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Mini-Salon 32: Pinner and Franses Revisited: Animal Tree Ensi Research in the Age of the Internet By Chuck Wagner

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September 17th, 2017,
07:10 PM

#1

[Chuck Wagner](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 85

[An Ersari \(?\) Ensi with some interesting motifs](#)

Greetings all

Several years ago (2006) Louis Dubreuil put together an interesting discussion thread on what he thought might be an Uzbek ensi salon, and followed up a couple years later with a Salon discussing the use of the *kush* motif on ensis.

Links:

http://www.turkotek.com/misc_00039/uzbek_ensi.htm

http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00130/salon.html

Within the Salon he went into great detail, which I won't try to repeat here - but - I will note that specifics on the type of kush motif on my ensi (below)were sparse. In his earlier discussion, he had identified a couple other pieces that fall into the same general class as this ensi, based on the kush elements and the guard borders:

This example is from Louis' thread is from ORR vol 10, # 6, aug/sept 1990, and is the closest to mine:



I find the nature of the motifs on my piece, and their rendering, to be out of step with my perceptions of size vs. age for ensis. This piece is large for a Turkmen ensi at 81.5 in (207 cm) X 70 in.(178 cm). Yomut pieces are often this large, Tekke generally smaller. Most of the older ensis that I am familiar with (including the animal-tree ensi in the main article) are significantly smaller.

Here are a few images and related comments:

Note that in the center field panels, each panel holds a single kush element, with lots of open space, a characteristic I associate with earlier rather than later pieces. Also note that the kush motif has the birds head style rather than the generally later candelabra style:



Also note that the center panel border and guard border motifs are also typically associated with earlier rather than later pieces. The lateral center panel motifs are outlined with light red:



But the Ersari "star" major border is - in my mind - a later feature:



The colors look good to me, although one could make an argument that the yellow may be a synthetic. The relatively brighter red in the diagonal corners around the stars on the major borders doesn't scare me, but could also be synthetic. Dick Parsons, in a note, commented that it was common for the Turkmen of means to use a light madder red on white or ivory wool, which made a bright but still entirely vegetal red.



Here is a closeup of the back:



Questions I would like to pose are:

Does anyone have more knowledge than I (not a difficult hurdle) regarding the blocky red and white reciprocal "s" border ?

Does anyone have any guesstimates they would care to offer as to which quarter of which century they feel this pieces belongs to ?

Regards
Chuck

Last edited by Chuck Wagner; November 6th, 2017 at 12:32 AM.



September 17th, 2017,
09:30 PM

#2

[Chuck Wagner](#)
Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 85



Hi

Reviewing both my own copy of ORR, and the Christie's website, I am unable to find any more information on the ensi from Louis' thread, from the September 11 1990 sale of pieces from the Meyer-Muller collection.

Regards
Chuck



October 10th, 2017, 02:46
PM

#3


[kabinsons1](#)
Registered

Join Date: Oct 2017
Posts: 3



Hi,

The design of rugs what is mentioned in the thread is very sensitive and beautiful. The picture of the rugs are very pretty and the quality

are so e  ffected.

Thanks



October 11th, 2017, 03:23
PM

#4

[kabinsons1](#)
Registered

Join Date: Oct 2017
Posts: 3



Quote:

An Ersari (?) Ensi with some interesting motifs
Greetings all

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Does anyone have more knowledge than I (not a difficult hurdle) regarding the blocky red and white reciprocal "s" border ?

Does anyone have any guesstimates they would care to offer as to which quarter of which century they feel this pieces belongs to ?

Regards
Chuck

It seems outstanding to me.



October 12th, 2017, 12:16 PM

#5

[kabinsons1](#)

Registered

Join Date: Oct 2017
Posts: 3

Quote:

I find the nature of the motifs on my piece, and their rendering, to be out of step with my perceptions of size vs. age for ensis. This piece is large for a Turkmen ensi at 81.5 in (207 cm) X 70 in.(178 cm). Yomut pieces are often this large, Tekke generally smaller. Most of the older ensis that I am familiar with (including the animal-tree ensi in the main article) are significantly smaller.

This one is perfect in size but I am not familiar with the large one.



