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April 2nd, 2021, 11:53 AM

#1

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149

Who were the weavers of the Pazyryk rug?

Hi all,

We all know that the Pazyryk rug was discovered in the Altai, in a ca. 4th century BCE kurgan belonging to the Saka / Scythian culture.

While there is hardly any doubt left that most of the objects which surrounded the deceased were crafted locally (1), the carpet-weaver's origin has kept puzzling the archeology community, while also producing hare-brained ethnocentric theories and New Age fantasies.

Unless I missed something, this is still the situation today.

We had an interesting and lively discussion of this topic in Martin's 2014 thread 'The Pazyryk rug and felts' (2) We agreed that the ethnic group responsible for the weaving of the Pazyryk rug - either was part of the Achaemenid Empire, with a preference for an ethnic group still belonging to the steppe culture, not excluding however the semi-settled Persas and Medians though, - or was part of one of the Scythian / Saka tribes surrounding the Achaemenid Empire, of course including the Pazyryk culture itself.

In the thread recently opened by Martin 'Traces of Buddhist influence in Persian-, central Asian- and Anatolian rugs' (3), we have started discussing a very old religious motif which combines a representation of the Sun (a ball, or a star) and the Moon (a crescent). A symbol which may be the origin of the cintamani motif.

Dr. Emel Esin, in a highly interesting paper (4), convincingly argues that the Sun-Moon motif (ideograms, pictogram) appeared during the first millenary BCE or earlier in Central- and Eastern Asia.

FIG 1. Various Sun-Moon motifs.



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

The Sun-Moon motif permeated in particular the Central Asian steppe cultures and the successive semi-settled Empires which they created (Goekturk-, Uyghur Qaghanate, Kushan Empire etc. (3)(4).

Mrs. Nuray Bilgili in a paper about Mythology of the Turkik people (5) was (as far as I know), the first who figured out that the strange motifs on the bellies of fighting mythological beasts on the famous Pazyryk applique felts, were 'Sun-Moon' symbols too.

While the symbol was ubiquitous in Central Asia, it was normally used as an emblem displayed on ruler's crowns. In the Pazyryk culture the symbol brands mythical animals instead.

FIG 2.



Pazyryk felts with Sun-Moon motif. Ca 400 BCE. Picture courtesy Mrs Nuray Bilgili.

Some scholars think that these motifs, as Dr Xing Wu puts it (1) 'betray the Pazyryk craftsmen's lack of understanding of Persian elements' others (6) suggest instead that 'dots and commas were marking a convention derived from applique needle work', Samashev & al. mention (7) that one encounters the 'dots & commas' motifs mainly in the Pazyryk culture, and sometimes in Achaemenid Bactria, but most scholars do not pay any attention at all to it.

It seems agreed by most though, that the spectacular applique felts were crafted by Pazyryk craftsmen.

For what very little it's worth, I do believe, like Nuray Bilgili, that these motifs were indeed Sun-Moon symbols. Imho, they were **deliberately chosen** symbols, to which the Pazyryk culture attached some religious signification.

A closer look to the artifacts found in Kurgans of the Pazyryk culture shows that these three cases were far from being exceptions.

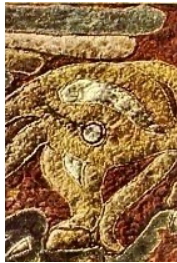
FIG 3.



Pazyryk. ca. 400 BCE.

FIG 4





Pazyryk saddle blanket, felt-applique and details. ca 400 BCE

FIG 5.



(A) Ukok barrows, Altai. Pazyryk culture. ca. 400 BCE.
 (B) Pazyryk. Kilim. ca. 400 BCE.

One could perhaps even suggest that the use of this symbol on otherwise typical Scythian / Saka animalist representations (8), could be a **marker** for the Pazyryk culture. A local artistic 'dialect', so to speak. The Sun-Moon symbol does not seem to appear on similar animalist artifacts crafted by proto-Scythians-, other Scythians / Sakas-, Achaemenides- or by the later regional culture: the Xiongnu.

FIG 6.



(A). Proto-Saka culture (Karashoky barrow). ca. 700 BCE (7). (B). Scythian. Southern Ural. ca 500 BCE. Archeol. Mus.Ufa. (C). Scythian. ca 400 BCE. Kul'Oba. Crimea.
 (D) & (E) Scythian. Southern Ural. ca 500 BCE. Archeol. Mus. Ufa. (F) Achaemenid. ca 400 BCE. Royal Ontario Museum. (G), (H) & (I). Xiongnu. 100 BCE-100 CE (8)

This led us into giving a closer look to the Pazyryk rug again, (deemed by many scholars to be too sophisticated to be woven by the Pazyryk people (!)) and there it was: **The deers of the rug border too do carry the same Sun-Moon symbol.**

FIG 7.



The deer border of the Pazyryk rug.

IMHO, if this is not a 100% proof that the famous carpet was woven by the same guys who crafted the felts (who according to the experts were 'locals', members of the Pazyryk culture, it comes pretty close.

You may open fire now.

Best regards
Pierre

Notes

(1) Dr. Xing Wu. Persian and Central Asian Contributions to the Formation_ of Social Landscape of the Early Nomads in Pazyryk Southern Siberia.

The author's opinion is that the analysis of the artifacts discovered in the Pazyryk kurgans suggests a cultural link between the Altai and the Achaemenid Persian Empire, including in the most celebrated pieces (the pile rug and the felt wall-hanging found in kurgan 5, which, however, he sees as closely associated with the symbolic system of the Pazyryk culture. Certain details, such as the '[rendering of animal musculature](#)', suggest that the Achaemenid style of the Pazyryk artifacts was not directly copied from objects manufactured in the Empire. Misinterpretations of Achaemenid stylistic traits '[betray the Pazyryk craftsmen's lack of understanding of Persian elements](#)'

(2) 'The Pazyryk rug and felts'
http://www.turkotek.com/misc_00141/Pazyryk.html

(3) 'Traces of Buddhist influence in Persian-, central Asian- and Anatolian rugs',
<http://www.turkotek.com/VB37/showthread.php?t=7976>

(4) 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.

(5) Nuray Bilgili, Ile mitolojik Gezinti

(6) Britannica. <https://global.britannica.com/art/Central-Asian-arts/Nomadic-cultures>

(7) Z. Samashev, G.A. Bazarbaeva, G.S. Zhumabekova, H.P. Francfort. 'Le kourgane de Berel dans l'Altai kazakhstanais'. Arts Asiatiques. 2000

(8) Speaking under Martin's control. This being his own turf.



April 2nd, 2021, 12:55 PM

#2

[Filiberto Boncompagni](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Location: Cyprus
Posts: 158



Nicely spotted, Pierre.

100% proof it isn't, but I agree it should have a lot of relevance.

Regards,

Filiberto



April 2nd, 2021, 03:09 PM

#3

[Chuck Wagner](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 147



Hi Pierre,

I'll hold any fire for now and just try to digest this.

But since you brought up Scythians and artforms, you might find it interesting to waste a weekend prowling through this old Salon (#82), within which (and among many other things) a discussion on Scythian design branched off into a separate thread.

http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00082/salon.html

? votre sant?

Chuck

(it seems that accent grave doesn't work very well either...)



April 6th, 2021, 11:07 AM

#4

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149



Hi Chuck,

Thanks for the link.

Sofia Gate's posts are interesting and very entertaining.

The origin of rug motifs is indeed something worth thinking (and dreaming-) about. Even though they surely have morphed over the past millenaries, and their religious- or social meanings surely aren't the same anymore.

It is quite clear that Sofia was struggling with trying to make sense of Ganzthorn's wild fantasies and manipulations of historical facts and that she already had serious doubts, expressing them diplomatically though.

I won't start again here a discussion of the alleged fundamental importance of Christians in carpet weaving, a theory mainly 'based' on the presence of crosses in so many rugs, including Islamic prayer rugs (!). Marla Mallett, yourself Chuck, Martin and several other Turkotekers have already brought reasonable answers and suggested to take Ganzthorn's delusions for what they are.

Just for the records, I can warrant that the bloke in FIG 1A was not the Grand Master of the Order of Malta.

Other examples of **retro-active** Christian influence in ART.

FIG 1



- (A) Shamshi-Adad V. Ca. 800 BCE. Cross. British Museum
 (B) Elam. Suse. ca. 4000 BCE . Mus?e du Louvre.
 (C) Greek oinochoe. ca.900 BCE. Athens Kerameikos Museum
 (D) Peru. Mochica. 750-1000 CE. MET
 (E) Xiung Nu. Felt rug 100 BCE-100 CE.
 (F) Iran. Siyalk III. 2000 BCE-3000 BCE.
 (G) England. ca 2400 BCE. Sun disk. Wiltshire Museum.
 (H)Turkmenistan. Altyn Tepe. ca 2500-3500 BCE.
 (I) Athenian. ca. 900 BCE. von Wagner Museum. Wurzburg
 (J) Cyprus. Geometric period. 1000-700 BCE.
 (K) Kassite dynasty. Seal imprint. 1600-1150 BCE.

A few more of the same, only for the fun of it.
 FIG 2.



- A. Crete. Minoan. ca. 1600 BCE
- B. Bactria ca. 2000 BCE
- C. Peru. Chavin. 900-300 BCE
- D. Nubia. ca. 1600 BCE
- E. Scythian. ca. 500 BCE
- F. Indus culture. Harappa. ca. 2000 BCE
- G. Peru. Atacama desert. 900-500 BCE
- H. Turkmenistan. Namazga IV culture. 3200-2700 BCE
- I. Maya. 500-800 CE.
- J. Peru. Mochica. 750-1000 CE
- K. Mississippi culture 1300-1450 CE

Coming back to the topic of this thread, the Pazyryk rug weaver's ethnic affiliation, I would also limit myself to few comments.

Sofia may have taken as granted some obvious manipulations of History and citations by Ganzthorn.

I have, for example, re-re-browsed through my two copies of Marco Polo's travels and am quite sure that he never reported that nomad-made rugs were largely inferior to city-made ones. Actually, Polo only mentioned rug weaving in a comment of his crossing of Syria. He noted then that 'Greek' and Armenian (city-) rug weavers were making good ones. He never visited and even less mentioned any tribal weaver.

Btw.1 : We are in the 14th century CE and 'Greek' obviously still meant 'Greek-speaking' , thus the former Byzantine local population, whatever its ethnic origin might have been.

Btw. 2. Polo's fellow Venetian, J. Barbaro, Venice envoy to the Court of the (Turkmen-) Aq-Koyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan in Tabriz in 1474 CE, highly praised his rugs as being superior to any other regional ones, including Ottoman ones. He did not bother to mention whether they were tribal or woven in city workshops.

About Ganzthorn's Law claiming *that pile rugs were only woven by city dwellers, (people who absolutely needed them for comfort), while nomads:*

a) had no need for them, being already over-stocked with sheep pelts and felts.

b) would not be able to weave them anyway, because assembling and disassembling the loom would be too much of a trouble for nomads.

The 18th-19th century Turkmen, were nomad, weren't they? And wove superb, technically superior pile rugs, didn't they? Arguably even the best of their time, deemed even better than Persian ones by most occidental visitors. They also were known for nice silver work.

Well, the Turkomaniac party here in Turkotek knows that while one part of the Turkmen, the 'tscharwas' (1) were on the move most of the year, leading the livestock from pastures to wells, others, the 'tschomris' kept their yurts for long periods at the same place. The 'tscharwas' being mostly the younger members of the family and the 'tschomris' being the older ones. But it took very little for a 'tschomri' to become a 'tscharwa'. A small difference of opinion with the Khivan taxman or with one's mother-in-law , the opportunity of a lucrative alaman, chasing hapless Persian farmers, or a bad winter for example. There were probably even 'tschomris' whose family would rarely move the yurt at all, being specialized in activities like boot-making, forging Persian coins or organizing and protecting caravans of Bokharian- or Khivan merchants, or simply idling and chatting in front of a cup of tea etc..

In the case of the Scythian- / Saka tribes, of which the Pazyryk culture was a branch, modern historians are finding increasingly proofs that they also lived in a stratified society, in which only one part was highly mobile (as Herodotus already wrote 2500 years ago). While the kurgans were of course only the privilege of deceased tribal rulers, well-to-do people and poorer ones often shared the same burial grounds, their tombs being only differentiated by the type and quality of the offerings. Weapons or horse-fittings for some, tools of their trade for others, nothing for many others.

While the Western Scythians were strongly influenced by Greek classical art, (It is probable that Greek goldsmiths contributed quite some pieces to Scythian rulers' kurgans), it is different for Central-Asian- and Altai Saka / Scythians: I do not think that there is any doubt left today: the Pazyryk artisans were the authors of the wondrous gold, bronze and wood artifacts and of the creative applique felts found in their kurgans. Also their weapons were made locally. Their successors in the steppe, after having taught to Crassus the advantages of mounted archery against dehydrated heavy infantry, also taught later Roman / Byzantine generals the advantages of armored heavy cavalry.

