Catalogue

The immense size of the Benaki collection made the cataloguing of all the pieces dating from the 6th to the 11th century impossible and, therefore, a selection had to be made. The textiles presented here were chosen as representatives of groups with similar technical and iconographic characteristics.[1] They have been organised into groups according to their weaving structure. This arrangement has also been followed by De Jonghe in the Catalogue of the PC textiles in the Vatican, who stressed the importance of the fabrics' structure in their evaluation and understanding.[2] The catalogues of other collections also make a distinction of textile structures.[3] However, the most common concept of catalogue organisation in the past has been iconographic, a system that overlooks important aspects of the textile objects. Another concept, recently adopted in textile studies, is cataloguing according to the textiles' usage.[4] Although this method can reveal interesting conclusions about the textiles and their role in society, it has not been adopted in the present catalogue because the fragmentary nature of many of the selected pieces makes a positive identification of their usage impossible. The textiles within each group are arranged chronologically, while pieces with similar iconography have also been put together.

The cataloguing of each piece consists first of an analysis of its technical properties, e.g. the material of its warp and weft, their spinning, and the particular weaving techniques used. The letters S and Z indicate the direction of spinning of the yarns. More specifically, in the case of tapestries, what is mentioned is the presence or not of warp grouping, the type of joints, like slit tapestry or dove tailing, and other decorative techniques employed. In the case of compound weaves the type of structure (taqueté or samite) and the number of main and binding warps are also mentioned. In the case of embroideries the types of stitches are noted. All these terms are explained in the Glossary. The photographs of the textiles, where not otherwise mentioned, have been taken by myself.

After the technical analysis, a description of the decoration follows. Finally, comments on the decoration, the style and the technicalities of each textile are made, accompanied by an effort to understand its iconography and place it in the general context of artistic production of each period. Furthermore, the comparanda in other collections are mentioned and an attempt to date and, in some cases, localise the Benaki pieces is made.

The inscriptions, mostly Arabic and two Coptic, have been read, where possible, with the indispensable help of Dr. Mina Moraitou, curator of the Benaki Museum of Islamic Art in Athens, Dr. Umberto Bongianino, Departmental Lecturer in Islamic Art and Architecture at the University of Oxford and Dr. Alexandros Tsakos, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Bergen. Most of the inscriptions, however, seem to be pseudo-inscriptions or repetitive, calligraphic versions of single words or phrases and do not offer valuable information for the dating and the localisation of the textiles.

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[1] See Introduction, p. xvi-xvii.

[2] De Jonghe et al., *Ancient Tapestries*, p. 1.

[3] See, for example, Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte.*

[4] See, for example, Durand and Saragoza, *Égypte, la trame de l'Histoire,* and even more methodically and well-argued, Schrenk, *Textilien.*

I. Textiles with linen, S-spun warp

I 1. 6935

Dimensions: 26x32.8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, **slanted weft**, dove tailing, vertical weft brocading, warp grouping 2/2, 2 Z-plied cords (one of red wool and one of natural linen) on the neck slit.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Decorative weft: linen, S.

Description

Part of a tunic, decorated with a Π-shaped tapestry band, ending in two *clavi* and framed at the top side by two more tapestry bands. The Π-shaped band is decorated with a vertical row of flowers with crescent-shaped buds, alternating with rosettes and is bordered by two red running spiral meanders. The flowers on the two *clavi* are vertical, while on the horizontal part they are reclined. Each *clavus* ends in a small, red leaf, containing another flower.

A second band of the same width is attached to the outer side of the horizontal flower band. This is decorated with two types of stylised, reclined flowers, appearing alternately on a brown ground, one pink with a long, thin stem and the other white with a trefoil bud.

On the inner side of the Π-shaped band is attached another, wider band. It is decorated with an arcade of five brown arches. Beneath each arch is a plant with three buds. Under the middle arch is a bird. All the plants are inverted, except for that in the arch to the left of the bird. The flowers on the first plant, starting from the right, are pink with white and have a green, X-shaped centre. Those of the second plant are also pink and white, but tear-shaped. Those of the third plant are pink, yellow and white and have the shape of pomegranates. The last plant on the left has green, tear-shaped flowers, with yellow stripes and a red and white core. The bird in the middle arch is blue, decorated with white dots and has a brown outline, except for its head. It also has a pink, pointed beak, a pink crest, a yellow, rhomboid eye and two pink legs.

On the spandrels of the arches are pink, yellow or blue hearts. The circular pier-bases of the arches are decorated with yellow eight-pointed stars.

From this decorative band start two pairs of white, vertical tapes, running parallel and close to the *clavi*. They are made with thicker wefts and each is bordered by two stripes with triple wefts.

The top of the tunic is fastened with a cord. This is made of two pairs of yarns, one white linen and one red wool, twisted together in the S-direction. Each yarn is S-spun, Z-plied. This cord is attached to the tunic with a white thread.

Comments

This piece illustrates a standard type of tunic decoration in Late Antiquity, with a horizontal neck band, extending in two *clavi*, each ending in a leaf-shaped *sigilum*.[5] The vegetal decoration of this tunic is rich and elegant. This is an example of a purely vegetal decoration, which, according to Thomas, was especially preferred for children tunics.[6]

An identical piece is found in the MDA,[7] which Apostolaki has dated to the 4th-5th century and Tsourinaki to the 6th-7th century.[8] The decoration with trees or flowering plants and birds under arches or compartments seems to have been preferred for the horizontal bands of the tunics, as is seen on other examples in the CMA, datable to the 5th-7th centuries,[9] the KM,[10] the Liebieghaus,[11] the MHTL,[12] the Chemnitz Collection,[13] and the MNAD (fig. 1).[14] The latter, which has a two coloured decoration, including dancing figures in the adjacent *clavi*, has been radiocarbon dated to the 5th-7th century.

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[5] For tunic decoration see also chapter 2e. Uses. p. 132-133.

[6] Thomas, "Costume, Fashion and Taste", fig. 12, p. 42.

[7] Apostolaki, *Koptika Yfasmata*, no. 773, pp. 135-136, fig. 101.

[8] Sofia Tsourinaki, Technical analysis for the "Tissus" programme in the Benaki Museum database *Museumplus*.

[9] Thomas, "Material Meaning in Late Antiquity", in *Designing Identity: The Power of Textiles in Late Antiquity*, Thelma K. Thomas ed., Princeton University Press 2016, p. 42, fig. 1-1.28

[10] Thomas, "Costume", p. 95, fig. 12.

[11] Naureth, *Koptische Stoffe*, no 17, p. 37.

[12] Bourgon-Amir, *Les tapisseries*, pl. 158-159.

[13] *Ägyptische Textilien*, no 55, p. 74.

[14] Cabrera and Laura Rodríguez, "The Collection of Coptic textiles in the Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, Madrid: the results of the dye analysis and C14 testing", in *Methods of Dating Ancient Textiles,* no 27. p. 72-73.

The motif of the red flowers on the border of our tunic seems also to have been a popular one. Similar flowers decorate the hem of the dress of empress Theodora on the famous Mosaic in Saint Vitale in Ravenna, dated to the 6th century and the same flowers are repeated on two vertical golden bands that decorate the dress of the first attendant standing to the right of the empress (fig. 2). The same motif is also found as *tabulae* border band, in a piece of the Benaki (fig. 3) and the MDA, both datable between the 5th and the 7th century.[15] Based on those datings, our piece could also be placed between the 5th and 7th centuries.

The cord attached to the neck line of the tunic may indicate that this tunic was not woven to shape, since there doesn't exist any interwoven reenforcement of the neck slit.[16] Moreover, a strange feature of this tunic is the fact that the horizontal flower tapestry band is not incorporated into the weaving and is stitched to the ground fabric, although the *clavi* are woven simultaneously with the plain weave ground.

fig. 1 Part of a tunic in the MNAD (footnote 14)

fig. 2 Mosaic of Theodora, San Vitale Basilica, Ravenna in commons.wikimedia.org, author Petar Milošević.

I 2. 6940

Dimensions: 24x54.5cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, flying shuttle, vertical weft brocading, double, triple or quadraple warps.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Decorative weft: linen, S.

Description

Lower part of a linen, plain weave tunic with a tapestry decorative band in two colours, purple and white. It is decorated with a chain pattern with purple borders, consisting of seven large circles, each containing a single figure, alternately a human and an animal, framed with vines. The human figures have a vertical orientation, while the animals a horizontal. The human figures are naked, standing warriors/hunters or dancers. All the figures hold an oblong object on their left hand. Their heads are square and are crowned by a cup shaped coiffure. On either side of the figures is a branch with leaves.

The first and third figures, which are similar, carry a lance-like object in their other, bent hand. On the first figure, the objects are arranged in the opposite direction: the oblong item is in his right and the lance in his left hand. His right hand is not visible and only part of the arm can be seen. It appears that this hand was omitted because of lack of space, due to an incorrect arrangement. The legs of the first figure also appear to be turned to opposite directions. Above the oblong item and next to the figure's head is a purple semicircle. Its function is unclear, but, given its shape and decoration it could be interpreted as a shield, although none of the other figures carry one.

The second and fourth figure are also similar to each other. They have voluminous hair and smaller heads. Their right hand is free and is bent upwards. These two figures, which do not hold lances, look more like dancers. It is very probable, therefore, that the item they appear to hold is the edge of a scarf which hangs from their body, as is more clearly the case with similar hanging objects in other examples.[17] The fact, however, that all the figures of this textile hold similar objects, could indicate that all the represented figures are dancers, as is the case in the majority of the textiles of this group, and that the lance-like objects are also dancing implements. Another possibility is that we have here a combination of dancers with the standard iconographic type of the hunter, carrying spear and cloak.

The animals are all represented in the courant attitude. The first animal looks like a lion. It has an oblong body which extends into a rounded rectangular head. The next quadruped is a hare,[18] the design of which resembles that of the lion. Its body narrows towards the front and ends in a rounded edge, which denotes the neck. Its head, which is not directly attached to it, has an irregular shape with many projections. The hare's body is decorated with vertical stripes. The third animal is another feline, possibly a lioness; alternatively, the spots on the pelt may indicate a cheetah or leopard. The animal's body is decorated with small C-shaped spots, regular or inverted. The last medallion at the bottom is all purple with a white outline.

The circles of the chain band are connected to each other through extensions of their borders. These extensions create rectangles between the medallions, which have a white centre with a purple square inside. From the top left and the bottom right side of each medallion springs a purple, trilobe leaf. The band is bordered by two rows of purple spiral meander, which at the lower end turn into purple tapes.

The plain weave of the tunic is decorated with bands of double or triple wefts.

Comments

The animated scroll is very popular throughout Late Antiquity, appearing in a variety of artifacts in many different versions. It is also often encountered in two-coloured textiles where the degrees of stylisation vary. A large number of two-coloured pieces with rows of enclosed animals and figures appear in many collections.[19] Dancers are also very common and are associated with the iconography of Dionysus, as these dancers are identified with the maenads of Dionysus' entourage and are characteristic of a group of tunics, usually called Mänadenstoffe.[20] On some of these textiles, apart from dancers, appear warriors or hunters with lances and shields.[21] More specifically, on a piece in the DT, which is stylistically and iconographically comparable to that of the Benaki, appears a dancer and a hunter, with a lion in the middle medallion (fig. 1). The hunter on that piece

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[17] Cabrera Lafuente, *La industrial textil,* no. 43, pp. 339-341.

[18] The quadruped's general shape resembles that of a hare, however two long, undulant bands seem to projects from its head backwards, the function of which is unclear. It could be interpreted as horns, in which case we are dealing with a different kind of animal, or as the Sasanian ribbon, which here strangely projects from the head.

[19] See, for example, De Bourguet, "Datation des tissus coptes", fig. 29, 32, p. 191; *Clavi* with rows of alternating, but, in this case, free-standing animals and figures are also encountered in MTIB, in Cabrera Lafuente, *La industrial textil,* no 42 (a looped tunic), p. 335-337 and also no 43, p. 339-341, no 45, p. 345-346, no 109, p. 489-490, no 112, p. 497-498. Also Apostolaki, *Koptika Yfasmata*, no 706, p. 98, fig. 62 and no 720, p. 109, fig. 73.

