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Welcome, [Filiberto Boncompagni](#).

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February 29th, 2012,
11:20 AM

#41

[Yohann Gissinger](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Location: France
Posts: 10



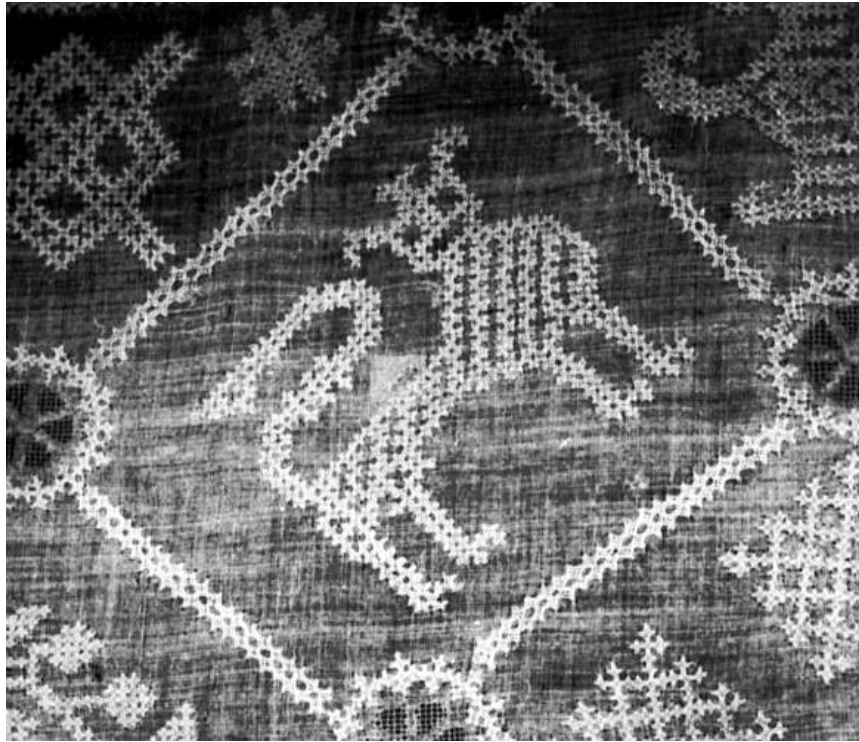
Filiberto,

The symbol is ancient and is frequent in textiles, but the one I show you is the closest I succeeded find, even regarding to its composition and to its palette (red, gold, black and white) and to its period.

If you have a better bysantine related example or whatever else, I will enjoy to see it... 😊

Please also have a look at:





Compared to FIG.13 & 5: Details of an embroidered linen table cloth 115cm x 315cm possibly woven in Niedersachsen (Germany) XIIIth c. found in a monastery in Isenhagen (Germany)





Compared to FIG.6 & 7: A detail of a small bag from the same period and area of production...reference lost.

If you have better clues, simply post 🙏🙏 be sure I will applaud in return.

Best regards,
Y😊



February 29th, 2012,
04:03 PM

#42

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)
Administrator



Hi Yohann,

Very good finds! As for a Byzantine example, I will see if I am able to find out one. Not for challenging you 🙏🙏, of course, but for the sake of knowledge!

Regards,
Filiberto



March 1st, 2012, 06:06 PM

#43

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)
Administrator



Hi Yohann,

I couldn't quite find what I was hoping for. The closest is this Byzantine woven silk fragment, V&A Museum, 1200-1399.

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 68



which I chose because it made me aware of my subliminal reaction to the textile depicted in Fig.21 as "Byzantine": it's because - and besides the double-headed eagle - the endless knots visible in the silk fragment and in the rug were used in Roman and Byzantine mosaic floors, like this one from the church of Nativity, 4th. cent. AD:



and overall, the composition of the rug of Fig. 21



recalls very much a mosaic floor.
Like this, Roman, from the Archeological Museum of Bergamo, Italy:



We can at least assume that the iconography of the rug comes from a Byzantine source.

Where was it made? Well, Germany could be a possibility...



