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[Traces of Buddhist influence in Persian, Central Asian and Anatolian rugs.](#)

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March 14th, 2021, 06:23 PM

#1

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 121

[Traces of Buddhist influence in Persian, Central Asian and Anatolian rugs.](#)

Hi Pierre, Filiberto and All

"When Ghazan (1271-1304) learned that some Buddhist monks feigned conversion to Islam due to their temples being earlier destroyed, he granted permission to all who wished to return to Tibet, Kashmir or India where they could freely follow their faith and be among other Buddhists"

(quote Wikipedia, I am not a deep reader)

...No wonder interesting old rugs have been found in Tibet 🌐

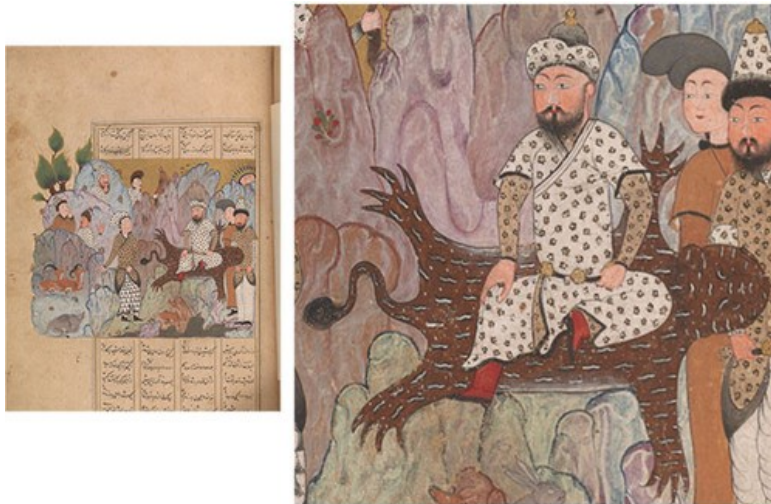
Perhaps it could be interesting with a fresh dive into speculative and possible connections in traces of Buddhist influence in Persian, Central Asian and Anatolian rugs? And of course visa versa.

I am kind of circling repetitive around a few topics, but perhaps something new could pop up via a Buddhist angle. I am totally aware it might be problematic and contested, but who knows it could be fun. We certainly have touched upon the topic of Buddhist material before, but perhaps we could zoom in on it a bit more. I suppose there are plenty of written historical sources on the topic, but probably rather sparse extant survived material in the rugs.

The iconic Tibetan Tiger rugs could be a place to start:



Here a Safavid miniature "Kayumars Enthroned"
Iran, Shiraz, Safavid period, 1518:

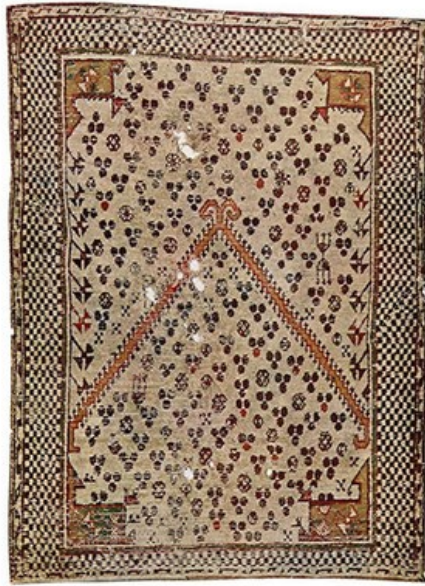


The Safavid miniature painter envisioning the mythological First King as archaic seated and enthroned on a tiger skin.

As there to my knowledge ain't any ancient extant Tibetan Tiger skin rugs it is of course hard to determine any direction in this relation, but personally I find it plausible that there is a connection.

This takes us swiftly to the Cintamani motifs in the in Anatolia.

Selendi White Ground Cintamani rug 16th.c, and Central Asian miniature 14th-15th.c:



Personally I am convinced that Gerad Paquin in his article in Hali issue 64,1992 got it right, connecting the Cintamani motif to the east in a complex of multilayered sources. In short form he convincingly suggest the Cintamani is a merger of tiger and snow leopard skins transferred as stylized patterns to the textiles. I am aware others think "Cintamani" is a misnomer and the pattern simply being a Trefoil pattern already existing in ancient Greece. But this Trefoil theory certainly doesn't have an explanation for the equally important part of the Cintamani motif - the accompanying "waves". Personally I am all for diffusion, merging and transformation of patterns, so I don't find any of this mutually exclusive. Snow leopard/Tiger skin/Dragon and Pearl could easily have landed up in Anatolia merging with an ancient Greek simple possible textile pattern - ending up on the Ottoman Sultans silk kaftans:



The Cintamani motif takes me to this beautiful Ushak/Aksaray(?) medallion rug:



And here comes the slightly crackpot speculative part (absolutely no offense to any whom may see the same as me):



I simply can't help seeing a Vajra/Dorje motif in the center medallion. I am totally fully aware that it is *very* unlikely that there were *any* practicing Buddhist weavers in 16-17th c. Anatolia, and of course even more unlikely that a patron Buddhist should have commissioned the rug, and afterwards haven forgotten to collect it 😊 . So I am just wondering if the Cintamani motif somehow could have dragged other stylistic motifs with it along its journey westward? Well of course highly speculative, and it is probably just a coincidence of resemblance, but still....?

The Ottoman Cintamani motif kind of pops up as a full-blown and well defined entity. There must have been some now lost pre-dating sources available for the Ottomans to develop the strikingly clear pattern. The puzzle is missing some bricks, and some of these bricks for sure could have contained the Cintamani in combination with the Vajra.

Here a Chinese/Japanese 11th.c. silk from Gerad Paquin's article. Cintamani with Vajra/Dorje small fillings. Not hard to imagine silk like this landing in Anatolia. And not hard to imagine the silk's patterns inverted with the Cintamani as fillings around a large Vajra:



The Vajra/Dorje motif could be interesting to follow around. Here a sample with a very interesting leather case for it:



The motif on the leather case of course is a simplified and stylized drawing of the Vajra it contains. But for me it certainly also looks like a version of the Tug/Tamga motif we have been hunting in other threads.

This could take us back to slightly safer rug-ground, this rug (can't believe I am calling this rug "safer ground") with the Kufic Tug/Al-mulk border and the field pattern which all in all has an aesthetically Tibetan tone to me. I don't know if its structural properties fit with Tibetan weave (as far as I remember it doesn't). The rug is published in "Orient Stars I" by Heinrich Kirchheim /Michael Franses, plate: 185. Potala Palace, Tibet. Does anyone have the book? Would very much like to know how the authors describe the rug, if they think it is woven in Tibet or if it was just found and appreciated there?

It could perhaps have landed in Tibet on account of Ghazan's "free" travel decree, if it is as old as it looks.

We have of course been around this rug multiple times before, but it seems very relevant here:



I suppose it is kind of a mystery rug with no directly comparable counterparts. And it could perhaps have been woven in a multitude of Buddhist environments, well it certainly looks very Buddhist to me, the endless knots floating in empty red space.

Sorry for the long post, but it is a tricky subject so I felt I had to try to explain myself. And sorry for starting with leaving India out of this, India is for some strange reason not really the first thing on my horizon. I suppose it is because my starting point is the Turkmen rugs, and Buddhist influence there conventionally seems a no go.

Best
Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; April 17th, 2021 at 11:31 AM. Reason: lots of unintended "?" and probably a lot of broken english remaining



March 15th, 2021, 07:39 AM

#2

[Martin Andersen](#)
Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 121



Hi All

Just a small addition regarding the center medallion:

When looking at the rugs today it perhaps feels innate that rugs have center medallions. But important to remember that neither the Seljuk nor the Timurid carpets utilized center medallions. To my recollection the classical explanation on how the Safavid center medallions comes into play connects them to leather fronts on book binding ornamentation, which predates the Safavid rugs with half a century. Personally I don't feel that explanation to be totally covering, I would think the voluminous domed and ornamented architectural features in mosques and palaces must have played an equally important role.

