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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 15th, 2013, 06:53 AM

#177

[Rich Larkin](#)
Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 36



Hi Phil,

Purple it is!



Rich



October 14th, 2013, 11:38 PM

#176

[Philip Loftus](#)
Members

Join Date: Apr 2012
Location: Tokyo
Posts: 56



'As well as a red dye...When the seeds are extracted with water, a yellow fluorescent dye is obtained. If they are extracted with alcohol, a red dye is obtained. The stems...etc

Hello Pierre

What did you think about this Wiki quote? Is it good info regards the fluorescent yellow do you think?

Hello James

My business used to be in the ag sector. For my sins I would trawl through anything and everything with a vague connection looking for product to export from Egypt.

Once I remember coming across something called zaffaron in Arabic which looked exactly like saffron but you could buy a tonne of the stuff for next to nothing, I think it was about LE30 a kilo. Real saffron at that time was about LE30 a gram.

As you can imagine I started planning an early retirement, however it turned out there was zero flavour. It took a while for the rice to turn orange as well.

Maybe it worked better as a dye. It looked exactly like proper saffron too.

Rich

A joke, mate.

Regards

Philip

Last edited by Philip Loftus; October 14th, 2013 at 11:48 PM.



October 14th, 2013, 01:45 PM

#175

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pierre Galafassi**

Hi Henry, Philip and James,

*A) The vegetal fibres in first picture look suspiciously like pistils of **Crocus Sativus**, thus it seems to be **Saffron** and **not safflower**. A rather common confusion. Despite the name similarities, the plants and the dyes extracted from them have nothing in common.*

*B) I did not find yet structure of the (expensive) red dye extracted from **Safflower** but the structure of the fluorescent yellow one is published: This dye has certainly a lousy light fastness and I doubt that it could have been used for rugs, at best for cheap clothing.*

*Best
Pierre*

Hi Pierre,

Well, I am not a botanist or chemist, so far away from my intellectual comfort zone.

Here is a source about "safflower", with some pictures of the flowers that are not so unlike the examples offered by Konieczny (http://gernot-katzers-spice-pages.co.../Cart_tin.html).



In contrast, here is a picture for the saffron stigmas.



It seems to me that Konieczny's example is more likely safflower than saffron.

By the way, I have found some material suggesting that safflower's colours can be light-fast, depending on how the dye is prepared and applied, but this is beyond my area of expertise. (<https://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j...Ey-fhYiu2U6Czw>)

James.

Last edited by James Blanchard; October 14th, 2013 at 01:52 PM.



October 14th, 2013, 01:33 PM

#174

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 82



Hi Henry, Philip and James,

A) The vegetal fibres in first picture look suspiciously like pistils of *Crocus Sativus*, thus it seems to be **Saffron** and **not safflower**. A rather common confusion. Despite the name similarities, the plants and the dyes extracted from them have nothing in common.

B) I did not find yet the chemical structure of the (expensive) red dye extracted from **Safflower** but the structure of the fluorescent yellow one is published: This dye has certainly a lousy light fastness and I doubt that it could have been used for rugs, at best for cheap clothing.

C) A very large number of plants, endemic in Asia, supply good yellow dyes, with light- and wet-fastness sufficient for a usage for carpet too. I am sure that even if Sistani did not use (for rugs) the safflower yellow they had no shortage of good alternatives.

Best
Pierre

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; October 14th, 2013 at 01:41 PM.



October 14th, 2013, 01:32 PM

#173

[James Blanchard](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Posts: 59



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Henry Sadovsky**

Hi James-

So... the rug shown below (with the sample of safflower) must be from Sistan, eh? 😊

Just having a bit of fun... Pierre already posted a good reason to doubt Konieczny's assertion about safflower being an important dye-stuff in Baluchistan.

I will return to an important observation you previously posted that is causing me to re-consider a part of my model.

Thankful that you're in no big hurry,

Henry

Hi Henry,

I'm not going to be too quickly dissuaded from the safflower dye part of the story. Safflower is one of the oldest dye-stuffs for textiles. I found a source (<http://www.crcnetbase.com/isbn/9781439832080>), which notes that among other historical uses "In Iran and Afghanistan it was used to dye woolen rugs".

Even modern amateur weavers have no trouble using it to create a variety of colours.

<http://youcanknitwithalighsaber.blog...al-dyeing.html>

Quote:

safflower for brighter (practically fluorescent...) oranges & yellows;

Of course, there are other ways of making orange of various shades. But I am also interested in the greens (and yellows) of the "Seistan" palette.

Whatever we might think of the accounts of Konieczny and others, there are direct references to the use of Safflower as a dye component of rugs and other woolen textiles in that region.

