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The pelt and the origin of the prayer rug

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Virtual Show and Tell Just what the title says it is.



Page 5 of 5 [← First](#) [<](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

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April 21st, 2014, 03:29 AM

#81

Unregistered
Guest
Posts: n/a



Hi all,

Just a short addition: The pelt rug is from the Bergama/Izmir region, 18th century; the yastik with the star belongs to me and Dennis Dodds told me that it "is likely SW Anatolia, in the Menderes Valley/Dazgir region and probably was woven in the mid 19c." (I showed a much better picture to him, but it has got lost; sorry for the bad quality).

The short distance and the time difference as well as the rectangle in the center of both pieces made me reflect on the hexagon as a simplified pelt form.

Guido



April 21st, 2014, 06:45 AM

#82

[Martin Andersen](#)
Members



Hi All

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 86

I think I have found the actual karapinar from the scanned mosque photo from Jon Thompson's "Carpets From the Tents, Cottages and Workshops of Asia":



There are some details in the center which does make it directional, and as such I suppose calling it a prayer medallion rug would be fair - especially because we also have the photo of the rug placed on the floor in a mosque.

Sheep pelts with head and tail removed are only slightly directional, one could say that this ambiguity is shared with both medallion and double niche prayer rugs - and speculate that this could have been a mediating factor in a possible merger between pelt and niche.



best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; April 21st, 2014 at 07:15 AM.



April 23rd,

#83

2014, 07:26 AM

[Martin Andersen](#)
Members

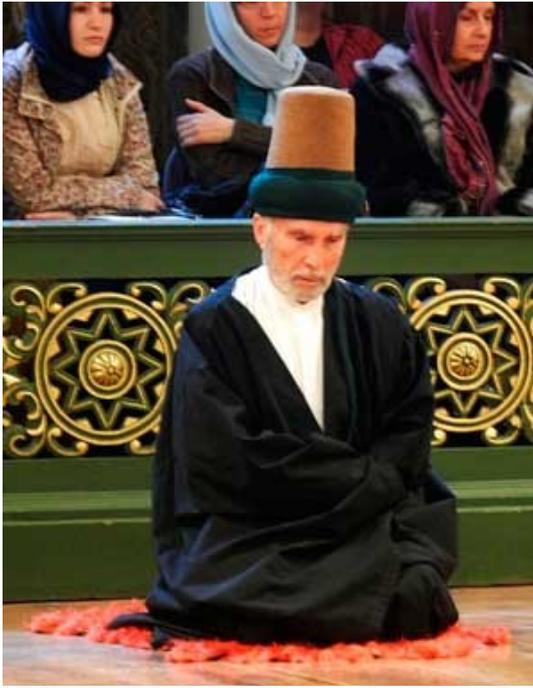


Hi All

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 86

Just a final post to sum up. I am aware that there can be no final confirmation in this and I am of course just a happy amateur in the rugs, but these prayer/niche rugs from central Anatolia and the Konya area were woven while honorable sheiks from the highly influential Mevlana sufi order - with its center in Konya - daily performed religious practices on red sheep skins:





(the ladies in the background could in another time have been the weavers of non-commercial red field prayer/niche rugs 😊)

To me the striking convergence between prayer/niche rug and red pelt both functional and visually can't just be a coincidence. If this should also be extended to the medallion rugs is perhaps questionable, but the occurrence of directional prayer/niche-like medallion rugs and the double niche rugs to me suggest that the pelt is also an underlying motif in some of the medallion rugs.





If nothing totally new turns then I will stop here.
best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; April 23rd, 2014 at 09:41 AM.



April 25th, 2014, 06:50 PM

#84

Guido_Engel

Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi Martin, hi all

Just a last posting. First of all it is not my my intention to discredit your ideas. In my opinion you have done a great job; congratulations.

You have shown to us that the animal or parts of it are the medium to come into contact to a supreme force (gods,ancestors...no wadays often called life force). This is true for old cultures like China or Egypt but also for quite a lot of archaic ones. Each rug/kelim in a ritual context must show this medium or parts of it. So each rug/kelim made of animal wool can be used as such a medium and a

prayer. But not each rug with an animal design is a prayer.

The mihrab-like niche is known for thousands of years and I think it represents this life force itself. A possible example could be the bagface below with the medium camel in the niche.



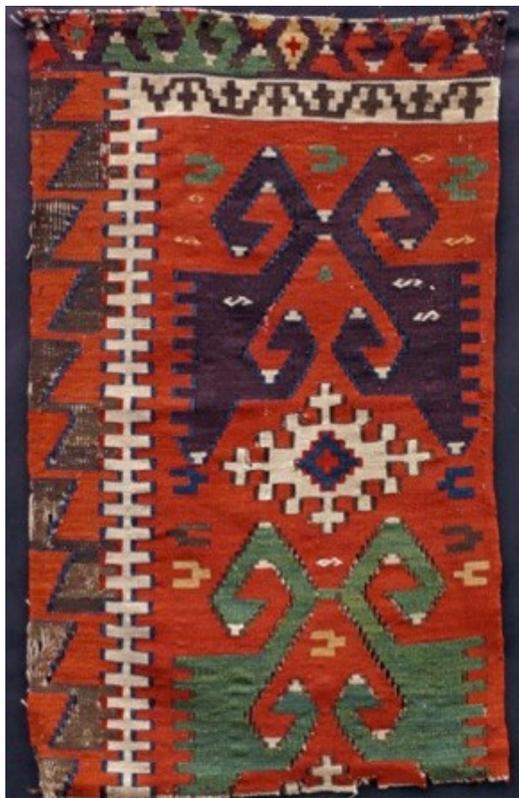
You have shown a picture of sheepskins lying in front of the mihrab. For me the sheepskin is the medium and the mihrab is the life force.

