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The "Crivelli" rug

Welcome, [Filiberto Boncompagni](#).
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April 3rd, 2011, 05:14 PM

#1

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7

The "Crivelli" rug

As Pierre wrote in his essay:

"A fourth group, illustrated only by two Crivelli paintings (ca. 1482-1486), incorporates recognizable birds, but only as secondary motifs in a dominant geometric pattern. There is a "normal" border in one of them. We know of only one extant Crivelli fragment (15th century, Budapest Applied Art Museum)."



here is an enlarged detail of the second painting



depicting a similar but not identical rug.

In "THE CRIVELLI COMPASS ROSE RUG" by David Milberg

www.rugreview.com/orr/9-1-7.htm

Milberg suggests that the paintings show the two slightly different halves of the same two-medallions rug.

Here is the Batári-Crivelli (from Ferenc Batári, the Ottoman Turkish carpet expert, who gave it the name "Crivelli rug" in a 1984 study) rug fragment, 15th century, from the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, commonly considered as an Ottoman Turkish carpet.



But, according to Milberg, there are more: one "was found in a mosque in Savrihisar (Turkey) by Nejat Diyarbekirli (*Hali* 6/4, p. 459). The 16-point medallion occupies a light red field which it shares with spandrels of mixed design. A main border consisting of Greek crosses is surrounded by a double pearl (88) border. Bird forms but no latch-

hooks appear. The rug may well date to 1400 but is so crudely rendered that Crivelli would have disdained it."



then "Two other groups of pile weavings featuring similar medallions are known. Single-warp knot Spanish carpets attributed to the 15th century (but with more than 16 points) are to be found in several museum collections.⁴ And, as if to balance these early Western rugs, a new group from Kazakhstan were published by M. S. Mukanov in *Oriental Carpets and Textiles Studies (O.C.T.S.) I*, p. 161, fig. 7. Neither group displays bird forms nor latch-hooks and so should be regarded as derivative.

What is more important is: *The largest group of rugs bearing 16-point medallions are to be found in the Caucasus. And here they are found in kilim, soumac, and pile structures.* suggesting a northern Caucasian (nowadays Kuba/Daghestan) origin.

... We are further indebted to Ibn Khaldun for preserving a document from Abbasid times, and a map from his own. The document lists the revenues in coin and goods rendered to the treasury at Baghdad from the contributory regions about A.D. 786 (*op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp.361-365). Of the 34 regions listed, three gave partly in rugs as follows:

- a) Armenia - Embroidered carpets: 20
 - b) Ifriqiyah (Tunisia) - Carpets: 120
 - c) Tabaristan - Tabaristan carpets: 600 pieces.
- His map (p. 110) locates Tabaristan north of Armenia and west of the Caspian Sea.

The Arabs frequently incorporated Christian (Caucasian) Albania within the designation "Armenia" (see Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. I, p. 443). The region south of the Caspian Sea is better known for its production of silk than for wool. Some 200 years ago a colony of Kurds were settled at Kalardasht. These continue to produce carpets on a small scale. No other rugs from this region are known.

In the 14th century both Genoa and Venice maintained caravansaries in the port of Trebizond. Here valuable merchandise of many kinds, including textiles, were stored. This city, older than Rome, that had offered salvation to Xenophon's beleaguered army, was the eastern outpost of the West. Armenian merchants in the rug trade could have conveyed them to Venice via this port until A.D. 1461. For in that year this last "Greek Empire" finally succumbed to the armies of Islam. If Crivelli's rug arrived by this route, it was old when he first painted it. Perhaps he acquired his first rug, second hand, in the Ghetto. But to say more is to flirt with Folly.

I quoted this old article because it offers a further hypothesis connecting "animal rugs" with origins different than the commonly acknowledged Turco-Anatolian which, as far as I know, is assumed by default but never really proven.

There is another extant rug that I'd like to connect to the Crivelli family:



According to the webpage where I found it, the rug (in Berlin, Museum fur Islamische Kunst) is "newly attributed to the Nachivan region of Greater Armenia and dated to ca. early 1400s"

There is no mention of who is the responsible for the new attribution and dating other than the note "Unpublished until Spuhler, who does not believe that this is an early animal carpet (he dates it to West Turkey, ca. 16th-17th century)".

