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Welcome, [Filiberto Boncompagni](#).

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March 15th, 2011,
06:03 PM

#1

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)
Administrator

[Another Tibetan fragment](#)

Hi Pierre,

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7

Your mention of the Tibetan fragments is a perfect opportunity to post another of those fragment that was published on HALI (May 1997, Issue 92, page 86) with an abridged version of the related article: "Pregnant with Meaning" by John Eskenazi. The emphasis (underlined text) is mine.



Quote:

...This fragment has been radiocarbon dated to 1276 +/- 45 years, a result in line with those obtained for the other early animal rugs. The 'Tibetan' group of rugs raises questions that may never be answered. We know nothing of their origin. They were found in Central Tibet by pure chance. What is known is that they did not

come from one or more specific monasteries - a source that might have helped in tracing their origin, since most Tibetan monasteries have a well documented history.

...

It seems to me that the rugs of this group were cult and/or burial carpets, perhaps also used in secular ceremonies. The mythical beasts speak a very ancient totemic language typical of the 'animal style' art that flourished from China to Ireland during the Iron Age and later among the 'barbarians' of the Migration period. The animal style is that peculiar manner of ornamentation, primarily zoomorphic, used by the early, mounted warrior-herdsmen of Eurasia whose economy depended on animals and plunder. This form of art is mainly focused on the representation of confronting animals: birds, felines, horned beasts or, often, a mixture of all three. Their art is characterised by regional and tribal styles. They did not create these styles, but formulated them using motifs derived from the subordinate animal representations of the particular urban civilisations with which each group came into contact directly or indirectly. No single place or origin for animal style cultures and their art has been identified. Animal style art results from a cultural unity that endured for a long period over a large area among diverse ethnic groups.

....

In China, animal style art occurs as early as the Shang dynasty (ca. 1500-1050 BC) in the design of archaic bronzes. It flourished during the Warring States period (475-221 BC). Bronze and gold plaques from the same epoch have been found in Mongolia and in the more southerly Dian culture. Animal style artefacts occur and Ordos metalwork, Luristan bronzes, Mesopotamian ivories, Sasanian silver, Central Asian woodwork, Sogdian textiles, Byzantine art and Seljuk decoration.

So why not in this group of carpets?

It was fascinating to compare the two Kirchheim rugs with the well known Seljuk rugs from Anatolia in the extraordinary exhibition at the Turk ve Islam Eserleri Museum in Istanbul last autumn (HALI90, pp.B6-9I).

It was clear to me that these groups speak a different language.

The strong totemic flavour of the 'Tibetan' group contrasts greatly with the pattern-oriented carpets of Seljuk Turkey. The palette is also different, especially in the reds which tend to be darker and bluer in the 'Tibetan' group and yellow/red in the Anatolian group. The pictorial evidence of Sienese paintings is insufficient for the attribution of the 'Tibetan' carpets to Anatolia. One direction future research into these rugs might take is to compare them chromatically, technically and stylistically to later products. A few 17th to 19th century fragmented rugs have also come out of Tibet, some of which have abundant goat hair in the warps and a darkish palette that includes the bluish-red of the 'Tibetan' group. Their designs do not relate precisely to a specific known production and are generally a quite coarsely rendered mixture of Turkish, Persian and Xinjiang elements. Perhaps we are dealing here with a Central Asian tribal production about which we know absolutely nothing.

I shall hazard another guess. In my view there are strong similarities between the 'Tibetan' group and 'Avar' kilims from northeast Transcaucasia. They share the same shamanistic animal style vocabulary and are also generally decorated with large, stylised superimposed mythical beasts (HALI 89,pp.79, 81). Usually