Another example for this idea could be this South Persian bagface with the brown hooked beings next to the white niche.



To avoid misunderstandings; I don't see a ritual context for both pieces.

Second, one shouldn't either forget that for these archaic people everything around them was full of spirits and they needed the help of their life forces all their lives. These societies didn't differ as strictly between the profane and the ritual sphere as we do and used their items for both (that was certainly also a question of money, because good wool was precious). I will try to explain it by showing a complete Aksaray kelim and an Obruk fragment (some decades older).





I once read that Anatolian kelims with seven (the holy number of Turkic people) stripes were used in a funeral context, another author states that seven is bringing good luck in the context of marriage. The Obruk shows that the hooks on rugs could be regarded as a part of a protective animal (possibly a dragon with seven feet you often find in Turkic myths). In the case of these kelims they could have been woven as dowry items, then used as protective items for the whole family and finally during the weaver's funeral.

As there are so many rugs with animals I wouldn't overestimate the ritual context, but think more often of a protective function. Turkic tribes had different animals protecting the community.

In archaic cultures you often find the myth of persons dreaming of an animal protecting this person all his life. Further on these societies had a very close contact to animals and expressed many ideas of everyday life in animal's symbols.

These are just some ideas from the ethnological side and I hope you don't feel attacked.

Congratulations again for this thread not only interesting for the rug collector,

Guido



May 4th, 2014, 02:11 PM

#85

[Horst Nitz](#)

Members

Join Date: Feb 2013
Posts: 29



Hi Martin,

when I responded whilst your thread still carried its original title, I did so for several reasons: because I found the title challenging and because I thought it a nice idea to work together on something and indulge ourselves in the luxurious position of having two perspectives on the origin of prayer rugs. As it turned out, you had your ideas fixed when I entered the thread and wanted to run it home without distraction. With the changed title and its narrowed focus, I now feel misplaced here and think, I want to follow your

advice and start another thread or Salon with the former abandoned title. Still, I like to bring matters to an end as promised and, for a probably last post here return to the issue of the rugged border which you raised.

In post #49 you presented a number of rugs and wrote." Apart from the topping ramshorn, it to me also looks like they share a distinctive jagged border articulation along the niches which we don't see elsewhere on other borders of the rugs." This I commented on and said, it was a valuable observation. You could have said the same on prayer kelims, where the jagged border in the form of a climbing plant combines an important design aspect and a technical requirement, ie preventing a long vertical slit at the interface between field and border. In the case of the pile rugs, technically, there is no point for this. In conclusion, those knotted rugs rely on a foregoing kelim design for their statement. The significance of this I'll address in a separate essay.

Regards,

Horst



May 5th, 2014, 01:44 PM

#86

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008

Posts: 86



Hi Horst and Guido

I certainly didn't mean to disrespect you, I just wanted to keep focus, the threads here on Turkotek sometimes tend to digress and get very long. Looking forward to see your new thread or salon.

all the best
Martin



September 28th,
2014, 08:57 PM

#87

[Guido_Engel](#)

Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi all,

I just want to present this old Shahsavan fragment, which shows like the Turkish kelim fragment that the hook design in nomadic work could be a simplified animal form.

Guido









October 11th, 2014, 02:48 PM

#88

Guido_Engel
Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi Dinie,

Here is my promised answer. I'm posting here, because there is no connection to Horst's discussion.

Klaus Schmidt, who excavated Göbekli Tepe in Turkey - built about 10000 BC - reflected in his book on the development of the demon. They exist since Ice Age and they are composite beings with a human body and an animal head (or an animal mask?); you also find these same composite demons (human body and animal head) often in Islamic art and in almost all cultures around the world.

Schmidt said that they're often shown in a dancing position and the dancing movement can be best expressed by the human body. Furthermore he gives a link to shamanism. The shaman is falling

into trance by dancing (human body) and thinks to change into an animal (animal head) and is therefore able to come into contact with the "other world". By the way I'm not thinking that the weaver saw the brown hook design as shamans.

There is a highly interesting exhibition on "the importance of dancing for creation in Asia" at the Ethnological Museum of Vienna(I show a picture below).

To come to an end: I personally doubt that these brown hook designs on my my bagface have their origin in flowers or plants(this might be true for the pieces you have shown),but were influenced by an old popular belief in primarily benevolent forces and therefore have an apotropäic/protective function.

Regards Guido





October 11th, 2014, 02:52 PM

#89

Guido_Engel
Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi all,

a last example to demonstrate the importance of the animal in nomadic way of thinking.

This is an old nomadic Bakhtiari work with a design called " Dragon and Phönix" .I personally see neither the dragon nor the phönix.

