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 [Turkotek Discussion Forums](#) > [Virtual Show and Tell](#)

 **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.



Page 6 of 12 << First < 4 5 **6** 7 8 > Last >> 

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 October 11th, 2013, 09:36 AM

**#137**

#### [Steve Price](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 67




Hi Henry

I'm sorry to say that keeping track of what's going on in this thread exceeds my attention span.

Steve Price



 October 11th, 2013, 09:29 AM

**#136**

#### [Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012  
Posts: 60



**Intermission?**

Hi All-

Obviously i find this thread highly interesting and engaging. That said, i wonder if others, as i, aren't finding that its length and number of ideas introduced are not leading to intractability? I have an idea on how to deal with that, but first would like to get a sense of whether or not others are interested in trying something new? If so, please add your

thoughts/comments [here](#).

Henry



October 11th, 2013, 07:58 AM

#135

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56



Rich

The orange green blue purple red group.

Joel

Selections from the Record of the Mission to Seistan Under the Command of Major-General FR Pollock by Surgeon HW Bellew Calcutta: Printed at the Foreign Dept Press 1873

Philip



October 11th, 2013, 07:47 AM

#134

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008  
Location: Massachusetts  
Posts: 49



Quote:

I had a look through a book published in 1873, a complete survey of Seistan.

Hi Philip,

Could you share the bibliographical info on the book? 😊

Joel



October 11th, 2013, 06:03 AM

#133

[Rich Larkin](#)

Members



Join Date: Jun 2008  
 Location: Massachusetts  
 Posts: 36

Hi Philip,

Quote:

Just to summarize the position for Seistan as the origin of these pieces....

In the context of the thread, what pieces specifically are you referring to?

Rich



October 11th, 2013, 02:14 AM

#132

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
 Location: Tokyo  
 Posts: 56



Here's a list of the tribes living in Seistan in the 2nd q 19th c with the spelling used in the book;

Cayani, Seistani (aboriginal inhabitants), Sarbandi, Shahbreki, Nahroe Belooch, Sanguran Belooch, Tawei Belooch.

The Seistani made up the bulk of the population and worked as serfs in a feudal society. They did all the manual labour, agriculture, handicrafts (no mention of weaving), and worked as shepherds.

Only the Tawei Belooch (from `Tawe` Arabic for halter or collar) are mentioned as weavers not only of pile weavings but reed houses, and whicker baskets. They are a couple of rungs up from the Seistani but are still indentured to the wealthiest tribe the Sarbandi whose villages could number 1200-1000 houses.

So if Seistan were to be the origin for these pieces then a possible scenario is that the Sarbandi were the commissioning group and the Tawei Belooch the weaving group.

Just to summarize the position for Seistan as the origin of these pieces post 1873 and pre the famine in Persia including Seistan of 1861 and whose effects were still noticeable in 1873 we have;

-Sufficient and suitable soil, water, livestock, dye plants, and

weaving ability all atested to by a contempory account.

-A wealthy elite with large groups of workers functioning in a feudal agricultural society.

Philip



October 10th, 2013, 09:47 PM

#131

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56



Hello James

Once again just for good order's sake I had a look through a book published in 1873, a complete survey of Seistan. Details of the soil and indigenous plants make it clear that there is nothing about Seistan at that time which makes the idea of the purple red orange blue green group having originated there implausible.

Hello Pierre

Would cold fermentation dying of greens yield a colour more fully attached to the wool fibers making the speckled blue-yellows as the attachment degrades unlikely?

Thks/rgds

Philip



October 10th, 2013, 03:55 PM

#130

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008  
Posts: 59



Hi all,

I am all for the *terroirizing* of this thread. 🍷

Beyond the terroir, I suppose we need to look for the local

flora for dyestuffs and minerals, etc. for mordants. What seems clear is that the colour palette is almost certainly highly related to the place and time of weaving.

But I suppose we knew that already. This brings us back to a central question in this thread. If we define this group at least partially by its particular palette, what does that tell us about the likely location or locations of origin.