Regards,

Filiberto



March 1st, 2012, 10:44 PM

#44

[Yohann Gissinger](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Location: France
Posts: 10



Filiberto,

I didn't want to mean the textiles in paintings were made in "Germany", I just wanted to illustrate that some textiles made there in the XVth c. were very close to the pieces illustrated, not only in the details (like some byzantines) but even in their global composition and eventually in their colors.

I am lucid on the fact that such pieces are church's table cloths or whatever else of a great value and were probably not initially destined to the ground and may have been displayed there only during the painting of the scene...

In another hand I agree with you about "the sake of knowledge!" as our common benefit. If we don't succeed in finding all the remnant examples of the paintings illustrated there, at least, I hope we succeed in proving that lot of obsessed ruggies including world well known writers, are wrong when they systematicaly see oriental rugs in these paintings. That's one of my own challenges!

Best regards 🍷🍷🍷

Y😊

Last edited by Yohann Gissinger; March 1st, 2012 at 11:59 PM.



March 3rd, 2012, 04:04 PM

#45

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 68



Quote:

That's one of my own challenges!

Mine too... 🍷🍷

Regards,

Filiberto




March 18th, 2012, 11:34 AM

#46

[Pierre_Galafassi](#)

Guest

Posts: n/a

 **A mystery which comes as a courtesy of George Potter.**

George has discovered in a 1475 painting by Niccolò Alunno



Niccolò Alunno, Madonna and Child with St Ann, 1475, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

another example of rug with the same kind of very strange animals, which was already featured in two older rugs: The one in FIG 13 (Salon on Animal Rugs), dated 1425, and the one in FIG 9, dated 1252.



Niccolò Alunno, Madonna and Child with St Ann, 1475, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (detail)



FIG 9. Anonymous, Annunciation, 1252, Church of the Santissima Annunziata, Florence.



FIG 13. Gentile da Fabriano, Detail from Annunciation, 1425, Vatican.

It is amazing that such a strange rug could have been represented three times over a period of 250 years. Even more so, when one takes into account that while the three rugs are very similar, (obviously the brainchildren of the same weaving people) they are not identical. The two later rugs are not mere copies of the first one.

This somehow weakens the hypothesis that, being part of a fresco on the walls of a Florence church, the 1225 rug could have been seen by both the later painters, who could have copied it. Then what?

Did both Da Fabriano and Alunno take inspiration from the older rug, but modifying it?
Were the thirteenth century weaver "tribes" still active during the fifteenth century?

Please also note the battle of phenix and dragon in blue-black rectangles, which can be seen in both FIG 9 and 13 and is also partly visible under the Virgin's robe.

Best regards
Pierre





Hi Pierre,

As you said, the three rugs are similar, but not identical, and the two more recent seem to me a bit more similar:



I don't think they are modified copies of the 1252 fresco (Fig.9). More likely they are different versions of rugs that were in vogue in 13th and 14th C. Europe. See also the embroidered linen table cloth posted by Yohann at the top of this page:



different (also on a very different medium) but close enough to justify a comparison.

Regards,

Filiberto

March 18th, 2012, 01:12
PM

#48



Carrying on with analogies...

The famous "Phoenix and Dragon" carpet could have similarities too



BUT its system of frames and borders is different, while the same "system" is identical in all of three depicted examples. Too identical and too consistent to attribute it to "sloppy artistic" copying of the Phoenix and dragon carpet. Apart the fact that the fresco is two centuries older, of course.

March 18th, 2012, 07:09 PM

#49

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 48



Hi Filiberto,

250 years of popularity seems quite a long time. But who knows. One point in favor of your preferred theory is that two colleagues of the cross-eyed alien, the phenix and the dragon, were still in fashion too after the middle of the fifteenth century: In addition to Mantegna, 1448 (FIG 8. Salon «animal rugs»), Di Bartolo, ca. 1441, (see earlier in this thread), also Delli Erri (1460-1470) , Obilman (1466), J. Bellini (1444) and others, kept illustrating the domestic row (*) between the dragon and the phenix.

