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The Pazyryk rug and Felts

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



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August 3rd, 2014, 12:49 PM

#21

[Martin Andersen](#)

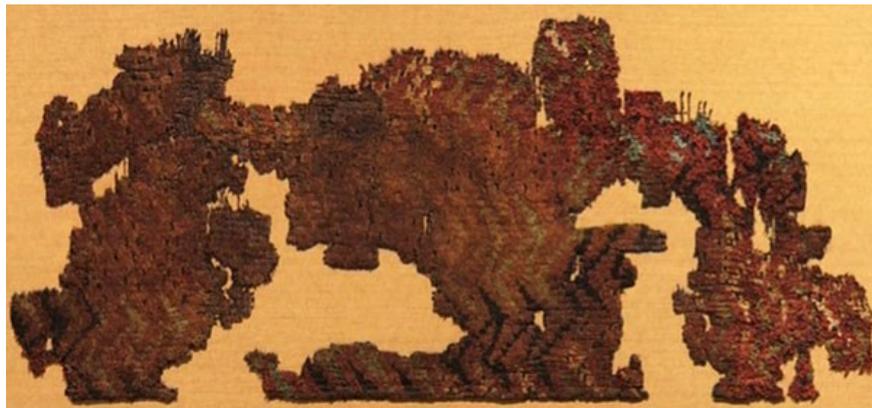
Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



This a slight digression but Franses material as a minimum might illustrate one interesting movement of pile weave and iconography from east (the Tarim Basin) towards west, and thats the tiger motif/rug.

Franses shows this as "The Korla tiger stripes fragment. Eastern Taklamakan, Xinjiang, C-14 761-385 BC":



(and perhaps one should remember that this dating is totally parallel to the dating of the Achaemidian Ibex weave, thous still leaving us in the dark whether the oldest pile is from east or west)

At the Ula Noin finds we have this embroidered tiger (or tiger-skin if one would see it as origin of the much later Tibetain tiger rugs), note the "checker board" border:



And here a tiger rug which Franses presents as "Bactrian AD 416-600", again note the "checker board" border



best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; August 3rd, 2014 at 01:44 PM.



August 4th, 2014, 08:37 AM

#22

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



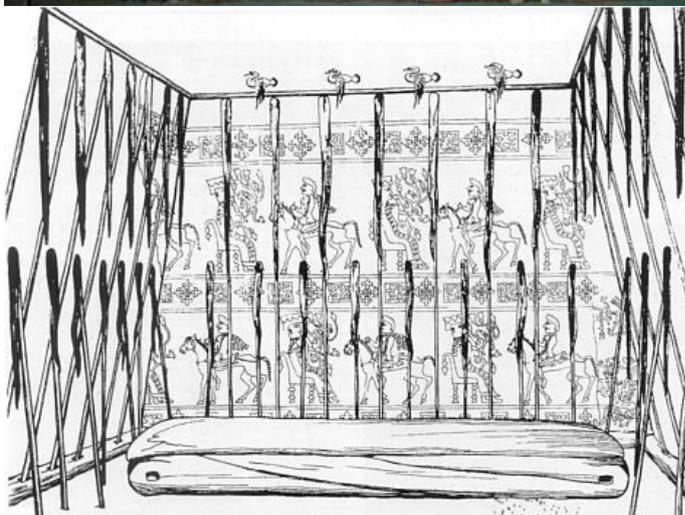
Just one more small note regarding Schurmanns stylistical argument.

Schurman writes this regarding the animals on the Pazyryk pile: *"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"*

And its not quite correct because relaxed and uncoiled Scythian depictions of animals do exist, here some samples in Scythian metalworks:



And one could also argue that in the large Pazyryk felt some details stylistically surely are coiled and full of tension, but the framed repetition of all the motifs actually constitutes an overall totality which is rather calm, monumental and "classical" in expression - stylistically on par with the pile rug:



And though there are interesting correspondences between the Achaemenian Apadana relief and the Pazyryk border, there certainly also are huge differences in artistic style between the naturalistic classical expression of the Achaemenian and the slightly naive drawing of the Pazyryk pile (I take the liberty of using a mounted rider in this comparison, no mounted riders at Apadana, and half of the horses are mounted in the Pazyryk 😊)



And Franses Achaemidian Ibex pile weave does show that the Achaemidian could be highly naturalistic ambitious even within a limited amount of knots, the Ibex coiling its head towards the body here:



I would still think that the Scythian label covers a variety of diverseness of different steppe cultures and not the totality of singular empire-like organization with a totally unified cultural expression. And the Pazyryk culture, including the pile rug, could represent one out of many branches with its slightly particular aesthetics, of course influenced by its direct and indirect exchanges with both other Scythian, Chinese and Middle eastern cultures.

The stylistic arguments for locating the Pazyryk pile rug to me are very ambiguous, and personally I will need more material before I let the archaeological finding of the Pazyryk in Mongolia being completely overruled as main clue to region of production.

I am going out on a speculative limb here, but if one asserts that the pile rug and the felt are produced by the same people, and the pile rug is inspired by Achaemenian iconography especially the Apadana relief, then one could look for the same influence in the felt. I am aware that the official interpretation of the iconography of the felt is the Pazyryk ruler mounted on a horse in front of a seated goddess (but haven't actually seen any particular good argumentation for this interpretation). But the seated person could have some resemblance to the seated Darius I on the Apadana relief:



The chair, dress and hat having resemblance, and both persons holding a floral representation in the hands (If one combined Darius' lotus flower with his stick one could get something like the Pazyryk tree-of-life representation). Well as I said, a limb, but one could suggest this as an stylistic influence from the Achaemenian iconographic representation of royalty which has transformed itself to Pazyryk culture - on par with elements in the pile rug.

best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; August 4th, 2014 at 12:39 PM.



August 5th, 2014, 10:44 PM

#23

[Marla Mallett](#)
Members

[Origins of Pile Weaving](#)

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 23

Hi Martin,

First, I want to thank you for all the materials and ideas that you have provided in both this and your other recent threads. Fantastic!

