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 **The Pazyryk rug and Felts**

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 July 25th, 2014, 11:52 AM

#[1](#)

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150

 The Pazyryk rug and Felts

Hi All

I take the liberty of opening yet another thread. The Pazyryk rug and felts are both in time and design a series of benchmarks. I know this material has been discussed before in many threads here on turkotek (one example here http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00104/s104t1.htm) but perhaps it could be interesting to try to collect materials and references in one thread?

Here the famous 5th-4th centuries BC pile rug:



(I haven't seen it in real life but the colors in reproductions certainly varies more than usually, perhaps its cautiously lit at the Hermitage museum)

Personally I don't have any in-depth overview of the material, so I hope to learn something in this thread 😊

best Martin



July 27th, 2014, 02:04 PM

#2 □

[Martin Andersen](#)

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Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



The Pazyryk pile rug is by the Hermitage museum labeled Scythian-Sakae period (6th–4th centuries BC) and as a part of their Altaic region collection. This of course logically in accordance with the archaeological context of the rug.

In the rug world Ulrich Schurmann (and Volkmar Gantzhorn) on the basis of purely stylistically comparisons would like to relocate the carpet as "a masterpiece of Armenian workmanship". Ulrich Schurmanns argument can be seen here <http://bedrosian.com/Classic/Paz/paz1.htm>

Stylistical arguments are always interesting - and debatable (and in stylistic comparison within art history I take the liberty of trusting my own eyes 😊). The Scythian-Sakae culture were doubtless part of a larger cultural exchange, and the comparison of the Niniveh 7th.c bc(?)

alabaster floor and the main field of the Pazyryk floor certainly is an interesting fit. Far from a complete replica, but surely close enough in some details to be closely related:



But this is surely not enough to relocate the production from Mongolia to Armenia? We know countless of other patterns have migrated this distance without having to be produced in the same geographically location. And is a single pattern on a marble floor enough to put a specific city as production location on a rug from an otherwise known nomadic culture? Thats rather adventurous.

Apart from this Schurmann compares the headgear and the parading riders to Achaemenid style reliefs, this is more debatable, stylistically certainly not as close a fit as the floor/main field pattern.

And then there are the on the Pazyryk rug very prominent stag border motif:



Shurmann kind of skips the stags relation to the Pazyryk felts and Altaic culture in general with this comment:

"The animals in the Pazyryk rug do not correspond stylistically with the known artistic styles of the Scythians whose principal characteristic is one of great tension. This is most noticeable in their gold and wood work where strangely coiled animals look reposed yet still remain ready to spring....."

In the Pazyryk rug, however, the bucks seem to be grazing mournfully,

relaxed, and without tension; the horses trot along unexcited; all this belongs stylistically to the art of Middle Eastern world."

I would say this is plain wrong, the stags on the pile rug corresponds stylistically directly with the felts (and so do the "griffins"):



Regarding Schurmanns stylistic argument one could look at this horse head, and say something like "*relaxed, and without tension;... all this belongs stylistically to the art of Middle Eastern world*":



And one would be wrong - it simply belongs very specifically within the context of the art of the Scythian-Sakae culture:



I would say if one moves the Pazyryk pile rugs origin of production why not skip archeological context for its related material and move all of it to Armenia (I'm sure their cultural ministry will happily agree, probably even stick out a medal 😊)

best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; July 27th, 2014 at 04:52 PM.



July 28th, 2014, 10:19 AM

#3 □

Pierre Galafassi

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009

Posts: 96



Hi Martin,

The bestiary & artistic analogies between the motifs of the Pazyrik rug and other Scythians artefacts make good sense to me too, although my competence in comparative art is nil, contrary to yours.

May be we can look at the question from a different perspective as well.

There is an obvious emphasis in this rug on wild animals (reindeers, stags), and horsemen. Is it too farfetched to think that these motifs were more than just decorative, that they signaled the great importance of these models for the weaver's daily life and /or for the chief buried in kurgan 5?

This would point toward a civilization of horsemen and hunters. Nomads. Steppe people. Or recently settled people for which the horse kept being important as vector of their military power and/or of their economy.

The stags or reindeers of the rug border rather point at a northern / central Asian civilization.

The outstanding weaver's mastery probably indicates a very ancient rug making tradition, thus probably points at sheep raising people.

The archaeologic finds around the Takla Makan desert and in the Tarim basin, thus not very far (as distances go in Asia) from the kurgan, show without doubt that there was a rug-weaving activity in the region more than two thousand years ago. Were the weavers Sakas? I don't know whether this has been clarified yet.



FIG Eastern Turkestan about II BC

There is nothing in this which would contradict a weaving by the rich and powerful Scythians or Saka nomads of the fifth century BC themselves,

to the contrary.

It would also be interesting to compare the clothing of the horsemen in the border with the traditional western Scythian attire as known to us from fifth century Scythian jewelry and Greek pottery. Do I err or are they significant similarities?

Then, if one was not satisfied with this weaver's identity, one could think of a probably much more appealing candidate, rather than jumping at any exotic alternatives like:

- an ethnic group, the Armenians, which at the time was just entering history as a politically organized body and was hardly known later for any particular competence and passion for horses or reindeers, or
- a population, the Mesopotamians, prevalently made of farmers, IMHO quite unlikely to specialize in rug-making, and who, I suppose, were not often overrun by reindeer in their daily life 😊, nor particularly renowned for their prowesses on horseback and who certainly never were considered as being true "ruggies", not even now, when this activity has become purely commercial.

IMHO the stronger candidate I am pointing at is the Achaemenid Persian Empire, which at the time of the Pazyrik weaving was reaching the apex of its power, probably being the largest Empire on Earth ever and ruling over Anatolia, Caucasus, Persia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Transcaspia, Sogdiana, reaching the limits of the Takla Makan desert and the shores of the Indus River.

This highly organized Empire with active commercial routes, a strong gold currency, and many rich cities, was founded like most other Asian Empires by nomadic sheep-raising horsemen. Among its many subjects there was certainly no shortage of potential rug-weaving ethnic groups, including probably the ruling clans themselves.