These people had an old and advanced experience of metallurgy, textile, archery and horse-breeding, inherited from their ancestors of the Afanasievo--> Andronovo--> Tasmola cultures. (Just like their probable cousins the Yuezhi / Tokharians-->Kushans or their other probable cousins the Persas and Medes).)

We also do know that the Tarim Basin, so to speak the backyard of the Altai Pazyryk culture, was home of cultures very advanced in textile technology.

Last but not least, the spectacular and technically advanced Pazyryk rug was not the only sophisticated piece of pile rug supplied by the Pazyryk kurgans. A Bashadar kurgan also contained an even older fragment, even more densely woven: 6000 asymmetric knots/dm², while the Pazyryk rug used symmetric knots). (2)

In fine, about the major role of Armenian weavers in carpet history:

It is well documented by reports of Arab travelers, around 700-800 CE, (thus about 1000 years after the weaving of the Pazyryk rug), that Armenians wove beautiful rugs and mastered the production of superb (cochineal-) red shades

However, this fact does not prove that they already mastered rug weaving in 300-500 BCE and even less that they had anything to do with the weaving of the rugs found in kurgans of the Pazyryk culture.

To my limited knowledge the only documented mention of rug-making at such an early time was made by

Xenophon, a 400 BCE Greek general very familiar with the Achaemenid elite, who claimed that the Medes wove beautiful and expensive rugs. He also praised their red shades (3) (4).

Notes:

(1) My humblest apologies to any Turkmen reader for this probably ridiculous spelling. It is taken from visitors like H. Moser. The best I can say is that Moser's native Schaffhausen dialect too sounds like a disease of the throat.

(2) Ludmila Barkova, at the time curator of the Pazyryk collection, Hermitage Museum. Paper in Hali 107. 1999. Excerpts were discussed by Filiberto in Martin Andersen's Salon 141 'The Pazyryk Rug and felts'. One of Barkova's conclusions was '..The Pazyryk carpet and the Bashadar fragment show that 2500 years ago, Eurasian pile carpet weaving existed in several different technical variants, symmetric and asymmetric knotting combined with complicated techniques' She also wrote '..The question of the exact place of manufacture of the Pazyryk carpet is perhaps not as important as the fact that the pile carpet technique developed so early and spread so rapidly throughout the nomadic civilizations of the Steppe Corridor..'

(3) The Medes nomads arrived in Persia around 1000 BCE. They kept an important role in the Persa's Achaemenid Empire. It is highly probable that both tribes shared their origin (the Andronovo culture) with the Saka / Scythians.

(4) Xenophon. Anabasis. Three short mentions, but he does not tell us whether these were kilims or pile rugs. Given the exorbitant price mentioned, one can suppose that they were pile rugs. There is also one mention of heavy Median rugs in Xenophon's Cyropedia.

Regards
Pierre

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; September 29th, 2021 at 08:59 AM.



August
24th, 2021,
11:27 AM

#5

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
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Join Date: Oct
2009
Posts: 149

'Chi tace acconsente' as Filiberto would perhaps say ('He who is silent consents'). But despite the eerie silence following my previous post, I will take the liberty of a bit of overkill, now.

The sun-moon motif on many Pazyryk artefacts and on the Pazyryk rug too is not a 100% proof, but surely a clue of its weaving by members of the Pazyryk culture.

It could be worth reminding that there are several other interesting clues that this rug may have been woven in a Scythian culture (Pazyryk culture included). Many were already mentioned in Martin's 2014 Turkotek thread (1)

One of these clues was even supplied by a staunch opponent to any Pazyryk/Scythian origin, who taught to the 'slightly reluctant' Turkotek community the indisputable 'fact' that weavers were 'obviously' Mesopotamians, precisely from somewhere near Nineveh.

He also unwittingly mentioned that the border of horses and horsemen was 'obviously' a proof that the rug was a funerary weaving (2)



FIG 1. Pazyryk rug detail. Fourth century BCE.

This remarkable insight (especially concerning an artefact found in a tomb), indeed could be right, since archeology has largely proven that horses were routinely sacrificed to offer company to lonesome deceased Scythian chiefs in their kurgan. Many cases are known in which a large number of horses were laying in the tumulus or were impaled in circle around the tomb.

This was true in the whole Scythian world, including in the Pazyryk culture. (3)

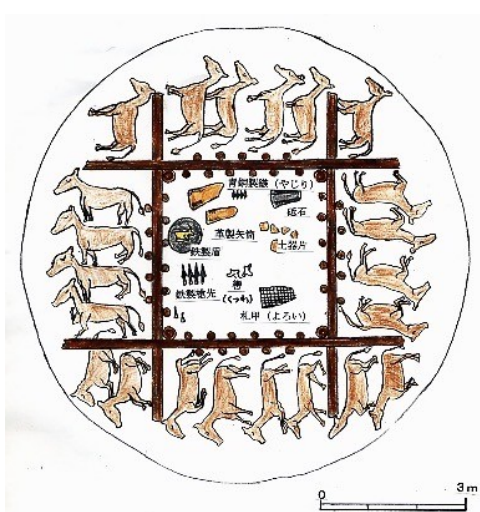


FIG 2. Sketch of the Kostromskaya kurgan burial (Western Scythians)
(source [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kostromskaya_\(rural_locality\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kostromskaya_(rural_locality)))

Human beings too had the honor and pleasure of being sacrificed and buried with their boss (males and females). At least one case is known (upholding Herodotus' claim), in which the horsemen were impaled on their horses and disposed in a nice merry-go-round, as once rightly observed by Steve.

Even if the Pazyryk rug was not intended as a funerary rug, the importance given to a motif of mounted cavalry could still point to Scythians being the weavers: Seen by most historians as the probable inventors of mounted cavalry and composite bows, they militarily dominated the Eurasian steppe during centuries. In the 4th-3rd century BCE they surely still were the most horse-obsessed culture in the world, even though their military inventions had been exported South by some of their Indo-European relatives: the Median- and Persa- tribes (4), the latter ones having founded the Achaemenian Empire only about two centuries earlier.

By the way, it is conspicuous that all horses in the rug border were males (5).

IMHO, the sacrifice of male horses made both economical- and symbolic sense for Scythians: It appears that they preferred to use mares or gelded horses in battle (supposed to be more calm and disciplined). I suggest that the best performing stallions were used as reproducers, while the less effective- or older ones were prime candidate for sacrifice or for the barbecue.

Another clue for a Scythian origin of the Pazyryk rug may be supplied by the horse saddle covers which, nearly all, carry exactly the same motif, thus, perhaps, a motif familiar and meaningful for this culture. (FIG 3). It has been suggested that it represented a tree of life. One could also suggest stacked Orix skulls.



FIG 3. Pazyryk Rug : motifs of saddle covers

A 4th century BCE Greek Eubean pottery in the Louvre shows a stereotypical Scythian warrior, wearing a tunic with the same motif. Experts of the Louvre Museum identified the warrior as being a member of the Dahha Scythian tribe, which, around the time of the Pazyryk rug weaving, lived East of the Volga and West of Khorezmia. (FIG 4)



FIG 4. Greek Eubean red figure vase. Fourth century BCE. Louvre Museum.



FIG 5 Map of approximative positions of Daha-, Tigraxauda-, Haumavarga- and Pazyryk Scythians during the third century BCE (source Michigan Un.)

The same motif again was found on a central Asian Terracotta, now in a Tadjikistan Museum (6)



FIG 6. Fragment of terra-cotta featuring saddle and saddle cover. Central Asia.

Adorned tight trousers, are frequent in traditional Greek- and Persian representations of Scythian warriors (7), but are also seen in Scythian artefacts (FIG 7 & 8) . Pazyryk horsemen wear such trousers too (FIG 9).



FIG 7. Scythian adorned trousers
 A. Greek vase ca 500 BCE SMPK Berlin.
 B. Scythian work. Kul-oba Kurgan. British Museum.
 C. Greek vase. ca 500 BCE Louvre.



FIG 8. Scythian adorned trousers (Kul-oba))



FIG 9. Pazyrik horsemen wearing adorned trousers

The Apadana frieze which represent tributary nations bringing their offerings to the Persian King of Kings suggests that the Scythians were not only famous for their horses and their gold, but that they were also competent weavers: the frieze shows Tigraxauda Scythians paying their tribute of horses, gold and three different types of textiles, perhaps a small rug too. (FIG 10).

Interestingly these Scythians were one out of only four tributary nations offering so much textiles. Two of them were variously identified: a. As Medians or Scythians and b. As Sagartians or Scythians a less known tribe. I shall come back later to this topic.

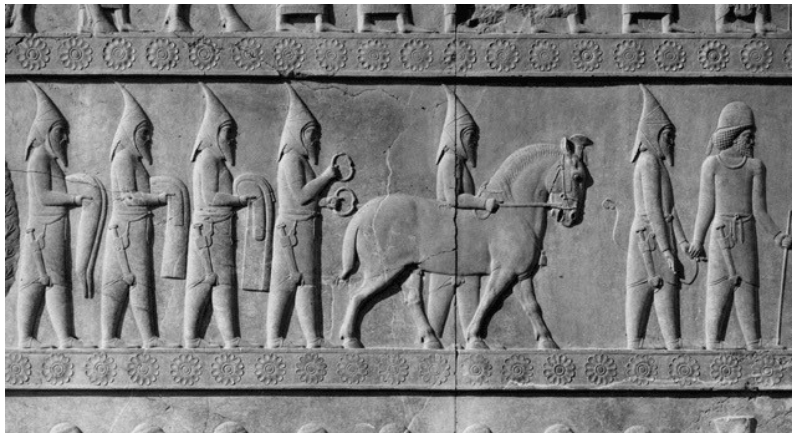


FIG 10. Darius' Palace, Susa, Apadana frieze, ca 510 BCE. The Tigraxauda Scythian delegation.

Scythian competence in textiles and applique felts is also confirmed by other artefacts found in kurgans of the Pazyryk culture. Some pieces, like the border fragment with lions below (FIG 11) were initially, perhaps too hastily, attributed to Achaemenid workshops, an opinion which several scholars now contest, suggesting instead that they were inspired by Achaemenid models, but woven by Scythians (8). I haven't obviously a clue about who is right or who is not, I only read that the motif of a border of triangles was already characteristic of the pre-Scythian Andronovo culture FIG 12, its use in several Pazyryk artefacts (including another kilim featuring lion heads) should not come as a surprise.

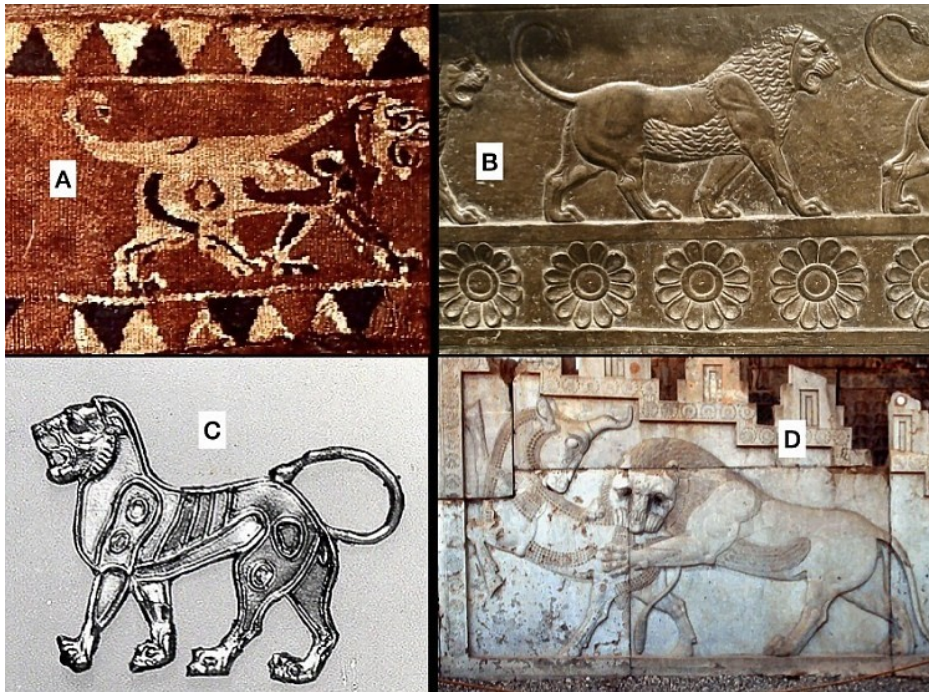


FIG 11. Striding lions. A Pazyryk kurgan. B, C, D, Achaemenid artifacts



FIG 12. Andronovo culture.

By the way, one of best known Pazyryk felt applique rugs (FIG 13) features a (deceased?) Scythian prince proudly riding his horse when meeting the enthroned deity. A rather frequent Scythian theme. IMHO this emphasizes again the major importance of this animal even in a Scythian warrior's afterlife.



FIG 13. The deceased warrior and the deity. a) Pazyryk wall hanging. Applique felt. kurgan 5 b) Western Scythian. Merdzhany..