I would like here to just comment briefly on your reference to the movement of pile weaving from east to west or vice versa:

Probably the earliest known extant pile weavings are from Egypt, dating from about 2000 BC. Early examples have turned up in a wide variety of places, of course—including East, West and Central Asia, North Africa and South America--pieces displaying a wide variety of structures. In some places several different pile techniques have been used. From my perspective, these structures would seem to have originated independently in most places; some extant fragments, in fact display quirky details suggesting experimentation. I believe that the presence of knotted pile actually tells us nothing about the origin of any early weaving, nothing about the "migration" of weaving technology.

Just to satisfy my own curiosity, once several years ago when I was teaching a class of beginning weavers, I conducted a little experiment. These were students who knew nothing about rugs. We were using simple frame looms and had gone through a variety of elemental flat weaves. I then remarked that primitive peoples just about everywhere had used furs for warm clothing, and asked them to see what sort of "furry" surface they might devise with their yarns—to keep them warm if furs weren't available. They could use extra yarns in any way that they wished. Well, the results were quite interesting. Within this class of about 15 students, these young people devised at least a dozen different viable pile solutions, including knots and inlays—nearly all structures that have, in fact, turned up in various archaeological sites around the world.

In my opinion, a few basic weave structures can be "tracked" as they move from one group to another, simply because of the techniques' complexities. These might include warp-substitution, double weave, weft-substitution, and various warp-patterned weaves. But knotted and inlaid pile are among the structures so simple, so direct, and so elemental, that they can be expected to pop up anywhere—with no reason needed to justify their appearance.

Marla

Last edited by Marla Mallett; August 5th, 2014 at 11:02 PM.



August 6th, 2014, 02:01 AM

#24

[Horst Nitz](#)
Members

Join Date: Feb 2013
Posts: 54



Hi Martin,

for a while I have been enjoying this from a distance. Thank you for the wealth of material and your prompts for discussion. Please, let me chip in with an idea or two. You write:

"I am aware that the official interpretation of the iconography of the felt is the Pazyryk ruler mounted on a horse in front of a seated goddess (but haven't actually seen any particular good argumentation for this interpretation). But the seated person could have some resemblance to the seated Darius I on the Apadana relief: ... both persons holding a floral representation in the hands ..."

The floral representation is a reference to the ancient Oriental tree cult. Divinities were represented with or by a tree. Against this background the goddess is a representation of Kybele, which in this instance signifies a western influence on Scythian art.

Schuermann's Armenian attribution of the rug can be understood as a polite homage to his hosts, the Armenian Rug Society, who invited his speech that gave the basis for the monography on the rug.

Regards,

Horst



August 8th, 2014, 03:58 AM

#25

[Chuck Wagner](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 21



Frère Pierre,

OK, so skimming text is not the most effective information transfer method. I replied to Martin only to read more thoroughly later and see that YOU are the one who asked if I had changed my mind about the Gantzhornesque Armenian hypothesis. So:

No.

Referring directly to his references the Armenians in the bas reliefs at Persepolis, allow me to point out that ALL the non-Persian cultures lined up to see the Persian emperor (Armenians included) are not lining up to trade goods with him - rather - they are lining up to pay tribute to him.

To me, this would imply an even broader Persian dominance than is generally mapped throughout central Asia. To suggest that some enterprising proto-Armenians in the western Caucasus somehow managed to push through this clearly strong Persian presence and influence the manufacture of goods in possession of Altaic royalty, is a bit of a stretch to me. I think it far more likely that Persian influence was cast over these many cultures, like a blanket, and that the rug was a gift from one royal entity (likely Persian) to another.

Regards
Chuck



August 8th, 2014, 09:20 AM

#26

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



Hi All - Thanks for tuning in.

Interesting that pile weave can pop up even in a contemporary weaving class 😊 And Marla, the Egyptian 2000 bc pile fragments you are talking about, are they from what we would call wool carpets (or something along like the piece Franses shows? cotton with "Tulu-like" field). I would be curious to see them, haven't found them on the net.

Regarding the iconography on the felt, Kybele sure might be a possibility (a speculative one, and not a fact. Like so many other speculations in this thread), and thus suggesting a rather direct Greek/Phrygian influence in the felts. And, if there is agreement that the felts are local Altaic production, showing that the Altaic did incorporate western "classical" aesthetics and iconography in their locally produced felts. So why not the same regarding the pile rug?:



And surely no doubt that the Greek and Scythians were wellacquainted, here a Greek depiction of Scythians mounted on Ibex camouflaged horses:



Unless more material turns up which can verify a specific other origin than the Altaic region I personally don't think neither the Nineveh alabaster floor pattern nor the horses and their riders drawing, as purely stylistic resemblances, is enough to relocate the production of the Pazyryk pile.

Best Martin

(I will really have to stop now, summers gone, back to work 😊)



August
9th,
2014,
08:20
PM

#27

[Horst](#)

[Nitz](#)
Members

Hi Martin.

Join
Date: Feb
2013
Posts: 54

I can't let this stand uncommented:

"Unless more material turns up which can verify a specific other origin than the Altaic region I personally don't think neither the Nineveh alabaster floor pattern nor the horses and their riders drawing, as purely stylistic resemblances, is enough to relocate the production of the Pazyryk pile."

When the find of the Pazyryk carpet became known, it was almost immediately welcomed with efforts of functionalizing it, and making it a projection screen to serve all sorts of ends. The leading rug expert of the time, Kurt Erdmann, in defence of his theory of a Western Turkestan origin of rug patterns and technology denounced it – without having seen it – as a cut loop fabric (exact reference in a coming communication). There were others, to whom the rug was a proof, that the pile rug tradition began with the Turks in their ancestry homelands deep in Asia – see early HALI issues for this. Rudenko's, the excavator's, voice was hardly being taken notice of. To him, the rug's origin was in West Persia / Azerbaijan. Schürmann later specified this assessment. It is incorrect to say, he relocated it. I have mentioned in my last post that I regard the Armenian attribution as a politeness towards his Armenian hosts. At the location in the Northern Zagros pointed out by Schürmann existed at approximately the time of the making of the rug a permanent Skythian camp, that at a different age may have been nominally just within the borders of the Armenian empire. Without belittling the Armenian contribution to rug history, this does not make it an Armenian rug of course; and the Urartians very probably were not the ethnic predecessors of the Armenians.