[20] Paetz, "Radiocarbon Dating", p. 167-168.

[21] See, for example the tunic of the Folkwang Museum and the DT in Paetz, "Radiocarbon Dating", p. 170, 173, fig. 5, 6, 11.

wears a mantle that hangs down from his body in a way that resembles the shawl of a dancer.[22] In another two-coloured tunic fragment in the Louvre, each warrior, who stands under an arch, holds a shield from which hangs a piece of folded cloth.[23]

These examples suggest that our fragment is also decorated with a combination of maenads and hunters and that the hanging objects could also be mantles, although they are not attached to their body. It appears, therefore that on this and other comparable examples, a mixture of the scenes from the Dionysiac cycle with hunting scenes has occurred.

A group of two-coloured fragments of tunics with Dionysian affiliations, now in several museums and private collections, is discussed in an article by Paetz, who also subjected them to radiocarbon dating. A wide time span between the 3rd and the late 6th century (95,4% probability) was produced for most of these pieces.[24] Regarding our fragment, the relatively restricted use of the flying shuttle, compared to the aforementioned examples, could point to a late date, possibly in the late 5th-6th centuries.

Radiocarbon dating of two-coloured textiles, not necessarily with Dionysian scenes, has shown that they have been produced for a long time and that vegetal patterns of the 3rd-4th centuries were perpetuated even into the 7th century.[25] Therefore, we are dealing here with a case of a continuation of the pre-Islamic iconographic traditions into, at least, the first period of Islamic rule.

fig. 1 Tapestry band in the DT (footnote 23)

[22] Paetz, "Radiocarbon dating", p. 172, fig. 9.

[23] Roberta Cortopassi and Chris Verhecken-Lammens, "Tunics with Loops: C14, Spinning, Weaving, Dyes and Iconography", in *Methods of Dating Ancient Textiles*, p. 147, fig. 12.

[24] Paetz, "Radiocarbon dating", p. 167-175.

[25] Mark Van Strydonck, Antoine De Moor, Dominique Benazeth, "14C Dating Compared to Art Historical Dating of Roman and Coptic Textiles from Egypt", *Radiocarbon* vol. 46, No. 1 (2004), p. 238.

I 3. 8495

Dimensions: 28.4x25 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, irregular warp grouping (single and double warps).
Decorative weft: linen, S (on the rosette)

Description

Square tapestry panel with bust of a female figure. The figure has an ochre face and neck. The square face is defined by a dark blue, curved line, which is open on the right side, unifying the face with the thick neck. Two thick, dark blue, joined curves denote the eyebrows and a dark blue, downward, hooked line signifies the nose. Two orange, short, straight lines, and a third, curved orange line, denote the mouth. The figure has large, oval, white eyes with yellow pupils. The figure's dark blue hair is decorated on top with two light brown, stylised leaves, resembling a wreath. On its sides, are two large, light brown, branch-shaped earrings with white pearls. The figure is crowned with an ochre halo.

She wears a green garment with a central, red square, decorated with ochre toothed bands. On the neckline of the garment is an orange band with white pearls, which could represent a necklace or collar. The garment is outlined in white.

The ground behind the bust is bicoloured. It is dark blue on the upper part that corresponds to the head and neck of the figure, and grey green on the lower part that corresponds to the garment.

Three sides of a wide, white border, outlined with a red band, survive. The white border is decorated with a double row of oval lenticular gems. These come in pairs of red, light brown or grey green colour. Between the gems are circular or square, dark blue dots. On the top left corner of is a hash-shaped red element and on the bottom left corner a red rosette. Parts of plain linen weave can be discerned on the top and bottom side of the textile.

Comments

The bust is characterised by vivid colours and expressiveness. The figure is bulky and her large eyes and thick eyebrows give her an interesting liveliness. Similar pieces are found in many collections, like that of the Brooklyn Museum.[26] The Brooklyn portrait, with its illusionistic shading, is dated to the late 5th-early 6th century and is believed to belong to a series of such pieces representing deities, mainly because of the figure's nudity. Despite the difference in design and in materials it shares common characteristics with our textile. The orange lines and dots on the nose and mouth of our figure may also be a cruder version of the shading of the face on the Brooklyn piece. Similar textiles are found in private collections,[27] in the VAM,[28] the MIK,[29] the MHTL,[30] the HM,[31] the Louvre[32] and the KM,[33] the two latter representing Dionysos and Ariadne. All are datable between the 4th and the 6th century.

Our piece seems to be a less sophisticated and more stylised version of such portraits, and it could be assigned to a later date, possibly the 6th-7th century. Its use remains undefined. It could have a funerary purpose or it could have been used as a cushion cover or hanging. Female personifications, usually represented richly dressed and heavily jewelled, were a popular theme for the decoration of Late Antique households, as they evoked wealth and prosperity.[34] This repertoire was also incorporated into Early Islamic palaces, as seen, for example, in the personification of Earth bearing gifts on the frescoed floor of Qasr al Hayr West (fig. 1).[35] We have here, therefore, an example of a Late Antique theme that has been incorporated to Early Islamic art, although it does not seem to have gained popularity and to have continued being used in later periods.

fig. 1 Central medallion of fresco floor decoration of Qasr al-Hayr West in Daniel Schlumberger, "Deux fresques omeyyades", *Syria*, T. 25, Fasc. 1/2 (1946-1948), p. 94, fig. 6.

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[26] Thompson, *Coptic Textiles*, no 9 (Acc. no. 57.41), p. 28-29, pl. VI.

[27] See, for example, Baginski and Tidhar*, Textiles from Egypt*, no 37, p. 53.

[28] Kendrick, *Catalogue*, pl. XIV, nos 52, 53, 58, 59.

[29] Wulff and Volbach, *Spätantike und koptische Stoffe,* pl. 16.

[30] Bourgon-Amir, *Les tapisseries*, pl. 83-87.

[31] Thompson, *Coptic Textiles*, p. 28-29,

[32] Du Bourguet, *Catalogue*, nos B 20-21, p. 72-73.

[33] Klaus Wessel, *Coptic Art*, McGraw-Hill 1965, p. 112-113.

[34] Maguire, "The Good Life", p. 70. For more examples of the representations of Gaia see also Maguire, "Garments", p. 217, figs 12, 20.

[35] Maguire, "The Good Life", p. 73.

II 4. 25765

Dimensions: 37x27cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, warp grouping 2//1.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Fragment of a furnishing textile, decorated with polychrome buds on a white, plain weave ground. Only three buds survive and they are alternately orientated to the left and right in what seems to be a staggered row. The buds have a pointed tip and a thin stem and are outlined in brown. Each bud consists of differently coloured areas. The colours used are pink, white, light blue, red, yellow and green. The top and bottom bud have the same colour arrangement. On the background there are brown stripes. alternating with orange and red broken lines, made of floating wefts. On the plain weave appear rows of double or triple wefts.

Comments

This textile has a very coarse appearance and an extremely low density on the plain weave areas. This decoration seems to be a type of *semis*, namely an all-over, floral decoration, free or set within compartments, popular in Eastern Mediterranean art during the 5th-7th centuries[36] and especially preferred in silk textiles, from where the inspiration for the motif seems to derive.[37] A

[36] For this motif on Syrian textiles see Pfister, *Textiles de Halabiyeh*, Paris 1951, nos 17, 22, 23, 28, 31, 34, 35. Nos 25 and 26 especially, have very similarly shaped and arranged buds to our example. The motif of the scattered flowers on tunics seems to persist until the 8th-9th century, as is demonstrated by the radiocarbon dated tunic in a private collection in De Moor, *Coptic textiles from Flemish Private Collections*, no 113, p. 217-218.

[37] The compound weave structure of most of the silk textiles is particularly suitable for repetitive motifs, such as the *semis*. See Gonosová, "Early Byzantine Floral Semis", p. 227-237. See also, Cabrera Lafuente, *La industrial textil*, p. 161-162, 182 and 186.

larger piece with similar decoration of polychrome buds is found in the Louvre (fig. 1).[38] That piece, which, however, has more elegant design and paler colours and seems overall to be of a better quality, has been subjected to radiocarbon analysis, which produced a date between 542-648. A similar dating could also be proposed for the Benaki piece. Another fragment with similar buds and broken lines in between is found in the Bouvier,[39] and two other similar fragments in the MHTL.[40]

The light texture and the small scale repetitive decoration of all these pieces suggest that they must have been used as curtains.

Fig. 1 Louvre AF 6110 in http://www.textile-dates.uni-bonn.de/textile_show_pdf.php?textile_id=534

[38] Du Bourguet, *Catalogue,* no E 75, p. 216.

[39] Stauffer, *Textiles d'Egypte*, no 51, p. 136.

[40] Bourgon-Amir, *Les tapisseries*, pl. 277-278.

I 5. 21510

Dimensions: 15x16.8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, dove tailing, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Decorative weft: linen, S.

Description

Textile fragment representing a stylised, tapestry woven, vivid green bird on a white, linen, plain weave ground. The bird has a rounded rectangular body. The bird's body is outlined in yellow and dark blue and ends in a trident-shape tail. It is decorated with a number of straight or diagonal yellow lines with toothed protrusions, yellow, blue and white C-shaped elements, and a flower-like decoration consisting of three small yellow circles in a row, outlined and dotted in blue, at the bottom of which is a white oval with red stripes.

The bird has an almost circular head and a red eye outlined in blue and yellow. Several yellow dots also appear around its eye. Three small, protruding, red rectangles denote the beak. Two small red ovals attached to the bird's back, close to its head, possibly denote another wing or part of the bird's plumage. Each is decorated with yellow dots and a yellow stripe in the middle. The bird has thick, red, rectangular legs, each with a dark blue stripe denoting the claws. The left leg is slightly longer, giving the impression that it is closer to the viewer and, consequently, a sense of perspective. Above the bird, two small stylised flowers appear on the white ground. They are almost circular and consist of a green base and a red top, with a white and yellow dot in the centre.

Comments

The bird is characterised by vivid colours and a stylised design. The C-shaped eye and the C-shaped and toothed elements that decorate the bird's body are commonly found on Egyptian, post-conquest textiles. More specifically, the decoration on the bird's chest brings to mind a group of textiles with similar, multicoloured, abstract ornaments (e.g. II 4, VI 2 and II 3). A fragment with an open mouthed bird in a plain weave, decorated with buds, though differently designed, is also found in the KAM[41] and is datable to the 7th or, possibly, early 8th century.

The combination of birds and flowers or trees, recalls the *semis* design[42] and can be interpreted as an allusion to paradise, particularly preferred for curtains and hangings, especially during the 6th and 7th centuries (fig. 1).[43] Our piece could have been part of such a curtain, the geometrical decoration of which suggests a post-conquest date, towards the end of the period of their production, namely the 7th or 8th century.

fig. 1 Right part of a pair of curtains in the BM, Dauterman Maguire, "Curtains at the Threshold"

[41] Dauterman Maguire, *Weavings*, no A28, p. 72.

[42] See 25765-I 4. See also, Cabrera Lafuente, *La industrial textil*, no 81, p. 427-428.

[43] See the curtain in the MET in Stauffer, *Textiles of Late Antiquity,*, no. 46, listed p.47, ill. p. 23. Also the pair of curtains in the BM in Dauterman Maguire, "Curtains at the Threshold". For another comparable fragment see also Dauterman Maguire, *Weavings,* p. 72, no. A28. Also De Bourguet, *Catalogue*, nos E 117-119, p. 232-233 for relevant pieces in the Louvre.

I 6. 7098

Dimensions: 21.8x12.3 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, vertical weft brocading, warp grouping 2/2 (dropped threads?).
Decorative weft: linen, S; brown wool, S.