FIG 14. The deceased warrior and the deity: a) Pazyryk wall hanging. b. Western Scythian. Nosaky kurgan 4

The walking figures on the Pazyryk rug resemble those of the various Apadana delegations offering a horse as tribute. It is this motif which initially suggested a Persian origin for the carpet. But Judith Lerner observed that on the Pazyryk the horsemen are both mounted and walking, a pattern which is a rather distant adaptation of the Achaemenid original. Rubinson and Farkas added that the relatively naturalistic body contours and pose with lowered head suggest a weaving of the carpet in Central Asia or Siberia, where naturalistic representations of animals are indigenous.

Still another clue for a Scythian origin of the weavers of the Pazyryk pile rug could be the border of deers (FIG 15): Deers / stags were not only one of the favorite motifs of pre-Scythian and Scythian art (FIG 16 and 17), they were also identified by several scholars as being a species indigenous to the steppe. Even Rudenko (who did not support the Scythian origin of the Pazyryk rug) wrote that the deer were of the *Cervus dama* type (9), a variety surely much more familiar to Scythians than to (hypothetical) Mesopotamian weavers.



FIG 15. Detail of Pazyryk deer border.



FIG 16. Deer in Pre-Scythian and Scythian art.
 A. Kul-Oba. Hermitage Mus. B. Scythian petroglyph C. Budapest Mus. D. Bratoliubivica kurgan E. Pazyryk kurgan. F. Filippovka. G. Issyk, Kazakstan.

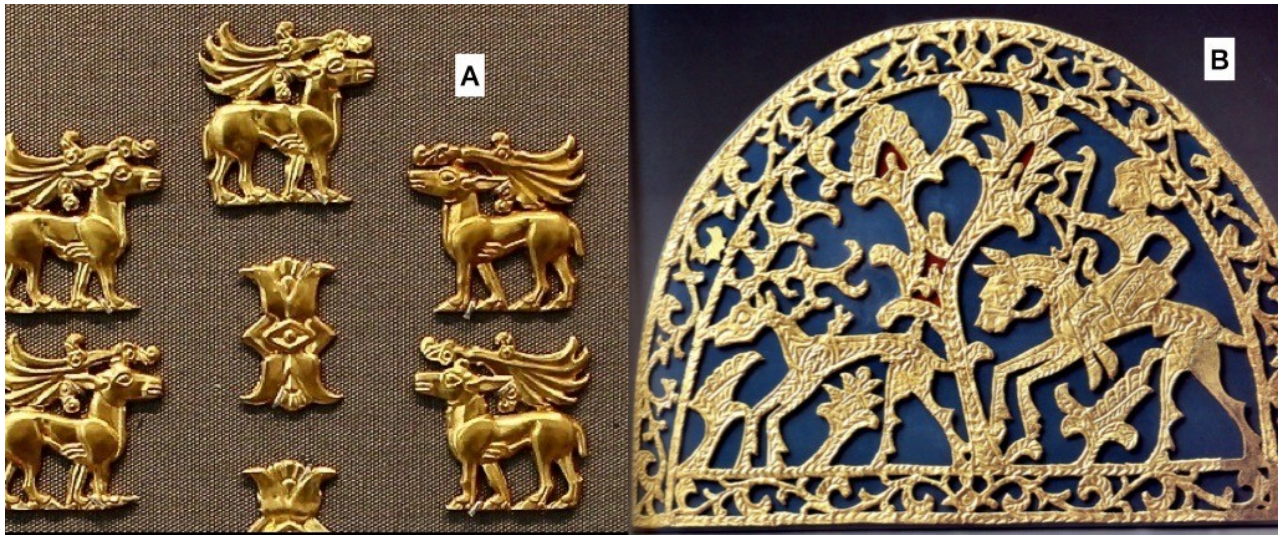


FIG 17. Deer in Scythian art.

As usual I am much too verbose, sorry, see you next post

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; October 25th, 2021 at 03:04 PM.



August 24th, 2021, 11:32 AM

#6

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Another border motif of the Pazyryk Rug rather points to Scythian weavers too, a griffin, a composite monstrous mythical animal (FIG 18).



FIG 18. Pazyryk Rug. Detail of the griffin border.

Chimera-, griffin- and sphinx- motifs were rather popular in many antique civilizations, including the Egyptian-, Mesopotamian-, Etruscan and Greek ones, but they were surely among the most frequently used motifs in the Scythian culture FIG 18 and FIG 19. Some scholars suggest that they were protectors of the deceased.



FIG 19. Scythian griffin, chimeras & sphinxes



FIG 20 Griffins, sphinxes and chimeras in kurgans of the Scythian Pazyryk culture (applique felts)

In his 1982 conference (pp 9,19) Schurmann wrote '... The head of the griffins (in the Pazyryk bordure) looks backwards...(On the) decoration on a sword of an important person behind the King on a relief on the Apadana of Persepolis, the griffins are turning their head back like in the Pazyryk...'

The not too subtle message was: This excludes a weaving by the Pazyryk folks and proves a much more western weaving of the carpet.

However as FIG 20.1 below and FIG 16 H,16 C show, Scythians too were fond of representations of mythical animals looking backward. According to Kim (14) this is even one of the most frequent styles of Scythian gold

plaques.



FIG 20.1 Scythians mythical animals looking backward.

You may have noticed the close resemblance of the Pazyryk griffin motif with one plaque of FIG 20.1.

Please give also a **look to the frame** of the Pazyryk griffin:

Such a 'braided' frame is often seen around rectangular Scythian plaques, both from Western- and Eastern steppe cultures, including the Ordos.



FIG 20.2. Scythian 'braided' frames of Scythian plaques

n? 6: Pazyryk griffin motif.

n? 1, 2, 3, 5, Western Scythian

n? 4, 7 Eastern Scythian Ordos Culture

n? 8: Central Asian - or Western Scythian

n? 9: Clay form found in an Eastern Scythian coppersmith's tomb.

Framing a picture is a simple and obvious idea and other antique cultures surely adopted it sometimes too. For example many Roman mosaics feature frames, some looking quite similar to the Scythian ones.

This similitude is therefore not any proof that the Pazyryk people wove the rug, but **imho the Pazyryk weavers are scoring a point again.**

There is a diffuse and imho quite unfair opinion that the Pazyryk rug was too sophisticated to be woven by 'mere nomads' like the Scythians. Opinion which credits instead an unprecised urban civilization for it.

Not only does it seem a strange concept for anybody aware of the exceptional quality of Scythian artifacts, and of the fact that the Scythians weren't all nomads anyway, (part of the Scythian population was settled, as already explained by Herodotus. See also (10.1 and 10.2) , but it is also a fact that the Pazyryk rug is several centuries older than any other extant pile rug discovered until very recently, except the Bashadar fragment which was also unearthed from a kurgan of the Pazyryk culture. While the Siberian permafrost surely is the reason why we found these rugs there, the fact that such old extant pile rugs weren't found anywhere else should at least incite the promoters of other origins to a bit of caution. (See my previous rant on this topic in post #4 of this thread).

IMHO the outstanding quality of the rug suggests a very ancient rug weaving tradition. The discovery of the Bashadar rug fragment supports this opinion, since it is even about one century older than the Pazyryk Rug, much more densely woven and it uses yet another weaving technique (asymmetric knots instead of symmetric ones.)

Besides, as mentioned before in post #4, one of the very few historical mentions of rugs around the time of the weaving of the Pazyryk pile rug was made by the greek general Xenophon in two of his famous reports (Cyropedia and Anabasis (11)). In both cases it was in very short notes, as a mere aside, mentioning their red color, their exorbitant price and crediting Median weavers for it. Xenophon does not tell us whether these Median rugs were pile rugs, kilims, embroideries, applique felt rugs or any combination thereof, like this recently auctioned felt and flat weave combination , C14 dated to the 3rd-4th century BCE too, and attributed to Central Asia (FIG 21). Btw, its outstanding state of conservation, despite its age, indicates that it surely comes from a kurgan protected by the permafrost. Most probably Scythian.



FIG 21. Felt-backed kilim auctioned 2011. Kilim border woven separately and applied. (Source Christies)

Let's not forget that the Medians were an Indo-European tribe too, which most probably was, (like the Scythians, the Persas and the Cimmerians), an offspring of the Andronovo culture and therefore it should not come as a surprise that they still shared some characteristics with the Scythians, including horsemanship, weaponry, sophisticated metal working and semi-nomadism. (13). Why not pile rug weaving too, if I may ask?

By the way, the Medians had the reputation among the Persians to be more art-oriented than their Persas colleagues (12) Accordingly, they were said to be frequently in charge of palatial construction sites in Achaemenid

Persia. They were also accused to be enjoying bling-bling too much. Xenophon insinuates that they were an effete lot, who perverted the more machos Persas and had a bad influence on their military skills.

As recent research confirms (8) and (13), Central Asia (Northern Afghanistan, Bactria, Margiana Tarim Basin,..) was quite early a rug-weaving area, at the latest from the first century CE onwards, perhaps much earlier, surely long before there was any mention of Turkik, Armenian or Persian pile rugs. One could even suggest a possible 'fertilization' by the Scythians of central asian people rather than the other way around.

Conclusion

It seems credible to me that the Pazyryk culture (or another Scythian tribe) was responsible for the weaving of the Pazyryk and the Bashadar rugs.

IMHO, other credible options would still be the Medians or the semi-nomadic Yuezy/Tokarians (later to become the elite of the rich Kushan Empire), who both may have shared an Andronovo origin with the Scythians and may have shared many technologies too.

Even the worse word diarrheas must have an end, and this is nearly it.

See you next post for a few notes.



Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; November 7th, 2021 at 08:52 AM.



August 24th, 2021, 11:34 AM

#7

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149



Notes:

(1) The Pazyryk rug and felts (2014) http://www.turkotek.com/misc_00141/Pazyryk.html

(2) Post 27 http://www.turkotek.com/misc_00141/Pazyryk.html

(3) see for example

- C. Leighton, Curator of B.M. Scythian project.

<https://blog.britishmuseum.org/horses-a-scythians-best-friend/> ..

'...In cases such as at Arzhan as many as 200 horses were found harnessed and buried together with the dead'..'The quantity and variation of horses found here fits Herodotus' account that allied Scythian tribes offered sacrificial horses to each other as a way of paying their respects...' '..Archaeology has also made it clear that the more important the person, the greater number of horses were offered. At the famous frozen tombs at Pazyryk, located high in the Altai region of southern Siberia, entire horses were found preserved within the permafrost still dressed in their magnificent ceremonial regalia..'

-S. Lepetz. The princely tomb of Berel.

<https://sciencepress.mnhn.fr/sites/default/files/articles/pdf/az2013n2a9.pdf>

(4) The Median and Persa nomads who successively conquered Iran, as well as the Cimmerians who established themselves in northern Anatolia, were most probably offsprings of the Andronovo pre-Scythian culture. The first Median to create a kingdom in Iran started his reign around 730 BCE. The Medians seem to have kept close contacts with their Scythian 'cousins' long after their invasion of Iran, since, according to Assyrian tablets, several wars opposed the latter to allied Scythian- and Median armies (12). The Assyrians were initially victorious (or so they claimed), but in 612 BCE an alliance between Babylonians, Scythians and Medians, stormed the Assyrian capital Niniveh. By 609 BCE they had destroyed the Assyrian Empire.

Around 550 BCE, the Persas, another Indo-European tribe of pastoralist nomads established in Southern Iran, led by Cyrus the Great, overthrew the last Median King and created the Achaemenid Empire. The Median kept playing an important role in this new empire.



FIG 22. The Median Empire

See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andronovo_culture

(5) L. Lepetz & al. The horses from the graves of the Pazyryk culture. Masters of the steppe. pp.227-247

(6) Xing Wu. <http://www.academia.edu/2765638/> Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Persian and Central Asian elements in the social landscape of the early nomads at Pazyryk, Southern Siberia. Persian and Central Asian. '...Fragment of painted terra-cotta statuette figurine from the Museum of Antiquities in Tajikistan, which bears an ink-drawn saddlecloth decorated with curved tendrils identical to those on the horse on the Pazyryk carpet..'

(7) It is of course unlikely that Scythians trousers were really as clinging as the Greek potters represented them, among other good reasons because they did not invent Elastan. But apparently these fellows were pretty good weavers and tailors.

(8) Zhang He. Knotted Carpets of the Takla Makan. The Silk Road 17, 2019, pp.36-64

(9) Rudenko 1968, p. 42. The discoverer of the Pazyryk Rug had a strong preference for a more western central Asian origin, but he also identified the deer pictured in the border as being of the species *Cervus Dama*, most likely to be living in the steppe, thus in a Scythian area. Later scholars proposed other identities for that deer, but mostly also hinting at a nordic habitat. Btw. blatant misrepresentations of Rudenko's opinion about the origin of the rug, by some ethnocentric writers and by some rather imaginative bloggers, did push this alleged origin much towards the South and West, including Armenia and even Mesopotamia. See also (1)

(10.1) A.R. Ventresca Miller & al. (Michigan Un.) Scythian people weren't just nomadic warriors. PLOS ONE. Open access journal. March 2021.