And apart from this perhaps again a basic influence from the east, the simple starting point of having a marked center in a carpet, generating a multitude of floral ornamentations around it in Persia and Anatolia?

I wonder if this Chinese painting, taken from Pierre's Old Masters Salon http://www.turkotek.com/old_masters/salon_7.html, depicts the oldest known rug with a center medallion?

"Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute. 12th -13th CE Nat. Palace Taipei Taiwan":



(and right now I of course can't see anything but a stylized Vajra in this medallion 😊)

Best
Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; March 15th, 2021 at 11:34 AM.



March 15th, 2021, 09:47
AM

#3

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 132



Hi Martin,

Just a quick answer about the Orient Star rug.

Franses / Kirchheim comment in German edition: '.. Der fruehe Konya-Teppich mit Kassettenmuster **aus dem** Potala Palast.

Wahrscheinlich Anatolien 12-14 Jahrhundert...'

The author confirms that the fragment was once used in this Tibetan monastery/palace and suggests weaving in Anatolia.

Your new thread is highly interesting.
I will need serious help from Saint Wikipedia during the next days.

Best
Pierre



March 15th, 2021, 10:34
AM

#4

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 121



Thanks Pierre

Isn't it highly doubtful they would have attributed it to Anatolia if it hadn't been for the border's resemblance to the Seljuk rugs? The color scheme and field pattern being totally foreign to the Seljuk rugs. Well hopefully they also had structural reasons for it.

Best

Martin



March 15th, 2021, 02:23 PM

#5

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 121



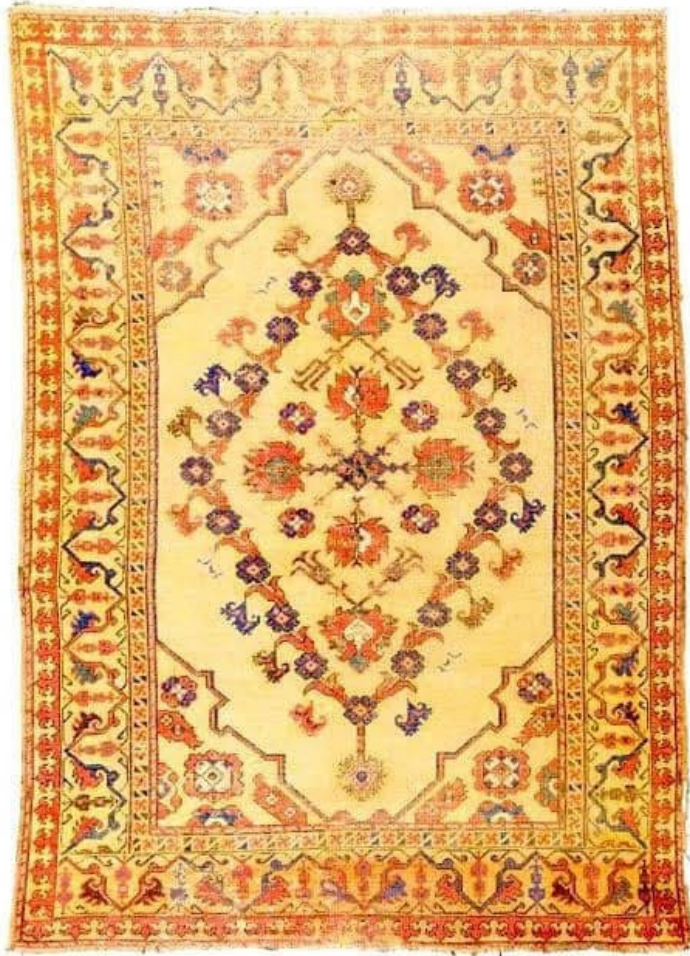
Funny...I was just contemplating on if it would be okay to take the Ushak/Aksaray medallion to photoshop, as an illustration inverting the red/green in the "leaves" of the Medallion, to suggest they could look like the flames of the Vajra (and of course it is not okay using photoshop to make points like that):



Here Burning Vajra (- and note it is also The Flaming Pearls/Cintamani) :



And then this one pops up, red and flaming hot 😊:



Best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; March 15th, 2021 at 09:49 PM.



March 15th, 2021, 09:46 PM

#6

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 121



Pierre - If the Potala Palast Orient Star rug is woven in 13th.c then it could actually have been a product of a Buddhist environment within the Ilkhanate before they were expelled by Ghazan, and that could theoretically include parts of Anatolia? - bordering the Anatolian Seljuks?

Well of course the weavers of the two very different types of the Kufic/AI-mulk border doesn't have to have been neighbors, but interesting thought that they perhaps *could* have been.

And it could sure be interesting with a fixed and specific timeline regarding the development of the Anatolian center medallion. I am not sure how much of the dating in the literature is based on stylistic evaluations, rarely any info on it.

Regarding the White Ground Selendi Cintamani rugs I have only seen two others with center medallions (they are rather rudimentary medallions, and one of them is a niche rug where the medallion probably doesn't really count, it could represent evers, lamp ect..):



Best Martin

Last edited by Martin Andersen; April 14th, 2021 at 07:38 PM.



March 16th, 2021, 10:41 AM

#7

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 132



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Martin Andersen**

Isn't it highly doubtful they would have attributed it to Anatolia if it hadn't been for the border's resemblance to the Seljuk rugs? The color scheme and field pattern being totally foreign to the Seljuk rugs. Well hopefully they also had structural reasons for it

Indeed, I agree. The same quick (and perhaps dirty) identification was made, if I remember well, for the 'pregnant animal' rugs too. Symmetric knots OK but what have the totemic animals and the cassette structure in common with Seljuk rugs?

To go a step further, it is IMHO an oversimplification to give the merit of a carpet type to the political power ruling in the supposed geographical weaving area at the supposed time of weaving. If it can be more or less justified to speak of Louis XIV- or Georgian styles, it surely can't be much more than a convenient code for occidental collectors, for the carpets woven in 13th-15th century Asia, a whirlpool of rug-weaving ethnic groups, in short-living states, whose ruling groups were nearly always a minority ethnic group. Marco Polo, while crossing the Syrian region and praising its rugs mentioned only 'Greeks' (meaning former Byzantine populations of Greek culture) and Armenians. Both urban populations. He did not visit the many semi-nomadic tribes of the region, autochthonous ones or newcomers.



March 16th, 2021, 11:16 AM

#8

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Martin Andersen** 

If the Potala Palast Orient Star rug is woven in 13th.c then it could actually have been a product of a Buddhist environment within the Ilkhanate before they were expelled by Ghazan, and that could theoretically include parts of Anatolia? - bordering the Anatolian Seljuks?

Well of course the weavers of the two very different types of the Kufic/Al-mulk border doesn't have to have been neighbors, but interesting thought that they perhaps could have been:

Oh yes.


Besides we should remember that the Turko-mongols (and perhaps most steppe cultures) were relatively tolerant in religious matters, even curious and sometimes a bit ironic when discussing faith with envoys of the great religions.

It seems to me that pogroms were an invention of settled states, whenever a religion would try to meddle in politics and try to achieve a monopolistic position by convincing the local crowned moron to eliminate their competition.

Genghis khan's Mongols and Timur's Turks, instead were pragmatists. Severed Christian-, Islamic- or Animist heads make all perfectly suitable building material for skull pyramids as long as they contained ideas of resistance.

This long digression to say that commercial contacts between the populations probably weren't much hindered by differences in religion in 13-15th century Central Asia. And that the religion of the rulers was not saying much about the religions of the people. The Il-khan being a perfect example. It took them a very long time to decide to adopt the main religion of their state. Islam.