Best regards
Pierre



July 28th, 2014, 12:12 PM

#4 □

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150

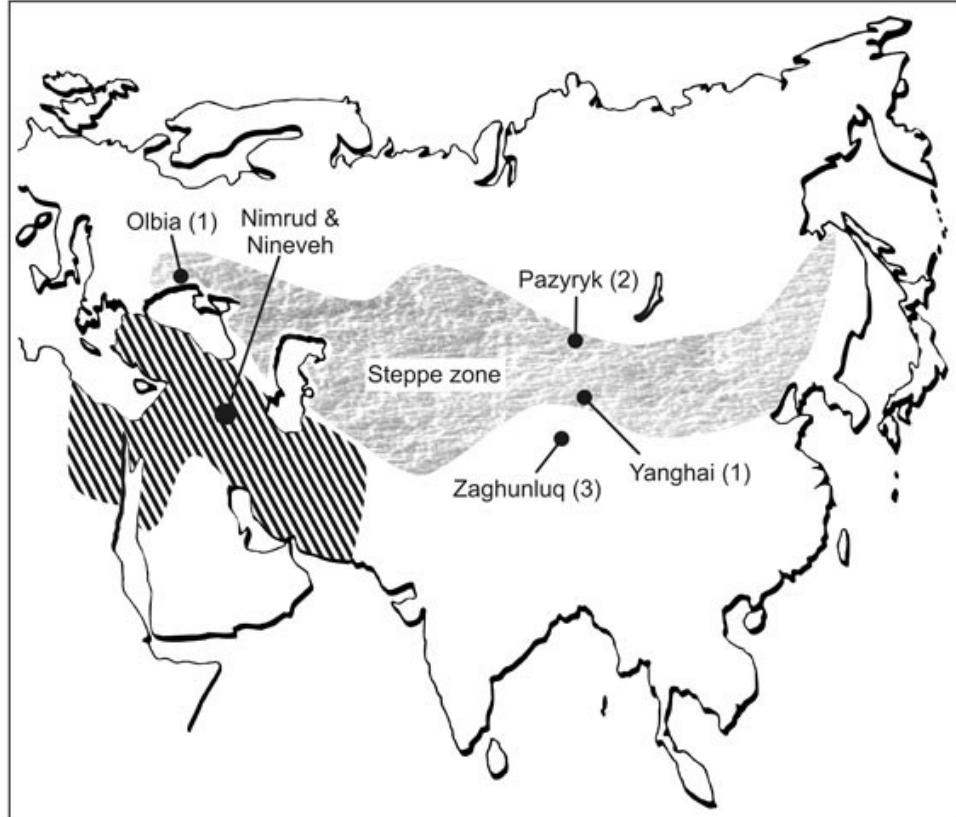


Hi Pierre

No doubt that the Pazyryk pile rug is a technically and artistically highly developed piece of weave, and it must spring from a much older tradition. And it is kind of annoying that it dumps into the history without any predecessors which could place its origin with absolute certainty 😊

Personally I find that its overall aesthetics are in good accordance from what is else known from Scythian/Eurasian steppe culture, which in general were influenced by Greek and Achaemenid contact, migration, trade and war.

A map of the geographical situation might be appropriate. The climate of Eurasian steppe plateaus and its pastures has for millenniums been the environmental area for the nomadic cultures:



Regarding the Scythian (and Kurgans) as a unified people I suppose this quote from wikipedia is what I find most likely:

"Others have further stressed that "Scythian" was a very broad term used by both ancient and modern scholars to describe a whole host of otherwise unrelated peoples sharing only certain similarities in lifestyle (nomadism), cultural practices and language. The 1st millennium BC ushered a period of unprecedented cultural and economic connectivity amongst disparate and wide-ranging communities. A mobile, broadly similar lifestyle would have facilitated contacts amongst disparate ethnic groupings along the expansive Eurasian steppe from the Danube to Manchuria, leading to many cultural similarities. From the viewpoint of Greek and Persian ancient observers, they were all lumped together under the etic category "Scythians"."

Shurmann puts the production of the rug specifically to "Sakic situated a little east of Niniveh" on account of the stylistic resemblance to the pattern on an alabaster floor. I have just found what I would say is a closer match to the pattern. This according to Schurmans argument would relocate the rugs production to Phrygian Gordion, Anatolia. To the left ceramic tile 6th.c , Gordion., to the right the Nineveh alabaster:



Well, I will still say a pattern like this is very transportable, and this doesn't make the Pazyryk rug "Phrygian" instead of "Armenian". A pattern like this could easily have traveled along with nomadic tribes on the steppe plateau both on textiles and metalware until it 200 years later ended up in the Pazyryk valley.

Best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; July 28th, 2014 at 01:04 PM. Reason: Achaemenid instead of Archimedean (no wonder I couldn't do google image search :))



July 28th, 2014, 03:49
PM

#5 □

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150

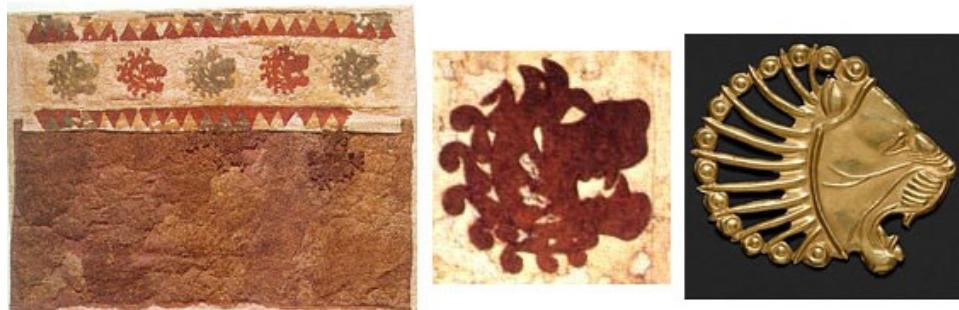


As I understand Schurmann it is the pile rug and not the felts he allocates to a middle eastern origin, the felts I suppose there are agreement on are locally Altaic produced.