'...The Scythian people, who lived across the Pontic steppe around 700-200 BCE, are often portrayed as a culture of nomadic warriors. But this idea is challenged by archaeological evidence that indicates a more complex and varied culture at this place and time. In this study, researchers employed isotopic analyses to investigate patterns of diet and mobility in Scythian populations...'. '...These results support the growing understanding that Scythian populations were not a homogenous culture, but a more diverse group which, in some places, lived more sedentary lives with a dependence on agriculture...'

(10.2) S. Spengler & al. An imagined past? Nomadic narratives in Central Asian Archeology. The University of Chicago press Journals.

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/714245#>

'...Nomads, or highly specialized mobile pastoralists, are prominent features in Central Asian archaeology, and they are often depicted in direct conflict with neighboring sedentary peoples. However, new archaeological findings are showing that the people who many scholars have called nomads engaged in a mixed economic system of farming and herding. Additionally, not all of these peoples were as mobile as previously assumed, and current data suggest that a portion of these purported mobile populations remained sedentary for much or all of the year, with localized ecological factors directing economic choices...'

(10.3) J. Lendering. Scythians, Sakae. Iran Chamber Society.

http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/scythians_sacae.php#sthash.SafGj9z.dpuf

As described by Herodotus, the Scythian tribes were semi-nomadic: A class system: The political elite was their mounted cavalry, from families / clans owning large herds of horses and sheep and living a pastoral life. While other Scythians of lower rank were settled farmers, artisans etc..

Achaemenid Persia distinguished the following Scythian/Sakae tribes:

- Saka tigraxauda (Sakae with pointed cap): North of the Persian border and West of the lower Amu-Darya, at times paying tribute to Persia. Perhaps the Scythian tribe which helped the Median Kingdom, their southern neighbor, to destroy the Assyrian Empire in the 7th century BCE.

- Saka Apaa (Water Sakae): Near Choresmia and South of it.

- Saka Haumavarga (Haoma-drinking Sakae): In Sogdiana / Bactriana. North-East of the Persian border.

- Saka Dahaa (Sakae robbers). North and west of Choresmia. They may have been the Pami who, centuries later,

founded the Parthian Kingdom.

- Saka Maa. (Moon Sakae), called Massagetes by the Greeks). I wonder whether the Persians called them 'lunatics' because they destroyed an army led by Cyrus the Great and were responsible for his death.They lived near the Syr darya and East of the river.

- Saka Paradrayaa. (Sakae across the Sea). West of the Caucasus, in Crimea and Ukraine. They may have included the Scythians called Sauromatae by the Greek.

- The Scythian Pazyryk culture was not clearly identified by the Achaemenids, nor by Herodotus, perhaps because several thousand kilometers and the Pamir- and Tien Shan high mountain range separated them.

-The Cimmerians: Possibly still another Scythian culture. They were among the first to move South, leaving their home in the Caucasus (pushed out by other Scythians, according to Herodotus). During their migration they ruined Urartu (old name of Armenia) and settled in Phrygia.

(11) Xenophon. Cyropaedia the education of Cyrus. Translated by H.G. Dakins.

Xenophon. Anabasis. Expedition de Cyrus et retraite des Dix Mille.

[https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Exp?dition_de_Cyrus_\(Trad._Talbot\)/Texte_entier](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Exp?dition_de_Cyrus_(Trad._Talbot)/Texte_entier)

(12) S. Razmjou. In search of the lost Median art. Iranica Antiqua vol XL 2005

[http://www.academia.edu/2390658/ In Search of the Lost Median Art Iranica Antiqua 40 271-314](http://www.academia.edu/2390658/In_Search_of_the_Lost_Median_Art_Iranica_Antiqua_40_271-314)

A very interesting paper

Among Razmjou's many interesting remarks:

'...In these (Median) artifacts there is a tendency to show movement and curved forms in the animal bodies.

These are accompanied by more familiar elements. Their parallels can be widely found in the northern nomadic art...'

'...The Medians settled closer to the north and could thus stay in touch with their origins. It was not so easy for the Persians (Parsas), who went far into a region with a totally different cultural and artistic background...'

(13) See http://www.turkotek.com/old_masters/salon_7.html

(14) Kim Moon. A Study on the Scythian Gold Plaques. 2002. Suwon University. Korea.

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; October 7th, 2021 at 06:54 PM.



August 25th, 2021, 09:06 PM

#8

[Egbert Vennema](#)

Members

Join Date: Dec 2014
Location: Schiedam, The Netherlands
Posts: 6

Pazyryk,

Scythian Kurgans, black felt carpets,winged creatures, trousers , panthers and horses..

<https://brewminate.com/kurgans-ancient-burial-mounds-of-scythian-elites-in-the-urasian-steppe/>



September 6th, 2021, 01:13 PM

#9

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149



The picture below (FIG 23) illustrates well the importance of horses, stags and monstrous composite animals for the Pazyryk people. Imho it brings further credibility to the hypothesis of a local weaving of the rug. The picture shows a reconstruction of one of the several horses buried in kurgans of the Pazyryk culture which were wearing masks representing stags. It also shows details of a motif decorating the saddle cover, featuring a tiger branded with the 'sun & moon' symbol.



FIG 23 Reconstruction of the horse. Close up-view of the plaque with sun-moon symbol. The original saddle cover. (Pazyryk barrow #1)

Btw. I find it curious that the sun-moon motif could brand indifferently either the predator (as in this case) or the prey, as seen for example in FIG 24. What could be its signification for the Pazyryk culture: Religious? Specifically linked to the funerals? Tribal totem? Allusion to the deity?



FIG 24 Pazyryk culture. Berel kurgan. Wooden plaque.

Sacrificed horses do not carry only masks of stags, but also masks of other real- or imaginary animals of the Pazyrik bestiary, for example an orix, a bird, some kind of bull featuring forward-pointing horns, a bird standing between the horns of a mountain goat etc.



FIG 25. Horse masks from various Pazyryk and Berel kurgans.

P.S. Thanks for the link Egbert.

Regards
Pierre

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; September 29th, 2021 at 09:17 AM.

[Edit](#) [Quote](#) [Reply](#)



September 9th, 2021,
05:36 AM

[Chuck Wagner](#)
Administrator

Join Date: May 2008
Posts: 147

#10



Hi Pierre,

Something caught my eye a few days ago and I'm just now getting around to posting it.

Refer back to your post above, #5 in this thread, Figure 6 - the terracotta figurine - and take a look at this Baluch piece:



It is currently available in the market so I am not going to comment on any aspect of it beyond the similarity to the motif on the figurine.

Regards
Chuck



September 11th, 2021,
12:06 PM

#11

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members



Hi Chuck,

Yes it is interesting indeed.

Don't the reciprocal motives look either like stacked horns (black) or like trees (red), a coniferous for example or a tree of life ?

It reminds me also the exaggerated stag horns typical of Scythian art and a well known Turkmen- , especially Yomud motif, of which I can't remember the name right now, but you surely see what i mean.

I am ready to believe that a number of very ancient motifs may have survived somehow, their original meaning lost and their design probably a bit modified. The cintamani is perhaps such a case in which the likely original meaning (sky deities and big cats carrying a particular religious or social message ?) has been lost, perhaps masked, to avoid annoying finicky new masters.

Regards
Pierre



September 13th, 2021,
10:09 PM

#12

[Chuck Wagner](#)
Administrator



Pierre,

Oddly, it also reminds me of a trip from quite a long time ago, to Thailand.

Tongkonan houses are traditionally decorated with a bilateral stack of water buffalo horns on a pole at the entrance to the house.

A glass of port, maybe a few grapes or apple slices, and some cheese to be prepared, and then mull the likelihood of a trade route between Thailand and Afghanistan...



Regards
Chuck

From pathismygoal.com:



September 16th, 2021,
02:24 PM

#13

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149

Pazyryk dyes

Hi all,

You may have appreciated the fact that I compassionately refrained from mentioning which dyes were used in the Pazyryk rug and avoided boring you with chemical structures and dyeing methods, as I do so much enjoy.

Well, good things don't have to last forever.

The fact is that the identity of these dyes could perhaps give us a hunch about the geographic position of the weavers too.

Over 30 years ago already, promoters of an Armenian origin of the rug jumped on this band-wagon despite an absolute lack of scientific evidence: Volkmar Ganzthorn (1) 'improved' an earlier piece of fiction written by U. Schurmann (2) about the weaving of the Pazyryk rug in Armenia, positing that red shades of the Pazyryk rug were obtained with Armenian cochineal (3), falsely inducing his readers into believing that cochineal was an Armenian exclusivity at the time. He was followed by some authors of rug-books and by many blue eyed bloggers.

Ganzthorn claimed:

○ that some red shades of the Pazyryk rug were obtained with cochineal (**true**, documented in a number of scientific reports),

○ that cochineal was already 'harvested' in Armenia at the time of the rug weaving. (**True**: documented in 7th century BCE Assyrian sources).

○ that Urartu (the state which preceded the Satrapy of Armenia) was known for its textiles (although its specialties were iron- and bronze working and horse breeding). (**True**: documented by Assyrian tablets describing the booty taken by Sargon II in Urartu in 714 BCE, which included 130 tunics of various colors, including purple, made of flax and wool) (4)

○ that Armenians inherited the technology of **pile carpet** weaving from Urartu (5), dyed the wool of the Pazyryk Rug

with Armenian cochineal and wove the Pazyryk rug 'to order' for the future resident of Pazyryk kurgan nr 5. (2) **These last three claims are bogus!** Ganzthorn and Schurmann made them up fully out of thin air. The only (roughly contemporaneous) source we have is Xenophon (ca 355 BCE) who mentions that Medians (not Armenians) produced expensive rugs featuring a beautiful red, but Xenophon did not bother to tell us **whether these Median rugs were pile rugs**, or whether they were kilims, felt rugs, composites of kilim and felt rugs, or embroideries.

Xenophon also tells us that the Achaemenid King of Kings Cyrus had a great liking and a connoisseur's eye for various red shades. '*..He ordered to bring in other Median clothes,....he did not spare purple cloaks, dark-red, crimson, or scarlet ones..*' (Cyropaedia, VIII, III, 3)
N.V. Polosmak (13) suggests that this love for red '*..probably is rooted in the Indo-Iranian history of the Persians..*' Also the Pazyryk culture loved red shades very much.

About the former Urartians' or early Armenians' talent for making **any kind of carpet** we know absolutely nothing. There is no document or archeological discovery supporting such a theory as far as I know.

Imho, it is credible that some red shades dyed for Median rugs were made with cochineal. The core of Median territory being situated near Ekbatana,(6) their former capital, in the Zagros, South of the former Urartian territory (then Armenian Satrapy of the Achaemenid Empire), it is also credible that they could have sourced at least part of these dyes from near-by Armenia.

Credible, but fully undocumented and unproven.

It is surely a bit abusing our credulity to pretend that the fact that the Ararat piedmont was indeed a great source of cochineal and that Urartians too where making reputed textiles as early as the 7th century BCE, would ipso facto designate the 3th-4th century BCE Armenians as the weavers and suppliers of a pile rug ordered by the chief of the most eastern of all the Scythian / Saka cultures (about 5000 km as the bird fly, and with the Pamir range in between).

Furthermore, cochineal was also found in the famous wall-hangings and in other textiles of the Pazyryk culture. (7) Using the same twisted logic, Ganzthorn should have attributed also these other (typically Scythian-) artifacts to Armenian weavers.

It is surely quite a bit more credible that the Pazyryk culture would have imported loads of Ararat/Araxes cochineal to dye its wool.

Actually quite a lot of loads would have been necessary, since all Eurasian varieties of cochineal (including the Armenian and Polish ones) contain very little coloring substances, much less than American cochineal: On average, depending on the quality of the source, 'Armenian' cochineal contains about 2 times less dyeing substance than the 'Polish' variety and nearly 20 times less than the Mexican variety.

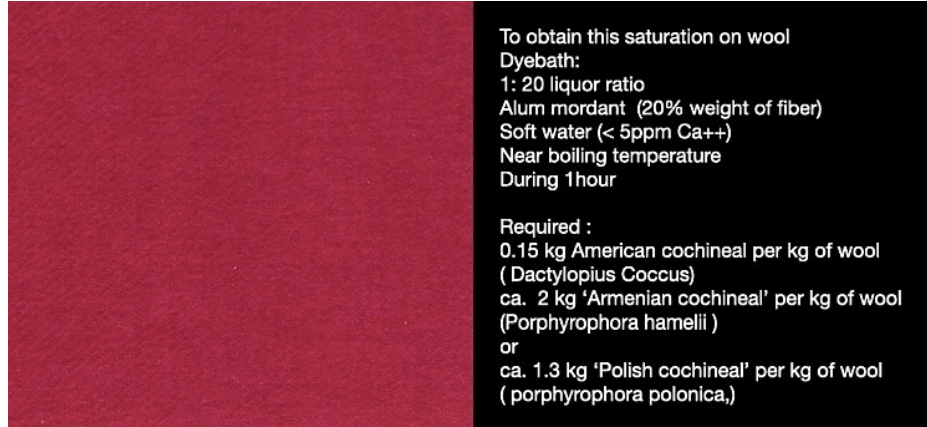


FIG 1 Quantities of European cochineal (Porphyrofora Hamelii (Armenian) or Porphyrofora Polonica (Polish) vs American cochineal (Dactylopius Coccus) needed to obtain the same saturated red. (Own dyeing)

Btw. any mischievous guy (like me) could question the competitiveness of 'Armenian' cochineal vs the 'Polish' variety, from the point of view of a south-eastern Siberian Scythian tribe, which could more easily have operated inside of the aptly named 'Scythian steppe' and dealt only with people speaking similar dialects.