 March 16th, 2021, 11:39 AM

#9

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 121



Hi Pierre and All

I better quickly underline a broad reservation in my intentions of this topic. What I may see and will be looking for in this are underlying possible traces of stylistic influences from Buddhist/Chinese/Tibetan origin in the Persian and Anatolian rugs.

My rationale for taking the liberty of doing it is that there are other patterns and stylistic elements which self-evidently, and of course generally accepted, shows a very direct influence from China to the Persia/Anatolian rugs, The Cloud Band being the most obvious. And personally I would actually find it very strange if other less obvious stylistic elements had *not* made the same journey.

Han dynasty Cloud Band, Yuan Dragon and Pearl, Safavid Cloud Band:



Best
Martin

(Choosing solely "Buddhist influences" in the headline of the thread was perhaps an attempt of angling the topic just a tiny bit provocative 😊)

Last edited by Martin Andersen; March 16th, 2021 at 01:36 PM.



March
22nd, 2021,
03:09 PM

#10

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members



Hi all,

Join Date: Oct
2009
Posts: 132

About the origin of the cintamani motif on rugs and textiles, one meets a number of more or less credible explanations in rug books.



FIG 1 Cintamani with detailed Kun-Ay motif. 15th century. Turkish Handwoven Carpets. Vol II. C.135. Vakiflar Hali Mus.



FIG 2 Red ground Cintamani. Anatolia. ca. 17th century. Berlin Mus.

Three of them have aroused my curiosity and motivated a bit of searching. Let's get rid of the less credible one first (and keep a bit of suspense):

According to some sources, Timur's battle flag and tamga represented three balls in triangle and

this design is sometimes called 'badge of Tamerlan' in Rugdom (1).

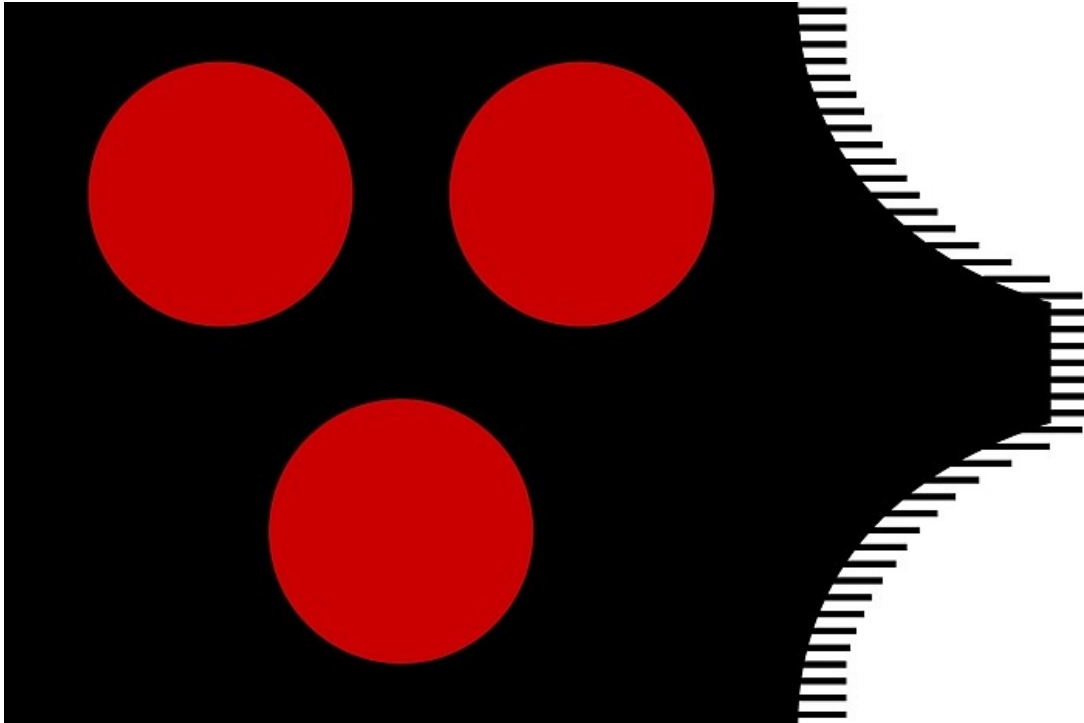


FIG 3 modern (and hypothetical) reconstitution of Timur's battle flag.(Wikipedia)

The former information is probably correct, since diplomatic correspondence of the year 1402 CE between Timur and Charles VI, King of France (2, 3) indeed mentions that one of Timur's titles proclaims that he was born under the highly auspicious conjunction of three planets.

However, that Timur's personal prestige would have incited 15th century rug- and textile weavers to utilize this symbol seems to be mere rug lore to me:

- Long before Timur's birth the symbol was already used in western- and central Asia.
- It seems highly unlikely that 15th-16th century Ottoman weavers, major users of this symbol, would have dared to weave Timur's Tamga and battle standard in their rugs: this fellow was the greatest enemy of the Ottoman Empire, had recently destroyed the Ottoman army at the battle of Ankara (1402 CE), killed one of Bayesid's sons and captured the Sultan himself, who died shortly after.

The second hypothesis about the origin of the Cintamani motif, is very credible, imho:

According to some sources, it was inspired by the pelt of a big wild cat, perhaps the snow leopard which shared the Altai- and Tian Shan ranges with Turko-mongol tribes (and their sheep). There is no doubt that the pelt of such a noble and dangerous animal made a fitting adornment for a ruler wanting to advertise his bravery and manhood.

All around Eurasia the rulers always illustrated, on all kind of artifacts, their skills at hunting ferocious beasts and were also often represented sitting on a pelt or even wearing it, Herakles style. Also shamans and some Moslem clerics leveraged its prestige. (4). Marco Polo, mentions its use by the Mongol upper crust.



FIG 4. Snow Leopard.



FIG 5. Seldjuk Beylik. 12th-13th century CE.



FIG 6. Sassanian King hunting Lions. 5th-7th century CE. British Museum.



FIG 7. Rome. Emperor Commodus as Hercules. 192 CE. Museo Capitolino.



FIG 8. Assyria. Ashurbanipal II hunting lions. 7th century BCE. British Museum.

I suppose that such a popular belief would be easily compatible and complementary with what imho seems to be the oldest and most important source of inspiration for the cintamani motif: An extremely ancient religious- and royal symbol, combining the Sun and the Moon, two important deities meddling in key issues like fertility and proper timing for planting.

Btw. I suspect that the latter deity still keeps influencing the mood of some members of my own family.

See you next posts.

Pierre

Notes.

(1) *Oriental Rugs. Illustrated Lexicon of motifs.* Peter F. Stone. pp 70

(2) A.S. de Sacy. *Memoire sur une correspondance inedite de Tamerlan avec Charles VI.* Institut de France. 1822.

(3) H. Moranville. *Memoire sur Tamerlan et sa cour par un Dominicain en 1403.* Ecole des Chartes. 1894.

(4) See 'The pelt and the origin of the prayer rug'. Martin Andersen. http://www.turkotek.com/misc_00140/pelt.html

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; March 22nd, 2021 at 03:21 PM.



April 1st,
2021, 06:49
PM

#11

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members



The Sun-Moon motif, a possible ancestor of the Cintamani?

Join Date: Oct
2009
Posts: 132

Hi all,

A very interesting paper by Emel Esin (1) describes the history of a very old religious- and later

political symbol combining a representation of the sun (a ball or a star) with a representation of the moon (a crescent or a smaller ball).

Mrs Esin convincingly argues that these pictograms appeared, at the latest, during the first millenary BCE. Since the publication of her paper in 1984, archeology has discovered many older occurrences of the motif.

According to Esin, this symbol became particularly popular in **central- and eastern Asian steppe cultures**, which passed it to many of the settled- or nomad empires which they successively created.

Fig 1 shows some of the various forms which the Sun-Moon motif took over many millenaries and in different Asian regions. It was assimilated and, so to speak, 'recycled' by many religions: Animism, Mazdeism, Islam and Buddhism among others.