Interestingly, Marla Mallett notices that the animals in the centers of the stars are

articulated completely with offset knotting, as shown in this close-up that I borrowed from her web site

while the rest of the rug has normal knots.



Regards,

Filiberto



April 5th, 2011, 10:46 AM

#2

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

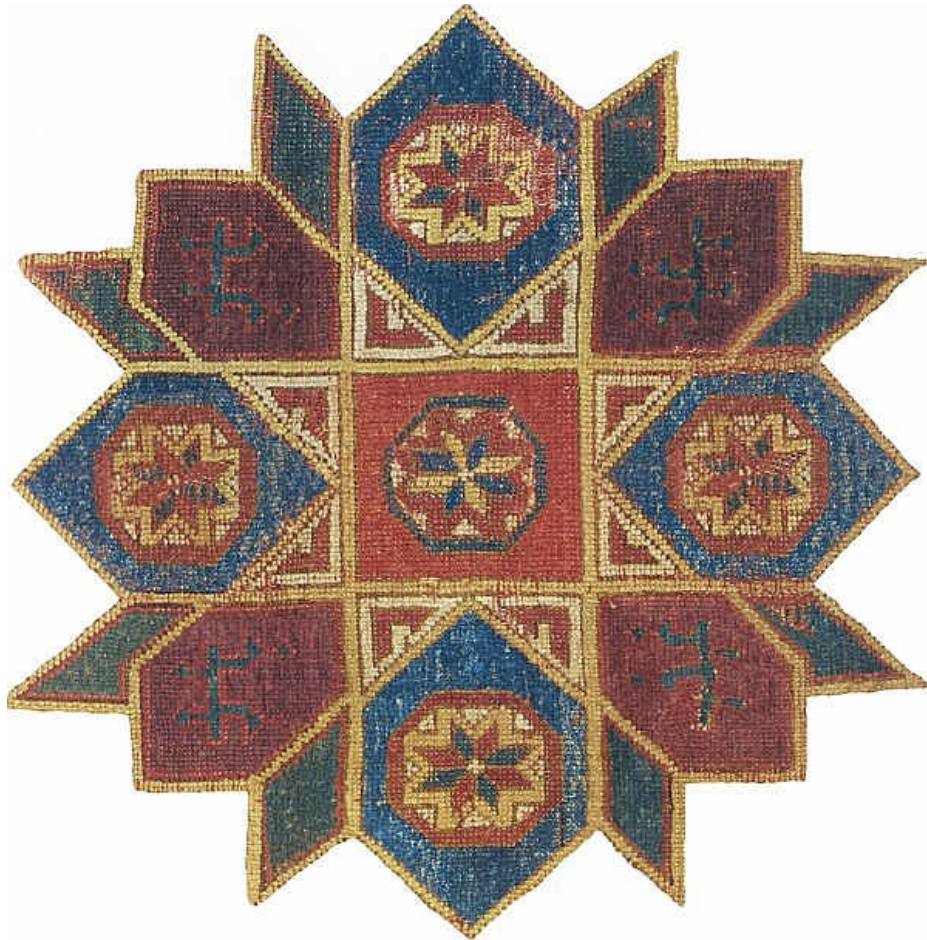
Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1

Hi Filiberto,

The number of extant 'Crivelli» 15th century rugs is apparently a bit larger than what I thought initially.

With two additional ones below:





The whereabouts of the first one are unknown to me. The latter one is a large fragment, of which a computer reconstitution of the central medallion is shown here, which belongs to the Kirchheim collection (*Orient Stars*, page 275).

These (painted or extant) Crivelli rugs show an interesting evolution of an animal motif from figurative to abstraction beyond recognition. The departure from naturalistic representation might have been caused, for example, by a stricter (local or temporary) enforcement of Islam's ban of human and animal motifs.

Another interesting point is the particular type of border of the first rug: A motif which has survived without change over a millenary, since it was already featured in the large carpet of the ninth century miniature below (*Shamana*, Freer Gallery, Smithsonian) and was still rather frequent in nineteenth century Caucasian rugs.