FIG A. 1460-1470. B. degli Erri. Scene of the life of St Vincent Ferrer. Detail. K. M. Vienna.



FIG B. 1466. N. Obilman. Annunciation. Wroclaw.



The place of origin of these bizarre rugs remains a mystery, however the various examples, shown by Johann in this thread, of spanish silks with rather similar animals, including a

couple of beast with bifid tail could hint at a Mudéjar origin perhaps?



(* *In chinese tradition the dragon often represented the Emperor and the phenix the Empress.* 😊)



March 19th, 2012, 04:07 PM

#50

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 68

Hi Pierre,

Quote:

In chinese tradition the dragon often represented the Emperor and the phenix the Empress

Mmmmh..... You gave me the idea to check my "DICTIONNAIRE DES SYMBOLES" (Chevalier/Gheerbrant, Ed. Robert Laffont, 1993 re-print).

About "Phénix" - first mentioned by Herodotus [5th century BCE] (History, book 2) - it says it symbolized resurrection and immortality. "That's why in all of the Middle Ages it was the symbol of Christ's resurrection".

As for the Dragon, in Christianity it was associated to the serpent in symbolizing the Demon or Evil (see St. George, the dragon slaughterer 😊)

I guess that the "Phoenix and Dragon" iconography that was imported from the Orient (and whose meaning I don't remember at the moment, but it goes beyond the

Emperor/Empress) was adopted in Europe to symbolize the fight between the good and the evil.

Which doesn't help us to find the origins of the "Phoenix and Dragon" rugs in those paintings but *could* authorize us to think that some (I say some) of them could even be European copies.
But this is only a theory...

Regards,



[Jeff Sun](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 1



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Filiberto Boncompagni**

Hi Pierre,

Mmmmh..... You gave me the idea to check my "DICTIONNAIRE DES SYMBOLES" (Chevalier/Gheerbrant, Ed. Robert Laffont, 1993 re-print).

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Which doesn't help us to find the origins of the "Phoenix and Dragon" rugs in those paintings but could authorize us to think that some (I say some) of them could even be European copies.

But this is only a theory...

Regards,

A word on the Dragon/Phoenix.

While the European concept of the Dragon may have some distant ties to China, the Phoenix does not. In fact the term "Phoenix" is just a western naming laid over top of a completely different Chinese Idea.

The western Phoenix, self-immolates and is reborn from the ashes in a Phoenician legend...hence the name Phoenix....from Phoenicia.

The Chinese legendary bird is actually called "Feng Huang"...which unfortunately sounds just a little like Phoenix..and is so called in the west, but does not share any of the western Phoenix's other traits and in-fact symbolizes quite different things and is depicted entirely differently. Doubtless some 17th or 16th century European trader making landfall in China first heard of "Feng Huang" and said ..."Ah...they must mean the Phoenix"....and the term stuck.

The only thing they have in common is they are legendary birds. They are not related to each other anymore than either are related to the Native American Thunderbird, Quetzocoatl, Garuda, the Arab Roc or Rodan. OK. Technically the last one is a giant supersonic Pterydactyl and not a bird, but I think you all get the point.

Last edited by Jeff Sun; March 25th, 2012 at 06:00 AM.



[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 68



Hi Jeff,

You are right on all accounts. What I wanted to convey in my post was that, in my opinion, the iconographic coupling of "Feng Huang" and the Dragon did not exist in the West. When it appeared - probably imported from China - it was "translated as the "Phoenix and Dragon" with all the related western meanings.

Regards,



March 29th, 2012, 05:18 PM

#53

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 48

Hi Jeff and Filiberto,

The fight of the Chinese dragon (Shen-Long) with the Chinese phoenix, or rather the Fenghuang (as rightly precised by Jeff) was obviously a well established motif in different areas of central and western Asia. Below it is illustrated on two extant Safavid rugs from the sixteen and seventeen centuries. In a very densely knotted and "naturalistic" version.