FIG1



(A) 10000-8000 BCE. (B) 2100-2000 BCE. (C) ca. 400 BCE.
(D) ca. 700 CE. (E) ca. 550 CE (F) 550-700 CE
(G) ca. 1100CE (H) ca.1000 CE

With the following pictures, I would like to illustrate the amazingly large dispersion of this symbol. While it may have kept religious signification in some cases (2), it is clear that it was also often annexed by the ruling class, as a royal emblem and a sign of divine support of the regime. Which of course is nothing new, it happened with most successful religious symbols. We have seen it happen for example with the trident (3), initially an attribute of Poseidon, the Greek god of the Sea and horses, which became a royal attribute for many central Asian rulers and was also confiscated by an Hinduist god.

FIG 2.



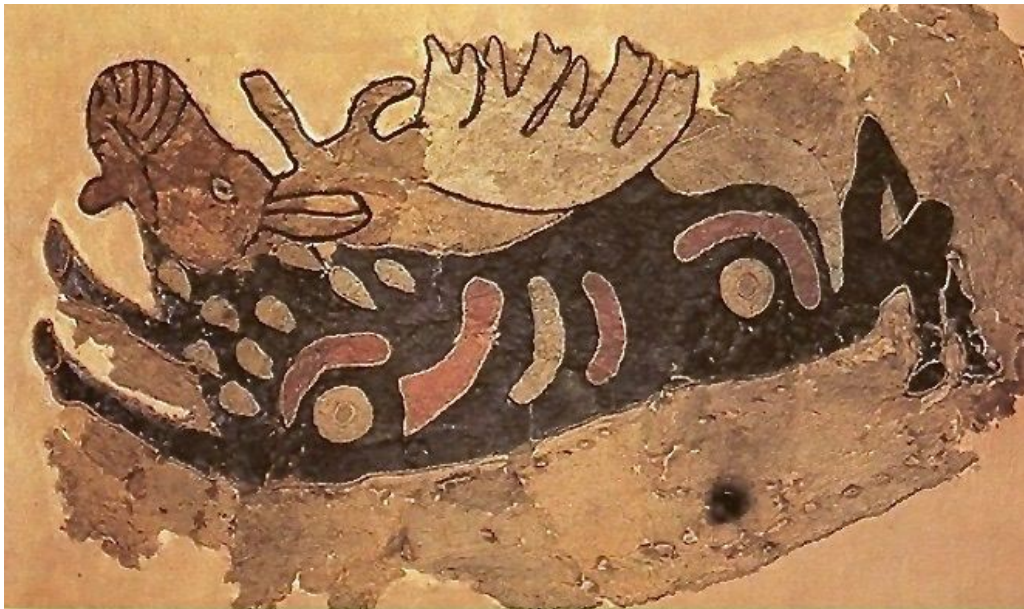
(A) Gupta. Kumaragupta 414-455 CE. (B) Qarakhanide. 1032-1212 CE. (C) Goekturk. 552-743 CE. (D) Kushano-Sassanian. Peroz II. 303-330 CE (E) Kushan. Huviska I. 152-192 CE. (F) Goekturk Qaghanate. 552-743 CE. (G) Parthian. Vardanes I. 40-45 CE. (H) Kabul Khanate. Tegin Shah. 728 CE. (I) Umayyad Caliphate. Abd al Malik ibn Marwan. 685-749 CE. .

FIG 3.



(A) Gobekli Tepe. 10000-8000 BCE. (B) Goekturk Qaghanate. Niri Qagan. 572-602 CE. (C) Khotan ruler. ca 400 CE. (D) Northern Wei. ca 500 CE. Tomb of Sogdian expatriate. (E) Goekturk coin. (F) Sumerian. Ibbi-Sin enthroned. 2100-2000 BCE. (G) Xiongnu. Noin Ula barrows. 100 BCE-100 CE.

FIG 4.



Pazyryk culture. ca. 400 BCE. Pictures courtesy of Mrs Nuray Bilgili. (2)

FIG 5.



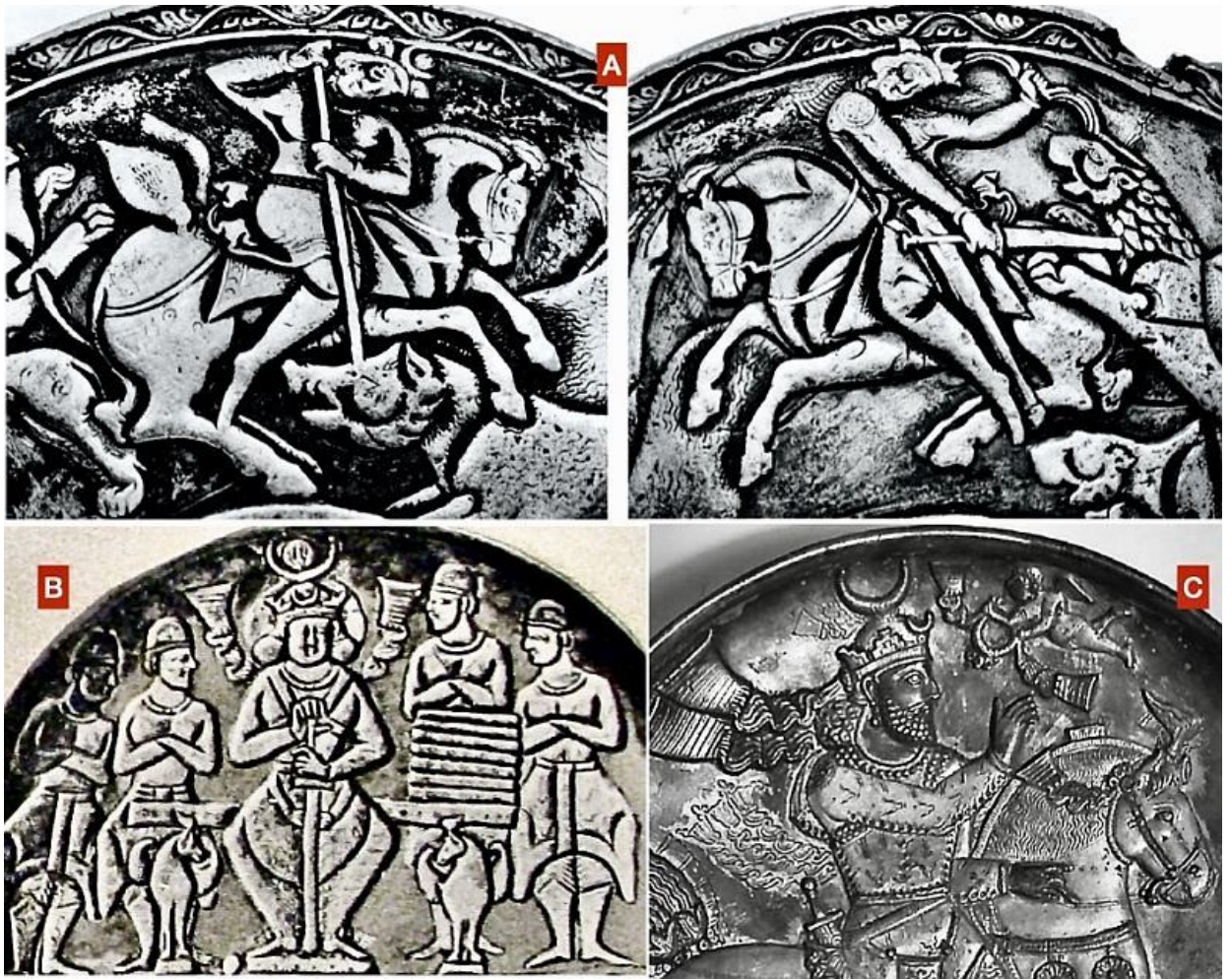
Northern Zhou. Funerary bed of a sinicized Sogdian, An-Qie. 579 CE.