Best
Pierre



April 5th, 2011, 02:41 PM

#3

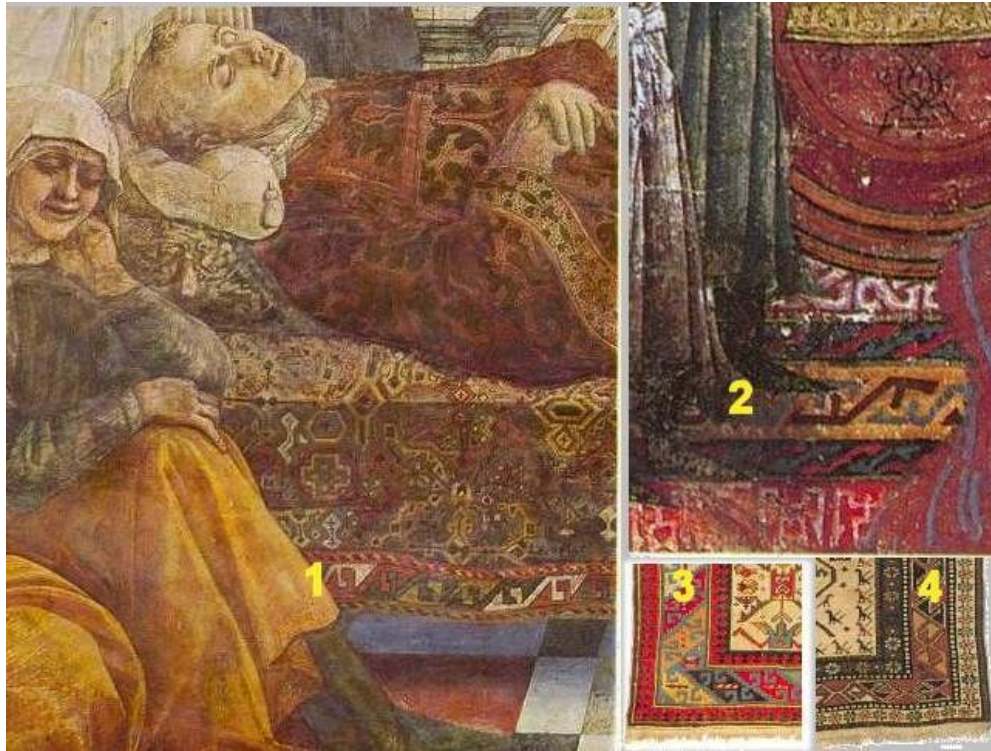
[Filiberto](#)
[Boncompagni](#)
Administrator



Hi Pierre,

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7

The "Shahnama" border caught my attention years ago when I noticed the similarity with a Filippo Lippi's fresco (Funeral of St. Stephen" ca.1460 Prato, Duomo). At the time I had prepared this composite image for a post that never materialized. The image shows the border in Lippi's fresco in n.1, the Shahnama border in n.2, and two Shirvan borders in 3 and 4 (the latter a Marasali).



Facts to notice:

- there are two flavors of the same border; the stepped one like in this



which I am glad you found 😊👍😊 and the more linear one, like in the "Armenian

Nachivan" above and the two painted examples

- besides the border, the rug in Lippi's fresco is utterly mysterious. 🗨️

Regards,

Filiberto



April 6th, 2011, 05:43 PM

#4

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1

Hi all,

There are indeed very few later medallions which could be considered evolutions from the Crivelli star.

One could perhaps argue that the rare 16-sided star medallion below is such a heir, but it is more likely that it is derived from the much more frequent regular octagram, extensively used in rugs attributed to the Mamluk or in so-called star-Ushak carpets for example.



Source: B. Balpinar U. Hirsch, Teppiche, page 199.

In the carpet below, the Crivelli design is barely recognizable and is demoted to the status of secondary motif.