On a more technical point, Pierre what would it take to test the dyes of some pieces from this region for dye composition? I must say that remain intrigued by the possibility that safflower might be an important contributor to at least the yellow/green and perhaps yellow/orange part of this palette.

James



October 10th, 2013, 02:23 PM

#129

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009  
Posts: 82



Thanks Paul!  
"Terroir expert" sounds definitely better than "Dirt expert", no question.

As far as the quality of wine in W.S is concerned you are running through an open door with me. Pity that Turkotek policies would not tolerate that we mention any specific vineyard. 🌿

Sorry Steve. End of OT.  
Pierre



October 10th, 2013, 02:02 PM

#128

[Paul Smith](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 11

**Terroirists**

Pierre,

I have a good friend who in fact is a professional in the wine industry here in Washington State (don't laugh, folks, we make some great wine here), and his specialty is indeed

"terroir". His technical field in English-speaking academia is "Soil Scientist," sort-of an offshoot of geology, but he prefers titles that involve "terroir," though he has also been called "Dr. Dirt, Soil Savant" and is currently "Director of Enology and Viticulture." The concept of terroir as I understand it is perfectly applicable to this discussion of dyes, soil, and water.

Cheers,

Paul



October 10th, 2013, 09:48 AM

#127

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012  
Posts: 60

**Terroir- c'est le mot juste.**

Hi Pierre-

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pierre Galafassi**

*I used «terroir» out of mere ignorance: there must be a proper English word for it too ...*

I am quite confident that there is no equivalent English word that supplies the subtlety (and history, and romance) of *terroir*. L'Académie française would verify this for you. ; )

Henry

*Last edited by Henry Sadovsky; October 10th, 2013 at 10:09 AM. Reason: Italicize 'terroir'*



October 10th, 2013, 08:56 AM

#126

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009  
Posts: 82



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Philip Loftus**

*I'd been meaning to ask you about the cold fermentation dying because such a point is made about the depth of the purple obtained.*

Hi Philip,

I am no expert in wool fermentation dyeing, but Manfred Bieber is: He has invested time and scientific competence in studying the process in details, summarizing his findings in his excellent Salon 134.

Years ago, I still had doubts about this process' practicability and its actual utilization by rug-weaving nomads. Mainly because cold dyeing of wool is an extremely slow process (About a week time, or even more, can be necessary to obtain a saturated color) and also because I feared that fermentation would harm the structure of the wool fibre.

However, a friend of mine, founder/owner of an Afghan dyeing- and weaving workshop and «natural dyer» with over 30 years of field experience, showed to me that it works very well and that it is a perfectly practical process even for nomads. I could reproduce his recipes without problem in my own cottage laboratory and found, on the Net and in books (Tzareva, Bieber etc..), several descriptions of similar processes, with recipes making good sense, coming from various Asian regions including Tibet, Anatolia, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan.

My friend explained to me that he often uses a «Summer fermentation process» or a «Spring- or Fall process», which both basically consist (as described too by Manfred , Tzareva etc..) in leaving the wool in a container (a tinned copper pot or a plastic drum will both do) outside in the shade, in a bath containing a cereal ( for example the local «jugara» mentioned by Tzareva, O'Donovan etc...), which fermentation changes the surface properties of the wool and therefore facilitates the dye and mordant penetration in the fibre (Manfred demonstrates that the fermentation erodes the wool scales, mimicking the effect of a modern industrial wool chlorination process). The main difference between «Summer-» and «Spring/Fall» processes is the temperature reached in the bath, higher in Summer (say 40°C-45°C) than in Spring/Fall (say 25-30°C).

With rubia, fermentation dyeing allows for example to achieve cherry red shades instead of the usual brick reds (with alum mordant) or to achieve violet/purple shades (with a little iron salt as co-mordant and using the "Spring/Fall" fermentation process, since it is critical for that shade that bath temperature does not pass the 30°C mark).