I find your reference to the Phrygian tile highly interesting. The Assyrians and the Phrygians were engaged with one another in many ways, and I find it not at all impossible to imagine, that the motif in the square compartment of the rug had a domicile in the art of either empire. Not Nineveh alone should be considered in the assessment of the rug; also Khorsabad is known to have had a similar floor. The question is, whether the Assyrian / Phrygian design has survived in the Pazyryk rug, or whether the floors in the palaces were modelled on pre-existing rug types. The general plan of the floors and the Pazyryk rug is reflected in an almost contemporary group of Bactiari compartment rugs. The Bactiari, in the past, undertook one of the longest seasonal migrations; they spent the summer on pastures near the northern Zagros. It seems possible, that this way the Bactiari group of rugs and the Pazyryk rug are distantly related.

What can be said about the interaction of Skythian and Western art stile? This relationship has been discussed with a focus on metal objects and has led to a kind of working model that I have extracted from the catalogue of the great "Gold of the Skyths" exhibition a few years ago. Initially, the Skyths and the Greek had little knowledge of one another, although they traded. The Skyths provided the growing Greek city states with the wheat they needed. This spilt still more gold into their chests, in addition to their revenues from keeping the Silk Road open, and from the gold they took out of the rivers in the Altai. They spent some of it on prestigious objects of art coming from Greece. When the city father realised that they had become dependent on a people about whom they knew next to nothing, Herodot's hour came. He was

commissioned to visit and collect intelligence on location. From him comes almost all early information on the Skyths. Eventually from the Greek homeland artists moved upstream to the source of the gold into the Greek colonies on the northern Black Sea coast seeking contact to their patrons of art to be. This led to an interactive form, representing Skythian as well as Greek designs in one piece made with Greek technology. Eventually traditional Skythian artists blended their Altaic tradition and technology with the influences from the West.

In applying this model to the Near / Middle East, I would put the rug in the middle phase. This comes near to what Rudenko possibly had in mind, and what Schürmann had established. The brilliance of his analysis shines brightest, were he interprets the allegorical aspects of the rug. It is not a rug that went into a Kurgan accidentally like a spoil of war might have; it was designed a burial rug and tells the story of a burial – a great example of cultural exchange. The technology is clearly western, it finds no parallel in the Altaic region, not at such an early time in any case.

The big felt hanging in Kurgan V. It is hard to imagine, that it was made in the Altai, the style and technology are different there. If one has seen a number of felt application objects in the original, it is not too difficult to distinguish. The scene is a wonderful transformation of a motif that is firmly embedded in Old Oriental tradition:

Reception scene. A goddess receives (minor) divinities, one male, one female, and a human. Both goddesses emanate floral motifs, the 'big' goddess holds a tree / plant in her outstretched hand:



(Cylinder seal rolling, Mesopotamia, Elam; Akkad period, ca 2340-2193 BC)

At 2007 Istanbul ICOC Leeds University design specialist Michael Hann concluded his speech by saying, in the essence, he has no difficulty accepting that the rug was made in West Persia / Azerbaidjan. Nobody came forward in the discussion with reservations about this (Michael Hann – The Pazyryk Carpets – A Stylistic Appraisal of the Design Characteristics of the Deep – Frozen Treasure from Kurgan Number Five in the High Altai).

The one who presently is relocating the production of the Pazyryk rug is you. I suggest we better not turn the clock back to claims and discussions we had in the 1970s and 80s. Otherwise, thanks again for your initiative.

Best,

Horst



August 10th, 2014, 02:46 AM

#28

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



Hi Horst

I of course might be wrong in this, but If Shurmanns stylistic argument is the clock, then I just personally don't find it very convincing. And assumptions on assumptions seems to be happening frequently in the discussions of the rugs, even in print, so I take the liberty of being skeptical 😊

And you seem to be relocating the felts?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Horst Nitz**
The big felt hanging in Kurgan V. It is hard to imagine, that it was made in the Altai,

I haven't seen anywhere else that the felts shouldn't be produced by the Pazyryk Altaic culture, to me they look like Pazyryk Altaic material in direct relation to fx metalwork and tattoos:



Best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; August 10th, 2014 at 03:07 AM.



August 10th, 2014, 06:11 PM

#29

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 96



Hi Horst,

Quote : *"Against this background the goddess is a representation of Kybele, which in this instance signifies a western influence on Scythian art"*

IMHO, one could do better than to pick representations of Cybele as an example of occidental, Greek, artistic influence upon eastern Scythians.

The Mother Goddess was an antique **Asian-, especially Phrygian goddess too**, adopted quite late (sixth to fifth century BCE) by some Anatolian Greek colonies and, later , exported to some Greek city-states, later still to Rome.

If the fifth century BCE eastern Scythians, supposed makers of the artefacts in discussion in this thread, have taken inspiration from any fifth century BCE temple-representation of Cybelle (a long shot, surely no fact), they were much more likely to have found it in Anatolia, for example in Phrygia itself and in nearby Cappadocia, Achaemenid Anatolian Satrapies largely settled since the VII BCE by the Cimmerians, a branch of the occidental Scythians.

This being said, I think that it is indeed generally agreed that fifth century BCE Greece had a strong artistic influence on the occidental Scythians' art. The artefacts found in kurgans of Krimea and Dniepr/Dniester valleys are proof enough for it.

An influence which indeed may have easily diffused to the eastern Scythians as well.

The mostly friendly relations between occidental Scythians and Greece (especially with the maritime confederation led by Athens and with Miletus, are also proven by the many Greek cities (mostly colonies of Miletus) operating safely along the coast of the Scythian territory (FIG 1 source Wikipedia), by the trust of Athens which, at the time, kept an auxiliary police force of Scythian archers in the city, by documented negotiation for alliances with Athens and Sparta against the Achaemenid empire and by extant classical Attic pottery frequently illustrating the companionship between Athenian hoplites and Scythian archers. (FIG 2 and FIG 3).

Quote:..."...*When the (Athens) city father realized that they had become dependent on a people about whom they knew next to nothing, Herodote's hour came. He was commissioned to visit and collect intelligence on location. From him comes almost all early information on the Skyths. Eventually from the Greek homeland artists moved upstream to the source of the gold into the Greek colonies on the northern Black Sea coast seeking contact to their patrons of art to be ..."*

That fifth century BCE Athenians did not have a clue about the occidental Scythians and had to send Herodotus, for gathering valid economical informations, is a very personal interpretation of yours which I'd rather not share:

- A mere glance at the map below, showing the numerous Greek colonies in Scythian territory should already raise serious doubts about it. These colonies mostly date from the sixth or even seventh century BCE. They hardly waited for Herodotus' input before dealing with the Scythians and creating expensive artefacts for them.