Generally the Pazyryk felts are obviously stylistically a part of "Scythian animal style". This saddlecover a beautiful sample:

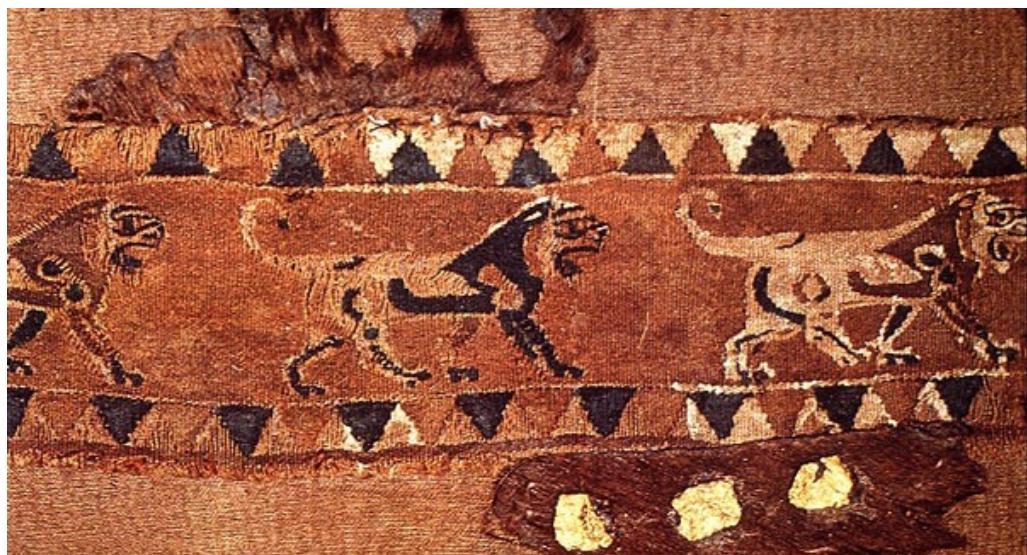


But there are also stylistic elements in some of the felts which could suggest middle eastern origin. Lions hardly populated the Altaic region 500 bc, but they are on some of the felts, and its tempting to compare them directly to the Achaemidian style lion on the right:



But isn't that kind of evidence that the Pazyryk people stylistically locally did produce artworks that were inspired by Achaemidian, or in more general term Mesopotamian, styles? And why could this not be the case with a simple pattern in the pile rug?

These flat-weave lions should also be from from the Pazyryk burial (haven't seen other than this detail photo of them yet). They surely also look like they have walked all the way from Mesopotamia - and why not? the same goes for the the griffins:



Just in case someone would like to also allocate all the lions to being produced in the middle east, then here a tattoo from one of the mummies found in the Pazyryk burial site:



I doubt that the Pazyryk people had to ride all the way to Nineveh to get their tattoos 😊

best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; July 28th, 2014 at 04:07 PM.



July 29th, 2014, 10:13 AM

#6 □

[Martin Andersen](#)

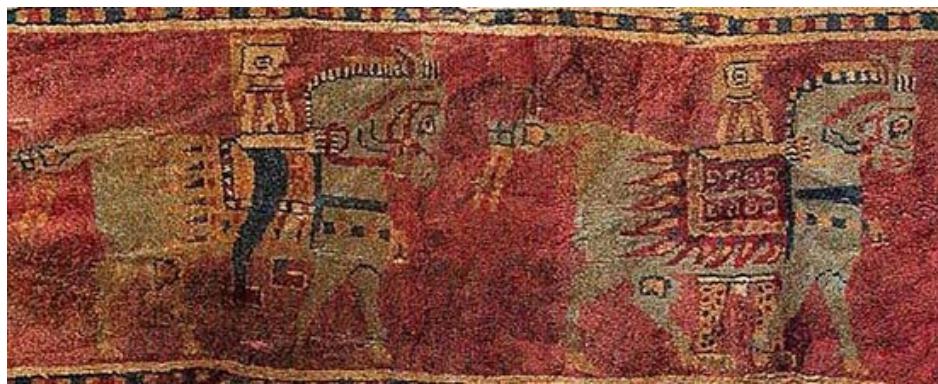
Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



I better say I find Ulrich Shurmann's text and observations highly interesting and his argumentation imaginative and sober (though I don't agree with most of it 😊), he is far from Gantzhorns bombastic presentation of fantasies for facts.

I have tried following Shurmann a bit further and looked into the depiction of the riders dress on the border:



Shurmann compares the riders to the depictions of Apadana at Persepolis "The tribute bearers relief", where all of the nations which paid tribute to the Achaemenian king are depicted with different characteristics. He has a rather unclear argument regarding the pointed hats/bashliks of the Scythians, as the hats on the Pazyryk riders aren't pointed he seems to conclude they are not Scythian and suggest that the depiction on two Urartuan seals are a complete match (with a special Urartuan non-pointed hat). These seals are the base of Schurmann calling the Pazyryk "an Armenian masterpieces" - the Urartuan being part of Armenian history.

Schurmann even goes so far as to a bit poetical suggest that the riders on these seals could be the actual king buried at Pazyryk:



To my eyes the hats on the seals are totally similar to lots of other both Greek and Scythian stereotypic depictions of bashliks/pointed hats, the hats probably in leather, felt or other textile and therefor softly folding. The same could be the case with the hats of the riders on the Pazyryk border. In general the hats of the Scythians have probably varied more in real life than the middle eastern stereotypes. Here some Scythian hats found in the burials, the first from Pazyryk. The last one, without the ceremonial(?) topping could be the plain model used by the riders on the Pazyryk border:



All in all Shurmann's comparison to the Urartuan seals is not very convincing, and certainly in my opinion very far from enough to give the Pazyryk a specific Urartuan/Armenian origin. Schurmann doesn't look at the dress on the Urartuan seals, and here there is a serious dresscode misfit compared to the riders on the Pazyryk border 😊 The Pazyryk riders are wearing conventional tight Scythian trousers, while the Urartuan rider is wearing a court style Mesopotamian loose gown:



Here the worlds oldest 3300 years old complete trousers found in a burial in the Xinjiang Tarim Bassin, certainly made for riding:



Looking at "The tribute bearers relief" at Apadana I suppose its fair to say that the different nations are symbolically depicted with what the Achaemenians would have regarded as their characteristics in dress - and in tributes. The Scythian delegation actually seem to predominantly be paying tribute in textiles, even a pair of trousers. In the delegation there are 5 persons bringing tribute, and 3 of them are carrying textiles (the two other bring bracelets and a horse)



Well, they are not tributing rugs, but I suppose its fair to say that the Achaemenians must have regarded the Schytians as producers of textiles
😊

best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; July 29th, 2014 at 11:18 AM.