FIG 2 The Scythian steppe (Source of this excellent picture is Simon Netschev)

If I am not mistaken, there are pretty good clues that another Scythian culture roamed even the northern European area, Poland included: The 5th century BCE Witaszkovo (Vettersfelde) Scythian 'hoard' for example.



FIG 3 Some of the Scythian artifacts discovered at Witaszkovo (Vettersfelde), Poland.

Alas, recent scientific progress has put some question marks even behind the reasonable theory of an import of Armenian- (or Polish) cochineal into the Altai:

O Generations of entomologists have shown that usable cochineal varieties are native from many regions of Eurasia, not only Poland or Armenia.. The entomologist R.V. Jashenko (8) lists already over 50 species, of which about 15 could be collected, still today, in quantities sufficient to justify their use in dyeing. So far we can be sure of only three specific species being used in antique historical textiles. This being due to the fact that, until recently, analytic methods did not allow to differentiate between the various species of Eurasian cochineal used in dyeing old textiles, not even between the largely used 'Armenian'- and 'Polish' varieties.

Only from the early 1990s onward, **J. Wouters & A. Verecken**, using advanced HPLC methods (9), have been able to propose to the scientific community and to archeologists a graphical system, based on the relative proportions of minor dye components (mainly kermesic- and flavokermesic acids and three other colorless impurities), which now allows to distinguish between the two main Eurasian cochineal species and the American variety. Still not an easy task I suppose.

O Jashenko and other entomologists have also shown that even when one limits the discussion to the three best known Eurasian species, the geographical distribution of these species is very large indeed, which imho means that

many cultures, including Scythians, would have been able to use locally gathered insects, or to import the dye from nearby sources.

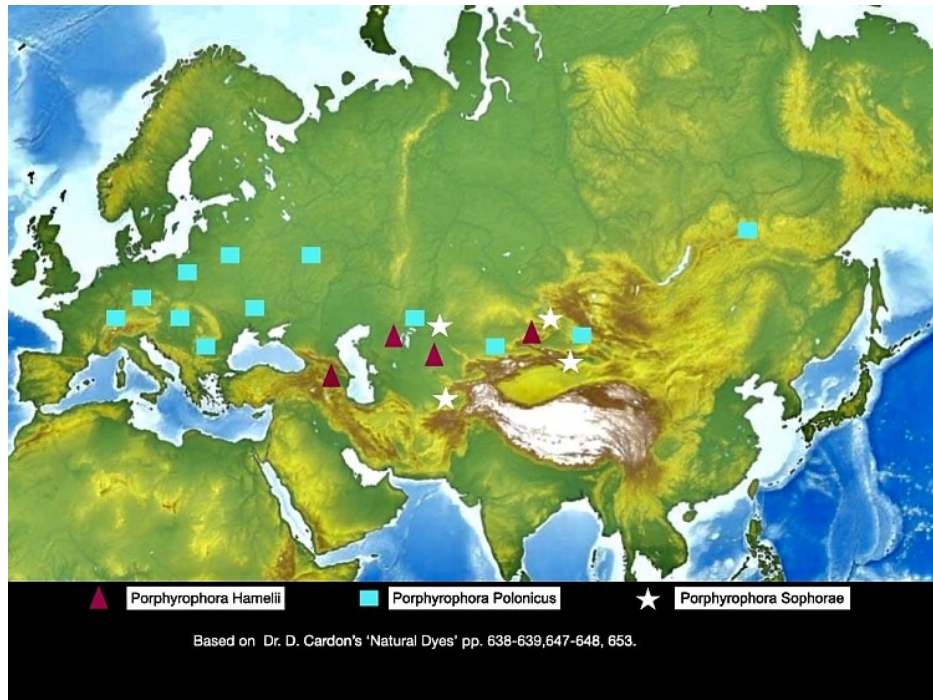


FIG 4 Distribution of the three major species of Porphyrophora in Eurasia (After Dr. D. Cardon pp 638-639,647, 653.)



See you next post

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; October 22nd, 2021 at 10:27 PM.



September 16th, 2021, 02:31 PM

#14

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149



Suite (et pas fin)

One can surely expect that thanks to Wouters and Verecken, new archeological studies will soon tell us much more about the sources of the dyes.

Appetizer :

O H. Boehmer & J. Thompson (10) claim that the cochineal species used by the Pazyryk culture in their textiles (including in the famous pile rug) was not *Porphyrophora hamelii* (Armenian variety) but *Porphyrophora polonica*.

O Jian Liu identifies *Porphyrophora sophorae* in textiles discovered in graves of a semi-settled culture contemporaneous with the Pazyryk people and living next door, so to speak, at the fringes of the northern Takla makan (11) (12).

O Another recent paper (on which I could not lay my hands yet) suggests the presence of *P. Sophorae* in the Pazyryk rug too.

Conclusion:

The large geographical distribution of two of the three main Eurasian cochineal species makes a decision about the localisation of the weavers of the Pazyryk impossible at this stage.

However any trustworthy confirmation of the presence of *Porphyrophora Sophorae* in the rug would rather point to a central- or East Asian origin, since it seems unlikely that any western Asian weaver would have preferred using this variety instead of near-by 'Armenian' or 'Polish' ones.

I am probably stating the obvious, but it seems to me that looking for the identity of the **yellow dyes** present in the rug may be a bit more promising, for the following reasons:

O Botanical sources of good yellow natural dyes are plentiful, easily available anywhere through Eurasia including from some plants with a limited geographical distribution.

O The Scythians, like their cousins the Persians, had a strong preference for various, possibly saturated red shades for their textiles (13). A credible incentive for going to the trouble of far away sourcing, if needed.

Yellow shades, to the contrary, did not have any particular prestige and could have been easily sourced locally.

Imho, there was therefore no reason for importing any yellow dye from far away.

O If an analysis of the yellow dyes used in the Pazyryk would show the presence of a yellow supplied by a plant growing exclusively either in western- or in eastern Eurasia, we could have made a good step forward in identifying the weaver.

I am alluding for example to *Sophora Japonica*, native of Korea, northern China and eastern Asia and documented as being already used by dyers in the region during the first millenary BCE (14) or *Cotinus Cogggyria* which is native of Asia Minor and southern Europe.

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; September 16th, 2021 at 03:06 PM.



September 16th, 2021,
02:35 PM

#15

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
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Join Date: Oct 2009
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Notes

(1) V. Ganzthorn. *Les Tapis d'Orient*. Taschen edit. 1998

(2) Ulrich Schurmann. The Pazyryk Its use and origin. Symposium of the Armenian Rugs Society New York 1982, Schurmann's wondrously creative brain posited that Scythians roaming Median territory belonged to the Pazyryk culture and built their Iranian capital (their holiday home so to speak), Sakik, near Lake Urmia, South of Armenia. A totally dreamed up-city, its location unknown, any description being purely imaginary. Schurmann derived the name of the bogus capital from 'Saka', the name which Persians gave to Scythians, which wasn't any compliment, since it is said to mean 'dog'. It surely wasn't how they called themselves!: It is even quite unlikely that they used any generic name equivalent to Scythians or Saka. One can rather suppose that each Scythian culture used a specific tribal name.

According to Schurmann, the fabled Scythian 'King of Sakik' could even have ordered the famous carpet from nearby Armenian weavers and carried it with him, back to the Altai !!

(To enjoy a well deserved retirement at the reasonably venerable age of 300 years, in his cosy kurgan nr 5, I guess).

Page 28. '...It came to my mind that the bashliks shown in the Pazyryk rug belong to a tribe of Scyths that were resident in the former Urartu region and I have found two seals that seem to support my idea. One is a rolling seal showing a bow-shooting warrior on his horse (16). The other one, apparently a signet ring, shows a kingly personage on a boar hunt. Could it perhaps be the king or prince who is buried in the 5th Kurgan..' Sic.

What is instead considered factual by historians is that unidentified nomadic horsemen and archers, called Cimmerians by the Greeks (perhaps a Scythian tribe too), wreaked havoc all over Urartu during the 8th and late 7th centuries BCE, bringing the state close to annihilation.

According to Herodotus, around the mid 7th century, another group of unidentified Scythian troublemakers annoyed the Medians, until King Cyaxares booted them out in 625. BCE.

P.R. Helm. Herodotus 'Medicos logos' and Median History. *Iran J.* Vol 19; pp. 85-90.

L. Lebedynsky. *Les Cimmeriens. Les premiers nomades des steppes europeennes.* 2004

D. Nijssen. Cimmerians and Scythians: Herodotus reconsidered. *Ancient World Magazine.* 2018

A bit later ,in ca. 609 BCE ,other unidentified Scythians, (possibly a group of Massagetae, aka Saka Maa), allied with Babylonians and Medians, terminated the Neo-Assyrian Kingdom. While the Medians and the Babylonians shared the Assyrian territory, these Scythians either returned to their mother tribe or were assimilated by the Medians.

Please keep present that all this happened during the 7th century BCE, **3 or 4 centuries before the weaving of the rug**. No Independant Scythian tribe would have been able to stand its own ground inside of the mighty 4th-3rd BCE Achaemenid Empire.

(3) At the time of his paper, positing the Armenian origin of the Pazyryk dyes, Ganzthorn should have known that it was still technically impossible to identify any cochineal as being specifically Armenian. Prof. Whiting, at the time one of the best specialists of the analytical identification of natural dyes (and a devoted ruggie) wrote that using the best method available in 1982, (thin layer chromatography,TLC) he could not confirm nor disprove that the Pazyryk dye was Armenian cochineal.

Mark. C. Whiting (Bristol University). Report on dyes of Pazyryk carpet. *Oriental Carpet and textile studies TS vol 1* 1985. pp. 18-22. And Conference on Oriental Carpet. London 1983.

(4)

D. Cardon *Natural Dyes.* pp. 650-651

B. Goekce. Craftsmen and manufacturers in the Urartian Civilization. *Anatolica XL* p.25.

Wikipedia. *The Economy of Urartu.*

(5). There is no document, no discovery allowing us to suppose that **pile** rugs were woven by the Urartians. The reports in some magazines that pile rug fragments were excavated at Karmir-Blur (aka Teishebani, Urartu / Armenia) and that they featured the symmetric knot, traditionally used by much later Armenian- (and Ottoman) weavers, are fake news.

It is therefore preposterous to claim, as some do, that the symmetric knot of the Pazyryk proves its weaving by Armenians:

There is no trace of such a discovery in scientific papers describing the results of the excavations at Teishebani or anywhere else. It would surely have made a huge buzz worldwide!

Btw. the author of this joke may have scored an own goal: The one hundred year-old fragment of pile-rug excavated in a Bashadar kurgan (Pazyryk culture!) was woven with the asymmetric knot. And was nearly twice as densely woven as the Pazyryk.

(6) The modern Hamadan.

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; October 7th, 2021 at 06:31 PM.



September 16th, 2021,
02:40 PM

#16

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149



(7) D. Cardon. Natural Dyes. pp 654. Unspecified Cochineal identified in the Pazyryk pile rug and in one felt. As prof Cardon puts it: '*...Further dye analysis of these species and all species of Porphyrophora present in central Asia, at their different stages, are needed..*'

(8) D. Cardon Natural Dyes. pp. 635-636. Mentioning Jashenko's and other entomologists' work. Below, my summary of Dr Cardon's pages 638-639, 647, 653

The three main Porphyrophora species are:

O. Porphyrophora polonica ('Polish' cochineal), which has a very wide geographical distribution, going from Switzerland in the West to Mongolia in the East, including Ukraine, Kazakstan, the southern Altai and Sayan mountains, among others, some regions in which Jashenko identified a large potential supply.

O. Porphyrophora hamelii ('Armenian' cochineal) which has also a rather large geographical distribution in 'solonchaks' (dry steppe) at the foot of Mount Ararat in Armenia and near the Araxes River, (were it was well documented in the antiquity) but also in various semi-desertic or marshy areas of Central Asia, from the Caspian Sea to the south-western Siberian depression.

O. Porphyrophora sophorae. 'Sophora carmine') fairly common in Uzbekistan and Kazakstan, near lake Balkash and on the north of the Takla makan, on the margin of lakes and marshes

(9) D. Cardon. Natural Dyes. pp. 649. Cit. Wouters & Verecken 1991.