Description

Two brown tapestry bands which bear squares, filled with birds, human busts and a stylised vegetal ornament. The birds and busts are enclosed in yellow medallions and have four dots around them, inside the corners of the square. The birds are horizontally and the busts vertically orientated.

The first surviving square of the left band contains a blue bird with a white, wedge shaped wing. The second square contains four attached pairs of red volutes in a square arrangement. Each pair consists of two downward spirals on either side of a central shaft. In the centre of the square is a large, white dot. The third square is decorated with the bust of a human figure with a green garment, decorated with a red and yellow collar, and a green halo. A brown hooked line, signifies the nose, and a brown stripe the mouth. The brown lines and the hair outline are crooked, implying a non expert craftsmanship. The fourth square is also decorated with red volutes. The fifth contains a white bird, similar to the first bird, though shorter, facing to the left and with a larger wing attached to its body. Above the bird is a semi-circular, red and green ornament. The function of this element is unclear, but it is possible that it is a misinterpretation of the "Sasanian scarf", pictured around the necks of animals and birds in depictions inspired from eastern prototypes.[44]

[44] For the "Sasanian scarf" or "ribbon" see chapter 2c. Iconography, p. 109.

The upper band has a similar decoration. The first square from the left contains a bust, similar to that of the lower band. This figure has a red halo. Its thicker hair forms crenellations at the sides. On its face are two square eyes, from the inner sides of which start two vertical stripes, denoting the nose. Its torso is broader and is framed by a yellow collar. The second square repeats the volute decoration. The third contains another blue bird, with a blue wing which is not attached to its body. Above the bird is a similar semi-circular ornament. The fourth square is again decorated with volutes and the last square contains another bust without a halo, possibly due to a wrong space arrangement, as this figure looks overall squeezed. Its head and thick hair are irregularly shaped.

Comments

This piece appears to have been a pair of cuff bands from a tunic decoration. It is a piece with a naive execution, but the vivid colours and the interesting variations of the repetitive decoration give it a lively character. A fragment of bands with square panels, where very similar volutes alternate with birds is found in Liebieghaus.[45] The busts and masks are a frequent theme in Roman and Late Antique art, also represented in the Umayyad period.[46] Their arrangement in squares, alternating with birds and stylised rosettes, brings to mind wooden panel decoration, like that of Bāwīṭ Monastery.[47] In such a panel in the MET, possibly dating to the 5th century, we can even see the four dots on the corners of the square, also found on our textile (fig. 1).[48] The association of the decoration on this piece with ceiling or wall decoration could also suggest that this is a fragment of a furnishing textile.[49]

The volutes with the tripartite tips bring to mind the vegetal decoration on the group of textiles with birds in medallions on a red ground, datable to the 7th-9th centuries (e.g. VII 3). The weaving of the facial features of the figures with the square eyes and hooked noses are related to those on textiles of the 7th century (e,g. II 1). Therefore, this textile could be dated between the 7th-8th centuries. It represents a type of decoration which could be a later version of the Mänadenstoffe (see I 2), with the motifs arranged in isolated panels without any connection between them.

fig. 1 Encaustic wooden panel in the MET in https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/453639

[45] Naureth, *Koptische Stoffe*, no 22, p. 44.

[46] For a survey of the motif see IV 18.

[47] *Byzantium and Islam*, no 52B, p. 84-85.

[48] *Age of Spirituality*, no 596, p. 669.

[49] According to Török, furniture textiles often repeated the decoration of architectural units, like ceilings. See VII 2.

I 7. 6971

Dimensions: 16x12 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, two-coloured shed, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, Z; linen, Z.
Decorative weft: wool, Z (on the nose of the left figure).

Description

Oblate tapestry medallion with a red ground. It is decorated with two stylised, white, almost identical, confronted figures that look like they are dancing. Their heads are represented in frontal view, while their bodies seem to be addorsed. Each figure has one visible arm and hand, stretched outwards. The rhomboid heads of the figures are dominated by large, blue, C-shaped eyes. A large, red dot figures in the middle of their foreheads and another in the place of the mouth. They have blue, long, fluttering hair, trident-shaped hands and thin arms, on which they seem to balance a large, white disk, decorated with red circles and semi-circles. Their long torsos are decorated with blue stripes. They seem like they are wearing knee-high skirts, or tunics, each also decorated with blue lines. These skirts are outlined on top by a single yellow band, outlined in blue, which forms a curve over both, unifying thus the bodies of the two figures. Their trident-shaped feet that are closer to the viewer are slightly longer, giving thus the impression of perspective.

Between the figures' heads, is a white, spiral stripe. Between the figures' necks and on the same level as the white disks they balance in their arms, is another white disk, but with two green circles. On either side of the figures is a stylised, white bird, probably ducks, which face each other Their rectangular body is decorated with an oblong blue and yellow band, woven in the technique of athe two-coloured shed. The medallion has a white border, decorated with a grey-blue, spiral meander. Parts of the plain, linen weave around it are also visible.

Comments

This roundel was probably part of a tunic decoration. It presents several interesting characteristics, like the Z-spun linen wefts, which, however, appear only in the tapestry area. An important fact indicated by this piece is that the tapestry areas, even when they were woven together with the tunics and were not sewn afterwards, were, sometimes, woven with different materials. We can imagine, consequently, that warp canvases were left empty for the specialised tapestry weavers, who added, possibly a little later, the decoration with the materials available to them. This piece could also corroborate the use of both Z and S spun yarns on the same workshops, as noted by Pritchard,[50] indicating, possibly, different provenance of the spun yarn, or even different practices of the weavers. The question of why linen should be Z-spun at all, of course, remains, but it appears that this was sometimes done in accordance to the spinning of the wool.

The design of the roundel is highly abstract and, although the figures seem to be dancers, it is not at all clear what exactly is represented here. Opposed dancers, the hands of which merge are found in a two-coloured tapestry roundel in the Hazorea collection.[51] Also, confronted figures on either side of a vase, with two small birds in front of them are found in a roundel of the MDA (fig. 1), dated by Apostolaki to the 6th-7th century and thought to be inspired by Sasanian art.[52] Those naked figures hold lances with circles, they have a stretched arm and long hair and are woven in similar colours. The narrative character of the scene, with the nude figures and the lion above them, the vegetal, although stylised, environment and the presence of a variety of small, still identifiable ornaments- which, however, are absent from our example- support such an early dating for the MDA piece and rather suggest a later date for the Benaki example. Also, We could, therefore, date this medallion, possibly to the 7th-8th century.

fig. 1 Roundel with naked figures in the MDA (footnote 52)

[50] Pritchard, *Clothing Culture,* p. 62-63. See also chapter 3b. Techniques, p. 83.

[51] Baginski and Tidhar, *Textiles from Egypt*, no 66, p. 65.

[52] Apostolaki, *Koptika Yfasmata*, no 1273γ, p. 167, fig. 136.

I 8. 15147

Dimensions: 10x10cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, warp grouping 2/2.

Description

Roundel, although not preserved in its original full shape, which depicts a bird in profile, on a blue ground. The bird seems to be walking to the left. It has an ochre body with a white and blue stripe in the middle, probably signifying a wing, white legs and beak, a crest and a brown eye with a green line above. The bird's body ends in three floating stripes, signifying the tail. A white double ribbon hangs from the bird's beak, while a white and ochre curved element floats behind its neck.

Comments

The rendering of the bird is quite reductive. The details of the head, plumage and tail are very roughly given, basically through single or double lines. Nevertheless, the design is well proportioned and balanced and the overall appearance is quite lively.

The sprig of leaves that appears to hang from the bird's beak probably derives from eastern iconographic traditions, as is the curved element above the bird's back, which can be associated with the "Sasanian ribbon or scarf", depicted around the neck of birds and animals.[53] However, this example, and the other examples in this group, are not directly modeled on Sasanian prototypes since the iconographic elements of the pendant or vine and the ribbon have been transformed into almost abstract designs and have lost their original form and meaning.

Similar roundels are found in the Bouvier, datable to the second half of the 9th century,[54] in the Cluny[55] and in the MIAJ[56] datable to the 7th-9th century. All the above mentioned examples

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[53] For these motifs see chapter 2c. Iconography, p. 109.

[54] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 43 and 44, p. 100-101.

[55] Lorquin, *Les tissus coptes,* nos 85 and 86, p. 228-230.

[56] Baginski and Tidhar, *Textiles from Egypt*, no 147, p. 106.J.

share similar technical characteristics (double warps, use of linen) colour palette and iconographic characteristics with the examples of the Bahnasā group (e.g. I 16). There is a possibility, therefore, that they are products of the same town and could also be dated to the 8th-9th century. Their large number attests to their popularity.

These birds in medallions bear analogies with the mosaics featuring animals and birds inside interconnected circles. This iconographic tradition dates to the Roman period and seems to have become particularly popular in the 5th and 6th century in mosaic floors of Eastern Mediterranean.[57] and continued onto the Umayyad period as is seen on later examples, like in Qasr al Hallabat.

fig. 1 Bird on the floor mosaic of Caesarea Maritima, Israel (footnote 57)

fig. 1 Mosaic floor at Qasr al-Hallabat in https://universes.art/en/art-destinations/jordan/desert-castles/qasr-al-hallabat/mosaic-floor-2

[57] See, for example the comparable birds in Caesarea Maritima in Israel, in Asher Ovadiah and Sonia Mucznik, "The Early Byzantine Architectural Complex and Its Figurative Mosaic Pavement in Caesarea Maritima- A Reconsideration", *Liber Annuus* (January 2017), vol. 67, p. 397-426, fig. 7.

I 9. 15144

Dimensions: 14x12 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Tapestry roundel depicting a bird in profile on an ochre ground. The left and right side of the medallion are not wholly preserved. Parts of linen plain weave are visible on the top and bottom side. The roundel doesn't have a border, but its shape is outlined by thicker linen wefts, at the point where the tapestry weave starts. The bird appears to be walking to the left. It has a green body and tail, bearing three triple stripes of dark blue, white and green. Its neck is also green with a white flame-like band, representing the plumage. Its beak and the area around the eye is woven in ochre. The bird also has a white crest. The blue upper outlines of two outstretched wings are also visible. The legs do not survive, apart from two small blue curves that probably signify the claws. The bird seems to be holding on its beak a white and ochre leaf.

Comments

This is another medallion of the same category as I 8. The bird has a lively posture conveying a sense of motion, an expressive eye and balanced proportions and design, all contributing to a naturalistic and animated result. This piece could also be dated to the 8th-9th century and possibly attributed to Bahnasā.

I 10. 15621

Dimensions: a) 33.5x22 cm
b)15.5x9.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen; S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, double linen wefts in some parts, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Large part of a white linen textile, bearing two medallions wth birds. The medallions, which have an ochre ground, are not perfectly round. The birds have green bodies that end in tripartite tails, while the area around their eyes, beaks and the front part of their neck are ochre. The details of the plumage and wings are given in ochre, brown and white bands. The bird on the upper roundel is outlined in brown, while that on the bottom is outlined in blue. A small, ochre, rhomboid element with a blue outline is found on the left bottom part of the textile.

Comments

The position of the medallions on the plain weave ground, which is not symmetrical, and the presence of the small, circular decoration indicate that these medallions are not *orbiculi*, but part of an allover design. An interesting element illustrated here is the method of weaving circular shapes in tapestry on a plain weave ground, which is the same as that seen on Late Antique textiles and includes the forming of triangles on the sides of the circle, woven with double warps in tapestry weave, in order to achieve the transition from the plain weave ground to the circular tapestry area (fig.1). This process is common on circular medallions that are not stitched to the ground fabric, but are woven together with the tabby grounds.[58] This textile could also be dated to the 8th-9th century, together with the rest of the group.

fig.1 Detail of the weaving of the medallion in I 10

fig. 2 Reliefs from Taq-i Bustan in Von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte*, Abb. 92-94.

fig. 3 Lustre-painted ceramic bowl in the MIC in https://gr.pinterest.com/pin/860820916249814202/?lp=true

The roundel, could be part of a garment decoration or of a furnishing textile. The allover decoration of garments with birds in roundels was common in Iranian and Central Asian tradition, as is shown on the reliefs of Taq-i Bustan and Afrasiab (fig. 2),[59] and also in Byzantium as suggested by the garment of the emperor Justinian, depicted in the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna. It seems that this tradition was continued in Egypt well into the Fāṭimid period as indicates the costume of a falconer in a lustre-painted ceramic bowl of the 11th-12th century in the MIC (fig. 3).[60] It is also possible that the roundel belonged to a furnishing textile of similar decoration.[61]

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[58] De Jonghe et al., *Ancient Tapestries*, p. 16-17.