July 29th, 2014, 10:56 AM

#7 □

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



Then there are the tiny depictions of saddle covers on the border. To me they seem obviously directly related to the felt saddle covers also found at the burial. And establishing a direct stylistic connection between the pile rug and the felts which Schumann ignores:



July 29th, 2014, 01:00 PM

#8 □

Martin Andersen

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150

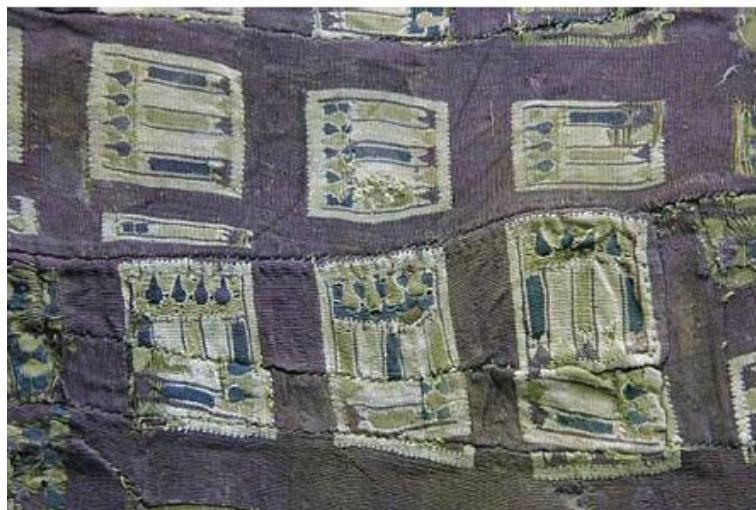
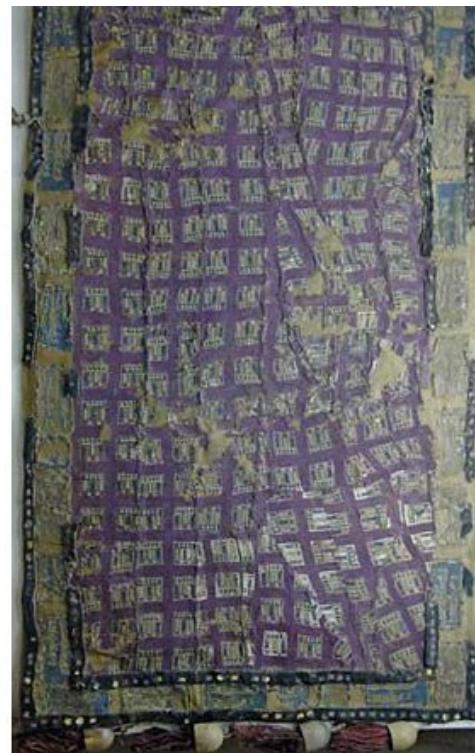


And I better, before someone accuses me for being totally Scytho-centric, quickly state that I agree that some other textiles found in the Pazyryk burial are imported. Here fine Chinese silk embroidery on a saddle cover, it to me looks like the Pazyryk felt makers framed the applied Chinese silk as the overall decoration for the saddle



The same could be the case here, and the weave on this one I agree stylistically looks of middle eastern origin, I think Assyrian has been

suggested.



But to me these composite felt saddle covers, which might seem a bit brutal towards the fine applied textiles, are rather different from the aesthetical totality of the pile rug.

best Martin



July 29th, 2014, 01:50 PM

#9 □

[Martin Andersen](#)

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Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150

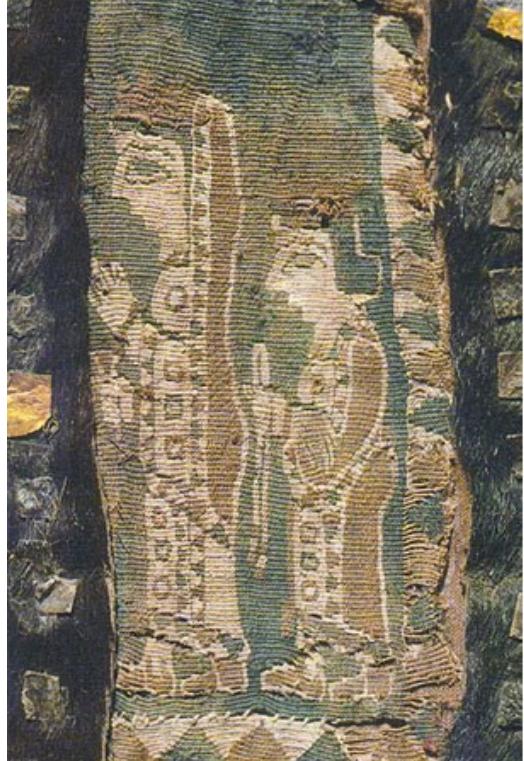


sorry, I can't stop when I first get started.

There are also some variations in the Scythian women's headgear. While some go for extraordinary long pointed hats or wigs, some go for a high but flat veiled/crowned decoration of the head. Here the Pazyryk woman's headgear:



And here a comparison of the flat weave from the saddle cover to a reconstruction of dress and crown from 4th.c. bc Kherson region burial:



A digression but interesting that this could take us almost directly to for example the Turkmen tribes 2500 years later 😊 here Yomud and Tekke:



best Martin



July 29th, 2014, 04:41 PM

#10 □

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 96



Hi Martin,

Good that you reminded us the Apadana tribute frieze.
It allows us to avoid unsubstantiated "Ipse dixit" blah and instead lets us make our own opinion about the validity of Shurmann's hypothesis.

I agree that the headwear issue does not convince me either.

I won't repeat here your (in my opinion very valid) points, just add two remarks:

The Scythian (pointed-) headwear in the frieze could anyway be typical of a particular Scythian population which had accepted to become tributary of the Achaemenids, perhaps after a military defeat or because they found enough incentive in dealing peacefully with them. Thus probably a branch which was close to the frontier and from the commercial routes. For example the western Scythians, who were also on good terms with the Greeks at the time. Not necessarily their independent, far away, eastern brethren from the Pazyrik area. (The Achaemenid attempts to rule on the volatile northeastern tribes ended in several military disasters).

It seems to me that the headwear of the Pazyrik horsemen (see FIG 1) shows a characteristic which can be seen also in headwears of several other tributaries on the Adapana frieze: Rather flat on top, it covers the lower part of the face.
Such a headwear makes a lot of sense for horsemen confronted with the climate of a desert or a dry steppe. A type of climate to which many populations inside and outside of the Empire, including the Scythians,

especially nomad horsemen, were often confronted.

In FIG 2, one can see the headwear of an Arian tributary (An Indo-European ethnic group in part urbanized, in part nomad, based at the time near the Hari Rud river (thus near modern Herat and southern Turkmenistan)

Pretty similar headwear IMHO.