Besides, dear old Herodotus, a rather prudent 007, probably never ventured any further than the Milesian colony of Olbia.

Glad if you could find solid references of the contrary.

It is not very likely that Athens would have sent him in this mission anyway, since after his celebrated tour of Egypt, western Persian Asia and his visit to Olbia, he first returned to his Anatolian native city (then under Persian rule too) and only then did he leave for Athens, (where he was apparently well received), staying there for 3-4 years, then moving to a new colony being established by Athens in Calabria. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodotus> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thurium>

It is rather likely that Herodotus gathered his typical mixture of accurate informations and fairy tales about the occidental Scythians in Olbia, from local Greek- and Scythian business people. Perhaps also in Persia from officials who had to deal militarily with the Scythians at the time.

Quote: .." *It is not a rug that went into a kurgan accidentally like a spoil of war might have; it was designed a burial rug and tells the story of a burial – a great example of cultural exchange"*...

One could agree that it might have been a rug designed for a burial, basing such an hypothesis on the fact that the Scythians (and other nomads of the time), in some cases, still impaled horses around the burial site and also still indulged in human sacrifices. The rug border featuring riding- and walking horsemen could indeed be a representation of a burial ceremony. Or may be not. It is surely a fair working-hypothesis, but not a proven **fact**, as you'd want us to believe.

Besides, assuming this hypothesis to be true, it would significantly reinforces the hypothesis that the rug weaver was himself part of such a nomad civilization (Scythian, Cimmerian, Parsa, Medes, Sogdian, Arian, etc...), hardly a citizen from an age-old urban civilization who couldn't tell horse-head from horse-tail and hardly familiar with horsemen's fashion.

But, of course, one is still entitled to believe that the future royal occupant of kurgan V faxed a "carton" with the rug design he wished, to a competent Babylonian rug weaver, de gustibus...

Quote: *"..The technology (of the Pazyryk rug) is clearly western, it finds no parallel in the Altaic region, not at such an early time in any case.."*

I can't wait to admire the **other** extant rugs from fifth century BCE which allow you to make such an authoritative comparison of east-west rug weaving technologies. By all means do publish them.

Quote: *.."This spilt still more gold into their chests, in addition to their revenues from keeping the Silk Road open, and from the gold they took out of the rivers in the Altai.."*

Even a superficial glance on a map of the Achaemenid Empire of the fifth century BCE would have shown that the King of Kings, (and certainly not the occidental Scythians!) had control of most of the Silk Road, for what little the road was worth during the fifth century BCE.

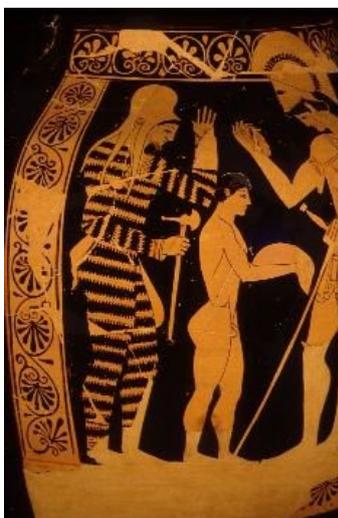
FIG 1: Fifth century BCE, Greek colonies in occidental Scythian territory



FIG 2 Greek hoplite and Scythian archer marching together to battle



FIG 3 Greek hoplite and Scythian warrior preparing for battle.



Hi Chuck

Quote: "*..To suggest that some enterprising proto-Armenians in the western Caucasus somehow managed to push through this clearly strong Persian presence and influence the manufacture of goods in possession of Altaic royalty, is a bit of a stretch to me. I think it far more likely that Persian influence was cast over these many cultures, like a blanket, and that the rug was a gift from one royal entity (likely Persian) to another...*"

I do indeed agree with that: We will have to wait for more informations and, as Martin puts it, to hope for another miracle performed by the permafrost or the extreme dryness of the desert, but to me,

- either, as you suggest, the rug was ordered by the King of Kings and probably meant as a royal gift or, less likely, was part of a royal household lost, for example, during Darius' disastrous campaign against the ever elusive occidental Scythians around 510 BCE. (Either way, one can safely assume that thanks to the great ethnocultural diversity in the huge Achaemenid empire, there was no shortage of competent weavers, the Parsa- & Medes ruling tribes included. To designate one of them in particular as THE author would require a lot of faith in one's own intuition or a remarkable lack of respect for hard facts.

- or it was indeed made by eastern Scythian weavers. There is nothing known yet which would disqualify them as potential authors, to the contrary, as we have already seen in this thread.

I hope that you did not mind me calling you "brother", Chuck, I am quite sure anyway that you will achieve sainthood even without integrating any monastic order. 😊

Hi Marla,

I do join Martin in his plea: if you do come again across this 2000 BCE Egyptian pile rug description (on a tumb mural I suppose?), please, by all means, share the link with us. That would be 1500 years earlier than Pazyryk !

The closest thing I encountered so far in literature was a mention of a kind of Egyptian leather patch-work appliqué on textile (ca.1200 BCE), and tomb murals showing textile- (not rug-) weavers at work (Beni Hasan ca. 2000 BCE).

Finally, many thanks again to you Martin for these entertaining treads. I wish you a fertile work.

Best regards
Pierre



August 11th, 2014, 10:28 PM

#30 □

[Marla Mallett](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 23

Hi Pierre and Martin,

The earliest surviving Egyptian pile weaving fragments that I am aware of (including those from around 2000 BC) have all been linen. I am not aware that any of these have been described specifically as "rugs." We don't have to rely on wall paintings for evidence of pile or other woven production; quite a lot of actual textiles have survived. Some I saw about 30 years ago in the Metropolitan Museum's old Textile Study Room; others I viewed in Cairo's Pharaonic museum. I'm vaguely remembering fragments in the storeroom of Cairo's Islamic Museum also, but those are very foggy memories, and that museum's documentation was dismal. All were linen, though, and as I recall, the structures varied from looped pile to various sorts of knotting. Since they weren't my primary research interest at the time, I gave them short shrift. But these collections were astonishing: quite a number of textile structures had developed in Egypt by the 14th century BC, Tutankhamon's time, not just pile variations, but techniques considerably more specialized and complex—tapestry, leno weave, various kinds of inlay and brocading, and extremely intricate double-faced warp-patterned weaves. Also, a few years ago I encountered some fragments of woven burial materials in the storeroom of a small defunct Cairo ethnographic museum, but no archaeological context for those was available. Although assorted archaeological notes mention thick linen pile weaves from the 15th and 14th centuries BC from burial sites in Sudan, I have never encountered reports that were clear in their technical descriptions. Basic weaving techniques have been typically misidentified as "embroidery," thick shaggy surfaces described as made with "yarns looped or knotted." So often we must read through interminable excavation reports to find just a vague line or two referring to the textiles.