[59] Von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte*, Abb. 92-94.

[60] Grube and Johns, *Cappella Palatina*, p. 170, fig. 44.5.

[61] For a type of furnishing textile decorated with birds in roundels and dated to the 9th century see Shepherd, "An Early ṭirāz", p. 7-14. Also Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 9, p. 54.

I 11. 15638

Dimensions: 14x15.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, gimp, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Medallion with an ochre ground depicting a very stylized bird. The bird is rendered with two curves, one for the head and neck and one for the body. Each curve is made of three bands of white, green and dark blue, although the colours are reversed on the bottom curve. Another curved green band floats between them, representing the bird's wing. The medallion has no border and part of its left side is missing. Parts of the linen ground are visible around the roundel and the triangle woven to connect the plain weave with the tapestry area can be discerned on the right side.

Comments

None of the previous examples exhibits the degree of abstraction found on this bird. Here, no eyes, legs or beak are visible and the bird is given in a very reductive form. Nevertheless, the colours and the basic design agree with the above mentioned examples and we could also date this piece to the 8th-9th century. Its different design and degree of abstraction could be attributed to a different weaver or workshop.

I 12. 15143

Dimensions: 11x10 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Decorative weft: red wool, slightly S-spun.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, two-coloured shed, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Tapestry roundel depicting a bird in profile on a dark blue ground. The bird has an oblong white body, decorated on top with a row of square red dots and two red stripes. Its thick, ochre neck and head have a squat appearance. A dark blue square signifies the eye. A white crest figures on top of the bird's head and a small dark blue triangle decorates the bottom of its neck. The bird holds in its beak a long, thick and curved, ochre band. The bird's ornamental, white tail springs from the bottom of the neck, curves upwards and has a split tip. Its white legs and feet are unusually large, especially the protruding back claws. The medallion has no border. Parts of the plain linen ground are seen at the top and bottom side. The ground is embellished with red woollen weft yarns, that go over three pairs of warps.

Comments

This medallion shares similar characteristics with the rest of the group, but there are also elements that differentiate it. The red colour, the bird's feet, tail and the decoration of its body are quite different. Moreover, the elaborate tail and the small triangle on the base of its neck associate this example with to the so-called "Sasanian" textiles with bird decoration, datable to the 7th-8th century.[62] The employment of characteristic Egyptian techniques, though, like the slit tapestry and the pairing of the warps attest to Egyptian manufacture, perhaps to a crude imitation of the eastern silks or of their woollen equivalents. In any case, this piece could be dated to the 8th-9th century, together with the rest of the group.

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[62] See Von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte,* Abb. 98, 99, 100. See also VII 3 and VII 4.

I 13. 15664

Dimensions: 22x78 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

These two pieces of ochre tapestry have almost identical design, consisting of alternating decorative bands, interrupted by medallions with birds. Moving form the centre outwards, the first wide band is decorated with ochre rhomboid shapes, created by curving the weft yarns. In the middle of each rhombus is a flower-like element, consisting of white dots around a blue core. This band is flanked by two narrower, blue bands that bear a continuous undulant, ochre line, on either side of which are oblong green circles. Above and below these bands, are two undulant dark blue lines with white circles on the curves, and, finally, an undulant design of green and ochre curved lines on a brown ground, embellished with small white dots. A dark blue element above this last decorative band, near the right medallion, probably suggests a continuation of the design.

The medallions on the larger piece have an ochre ground and each contains a bird in profile. The opposed birds combine the iconographic elements of the birds with a tripartite tail, like I 8 and I 10 with those of the birds with outstretched wings, like I 9. Both birds are woven in ochre, white, brown and green and a leaf hangs from their beak. On the right medallion, an unidentified green element consisting of two stripes that merge at one end is found in front of the bird.

The smaller piece shares the same ground decoration with the larger, but this medallion is too fragmentary and certain parts of it seem to have been wrongly put together, so that it is almost impossible to identify its subject. It is probable, though, that it also represented a bird, judging from what seems to be a wing. What is certainly different is its blue ground colour and its slightly larger size.

Comments

It is possible that the two pieces belong to the same fabric -since the ground decoration is identical- which seems to have been a furnishing textile. The different colour of the last medallion could indicate that it belonged to a different decorative band of the same textile. Of course, it is equally possible that the smaller piece belonged to an altogether different textile, woven probably at the same workshop.

The iconography and the colour palette fall into the same tradition as the already examined birds in roundels (I 8-12). These two pieces could also be dated to the 8th-9th century. This piece illustrates a possible decorative arrangement of the roundels with birds on a furnishing textile, set in rows and connected with geometrical bands.

I 14. 15619

Dimensions: 25x30.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Decorative weft: weft brocading with linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Two tapestry pieces sewn together. The upper part consists of an ochre roundel representing an animal, a gazelle or deer, among floral decoration, with large parts of its linen plain weave background surviving. The animal has an ochre body decorated with a green band along its back and white parts on its rear side, abdomen and neck. Its rear part is largely destroyed. Its head is slightly lifted upwards and has brown details for the eye, eyebrow and mouth. The animal has two triangular ears, and two long, thin, white stripes that stem from its head and could suggest horns. Attached to a horn is a white flower-like adornment that gives the impression of hanging over the animal's back. The animal's front left leg is lifted, conveying a walking movement. In front and above the animal is a curved white vine with leaves of different shapes, single or two-coloured in white, brown, ochre and green. The tip of the vine opens into a flower. Part of the decoration of the bottom side seems to have been covered by the second piece.

The second piece below is largely destroyed. What survives is a blue band on an ochre ground, decorated with double white dots, quite similar to the border band of I 13 and I 18. Below that is a row of triangular elements made of the same ochre colour as the ground. Further below on the left is a star-like decoration, consisting of white and green interlocked triangles. This element seems to be repeated on the right side. Two large circular gaps on this piece could signify the spot where two more roundels originally were.

Comments

It cannot be said with certainty whether the two pieces come from the same textile. In any case, their arrangement here does not represent their original appearance.The natural and graceful posture of the animal, the addition of the vine, with its frolic and decorative character and the refinement of the design produce an elegant result. The colours are similar to those used on the Bahnasā group. The elegant design and the iconography, resemble a piece in the Bouvier, representing a gazelle, datable to the second half of the 9th century.[63] Another relevant piece in the Cluny is dated to the 8th-9th century, due to its stylistic affinity to an 8th century gazelle mosaic of the chapel of Theotokos in Nebo.[64] A comparable textile in the MIC bears a frieze on which felines combine with a deer or a gazelle.[65] The Benaki gazelle is also similar to those on the well known floor mosaic at Khirbat al-Mafjar (fig. 1).[66] Behrens-Abouseif stresses the resemblance of the mosaic's border with textile tassels, hypothesising that similar curtains were used to close off the caliph's room and it is possible that the aforementioned pieces are the remnants of such curtains.[67]

The gazelle, or deer was a popular theme in the art of the Eastern Mediterranean, especially favoured in the Near East, where it was associated with the royal hunt. The specific motif of a gazelle drinking water became popular in Christian art, since it was associated with baptism. Gazelles also held a prominent role in Islamic art, possibly following the Near Eastern tradition, although their symbolic meaning remains unclear.[68] Behrens-Abouseif associated them with female beauty and grace, as is also the case in Arabic poetry and literature.[69]

On the linen, plain weave there is broché decoration. The same technique is employed on textiles of the Bouvier, with similar iconographic elements and colour palette, datable to the 9th century.[70] One of them bears a short benedictory Arabic inscription, the form of which places it to the end of the 8th-beginning of the 9th century.[71] Our piece could, therefore, be of a similar date.

fig. 1 The lion-gazelle mosaic (after Hamilton) in Behrens Abouseif, "The Lion-Gazelle Mosaic", p. 13, fig. 3.

[63] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 40, pp. 96-97.

[64] Lorquin, *Les tissus coptes*, no 69, pp. 200-202.

[65] Ibid., p. 202.

[66] Ettinghausen et al., *Islamic Art and Architecture*, p. 42-43, fig. 47.

[67] Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "The Lion-Gazelle Mosaic at Khirbat al-Mafjar", *Muqarnas*, vol. 14 (1997) p. 16

[68] Gelfer-Jørgensen, *Medieval Islamic Symbolism,* p. 124-126.

[69] Behrens-Abouseif, "The Lion-Gazelle Mosaic", p. 14-16.

[70] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 34-36, p. 85-91.

[71] Ibid., no 34, p. 85-88.

I 15. 15632

Dimensions: 47x16.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, warp grouping 2/2.

Description

Tapestry fragment with leaves on a dark blue ground. The ochre, heart shaped leaves with the elongated tips stem from ochre, undulant stems. A pair of parallel stems with opposed leaves appears on the right side of the textile, and a second pair is found above it. A third, single stem, stands on the left side of the textile. The complete design and the way the stems were connected to each other cannot be reconstructed, since the textile is poorly preserved. On either side of the leaves band are parts of white ground with ochre, radiant shaped ornaments.

Comments

This piece is part of a furnishing textile. Although scrolls are a very popular motif, this type of leaves in a tree-like arrangement, in different levels, is not often encountered. The combination of ochre, white, green and dark blue and the double linen warps bring in mind the textiles of Bahnasā and could also be dated to the 8th-9th century. It is an example of the type of vegetal decoration that could have adorned the fabrics made in these cities, although its decoration could have originally been combined with figural representations.

The leaves are not woven as one unit, but consist of smaller areas of the same colour, between which slits are created, producing an interesting effect of shadowing on the surface (fig. 1). This technique is often encountered on the textiles of the Bahnasā group. (e.g. I 13 and I 14).

fig. 1 Detail of a leaf

I 16. 15149

Dimensions: 26.8x28 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Part of an ochre frieze, containing a slightly oblong medallion with a stylised quadruped, possibly a lion. Only the upper and lower part of the medallion's outline survive. This is made of two white stripes on the upper part and a single one on the lower part. On the upper part of the medallion's outline a green rectangle appears between the two white stripes.

The quadruped has a dark blue outline. The main part of its body, its legs and the upper part of its head, are green, while its neck is ochre. Its mouth and nose, the lower part of its neck and its abdomen are woven in white linen. The quadruped's eye consists of a large dark blue dot containing a white linen crescent. The rear part of the animal does not survive, though a white, triangular element above the animal's back, could be part of its tail.

The borders are two dark blue stripes, adorned with white linen rectangles, to produce a pearl border effect.

Comments

The piece belongs to a group well represented in many textile collections,[72] datable to the middle to late 9th century, namely to the Ṭūlūnid or ʿAbbāsid period and attributed to Bahnasā in Middle Egypt. Their attribution to Bahnasā is based on the comparison with MIC 14913, a similar inscribed pieces which mentions the ṭirāz factory of this town and also a date, possibly 850 AD.[73] Bahnasā, former Oxyrhynchus, had been a well known textile centre. Historians and geographers of the 10th century specifically mention that it was famous for its production of curtains made of linen and wool, on which all sort of animals were depicted.[74] This textile could well be an example of these curtains.

Their dating is based on the aforementioned inscription of the MIC textile and on the close relation of these friezes with running animals and pearl borders to the friezes on the murals that decorated the Main Palace of Samarra, built in the 9th century for the ʿAbbāsid caliphs.[75] A strong resemblance between these pieces and some of the Samarra paintings seems indeed to exist in the pearl borders, the medallions and the posture of the animals.