Persian. Safavid period 45 silk, phoenix and dragon motif. Detail. XVI-XVII



Persian. Safavid period 31.2 The Mantes rug. Detail 2. XVI. 783X379.Louvre.Paris .jpeg

The Chinese origin is rather evident. One can quite safely assume that this motif migrated

west following the Mongol onslaught and under the Ilkhanid rulers (mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century). One can also suppose that a prestigious and powerful "animal" like the dragon would have been used as totem, tribal symbol by some of the mongol- and turk clans which took part to the attack (just as tigers, wolves, lions were used etc..)
Best regards
Pierre



April 25th, 2012, 04:15 AM

#54

[Jeff Sun](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 1



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pierre Galafassi**

H

The Chinese origin is rather evident. One can quite safely assume that this motif migrated west following the Mongol onslaught and under the Ilkhanid rulers (mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century). One can also suppose that a prestigious and powerful "animal" like the dragon would have been used as totem, tribal symbol by some of the mongol- and turk clans which took part to the attack (just as tigers, wolves, lions were used etc..)

Best regards

Pierre

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pierre Galafassi**

The Chinese origin is rather evident. One can quite safely assume that this motif migrated west following the Mongol onslaught and under the Ilkhanid rulers

Best regards

Pierre

Fascinating! I've never seen them before depicted in a Persian rug.

While much might be attributed to the Mongols, it's probably more likely that these symbols arrived in Persia by completely peaceful means along the Silk Road. Chinese brocades and porcelain often depict this pairing, and these would be very sought after trade goods in Persia. China had a complete monopoly on both silk and "China" for centuries.

Of course, the dragon and phoenix may even have arrived in Persia...(gasp)...on carpets! Imitation of a particularly striking, rare and luxurious import would only be natural.

It's all speculation, of course.



April 27th, 2012, 12:48 PM

#55

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 48



Hi Jeff,

You are right, the migration of the "dragon and phoenix" motif to central Asia, Iran and Azerbaijan might even have happened, by way of the Silk road, long before the Mongol onslaught. Besides, the frontiers of the Chinese Empire, times and again, included parts of Transoxiana. Another point in favor of your suggestion is the Chinese influence already visible in Great Seldjuk miniatures, several generations before Genghis Khan.

Could the vehicles of dragon and phoenix motifs have been China-made **rugs**? I doubt it, because of the lack of proper Han rug-weaving traditions. The inhabitants of the Tarim basin (of Khotan for example) could have made more credible go-betweens, including the old Turanians and the Uyghur Turks:

They have been ruggies for ages, their weavings had a high reputation (1) and they have been many times tributary of the Chinese empire. It is well documented that they supplied Chinese elite with rugs, although this never was an important import item for the Han. It is therefore not unlikely that they have been weaving rugs with traditional Chinese motifs

too, to satisfy their occasional eastern customer (As they were still doing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). "Chinese-looking" pattern might have also completed their traditional rug motifs, because Buddhism was the Tarim basin's religion until the tenth century.

Rugs like the one in FIG.1 (Fifteenth century? Origin unknown but the Tarim basin would be a logical source), which shows two typical Chinese «shishi» and a kufic border quite similar to the one in the (seldjuk?) «animal rug» in FIG 26 of the main essay.

FIG. 1 Khotan ? Fifteenth century? GLEN (Kyoto Mus.)



FIG 26 Turkish, thirteenth or fourteenth century. H. Kircheim. Orient Stars.



(1) Hans Bidder "Carpets from Eastern Turkestan". Mr Bidder even qualifies the Tarim basin as "the oldest home of pile carpet known to us today" . Page 11.

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; April 27th, 2012 at 05:57 PM.



April 27th, 2012, 03:41 PM

#56

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 68



Hi Pierre,

Quote:

Could the vehicles of dragon and phoenix motifs have been China-made rugs? I doubt it

But it could have been another kind of textile...

This discussion started more than 13 months ago, so it's natural to forget its beginning. I have a good visual memory, though, and I remember having posted this image, Armenian miniature, the Armenian Archbishop Jean of Cilicia, 1287, detail:



I didn't remember *where* I posted it (my "locational" memory is no match to the visual one 🤔), but the most logical place was this thread, and there it is, post #3. See the Chinese Dragon? Its style is exactly the same used today in Chinese or China-influenced culture (I have a Nepalese print that is almost identical).