Source: H. Kirchheim, Orient Stars, page 294.
Regards
Pierre



April
10th, 2011,
03:31 PM

#5

[Chuck
Wagner](#)
Members



Buon Giorno e Bonjour,

Join Date:
May 2008
Posts: 0

...and the stepped version lives on to this day. Or, at least, to the 1930's or so. It is always fascinating - to me - to find that nomadic tribespersons like those of the Sistan (often considered somewhat isolated from the whole art history scene) are so well read on the lesser points of the Old Masters:



Chuck Wagner



April 11th, 2011, 10:13 AM

#6

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7



Hi Chuck,

Isn't amazing how borderless a rug border can be? How could it reach a relatively recent Baluch-type bag? Furthermore, that is not a motif commonly used in the region. As a matter of fact, I don't recall *any* border like this used in the region.

I'm going to delete your post (1) to avoid the pesky Balu-natic chatter which surely will follow your discovery - and I strongly suggest you to destroy the evidence.

Regards,

Filiberto

(1) Just kidding, of course 🤪



April 11th, 2011, 12:41 PM

#7

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1



Yes Chuck, indeed the universal success enjoyed by this border is amazing: As proven by its chicken row the rug below was woven in Georgia USA ! Even though some eurocentric experts still attribute it to Spain, 15th century.



April 11th, 2011, 07:29 PM

#8

[Richard Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 3



Hi Filiberto,

Ouch!! You really know how to hurt a guy. I was about to leap to the keyboard to tout the one more brick in the wall linking Baluch weavers to the 13th century Seljuk crowd, then I tripped over your deeply cutting "Balu-natic" remark. So, I had to cancel. 🤦

Pierre,

Do you happen to know what is at the other end of that Spanish rug? More birds, or maybe an inscription, "Just us chickens?" Have you seen such birds on other Spanish carpets? The the curled tails may require some ornithological research.

Rich Larkin



April 11th, 2011, 07:53 PM

#9

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7



Hi Rich,

No, the other end had the inscription:

Fabricado en España con el diseño baluch

That's why I had to crop the picture.



April 11th, 2011, 08:35 PM

#10

[Richard Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 3



OK Filiberto,



April 12th, 2011, 10:28 AM

#11

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1



Hi Rich and Filiberto,

A war between Balu-natics and Caucaso-maniacs is not a good place to be caught into. It is my duty however to deny any inscription in Spanish at the other end as well as any mention of a Western Pakistani tribe. In fact it is in English and partly illegible «.. icial suppl.. o.....tucky fr.....ken.» Not being an expert of early US rugs I must leave the identification of the weaving tribe in Georgia to my betters.???

Neutrally yours
Pierre



April 12th, 2011, 12:24 PM

#12

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7



And here it is again, partially visible (*Note: I found a better picture and now it's fully visible*) in its "unstepped" reciprocal flavor in this 1519 painting of Jacob Cornelisz van Oostanen, a Northern Netherlandish painter.



Incidentally Peter Stone puts this border among the Caucasian section, Daghestan, and calls it "C-15 Reciprocal Border" (1). And what we see above it? The classical "Leaf and Calyx" border (C-63 in Stone's). Exactly the same unchanged design as we still see in much later rugs, especially Caucasian (not sure about Baluch but one never knows 😊).

Of course there is a close relationship between the "Leaf and Calyx" border and the one of the Batári-Crivelli rug above - I remember Wendel Swan wrote a paper on the subject but I cannot find a trace about it.

There are a few more paintings related to these borders. I think it's worthwhile to open a new thread about them. I'll do it later. Stay tuned. Regards,

Filiberto

(1) Peter F. Stone, *Tribal & Village Rugs – The Definitive Guide to Design, Pattern & Motif*



April 12th, 2011, 04:11 PM

#13

[Rich Larkin](#)
Members



Hi Filiberto,

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 6

Of course, the Baluchis did manage to acquire the border.



My opinion is that this and other early Anatolian motives survived into relatively recent time among the Baluch over centuries, reflecting their roots in regions more westerly than their current and recent homes. I don't think one must conclude that weavers of one or two centuries ago simply copied them from neighbors. Whatever the truth of that might be, it is remarkable how persistent are many of the designs you and Pierre have shown in this outstanding series. It seems that little has changed in many of them, perhaps small details. I note in the example I've posted that the calyx has retained its basic shape, including the vertical element in the petals at the top, a feature missing in some iterations.

Rich Larkin

P. S.: Pierre, being slow of mind, I had to puzzle a bit over the end of your recovered inscription. *Funneee!* The Colonel himself would be proud. 🙌🙌

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1



Spanish animal rugs

Hi Rich,
Your question about birds in Spanish Renaissance rugs hits an interesting point.