In this item the blue background is more imprtant showing three mythical birds (possibly roosters,which are often found in Luristan art);the left one is leaving and the right one entering the field. The bird in the center is complete.

In most archaic cultures the animal plays a leading role,but not the plant.That"s why I think that in true nomadic art the animal dominates,whereas textiles with a predominant amount of

flowers/plants are influenced by urban civilisations maybe for commercial reasons.

Regards Guido



October 11th, 2014, 02:55 PM

#90

Guido_Engel

Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi all,

after having bought the two kilim frags I remembered a small exhibition catalogue (Islamic Museum of Berlin) on" Dragon, Phönix, Double-headed Eagle; mythical creatures in Islamic art".

They point out that these composite beings existed already in the preislamic period and are often found on textiles , buildings... probably for protective/apotropäic reasons.

Dragons and birds like senmurv and simurg are most important and are often combined to mythical creatures. The birds" wings often end in dragons" heads as well as the tails of other mythical creatures.

Looking at the two kilim frags one culd certainly reflect on this idea of combining dragons(hooks) and birds (bodies).

Regards Guido





October 12th, 2014, 03:07 AM

#91

[Dinie Gootjes](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Canada
Posts: 29



Hi Guido,

Where to begin???

I think the main question I want to ask is this: with the obvious relatives/ancestors of your bag face looking you in the eye and kicking you in the shins, why do you insist on finding seventh cousins twelve times removed to explain the design?

I do not doubt that your bag face is old, though how old is difficult to decide, with no dated examples available to compare it to, as far as I know. But the floral design is old enough to be the obvious inspiration, and why would it not be so in your bag face?

Quote:

In most archaic cultures the animal plays a leading role, but not the plant. That's why I think that in true nomadic art the animal dominates, whereas textiles with a predominant amount of flowers/plants are influenced by urban civilisations maybe for commercial reasons.

I do not deny that, but for commercial reasons, or for other reasons,

why would your bag face not have flowers, while at the same time you say that the examples I show (in the tread in Horst's Salon) may have them? You cannot declare a rug truly tribal and archaic just because a (respected) dealer says it is old, and you would like it to be so. In my other post and in post # 8 in your saved thread here http://www.turkotek.com/misc_00120/motifs.htm I clearly indicate several areas where you can see the remnants of the old floral design in these rugs. What sets yours apart?

As to the hooked designs as simplified animal forms, James Opie in *Tribal Rugs* considers them animal heads, going back to bronzes from Luristan, if I remember correctly. Also animals, but not quite the same way. But this is beside my main point.

Last question: where do you find the seven legged dragons? Google is full of seven headed dragons in Turkey, but none with seven legs. It seems the legs are often even missing. Well, I did find one ;-):



Dinie



October 12th, 2014, 05:05 PM

#92

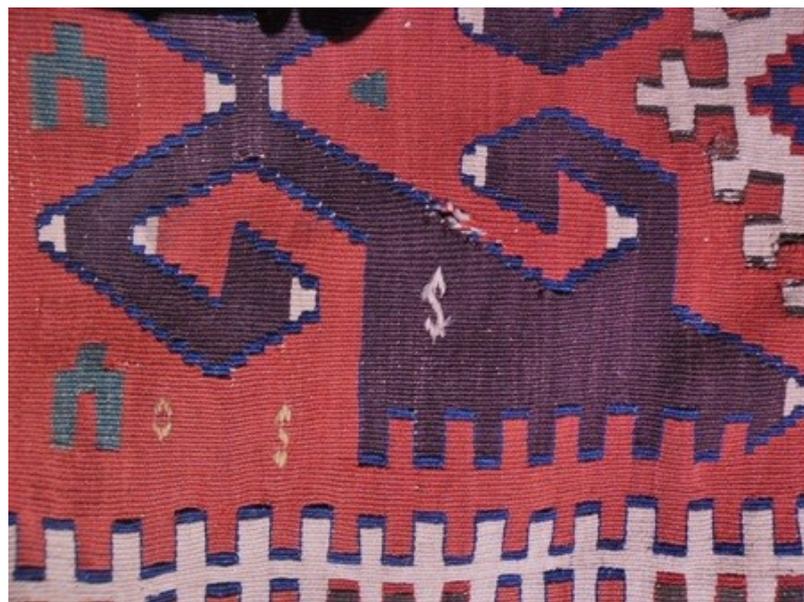
Guido_Engel
Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi Dinie,
I'm sure you posted this nice dragon for my daughter. Thank you in her name.

For the seven legs, which belong to the body, please see my posting 90.



In the book on mythical creatures they mention the combination of a bird body and dragons" heads(which could be expressed by the three hooks).I know, in an earlier posting I was reflecting on a dragon with seven feet,but I hadn"t read this book yet. For detailed

information please read the book.By the way I'm really not the first one,who reflects on the hook and the dragon.

The number "seven" is the holy number of Turkic people (please look at posting 84).

Different interpretations I know at the moment.

1. Frauenknecht: eagle;he also says that interpretation is a very personal affair.
2. Mothergoddess
3. Dinie:flower/plants
4. Guido: mythical creature (possibly a combination of dragon and bird).
- 5.Where is the problem ?