termed dragons, these are in reality composite animals characterised by complex tails and unusual protuberances, as in the 'Faces' carpet and the present fragment. Further analogies can be found in the zigzag lines adorning the animals, and, in the present fragment, the eight-pointed stars. Both groups are also randomly decorated with stylised birds and two-headed quadrupeds typical of later Caucasian and Azerbaijan tribal weaves. The 'Tibetan' group and the kilims share a very similar palette, especially in the cold bluish dark red, the blue and the green. Interestingly, the Avar were an eastern Mongol tribe who reached Europe in the 6th century and who certainly produced animal style works of art. How 'Avar rugs found their way to Tibet is another question, and one I cannot attempt to answer. For the time being we can let our imaginations wander and fantasise that they were made in a great workshop in Merv for the meeting of a local ruler with dignitaries from Khorasan, or in Balkh for use in local mosques. Perhaps they were woven as burial carpets for a Tibetan or CentralAsian chieftain, or were donated to the new Lhakhang Chenmo monastery at Sakya in Central Tibet In 1256 or that of Rinboche in Khams, founded in 1276. Maybe they came from the Qinghai burial caves or were given as gifts by Kubilai Khan's younger brother Hulagu to the Tibetan monks he invited to Baghdad after 1256 in the hope of making Buddhism the official religion of the new Il-Khanate. Sufi masters might have meditated on them, Omar Khayyam could have composed poems lying in a drunken stupor on one in Samarkand, or perhaps Marco Polo tripped over one on entering the great hall of the Governor's palace in Tiflis, Georgia. Indulging in such fantasies is as much as we can do for the time being and perhaps is the wisest thing we can do anyway... and, of course, as the American say, enjoy!

The same from me!

Filiberto



March 22nd,
2011, 08:56 PM

#2

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members



Hi Filiberto,

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1

I can't say that I see clearly the analogy of the «pregnant animal» rugs found in Tibet with 19th century Avar kilims & rugs 😊. I like both though. The rug fragment shown in your post is too small to tell, but could be a close cousin of the other «Kircheim rug» below, already shown in Turkotek by Marla and others.



Dated by C14 the latter was found roughly contemporaneous with the 12th-13th century «pregnant animals» rugs. If I do not err, this impressive piece (which according to Kircheim and al. might have been woven south of the Caspian), was exfiltrated from Tibet too.

Although it is full of nice little beasts and features two large human-faced «snakes» or «dragons», its motifs are very different from those of the "pregnant animal rugs". They seem religious and pre-Islamic to me. Perhaps inspired by an old Indo-European

religion? The Mazandaran province for example was penetrated by Islam quite late (directly by Shiite Islam, I believe). Fire-worshippers' temples were still active southwest of the Caspian Sea until the end of the 19th century.

Best
Pierre



March 23rd, 2011, 08:19
PM

#3

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7



Hi Pierre,

Yes, they are of the same kin. The palette should be the same too. OK, the two scans above differ, but that is due to difference of color calibration, typographic reproduction, different scanners and so on.

Let's see a detail of the first:



compared with one of the "faces":



More or less the same design.

Interestingly James D.Burns attributes the "faces" carpet to Kurds. See quote from Hali website:

Quote:

Antique Rugs of Kurdistan

11 April 2003

Michael Wendorf writes:

....

He also illustrates (Plate 27) the so-called 'Faces' carpet in Heinrich Kirchheim's collection ('Orient Stars', pl.218, HALI 74, p.97), which also has offset knotting and shares similar colours - blue, green and light red - and iconography, arguing that it and the Berlin carpet 'might well be the earliest two surviving Kurdish rugs'. If so, they are likely the product of Ayyubid Kurds whose empire was founded in Upper Mesopotamia and extended in the 13th and 14th centuries from the northern shore of Lake Van to Syria and Egypt.

Which makes me happy: as a Caucasian-o-phile, there is a chance that these are earlier Caucasian rugs, by Avars or by Azerbaijani Kurds, why not? Incidentally, the "faces" carpet has offset knotting in the border but it doesn't seem so for the other (or if there is, I cannot find it).
Regards,

Filiberto



March 24th, 2011, 12:04 AM

#4

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1



Hi Filiberto,

The good thing about the Rugdom Hypermarket is that there is a bold theory for every customer. There is a severe disfunction in the supply line for good proofs, but never mind.

You should find Eberhart Hermann «simpatico» too: In Kirchheim's book (page 350) he suggests an Azerbaijan «kurdo-caucasian» origin, the boldness of this attribution is a trifle weakened by the sentence «..in Verbindung mit Stillvergleichen zu den kurdo-armenischen seljuken Teppichen..». Do I err or is it synonymous with «indo-europeo-armeno-oghuz»? 😊

E. Herman thinks that the motifs are inspired by the Zendavesta cult. The C14 test is not accurate enough to tell whether the Ayyubid (kurds) or the Seljuk (turks) ruled when and where the rug was woven. However, the center of power of the former was Syria and Egypt, while the latter (Rum Seljuk) indeed dominated southern and eastern Anatolia and the southern fringes of the Caucasus for a while.