If a Chinese dragon can find his way into an Armenian Archbishop's garment, also the dragon and phoenix motifs could have found the same way to the M.E. and beyond, I suppose.
Regards,

Filiberto



April 28th, 2012, 06:01 AM

#57

[Jeff Sun](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 1



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pierre Galafassi** 
Hi Jeff,

*Could the vehicles of dragon and phoenix motifs have been China-made **rugs**? I doubt it, because of the lack of proper Han rug-weaving traditions. ...*

I mentioned that in jest mostly, but it is an interesting point.

Generally, I would agree with you about the unlikelihood, but with conditions:

1. It would depend on what era of antiquity you are looking for the connection. if you are looking in the 16th or 17th century...like the Safavid rug you posted, then, yes, I would say that there is probably *some* chance of a Chinese rug making it's way to Persia with other trade goods. **A silk rug**, in particular would be *very* desirable.

It is known that carpet making in China proper was established in the Ming era concurrent with these time frames, albeit existing examples are from the end of that era.

2. If you are looking before that era, than I think, like you, that it becomes unlikely...but "unlikely" is a matter of degree.

- Were Chinese rugs available for trade. **Yes**. It's generally known that felt carpet making in China goes very far back. Possible examples exist (in Japan) that were made as gifts for royal exchange from the Song era. However, piled weaving probably goes back to the Yuan Dynasty. As a complete aside, one individual in Beijing while I lived there maintained that he had **possession** of rugs from the Yuan dynasty....which would probably make them the

oldest rugs in the world other than the Pazryk. I don't lend much credence to his particular claim...(How would one even recognize a Yuan era rug? You would have to carbon date it at least)...but I am not so bold as to say it is impossible for an example to survive to modern day.

-Could rugs travel from China to Persia? **Again, yes.** As the post about the "Avar" fragment found in Tibet shows that carpets could indeed travel far from their homes...and Arab and Persian traders were well established in China quite far back in history. It would be no more difficult to transport a Chinese rug to Persia, than any other trade good, such as brocade or porcelain...maybe even easier.

Last edited by Jeff Sun; April 28th, 2012 at 07:32 PM.



April 29th, 2012, 03:41 PM

#58

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 48

Hi Filiberto and Jeff,

I do fully agree with your posts.

As far as the most likely date for the introduction of pile-rug weaving in Chinese workshops is concerned, Hans Bidder brought very interesting and credible informations (1).

Dr Bidder was a German diplomat in post in Beijing after the first world war, he was also a sinologist and a rug connoisseur (probably considered the best expert for rugs of the Tarim basin).

The question of China-made rugs was among his interests too and he worked during two decades with Chinese historians, with philologists, as well as with the odd competent Chinese rug dealer of the time, to clarify it.

According to Bidder, felt rugs were known and used by the Chinese elite at least since the Mongol Yuan dynasty, or even earlier, perhaps popularized by one of the several earlier dynasties of nomad origin, like the Kin (Djurchet).

As far as pile rug-making in Chinese workshops is concerned, Bidder concludes to a much later date of introduction. When he arrived in Beijing, in 1925, he still noted «a total lack of innate appreciation in the Chinese for the carpet as a work of art as well as of practical understanding of it as an element in domestic habitation» (2). Bidder explains this indifference to rugs by the fact that, alone in all Asia, only the Han Chinese dropped, very early in their history, the habit of eating and sleeping on the ground and made wooden chairs, beds and tables instead. For a long time, pile rugs were therefore only imported into China either (seldom) ordered by the Palace, or by the occasional gentleman-collector, by foreign ethnic minorities, including conquerors, or came as gifts from other Kingdoms.