(10) H. Boehmer & J. Thomson. The Pazyryk carpet: A technical discussion. Notes in the History of Art. Vol 10, nr 4 'The Dating of Pazyryk', pp 30-36, 1991. University of Chicago Press.

'...It is the most northerly species, Porphyrophora polonica, that appears to have been used to dye the felt. [...] The red pile of the carpet was found to contain the same insect dye components as the felts. The ratio of carminic to karmesic acid was 8:1. [...] However, the presence in the carpet of a red dye derived from an insect found in the steppe region, as opposed to one available on or near the Iranian plateau (Ararat Kermes) that has been known and used since antiquity, is strong evidence that the Pazyryk carpet did not come from the Iranian plateau, but farther to the north. This finding supports the view that the steppe-related elements in its essentially Achaemenid design indicate a Central Asian provenance..' *..as described at page 30, the 'Achaemenid design' refers only to the most northerly Central Asian part of the Achaemenid territory..'*

(11) Jian Liu & al. 2500 year-old history of the use of natural dyes in Northwest China. Dyes and Pigments. Vol 187. 2021.

'..Two insect dyes were used to color textiles in early iron Age'

'..the presence of Porphyrophora species in Subeixi textiles suggests that the early transmission of the steppe culture from the south of Siberia to the Turpan basin occurred in the early Iron Age..'

The Subeixi culture lived in the Turpan Basin along the northern limit of the Takla makan desert, so to speak next door to the contemporaneous Altai Pazyryk culture. They, had commercial contacts with them, were a semi-settled pastoral and agricultural society too, which raised horses, sheep, cattle, used the same weapons than the Pazyryk culture, grew various cereals and left traces of a rather intensive textile activity and of sophisticated wood working including peg-legs.

I am sure that Filiberto will agree with me that they were highly civilized blokes! They were eating pasta (not sure about ravioli though) and played ball since three leather balls were excavated in tombs. (Well Filiberto, they probably did not play Calcio, rather polo I suppose. But nobody is perfect.)

(12) Kramell A, Li X and al. Teintures des vêtements et accessoires textiles de l'age du bronze tardif du site archeologique de Yanghai, Turfan, Chine: determination des fibres, analyse des couleurs et datation. Quaternary International 348: 214-223. 2014.

(13) Polosmak N.V. Purple and Gold over Thousands of years. Science First Hand. Vol 4 Nr 1, 2005. *'..The three colorants (Note: kermes, rubbia and cochineal) identified in the Pazyryk fabrics produced red color. Though ancient dyers could use any of the identified dyestuffs to gain red color, they always used a combination of the three dyestuffs in different proportions. This stable combination of three red dyes suggests that the dyers might have tried to achieve particular shades of red and, unlike us, probably saw the difference between these shades..'*

N.B. 1: The identification of the dyes is based on older work, Wouters' and Verecken's testing protocol for cochineals was not yet applied.

N.B. 2: The presence of kermes (collected in the Mediterranean areas only) in Pazyryk textiles, would show, if confirmed, that the Pazyryk culture was willing and able to get dye from far away.

(14) In spite of its name Sophora japonica was not native of Japan (D. Cardon p 210)

(15) D.Cardon p 191-192

(16) The cylinder seal (showing a probably Scythian horseman performing the so-called Parthian shot), which Schurmann uses as 'evidence' for his theory (and which he is careful not to identify), belongs in fact to the British Museum (nr 89816). The B.M. curator does not mention any place of discovery, nor would he assert any age. His

guess is an Achaemenid- or a later Greco-Scythian origin. Again Schurmann cooked it up, scoring quite high on the Pinocchio scale.

Believe it or not, but this is it 🤔🤔🤔

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi: October 7th, 2021 at 06:25 PM.

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September 16th, 2021,
04:13 PM

#17

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149



Hi Chuck,

Do you believe it possible that stacks of horn on a house could have the same meaning in Thailand than it has in Mediterranean countries (Italy, Spain, France included?)

I'll follow your lead and think it over with a glass of Barolo and a bit of sardinian cheese. 🤔🤔🤔

Pierre

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September 28th, 2021,
12:07 PM

#18

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149



Will the central field motif of the Pazyryk Rug give us any additional clue about the origin of its weavers ?

Well, I am sorry but it does not seem very likely.

This topic too was discussed in some details in the 2014 thread 'The Pazyryk Rug and Felts' (1). I shall add some related facts, new arguments and pictures.

Once more we must start from Schurmann's fabrications:

Those who managed to stay awake through my previous posts may remember that he cooked-up the theory that the Pazyryk rug was woven by Armenian weavers working on order for a Scythian King residing right in the middle of the mighty Achaemenid Empire, south of the Armenian Satrapy, and that this rug somehow found safely its way to barrow number 5 at Pazyryk.

One of Schurmann's most 'persuasive proofs' for this theory was the 8-pointed star woven in the central field and in one of the secondary borders of the rug.



FIG 1 Detail of the Pazyryk field motif

Schurmann posited that this motif was copied from one of the alabaster thresholds of the Neo-Assyrian Northern Palace of Nineveh. He also implied that the 'rug-like' design of the threshold 'proves' that local people (Armenians), wove pile rugs.



FIG 2. Nineveh threshold. Northern Palace. Neo-Assyrian ca. 620 BCE

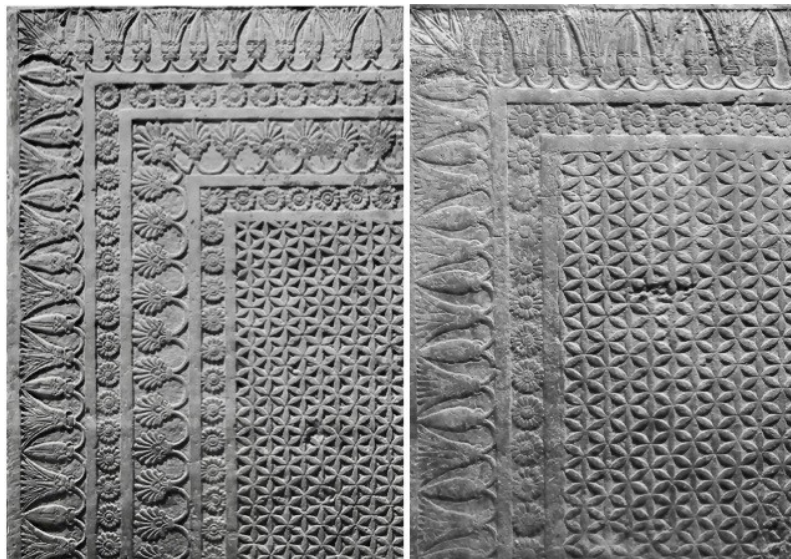


FIG 3. Two more alabaster thresholds. Same Palace.

However, as usual, his theory doesn't hold too much water:

O. The Pazyryk rug was woven during the **3rd or 4th century BCE**, as confirmed by C14 testing. This is three centuries after the fall, sack and complete destruction of Nineveh and its Palace, in 612 BCE, by the joint forces of the Babylonians, the Medians and some Scythians (2). The termination of the Neo-Assyrian state followed soon. Never again was Nineveh a political center. It is unlikely that anybody could have been inspired centuries later by a threshold buried deep under the rubbles of the Palace.

○. The motif of the threshold was not specifically Neo-Assyrian, not even specifically Mesopotamian. It was known long before and had been used by a number of antique Eurasian cultures.

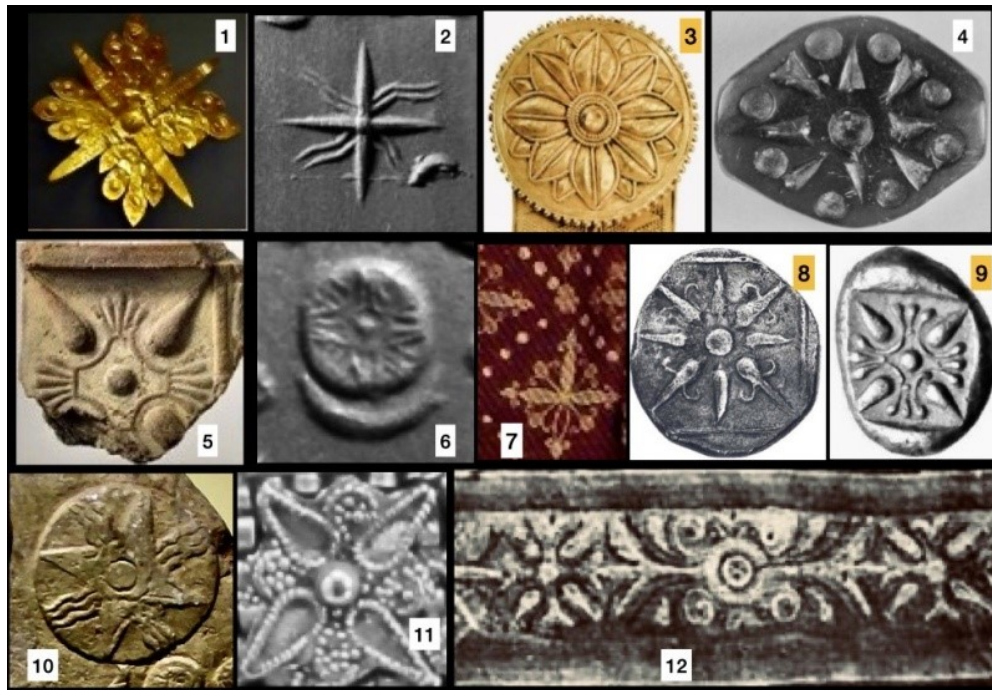


FIG 4. Pazyryk stars a gogo!

1. Mycenaean. 12th BCE
2. Assyrian seal. 14th-13th BCE
3. Achaemenid. 4th BCE.
4. Minoan seal. 18th-15th BCE
5. Phrygian tile. 5th BCE
6. Babylonian seal. 20th-17th BCE.
7. Sogdian? Silk. Yingpan man. 4th-to 5th CE
8. Greek. Crete. Itanos. Silver stater. 5th BCE
9. Greek. Miletus. Coin. 6th- 5th BCE
10. Kassite Babylonian stele. 15th-11th BCE
11. Etruscan earrings. 6th-4th BCE.
12. Noyon Ula, Xiong Nu tumb. Embroidered rug. Kushan-made? 1st BCE-1st CE.

It was one of these ubiquitous star- and rosette motifs found on artifacts all over the Eurasian world, since millenaries. Some motifs were, at least initially, religious symbols, like the 8-pointed stars dubbed 'Ishtar-', 'Inanna-' or 'Shamash stars' (The latter being similar to the 'Pazyryk' star).



FIG 5. Ishtar and Shamash-stars

Other stars started their career as mere decorative motifs and were promoted to religious symbols much later. For example the 6- and 5-pointed stars.

The comparisons between the motifs on old Mesopotamian cylinder seals (FIG 6 & 7), show that even in their religious / symbolic function, the star motifs could vary very much, even inside the same cultures and epochs.



FIG 6. Cylinder seals: Elam, Babylonian, Kassite Babylonian.



FIG 7. Cylinder seals: Kassite Babylonian, Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian.

It appears that by the time of the weaving of the Pazyryk carpet, many star- and rosette motifs were already purely decorative. The Achaemenids in particular were quite addicted to the rosette.

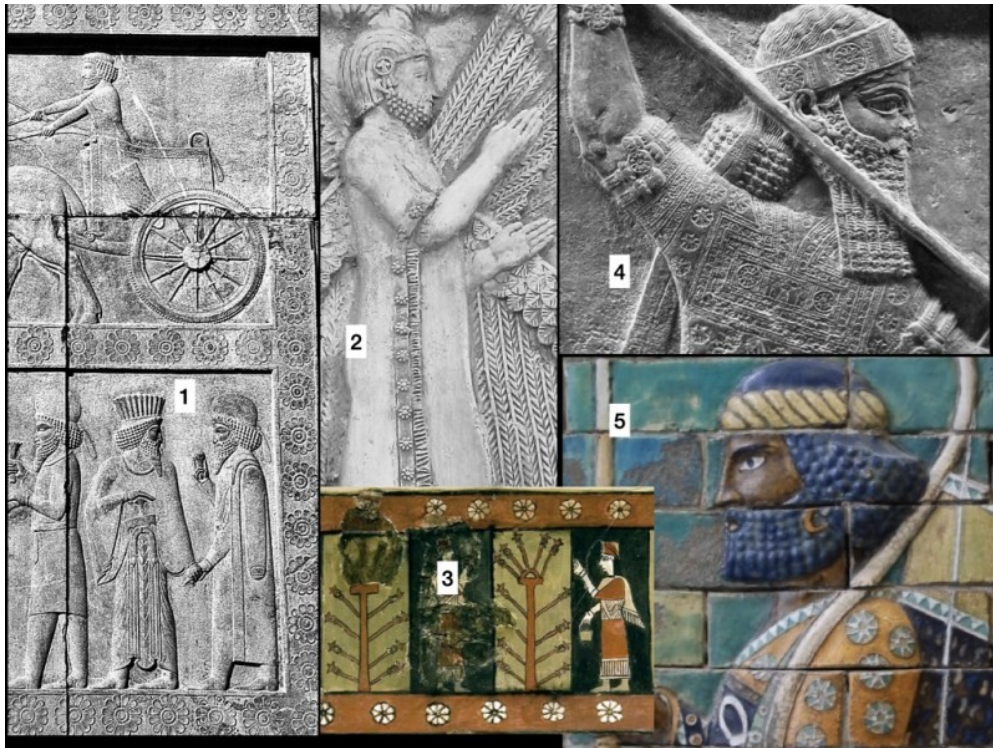


FIG 8. Decorative rosettes: 1, 2 and 5 Achaemenid. 4 Neo Assyrian. 3. Urartian.