So, while I won't hold too fast to this issue since I don't have stronger evidence, I am not too quick to abandon it since the plant is plentiful, first-hand accounts suggest its use, and it fits with the palette. Referencing another essay on the topic (<http://www.orientalcarpets.com.au/ho...rs/essays.html>):

Quote:

Most greens, however, were double dyed yellow with blue and most yellows show safflower predominant.

As you might recall, in one of my earlier posts I suggested that it was the wide use of greens that is one of the distinguishing features of the "Seistan" palette.

So, I think we have more than wild speculation to think about here.

James



October
14th, 2013,
12:15 PM

#172

[Henry
Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct
2012
Posts: 60

Morocco in Sistan?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **James Blanchard**

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.



Hi James-

So... the rug shown below (with the sample of safflower) must be from Sistan, eh? 🤔

(Note: The image of a rug currently on the market was posted here, and has been deleted. Steve Price)

Just having a bit of fun... Pierre already posted a good reason to doubt Konieczny's assertion about safflower being an important dye-stuff in Baluchistan.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pierre Galafassi** [↗](#)

*... 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.*

(Note: Emphasis as in original.)

I will return to an important observation you previously posted that is causing me to re-consider a part of my model.

Thankful that you're in no big hurry,

Henry



October 14th, 2013, 10:43 AM

#171

[Joel Greifinger](#)



Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 49

Quote:

Two of your notes refer to Hazara weaving in a context that most likely suggests pile weaving in particular. I think I recall a few statements in the literature that eliminate the Hazara people as weavers of pile goods. Am I right about that? Can anyone cite such comments?

Hi Rich,

Are you referring to the great majority of Hazara who are Shia or to the much smaller group of Aimaq Hazara who are Sunni? Both produce flatweaves but the Aimaq Hazara are one of the elements in the Chahar Aimaq that are reported to have produced pile weaving, as well.

At any given moment, Michael Craycraft lists a number of pile weavings that he categorizes as Hazara, including ones that *might* be said to fall into the purple-orange-green realm.

I hope it isn't unseemly for a mere bystander to venture that tentative assessment. 🙄

Joel



October 14th, 2013, 10:16 AM

[Rich Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 36



HPhil,

BTW, how can you tell purple (#168) in that photo?

Rich



#170



October 14th, 2013, 10:14 AM

[Rich Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 36



Hi Henry, et al,

I'm out here idly standing by, but I must give credit where it's due. The list of sources in #162 is excellent. It gives rise to a question which is probably not very pertinent to the Seistan inquiry as such. Two of your notes refer to Hazara weaving in a context that most likely suggests pile weaving in particular. I think I recall a few statements in the literature that eliminate the Hazara people as weavers of pile goods. Am I right about that? Can anyone cite such comments?

Regarding the period images Phil posted, I think you are referring to the weaving staked on the ground as apparently flatwoven. I agree, it looks so. But what is it? Not anything that comes to mind to me.

One last note, on the Seistan issue. As far as the "electric" colored group of weavings goes, is there a firm consensus that it is really an "old" group? It has been suggested that many examples of them came into the market in the period of upheaval in Afghanistan. I haven't seen that many in the wool, but it seems a significant proportion of them are in very good condition.



#169

Rich



October 14th, 2013, 06:14 AM

#168

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012
Location: Tokyo
Posts: 56



Hello Henry

Draped over the loom you mean? It does, doesn't it. Purple and camel I'd say. Looks like you found our purple for us.

Is it a shawl still on the loom? Apparently reed boats, reed houses and baskets plus shawls were the principal output of the weavers (sorry I can't be bothered to hunt up the exact quote).

Regards

Philip



October 14th, 2013, 01:32 AM

#167

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

Pittenger's source

Hi Philip-

Wonderful stuff. Don't know how much it matters, but i can't tell from the last photo you posted if that isn't a flat-weave on the loom?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Philip Loftus**

... reading Bellew ...

They visited a carpet factory where children worked and suffered eye problems in consequence of the poor lighting inside the place. In another village 20 looms were operating, in another 10. I'm wondering if Pittenden read all the volumes in his survey... (?)

Robert **Pittenger's** sources for his quotes from Bellew are listed as:

- - "Record of the March of the Mission to Seistan," in INDIA: SELECTIONS FROM THE RECORDS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, No. 104, Calcutta, 1873. (Capitalization as per Pittenger)
- FROM THE INDUS TO THE TIGRIS, London, 1874.