Hi Henry,  
I used «terroir» out of mere ignorance: there must be a proper English word for it too and I would be grateful if somebody would teach it to me. 🤔🍷🍷😊

Regards  
Pierre



October 10th, 2013, 07:35 AM

#125

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012  
Posts: 60

**Terroir!**

Hi Pierre-

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pierre Galafassi**

*«Terroir» meaning in this case particularities of the shades which are not created purposely by the dyer/weaver, but caused by local factors which are largely beyond his/her control).*

Not being an oenophile, i have had no opportunity to include 'terroir' in my discourse. While your post has not transformed me into a wine connoisseur, i now look forward to using 'terroir' regularly.

There are few better gifts than a new word. Thank you.

Henry



October 10th, 2013, 05:02 AM

#124

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56



Just for good order's sake here's some info about the sheep.

The Baluchi Also Known As: (Baluchi dumda, Mengali, Taraki, Shinwari, Araghi, Farahani, Kermani, Naeini, Yazdi) is a breed



of sheep that originated in the eastern and south eastern area (Sistan and Baluchestan) and kavir markazi of Iran. They are fat-tailed sheep using for dairy, meat and wool (with good quality carpet wool). The average height of this breed is 74-55 (male/females) cm. A live Baluchi sheep weight about 44-36 (male/femals) kg. Birth weight of the lambs is 2.6-2.2 (male/females) kg. Milk yield per lactation about 47 kg. (fat avg, 7.2%) and average of yearly fleece weight 1.55 kg each sheep. They are white with black marks on the head and legs. Rams can be either horned or polled and ewes are polled. This breed accounts for 50% of the national flock in Iran.

Source Mr. Ali Golashan

Philip



October 10th, 2013, 04:30 AM

#123

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56



From my side thanks again, Pierre for all the great info, much appreciated! It's very clear.

I'd been meaning to ask you about the cold fermentation dying because such a point is made about the depth of the purple obtained.

Thks/rgds

Philip



October 10th, 2013, 01:44 AM

#122

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009



Hi Philip, James & Henry,

Posts: 82

Water hardness does have a (limited) influence on saturation of the wool coloration and on the shade obtained and therefore can be a minor component in the typical shades of a particular «terroir». («Terroir» meaning in this case particularities of the shades which are not created purposely by the dyer/weaver, but caused by local factors which are largely beyond his/her control).

I am not able to go beyond that too vague remark. Mainly because there are many other, more important, components of the «terroir»

To name just a few well documented ones:

The local water sources can be ferruginous. Even traces of iron ions are known to influence significantly the shades of just about all usual red- and yellow natural dyes.

The indispensable alum mordant was in the past a natural product, mostly gathered in desert areas. It came often in a form contaminated by iron. Depending on the quality available in a particular region, one can expect significant impacts on shades.

Central Asian populations used mostly tinned-copper cooking- and dyeing pots, but, during the nineteenth century, cheap Russian cast iron vessel penetrated this new market. One can safely assume that, due to oxidation of the latter, red and yellow shades would have a tendency to become duller, more brownish, while tinned-copper dyeing vessels would, if anything, make the rubia reds a trifle brighter. Late nineteenth century visitors noted the ubiquity of cast-iron pots in some Turkmen tribes (Yomud especially) which makes one suspect that their brick-red, more brownish than in other tribes, might not have been entirely their free choice.

Different botanical variety of rubia contain different mixes of (similar but not identical) natural red dyes and yield somewhat different red shades. The size of the roots, their age, the method of storage, the part of the roots being used, all do influence the shade too.

Similar differences can be shown with other dyeing plants.

The scarcity of firewood and alternative combustibles in a particular region will influence the dyeing process and justify

the dyers preference for so-called fermentation dyeing (cold dyeing at 30-40°C) as described by Manfred Bieber in his last Salon. As proven by E. Tzareva («Rugs from Central Asia») the Turkmen dyers knew a variety of such cold methods (and some still do). I have no evidence at hand that Sistan dyers knew them too, but it is highly likely.