October 12th, 2017, 01:19 PM

#6

[Steve Price](#)

Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 74

Hi Kabinsons1

I guess you didn't receive the email message I sent you yesterday. It was letting you know that we don't permit the use of pseudonyms on our forums, and asked that you send me (sprice@vcu.edu) your full name so I can make that your user name.

Please do that before posting again.

Thanks.

Steve Price



November 5th, 2017, 08:28 PM

#7

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 49

Hi Chuck

I suppose you know that Ensis already turn up in western commercials in late 19th, so it is rather fair to think they have been produced to the western marked from there on. In guessing age of the rugs I am sure your own guess would be at least as good as mine. And age of course isn't everything, your Ensi looks totally lovely both in quality of wool, color and design.

Is it reminiscent of flatweave endings in the top right corner of your Ensi? If so that would bode for some extra age in my book.



The Hecksher Ensi looks rather related to the design of your Ensi. Personally it to me looks like one of the oldest Ersari Ensi's I have seen (and when I say "seen" it just seen on the internet). 152 x 132 cm, Info is here (as i remember it has been James Allen's so he would know more 😊) <https://www.learner.org/courses/globalart/work/254/index.html>



Here a few others which also looks related, I would say all younger than the Hecksher Ensi. Sorry dont have measurements on them, but they to me looks around same size as the Hecksher:





And this one a bit different but according to Jürgh Rageth an Ersari with serious age 18th early 19th (must admit It doesn't really looks like that to me, but I sure respect Rageth's authority in this). Its no. 35 from "Turkmen Carpets, A New Perspective" Size 179 × 129 cm.



Rageth also has a rather astonishing new interpretation of the Kush motif, if one goes along with it then it's goodbye to "birds" - and hallo to "raised arms" 😊 He sees the Kush motif as having an origin in Mesopotamian throne motifs, and makes a rather good argument around it (not quite sure if I buy into it yet, but must admit it slowly grows on me)

Best
Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; November 6th, 2017 at 12:39 PM.



November 5th, 2017,
09:10 PM

[Martin Andersen](#)
Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 49

#8

Might be a side topic, but another interesting feature in your Ensi is that it has the Peikam border as minor border. I would say it is no coincidence, in a strange way it belongs there. To me this group of Ensis represent parts of a very interesting design development puzzle (which probably predates all the Ensi here with a minimum of couple of centuries). Here your borders on the left - and on the right 😊



Best
Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; November 5th, 2017 at 09:30 PM.



November 5th, 2017,
09:25 PM

#9

[Martin Andersen](#)
Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 49



Regarding the red and white reciprocal "s" borders I would say they are stylized curled leaf borders, perhaps one could see a parallel stylization on this Salor in the relation between horizontal and vertical versions of curled leaf and s-borders



November 5th, 2017,
11:55 PM

[Rich Larkin](#)
Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 107



#10



Hi Chuck,

Tough act to follow there with Martin's posts. I won't try to embellish any of that commentary. Anyway, if

- the last image posted is 18th Century, and
- the kush motif is raised arms, not birds,

I got off the bus at the wrong stop. 🙄

I will say something about your ensi. Based on the size, the mustard-y yellow, and subtle other factors relating finish, I would be inclined to place it later rather than earlier. Not necessarily very late, though. I agree with Martin the plainweave flat end finish (if it had that) argues for greater age. After 1900, I would think. Though I agree open space around designs generally supports greater age, I am not so sure the generous space around the kush motifs exemplifies the principle. I am more inclined to see the space as a function of the relatively great width and the weaver's decision to stick with a single kush device in each panel.

Regarding that yellow, I think it appears in a wide range of woven products from the greater Afghanistan area at some historical point. I won't attempt to identify the time it happened. I don't necessarily consider it synthetic, either. My understanding is there are many ways and natural sources for yellow. I think it is very possible the mustard shade of the color became widely available from some popular dyeing center in the region somewhere along the line, resulting in its appearance in many rugs. That rationale doesn't necessitate a conclusion of synthetic process in my opinion.