FIG 6.



(A) Khotan Kingdom. Pottery. Ca 500 CE. Kashi Museum (B) Kidarite Huns. King Kidara. 350-386 CE. (C) Bamiyan Kingdom. 700-800 CE.

FIG 7.



(A) Kidarite Huns. Two princes hunting. 460-479 CE. British Museum. (B) Sassanian. Kosrow I. 531-579 CE. Hermitage. (C) Sassanian. Kosrow I. 531-579 CE.

FIG 8.



(A) Northern Zhou. Sarcophagus of sinicized Sogdian Shi-Jun. 579 CE. Shaanxi P.I.A.
(B) Seldjuk of Rum. ca 1200 CE. Brooklin Museum

FIG 9



(A) Volga-Kama silver plate. ca. 500 CE . Hermitage Museum. (B) Sogdian King. Drawing from an Afrasiyab mural. ca 600 CE. (C) Volga-Kama silver plate with Hephtalite inscription. ca. 500 CE. Hermitage Museum. (D) Hephtalite Hun ruler. 400-500 CE (E) Xiongnu. Drawings of gold buttons. 100 BCE-100 CE. Hermitage Museum. (F1 & F2) Volga-Kama silver plate. Moon-Sun deity? ca. 500 CE. Hermitage Museum.

A grouping in triangle of three solar- or lunar symbols can be seen on several of the pictures above (9E, 9F, 8B, 1G, 1H,..) All of them being much older than Timur and his hypothetical flag.

Notes.

- (1). *Dr. Emel Esin. 'Some motifs of Ottoman Turkish flags and flag pole finials'. Comite International d'Etudes Pre-Ottomanes et Ottomanes. VI Symposium. Cambridge 1st-4th July 1984.*
- (2). *Although the 'new owners' assimilated the symbol, adapting it to the need of their own pantheons.*
- (3). *TurkoteK thread 'A rare border in 14th century rugs'. <http://www.turkoteK.com/VB37/showthread.php?t=7961>*
- (4). *Nuray Bilgili, Ile mitolojik Gezinti.*

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; April 1st, 2021 at 07:04 PM.



April 2nd, 2021, 10:11 PM

#12

Martin Andersen

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 121



Hi Pierre

Thanks for the huge input 😊 And its all very relatable to what I have looked into, but it this sure is a complex and meandering subject.

I will see if I can pull together a small narrative line which by the nature of this complexity will have to be reductive. Hopefully ending up connecting directly up to also Emel Esin sun/moon motif in its very interesting specific Chinese origin - of course multiple origins in this, the sun and the moon being around all humanity at all times. But trying to track the sun/moon motif in more detail and in specific iconographic constellations in the steppe cultures and their neighbors seems like seriously huge and interesting task, heroic of Emel Esin to do it.

Well I will just try to start my line of thought, which is mainly based on visual observations.

We know Ghazan "kindly", after he had ordered the destruction of their temples, allowed the Buddhist to practice their religion abroad.

And the Ilkhanate sure seems to have had its problems with its Buddhists. Here an Ilkhanid miniature retro-dating the conflict to "Abraham destroying idols", with surprisingly beautiful and precisely drawn statues:



Al-Biruni's "Chronology of Ancient Nations" 1307, Persia.

But who where these Buddhist?

Some minor enclaves seems to have survived the Sassanian Zoroastrianism and the later Arabic Islamic purge. But I suspect Ghazan's main problem was his own heritage. The Mongol elite bringing with them a mixture of Buddhism and shamanistic Tengrism from their homelands in Mongolia and northern China. Even Ghazan himself before his conversion to Islam having received Buddhist teaching in his youth.

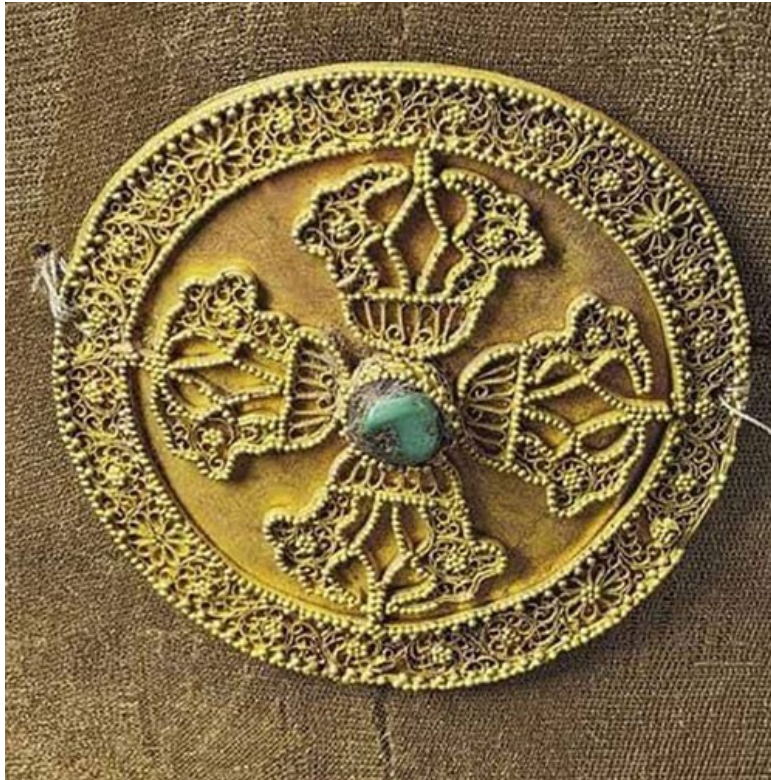
If one follow the line of the Cintamani motif back to Mongolia, then (apart from the earlier posted miniature with the threefold burning Cinatami as throne motif) the Gugu Guan headdresses of the Ilkhanate and Mongol ladies is interesting. Ghazan with his wives:



By a miracle some of these headdresses have survived, here two. The one on the right Golden Horde 13-14th.c.



Prominently placed on it a Vajra medallion, and with what to me looks like a very early Yin Yang composite stone in the center:



A side-note but the Gokturks (6-8th. c) seems to have utilized a very similar ornamentation, note the pearls in the centers:



And a chance to throw something directly rug-related into this, here a Gokturk weave also with a similar ornamentation. Nice to get some kind of notion of how early large Turkic textiles may have looked 6th.c:



The Flaming Pearl Cintamani here seen on Yuan Mongol empress Gugu Guan headdress.



The headdresses could take us back to the northern China Buddhist Liao dynasty (916-1125), and this beautiful and strong version of the Cintamani/Flaming Pearl and Dragon motif:



Also Liao dynasty here:



It is interesting to follow the Flaming Pearl/Cintamani motif around because it is a rather clear and well-defined yet complex and composite configuration which obviously is highly loaded with representative and symbolic/religious content. It is simply more easy to track and recognize than other less clear or more simple patterns and motifs. Buddhism of course have a long and extended history in both Mongolia and China. In Mongolia probably transferred via Tibet and China. And in China via direct contact to India, perhaps going back as early as 200 bc.

I have looked for really old Indian Hinduistic and Buddhist versions of the Cintamani motif. But the old Indian versions seem to be more generally just any jewel or a plain round sphere. No doubt that the Flaming Pearl version of the Cintamani were widely used by the Buddhist, but I right now tend to believe that this specific iconographic version of the Cintamani as the Flaming Pearl has its separate Chinese origin - interesting in itself both in iconography and religious content. And an origin that predates Buddhism with millenniums.

The word Cintamani itself has a Sanskrit etymology meaning 'Wish-Fulfilling Gem', but if one makes an image search on the Chinese term for it "As-one-wishes jewel" in the Chinese letters 如意珠, then one has the chance to buy a multitude of small glass pearls like this:



And that is actually *very* appropriate, and an example of the amazing continuity of Chinese culture. These small pearls represent an unbroken link back to Neolithic China. And can be seen as a condensed versions of The Dragon and Pearl motif, originating in the fascinating Jade "Bi" disk:



Liangzhu culture 3400-2250 BC

...to be continued...