While the earliest surviving Egyptian weaving (plain weave) is from the Faiyum oasis and from the 5th millennium BC, the earliest Egyptian pile pieces that I have concrete knowledge of are from Eleventh Dynasty tombs. One well-known, finely woven example from Daeir-el-Bahari and now in the Egyptian Museum dates to circa 2000 BC. My notes say that this was documented by H.E. Winlock, in the Metropolitan's expedition report of 1930-31, but I can't put my hands on this report now. This largest and most accomplished piece was looped pile; other examples from the same site and currently in the Egyptian Museum were pile as well. Three or four knotted, shaggy, long-pile linen pieces were actually included in a Met exhibition about 15 or 20 years ago. These may have been from their 1930 expedition; I'm not sure.

Since Egypt and the areas along the eastern Mediterranean as far north as Syria were interconnected for so long, findings from archaeological sites in those areas are of related interest--Dura Europas in Syria, Palmyra, and others. The extant textiles that I know about date primarily from the first couple of centuries AD; I haven't followed archaeological reports in the last 20 years, nor have I made any special effort to mentally catalog pieces from the region. But excavation materials from the At-Tar caves in Iraq, southwest of Kerbala, are particularly fascinating because they are so well documented. Hideo Fujii and Kazuko Sakamoto unearthed huge quantities of textiles there—over 4000 fragments, a great many of them pile weavings. They found a wide range of structures, including five different kinds of knotted pile plus variations. The pieces are described as about 90% wool (sheep and goat), the remainder cotton and linen. There were obviously major textile industries in nearby areas. We are fortunate to have Fujii and Sakamoto's quite detailed description of these textiles in *ORIENTAL CARPET AND TEXTILE STUDIES*, Vol. IV, Eiland and Piner, Eds, 1993.

Marla

Last edited by Marla Mallett; August 12th, 2014 at 05:42 AM.

August 12th, 2014, 11:11 PM

[Horst Nitz](#)

Members

Join Date: Feb 2013
Posts: 54

Hi Martin,

thank you for the comparison in your last post. It demonstrates nicely what I meant to explain previously and perhaps did not manage to bring across as intended.

#31

The textile (felt) figure in your post indeed is reminiscent of or indicating Altaic style; it is however a blow-up of a detail in the large felt hanging, accounting for perhaps 10 % or less of the overall size. Looking at the hanging in total it is dominated by the Old Oriental / Mesopotamian reception theme, also unlike Altaic style in the great ease of the figures, dancing horse, flying scarf or cloak etc etc. It indicates a change process, an assimilative adaptive style as a result of the interaction of the traditional with new influences in a western context after a few generations. The old is retained but moves to the peripherie, as also happened in rugs quite frequently.

The aristocrat who collected / commissioned the rug and the felt in preparing for his death, if the objects indeed were his taste, appears to have been a rather modern thinking, reform oriented person.

Do stay sceptical by all means, I do the same.

Best wishes,

Horst



August 16th, 2014, 12:34 PM

#32

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 96



Hi Martin and all,

Schurmann uses the Apadana "Tribute frieze" to further dismiss the possibility of a weaving of the Pazyryk rug by the local Altai Scythian tribes themselves. An argument which seemed rather suspect to me and did indeed raise my curiosity: Your post #6 mentions his claim that the Pazyryk rug horsemen don a flat headwear while the Scythians of the Apadana frieze don high- & pointed hats.

Ergo , Schurmann dixit, the Pazyryk horsemen weren't Scythians.

You did propose common sense explanations for this and also mentioned the fact that while the Urartian horsemen, (whom Schurmann supposed to be the better match with the Pazyryk horsemen), indeed wore flat-hats, they also featured "bag-trousers" or even robes, instead of the more habitual (and a trifle over-decorated) Scythian clinging trousers.

You also point to the fact that the term "Scythian" or "Sakâ" designated a large number of independent tribes, genetically- and linguistically- related, sharing a similar nomadic life style and a similar art, but dispersed through an area of more than 6000 km from East to West.

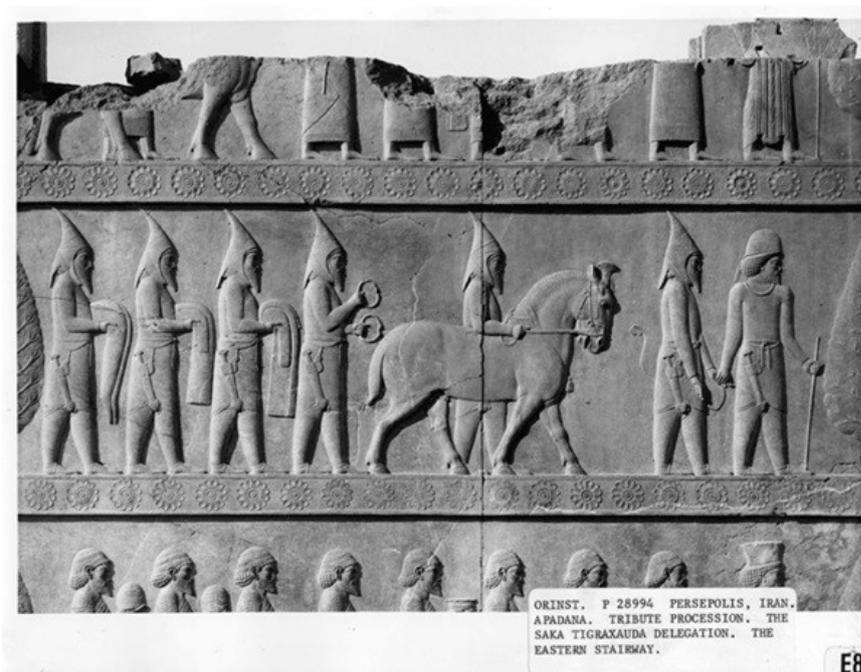
At least some differences in clothing between the tribes shouldn't therefore come too much as a surprise.