Saksaoul, the main Central Asian desert firewood and several other bushes, yield strongly alkaline ashes. Modern Turkmen dyers still know that an alkaline rinsing bath (after dyeing) has an influence on the final shade of the wool and allows to shorten (reducing the waste of precious water) the rinsing process. Again Sistan dyers/weavers were likely to know this use of alkaline ashes too.

Then, there are obvious differences of natural shade and dyeability between various qualities of wool, depending on the particular sheep race (sometimes specific for some tribes or regions), on the local climate and flora, on the season of shearing, on the thoroughness of the wool washing etc..

Aaah, and yes Saffron is very expensive, but safflower **red** must have been even worse. Just from the top of my head, I think that there was about 100 times less red than yellow in safflower and that its recovery was a complex process. I'll have to check in my bible (Dr D. Cardon's outstanding book "Natural Dyes" )

Best regards  
Pierre



October  
9th, 2013,  
08:54 PM

#121

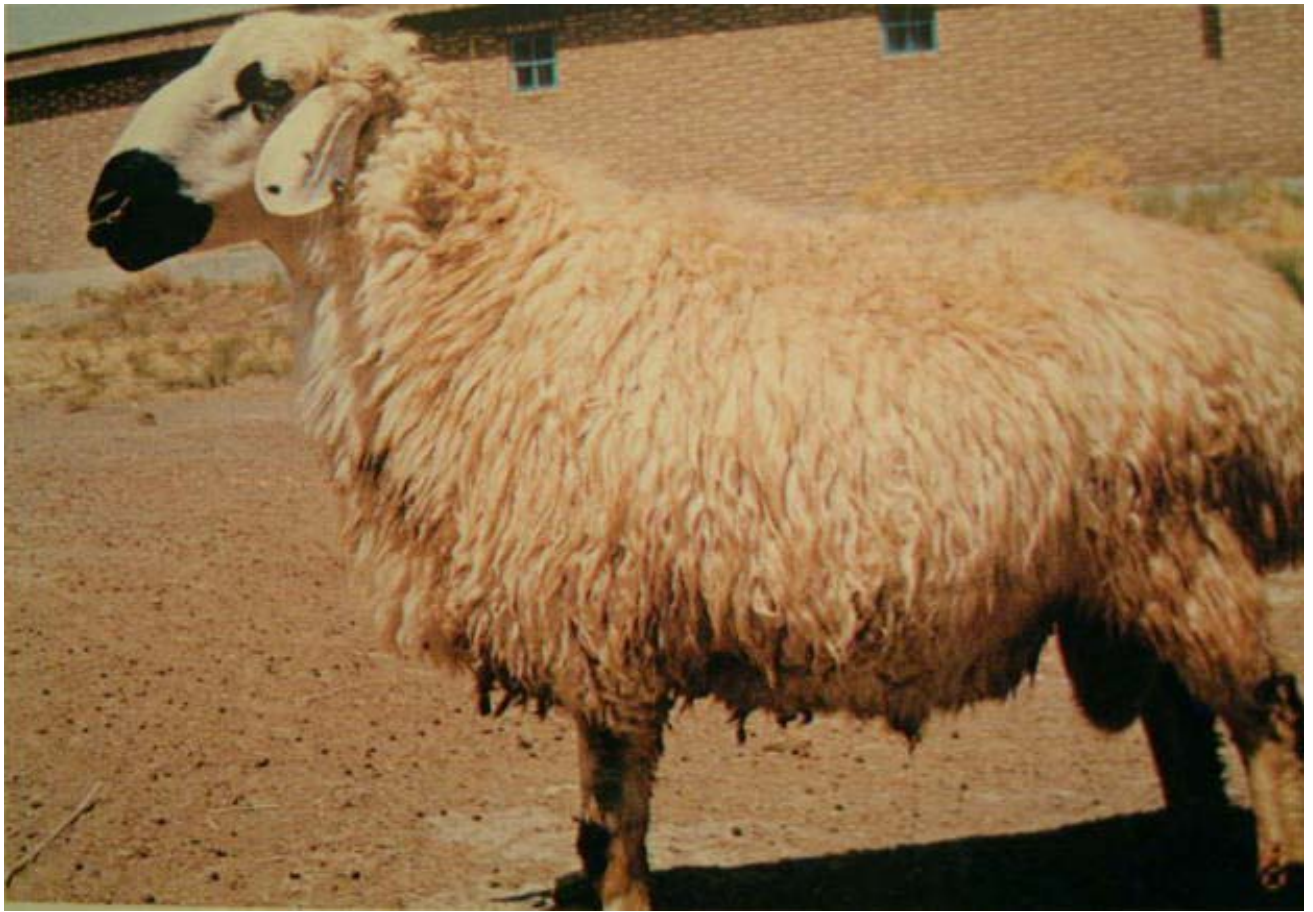
[Philip Loftus](#)  
Members



Hello Pierre

Join Date:  
Apr 2012  
Location:  
Tokyo  
Posts: 56

Just to be clear if I'm reading you right the water used in dyeing the rugs in question is probably slightly saline and obviously the same/ similar source. That would imply the dyers were using river water rather than soft artesian water if that's the choice- Sistan river water rather than Sistan mountain water.(it's now so saline that it's becoming unusable for crop irrigation).



Baluchi or Naeini sheep.

Thks rgds

# Philip

Last edited by Philip Loftus; October 9th, 2013 at 11:14 PM.



October 9th, 2013, 07:54 PM

#120

## [Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012  
Location: Tokyo  
Posts: 56



Hello Pierre

Thanks for that interesting & informative reply. It was your thought about water quality in the Salor Red Salon that made

me wonder about the water used for the Sistan pieces.

Sheep take on 3x as much water as feed so water quality ought to impact wool quality.

Are we looking at the same mordant being used in for example the 3 pieces above basis their being exactly the same shade?

Obviously that Brit who refused to drink the water was hoping someone would offer him a lager!

Thanks/ rgds  
Philip

*Last edited by Philip Loftus; October 9th, 2013 at 08:17 PM.*



October 9th, 2013, 05:32 PM

#119