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[72] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 92-96; Lorquin, *Les tissus coptes*, no 69, p. 200-201; Beckwith, *Studies,* p. 17 and fig. 25. Baginski and Tidhar, *Textiles from Egypt*, no 209, p. 139.

[73] Unpublished, mentioned in Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 93, footnote 3.

[74] See chapter 1e. Centres of production, p. 52-53.

[75] See, for example, Herzfeld, *Die Malereien*, pl. L. See chapter 2c. Iconography, p. 118-119, fig. 2.

I 17. 15644

Dimensions: 16.5x17.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, warp grouping 2/2.

Description

Part of an ochre frieze with two medallions, each enclosing a quadruped and bordered by two narrow white pearl bands. A large part of the borders, especially of the bottom one, is destroyed, as are the edges of the medallions. The left medallion has a border of two white parallel lines which on the upper part are very close together and end in an ochre leaf. At the bottom the two white lines are further apart and the space between them is filled with ochre, part of which is woven of separate ochre and one green rectangles, divided by brown stripes. The border of the right medallion has the opposite arrangement, with the upper part being wider and filled with ochre. A green ring links the two medallions. Below that and between the medallions is a blue triangular element. The animals are very similar to that on I 16 in design and colours. Here, the animals have at the base of their heads a white meander band, reminiscent of the checkered collars in the Samarra wall paintings.[76] The white, upward, trident-shaped tail of the animal on the right medallion survives. The quadruped on the right holds a flower in its mouth.

Comments

This piece belongs to the same artistic tradition as I 16. The animals, however, possibly also lions, exhibit a more expressive and lively rendering, which is especially apparent in the design of their heads and eyes, and in the posture of the right quadruped that turns its head backwards. This piece could also be dated to the 9th century and attributed to Bahnasā, though, possibly to a different workshop.

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[76] See Herzfeld, *Die Malereien*, pl. L. Also chapter 2c. Iconography, p. 117-119, fig. 2.

I 18. 15613

Dimensions: 27.5x20 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Desciption

Part of an ochre frieze with an animal running to the left, the rear part of which is missing. The frieze is defined by dark blue borders. The right part of the border band is decorated with a narrower, ochre band bearing a double row of white pearls, and the left part with a green band with an ochre stripe in the middle. The animal has an ochre body, decorated with circular elements of a slightly darker or of the same ochre colour. A white band underlines the animal's abdomen, chest and legs, while another one defines the animal's head. The white part of the abdomen and part of the animal's body above it, are woven in the form of separate squares, creating a decorative effect.

The animal's eye consists of a white triangle. Its mouth, highlighted with a curved white band, seems to be open. Five stripes are woven above the animal's nose, but, as the textile is destroyed at that point, it is impossible to determine its significance. Its legs are extremely thin and outstretched, giving the impression that the animal is running. The undulant shape of the animal's

body also contributes to this effect. Between the legs are two triple curved stripes of blue, white and ochre, reminiscent of those in front of the birds on I 13, I 8 and Bouvier.[77] The significance of this element remains, however, unknown. Right above the animal's back and corresponding to its curved shape, is the blue triangular and relatively large tip of its tail, adorned with white, almost parallel stripes. Part of the plain linen weave survives on the upper part of the band.

Comments

The colours, iconography and technical details of this piece affiliate it to the textiles with animal friezes attributed to Bahnasā. The animal seems also to be a lion or a leopard. Nevertheless, its design, the decoration of its body, the borders of the frieze and the absence of roundels differentiate it. The design here is quite lively and graceful, a fact especially apparent in the decoration of the animal's body, the rendering of the eye and mouth and the sense of movement, accentuated by the alternation of curves.

The striped decoration of the tip of the animal's tail is reminiscent of the effect achieved through the "false hatching" technique.[78] Although the effect is similar, this technique is not used here and the stripes are made of simple alternations of the weft colour. The decoration on the animal's body is rendered by dots of the same or very similar colour woven separately, in order to create slits. This technique is also found in other comparable textiles.[79]

The absence of roundels and the overall design of the animal, detach this piece from the Samarra prototypes, although based on the similarities in iconography, technique and theme, it could also be dated to the 9th century.

[77] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 9, p. 54.

[78] De Jonghe et al., *Ancient Tapestries*, p. 45. For examples of the technique see ill. II, p. 216, dated to the 5th-7th century and ill. XVIII, p. 237, dated to the 7th-8th century.

[79] I 13 and I 14. Also Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 36-37, p. 90-92

I 19. 15694

a) **Dimensions**: 19.3x3.9 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S
Decorative weft: weft brocading with linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, gimp, warp pairing 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

b) **Dimensions**: 19.5x20.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Decorative weft: weft brocading with linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description
Two tapestry pieces with ochre inscriptions on a white ground. The letters are bold and angular, without significant difference in height. The upward shafts of some letters have a triangular tip, while others take the form of inverted triangles. Parts of white, linen plain weave with white, brocaded decoration are preserved around the inscription on both pieces.

Comments
The fragments, which probably were part of furnishing textiles, do not seem to belong to the same piece, as differences in their density indicate. A series of similar pieces are found in the Bouvier. They are dated to the 9th-10th century, basically because of their epigraphic style.[80] The inscriptions on two of them mention the ṭirāz factory of Miṣr.[81] No 90 mentions the ṭirāz of Miṣr, while 91 also bears a decoration with broché linen on its plain weave surface. The inscription on our smaller piece could be read as "tir[az]" or [Mi]sr, while that on the bigger piece seems similar to that of no 87 of the Bouvier, reading "li-ṣāḥibihu mimā" "to its owner that..".[82]

This group of furnishing pieces exemplifies the increasing role of Arabic script in textile decoration.

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[80] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 84-91, p. 156-164.

[81] Ibid., nos 86 and 90, p. 158-159 and 162-163.

[82] Ibid., no 87, p. 159-160.

I 20. 15446

Dimensions: 34.5x7 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, warp grouping 2/2.

Description

Tapestry band with stylised, angular animals and birds on a red ground. Starting from the left, two confronted birds are represented. The birds are green and yellow and consist of a triangular body, a large T-shaped tail, a white oval wing, decorated with stripes, and white legs ending in forked claws. Between the two birds stands a column-like decoration made of rhomboid elements.

Next to the birds is a yellow quadruped with a very narrow, long body. Its front legs are stretched forward, while the back are open, conveying a forward movement. The legs, which end in forked hoes, are thin, except for the back one, which is much thicker. The animal's head is square with projections at the front, denoting the muzzle, and at the back, signifying the ears. To the right is a dark blue animal with an oblong body, decorated with white squares and long, rectangular legs. Next to this animal is another yellow bird, resembling the previous. In front of it is a diagonal band, similar to that of its tail, which could indicate that the opposite direction was initially intended for this bird. Next to it are two more green birds, facing to the right, very similar to the first. The last creature on the frieze is a white quadruped facing to the left, woven quite like the previous, but with a larger muzzle and straight front legs. Several geometrical designs are found around the animals and birds.

The central frieze is framed by two dark blue bands, each decorated with a row of rhomboid green, yellow and red pearls. Parts of white, linen, plain weave are seen beyond these bands, on both sides of the textile.

Comments

The design of this piece is extremely angular and abstract to the point that the identification of the animals is not possible. The popular theme of the frieze with birds and quadrupeds is again represented here, but without frames and in a somewhat asymmetrical arrangement, where similar animals have different sizes and look at random directions. Quadrupeds with square heads from

which protrude horizontal stripes are found in BAV 6862,[83] a piece attributed to the Fayyūm and dated to the 9th-10th century. Animals with extremely thin and oblong bodies are also found in a piece of the Bouvier, although their heads, feet and tails are differently designed.[84]

If the piece has indeed a Fayyūmi origin- quite possible given the style of the decoration- the use of linen warps and their pairing on the tapestry area is a very interesting characteristic which is not found on other textiles attributed to the area.[85] This fact questions the exclusive use of woollen warps on the Fayyūmi factories or could be an indication that textiles with similar decoration were also made elsewhere, using linen instead of woollen warp.

[83] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 78-80 and 486.

[84] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 78, p. 148-149.

[85] See also BAV 6848 in Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 31-32 and 469 with linen warp. The piece is not attributed to the Fayyūm, but its iconography and design are very close to characteristic Fayyūmi products. See also I 24.

I 21. 15633

Dimensions: 16.5x9.8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, gimp, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Tapestry band with a central frieze of geometrical decoration and two framing friezes with Arabic inscriptions on a red ground. The central frieze consists of three hexagonal compartments, made of a yellow stripe, which extends outwards, connecting the compartments. The central hexagon survives intact, that on the left survives in half and that on the right preserves only a small part of its right side. The compartments consist of a small, yellow roundel, on which figures a very reductive bird with a beige body, a large beige eye, an upward, brown tail and brown legs. The roundel is inscribed in a beige diamond. On top and below the diamond are attached two beige triangles, the upper of which is inverted. Each has at its base a smaller, green triangle, set on a yellow frame. On each side of the diamond is attached an E-shaped element that faces outwards. These elements have round edges and are alternately green and yellow.

Between the hexagons are pairs of mirrored, rhomboid decorations. Each consists of a diamond standing on a small base. Inside each diamond are three stripes, a white, longer one in the centre, and two red, shorter ones above and below. Each stripe is set against a wide ochre frame,

outlined in dark blue. On either side of the diamonds are small, white ovals with a brown centre. On either side of the bases are larger, yellow ovals with a white centre.

The central frieze is bordered by two white, narrow bands, followed by duplicate inscription in Kufic script. The white or yellow letters are fairly large, angular and widely spaced and almost all have the same height. The *qāf*s are filled with brown, horizontal stripes at their base and the letters with a circular part have brown circles in their centre, with one or more white dots. Parts of plain linen weave are visible, mainly on the upper side of the textile.

Comments

The presence of the Arabic inscription establishes with certainty a post-conquest date. The design of the piece is abstract and stylised, while the execution seems quite maladroit.
The inscription is too fragmentary to allow a meaningful reading. Comparable textiles are BAV 6854, 6848 and 6888,[86] all with friezes with hexagonal, oval or circular medallions -although with larger and more sophisticatedly woven birds and animals- and E-shaped elements in between. The latter is an ornament attributed to the workshops of the Fayyūm and to the 9th-10th century.[87] The style of the letters, with their short shafts, similar to that of BAV 6936, which is dated to the 9th century, basically because of its epigraphic style,[88] also supports a dating between the 9th and the 10th century.

This piece, together with other similar pieces, seems to belong to a broad category of textiles made of linen and wool, on which figure friezes with medallions containing birds or other animals and large, stylised vegetal or geometrical decoration in a quite naive execution and design. This category could be regarded as a predecessor or even a contemporary, less sophisticated version of the silk Fāṭimid textiles with friezes of animals in medallions and framing inscription bands.

[86] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 29-32, 111-113, 495 and 468.

[87] Ibid., p. 609, fig. 3, nos h, i, j.

[88] Ibid., p. 50-51 and 476.

I 22. 15278

Dimensions: 16.8x7.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, irregular warp grouping (single and double warps).

Description

Tapestry band with three ochre medallions on a dark blue ground. The first medallion from the left contains a bird, which does not survive complete. It has a white head with a large, circular eye, a green and yellow oblong body and a small yellow triangular wing attached to its back. The next medallions contain a stylised flower each. The first flower, the lower half of which does not survive, consists of a yellow and green core, crowned with a yellow, curved band. The core of the flower is based on two rows of green sepals. The second flower consists of a blue bud, below which are two rows of sepals or leaves. The upper row is yellow, outlined in blue and the second row is green. The flower springs from an oval beige base. The borders of the medallions consist of three consecutive circular outlines of yellow, white and yellow. Between the medallions are pairs of mirrored ochre, butterfly-shaped decorations, one on top of the other, the bottom ones inverted. The tapestry band is framed by ochre and green narrow bands. It is sewn on a linen, plain weave ground. The right side of the band preserves its selvedge, reinforced with six triple to quintuple warps.