Bidder thinks that, although «..no documentary evidence for this surmise has ever been ascertained,..., not even in the archives of the Beijing Palace Museum» (3), the best candidate, as creator of truly Chinese pile-rug weaving workshops, was the Manchu Qing Emperor Gaozong (alias Qianlong, 1711-1799) who was «less focussed on the Middle Kingdom and less indifferent to the areas beyond its border» than other Ming and Qing Emperors.

This interest led to his conquests of the Turkik Tarim-basin and other parts of central Asia (with certainly an ample booty of rugs) and included a systematic massacre of the Dzungar in Mongolia.

Bidder thinks that the psychological profile of Gaozong, who wanted to rival the magnificence of the Persian- and Mughal courts is a valid clue to.

Besides, Beijing folk tales had it that Gaozong's concubine Khoja Iparhan, (alias Xiang Fei), a Uyghur princess, jump started the Emperor's rather un-Chinese passion for rugs. Understandingly, Bidder does not give much credit to this story.

P.S. I just came across a miniature featuring a Timurid warrior fighting a very «naturalistic» dragon. Unlike the typical Chinese dragon, which is usually airborne, the beast is walking on the ground, but otherwise it looks quite «Chinese». The miniature also resembles Renaissance renditions of «St Georges and the Dragon». I shall post it later.

- (1) Hans Bidder. Carpets from Eastern Turkestan.
- (2) *ibid.* page 9
- (3) *ibid.* page 26

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; April 29th, 2012 at 08:07 PM.



May 1st, 2012, 03:48 AM

#59

[Jeff Sun](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008

Posts: 1



Pierre-

While I enjoyed Hans Bidder's work, we must consider the following:

1. He really was a connoisseur of rugs from Xinjiang and not those woven in Eastern China.
2. He was a relatively early writer (1964) and so perhaps his resources were not the best, living in China at an even earlier time when travel was hard and literature scattered. The first 76 years of the 20th century were hell on China.
3. We run a-foul of the question "What is a Chinese Rug?" Is it only one woven by Han Chinese hands? What about Ningxia and Inner Mongolian rugs, which are rife with Chinese symbols and character, but woven by ethnic Hui or Mongols? And so on...

Consider that later researchers and authors disagree with Bidder.

1. Near Bidder contemporary **H.A. Lorentz**, discusses Ming rugs on pages 78-81 of his book *A View of Chinese Rugs* from 1972. Noting that they are Rare with a capital R. (One would expect otherwise?) He shows several examples of likely Ming rugs on pages 107 and 108.
2. **Murray Eiland** maintains in *Chinese and Exotic Rugs* from 1979, pg 13, that the Yuan dynasty established rug factories in the north of Beijing, but declines that the Ming maintained the business.
3. **Rostov and Jia Guanyan** in *Chinese Carpets*, pgs 62-63, from 1983 maintain again that rugs were made in government workshops during the Yuan in Beijing, and during the Ming, in Ningxia.
4. **Lu Hong Qi**- Sporting quite the patriotic name (Red Flag Lu) and poorly translated English text, maintains on page 16 of *Antique Rugs of China*, 2004, that rug working workshops were established in Beijing in 1298, quoting the Chinese text, *Da Yuan Zhan Gong Wu Ji*. On page 18, he maintains that the Yuan workshops were taken over by the Ming. If the workshops were established in 1298, that's a solid 70 years of carpet making before the fall of the Yuan in 1368. Potentially, that's a lot of rugs!

As an aside...I find it hard to believe that ALL of these texts are so OLD. Why are there no more recent books on my shelves? 🤔

Therefore, Bidder aside, three of four sources agree that there were rugs made during the Yuan Dynasty and three of four sources agree that rugs were made during the Ming.

So based on these, we could say there is sufficient scholarship to show continuous rug making in the broader sense of *China*, (Ningxia, Beijing, Baotao) since the Yuan, and examples with *Ming character* if not outright attribution, survive until today.