The Scythians too, Pazyryk culture included, used various types of rosettes to adorn their artifacts. Perhaps influenced by contemporaneous Greek- and Persian art.
 Btw, the six-pointed star with horse heads (FIG 9.2) seems in the same funeral Scythian spirit as the horse border of the Pazyryk rug. 😊



Fig 9.1. Scythian artifacts with rosettes.

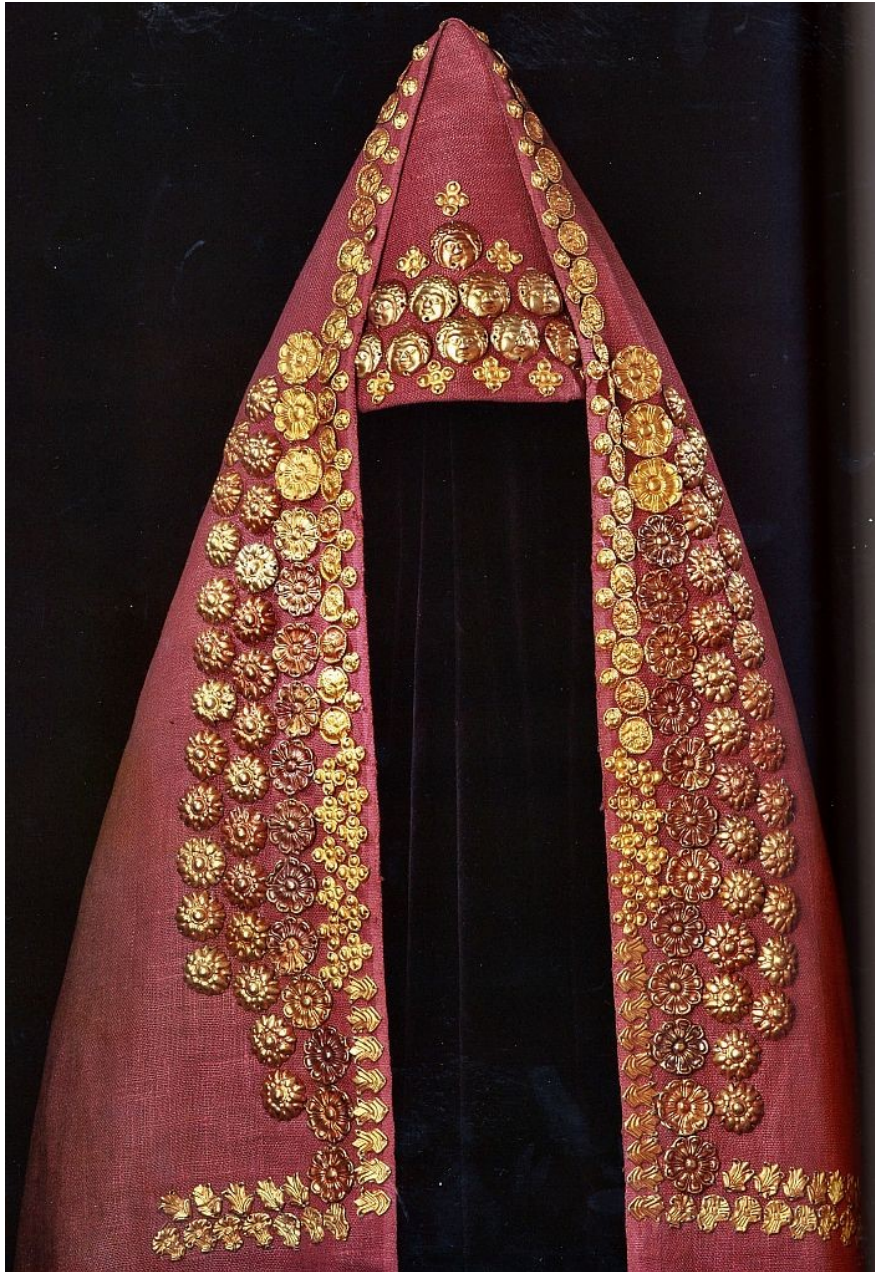


FIG 9.2. Scythian rosettes aplenty. The Tetianyna Dame's headgear. 4th century BCE.

Several applique-felt saddle covers, filled with rosettes, have been excavated from the same kurgan 5 as the Pazyryk rug.



FIG 10. Saddle covers. Pazyryk kurgan 5. 4th-3rd century BCE

○. I do believe that such a simple motif like the Pazyryk star has been 'invented' independently in regions as distant as the Altai, Mesopotamia, Greece, Crete and Tuscany, merely inspired by common flowers or the sky that we all share.

But in the very unlikely case that the Pazyryk Scythians would have suffered from a severe congenital lack of imagination, they could still have been inspired by similar stars on artifacts and coins of **contemporaneous cultures**, with which Scythian tribes had commercial **contacts**:

- For example with Miletus, a Western Anatolian Greek city (mostly controlled by the Achaemenid Empire). (3) Its coins carried quite often a replica of the Pazyryk star. (FIG 11).
- With one of the many Miletus colonies spread at the fringes of Western Scythian territory or in it, like Olbia for example. (4)
- With the Sindis, people from the northern shore of the Black Sea, (5) active in the cereal trade with Athens, perhaps Herodotus' 'Farmer Scythians' .



FIG 11. Miletus, Olbia and Sindi coins
1-4. Miletus coins. 5. Olbia coin. 6. Sindi coin.

I believe that nobody would seriously suggest that these analogies could identify any of these places as being the Pazyryk rug weavers' abode.

○. Schurmann's theory that the Nineveh Palace threshold looked like a carpet and that this 'proved' that this area of western Asia was actively weaving pile rugs already during the 6th-7th century BCE is fully unsubstantiated IMHO.

Btw. many extant Roman mosaic floors look like carpets too, but, as far as I know, the extensive Roman archives do not mention any pile-rug weaving in the Empire.

Given the advanced pile-rug weaving technique displayed by the Bashadar- and Pazyryk rugs,

- It seems obvious that at least one Eurasian culture had developed the technology long before the 4th-3rd century.
- Such a long time would make it likely that other cultures had managed to acquire the technology too at the time of the weaving of these extant pieces.
- The acquisition of pile-rug weaving capabilities by these other cultures may have been fostered by an old knowledge of sophisticated textile weaving. (6) .

But beyond that, there is only one proven fact: The Bashadar - and the Pazyryk were the only extant pile rugs known before the very recent discoveries of one even older extant rug of undefined origin (published by M. Franes (7), C14-dated 7th-4th century BCE by two reputed labs!) and some small and coarse fragments, in symmetrical knots, unearthed in the Yanghai cemetery, near Turfan, Northern Taklamakan (8), some being datable between the 11th and the 8th BCE !



FIG 12. Candidate for the title of oldest little-damaged pile-rug in the world. Source M. Franes.

Thereafter, there was a wide gap of at least three centuries, without other significant trace of pile-rug weaving anywhere.

Very few pile rugs (supposedly-) dated from around the 1st century CE have been discovered.

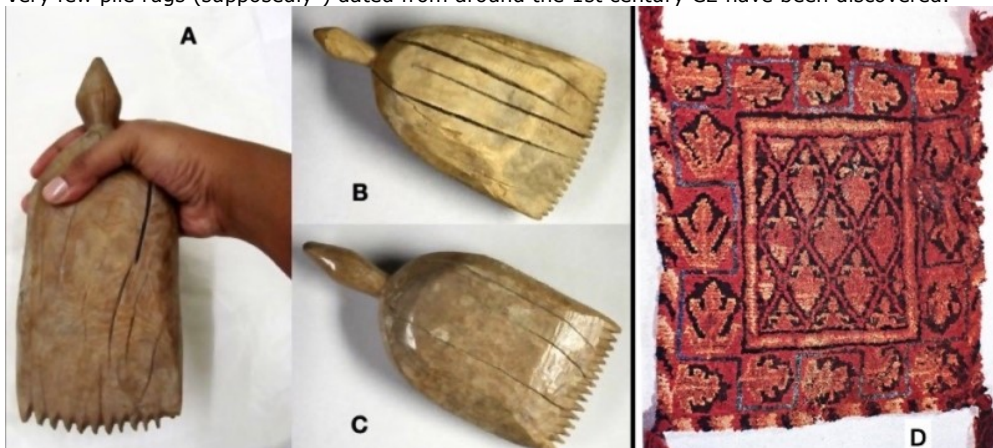


FIG 13. Rug and rug weaving tools. ca. 1st CE. Carpet: Shampula (Khotan Taklamakan)

Extant fragments, C14-dated between the 4th and the 7th century CE, remain extremely rare too, none approaching the technical mastery of the Pazyryk- and Bashadar weavings.

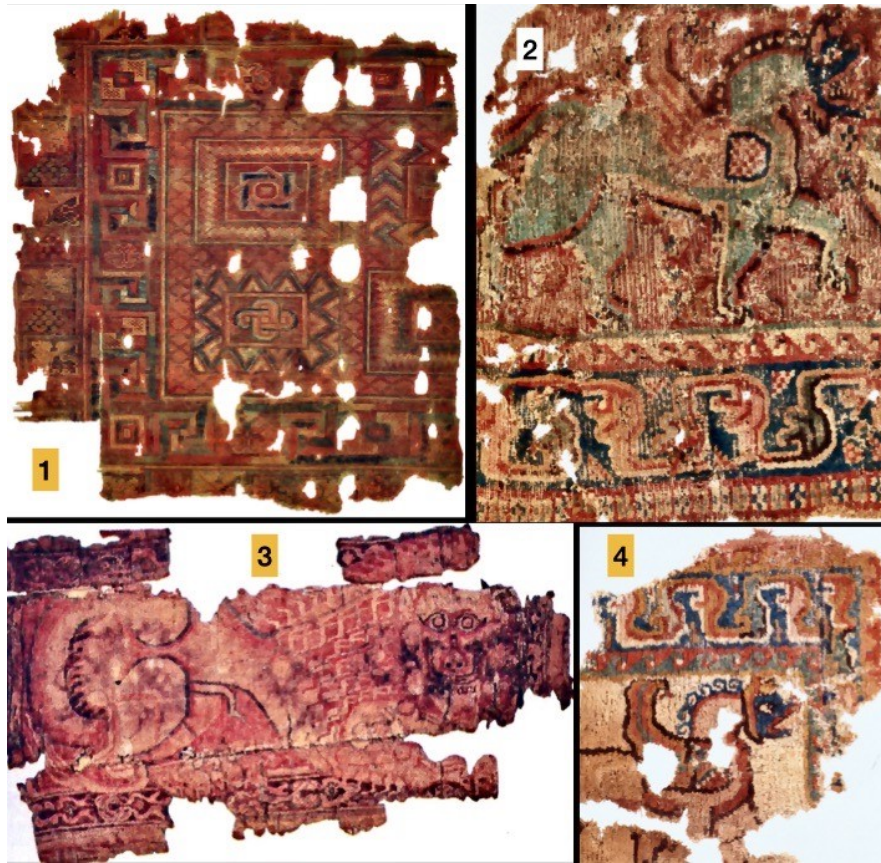


FIG 14. Rugs datable ca. 4th to 7th centuries CE. Source of 2 ,3,4: F. Spuhler.

These latter fragments were mostly retrieved in an area including Taklamakan oases, Bactriana and northern Afghanistan (7, 8) It seems therefore possible that cultures of this region too already wove pile rugs around the 4th-3rd BCE or before. A reasonable theory, but not a proven fact yet.

The lack of discoveries of extant rugs is surely due in good part to the rarity of climate- and soil conditions favorable to the conservation of wool, to unfavorable burial traditions of many populations and to destructions caused by tomb robbers, but this rarity and the inferior weaving quality may also signal a kind of dark age of pile-rug weaving following the heydays of the Scythian culture. Just a thought.

But let's not digress and let's return to the question: Does the 'Pazyryk star' give us any information about the place of weaving of the rug? IMHO the answer is clearly NO.

At this stage, I remain of the opinion that the Pazyryk people themselves are the safest bet, followed by others, more western Scythians tribes, by an undefined population of the area encompassing the Taklamakan and

Bactriana, and by the Medians.



See you next post for some foot notes. (It always make your posts looking more serious)

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; October 7th, 2021 at 06:22 PM.



September 28th, 2021, 12:10 PM

[Pierre Galafassi](#)
Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
Posts: 149

#19

Notes.