Comments

The decoration of this piece categorise it to a large group of textiles with friezes of birds, animals and flowers in medallions, separated by pairs of mirrored, butterfly, palmette, rhomboid or E-shaped partitions (e.g. I 21, I 25, IV 27).[89] BAV 6922, datable to the 8th-9th century, basically because of the archaic style of its Kufic inscription, bears a similarity to our example, though it doesn't have silk wefts.[90] The colours and the design of this piece remind the textiles of the Bahnasā group (I 8-18). It is, therefore, possible that it represents the first attempts of these factories with silk tapestry, on which the size and the style of the decoration does not differ from the woollen examples, and could be dated to the 9th-10th century.

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[89] These decorative arrangements appear in textiles with various warp and weft materials, though the E-shaped partitions seem to be applied mostly on woollen textiles and to be associated with the Fayyūm.

[90] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 11-12 and 463.

I 23. 15077

Dimensions: a)28.5x9 cm
b)11.5x5.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, irregular warp grouping (single, double and triple warps).
Weft: silk, some slightly Z spun?

Description

Tapestry band with birds and stylised flowers in medallions, on an off-white ground. The two surviving birds have an oblong body with a brown, undulant outline. Their bodies have a downward incline and end in a narrow, upward, tail. The body of the first bird is ochre and off-white and that of the second bird is off-white with blue, diagonal half stripes on its upper part. On top is an oval wing, corresponding to the shape of the body, which also narrows towards the back and ends in an upward curve. Their heads are off-white and blue in the first and off-white and ochre in the second bird, with a projecting, undulant, thick beak. They have an off-white, square eye and a long, pointed, brown crest is attached to the back of their heads. Their feet do not survive. From the third bird only part of its off-white and ochre body survives. The outline of the medallions is of the same colour, as the ground and is created through the slanting of the wefts and the use of thicker weft yarns.

The flowers are off-white and ochre. They consist of a central bud with rows of petals around it. The first flower has a an oval bud that ends in two spirals on top. It is surrounded by two V-shaped leaves and two sepals with outward curved tips. The second flower has a circular bud, crowned by two curved bands and surrounded by three rows of petals with a trembling outline. Between their tips are small circles. Below are two oblong sepals. The third flower is similar to the first. Between the medallions stand palmette partitions with a mirrored design. Their upper part consists of two squares, blue and green or ochre, with an off-white centre. Above the squares are two buds with large petals. The bottom part is an inverted version of the upper and has the opposite colour arrangement.

The piece is complete on the left side, where the edge is reinforced with two quadruple and one triple warp yarn.

Comments

The popular theme of the birds, alternating with flowers and separated by double palmettes is repeated here, again in silk tapestry. The birds are very similar in design to those on the 8th-9th century medallions, although smaller (e.g. I 8-10). The "trembling" outline of the birds and flowers brings in mind textiles of the 10th century, which, however, have a different arrangement of decorative elements.[91] Similar pieces, also with irregular warp grouping, are found in the BAV[92] and the Cluny,[93] dated to the 10th century, in the MFAB (fig. 1),[94] the MHTL,[95] the MAHG[96] and at the VAM (fig. 2).[97] Also, similar characteristics are found on the ṭirāz textiles of al-Muṭīʿ (946-974 AD).[98]

The large proportions of the decoration, which point to a relatively early date and the design of the birds, which seems an intermediate stage between the 9th century roundels with birds and the more stylised examples on the textiles of the 11th-12th century, place this piece in a transitional stage, possibly in the 10th century. The stylistic affinity of the birds with those of the Bahnasā group could indicate that this textile is also a product of one of these towns.

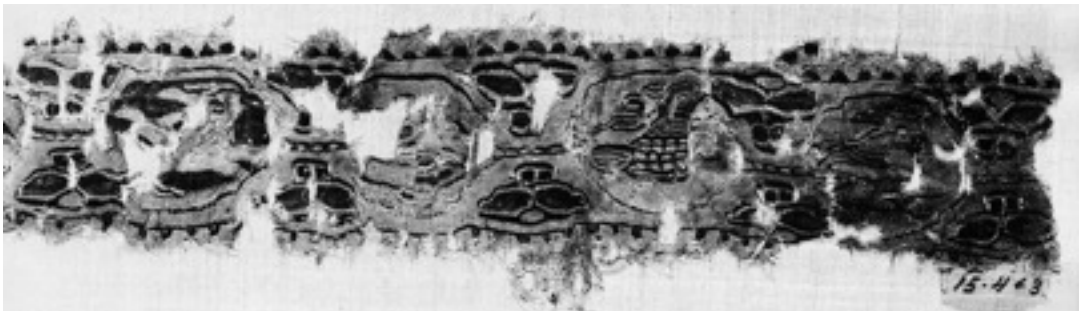

fig.1 Silk tapestry band in the MFAB in https://collections.mfa.org/objects/70402/tapestry?ctx=5c4a5242-0d57-466c-a733-19a9d0b1d2a5&idx=0

fig. 2 Silk tapestry band in the VAM (footnote 97)

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[91] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 132, p. 222-223.

[92] BAV 6839, in Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 47-49 and 476.

[93] Desrosiers, *Soieries*, no 28, p. 97.

[94] Britton, *Early Islamic textiles*, p. 51.

[95] MHTL nos 41.697 and 27931/15, 41.710, 41.695, 41.696 in Desrosiers, *Soieries*, p. 97.

[96] Marielle Martiniani-Reber et C. Ritschard, G. Cornu, & B. Raster, B, *Tissus coptes* (Vol. 1), Musée d'art et d'histoire, Gèneve 1991, no 2.

[97] VAM inv. no 128-1891 in http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O218501/textile-fragment-unknown/

[98] MHTL 41.592 in Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 48-49.

I 24. 15098

Dimensions: a) 26x4.5 cm
b) 25.5x5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Two red tapestry bands, each decorated with three hexagons containing stylised animals. The first hexagon of the upper band, starting from the left, has a yellow ground. It contains a quadruped of the same colour with a red outline, walking to the right. The textile seems to have been repaired with parts of other fabrics in the area around the animal's upper front leg, at the back part of its body and its head. The quadruped's main body is oblong, decorated with two rows of red squares and it has an upward tail. The two front legs are V-shaped and project forward and the hindlegs are C-shaped. The second hexagon contains a similar animal, white with a brown outline, on a red ground. It seems to have a long neck and a mane, although a vertical stripe including part of its neck, head, front body and front leg, is missing. The two torn parts of the hexagon have been sewn together, without replacing the missing stripe. As a result, the tip of the muzzle and the mouth have been sewn directly to the mane and the tip of the front foot, directly to the leg. The body of the animal is decorated with brown squares and rectangles. A vertical band in the middle of it seems also to be a repair. The third hexagon contains a simpler, also white animal on a red ground. It has a triangular, body and neck, an upward, Z-shaped tail and two oblong, diagonal legs. Its neck is decorated with blue rectangles and its body with two green crosses. The area in front of its body seems also to be a repair.

The first animal on the second band is similar to the last, although in a compressed version. This animal also has a third front leg, which might originally have existed also on the previous animal, before the repair. On the next hexagon is an ochre animal with a red outline on an ochre ground. It resembles the last two animals, but its body is rectangular with a rounded front side and a triangular neck. It is decorated with red squares. The last compartment, which is rather cup-shaped than hexagonal, contains another similar, ochre animal with a red outline on an ochre ground. It has

a rounded rectangular body, decorated with two blue arrowheads, two oblong legs and a Z-shaped tail.

All the hexagons have brown, pearl borders. Between the hexagons are couples of white and ochre confronted birds, one above the other, standing on either side of yellow, vertical stripes with short projections. The birds have a triangular body with a brown stripe, denoting the wing and triangular or C-shaped white or ochre legs. The legs seem often to be turned towards the opposite direction to the head. The white birds have ochre feet and vice versa. Both tapestry bands are bordered by two yellow narrow tapes, small parts of which survive.

Comments

This is another example of an animal frieze. The palmette partitions take here the form of opposed birds. The style of the decoration with the abstract and stylised birds and animals and the pearl bordered hexagons bring to mind the Fayyūmi textiles.[99] Also, a piece in the MHTL, attributed to the Fayyūm, has similarly designed, though single birds, in the place of the partitions between the medallions.[100] Similar birds between the medallions are found in BAV 6857, also accompanied by a typical Fayyūmi inscription and dated to the 9th-10th century.[101] However, the use of silk wefts on this piece makes a significant difference, since no silk textiles have up to now been attributed to the Fayyūm. The factories of the Fayyūm were renowned for the manufacture of woollen textiles, but it is possible that they also handled silk, especially after the wide introduction of this fiber to the Egyptian textile industry in the 10th century. Of course, more silk textiles, which can be associated to the area, have to be identified in order to support this theory.

A group of textiles with linen warp and silk wefts, which are believed to be turbans and are decorated with quadrupeds in roundels, alternating with vegetal ornaments, is attributed to the ʿAbbāsid period, in the first half of the 10th century.[102] Consequently, our piece could also be dated to the 10th century.

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[99] See, for example, IV 27, IV 30 and comparanda.

[100] MHTL 30457.7 in http://www.mtmad.fr/fr/pages/topnavigation/musees_et_collections/mt_les_collections/rechercher_une_oeuvre/mt-rechercher-oeuvre.aspx

[101] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 96-97 and 492

[102] See Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 112; Britton, *Early Islamic Textiles* p. 35-37; MIC 7120 in Wiet, *Exposition.*

I 25. 15835

Dimensions: 48x16.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk.

Description

Red tapestry band with birds in hexagons, on a linen plain weave ground. The tapestry is poorly preserved with many parts of the decoration missing. Nevertheless, because of its repetitive character a reconstruction is possible. All the birds, which are walking to the right, are green with brown outlines and have a “trembling” appearance. They have a rectangular body with a forked tail, a long, curved neck and their heads, which are alternately green and light brown bear a crest. Their thin legs are alternately light brown and green. A small triangle behind their necks possibly signifies a wing. The hexagons are defined by a yellow outline.

The pairs of partitions are different on the upper and bottom part. The upper are butterfly-shaped decorations consisting of yellow and green wings. The bottom seems to consist of a dark brown, T-shaped element, from the top of which stem two diagonal, downward stripes and from its

base two shorter stripes curved upwards. Each band consists of two stripes, a green and a yellow. The tapestry band is directly attached to the linen plain weave, without the intervention of any borders.

Comments

This is another example of a bird frieze of the transitional type. The decoration between the hexagons falls between the opposed Es, found on naively decorated textiles, like IV 27 and BAV 6854, 6888 and 6848,[103] and the more elaborate palmettes, like those in I 23 and BAV 6728,[104] all datable to the 9th-10th century. Although the bird frieze follows a repetitive design, the birds are elegant and well proportioned. The slender proportions of the birds, their "trembling" outlines and their repetitive character bear a close relation to the birds in Fāṭimid textiles of the 10th century[105] although their larger size and the plain surrounding decoration suggest an earlier dating. Consequently, this piece could be placed to the 10th century.

[103] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 111-112, 29-30, 31-32, 495, 468-469.

[104] Ibid., p. 42-44 and 474.

[105] See, for example, Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Égypte*, no 132, p. 222-223.

I 26. 15067

Dimensions: a) 72x41.5 cm
b) 47x21 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: linen, S; silk.

Description

Large, plain weave textile with three tapestry zones. The uppermost consists of a yellow, kufic inscription on a dark blue ground. The letters have an overall angled appearance. Some letters have a spiral base and many go below the base line of the inscription. The long shafts are crossed by one or two short, horizontal lines. When two long shafts stand side by side, they share common horizontal lines, giving the appearance of a hash mark. Between the long shafts of the letters stand small, white geometrical ornaments.