I think everything is said and we should stop here.
There is already a battlefield on Turkotek and I have neither the time nor the interest to enter a second one.
Everybody, who is interested in my ideas may reflect on them.

Best wishes to all

Guido



October 22nd,
2014, 10:59 PM

#93

Guido_Engel

Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi all,

I know that I wanted to stop posting on this topic,but I read the last days Ipsiroglu"s book on Mongolian paintings from the 14th. century showing nomadic life and its religious ideas.

He points out that wild dancing and the close coexistence with the animals were very important aspects of nomadic life.



He also explains that demons (human body,behaviour of human beings and the head or tail of an animal and eventually horns) stood in the center of their pagan religious ideas (below a picture from the book with dancing demons).

For him these demons could be the personification of the mysterious and dangerous forces of nature and the attempt to exorcize them. Possibly the brown hook design on the Gashgai(?) bagface fragment has its origin in this idea.

Furtheron don't forget that Tanavoli mentions the demon head design on Afshar khordjins (see the picture above).





Now I will definitely keep silent.

Regards,

Guido



October 28th, 2014, 02:51 PM

#94

Guido_Engel

Guest

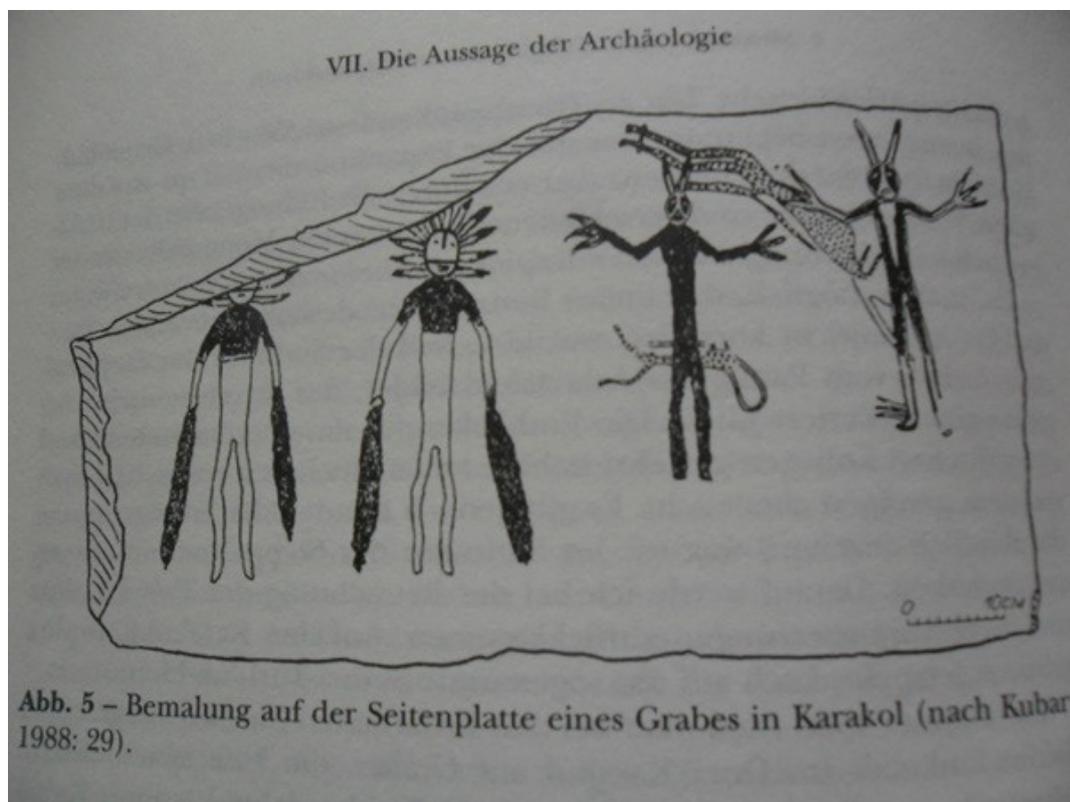
Posts: n/a



Hi all,

just a short addition to my last posting from Jettmar"s book on the preislamic religions of Middle Asia.

About sixty years ago paintings with supernatural beings (human body with the head of a bird,an ox or the sun) were found in a kurgan(Altai area) probably protecting the decedent .On some of the paintings these figures are dancing.



Regards,
Guido



December 28th, 2014, 08:45 PM

#95

Guido_Engel

Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi all,

After having read quite a lot on the role the animal had played in early Turkic culture, I would like to summarize the most important points. Everybody may decide for himself if the drawing of Turkic rugs, bagfaces and kilims was influenced by these ideas. For allwho

are interested in the topic, I would recommend the following books:

Julian Baldick: ANIMAL AND SHAMAN, ANCIENT RELIGIONS OF CENTRAL ASIA

Karl Jettmar: DIE VORISLAMISCHEN RELIGIONEN MITTELASIENS

Karl Jettmar: DIE RELIGIONEN DES HINDUKUSCH

Baldick: "...and it is the animal that is the most important motif of Turkic religion in general." (p.88)

1. The animal as ancestor

In this case the wolf is the most important animal for Turkic people; it is also rescuer (of a hero in Turkic epic), guide and heraldic emblem. "In the story of Oghuz there is not just a bovine as one parent of the hero, but the production of the traits of other animals as well: there is a contamination of the human and animal worlds." (J.B. p.91). Oghuz means "young bull".