Henry



October 14th, 2013, 12:22 AM

#166

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012
 Location: Tokyo
 Posts: 56



Hello Henry

Take your time, mate. After all you're doing a salon not a post. Thanks for the references. I am genuinely curious btw. I don't think we dotted the 't's or crossed the 'i's in Seistan for a moment.

When I started reading Bellew the old names threw me a bit and it took a while to realize that the pertinent section was just the last 20 or so pps. of the 172. The commission went up to Kandahar over to Tehran then Meshed and Birjand- where he didn't care for the local production because it was full of camel hair. ' In the Birjand ones, brown camel-hair is a prevailing colour, used too freely as a background, and often taking away from the otherwise graceful design'
 They visited a carpet factory where children worked and suffered eye problems in consequence of the poor lighting inside the place. In another village 20 looms were operating, in another 10. I'm wondering if Pittenger read all the volumes in his survey- just a thought.

While you work here are some excerpts from Landor about marriage in Seistan in 1902 for the rest of us. I think it sheds light on the dowry, maybe the subject of another thread.

'A Beluch marriage is a practical business transaction by which a girl fetches more or less money, camels or horses, according to her personal charms, beauty, and social position. Beluch women, when young, are not at all bad-looking with well-cut features and languid eyes full of animal magnetism like the Persian, and they seem shy and modest enough. The Beluch men have great respect for them, and treat them with consideration, although—like all Orientals—they let women do all the hard work, which keeps the women happy.

'A marriage ceremony in Beluchistan bears, of course, much resemblance to the usual Mussulman form, such as we have seen in Persia, with variations and adaptations to suit the customs and circumstances of the people.

'A good wife costs a lot of money in Beluchistan, although occasionally, in such cases as when a man has been murdered, a wife can be obtained on the cheap. The murderer, instead of paying a lump sum in cash, settles his account by handing over his daughter as a wife to the murdered man's son. Bad debts and no assets can also be settled in a similar manner if the debtor has sufficient daughters to make the balance right.

'Under normal circumstances, however, the girl is actually bought up, the sum becoming her property in case of divorce. When the marriage ceremony takes place and the relations and friends have collected, the first step is for the bridegroom to hand over the purchase sum, either in cash, camels, or sheep. A great meal is then prepared, when the men sit in a semicircle with the bridegroom in the centre. Enormous quantities of food are consumed, such as rice saturated with ghi (butter), piles of chapatis (bread) and sheep meat. A man who pays four or five hundred rupees for a wife is expected to kill at least twenty or thirty sheep for his guests at this entertainment, and there is a prevailing custom that the bridegroom on this occasion makes a gift to the lori or blacksmith of the clothes he has been wearing since his betrothal to the girl.

'The women on their side have a similar sort of entertainment by themselves, stuff themselves with food to their hearts' content, and wash it down with water or tea. At the end of the meal a bowl is passed round and each man and woman rinses mouth and hands.

'The Sung, or betrothal, is regarded as most sacred, and much rejoicing is gone

through for several days with music and dancing and firing of guns, and this is called the nikkar, just preceding the urus, or actual marriage ceremony, which is performed by a Mullah. The bridegroom, having ridden with his friends to a neighbouring Ziarat to implore Allah's protection, returns and sits down in the centre of the circle formed by the men. Two of his friends are sent to fetch the girl's father, who is led down to the assembly.

'The bridegroom again assures him in front of all these witnesses that should he from any fault of his own divorce his wife he will forfeit the premium paid for her, whereupon the father replies that he will settle a sum on the girl as a "mehr" or dowry. The father then departs, and returns, bringing the bride wrapped up in her best clothing and chudder.

'A slightly modified Mussulman form of marriage is then gone through, and the Mullah asks the woman three times if she agrees to marry the man. Everything having passed off satisfactorily, the happy couple depart to a hut or tent placed at their disposal, and very discreetly, nobody goes near them for some considerable length of time.

'It is said that the thoughtfulness of the Beluch towards a newly-married couple will go so far that, even if the tribe were stalked by the enemy, no one would go and warn the happy couple for fear of disturbing them!

'The bridegroom stays with his bride for several days, and if he belongs to some other village or encampment, will then return to his home, and leave his wife behind for months at a time.

'Beluch wives are said to be quite faithful, and at the death of the husband go for a considerable time without washing. This mark of respect for the husband is, however, extensively indulged in even before the wife becomes a widow—at least, judging by appearances.

'The weaving looms are the largest and principal articles of furniture one notices—not inside, but outside the houses. The illustration shows how the cloth and threads are kept in tension, from every side, in a primitive but most effective manner. The women work with extraordinary rapidity and with no pattern before them, beating each transverse thread home by means of an iron comb held in the hand. The pattern on the cloths is of a primitive kind, generally sets of parallel lines crossing one another at right angles.