(1)
Turkotek archive. The Pazyryk Rug and Felts. http://www.turkotek.com/misc_00141/Pazyryk.html

(2)
Laroslav Lebedinsky. Les Scythes. 2011.
Laroslav Lebedinsky. Les Cimmeriens. 2004
Dan Nijssen. VUU Amsterdam. Cimmericians and Scythians. Herodotus reconsidered. Ancient world magazine. 2018.

Wikipedia. Nineveh. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineveh>

(3)

Miletus. Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miletus>

Miletus coins: <https://www.coinarchives.com/a/results.php?>

(4)

Olbia coins: <https://coinweek.com/ancient-coins/olbia-ancient-greek-coins-of-the-black-seas-northern-coast/>

(5)

Sindi people. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sindi_people

(6)

A not excessively harebrained theory suggests that if the weavers of the Pazyryk- and Bashadar rugs were subjects of the Achaemenid Empire, they were talented textile weavers reputed in the Empire, and therefore probably represented on the Apadana freeze (Persepolis) carrying a tribute of textiles. Indeed several delegations of tribute bearers do carry textiles. At least one delegation is clearly identified as being Scythian (Sakas tigraxaudas). The identification of several other delegations is disputed among experts. The comparison with the throne bearers in the reliefs of Xerxes'- and Darius' tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam suggests that at least one additional textile-bearing delegation represented on the Apadana could be Scythian too. (Sakas haumavarga are a candidate). (The Pazyryk Scythians, living ca. 5000 km from the frontiers of the Achaemenid Empire, were obviously not represented on the freeze)

(7)

M. Franses. *In the Beginning. Hali 200. 2019, pp. 138-145*

(8)

Zhang He. *Knotted carpets from the Taklamaken. The Silk Road 17. 2019, pp. 36-64*

F. Spuhler. *Pre-Islamic Carpets and Textiles from Eastern Lands. pp. 1-65*

Last edited by Pierre Galafassi; September 30th, 2021 at 05:56 PM.



October 5th, 2021, 12:00 PM

#20

[Pierre Galafassi](#)

Members

Join Date: Oct 2009
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Hi guys,

Let's go back to the topic of the dyes used by the Pazyryk weavers.

(Sorry for this confusing back and forth movement, but one has to stay tuned)

In a very recent paper which I just finished reading (17), S.V. Pankova focusses on the textile fragments found in the Arzhan necropolis situated about 200 km Northeast of Pazyryk. The kurgans date from the earliest Scythian period, 8th BCE, more than four centuries earlier than kurgan 5 at Pazyryk (18). According to some scholars, this culture could have been the cradle not only of the Pazyryk culture but of many other Scythian cultures. Gold artifacts of amazing sophistication have been excavated (19), which have nothing to envy to the three centuries younger finds in Crimean Scythian kurgans (20).



FIG 5. Arzhan 2 barrow, Tuva. Gold and Silver.

Pankova notes the **variety of weaving techniques** utilized and reports interesting results of HPLC dye analysis.

6 fragments containing red dyes gave evidence of usage of:

○ at least 2 species of Rubbia. (21)

○ at least 3 different insect dyes (Porphyrophora, Lac and Kermes).

Kermes was the most frequently used in these fragments. It was surely imported from the Mediterranean shores (22), confirming D. Cardon's opinion (23) that loads of Kermes were travelling Eastward very early in History.

Lac was imported too, perhaps from India where it was used already in the 15th BCE (24).

Porphyrophora varieties could have been sourced locally or imported.

Four out of six fragments gave evidence of mixtures of two or more red dyes: These early Scythians were apparently choosy in matters of red shades.

Pankova seems to think that the textiles found in the kurgan were quite advanced too for their time. An opinion which Gleba (25) may share: Quote: *'..twills are also present at the earlier Altai sites Arzhan 1, Ak Alakha 1 etc..'. It should be noted that no twills have been identified from Greece or the Near East from pre-Roman times, yet they are very common in Italy, central- and western Europe...*

As my understanding of weaving is already abysmally low and keeps digging, I would certainly not dare to comment. (Marla, if you read Pankova's and / or Gleba's papers, please comment).



FIG 6.1 Arzhan 1 barrow. Fragments of Textiles. Hermitage Museum.

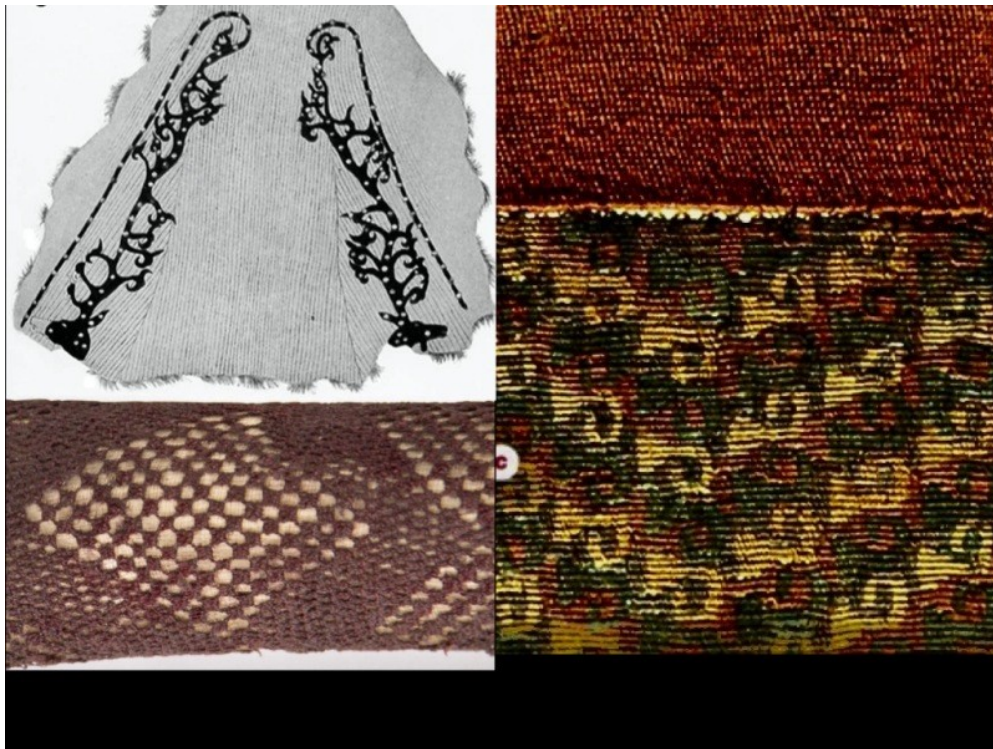


FIG 6.2. Textiles from kurgans of the Pazyryk culture.

What does it tell us about our topic, the abode of the Pazyryk rug weavers ?

Well, If the 8th century BCE Arzhan culture....

1. .. already dyed its textiles with imported red dyes, there was hardly any reason why the Pazyryk culture (its probable offspring) should not have been able to do it four centuries later. No need really to posit any dyeing of the wool (nor its weaving) 5000 km West.
2. .. routinely used all three major types of insect reds, they were surely pretty good dyers. They obviously knew, for example, that these dyes require dyeing in soft water. They knew as well the fact that these dyes allowed a variety of red shades not achievable with madder.
3. .. mastered many weaving techniques and did not have anything to envy to any other 8th century BCE culture, it seems possible that Scythians either 'invented' pile carpets too or easily learned the technique from the inventor.

As mentioned earlier in this thread, so far, in the Tarim Basin...

- Seven fragments of **pile carpets** have been discovered in the Yanghai- (Turfan) site, in tombs of quite ordinary

people, dating from two different periods, 11th-8th BCE and 7th-4th BCE. Woven on plain ground, symmetrical knot, featuring simple geometric motifs.

More finds are possible in the future since this site contains more than 2000 tombs.

- One fragment of pile carpet has been discovered in the Zhagunluk site. Woven on a twill ground (?), **asymmetrical** knot, plain off-white pile, dated around the 3rd century BCE. All being identified as mere saddle covers. (26)

Btw. from the Hami site, just East of Yanghai, comes the famous twill textile dubbed the 'Hami tartan' by the medias, which caused a tsunami of Celto-centric paper-waste a decade ago.

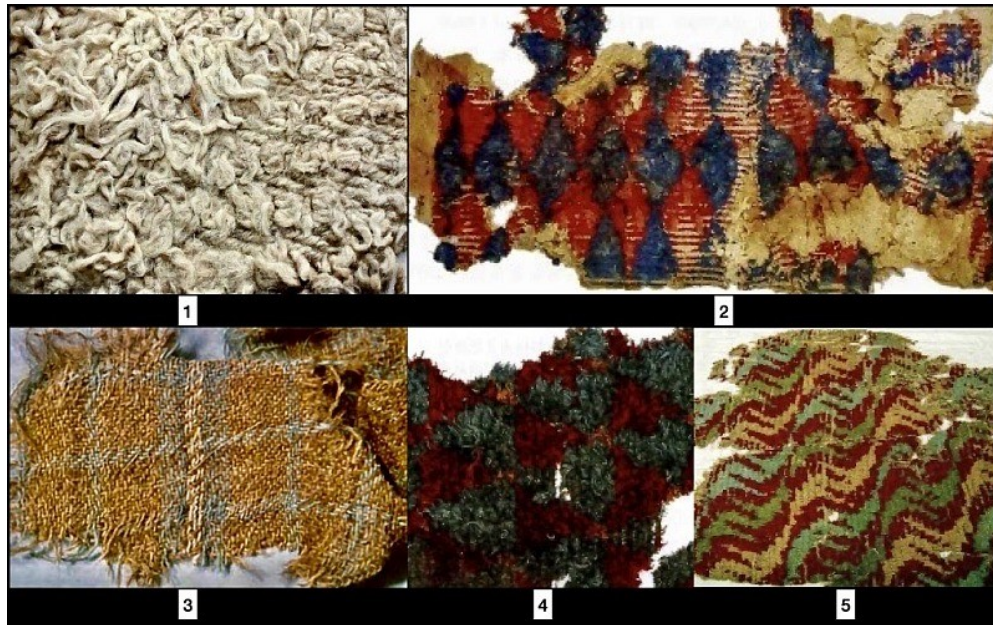


FIG 6.3 Pile carpet fragments and Hami 'tartan' twill

1. Zhagunlug pile rug ca 3rd BCE. 2, 4, 5 Yanghai pile rugs all older than 7th BCE. 3. The famous Hami twill.

We can therefore quite safely assume that these neighbors of the Pazyryk culture mastered the technique of pile rug weaving long before the weaving of the Pazyryk Rug and used it commonly enough (since they wove mundane saddle rugs, which they eventually 'wasted' in tombs).

This semi-nomad Yanghai culture of the north-eastern Tarim basin has therefore every right to be considered as a serious candidate for the weaving of the Pazyryk- and Bashadar rugs.

Imho, their proximity to the Altai further **increases the probability that the Pazyryk culture too would have mastered early the pile-rug weaving technology** and that **they** did the job. (They may have been either the 'teachers' or the 'students' of the Yanghai culture.)

Notes.

(17)

Textile finds from the Arzhan 1 barrow in Tuva. S.V. Pankova & al. Masters of the Steppe pp 397-430. Proceedings of Conf. at British Museum 2017.

(18)

Chronology of Scythian antiquities of Eurasia based on C14- and archeological data. Yu. Alekseev & al. Academia. 2001.

(19)

Gold technology of the ancient Scythians. Arzhan 2, Tuva. B. Armbruster. Archeoscience 33, pp. 187-193. 2009.

(20) A fact which should trigger some reflections by a number of slightly Eurocentric fellows, who attribute the sophistication of Western Scythian golden artifacts only to the influence (or talent) of Greek goldsmiths. (The same guys perhaps who pontificate that 'Scythian nomads' could never have woven a masterpiece like the Pazyryk rug.)

Btw. the 1200 to 800 BCE period was not the finest of the great Greek civilization. Not for nothing it was called The Greek Dark Age. May be they learned a thing or two from the Western Scythians, instead of the other way around.

(21)

O. IMHO, the presence of purpurine without alizarine in one fragment points to *Rubia peregrina* (wild madder, imported from western- or central Eurasia), *Rubia cordifolia* (Indian madder), Naga madder, (both imported from northern- or southern Himalaya Piedmonts) or *Rubia akane* (imported from Korea or China).

O. The presence in three fragments of both alizarine and purpurine, points at *Rubia tinctoria* (Madder, imported from Western Eurasia or at a, possibly local, variety of *Galium*).

(22)

D. Cardon. Natural Dyes, pp. 616. The insect Kermes vermilio lives exclusively on Quercus coccifera trees, which habitat is limited to the shores of the Mediterranean.

(23)

D. Cardon. Natural Dyes, pp. 617

(24)

D. Cardon. Natural Dyes, pp. 640-641

(25)

M. Gleba & al. Masters of the Steppe, pp. 156-166. Proceedings of Conf. at British Museum 2017.

(26)

Zhang He. Knotted Carpets from the Taklamaka, pp. 40

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