2. The animal as carrier of the vital force (Sogdian:farn; Turkic:qut)

Each human being has an "Alter Ego" in the form of an animal carrying a person's vital force. The animal's death means the person's death, too. The sheep is seen as the farn/qut of a house.

3. The animal as the totem (ongon) of a tribe

"Ongon" means the blessed and happy sign. It's the special animal, which protects all members and must not be hunted or eaten.

4. The animal as guide

In this context the animal is guiding during the tribe's migration to an unknown area. The Tajiks and Turkmen believe that a sheep's soul helps the soul of a deceased to pass the bridge to paradise. That's why a sheep is immolated when a person dies. The Tatars believe that the dragon is escorting the deads to the world under the earth, whereas the Kirghiz think that the eagle is bringing the deceased back to the world of the living .

5. Animals living close to heaven

They are thought to be "pure" and to be the connection to Tengri (Heaven/God) like the Mountain goat. In Pamir area eating a wildgoat means being free of all sins for 40 days.

6. Transformation

The most important aspect is transformation, human-into-animal and animal-into-animal transformation. There are three levels of the universe: the sky, the earth (and from medieval times on the underworld) and the space between them. To change between these three levels a human being must be carried by animals like horses and birds or must transform into them.

Even the animals must transfer into each other (remember Scythian art). By dancing the Yakut shaman imitates animals for travelling. First he becomes a horse to come to a mountain and then transforms into a bird to fly to the top.

7. The animal as an embodiment of a spirit or a spirit's qualities

The yakut know a type of spirit called "yekyna" (means mother animal) embodied by different animals like dog or bull. Each tribe has its own protective spirit embodied by an animal. One shouldn't forget the shaman's helping spirits in the form of animals.

8. The horse (the Yakut shaman's costume is called "horse", because it is necessary to travel to the underworld or the sky). It is able to transform (i.e., into an eagle). It is able to talk like a human being and often rescues the hero in Turkic epic. It is often the "Alter Ego" of a hero. It is able to revitalize human beings.

9. Mongolia
The ancestor is a blue wolf. Blue is the color of Heaven. Fighting is like hunting; the warrior must take the qualities of special animals (like hunting dogs) to be successful. Rescuing an animal means rescuing one's own life.

10. The dragon
It is the symbol of the neverending movement. When he lives under the earth in winter he symbolizes death. In April it is flying up to the sky and becomes the symbol of life.

Lots of these aspects you also find in other archaic cultures.

Happy New Year,

Guido



February 21st, 2015, 01:01 AM

#96

Unregistered
Guest

Posts: n/a

Seljuk architecture/Mevlana's tomb

It should be remembered that there were never any 'Seljuk' architects in Anatolia. The Seljuks used their subject peoples to do their building and stonework for them. The conical domes you see on Seljuk buildings come directly from much older Armenian church architecture, because as patrons and conquerors, the Seljuks commissioned the same architects and builders who had been doing that work for centuries in that region. Failing to see this relationship leads to all kinds of erroneous suppositions and theories, none of which hold water.



February 26th, 2015, 12:38 AM

#97

Guido_Engel
Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi all,

Everything I wrote on the role of the animal in early Turkic

mythology is also true for lots of other social groups all over the world depending on their level of development.

In the history of early mankind the animal was a numen like the sky, the sun or the stars representing a supernatural force i.e. bull/thunderstorm. That's why the shaman's helping spirits are animals.

About 5000- 4000 b.C. the demon enters the world, a composite being with a human body and the head of an animal. He now represents this unpersonal supernatural force. That's why the shaman has to be able to transform into an animal.

At the end of the development we find the gods in anthropomorphic forms, but there are still some features of animals, i.e. angel/bird and the prayer rug-made of wool - echoes these old ideas.

