

I would dispute the notion that the attribution of a definable group of rugs to Sistan is entirely dependent on Tom Cole's writing on the matter. It is a more widely considered hypothesis, as I have noted in a previous post.

I would like to pick up two themes that I hope we don't lose (pending the publication of your upcoming "M Group" thread).

1) There are particular components of the colour palette for this "Sistan" group that seems to only have commonality with flatwoven pieces from the adjacent "Chagai" district of Baluchistan, Pakistan. In particular, this includes purples, greens and a fiery orange that I don't see in other weavings "in the Baluch tradition", or other weaving groups in the region. I think this might be significant, but it could just be circumstantial.

2) Marla Mallett helpfully pushed us to look for flat-woven parallels with the weaving of the adjacent Baluchistan region of Pakistan. Now that I look at a few pieces, I see not only the float-weft technique, but also a particular "parallel triangle tree" design that seems shared between the flat-woven components of "Sistan" group piled pieces and the "Baluchistan" flat-weaves.

I look forward to your upcoming thread with great interest. I'd also like to hear your thoughts about where else we might find this colour palette, "electric" and "unplugged".

James



October 6th, 2013, 10:27 PM

#79

[Rich Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 36



Hi Henry,

My larger point about the three thematic notions I bulleted at the top of my post was that I was having a hard time grasping the interaction or overlap, if any, and I was having a similarly hard time getting their precise profile. Now, if there really is going to be a separate thread or salon in which the "M group" is clearly defined, I agree I'm being impatient and should keep quiet and see what happens.

BTW, I didn't see my horsehair-stuffed, intact (sort of) set of khorjins being of the ilk of the "dynamic" or "electric" palette genre. I was referring to the more sedate group of alternately colored rugs, sometimes referred to as Seistan, in which a lighter palette predominates. That group has been recognized much longer than 15 years. I suspect that pillow isn't quite so dark as compared with some of the other items in the thread, but that its darkish look is a photographic effect. It definitely is not, however, one of the light bright pieces Tom Cole was evidently speaking of.

Do I understand that you are not being skeptical of the possibility that the Seistan region produced a range of Baluch type rugs with a distinctive palette, as has been the belief in "rugdom" for a number of years? But rather, your skepticism is limited to Tom Cole's attribution of this narrower group of very strongly colored ("electric") rugs that have apparently showed up in significant numbers relatively recently?

My use of the term "defend" in regard to Tom Cole was a response to my sense that one or two persons seemed to be mildly chiding him for not having followed up on an implied promise to "flesh out" a theory about Seistan and a group of rugs. It didn't seem to me he was promising anything, though I may be mistaken. I thought his reference to Seistan was to the larger group of rugs attributed there, and that "apparently" (his term) reflected that he was accepting the prevailing wisdom at face value. As I say, I may be mistaken, and maybe Tom did take a leap regarding these suddenly ubiquitous rugs.

I understand your comment about Jerry Anderson's opinion better, and please excuse my imputation to you of disrespect in that regard. Even so, I think most wishful thinking commentators on Baluch rugs (including YHS) find it necessary to form conclusions about nineteenth century rugs by studying twentieth century examples. When one is as conversant with the affairs of the twentieth century Baluchi as Anderson seems to have been, there might be something to it. Certainly, considering the paucity of real information in this area, his comments must be worth more than 0.00% with an error margin of .005, plus or minus. In addition, I think your use of the term, "hearsay," in that context is a red herring that only tends unfairly to discredit the source (i. e., Anderson).

But, I'm so pleased that my rantings nevertheless had a healing effect on you. Breathe freely and openly with my compliments! 🍻🍻🍻

Rich



October 6th,
2013, 09:03 PM

#78

Henry Sadovsky
Registered

For Petes sake...

Hi All-

Join Date: Oct
2012
Posts: 60

I remain ill, but that does not dissuade me from making the effort to rebut Rich's well organized and seemingly thoughtful post. Any emphases in the quoted texts are as in the original.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Rich Larkin**

- 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.

Really?! Let's see.

- **Re: M-Group, and 'electric' subgroup:**

From post [#8](#)

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky**



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.

Rich's piece ("your piece" in the above) is represented by the images in the 2nd row left, and row 4 of the montage. The montage was to make the explicit point that i did not consider his piece to be of the same 'electric' palette as the others. I did subsequently point out that the image in the 2nd row right (the piece presented in the OP) was not clearly 'electric.'

Post [#13](#) further defines M-Group and the 'electric' subgroup of it. Rather than quote the entirety of it, i ask all those similarly befuddled as Rich to take a good read of it.

From post [#29](#):

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky** 

... i am using 'electric' as a descriptor. Do any of the images you posted suggest an 'electric' palette? That is entirely subjective. However, when compared to some of the other images in this thread... Decide for yourself.

FWIW, i used to (tounge-in-cheek) call them 'neon' rather than 'electric.' Perhaps i should have stuck with that, but i didn't want to invite misinterpretation- either as to whether i think the source of color is synthetic (i most certainly do not), or whether i am being dismissive (i am not).

So, Rich, what's your question about 'electric?'

Lastly, in post [#21](#):

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky** 

I have not yet defined M-Group. I am hoping we will do so together. So as to not (further) hijack this thread, and so as to get the focus of discussion away from "Seistan Rug," i will present M-Group more clearly in a separate thread.

So, Rich, are you not willing to wait for the separate thread?

• **Re: "Seistan Hypothesis"**

As you could have learned already in this thread, the "Sistan Hypothesis" is simply my term for the idea floated by Tom Cole in HALI #97 and [here](#) on TT.

From post [#56](#):

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky** 

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


Quote:

The presence of a dynamic palette characterized by greens, blue/green in addition to aubergine and red is apparently a distinctive feature of some rugs from SE Persia otherwise known as Seistan.

So, Rich, still not sure what the "Sistan Hypothesis" of this thread refers to?

• Re: The rest

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Rich Larkin** 
... 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.


I believe that it is Tom who has popularized the notion that such brightly/gayly/electric/neon colored pieces are from Sistan. He strongly advocates the point. Most people i have asked state that they consider such things to be from Sistan because that's what they have heard/read from Tom. Indeed, Tom needs no defense because no accusation has been made. I am simply asking for something other than hearsay evidence as to why he has been so vigorous a champion of Sistan as the origin of this interesting group of weavings? Please note that HALI routinely refers to such things as 'Sistan.' That is, such a provenance is now the conventional wisdom. Is that justified?

Earlier today (before Rich's post) Steve and i discussed my proposal for a Salon which would allow for further focused discussion on this question. Oh... and btw, Rich, before your posting, i assured that Tom was aware of this discussion and that he was invited to join it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Rich Larkin** 
... I find your comment about Jerry Anderson bemusing.

I made no comment about Jerry Anderson. My comment was on the value of arguing from authority based on hearsay testimony from a 20th c. observer when our interest is in the 19th c. (and before).

Rich, the only thing i appreciate about your post is that in addition to stimulating my spleen it has evidently revved up my immune system. Unlike a couple of hours ago, i am now pretty confident that i will not expire tonight. Hope that's O.K. with you... 

Henry

Last edited by Henry Sadovsky; October 6th, 2013 at 09:35 PM. Reason: Post now proof-read



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