Regards
Pierre



March 24th, 2011, 12:18 PM

#5

[Yohann Gissinger](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Location: France
Posts: 0



Hello guys,

Have a look at this catalogue description, please:

*In the 1990s a very small group of rugs appeared on the market, all of which were said to come from Tibet. They were very comparable in design and colouring, and all had very similar structure. They caused huge excitement when they were first published since they were thought to be original examples of rugs that were only known beforehand in European paintings. The majority of them have highly stylised animals that each has a further animal inside. One, the largest, formerly in the Kirchheim Collection, is now in the Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar (Heinrich E. Kirchheim et al., *Orient Stars, A Carpet Collection, Stuttgart and London 1993, pp.14 and 15*); the second is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (David Roxburgh, *Turks, exhibition catalogue, London, 2005, pl.98, p.143*). Jon Thompson lists a further example in a private collection in Genova, another unpublished three fragments from a large carpet with prancing horses in the Kirchheim Collection, and a small fragment in the Pine Collection (list from Jon Thompson, *'Carpets in the Fifteenth Century', in**

Carpets and Textiles in the Iranian World 1400-1700, London, 2010, note 54, p.57). The Genoa example is published in black and white by Jürg Rageth, *Anatolian kilims and radiocarbon dating*, Riechen 1999, fig.9, p.166.

(...)

The Metropolitan rug has been carbon 14 dated to 1040-1290 AD; the Qatar carpet to 1190-1300, and the Italian rug to 1205-1375. These results are all consistent and would support a date of almost anywhere in the 13th century. The fourth carpet however, that remaining in the Kirchheim collection, has been carbon dated with a result that indicates a date of 1308-1420.

(...)

Julia Bailey was the first person to suggest in print that these carpets, which had all been catalogued as Turkish, were in fact Persian, citing the similarity of an illustration in the Great Mongol Shahnama to the design of these carpets (Julia Bailey, 'Milestones in the History of Carpets', Hali 152, summer 2007, pp,140-143). Jon Thompson has recently returned to this theme, illustrating the Shahnama illustration (Thompson, op. cit., pp.50-52). Not only is the field design very similar, but there is an inner border showing that is almost identical to that on the three rugs noted above. There seems little doubt that it is one of this group of carpets that is depicted. The only question is whether it is of local manufacture, or an import

The Great Mongol Shahnama was dispersed in the early 20th century by the Belgian dealer Georges Demotte. Nothing remains of the colophon which might have given information about when and where, and for whom, it was created. Scholars are however relatively united in dating it to the second quarter of the 14th century, most concurring with the attribution suggested by Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair who argued that it was made for Ghiyath al-Din b. Humam al-Din Muhammad, the son of Rashid al-Din, the Ilkhanid vizier who was based in Tabriz, in around 1335. The carpets thus pre-date this, which is consistent with the carbon date results on the three "pregnant animal" carpets noted above. Even the early part of the dating on the Kirchheim carpet is entirely consistent with a date in the first quarter of the 14th century. The combination of pictorial and scientific evidence strongly indicates that this is the remains of a royal Ilkhanid carpets, probably from Tabriz, a remarkable survival.

Have also a look at this picture:



Source *The Weaving Art Museum and Research Institute*

Technical Analysis

Cairo Inv No IM 15634

Size: 13 inch x 14.5 inch

Warp: Wool, Z2S 16 per inch

Weft: Wool with areas of white cotton, 64-112 weft per inch

Structure: slit-tapestry

Any thought?

All the best,

Y 😊

Last edited by Filiberto Boncompagni; March 24th, 2011 at 03:26 PM.



March 24th, 2011, 03:46 PM

#6

[Steve Price](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 32



Hi Yohann

What is the catalog that your long quotation comes from?

Regards

Steve Price



March 24th, 2011, 03:57 PM

#7

[Yohann Gissinger](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008



Hello Steve,

Location: France
Posts: 0

A christie's catalogue.

Regards,
Y😊



March 24th, 2011, 06:16
PM

#8

[Filiberto](#)
[Boncompagni](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7

This is the image from Christie's catalogue:



and this is what I suppose should be the Shahnama illustration, since the omitted text ("*The design of this rug is closely related to that of the incomplete carpet remaining in the Kirchheim collection. Each has a similar inner band that cuts the corner, and from the Kirchheim example it is clear that this is the edge of an octagon. Our internal design is not the same, and unfortunately there is not enough remaining to be able to speculate very far*") speaks of octagons:





Regards,

Filiberto



March 25th, 2011, 11:42 AM

#9

[Filiberto](#)
[Boncompagni](#)
Administrator



Yohann sent me bigger scans of Christie's catalogue.