Regards,

Guido



April 8th, 2015, 12:00 AM

#98

Guido_Engel

Guest

Posts: n/a

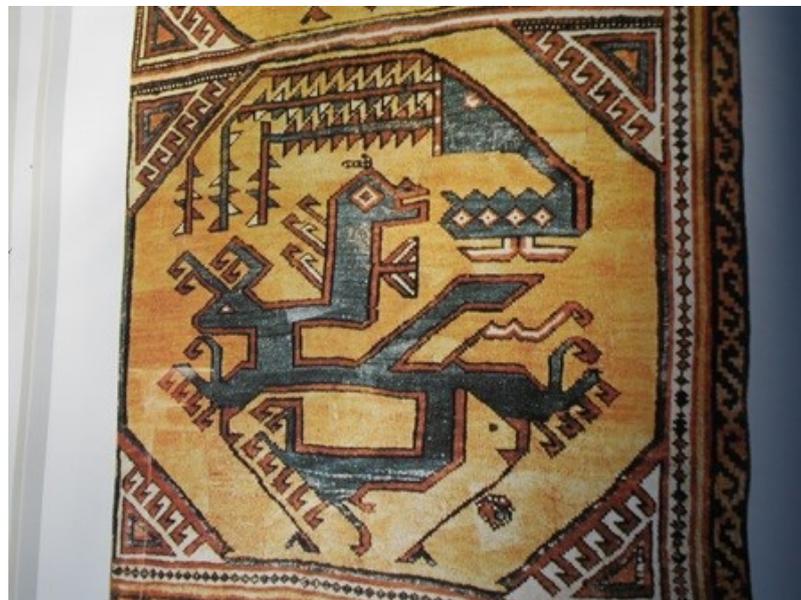


Hi all,

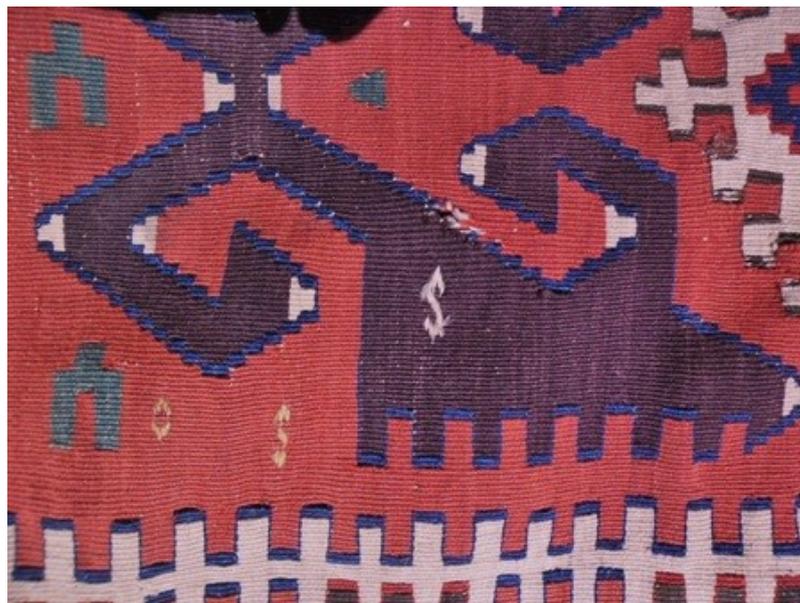
looking at lots of tribal pieces you find a rhombus, a hexagon or an octagon with animals or an animal like design-often birds- and framed by a hook design (the hook symbolizing the protective dragon?).

Looking at the "Phönix and Dragon rug" from Berlin (picture nr.1) this type of design seems to have a long tradition and the same could be true for the meaning of the design.

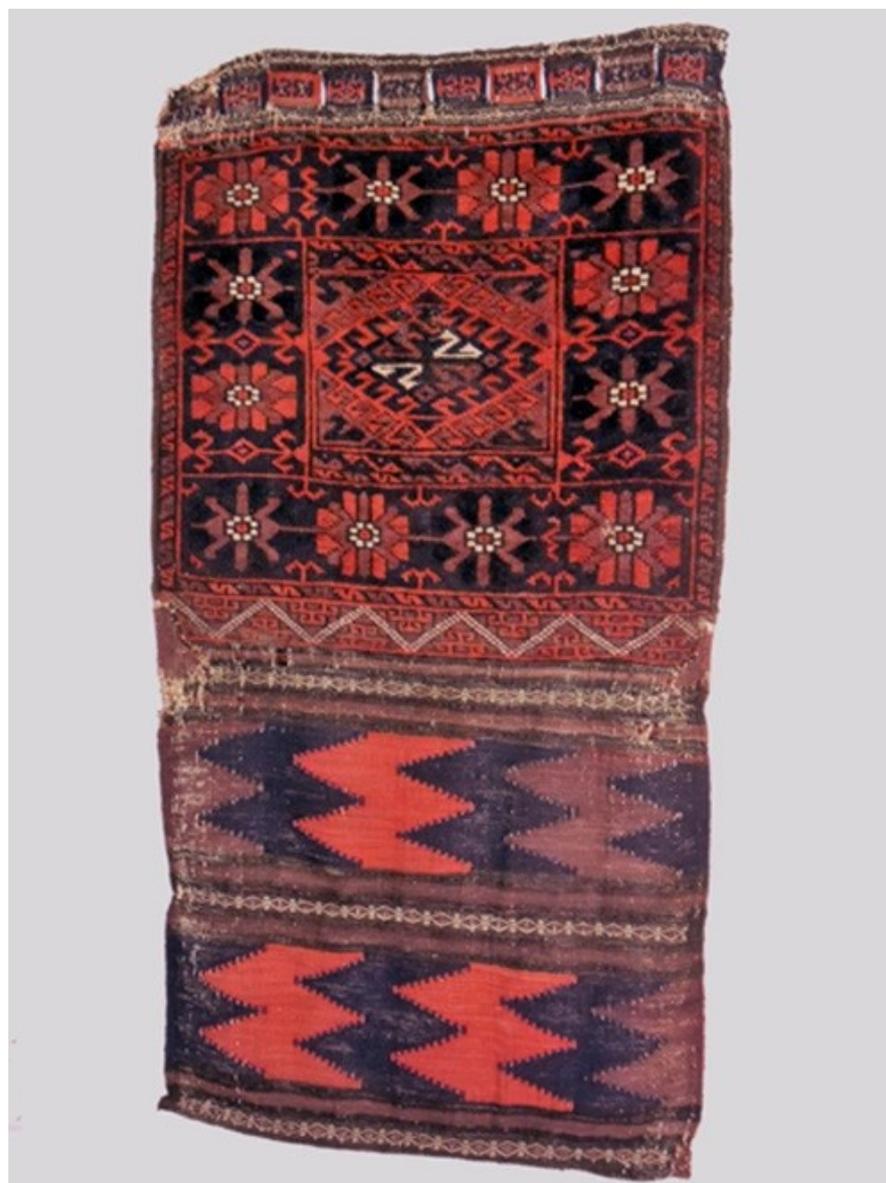
In the following some examples:



1. Phönix and Dragon rug, Berlin



2. Anatolian kelim fragment (explaining the hook design)



3. Timuri, Khaf area?



4.Gashgai?



5. Shahsavān



6.Kordi



7.MAD with Dyrnak,from the Kerki region along the southern-left bank of the Amu Darya; possibly Kizil Ayak. Turkish "Tirnak" means claw and Pinner speaks of "dragon claw". Moshkova calls the anchors in the center "birds with outspread wings".

Regards to all,

Guido



April 10th, 2015, 04:57 PM

#99

Guido_Engel

Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi all,

Just a short addition.



Picture 1



Picture 2

The bird's body in picture 1 is formed by a right triangle very similar to the four right triangles in the center of the dyrnak (picture 2); Jourdan calls it "triangle-bird-motif".

If Moshkova is right that the "anchor" shows a bird with outspread wings, the center of the Dyrnak would present birds in the front and profile view. The Dyrnak is made of 28 birds and 28 dragons.

Regards

Guido



December 27th, 2015,
01:58 AM

#100 □

Guido_Engel

Guest

Posts: n/a



Hi all,

I'd like to present you a bagface fragment (probably Kurdish) explaining the importance of the bird in folk belief.



First a short introduction.

1. Kurdish people don't think of birds as animals but as the symbol of the supernatural. In Kurdish mythology the supreme being at the beginning of creation is depicted as a bird.
2. In traditional societies each member has a special task to guarantee the clan's survival. The women's job is to give birth to lots of children and on these days they are the center of the community. Unfertile women are thought to have annoyed the spirits or ancestors and were despised.
3. In lots of archaic cultures the soul transfer is done by birds (or other animals). The soul (life force, ancestor) is transported from its place of origin (i.e. a tree, a river..) by its birdmother to the real mother, enters her body and transforms into an embryo. Just remember Queen Maya dreaming of Buddha entering her body as a white elephant and look at the four white birds at the bagface.



When giving birth a woman connects this mortal world with the afterworld (comparable to the shaman who is possibly the male answer to the female ability of giving birth). Anyway at this moment she is the most important part of the clan.

4. The bird represented the female aspects of the cosmos in lots of ancient and archaic cultures. So the different aspects of motherliness and the different stages of soul transfer with the woman as the border between the two worlds are embodied by special types of birds.

Let's have a look at the different birds.

1. The four white birds: They probably are geese or swans (both with the same symbolic meaning): a small head, a long neck and a plump body.



Geese or swans belong to the goddesses of fertility/love and represent in this context life. These white birds take the soul from its place of origin to its mother. The white goose Hamsa is Brahma's riding animal (the Hindu god of creation). The white colour stands for the sphere of the supernatural and the spirits; it is thought to attract them .

There is an old folk belief in demons and helping/protecting spirits that need a riding animal. A spirit of fertility or a spirit responsible for the soul transfer both ride an animal which is able to enter both worlds like i.e. a waterbird. Both birds look counter; so they connect the afterworld to this mortal world.

Just have a look at the figure riding the bird (possibly such a spirit/demon) and compare it to the Afshar 'demon's head' below with the two red triangles.