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008  
Posts: 59



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pierre Galafassi**

*Hi James,*

*I have no personal dyeing experience with safflower dyes (from *Carthame tinctorum*). I only can tell what I have got «de relato» or what I could deduce from the (known) chemical structure of the dyes:*

*Safflower contains two dyes usable for dyeing wool:*

*Best regards  
Pierre*


Hi Pierre,

The link I referenced does seem to note that "saffron" is often confused with the more plentiful "wild safflower".

I wonder what to make of this safflower sample in the British Museum

(<http://www.britishmuseum.org/research...Text=safflower>).

Konieczny claims that it was used for dyeing wool for kilims.

I would also be interested to hear your perspective on this article (<http://ecoport.org/ep?SearchType=ear...=195&page=2634>). It indicates that safflower can produce dyes with good light-fastness if the right mordant is used. I found it interesting that the authors didn't seem to be concerned about light-fastness vis-a-vis using safflower to dye wool for rugs since "[tourists' choices towards the faded dyed carpets and kilims rule out this disadvantage](#)" .

My understanding is that whereas saffron is very expensive, safflower is not. Perhaps I am mistaken.

James

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Last edited by James Blanchard; October 9th, 2013 at 05:55 PM. Reason: reply to Pierre, not Henry...



October 9th, 2013, 05:27 PM

#118

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012  
Posts: 60

 Anything deducible about the area involved?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pierre Galafassi** 

*I am sorry to say that I have no particular thought to share about this palette...*

Hi Pierre.

Thank you.

Having seen such pieces in the wool, i am not so concerned about the possibility of synthetic dyes as the source of any/some of the beautiful colors. I was half hoping that my open-ended question might lead you speculate on the possibility that such a palette is the product of a concentrated geographic area, or is a larger area, allowing for more varied flora and experience/expertise, more likely? Another way to look at such a question is, does your intuition suggest that the

palette is the product of one 'school' or many? Such questions, i suppose, are probably too vague.

Henry



Page 6 of 12 << First < 4 5 6 7 8 > Last >>

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