By the way, the famous Roman Pompei mosaic (likely to be a reproduction of an older Greek painting), illustrating Alexander taking on Darius at Arbeles, shows the King of Kings and several of his men wearing a very similar headwear.

Of course, I am not at all claiming that this is any proof that Arians or Persians wove the Pazyryk rug, it only illustrate again that we do not know enough about the headwear fashion of fifth century Asia 🏴 and should refrain from dogmatic attributions. Even taking into account the lax standards of Rug Science.

FIG 1 Pazyryk horsemen detail

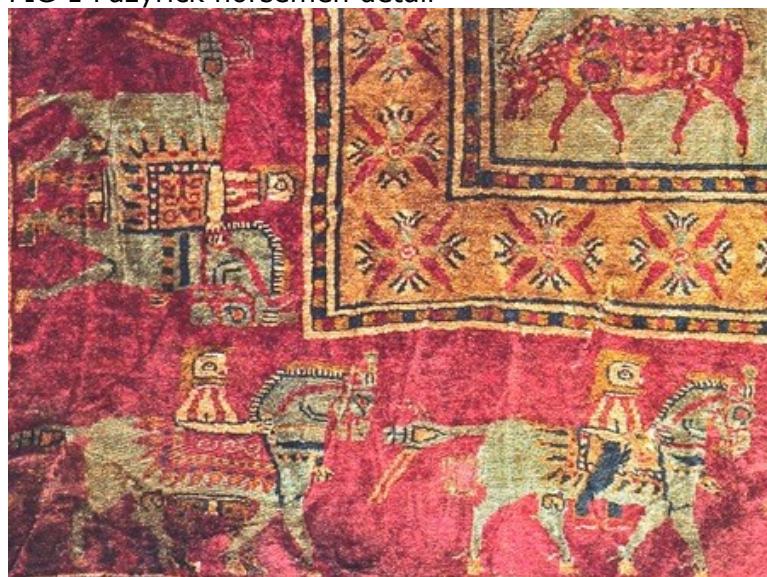


FIG 2 Headwear of Arian tributary (Apadana frieze).



Your remark about trousers seems a very a good one too. There is no doubt that the Pazyryk horsemen were wearing trousers, like several tributaries on the Apadana frieze, while many tributaries of the Apadana frieze, were wearing ample robes.

The Apadana frieze also allows to break another lance against the theory of the Pazyryk rug being woven in any part of the fertile alluvial Mesopotamia / Babylonia .

Antique authors, including locals (not only Greek arm-chair geographers) describe this very rich part of the Empire as quoted below from a gentleman called Bel-re'ušunu (Livius.org):

"the land lies between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. It produces wild barley, chickpea, and sesame, and even, in its marshlands, edible roots, called gongai. These roots are the equal of barley in nutrition. The land also produces dates, apples, and all sorts of other fruit, as well as fish and birds, field birds as well as waterfowl. There are also in the land of the Babylonians waterless and infertile regions near Arabia, while lying opposite Arabia there are hilly and fertile areas"

No mention whatsoever of horses nor of wool suppliers (sheep). Not really surprising when one remembers that these animals are not usually welcome in neatly cultivated fields and that the Babylonians, despite their (probably well-payed) mercenaries got regular beatings from various northern- and eastern nomad horsemen, (who in at least one case created a new dynasty) and that they ultimately fell to the Achaemenid horsemen.

Not surprisingly either, the Babylonian Apadana tribute does not feature any horse (Unlike the tribute of Scythians, Arians, Cappadocians, and even Armenians. The rich Babylonians were giving to the King of Kings, a bull and various products in pots, most likely the most valuable production of their fields and orchards and /or gold, and textile.

As far as textile is concerned the Scythian and Cappadocian people (the later living in a Satrapy conquered and settled, a century before "Pazyrik-time", by yet another Scythian-related tribe, the Cimmerians) must have been true textile powerhouses, since their tribute, next to horses and gold consists mainly of textile, as Martin was just making me aware. Both being, together with the Persian themselves, the Arians, the Armenians and some more ethnic groups, honorable candidates for the title of Pazyrik weaver, but only that!.

P.S: I have just retrieved a much older, interesting discussion about Pazyrik in which our Brother in Turkotek **Chuck Wagner** expressed and motivated his doubts about the Armenian theory, only about 10 years before us, Martin. 

http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00082/s82t4.htm

Chuck, have you changed your mind ?

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; July 29th, 2014 at 04:52 PM.



July 29th, 2014, 10:24 PM

#11

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



Well, Pierre - history repeats itself, someone will probably enjoy discussing this again in yet another 10 years 😊 and who knows perhaps at that time more have come up from either the permafrost or the deserts to bring even more candidates in as weavers of the Pazyryk rug. If nothing else come up now I will try to slow down my activity here on the Forum, my work is waiting, but it has as always been a pleasure to be in dialog with you

Best Martin



July 31st, 2014, 12:23 PM

#12

[Martin Andersen](#)

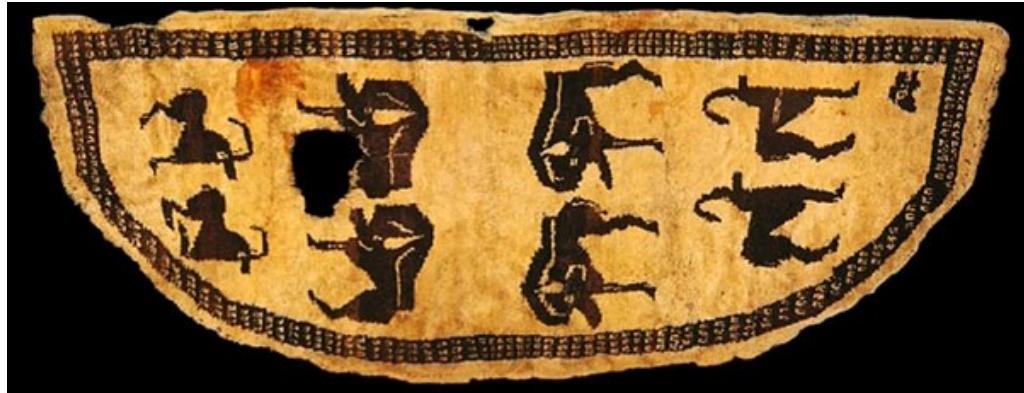
Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



Something else *did* turn up, a bit quicker than I expected 😊 John Taylor who runs the excellent Rugtracker.com pointed me towards Michaels Franses' lecture at Doha Museum of Islamic art in Quatar. There is a podcast of the lecture here <http://podcast.islamicartdoha.org/2011/michael-franses/>, as the organizers of the symposium have made this public I suppose its okay to use the material in a non-commercial forum like here (Michael Franses in the video makes reservations regarding the audience photographing the materiel because some are in private collections, but I suppose that's been cleared now when the video is on the net, if not I will of course remove this).