2. The owl

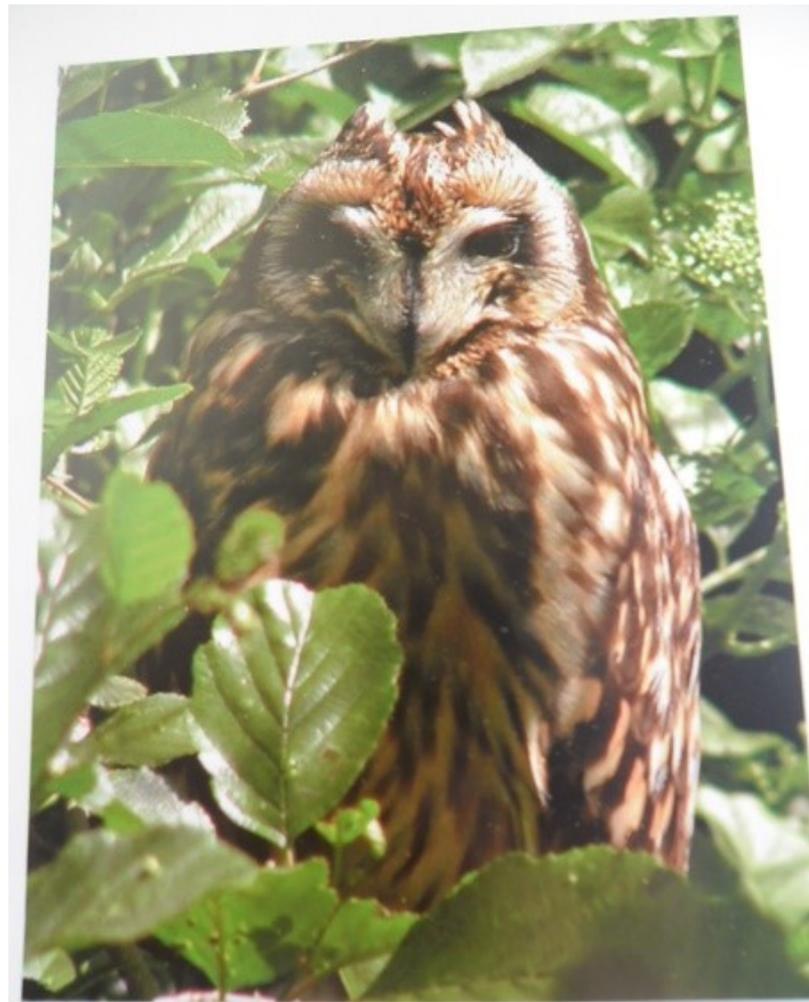


Abb. 4 Sumpfohreule (*Asio flammeus*)

The owl's beak begins under the eyeline; its face is similar to a

human face.



The owl is the bird below in this picture with the widespread (a symbol for movement) wings and one head with two eyes and one beak. Contrary to the goose/swan the owl is responsible for the transfer of the decedent's soul to the afterworld in lots of archaic cultures. The deceased puts on an owl's shape. It represents death.

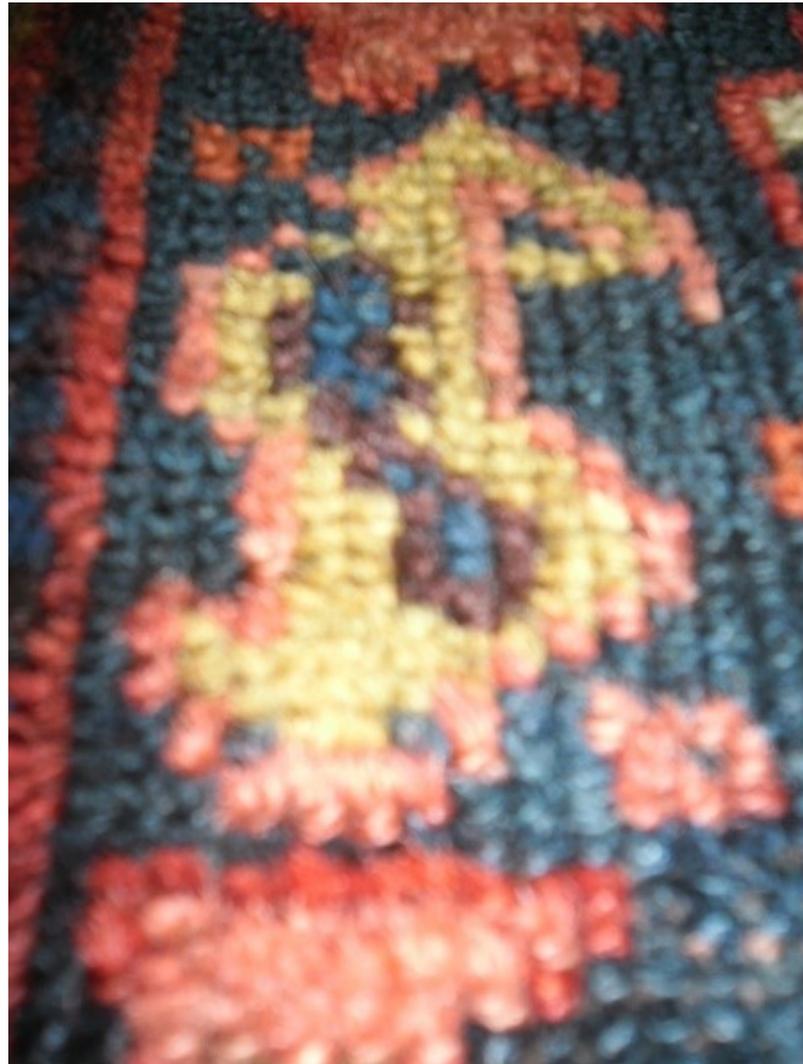
3. The vulture

Above the owl you see a doubleheaded (connection between this world and the afterworld) vulture.



It stands for the regenerative aspect. In Tibet the vulture transports the decedent to the Bardo a status between death and rebirth. In Zoroastrism the vulture is responsible for separating that which lasts forever (soul/ life force) from the rest of the body.

The goose stands for birth/life, the owl for death and the ancestors, the vulture for the status between death and rebirth.



In Kurdish belief the snake (the picture above) protects the entrance to the underworld and is responsible for fertility.

At the end one could also reflect on the chyrpy design. For me it expresses the wish for lots of children.



Birds' necks and heads.

Happy New Year 2016

Guido



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Page 5 of 5 [« First](#) [<](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

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