I went looking for some more informations on the net about this interesting fashion detail.

The first thing which popped out was that the tribe illustrated on the Apadana frieze (FIG A), which headwear Schurmann decided to be representative for all Scythians', was in fact one specific Scythian tribe, well identified by the Achaemenids, who called these fellows " Sakâ Tigraxauda " (Apparently meaning "The Scythians with the pointed hats").

One can reasonably infer therefore that most other Scythian tribes known from Persian inscriptions did not don this kind of caps: The Sakâ "Haumavargâ" for example, got their name because of their (alleged-) immoderate consumption of a drug, the Haoma, the "Apâ Sakâ" must have had some peculiar relationship with H2O, while the "Paradraya Sakâ" were the ones "across the sea" (thus living in Ukraine), the "Dahâ Saka" must have been particularly gifted for robbing hapless travelers, the "Mâh Sakâ" might have been a trifle lunatic at times (-:-) etc.. (Source: Iran Chamber Society. Jona Lendering, Scythians, Sakâ) etc...

FIG A Persepolis . Apadana tribute frieze: The Tigraxauda Scythian delegation(Source Livius)



The "pointed hat" Scythian tribe was incorporated into the Achaemenid Empire after its defeat in 519-520 against Darius, (an event recorded on the Behistun relief, on which one can see -FIG B- the defeated Tigraxauda chieftain Skunka led away to be slain). Henceforth the tribe had to pay tribute (hence its presence on the Apadana frieze).

Darius' inscription at Behistun.

"Darius the King says: Afterwards with an army I went off to Scythia, after the Scythians who wear the pointed cap. These Scythians went from me. When I arrived at the sea, beyond it then with all my army I crossed. Afterwards, I smote the Scythians exceedingly; another (leader) I took captive; this one was led bound to me, and I slew him. The chief of them, by name Skunkha -- him they seized and led to me. Then I made another their chief, as was my desire. After that, the province became mine."

FIG B

Skunka leader of the Sakâ Tigraxauda (right)
Behistun Relief. (Source Livius)



The "Tigraxauda " Scythians lived, at the time, in the middle- and lower Amu-darya and the lower Syr-darya region (FIG C, upper-right corner of the map). Several thousand kilometers from their Altai cousins. But they were, incidentally, the immediate northern neighbors of the Sogdians the future most successful businessmen of the (also future) Silk Road, which you discussed in the other thread Martin.

FIG C. *The Achaemenid Empire ca 500 BCE (source Univ. of Michigan)*



The artifacts found in this people's kurgans leave no doubts about the Tigraxauda being part of the Scythian civilization.(FIG E).

FIG D. *Central Asian Scythians. Khazakstan. Issyk. 1 V.-IV BCE*



The Issyk golden "man" (FIG F) , - who, incidentally, might have been a "young madam" instead -, famous for his (her-) pointed fairy hat , was unearthed in that region too and was perhaps even a close descendant of the defeated Behistun chieftain.

FIG E. *Central Asian Scythians. Khazakstan. The Issyk golden man. 4th-5th BCE*



If we care to remember too that, as you mentioned Martin, other Scythians have been represented with various types of hats, including Phrygian caps and, even more often, bareheaded, with their bushy hair free, I suppose that we can consider Schurmann's "pointed-hat proof" as rather irrelevant for the Pazyryk rug weaver's identity. It can't disqualify the locals anyway.

Best regards
Pierre



September 14th, 2014,
06:56 PM

#33

[Horst Nitz](#)

Members

Join Date: Feb 2013
Posts: 54



Hi Piere, Martin,

thank you for your valuable comments that prompt me to reconsider some aspects in former posts, and amend others. And my apologies for this late post. No joke, I had some difficulty finding my way back home from holiday (due to change of weather and wind direction whilst sailing the Baltic).

Trade and cultural exchange on the Silk Road. Near Sigmaringen in SW Germany in a Celtic burial a Chinese silk had been excavated, dating to the 6th century BC. How can that be so long before the "official opening" of the route that you are referring to? The supposedly Baltic amber beads in a 7th century BC South Siberian kurgan, how did they get there? Herodot relates, that during his lifetime still, the far away Hyperboreer (supposedly settling by the Arctic Sea) sent offerings wrapped in wheat straw to the sanctuary of Apollon and his sister Artemis at Delos by relay of the Scyths, who passed them to the Tracians and so on by a route that apparently was established long before the first Greek colonies on the northern Pontic Sea had been founded in the 7th century BC. All fantasy by Herodot or unreliable hearsay? Considering similarities of artistic expression, Rudenko (Frozen Tombs) suggests cultural exchange between Siberia and Eastern Europe in the 2nd millennium BC.

Cutting it short, I am using the term Silk Road in a generic sense, conceptualizing it as the ground system for Eurasian cultural exchange that worked both ways and that changed with history and circumstance. At the high time of the Scyths the music played on a route north of the Tian Shan range and the Caspian. The "official Silk Route" you are referring to around the Tarim Basin belongs to a later period (Wudi / Han, Mithridates II / Parthian).

In the east that early route connected South Siberia with Mongolia and Northern China. Near the Sajon mountains in the Tuva region thousands, and among them some of the oldest Kurgans are assembled in the so-called Valley of the Kings. The undisturbed 7th century kurgan Arzan 2 has been excavated early this millennium by a German-Russian team. It released 9300 gold objects, many of a quality that hitherto would have been thought of as having been made by Greek wandering craftsmen or in a workshop in one of the Pontic colonies (Parzinger 2002). Important for our discussion is, that apparently all the gold objects were made in the traditional animal style.