The rugs presented with c14 dating in the Franses' lecture is rather astonishing, and some of them very relevant for the material in this thread. For example he introduces a whole new group of pre-Islamic lion/tiger pile rugs. And he introduces what seems to be possibly the oldest existing complete pile-weave, and he attributes it Southwest Iran Achaemenid period, c-14 800-364 bc. And that to me is rather astonishing, giving evidence to Achaemenian pile weaving:



It seems none of the rugs Frances presents have archaeologic context, and that's of course a bit sad, as it makes their attributions less certain. But this Achaemenid weave sure stylistically is beautifully in accordance with Achaemenian metal works. Four of the wild goats depicted in stylized profile and four of them as far as I can see, very ambitiously for weave, depicted naturalistic with heads coiling in towards the body:



This surely attest that the Achaemenian were highly skilled and ambitious pile weavers, and as Pierre has pointed out candidates for being weavers of the Pazyryk rug - and that I have to be less scytho-centric in my point of view of the Pazyryk pile rug 😊

And then there is this beauty, pile weave main field and flatweave ends. Frances attribute it Sasanian, c14 dated 380-600 AD:



Some details in it for me make it fair to speculate that the Sasanian rather directly continued the weave tradition of the Acheminian: Franses shows two details an animal motif n the pile (which to me looks very much like a stag):



(Im no good at knots, and the photo here is not sharp, so please someone enlighten me, but doesn't this look like asymmetrical knots, and if so isn't this by far the oldest example? Well perhaps Franses would have said so if this was the case)

And the flatweave lion border, which both in the drawing of the lions with their stylized coloured musculature, and the triangular border is surprisingly close to the ca 1000 years older Pazyryk lion flatweave:



Please note that the triangular border goes like this: "white-down/light color-up/white-down/dark color-up" and so on. This is a complete match to the Achaemenian Lion frieze at Darius I's (522-486 BC) Apadana, now Louvre:



Architecturally and in iconography the Lion frieze is reproducing the Babylonian/Assyrian Ishtar gate. But the Assyrian lions are stylistically very different, much more naturalistic:



Louvre describe the style of the Acheminian lions like this: "Yet the style, combining extreme stylization (of the musculature and the mane) with a detailed knowledge of anatomy, is typical of the masterpieces of Achaemenid Persian art."

When looking at the Acheminian lions I can't help seeing that this bulging, outlined, multi-coloured, curved style for me has a very strong resemblance to the Pazyryk felts:



It is certainly not unknown in the arts that technical aspects of expressions become conventionalized to aesthetics which then gets transferred from one material to another (in the rugs we for example have the Ikat silk which gets transferred to pile weave patterns in the Beshir rugs). Here one could talk of what in art history would be called "tectonic representation of felt technique in ceramic tiles" The transference from felt aesthetics ceramics is of course just a highly speculative suggestion, but I find it very interesting as a possible example of bi-directional influence between urban and nomadic aesthetics.

Best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; July 31st, 2014 at 11:13 PM.



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July 31st, 2014, 05:20 PM

#13 [Reply](#)

[Marvin Amstey](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Fairport, NY
Posts: 21



Martin,

Thanks very much for the link to the Francis podcast and making us all aware of the 800 bc carpet in Iran. At least to me, this is new information.

Marvin



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August 1st, 2014, 08:31 AM

#14

[Martin Andersen](#)

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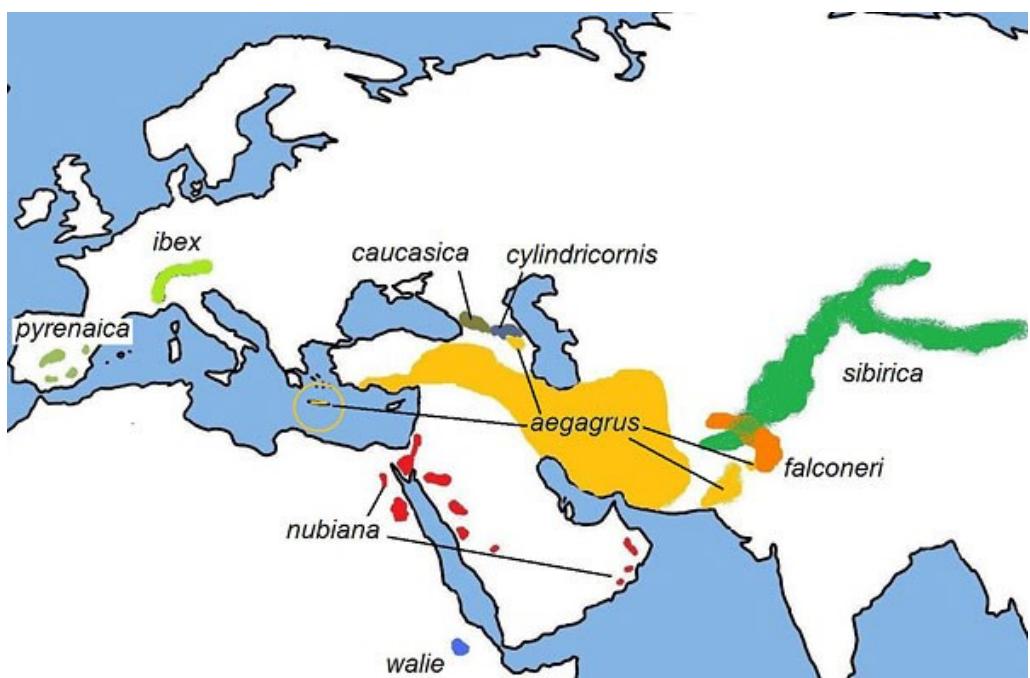
Join Date: Jul 2008