As to Bidder's theory that Chinese Furniture led to the non-adoption of the rug, I can not believe it entirely, although surely it might not help their popularity. **Why? Because rugs in China are often used outside the household.**

1. Equestrian rugs are common. Saddle rugs from Ningxia, Baotao and Beijing are often seen
2. Rugs are often used for pillows and cushions. I have seen them as cushions for seats for example. I remember seeing one in a very wierd shape(no corners) and asking the dealer what it was for. His reply: It was for a rickshaw bench.
3. Sometimes rugs are meant for the wall (what better place?) and Baotao landscapes are

often put to this use.
4. They are sometimes used in temples, of course.

I open it up for further debate. This is both fun and informative.

Last edited by Jeff Sun; May 1st, 2012 at 04:17 PM.



May 1st, 2012, 09:46 PM

#60

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 48



Hi Jeff,

Fair points about Bidder. He himself complained about the lack of local rug informants.

Given the Turco-Mongol origin of the Yuan elite, and in particular the important presence of Uyghurs in the bureaucracy of the first Yuan rulers it is indeed quite likely that there has been at least an attempt at starting a local production of rugs, using for example weavers captured by the Mongol in Kharezm or Persia, of which there was surely no shortage.

However, you are right, the first question to answer is «what is a Chinese Rug?» I suppose that Bidder limited «citizenship» to the Han Empire, even when a foreign dynasty ruled it. If we deliver the Chinese citizenship to rugs woven in peripheral areas, in the past mostly inhabited by non-Han, (Mongols, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Hui, Tangut, etc...), which all greatly enjoyed Chinese garrisons and governors in the early 1400s, then indeed the probability of Chinese Imperial workshops grows a lot.

If we accept Bidder's quite reasonable hypothesis that emperors with a marked interest for foreign countries were the most likely to create imperial rug-workshops or to keep them in business, then, from the fourteenth century onward, in addition to the Qing Emperor Gaozong, only another one seems to have the right profile: The third Ming Emperor, Yongle, alias Zhu Di, (1360-1424) who among other things commissioned admiral Zheng He's famous treasury fleets, strongly favored export activities, as well as navy-backed (1) «diplomacy» in British style. The Ming successors of Yongle quickly returned to the traditional Chinese policy of splendid isolation and nomad-bashing, at least until European countries (Portugal first, then Netherlands and Spain) obtained, during the last third of the sixteenth century the right to do some business with China.

The candidacy of Yongle as possible creator of an imperial rug workshop in Beijing (or at least in Han China) is not discussed by Bidder, who thus, probably, dismissed it as unlikely, but the bloke still makes a reasonable candidate too as «First Ruggie».

There aren't many extant rugs older than the seventeenth century which could be safely labelled «made in Han-China» and I am not aware whether for these few rugs, one has already been able to prove the claimed age, or to dismiss the option of Uighur-, Mongol- or Tibetan made-on-order production.

IMHO, the following pieces are among the oldest rugs with a possible made-in (Han-) China tag.

FIG 1. Beijing ?, fragment of palace carpet. XV ? «Glanz der Himmelssöhne». M.O.K. Köln.



The motif calls to mind Mongol appliqué felt, don't you agree?

Fig 2. Beijing?, palace carpet. XVI? 625X297. «Glanz der Himmelssöhne». M.O.K. Köln.



Certainly the motif is as Chinese as can be and there is hardly any doubt that it was made for the imperial Palace. But where was it woven?

Your points 1,3, 4 are well taken. I do agree. On point 2, I'll have to take your word. 🍻🍻🍻

Besides, cushions were just about as important for nomads than felt- or pile rugs and even in the highly unlikely hypothesis that an arthritic Chinese would not have invented them long before, the nomad conquerors would have imported this great idea.

Your complains, Jeff, are quite justified: there is no oversupply of recent books about Chinese rugs. The only one I know is «Glanz der Himmelsöhne. Kaiserliche Teppiche aus China 1400-1750» edited by the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Köln. Superbly illustrated, and interesting text, but it does not bring any conclusive information about our specific «where and when» question. According to the authors, Emperor Yongle had the famous stone ramps of the Beijing Palace copied from rugs. Possible.

(1) So called «Junk diplomacy» of which we have better, closer and shipless examples 🙄.

Best regards
Pierre

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; May 1st, 2012 at 11:32 PM.



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