Last edited by Martin Andersen; April 4th, 2021 at 08:29 AM. Reason: for a moment the preview fooled me to thinking umlaut was accepted - as luckily Chinese script is :),



April 4th, 2021, 09:41 AM

#13

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 121

The jade Bi disk:

The importance of jade in the Chinese civilization can hardly be overstated. According to contemporary Chinese historians it would actually be correct in Chinese context, as opposed to European/Mesopotamian, to think of a Jade Age in-between Neolithic and Bronze Age. The Liangzhu Culture 3400-2250bc is an important Jade Age period. May not be the oldest Jade culture, Chinese archaeology is moving rapidly, new finds all the time. Bronze enters China much later, the first important Bronze Age culture is the Shang dynasty 1600-1046bc. But China is already in the Jade Age a highly devolved civilization.

The bronze and metallurgy was probably diffused into China from north via the mobile steppe cultures. There is a *very* high degree of continuity in Chinese culture, and in this case ornamentation and iconography is rather directly being transferred from the jade to the bronze (though stylistic elements from the steppe culture seems to get mixed in via the metal works).

Jade in China covers a variety of stone types, valued for their colors, translucence, veins - and hardness. The later may sound strange, but exactly the difficulties of processing the jade is of importance. Jade can not be carved like for example flint stone can. It has to be meticulously and slowly cut, drilled and polished to take form.

The symbolic and social value of the Bi disks was probably derived from the difficulty of producing them. They were made by highly skilled specialist, and in that sense they are the direct markers of stratification in early Chinese civilization. The jade slowly concentrating an elite culture, which with all likelihood legitimized its power and privileges in religious concepts which got embedded in the jade. The outer form, the

polishing, the drilled hole in the center in the hard and difficult to work jade/nephrite stone was what generated the symbolic and hierarchical value. Some Chinese historians will even say that it is the jade that starts and generates the social hierarchical structure of China. Perhaps a leftover Marxist historical line of thinking, but I buy it 😊

I find it beautiful that one with good reasons in poetic short form could put it like this: The drilled void in the jade stone gives birth to the Chinese Civilization.



Early Liangzhu culture burial.

In this early elite burial one sees two, perhaps more, different cultic jade objects with drilled holes. The clear circular one, and the more squared rectangular form. These two forms later in the Liangzhu Culture takes on in complexity. There is no writing yet, but later Chinese texts identify the two forms as the ?Bi? and the ?Cong?. The Bi disk denoting Heaven and the Cong denoting the Earth.



To me it looks like the Bi is the primary motif, as it is also build into the Cong. And of the two the Bi disk certainly has the longest life in Chinese culture, treasured and produced continuously till present day time.

A parallel to the basic conjoined Bi and Cong may be seen in this Lingjiatan Culture

jade ca 3000bc:



The Bi disk gets to carry a large variety of celestial iconography, primarily cloud ornamentation and dragons, stylistically waving back and forth between legible imagery and ornament:



And the later jade Bi disks including all its ornaments and images very directly merges with with the bronze mirrors. As the jade disk the bronze mirrors were also important objects in elite Chinese burial practice. Here an example where the jade Bi is directly montaged into a bronze mirror:



In the bronze mirrors the images and ornaments gets more complex and detailed, the bronze material naturally allows it. And as an example of the amazing continuity of the Chinese culture one can put up a line like below.

What I believe we are seeing in this is the iconographic transformation of the void of the Bi disk - into the bulging pearl in the Dragon and Pearl motif:

(sorry this picture will need some scrolling to get the picture, I cant get to be allowed to break the limit on the 800px image size width. Pierre you do it all the time? 😊)



For sure the visual quality of the jade/nephrite stone in itself must have played an important role. As far as I go the drawing of the white veins in a jade/nephrite stone like the one below is the iconographic origin of the Chinese Cloud Band. Not hard to see why the Chinese saw Heaven in the Bi disk.



An interpretation of course.

...to be continued, sorry I have a long way to go... but Pierre and All please interrupt me.

Last edited by Martin Andersen; April 4th, 2021 at 09:47 AM.



April 13th,
2021, 02:45
PM

#14

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members



Hi all ,

Join Date: Oct
2009
Posts: 132

It seems clear now that the Sun and Moon association was already an important, most probably religious-, symbol for many Eurasian Bronze- and Iron- Age cultures. It would be logical to expect that it would have been often ' recycled ' in various later cultures and epochs, either getting different religious meanings, or becoming a royalty symbol, or a tribal totem symbol, or a luck-bearing symbol, or even losing completely any symbolic meaning in some cases, being degraded to mere decorative motif, or being morphed into more political correct motifs.

What may have happened too is that this very old, ubiquitous Moon-Sun symbol, in any of its various possible forms (disk and hole symmetrical or asymmetrical, disk and crescent, star and crescent, separated large- and small disks) got **associated** by members of the ever so creative Shaman- and Cleric Confederation, **with other esoteric symbols**, like the 'triple dot' motif, tiger- or snow leopard pelts, dragons, clouds or flames,
Thus giving birth to various models of cintamani or, in China, to different versions of Bi disks.

The simple triple dot symbol is often one of these motifs associated with the Sun and Moon symbol in cintamanis. (See for example post #10 in this thread).

FIG 1



The triple dot motif.

It is so simple that it could easily have been invented independently in various parts of the planet. In fact it can be seen on pre-Columbian Maya artifacts too.

But it could also have been a religious symbol spread by a large and very ancient culture like the Indo-Europeans.

For sure it was not only known in eastern- and central Asia but also in Europe already during the early Iron Age and most probably earlier.

Even a quick browsing through the Net shows many examples of its use during the first millenary BCE, for example by Villanovans and Etruscans in Italy, It was also used by western Scythians, by Thracians , by Greeks (Fig 2 to Fig 4).