Posts: 150

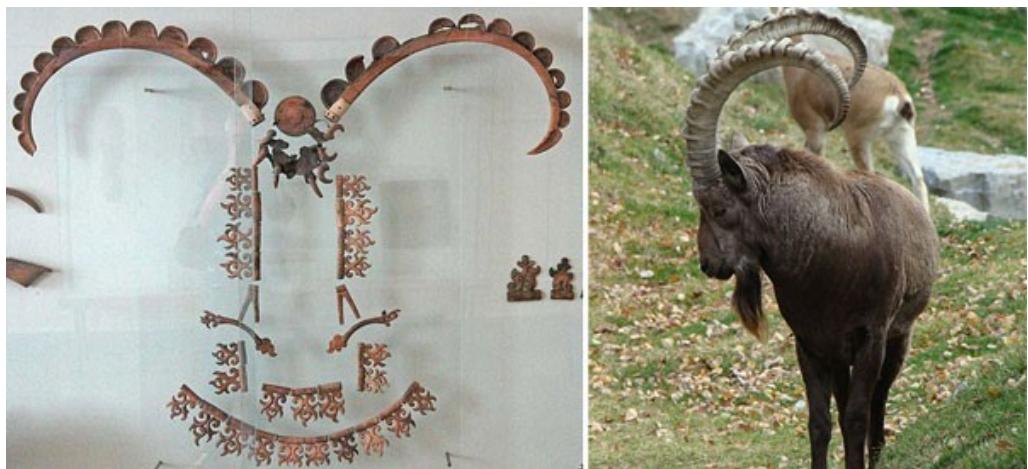
Hi Marvin

It sure is a marvelous piece this possible 800 bc horse cover. I can imagine it will be the portal to the history of pile weave in future rug literature. It also has an almost historical poetic point in the motif of the 8 wild goats which must be the Bezoar Ibex (*Capra aegagrus*). The *Capra aegagrus* is the ancestor to the domestic goat which is thought to be the first animal man domesticized.

Here a map of the of the different species of the Crapa:



It show an interesting division in geographical range between Messopotamian/Iranian and the Sibrian Crapa. And the horns of Sibrian Crapa does have visual characteristics (a more "ribbed squared drawing") which can be clearly recognized in some of the Altaic Scythian artifacts. Here the Sibrian Crapa and a Pazyryk culture "horse horn decoration":



best Martin



August 1st, 2014, 08:43 AM

#15 □

Pierre Galafassi

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 96



Outstanding post Martin!

The similarity between the 3 lion friezes is amazing and surely makes a much better clue for the identity of the Pazyryk rug than the Urartu-/Armenian- headwear theory.

As you rightly note, there are also obvious stylistic similarities between Achemenid art and the well known animalistic style (animals in movement, stylized & colored muscles) of the occidental Scythians (see artefacts found in the Krinean & Dnieper kurgans (gold and bronze artefacts mainly) and of the oriental Scythians (Pazyrik: felts, and of course **the** rug ..).

Not too surprising when one notes that Scythians and Achemenids share a same racial origin and that the Achemenids were still nomads a few century before "Pazyrik time".

Best
Pierre



August 2nd, 2014, 07:46 AM

#16 □

Alex Wolfson

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 8



First of all, thank you Martin for these two thought-provoking threads, and for pulling so much visual material together.

I am far from expert in this period of history, so forgive me if I limit myself to some general observations.

The felt panels and horse-trappings/headdresses recovered from Pazyrik are stylistically what one would expect from an early nomadic culture: abstract and dynamic in the way they capture the idea of movement.

If we look at an example already mentioned - the detail of the horse's head from the large felt appears quite static, but this is not the effect if the horse and rider are seen as a whole - notice the way the hind legs are depicted askew to give a sense of movement.

It is a markedly different aesthetic to that of the animals on the Pazyrik carpet, which have far more in common with the monumental glazed lions - much more classical and static.

Shurmann has indicated as much, but this is not to say that the theory of a mesopotamian origin is at all plausible (for the reasons already cited in other posts). Given the widely divergent aesthetics of the the felts and the carpet, however, it does seem likely that an urban environment was the source of the latter.

In this regard the depictions of the riders' saddles offer an important

clue. To my eye they almost certainly represent felt saddle covers with Turanian motifs. And this indicates that whoever wove the carpet would have had some reason to include them as part of the iconography, or at least been familiar with them.



August 2nd, 2014, 02:07 PM

#17 □

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



Hi Alex

I am certainly no expert either in this, I am just curious and learning as one thing leads to another - as it so often does in the rugs.

I find the Scythian material stylistically displays a high degree of cultural syncretism, adapting both Greek and Mesopotamian elements. Some of this might of course, as it my impression older euro-centric arthistory implies, have been made by non-scythian artisans. My point regarding the felt horse head earlier was perhaps a bit unclear, but what I meant was if one looked isolated at the horse head one would very easily conclude that it wasn't Altaic Scythian, but perhaps Greek. But looking at the totality of the felt (or even just the rest of the horses body, as you do Alex) it is obvious within Altaic Scythian aesthetics, and therefor an example that Scythian artisans were capable of incorporating stylistic elements in their works which we would call Greek or Mesopotamian (and drawing a naturalistic horse head, and even in felt, like the Pazyryk ain't as easy as one might expect 😊) The same could stylistically be the case with elements in the Pazyryk rug. And one could argue that looking at a singular horse on the border is looking at without the dynamic context that they are moving around the border in the opposite direction of the stags.

A bit harder to pinpoint exactly in this saddle cover, but to me this also might represent an integrated mix of Altaic Scythian and Greek/Mesopotamian influences (its easier to see in western metalwork, but I would find it interesting to stay in Pazyryk material regarding this)

:



Whether the Altaic Scythians technical were able to weave a sophisticated rug like the Pazyryk rug is another question, which I suppose is also highly debatable.

My main objection against Schurmanns text is that he on rather weak

basis makes a too specific and certain attribution of the Pazyryk rug as Urartian, and that he without any further material assumes a specific local continuity of weave tradition which makes him conclude the Pazyryk rug is an "Armenian masterpiece" (and thus directly or indirectly fueling the Gantzhornian fantasies of an Armenian/Christian origin of all pileweave).