Rich



November
6th, 2017,
01:10 AM

#11

[Martin
Andersen](#)
Members



Hi Rich

Join Date: Jul
2008
Posts: 49

Sorry I know it was a bit unfair just dropping the single point of Rageth's regarding the Kush motif, see it as a recommendation for a read of his book. I would have been thrown of the bus too if I hadn't read it.
Rageth's argument is very fascinating - and I suppose it's okay to say totally speculative, but very rational. And it is the first time I see a coherent attempt of interpreting the sum of all the design elements of the Ensi in relation to its possible representational function. I am a fan even though I don't agree with all of his writing (yet 😊). Here some of his illustrations to the argument:



Fig. 16: The Arjan bowl, found in a tomb of an Elamite ruler, Arjan, southern Iran, 7th or 6th century B.C. (for a complete image, see fig. 101). This is the earliest known evidence showing not just a yurt, but a yurt in connection with a banquet. The baldachin over the entrance to the yurt (behind the enthroned ruler) might be the earliest known precursor of the baldachin over the entrance of the yurt of the Sariq Khan in fig. 1, perhaps even showing the earliest form of the use of an ensi. Repr. from Majizadeh 1992: Fig. 1.

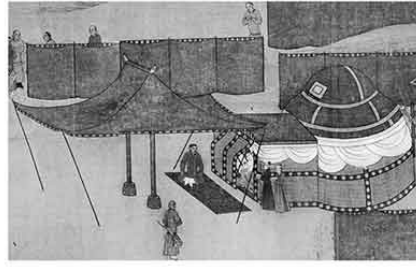


Fig. 17: Khitan trellis tent (yurt) with a trellis porch and ridged reception tent. Detail from episode 10 of the story of Lady Wen. 14th century copy after a 12th century original. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of the Dillon Fund, 1973.120.3. Repr. from Rorex/Fong 1974: No. 10.



Fig. 18: Trellis tent in a royal garden. Next to the trellis tent, a baldachin is just being set up. In the lower left corner, a man is seen hammering a plug for a guy rope. Detail from an Ilkhanid miniature painting, Baghdad, ca. 1400. Repr. from Denny 1979: 46.



Fig. 54: Reveal of a doorway to the 100 Columns Palace of Persepolis, 9 m high. Late 5th century B.C. The King enthroned on a giant stool, carried by 14 throne bearers. Repr. from Flandin-Coste 1848.



Fig. 55: Achaemenid rock tomb, Naksh-e Rostam. The upper part of the tomb shows a ceremony with the King, worshipping fire, above him the Faravahar, the symbol of "royal fortune". The middle part, representing the facade of an Achaemenid palace, bears the entrance to the burial chambers. Repr. from Flandin-Coste 1848.

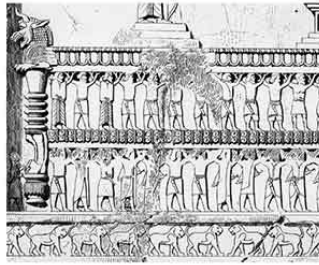


Fig. 56: Throne platform with animal protomes, 28 throne bearers (the feet of the platform clearly hover above the ground), and double volutes (sainak motifs) on the bridge. The King is standing on the platform, his right hand upraised in prayer. Below the throne platform is a frieze with striding lions. Repr. from Flandin-Coste 1848.

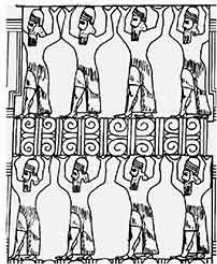


Fig. 57: The "Takht-e Marmar" in the great Iwan of the Golestan Palace in Teheran. The throne from the Qajar period (18th century) is supported by human figures, demons, and animals (below the throne, not visible on the image). Photo Jörg Affentranger, 2013.



Fig. 58: Detail from Salor ensi, cat. no. 1. Gush motifs (throne bearers) in several registers. Below is a frieze with striding deer, having their antlers in a vertical position (on the deer motif in Salor ensi, see figs. 16–19 in the chapter "The Salor").

The quadruple spiral: From Assyrian and Achaemenid thrones to the Turkmen sainak motif



Figs. 79 and 80: Throne of Sennacherib, detail from a scene of the capture of Lachish. The throne, standing on four pine cones, is supported by throne bearers and decorated with quadruple spirals on the bridge between the legs. Neo-Assyrian, beginning of the 7th century B.C.