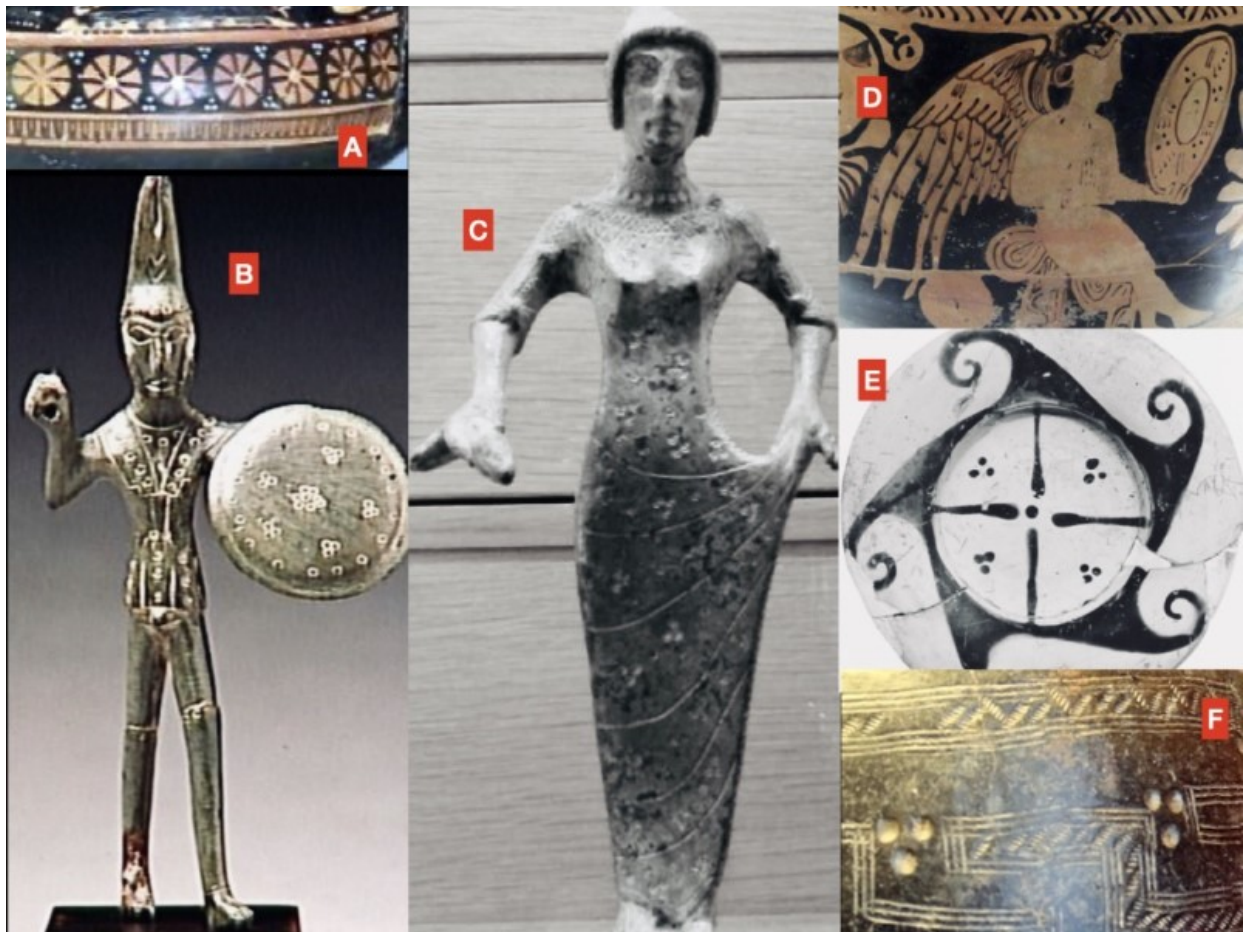
It is therefore probable that for many Eurasian Iron-or Bronze Age people the triple dot was a common symbol, perhaps linked to sky deities too. (Martin supports an interesting and credible theory about it, which he will surely explain in one of his next posts).The very long survival of such a banal, unspectacular motif is amazing, sure, but not exceptional, also the swastika and the triskelion for example made it through the millenaries, without much change, in many Indo-European cultures.

FIG 2. Greek.



A. Greek. Athenian. Geom. Style. Ca. 750. BCE. Muenchen Antikensammlung.
B. Greek. Late geom. style. Ca 700 BCE.
C. Greek. Athenian. 550-500 BCE. Museo Vaticano.
D. Greek. Beotian. ca. 400 BCE.

FIG 3. Etruscan. Campanian.



A. Magna Graecia. Bordure of a Vas.e 350-300 BCE. MFA Boston.
 B. Etruscan warrior. ca. 500 BCE. Louvres Mus.
 C. Etruscan dancer. ca. 400 BCE. Louvres Mus.
 D. Etruscan pottery. 300-250 BCE. Mus. Archeol. Firenze.
 E. Etruscan Genucilia plate. Cerveteri. 350-300 BCE. MET Mus.
 F. Proto-Etruscan. Villanova Culture. Ceramic. Ca. 800 BCE. Mus. Archeol. Maremma.

FIG 4. Thracian



A. Thracian silver. Rhyton. From Panagyuriste Treasure. 400-350 BCE. Reg. Nat. Mus. Plovdiv.
 B. Thracian silver. Maenad. From Boronovo Treasure. ca 350 BCE. Bulgaria.
 C. Thracian silver. From Boronovo Treasure. ca. 350 BCE. Ruse Mus. Bulgaria.

Regards
 Pierre

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; April 13th, 2021 at 02:51 PM.



April 14th, 2021, 07:17 PM

#15

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
 Posts: 121



Great post Pierre.

And I will have to temper my newly found Sino-centrism a bit.

With the simple motifs of dots, circles, and lines we are of course entering territory of the very basics of human visual expression. And one may easily over-interpret both content and connections. But on the other hand even very basic human visual expressions are, like verbal language, collectively developed forms of communication with intricate transformations and connections following mankind's migrations. For sure parallel but independent individual utilization of basic patterns and motifs probably have occurred, founded in materials, technique and geometric morphology or even bodily phenomenology. But at the same time language and gene-pole of course shows we are very concretely connected over vast areas. In my opinion it would be at least as wrong to ignore the connections as it would be to over-interpret them (and a bit more boring).

Blow paintings of dots and blow painted stenciled hands in conjunction with animal depictions are among humans oldest artistic expressions (recent research on the hand sizes suggest they were made by woman, so cudo to the female artists).

Dots, hands and Mammoth, the Perch Mercle Cave France, ca 25.000bc.:



It could of course just have been for the fun of it, but more likely it was a lot more than that. One could say the cave paintings represents prehistoric visual conceptualizations of the world in which the people lived. The animals, the hunting and the landscape brought into control by visual representation, with all likelihood of course accompanied by religious beliefs.

Already this early the dots can depict animal skin, here two beautiful horses:



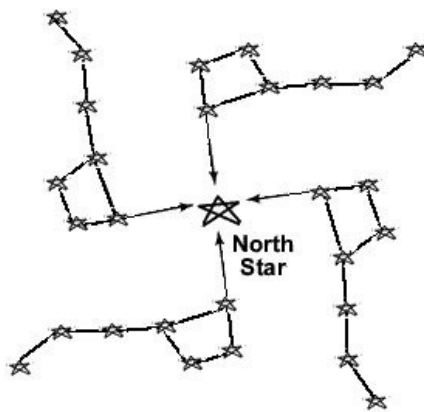
If we are already seeing celestial imagery in the late Paleolithic period I suppose is debatable. Personally I don't see why not, orienting oneself by the sky, in the daytime of course by the sun, and connecting imagery to the fixed star constellations in the night sky to me seems fundamentally human. Here the ceiling paintings of the Lascaux Cave (reconstruction in the Museum):



Moving forward in time and going to Mesopotamian territory one could perhaps a bit more firmly insist on celestial imagery being depicted. Pottery from Samarra 6200-5800bc:



It is of course an interpretation but personally I would see this as celestial imagery rotating around the polar star. We are in pre-writing era so of course no way of knowing for sure if this is just decorative motifs, but we are also the birth region of the Mesopotamian cultures with their profound interest in the stars which lead to astronomy as we know it. Many of the fixed star constellation rotating around the polar star could schematically be drawn as below, The Little Dipper in the example:



Anyway, this specific Bird and Fish motif on the Samarra bowl gives me a nice opportunity to move back into the origin of the Cintamani patterns:



An insert: It might be on its place to tentatively try to define a bit in detail what constitutes the Ottoman Cintamani pattern/motif. There is of course no totally fixed definition on it, it is in Anatolian context a term labeled to the rugs, textiles and ceramics by Wilhelm von Bode and not originally Turkic. All the versions are related, but to me there are some interesting and specific differences. One could group them further, but let's say 3 groups for the purpose of this thread:



- 1.) I would say we generally in the Ottoman silk Cintamani see asymmetric concentric circles within circles, often grouped in three, accompanied by waves and fillings with clear cloud bands motifs.
- 2.) In some of the white ground rugs we see the pattern in its most simple form, the 3 black dots configuration (I would say directly animal pelt related, I can come back to this in details latter)
- 3.) And then with more complexity, and various color configurations, in other rugs (and in the ceramics), the 3-dots accompanied by waves, both with and without the concentric asymmetric circles within circles.

Quickly back to the Bird and Fish Motif:

In Abbasid and Samanid 8-10th.c. pottery the Bird and Fish motif is frequent. Bird and Fish strangely conjoined at their mouths, without it is really looking like they are about to eat each other (would be a large mouthful for both parties):



And well actually they may not be, they may be debating deep and important matters, according to this old Mesopotamian story "The Debate Between Bird and Fish". It can be read here:

<https://www.mesopotamiangods.com/the-debate-between-bird-vs-fish/>

Not that this story is terrible important for this thread, but it is funny, and it may be an example on how mythological content diffuses into folk-tales and lives on for ages in decorative motifs.