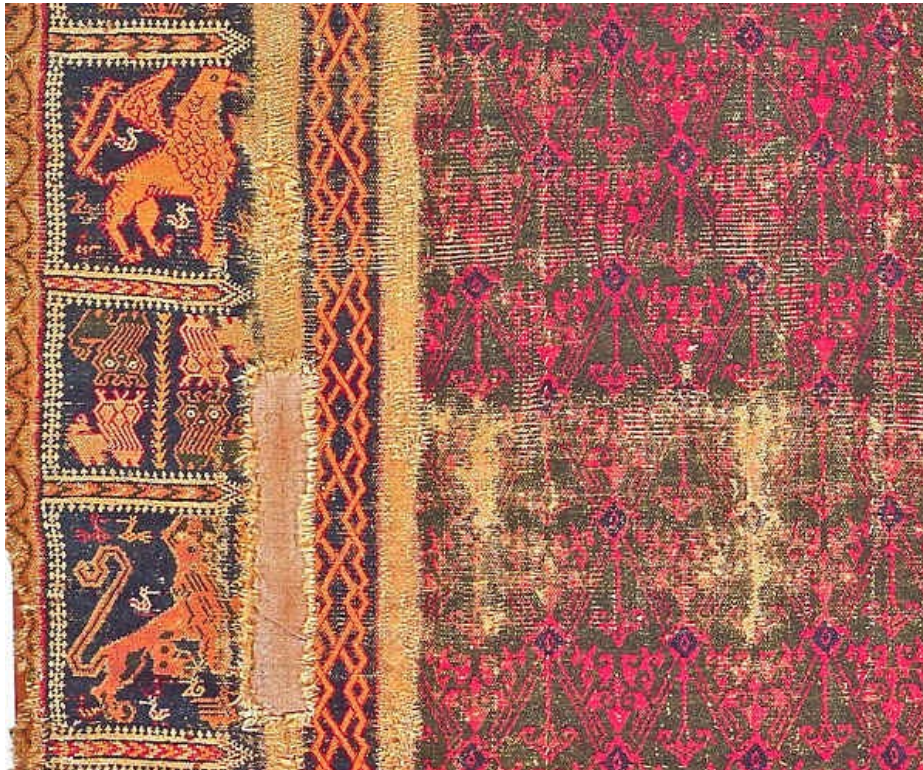
As mentioned by Yohann in an earlier post, Al Andalus might indeed have been the source of some of the (geometric- or animal-) rugs featured in 15-16th century paintings. Curatola (1) thinks that some of the smaller rugs appearing in V. Carpaccio's cycle of Saint Ursula (FIG 1, detail; Accademia, Venice) have a spanish origin. The "Parrot & Pope" rug in our essay might have been woven there too.



Al Andalus was indicated by the arab traveler el-Idrisi and the historian al-Saqundi (12th century) as being a very active weaving center, exporting its rugs to other Moslem states and "to the whole world". (2)(4). Rug fragments with typical Spanish knot, found at Fostat (Cairo) seem to confirm their information.

Eleanor of Castille, after her marriage to Edward I in 1254, was reputed to have brought a large quantity of Spanish rugs for use in her apartments at Westminster. (3)(4)

As illustrated by the extant rugs below, Al Andalus weavers were quite fond of animals, especially lions, griffons, bulls, chihuahuas (see border in FIG 2) ...err and yes Rich, chicken too 😊.



Alcaraz? 15th century. In "Oriental Rugs from Atlantic Collections", D. Dodds & M.L. Eiland.



Alpujarra 16th century.



Alcaraz? 16th century. In "Orienteppeiche im MIK Berlin", F. Spüler



Undefined Spanish origin. 16th century.

Sources:

- (1) *Venise et l'Orient. Tissus et tapis à Venise.* G. Curatola, pag. 210.
- (2) *Alfombras Españolas de Alcaraz y Cuenca, siglos XV -XVI.* Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, pag. 21
- (3) *Historic Floors.* Jane Fawcett.
- (4) *Carpet art in Islamic Civilization.* Ragheb Elsergany.