Figs. 81 and 82: Aramaic relief, 8th century B.C., Bar-Rakib, king of Sam'al (today Zencirli, Southeast Anatolia). The throne corresponds in detail to the Assyrian archetype. (cf. fig. 76). Image by the author, 2012.



Figs. 83 and 84: Achaemenid stool-throne (diphros) with quadruple spirals on the bridge between the legs. Persepolis, eastern stairway of the Apadana, 5th century B.C. Repr. from Koch 1992: Fig 83 shows a detail of the bridge with the quadruple spirals.



Fig. 85: Throne platform with animal protomes, throne bearers (the feet of the platform clearly are off the ground), and quadruple spirals (sainak motifs) on the bridge between the legs. The King is standing on the platform, his right hand upraised in prayer. Below the throne platform is a frieze with lions. Repr. from Flandin-Coste 1848.



Fig. 86: Bridge of the throne platform with quadruple spirals, above and below are throne bearers. Achaemenid, Naqsh-e Rostam, Tomb of Xerxes I, early 5th century B.C. Repr. from Koch 1992: Taf. 35.



Fig. 87: Audience and Banquet Hall of the Toprak-Kala castle, Khorasm, 2nd/3rd century A.D. Kushan period. The walls are decorated with large double volutes (half quadruple spirals) and rulers standing within niches. Below and all around are built-in seating benches. Repr. from Stawiski 1979: 193.



Figs. 88–90: Sainak motifs (quadruple spirals) in ensi of the Salor (top, from cat. no. 2), the Sariq (middle, from cat. no. 37), and the Teke (bottom, from cat. no. 50).

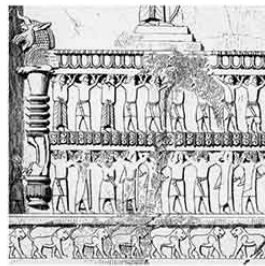


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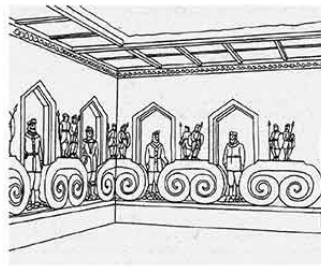
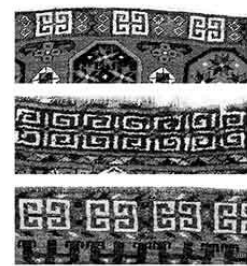


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Best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; November 6th, 2017 at 01:22 AM.



November 6th, 2017, 11:45 AM

#12

Martin Andersen
Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 49



This Kirghiz ceremonial yurt and its "canopy" could/should perhaps have been a part of Rageth's argument 😊 It does somehow sustains that the idea of a "baldachin-yurtdoor-rug" may have been a part of ceremonial decorations surrounding the yurt entrance in the time of the rug weaving people of our interesse. Shortly put it is the the relation between representational tent, baldachin and throne (sitting-position) which Rageth sees as having been stylized into the format of the Ensi.

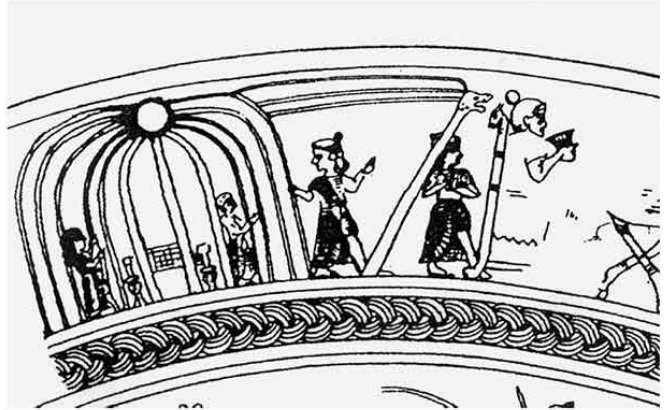


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best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; November 6th, 2017 at 01:08 PM.