What is more important is that some of these Abbasid bowls depicts peacocks - even with abstract concentric circles in circles as ornament on the outer side of the bowls:



This same peacock motif is also known from earlier Sassanian/Sogdian roundels:



The pattern of concentric circles can be seen totally identical on birds and kaftan on this Abbasid bowl (as the pattern on the birds is not only on their tails, we may be looking at an artistic mixture of peacock and guineafowl):



Fatimid version of kaftan with bird roundels compared to Fatimid peacock on ceramics:



And here what I would say is a Seljuk Cintamani silk kaftan, with beautifully clearly drawn asymmetric concentric circles within circles, accompanied by a cloud band pattern (real life peacock just for the visual dazzle):



This riding Seljuk falconer perhaps even more clearly depicts the full-blown Cintamani silk pattern on kaftan with the asymmetric concentric circles in groups of three:



To me the ceramic paintings shows that the Ottoman Cintamani silk kaftan's basic layout had its direct widely spread Abbasid and Fatimid precursor, and that it may actually have been fully developed already by the Seljuks.

And also very interesting that on the upper bowl the simpler plain black 3-dotted Cintamani pattern is reserved for the pattern of the horse's skin. To me the clear distinction of the two version of the pattern in this ceramic painting perfectly

illustrates the possible double origin of the pattern, one in celestial motifs and one in animal skin. Though of course Leopard and Tiger pattern may also have carried celestial Mongolian/Chinese connotations with them during the Turkic migrations, more on that later.

The peacock doesn't have its natural habitat in neither Persia, central Asia or Anatolia, it belongs in India and China. But it has early been exported to the west, kept for its beauty and dazzle probably only by nobles and royalties, as its a rather difficult and useless animal (well the Romans had it for dinner, but I bet it was expensive). In China the peacock may partly have been related to the composite and mythological celestial Fenghuang/Phoenix Bird (haven't quite given up on my Sino-centrism)

Best Martin

(more to follow)

Last edited by Martin Andersen; April 15th, 2021 at 07:53 AM.



April 15th, 2021, 07:40 PM

#16

[Martin Andersen](#)

Members

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 121



Just a small addition to the former post. There is a variant version of the Cintamani pattern in the Anatolian rugs where the accompanying waves have a blue outline with "centipede" or "tarantella" like protrusions. Must admit they have always kind of bothered me as they neither fit the Tiger/Leopard or the Dragon and Flaming Pearl origin of the Cintamani pattern. They could perhaps have their explanation as highly stylized feathers in the likewise highly stylized peacock motif:



best Martin



August 26th, 2021, 11:13 AM

#17

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 132



Hi Martin,

It seems quite probable to me too that the element below (FIG 1), frequemment used in cintamani motifs, was either inspired by a cloud or indeed by the tigers roaming all of eastern Asia millenaries ago, and therefore that the 'inventors' were either Chinese-, Xiong Nu-, Scythian-, or even pre-Scythian artists.



FIG 1: Cintamani motif. 16th CE. Turk ve Islam eserleri Museum.

What was the 'vehicle' which brought this particular motif to Anatolia is impossible to answer. It could have been Chinese silk ware, or elements of the Buddhist- and Shaman costume, or it may have been carried to the West by the constant flow of Turko-Mongol tribes which started crossing the Pamir after the second century CE.

The oldest examples of this particular S-like artist's interpretation of a tiger pelt I was able to find, so far, was on a gold plaque (FIG 2) discovered in a tomb dating from the Warring States period, 4th-5th century BCE, at Xigupan (Ordos, Mongolia), a border area settled at the time by both Chinese colonists and Nomads. The plaque is said to carry a Chinese inscription on the back (1)

Whether the artist was a Han Chinese or belonged to a nomadic culture, I have no idea. For what very little it's worth, it looks rather syncretic to me. That is **your** turf Martin.



FIG 2: Warring States. Xigupan barrow. 5th-4th BCE. (Source Andreeva)

Whereas the stunning piece below is surely Chinese, it dates from the western Han period 3rd BCE-1st CE. What amazes me is that this beautiful object was a mere safe conduct for a royal carriage!! (I wish my driver's licence would look like that.)



FIG 3: China. Western Han. 3rd BCE-1st CE Tiger "Jie" gold-inlay. Inscribed. Guangzhou Museum

There are many representations of tigers in Scythian-and Xiong Nu artifacts, but the pelt is rendered in various, more or less realistic ways which are not as impressive.



FIG 4: 1) Scythian 3rd BCE Hermitage Mus. 2) Xiong Nu 3rd-2nd BCE Henan P. Mus. 3. Scythian 5th-4th BCE Hermitage Mus. 4. Scythian Arzhan Tuva 7th-6th BCE. 5. Scythian tiger with antlers 6th-5th BCE Tuekta Altai. 6. Scythian Issyk 4th-3th BCE.

Note:

(1) Andreeva Petya. *Fantastic Beasts Of The Eurasian Steppes: Toward A Revisionist Approach To Animal-Style Art* . 2018. Pennsylvania U.

Regards
Pierre

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; August 26th, 2021 at 11:21 AM.



August 27th, 2021, 09:28 PM

#18

[Egbert Vennema](#)
Members

Sun, Moon & Varja.

Join Date: Dec 2014
Location: Schiedam, The Netherlands
Posts: 8

The 10th. tantra (of the 17.) from the (Indo) Tibetan Buddhism Dzogchen is called; ""Kissing of the Sun and Moon".

An excerpt of this tantra is called; " The song of Varja ".



August 30th, 2021, 04:25 PM

#19

Sorry wrong link.

Its title is called:

CINTAMANI:
NOTES ON THE FORMATION
OF THE TURCO-IRANIAN STYLE by Kadoi Yuka. pages 33 - 49 .(Edinburgh University.)

Epilogue

This paper has taken account of the infinitely complex way in which the triple-ball pattern was formed and became known as ?intamani in Ottoman art. Because of its immense impact on the art of the Ottoman period and modern times,⁶⁷ a decorative peculiarity of three balls in the triangular arrangement has been celebrated by inviting yet confusing etymological stories. The misleading naming — ?intamani — has increased yet another perplexity and turned into one of the scholarly wonders in Islamic art studies. Clearly, this decorative motif is by no means a parody of Buddhist jewels. Its Turco-Iranian associations speak for itself. There is no intention to rehearse the Ottoman story of ?intamani — how the creative spark of Ottoman designers made this motif special; how the echo of ?intamani reached its climax in the design of ceramics in the 16th century⁶⁸ and subsequently spread a variety of media; and how it became standardised due to its involvement in the mass market and lost its exquisite flavour in the 17th century. Yet in any cases, ?intamani appears along the ebb and flow of Buddhist inspiration.⁶⁹ As the style mellowed, the triple-ball pattern lost its animal features and began to convey different artistic messages. Its talismanic function was by degrees enhanced in Ottoman contexts, combining the forms of a crescent; it was eventually incorporated into a symbol of Islam, the profession of faith, as exemplified in the design of Ottoman banners.⁷⁰ Today, the eye-like appearance of ?intamani evokes that of nazar boncuk, a charm against the evil eye;⁷¹ even at a popular souvenir level, the ingenuity of ?intamani, recalling the glory of Turco-Iranian culture in a vast geographical area of Eurasia, is by common consent to be accepted.

The full article is on the internet. page 33-49 .

If you search on " Buddhist influence in Persian, Central Asian and Anatolian rugs " you can find a link to the peeters-leuven file (not behind a pay-wall.)

Egbert.

Last edited by Egbert Vennema; August 31st, 2021 at 03:16 PM. Reason: wrong link ,sorry. and bad spelling.



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