April 12th, 2011, 05:52 PM

#15

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7



Well, Pierre...
I don't think chihuahuas could make it into a 15th century carpet...



April 12th, 2011, 06:13 PM

#16

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 1



Hi all,

I would like to come back just for a moment to the Crivelli Star:

A further browsing through the net and scores of rug books confirms that the motif was rare already in the 15th century. Only very few credible heirs can be found among extant anatolian 16th and 17th century rugs. FIG 1 being one of these rare birds.



In "Orient Stars", H. Kirchheim.

However, as quoted by Filiberto from Milberg «The largest group of rugs bearing 16-point medallions are to be found in the Caucasus. And here they are found in kilim, soumac, and pile structures, suggesting a northern Caucasian (nowadays Kuba/Daghestan) origin».

FIG 2 (Kuba rug), 3 and 4 (East-Caucasian sumaks) illustrate Milberg's statement. Their 16-point star is indeed very similar to the 15th century prototypes.



In "Orient Teppiche. Band I. Kaukasische Teppiche" by D. Eder.



In "Sovereign Carpets. Unknown Masterpieces from European Collections" by E. Concaro & A. Levi.



One might argue that the design is merely a late revival, inspired by commercial considerations. However, experts date a number of such rugs from the early 19th century or older. FIG 2-4 indeed look pre-Kustar, don't they?

One cannot exclude therefore that a Caucasian ethnic group has kept weaving large Crivelli Stars during half a millennium. To quote Rich: «It is remarkable how persistent are many of the designs»

Filiberto has drawn my attention to a commercial Caucasian rug site mentioning opinions of various daghestani populations about the origin of that design. There is no unanimity about it, but all seem to agree that it is traditional. «...Tabarasan call this design «Juhud» (Jewish), Lezgis of the Kuragh region call it «Karabagk khanch» (Karabagk crest) and Lezgis of the Akhti region call it «Ermeni» (Armenian)....». The daghestani site owner adds his personal opinion that the star is probably the expression of « the artistic traditions of Mountain Jews and Armenians, the only Jewish and Christian people living in Daghestan for centuries as neighbors and compatriots...».

Amen.



Pierre



April 12th, 2011, 06:28 PM

#17

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009



Quote:

Posts: 1

Originally Posted by **Filiberto Boncompagni** 

Well, Pierre...

I don't think chihuahuas could make it into a 15th century carpet...

Why not Filiberto? Chihuahuas have the perfect size for a rug border. Come to think of it the the race must have been created in al-Andalus with this use in mind. Migrating later to Mexico on a Spanish Galleon, together with smallpox.

Regards

Pierre



April 12th, 2011, 07:23 PM

#18

[Steve Price](#)



Administrator

Hi People

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 30

I think you're on to something. The Chichuahua's curled tail and large, pointed, fan-like ears also figure prominently in stylized forms on many oriental rugs.

Regards

Steve Price



April 13th, 2011, 01:19 PM

#19

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)



Administrator

Hi Pierre,

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 7

Quote:

«...Tabarasan call this design «Juhud» (Jewish), Lezgis of the Kuragh region call it «Karabagk khanch» (Karabagk crest) and Lezgis of the Akhti region call it «Ermeni» (Armenian)....».

I think this quote is important because it reflects popular (in the sense of *vox populi*) appellations and, for once, it doesn't imply the usual attempt to appropriate textile items to their own ethnical group. But how we sort it out?

In my opinion I would give more credit to the "Armenian" and "Karabagh crest" (hence with strong Armenian possibility) denominations for the following reasons:

First, Lesghis are the primary makers of those large Sumaks. So they should know better than the others.

Second, the "Jewish" attribution could have ben mistakenly originated by the similarity of those devices with the Star of David.

Regards,

Filiberto



April 22nd, 2011, 09:16 PM

#20

[Chris Countryman](#)



Interestinger and interestinger

Guest

Fellow Ruggies,

Posts: n/a

We should never underestimate the power of chihuahuas and birds. Attached is a picture of a rare maned-chihuahua with two of the Colonel's friends. It was woven by the lost Baluch tribe of North Africa.



Chris Countryman



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2. Animals in Paintings

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