November 6th, 2017, 03:21 PM

#13

Rich Larkin
Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 107



Hi Martin,

Thanks for posting those illustrations. I understand why you find Rageth's ideas about the ensi compelling. A bit far-fetched, it seems, yet ingenious as well. And, as you say, it takes all of the elements of that rather odd layout into account.

The one that got me was Fig. 56, all those chaps with arms in the air. They must have been *extremely* tired by the end of that ceremony.



On the larger issue, we will have to wait for an especially early ensi to surface with more anthropomorphic candelabra.

Rich




November 6th, 2017, 03:27 PM

#14

Martin Andersen
Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 49



I agree, a head (or even a dot) in-between the arms of the Kush motif would do wonders  😊

best Martin

(and this one unfortunately won't quite do it, it would have to be earlier and less funny 😊)



Last edited by Martin Andersen; November 6th, 2017 at 03:36 PM.



November 6th, 2017,
05:08 PM

[Chuck Wagner](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 85



#15



Hi Martin, Rich,

I will catch up with comments this evening. But for now, here's a better image of the motif on my ensi:



Regards
Chuck



November 6th, 2017,
10:48 PM

[Rich Larkin](#)

Members

Join Date: Jun 2008
Location: Massachusetts
Posts: 107



#16



Hi Chuck,

Thanks for that view. It has a nice look about it, head-on. I can almost hear those bird-heads squawking.

Of course, it is always possible that the weavers themselves lost track of the origins of their own motifs somewhere along the line, then backtracked to a bogus interpretation, just the way we do it. That business of 28 peons holding the platform in the air would be a difficult notion for successive generations of rustic weavers to hang onto. Then, if you estimate the weight of some of that stuff on the platform and do the math...well, it scares the heck out of me even to think about it. 🤖

Rich



November 7th, 2017,
07:44 AM

[Chuck Wagner](#)

Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 85



#17



Hi Rich,

Here's an example of the variability of the kush motif on a single piece; with several individual "heads" having closed loops similar to those on mine - the weaver just didn't leave space between the head and the feather.

I agree that weavers lose track over time, but also, over the time required to construct a single piece...🤖🤖🤖



Regards
Chuck



November 8th, 2017,
08:39 AM

#18

[Martin Andersen](#)
Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 49



Hi Chuck and Rich

I totally agree in seeing animals/birds in these beautiful Kush motifs.

But to be fair to Rageth's argument it is the Salor Kush motif which is his offset. In the totality of his large scale "New perspective" argument he sees the Salor as the most important weaving group having an identity as the "Royal" tribe, an identity passed on directly from the Sogdians. I know, highly speculative but sustained also by some interesting linguistic points. And the representation of probably highly stylized human figures may easily have been transformed to birds perhaps under influence by Islam. Interpreting the Kush motif as birds I suppose solely hangs on their heads (and two of them - with no wings). And a few knots shifting place here and there in similar Turkmen animal heads can make our different current interpretations shift from flowers to goats to dogs to birds and even to candelabras 😊

Well, Rageth's argument of course has the weakness of hanging on almost a millennium of lost rugs, but I still find it very interesting because it ambitiously aims towards a coherent and rational interpretation of historical context, rug, tent and representation instead of solely focusing on an isolated rug-motif. On the other hand of course our pleasure and appreciation of the rugs is based on all the minuscule variations in the details of both texture, patterns and motifs.

best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; November 8th, 2017 at 09:21 AM.



November 19th, 2017,
08:10 PM

#19

[Chuck Wagner](#)
Members

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 85



Martin,

Rageth's opinion is at least based on some research and interpretation of evidence. I am still wading through his tome and haven't drawn any conclusions on his assertions. I will say that the rendering by the weavers - of some of the animal heads - are sufficiently detailed to

cause me to disregard the raised arm thesis for those pieces.

But IMHO the kush motif, should really be referred to as the kush class of motifs, and I think that the differences in the renderings may have meant a lot more to the weavers than they do to us.

I hope I can find some more documentary information on the peikam border; that is something that I'd like to discuss further - but I have little understanding so far.

Regards
Chuck



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Mini-Salon 32: Pinner and Franses Revisited: Animal Tree Ensi Research in the Age of the Internet

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