In the second half of the 8th century the Scyths stood in NW Iran, from where they raided into Syria, Palestine and the borderlands of Egypt. Around 500 they had retreated north towards or into the Caucasus according to Hekataios of Milet in his world-description (late 6th / early 5th c). The invasion of the northern Pontic took place in parallel to the foundation of the Greek colonies on the northern Black Sea in the first half of the 7th century. An insight into the earliest state of Scythian art in the west can be gained from the treasure find of Ziwiye near Saqqez (the Sakic of Schürmann) dating to the 7th century. Quite appropriately, given the closeness to Assyria, here the Sphinx motif apparently had its debut in Scythian art (the treasure was actually kept in an 8th century Assyrian style bronze tub). The publication from which these images are taken, describes the objects as "uniting stylistic elements of Assyrian, Urartian, Phoenician and Scythian artistic craftsmanship" (*Im Zeichen des goldenen Greifen, Königsgräber der Skythen*. Prestel. München, Berlin, London, New York 2007).





In comparison, gold works from the Northern Pontic burials at Uljap with a heavy Greek influence and hundred and more years later. The rhyton is thought to be an Attic work of the 6th century, altered in the 5th century, presented to a Maiotic Scyth ruler in the 4th century:



I have been trying to demonstrate two aspects:

(1.1) the practise of burying a Scythian ruler with particularly precious and rare objects has been demonstrated over several centuries in the far North-East as well as in the West of the Scythian experiential world. It occurs in among the oldest Scyths burials in the Tuva region in Siberia, ie Arzan 2; (1.2) this includes objects from far away places if available, ie amber from the Baltic at Arzan 2; a rhyton made in Attica at Uljap 4 in the Kuban region between the PÜontic and the Caucasus; (1.3) Hither Asian and probably West Persian rug at kurgan 5 in the Siberian Pazyryk valley.

Second aspect:

A matrix (2.1) The earliest artefacts in Siberian burials were almost exclusively made locally in the traditional animal style; (2) at the stage in the migration process that the Scyths had reached West-Persia (still early Scythian style) and before they withdrew beyond the Caucasus (8th until 6th century), an assimilation-adaptation process set in that lead to an integrated style as represented in some pieces in the Ziwiye find further up; (3) Later, Greek influenced and integrated objects occur north of the Caucasus in the Kuban and Pontic regions etc.

Putting it together: the occurrence of a West-Persian rug in a Siberian burial mount (as

attributed by Rudenko, Schuermann and other) is in full accordance with the migration history and the matrix of other finds of artistic objects, in particular of gold, that have belonged to the Scyths. Given the Ziwiyeh find and further facts, that the Pazyryk rug must have had an artistic and technological forerun of at least several centuries, and that at the time of its making the Achaemenid empire was only about 200 years old, it obviously rests in an older tradition, ie the mentioned Assyrian or Wider Upper Mesopotamian one.

As far as the big felt hanging is concerned, much of what was said further up, goes for that one as well. Beyond the fact that it was found in the same kurgan, the seated goddess with plant in the reception scene belongs to the Ancient Orient (cylinder seal further up), and so does the Sphinx below that has found its way into it (see Ziwiyeh find).

http://s149.photobucket.com/user/martinerikandersen/media/felt_zpsa25aa68f.jpg.html#/user/martinerikandersen/media/felt_zpsa25aa68f.jpg.html?&_suid=141070917573702417980554850161

Martin, you meant to demonstrate with these two images, that the figure on the left is traditional Scythian style because of some obvious similarities with the animal on the right (lion type body, antlers etc.). To me, the difference rests with the difference: the human face in the figure on the left makes it clear, that the original animal style figure on the right (East) has come a long way (West). It serves as a good example for matrix and change process I was drafting further up.

Regards,

Horst Nitz



September 15th, 2014,
12:33 AM

#34

[Patrick Weiler](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 38

Seal the deal?

While wandering through the lower floors of the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg after the Stockholm ICOC, I saw some cylinder seals from around the age of the Pazyryk rug. The motif in the field of the rug has been speculated on, as noted above, for a long time. Could it be a depiction of a symbol from an official seal?

Here is an impression from a circa 1800-1600 BCE Syrian cylinder seal. Note the "star":



It is from the Leroy Golf artifact collection, <http://www.antiquesatoz.com/golf/golfsyria.htm>

And another cylinder seal from the same website:



It seems plausible to me that this motif, used on official seals, was important enough to identify the entity whose power it represents. Anyone living in that time and region would probably have readily recognized the symbol. It is also possible that the rug itself was woven for the person, tribe or leader the symbol belonged to, similar to textiles attributed to the emperor's household in China.

Patrick Weiler

Last edited by Patrick Weiler; September 15th, 2014 at 02:11 AM. Reason: elaboration and hyperbole



September 15th, 2014,
03:50 PM

#35 □

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 150



Hi All

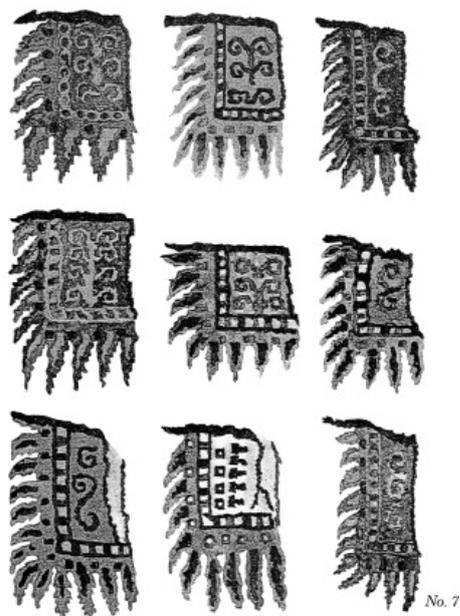
No doubt that Scythian art has strong elements of cultural syncretism with strong influence from both Greece and Mesopotamia. But to me a singular stylistic element like the "star" on the Pazyryk rug or stylistic influence on an artifact in general doesn't seem sufficient to pin-point location of production to either west-persian or central anatolia, or even more to a specific town.

As an example this gold piece from Kul Oba 4th b.ce:



Obviously overall what we would call Scythian animal style, and in the details obviously in classical greek style. But the greek stylistic elements, even if the pieces may have been produced by Greek Crimean craftsmen, wouldn't make us locate its production or cultural context to fx Athen. It is still a Schythian artifact found in the archeological context of a Crimean Scythian burial.