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7



Thanks Yohann.
Let's confront them with the illumination above.

Any thoughts?

Regards,

Filiberto



March 25th, 2011, 06:12 PM

#10

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7



An observation on the first two fragments – the one posted by me and the one posted by Pierre – is that they present elements of design that were woven with more restrictive techniques, like the borders of "S" of the first piece whose "forms are perfectly balanced warp-substitution designs". See Marla Mallett's "Tracking the Archetype"
<http://www.marlamallett.com/archetyp.htm>

The border is also the same of the "Phoenix and Dragon" rug, by the way (we'll have to keep in mind that).

Both fragments have stepped diagonals, another legacy from flatweaves.

The Christie's fragment doesn't have these "legacies" though. What do you think?

Regards,

Filiberto



March 25th, 2011, 07:58 PM

#11

[Yohann Gissinger](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Location: France
Posts: 0



Hello Filiberto,

In my humble opinion one can bring the christie's fragments close to the *FIG 26: 13th-14th century, Anatolia, Kirchheim, Orient Stars, p. 15* posted by Pierre in the main essay (sorry I don't have the picture to post for comparison).

The borders designs are very close and one can imagine, regarding the size of the fragments 3ft.7in. x 8½in. (109cm. x 22cm.) and 3ft.8in. x 9in. (112cm. x 24cm.) that the field construction is about the same (two octagons).

The main difficulty is maybe to imagine the filling motifs of those octagons. I can see a beast head in the lower left corner of the right fragment and not a lot more...

Regards,

Y 😊



March 25th, 2011, 09:14 PM

#12

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7



:Hi Yohann,

Re-posting a picture is very simple: suffice to go, in this case, to Pierre' s essay, Fig. 26, then right-click on the picture. You will see the link http://www.turkotek.com/old_masters/FIG26.jpg

select the link text, copy it, paste it in your post preceded by [img]and followed by[/img] (DO NOT leave empty spaces between the square brackets and the link text).

Et voila' :



Regards,

Filiberto



March 25th, 2011, 09:26 PM

#13

[Yohann Gissinger](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Location: France
Posts: 0



Thank you Filiberto,

I should have thought it by myself!
The field of the Kircheim example is divided in squares not in octagons.

Regards,
Y😊



March 26th, 2011, 12:37 PM

#14

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1



Hi all,

Yes, the fragment on the left is part of a main border which is identical to Kircheim's. There are even the same thin "poles" terminated by a "fork" on both sides of the humanoid motif. This intriguing "thin pole with fork" motif can also be seen hanging down from the mouth of each pregnant animal in the field of the Kircheim rug. I believe that I have seen it on several (probably younger) extant rugs (and will try to post one example later).

The fragments on the right are perhaps from another rug? "Hawk-eye" Yohann is right, one can see a typical head of a beast with open jaw.

Regards
Pierre



March 27th, 2011, 11:18 AM

#15

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1



Hi Filiberto,

The fragment which introduces this thread is not only close to the «pre-islamic» Kircheim rug, it also features a highly interesting border motif with what looks like a mythical animal too.

Since my March quota for hare-brained theories is not yet reached, I move that it has a striking analogy with a border motif found in several antique (18th-19th century) anatolian Kurdish rugs. Like the three below:





B Balpinar & U. Hirsch, Teppiche aus dem Vakiflar Museum, Istanbul., plate 83



E. Concaro & A. Levi, Sovereign carpets, Unknown masterpieces from European collections. Plate 48

Is my quota exhausted now?

Regards
Pierre

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; March 27th, 2011 at 11:22 AM. Reason: error in pic



March 27th, 2011, 02:49 PM

#16

[Filiberto](#)
[Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7



Hi Pierre,

Either I don't understand properly what you mean or one of us is suffering the effects of a serious rug overdose.

Do you mean these four-legged animals with sort-of wings in the border of the first fragment are similar the UFO's (Unidentifiable Framed Objects) of the Kurdish rugs?

Well, the UFO's protuberances resemble to part of the four-legged animal's "wings" perhaps. 🤔

Baffled,

Filiberto



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2. Animals in Paintings

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