The central band bears eleven hexagonal compartments containing reductive quadrupeds, birds and possibly human figures. One type of quadruped is repeated on hexagons number 1, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 11. It consists of a rectangular body with four projecting legs, a triangular neck and tail and a square head with a square eye. Their bodies are decorated with crosses and squares. The animals in hexagons 1 and 4 are light brown, and bear dark brown and white crosses, white squares and a white eye. The quadrupeds in hexagons 6 and 11 are blue with ochre crosses, squares and eye and are outlined in dark blue. Those on hexagons 7 and 9 are green, outlined in dark blue and bearing white and two dark blue crosses, white squares and one dark blue on the tail, a white eye and a

white mane with dark blue stripes. Above the animals is another decoration. In hexagons 1, 7 and 9 this is a white S-shape. In hexagons 4 and 6 this place is occupied by what seem to be orant figures. They does not survive intact, but two raised arms, attached to the body and two legs are visible. Each arm and leg is decorated with a small blue square. Their heads are dominated by large square eyes joint eyebrows.

Hexagons 2, 5, 8 and 10 contain four opposed reductive creatures each, arranged in two consecutive rows. They have a trapezoid body with a projecting tail at the top back corner, two parallel, L-shaped legs and a square head. Their bodies are decorated with L shapes and squares. On hexagon 5 and 10 the two upper birds have a white body and eye and a blue head and body decoration, while the lower two have a dark blue body and eye with a light brown head and body decoration. On hexagon 8 the opposite colour arrangement is encountered. The colouring on hexagon 2 is unclear, though it seems that all the birds are ochre with brown head and body decoration and a dark blue eye, except from the top right one, which has a blue body and eye and a white head. Between the pairs of birds is a vertical column of consecutive, white, triangular shapes, each decorated with smaller dark blue triangles and squares with white centres.

Hexagon 3 contains a complex of animals that seem to be two small, white addorsed quadrupeds, above which stand two other, ochre opposed creatures, possibly birds. The quadrupeds consist of a rectangular body, four diagonal legs, attached to each other, a circular head and a large, square eye. Their body is decorated with an ochre rectangle, containing two small, brown squares. Below their head is a small blue square of unidentified function. Above the quadrupeds and attached to their heads are two birds, with an angled, 9-shaped body and a very long upward toothed tail that reaches to the top of the hexagon. Above and below the animal complex is a small brown cross.

The hexagons are defined by a pearled outline, which extends and connects them. Between the hexagons are mirrored palmette partitions, each consisting of two ochre helixes and a blue and ochre triangular base. These partitions could also be reductive birds, as is the case on a comparable piece in the ROM.[106] The central band is framed by two narrower bands with curved, rhomboid medallions with ochre borders, each containing a cross-shaped decoration with spiral endings. This decoration is alternately blue, ochre, white and green. Between the medallions is a T-shaped decoration, also with spiral endings, ochre, brown or blue.

At the bottom side of the textile is another narrow tapestry band, also decorated with curved, rhomboid medallions. The medallions contain alternately a couple of opposed birds and a geometrical decoration. The birds, which seem to turn their heads backwards, have an S-shaped body and head and are either white ochre or blue with a differently coloured wing. The geometrical decoration consists of bicoloured squares in a cruciform arrangement. The spandrels between the medallions are filled with a decoration similar to that of the framing bands of the previous zone. The piece preserves its selvedge on the upper right part, which consists of two double warps and an area of denser warps.

Comments

The decoration of this piece falls into the broad category of the animal friezes. The appearance of orant figures is, however, exceptional. The main decoration of this piece has an abstract and naive character. The large, stylised quadrupeds and the pearled, connected hexagons bring to mind some Fayyūmi textiles, though the inscription, the rest of the decorative elements and the technical details do not conform with the characteristics of the group attributed to the Fayyūm.

[106] ROM 978.76.137, in https://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/442960/tiraz-textile-fragment-with-christian-motifs?ctx=99c46eae-09b1-41bb-9961-9dbed82cb217&idx=80

The orant figures are comparable to those on I 44. Also, the decoration of the narrow border bands is similar to that on high quality Fāṭimid pieces. (e.g. I 44).

The inscription has the characteristics of a pseudo-inscription without any textual meaning. The letters recall some ṭirāz of al-ʿAzīz (975-996), particularly one made in Shaṭā in 987-988.[107] Similar hash tags on the letters of the inscription are also found in BAV 6858, datable to the 9th-10th century.[108] The comparable piece in the ROM, already mentioned, is also datable to the 10th century, but is executed in woollen tapestry (fig. 1).[109] Based on all these facts, a date in the second half of the 10th century could be proposed for our piece. The ROM piece is described as having "Christian iconography", probably because it also bears orant figures, although differently designed and occupying the whole compartments. The orans figures are indeed an iconographic element found mainly in Christian art, but they also seem to have been incorporated into the repertoire of Islamic art and appear in Egyptian textiles of both pre and post-conquest dates.[110]

fig. 1 Linen and wool tapestry in the ROM (footnote 109).

[107] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques,* no 6896, p. 200-201 and 525.

[108] Ibid., no 6858, p. 86-88 and 489.

[109] ROM 978.76.137, in https://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/442960/tiraz-textile-fragment-with-christian-motifs?ctx=99c46eae-09b1-41bb-9961-9dbed82cb217&idx=80

[110] For a possibly pre-conquest example in silk see VAM 2065-1900 in http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O352751/textile-fragment-unknown/. For post-conquest examples see I 44; Benaki 15040 in *Byzantium and Islam*, no 187, p. 264-265; VAM 733.1886, which belongs to the group of bands with "saints", in http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O359174/band/; the AS weft looped hanging in Schrenk, *Textilien,* Cat. 8, p. 51-53.

I 27. 15243

Dimensions: 17.3x7 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: silk.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, warp grouping 2/1/1 and 2/1/1/1/1 (crossing also on single warps).

Description

Tapestry band, consisting of a dark blue central frieze with medallions and two framing bands. Four roundels survive on the central frieze, representing alternately a quadruped and a bird. On the first medallion from the left is a red animal with a rectangular body, four thin, yellow legs, a triangular tail and a large, circular eye. Its body is decorated with a pearl effect. On the second medallion is a green bird with a rectangular diagonal body, decorated with yellow dots, a C-shaped head and a pointed beak. A large tail was possibly attached to its back, judging from the similar bird on the fourth medallion. Two more small, white birds are found above and below the central. The third roundel contains a yellow quadruped with a rectangular body, decorated with red dots, a short tail, a red collar and a square head, two V-shaped ears, a square, white eye and four legs that appear in a running position. The fourth medallion contains a bird similar to that on the second, with a light green body, a yellow tail, eye and legs. The small birds accompanying it are largely destroyed.

All the roundels have a red, pearl border and a red ground, except from the third, which has a dark blue. Between the medallions are mirrored partitions, each having the appearance of two sets of wings, one above the other, red and C-shaped with green and yellow projections on the upper part, white and toothed on the lower part. The central frieze is framed by two narrow, red bands, decorated with green rectangles, outlined in yellow and having two yellow dots each. There are also traces of other ornaments, like a red dot on a dark blue frame, These bands are bordered by narrow pearled bands. Small parts of white, linen plain weave are visible beyond them.

Comments

This is another example of the transitional silk bands, with birds and animals in roundels and palmette or wing-like partitions. The naive character and the arrangement of the decoration, as well as the pearl borders and the simple design of the framing bands can be compared with pieces like I 22, I 25, I 37 and the Fayyūmi textiles (e.g. IV 27-31) so that this piece could be dated to the, probably late, 10th century. What is also interesting is the pairing of the warps, which is quite regular, but the repetition unit results in very scarce pairing, that does not appear on earlier textiles.

I 28. 15265

Dimensions: 18.5x13.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk.

Description

Red tapestry band with two surviving medallions containing an animal and a bird. The first has a light blue ground and contains a white quadruped, outlined in red, facing to the left, with a rectangular body, a triangular head with two oblong ears projecting backwards, four legs- the second of which is very thin- and a meander-shaped tail. Its body is decorated with a red band with green rectangles. The medallion has a red pearl border, which is narrower on the upper side. Only half of the second medallion survives. It has a red ground and contains a bird facing to the left. What survives is its long blue neck, decorated with white half stripes, a part of its white, rectangular body, decorated with a blue and a yellow band and two blue elements in the shape of quotation marks, and a yellow leg. The medallion has a cream pearl border. Between the medallions is a mirrored decoration, consisting of couples of opposed E-shapes. The upper are green with yellow and blue stripes, while those below are blue with yellow and green stripes. Their horizontal shafts are filled with red rectangles. The space between the opposed Es is largely destroyed, with only parts of white ground surviving. The tapestry band is framed by two chains, green on top and blue at the bottom.

Comments

This piece also belongs to the type of textiles with friezes of animals and birds in medallions. The pearl medallions and the partitions resemble the E-shaped elements, usually seen on textiles of the 9th-10th century. The angular style of the large animals, on the other hand, is close to that on textiles of the 11th century.[111] Therefore, a dating to the late 10th or early 11th century seems tenable. This piece, together with I 22, I 24 and I 27, exemplify the adaptation of older decorative styles, used in woollen tapestries of the 8th-10th centuries, to silk tapestry.

[111] See, for example, Benaki 15270, p. 64, fig. 2 and Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 233.

I 29. 15074

Dimensions:a) 51.5x40 cm
b) 37x39 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk.

Description

Large, plain weave piece with a central tapestry decorative frieze and a tapestry inscription above it. The central, red frieze is run by a blue, undulant band containing ochre, running quadrupeds. The band has trembling outlines, highlighted in ochre and brown. The quadrupeds are arranged in groups of four, each group facing alternately to the left and right, separated by inverted triangular elements. The quadrupeds, which vary slightly in shape, consist of an oblong body with attached, stretched legs and oblong heads with two small ears.

On each bump created by the undulant tape is a medallion with a pearl border, containing a complex of animals in a somewhat confused design. In the centre is probably a bird, with an irregular, oblong or trapezoid body, which ends in a pointed or trapezoid tail, an oval head, ending in a pointed beak, and a brown round eye. Below this bird is a quadruped, with a design similar to those on the undulant band, but its head and ears resemble more clearly those of a hare. On the remaining space around the bird and hare are two unidentified ornaments. They could be interpreted as very reductive birds, although their design is different from that of the other birds on this piece. Their shape resembles that of a snail. All the creatures on the medallions are ochre with brown outlines. The medallions have a double, ochre outline, with a red pearl band in between. On either side of the medallions are two birds with an oblong, undulant body, a round head, a pointed tail, an oblong wing and two thin, ochre legs in a forward movement.

The red, central band is bordered by two narrow, ochre bands with a blue, toothed design. Above the central decorative band is a dark blue Arabic inscription in tapestry weave. The base of the letters has an undulant outline, the long shafts have pointed tips and the letters with circular centre are filled with ochre or brown. Below the central is a narrow, ochre band and at the bottom of the textile, another band, consisting of alternately green and ochre undulant stripes bordered by two more ochre bands, a narrower on top and a wider at the bottom. The textile preserves its left selvedge, which has denser warps, resulting in a warp faced weave and its bottom edge, consisting of fringes.

Comments

The layout of the decorative band, with its central undulant tape with running hares is quite exceptional, as is the complex of animals inside the medallions. These complexes seem to repeat the falcon and prey motif, also seen on III 2. The inscription is too fragmentary and only words like "li-llāh" and "allāh" can be discerned.

The birds are very abstract, while the design of the quadrupeds recalls that of textiles of the 10th-11th century, like I 33. The undulant outlines also bring in mind textiles of the 10th century.[112] In concordance with this dating is the design of the inscription, which is not yet incorporated into the decoration of the central band, as becomes the case in many textiles from the 11th century onwards (e.g. I 33, I 45-46). Therefore a date in the 10th century could be proposed.

[112] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 132, p. 222-223.

I 30. II 400

Dimensions: a) 18x12.2cm, b)17.2x11

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: linen, S; silk.