Shurmann illustrates the Pazyryk rug saddle covers with this:



But he doesn't make the obvious connection to the actual saddle covers found in the Pazyryk burial. The tiny depictions of the individually drawn saddle covers with their huge fringes and ramshorn ornamentation is a rather prominent figurative motif on the rug:



To me the rug, the saddle covers and the felts seem to be in kind of good stylistic accordance, and I doubt that anyone would really suggest the felt saddle covers were produced in fx west-persia?



And Horst I fail to see what in the style of this head points especially to the west? Its style, what we might call cartoon like, to me seems rather similar to the other Scythian felts and even the tattoos. (I take for granted we are not talking facial characteristics here, the Scythians are generally thought to be of indo-european origin and we know from fx the Tarim Basin mummies that indo-europeans surely lived far east)



So still unless other material turns up, which certainly seems to be a possibility these days 😊 I personally don't see why the local Pazyryk Scythian culture should be ruled out as the possible creators of the rug.

I am all for speculation on motif emigrations and connections, but suggestions on specific production location should be backed up with more convincing facts than Schurmans before it is presented as a fact overruling archeological context. There of course may be arguments/facts which we haven't been around here, and I may be totally wrong - anyway thanks to all, its been an interesting discussion.

best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; September 15th, 2014 at 09:42 PM.



September 15th, 2014,
09:57 PM

#36 □

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 96



Hi Patrick,

As we all know, the sun and the moon were important deities in most old civilizations, including of course Mesopotamian- and Persian ones. The stars (or rather sun?) on these Mesopotamian seals look indeed very similar to the field motif of the Pazyryk rug, as do the "stars" found on a late pharaonic Apis Bull as well as on both tiles, one from Mesopotamia, the other from Anatolia, which were shown in a previous thread (in Horst's, Martin's and my posts). There is also a well known sculpture showing a 9th century BCE (Akhadian?) deity, Shamash, in which another very similar motif is prominent.

FIG: Ninth century BCE sculpture of Shamash



IMHO, it is indeed possible that this motif was first utilized somewhere in western Asia,

perhaps in Mesopotamia, long before "Pazyryk time". But even if this hypothesis is true, do we have any clue about who the «*inventors*» were. Were they indigenous to Mesopotamia ? Were they one of the many northern- or eastern nomad people who successively invaded the region and created several new dynasties? Is there any reason for excluding the possibility that this motif could have migrated on its own steam, over the centuries, from its original place to any other place in Asia, including eastern Scythia. Can we even exclude that it was created independently in different civilizations? I do support Martin's view that one single motif in the field of the Pazyryk rug is not sufficient to identify with any degree of certainty the origin of the weaver.

The Mesopotamian theory would be more convincing if (pre-Achaemenian) Babylonian- or Assyrian art styles would show a clear parenthood with the style of the Pazyryk rug. Is it the case? I am rather ignorant in Art and could of course be fully wrong, but I do not see any such parenthood: The stag- and horsemen frieze do not ring any such Assyrian- or Babylonian bell to me, the sphinx motif was popular all over western Asia, including Persia, in classical Greece, in western Scythia and of course was known at least since the 5th dynasty in Egypt. Whoever was the fifth century BCE weaver of the Pazyryk rug could probably have claimed this latter motif as part of his own civilization.

Best regards
Pierre



September 16th, 2014,
05:34 PM

#37

[Patrick Weiler](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008

Posts: 38

Satrap Claptrap?

Pierre,

I wasn't implying that the Mesopotamian version of the motif was the origin of the design which then traveled to the north. Just that the field design of the Pazyryk rug looks like the weaver of the rug made it look as though the motif was being rolled onto the surface of the rug, just as a clay tablet would have looked if a cylinder seal with the design was rolled onto it.

In this case, the rug is showing the very important official seal indicating the wealth and importance of the owner, surrounded by the deer border representing the natural bounty of their lands, surrounded by the horse border showing the might and power of their army.



If it was given as a tribute by a satrap to the king, it would be a very powerful symbol of the strength of the province and a luxurious gift.



Patrick Weiler



September 16th, 2014,
08:12 PM

#38

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 96



Hi Patrick,

I wasn't implying that **you** were implying that the Pazyrik rug was woven in Mesopotamia.



Joke by side, your interpretation seems perfectly credible to me.

The hypothesis proposed in an earlier post that the horsemen rug-border would in a way symbolize the burial and that the rug was perhaps woven for that purpose seems to be quite reasonable too to me, since the Scythians sometimes did circle the kurgans of their top managers with impaled horses. In case of first class burials their riders could even enjoy impaling too. (Archeology has demonstrated that the horses were mostly old beasts, which makes good economical sense. It is not known whether the riders were useless octogenarians too or young political nuisances).

Best regards

Pierre



September 16th, 2014,
09:24 PM

#39

[Steve Price](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 63



I wonder if the modern carousel is a descendent of Scythian impaled horses. Just a random thought.

Steve Price



September 17th, 2014,
12:28 AM

#40

[Horst Nitz](#)

Members

Join Date: Feb 2013
Posts: 54



Hi Patrick,

the further one goes back in the history of rugs, the more one gets to do with religious concepts, it seems to me. We are in at the deep now, the centre of the rug. The horses and their riders, the fallow, the wheel are paraphernalia; the centre is what makes the statement, in the case of the rug the very centre is what could be a star. But is it?

The star on the seals probably represents Ishtar. She had other signs associated with her, but the star is the most common. The indicated origin in or around Sakic (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saqgez>) was Assyrian borderland, with important shrines for the worship of local variants of Ishtar not far away: Nineveh and Arba'il.

If it is a star in the rug, it is a transformation and a composite form. It seems to be made up by a crossed bundle of ears and by a 45° rotated cruciform of pine cones. Both may relate to seasonal rites of spring and fertility. The latter aspect may have been partially covered by Ishtar, who was a goddess of sexual love. Since the motif also appears in Phrygian art, and since the 4th century BC must have seen the last stage of Ishtar, some diffusion with the Phrygian Kybele may have taken place, and that goddess was a proper mother goddess, according to some sources also popular with the Scyths.

I know, all this is uncertain territory and peppered with ifs and buts, but what good can a discussion of a rug be, that doesn't address its centre? Thanks, Patrick, for having made it a topic.

Steve, 🙄 you are scaring the kids.

Regards,

Horst

Last edited by Horst Nitz; September 17th, 2014 at 12:52 AM.



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