'In the same photograph (my previous post) two Beluch dwellings can be seen, with matting showing through the thatch. In many villages, however, the walls of the houses are made of sun-dried bricks, and only the roof is made of a mat plastered over with mud. In either case the Beluch seems to have a liking for crawling rather than walking into his house, for the doorway is invariably very low—4½ to 5 feet high.

'One is generally sorry to peep into a Beluch dwelling, but I felt it a sort of duty to see what there was to be seen. Nothing! or almost nothing. A large wooden bowl, a stone grinding wheel with a wooden handle to grind wheat into flour, a wooden drinking cup or an occasional tin enamelled one, of foreign importation, a matchlock, and that was all. In some of the smarter dwellings, such as the houses of chiefs, a few additional articles were to be found, such as a badni—a sort of jar for taking water—flat stones which are made red hot for baking bread, some occasional big brass dishes—tash—used on grand occasions—such as wedding dinners; and a deg or two or large brass pots.

'Nearly every household, however, possesses one or more khwa or skins for water, and a large kasa, made either of metal or wood, into which broth is poured during meals. Occasionally in a corner of the hut a small table is to be seen, on which are placed all

the family's clothing, blankets, darris or carpets, and lihaf or mattresses. These carpets, or rather rugs, are generally spread when receiving an honoured guest.

'The Beluch diet is wholesome but simple. They are fond of plenty of meat when they can get it, which is not often, and they generally have to be satisfied with dry bread. The woman who can make the largest and thinnest bread is much honoured among the Beluch. When they do obtain meat it is generally boiled and made into a soup called be-dir, which in the Brahui language really means "salt water," to express "flavoured water." Milk and ghee are dainties seldom indulged in and, being Mussulmans, the Beluch imbibe no intoxicants, but are smokers of strong bitter tobacco.

'It is not uncommon for lambs, sheep and calves to share the homes and some of the meals of their masters.'

Ah the good old days!

Regards
Philip

Last edited by Philip Loftus; October 14th, 2013 at 01:53 AM.



October 14th, 2013, 12:05 AM

#165

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 49



Quote:

I don't expect needling from a couple of mostly idle bystanders to have any effect. None whatsoever. I am, of course, not referring to you, or James, or Pierre, or Ike, or Marla, or ...

Henry,

Given your proven talent for generating new speculative categories (e.g. 'M-Group', 'Sistan Hypothesis'), I was of course intrigued as to who qualified as "**a couple of mostly idle bystanders**". By process of elimination of the participants in the thread, I don't think it's merely a conceit on my part to entertain the thought (hope?) that I might be included in that august pair.

Quote:

A good conversation will take the time that a good conversation needs/deserves.

I will leave it to others to decide whether the tone of your 'contributions' on this board, including the *ad hominem* connotation of the "idle bystanders" remark constitutes the sort of good conversation, premised upon mutual respect, that is a norm by which we agree to interact here.

Joel

Last edited by Joel Greifinger; October 14th, 2013 at 09:03 AM.



October 13th, 2013, 11:57 PM

#164

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered



I would like to thank ...

Quote:

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

Originally Posted by **Paul Smith** 
Hm, I suppose I would qualify as a needler ...

Hi Paul-

Your name simply didn't come to mind as i was composing my thoughts. Sorry. The ' ...,' i had thought, would clearly indicate that my tabulation of those who have, imo, contributed constructively, was incomplete. But since you seem to be feeling guilty/defensive, i will need to scrutinize your future postings more carefully!

;)

Henry



October 13th, 2013, 11:31 PM

#163

[Paul Smith](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 11



Hm, I suppose I would qualify as a needler, as I didn't make it into the list and that's fair I guess, as I just have some good "Baluchis" (including a bunch relevant to the discussion), a sincere interest, and a lot to do in my regular life. I have been following this discussion closely, however. I don't have lots of primary source materials before me, but I am familiar with Josiah Harlan--there's a great recent biography of him, *The Man Who Would Be King: The First American in Afghanistan*, by Ben Macintyre.

Anyway, in your list there, Harlan stands out as someone who really spent a lot of time with the people he discusses, since he was apparently elected Khan of the Hazaras about 1840, though they aren't really germane to the discussion of Seistan, it seems. To my knowledge, he was never actually a general officer in any army, either British, Afghan (maybe...), or American (he served in the Civil War also), though I believe he is the only American citizen who also served as a monarch of a foreign people. I admit to a strange kind of giddiness imagining the carpets these guys saw.

Sorry for the interruption, carry on...