The notion of Aryan and Turanian cultures, linguistics and ethnicities in this is of course highly contagious and sadly influenced by contemporary nationalistic ideologies. Its my impression that the reality of history has been more syncretic than what the older 19th early 20th european historians thought. An otherwise unrelated example could be the traditional nationalistic myth of an Anglo-Saxon genocide of the Celts in Britain, which resent DNA research to my knowledge has proved wrong. It wasn't an Anglo-Saxon mass invasion which wiped out the Celts and exiled them to outer territories, it was probably a very small invading warrior elite which introduced new language and culture - and a massive local population which stayed and transformed to a new identity, language and culture. I find this rather positive, the cultural aspect of syncretism as counterposition to the history of war and genocide. And I find we see it all the time along the trade routes of Central Asia, or the Silk Road if we should keep the old simplified eurocentric term 😊

best Martin



August 2nd, 2014, 02:37 PM

#18 □

Martin Andersen

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



Regarding the technical aspects of the Pazyryk rug, am I wrong or isn't 3600 knots pr sq decimeter equal of ca 232 kpsi? If so, that's well within what we would trust a nomadic tribe being able to weave.

best Martin



August 2nd, 2014, 05:30 PM

#19 □

Chuck Wagner

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 21



Broder Martin,

I need to go through this entire thread - and retrieve old memories - before I can answer your question.

I have had little spare time in the past several months; thus my absence from most Turkotek conversations. But things are getting better now.

In the meantime, take a look at this page - some excellent imagery of a wide variety of Scythian and related pieces:

<http://www.pitt.edu/~haskins/>

Regards
Chuck



August 3rd, 2014, 10:57 AM

#20 □

Martin Andersen

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



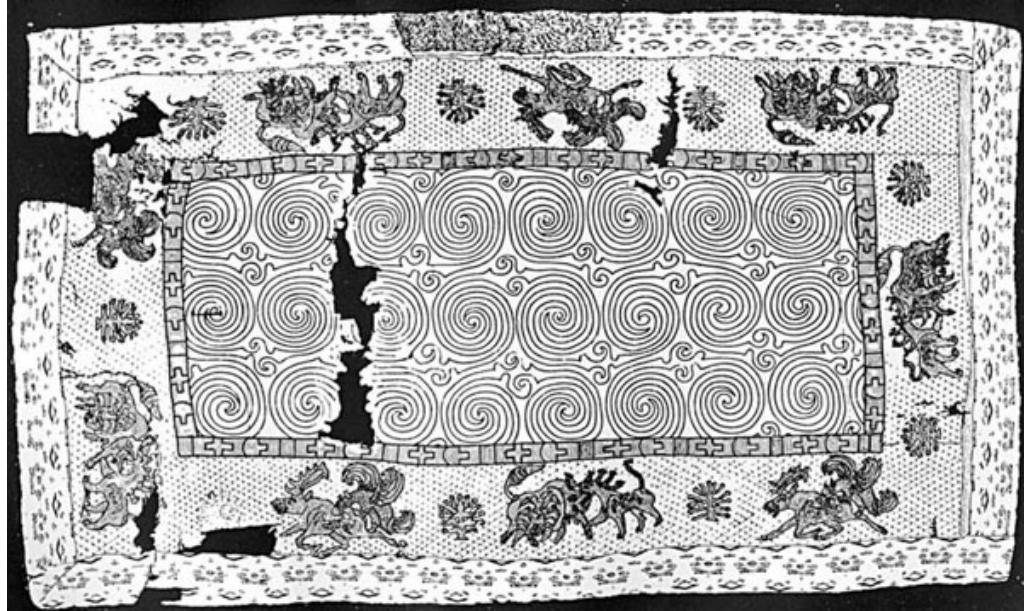
Hi Chuck - I will look forward to hear your opinion on this 😊

Pierre before posted an intact piece from the Tarim Basin, another technical thing I am wondering about is the knots in this and the fragments from Tarim Basin (and probably the related material Frances has presented), the ones I have seen to me looks like symmetrical knot (though I am certainly not much good at knots), here an example from V&A were they unfortunately don't inform about knot count and direction <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O92996/the-stein-collection-carpet-fragment-unknown/> :

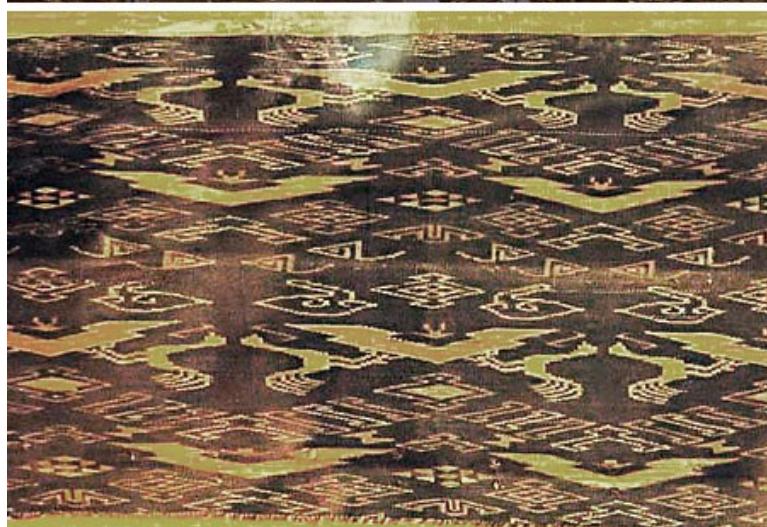


Schurmann sees the symmetrical knots as pointing towards Caucasus, perhaps they could just as well point to the Tarim Basin, both in time and geography closer?

Also in close range are 1th. bc Mongolian kurgan finds at Noin Ula. Here one of a pair of embroidered felt rugs with flatweave borders.



The stag and griffin border is of course obviously Altaic Scythian, the flatweave I suppose could be imported.



From the Ula Noin there are also some other very fine embroidery pieces, this one in some details with resemblance to the Pazykyk material, both pile and felt:



I suppose the turtles on the embroidery could suggest Chinese influence or origin:



And then there is this Noin Ulan fascinating fine embroidery:



Again its thought imported, but from were? The horse in gesture could easily be compared to the Pazyryk but to me the embroidery does not look stylistically Achaemidian (the Tarim Basin or Central Asian Grecco-Bactrian could be guesses).



Here a close up which shows a mustache we also know from the Pazykryk rug - it shows us fascial appearance (and what looks like blue eyes) which we would call clearly european:



This of course brings the Europid Tarim Basin mummies into mind, and even the strange fact that the oldest historical source on physically describing Gjengis Khan is: tall, red-haired and blue eyed, something which surely has generated some weird thoughts on the internet 😊

As the Noin Ula material is younger than the Pazyryk it doesn't say anything directly about the origin of the Pazyryk, but it is still interesting to compare as it might illustrate relatively close cultural context.

best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; August 3rd, 2014 at 11:57 AM.



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