October 13th, 2013, 10:19 PM

#162

[Henry Sadovsky](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2012
Posts: 60

 Pittenger, "Reports ... "

Hi Philip-

Pittenger's work is available. E-mail me if you have trouble finding a copy. Almost a year ago ([#127](#)) i posted what i had found of specific tribal references, up to the year 1875, in Pittenger's report:

Edward Stirling, 1828-29, speaking of a Timuri(?) village between Meshed and Bala Murghab:

"One woman was engaged along with two other women in weaving an elegant rug."

Gen. Josiah Harlan, 1837-40:

"The Hazarrahs of Dye Zungee exchange their ghee and woolen cloths for wheat, fruit, etc... "

"An excellent carpet is made in Dye Zungee. ... perhaps the best results of Hazarah efforts in the fine arts applied to utilitarian purposes."

Capt. Arthur Connolly, 1841, "Report from area between Bamian and Maimana":
"The Huzarahs and Eimauks bring to market... grain sacks and carpet bags, felts for horse clothing, and patterned carpets."

Nicholas de Khanikoff, 1958-9, Herat:
"... but in the rugs prepared in the huts of the Illyats (nomads), all the wefts throughout are of hair."

H.W. Bellew, 1872.
Ghayn (Qain):
Talks of the "celebrated" carpets in a context of nomads who are clearly not Belooch.
Also:
"at Turbat-i-Haidari, seat of the Carai family, of Tatar origin."
"The Balooch have now left the area;"

There were some references to Sistan as i recall, but no observations of Baluch weavers. That's not proof of anything, of course- merely an interesting un-observation (to coin a word). I'll look through it again.

A good conversation will take the time that a good conversation needs/deserves. I don't expect needling from a couple of mostly idle bystanders to have any effect. None whatsoever. I am, of course, not referring to you, or James, or Pierre, or Ike, or Marla, or ...

Later,

Henry



October 13th, 2013, 08:32 PM

#161

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012
Location: Tokyo
Posts: 56



Other supporting references can be found in Bob Pittenger's exhaustive compilation of citations from early reports and surveys, Reports on the Tribes: "Baluch" References From the Perso-Afghan Borderlands.

Hello Joel

I'd be really interested to get my hands on that. 🙏🙏

Philip



October 13th, 2013, 10:48 AM

#160

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 49

Sistan Hypothesis revival?

Hi Henry,

Back in Post #53, you declared that what you termed the "Sistan Hypothesis" was dead, pledging

Quote:

I will expand on this in due course.

Many of the subsequent posts have addressed aspects of the question, leading to the proposition that reports of the death of the "Sistan Hypothesis" have been...exaggerated.

You implied that you would produce evidence and arguments that challenged not just the imprecision but the substance of Tom Cole's statement that:

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.

Quote:

I'm curious to hear Henry's ideas.

Me too.

Joel

Last edited by Joel Greifinger; October 13th, 2013 at 10:59 AM.



October 13th, 2013, 10:07 AM

#159

[Philip Loftus](#)

Members

Join Date: Apr 2012
Location: Tokyo
Posts: 56



Hello James

Yes I agree. At least we can say it's a reasonable supposition. And word of mouth should also carry some weight. I'm curious to hear Henry's ideas.

Here's a pic of residents in Seistan outside a house.





An outdoor loom

Bellew is described as an Orientalist who spoke Arabic, Persian plus several local languages. One of the functions of their mission was to act as a boundary commission to arbitrate between the Persians and the Afghanis about their shared border.

Bellew describes the Seistanis as being composed of; Turks, Tartars, Uzbaks, Kurds, Moghuls, Arabs, Tajiks, Parsiwans, Afghanis, Pathans, Hazarah, Brahoee, Beloosh.

Some are there as a result of the Arab conquest, some were descendants of early Persians and the rest refugees from blood feuds.

His use of Seistani as a distinct group encompasses that section of the population subjugated to the Sarbandi and the Shahbreki .
So it is just this worker group which is made up of all the nationalities listed above. They constituted the same number of people as all the other groups combined in Seistan in the 1870's when the commission was there. Seems a bit of a helot state. In 1902 when Landor was there the same distinctions existed.

Philip



October 13th, 2013, 09:59 AM

#158

[Joel Greifinger](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 49



Quote:

Thanks for these fascinating historical records. It does seem that there were the means to dye wool and make carpets, and that there was rug production in the Seistan / Sistan region.



Hi Philip and James,

Other supporting references can be found in Bob Pittenger's exhaustive compilation of citations from early reports and surveys, *Reports on the Tribes: "Baluch" References From the Perso-Afghan Borderlands*.

Joel



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