Description

Two fragments of white, plain weave, decorated with yellow birds, outlined in brown, woven in tapestry weave. One of the fragments also bears a red tapestry band, poorly surviving. The birds, which stand free, without any kind of enclosure, appear in intersected, horizontal rows across the surface of the textile. Each bird consists of a wedge shaped body, sometimes with a "trembling" outline, a pointed tail, a bump-shaped wing, a wide beak, a brown, oval eye and two thin, red legs. Their bodies are yellow, decorated with green, inverted gammas. The wing of some birds is outlined in red, while in others, it is crossed by a red line which extends to the neck. A green outline runs across the top and the back side of their head and extends into their neck. The birds of each row face alternately to the left and right. On top of the first fragment is a red, horizontal line. The decoration of the red band on the second fragment is framed by two rows of rectangular pearls and seems to consist of medallions outlined with a brown, pearl band, that also connects the medallions.

Comments

This piece represents a different decorative concept than the bands with medallions, though with a similar iconographic repertoire. The design of the birds seems to fall between those of the 8th-9th century medallions (I 8-10) and those on the Fāṭimid pieces (I 44, 46). The connected pearl medallions bring to mind some 10th century pieces, many of which are attributed to the Fayyūm.[113] Based on these stylistic comparisons, our piece could also be dated to the 10th century. It could be assumed that this is a furnishing textile, possibly a curtain, for which the specific texture and decoration with small, repetitive designs was especially preferred. It is possible, therefore, that we have here a later, silk version of the curtains with *semis* decoration of the 5th-7th century.

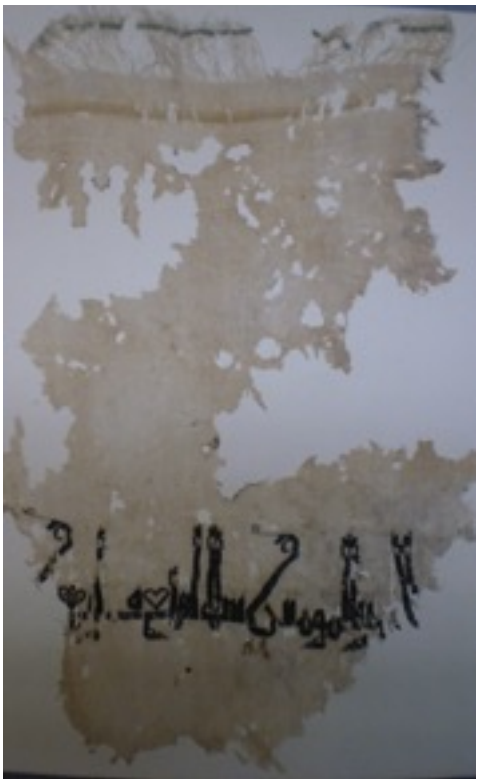
[113] See, for example, Cornu and Martiniani Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 73, p. 142-143; Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, no 6888 and 6854, p. 29-30, 111-113, 468 and 495

I 31. 14904

Dimensions: 47x32.5cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk.



Description

Linen textile with a large angular inscription in tapestry weave. The letters, which are woven in dark brown silk, have a highly decorative character. The long and medium height shafts end in two consecutive circles, a white and a dark brown. The latter takes the form of a leaf on reclined shafts, from which projects a very thin, long, leftward line ending in a spiral. The tails of the letters that go below the base line of the inscription have two indentations, creating a leaf like decoration. The letter ayn is heart-shaped, having either a simple outline or creating an open heart with spiral lobes between which is a diamond. The shafts of most of the other letters end in a thin line. The overall appearance of the inscription is somewhat confused and it does not run on a straight line. In the area around each letter the weave is in tapestry, but the rest of the textile is in plain weave. On top of the textile is a yellow and a narrower green band, the former framed by two beige ones.

The inscription reads “amīr al-mu’minīn sanat tisaʿ (or, possibly, “arbaʿ ”) wa arbaʿīn”, “the commander of the believers in the year (3)49 or (3)44…”.[114]

Comments

Although the inscription has an elaborate decorative character, its execution seems rather maladroit. It was, in all probability, made in the year 960-961 or in 955-956, under the reign of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Muṭīʿ (946-974). Similar pieces are found in the ROM,[115] the TMW[116] and the University of Michigan[117] (fig. 1). A similar epigraphic style seems to have continued during the reign of the Fāṭimid caliphs al-Muʿizz and al-ʿAzīz.[118] It seems that by the middle of the 10th century tapestry inscriptions had started replacing the embroidered ones, even before the Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt in 969.

fig. 1 ṭirāz of al-Al-Muṭīʿ in the University of Michigan (footnote 117)

[114] Etienne Combe, Jean Sauvaget, and Gaston Wiet, *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe,* vol. 4*,* l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1931, no 1506, p. 154.

[115] Golombek and Gervers, “Ṭirāz Fabrics”, no 7, p. 100.

[116] Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue*, nos 73.509, 73.215, 73.400, 73.28, 73.252, 73.432 and 73.544, p. 56-57,49-53, 57-58 and 61 pl. XXV, XXII, XXIII, XXVI and XXVII.

[117] Day, “Dated Ṭirāz”, fig. 23, p. 442.

[118] See, for example, ROM 963.95.5, in https://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/371275/tiraz-textile-fragment?ctx=d7f05777-3e0b-482c-9d8d-c7a54242bcc3&idx=0, for a ṭirāz of al-Muʿizz and Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d’Egypte*, nos 114-116, p. 194-198, for ṭirāz of al-ʿAzīz.

I 32. 15013

Dimensions: 35x9 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk.

Description

Double kufic inscription band. The inscriptions are woven in red silk on a white tapestry band, set on a white linen plain weave ground. The bottom inscription is upside down. The letters are fairly large and bold. The tips of the long shafts are similar to those of I 31, although in some cases here, the two circles appear unified, and in other cases the lower circle look more like a hook. In the middle of each long shaft is a horizontal line, projecting from both sides. The reclined shafts have a tripartite tip, similar to the tails of the letters on I 31. Between the letters appear upward spirals with an undulant, rightward or leftward tail, small triangles, tripartite, stylised buds, undulant lines, a heart shape with spiral lobes and a dot in the middle, and a reclined E-shape. The inscription is bordered by couples of thin, red lines. It reads: "…āllāhu naṣr min āllāhi li-'abdi llāhi wa ulīhi al-Manṣur Abī 'Alī al-īmāmu al-Ḥākim bi-āmri llāhi..", "…God, victory from God to the servant and friend of God al-Mansur Abu 'Ali imam al Ḥakim bi amri-llah".[119]

Comments

This textile appears to have been made during the reign of Ḥākim (996-1020). It is an impressive band, the appearance of which is, however, somewhat confused and condensed. A similar script and fillings are found in a ṭirāz of al-Ḥākim in the University of Michigan, although in a single line.[120]

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[119] Combe et al., *Repertoire*, vol 6, no 2272, p. 146.

[120] Day, "Dated Ṭirāz", fig. 26, p. 444.

I 33. 15304

Dimensions: 20x10.1 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, warp grouping 2/1/1 and 2/1/1/1/1 (crossing on single warps).
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Description

Tapestry fragment with five decorative friezes of almost equal width. The central has a dark brown ground and bears oval and circular, adjoining medallions with light blue borders, containing white, running quadrupeds. These have a rectangular body, ending in an upward tail. Their legs, apart from the lifted front one, are not directly attached to the body, giving a disarticulated appearance. The shape of their heads varies from square to round, with a rhomboid projection at the back for the ears. Their eye is a brown straight or curved stripe. The quadrupeds face alternately to the right and left, forming affronted couples, except from the fifth and sixth, which both face to the right. Curved, light blue bands are found behind the animals' ears and, sometimes, above their heads, following the curves of the animals. The animals and the medallions have trembling outlines.

Between the medallions and attached to them are white, irregular diamonds, outlined in light blue. The central frieze is framed by two red bands, bearing a yellow inscription with brown outlines. The long shafts of the letters form compartments each decorated with a yellow, spiral vine ending in a rosette with two or four petals. Of the other two decorative friezes only small parts survive, mainly at the bottom of the textile. They consist of adjoining, open, light blue and light green medallions, with alternately circular and V-shaped tips. Inside each medallion is a white, winged quadruped, similar in design to those of the central frieze, but with attached legs, a red, diagonal wing and oval heads that are turned backwards. The quadrupeds walk alternately to the right and left, forming confronted pairs. Parts of plain linen weave are found below this frieze.

Comments

The theme of the animal friezes is repeated here, presented in an arrangement and design that is to become the most popular type in Fāṭimid shawls or turbans. The central frieze consists of repetitive quadrupeds, enclosed in medallions and is flanked by inscriptions, among which grow tendrils and flowers. The inscription, which does not seem to have any textual meaning, though it does not follow the short repetitive pattern of other examples, seems to share a very similar sequence of letters with those on the inscription of I 42 (hereafter type A).

Here, the width of the central frieze is the same as that of the framing bands. The medallions do not have the elaborate frames of the later examples and the spandrels have a very simple decoration. All these could point to an early dating. The trembling appearance of animals and medallions resembles a piece of the Bouvier,[121] which in turn, is related to a ṭirāz in the BAV with the name of al-ʿAzīz.[122] Therefore, a dating to the late 10th-early 11th century could be proposed for this piece. A regular but scarce warp pairing is employed on this piece, a fact that can support its relatively early dating.

[121] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 132, p. 222-223.

[122] BAV 6716 in Cornu, *Tissus islamiques,* p. 198-200 and 525.

I 34. 14963

Dimensions: 31x16.8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: silk, the red wefts of the borders are slightly Z spun; linen, S.

Description

Large white, plain weave linen textile with a blue decorative tapestry band that bears six intact hexagons, each containing an unidentified ornament that looks like a standing human figure, with one arm bent forward and the other stretched to the side, and two stretched open legs, all made of thin, white lines. They could also represent birds, or an abstract design. The hexagons have a red ground, except from the sixth, which has blue. They are set against rhomboid, off-white frames, each decorated with two thin, brown V-shaped lines. The band is bordered by red lines.

Comments

The row of medallions, containing repetitive designs and set on wide friezes, the frames and their thin, brown decoration are all characteristic of Fāṭimid textiles (e.g. I 45 and I 47) However, human figures rendered in this manner are not usually encountered on textiles. On the other hand, the identification with human figures is not at all certain. The regular pairing of the warps in the tradition of the wool and linen tapestries indicates an early dating, which could be defined to the 10th-early 11th century.

I 35. 14966

Dimensions: 21.8x16 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Description

White, linen, plain weave textile fragment with two surviving tapestry bands. The wefts of the upper band are for the most part missing. missing. The upper band is yellow and is decorated with light red curved, diagonal stripes, which create an undulant design. The first stripes from the left have a more vivid, red colour, while the rest are pink. The band had originally a brown border. The second tapestry band below has a yellow ground and a pink outline. It is decorated with pairs of opposed leaf-shaped elements, springing from a common stem. Starting from the left, the first pair is pink with a blue outline, the second, half of which survives, is brown, the third yellow and the fourth blue, all with pink outlines. The yellow band takes then the form of a spiral on a pink ground and continues to the right as a narrow strip.

Comments

Since this piece does not survive complete, it isn't certain whether it included some other type of decoration. The leaf-shaped elements and the undulant designs are encountered in Fāṭimid textiles of the 10th-12th century, usually as border bands (e.g. I 41, I 45 and I 46). A piece with comparable, though more elaborate decoration is found in the Bouvier.[123] The leaf-shaped elements are also encountered in ṭirāz pieces with the name of al-Mustanṣir (1036-1094).[124] The piece could, therefore, be dated to the late 10th-early 11th century. It probably represents a simpler and less sophisticated type of silk decoration.

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[123] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 137, p. 230-231. It is dated to the 11th century because of its blue warp and the leaf-shapes.

[124] TMW inv. no 73.375 in Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue*, p. 75, pl. XXXIV. Also Cluny 22.300; MHTL 30.457/3 and 30.457/13 in Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 231, footnote 3.

I 36. 15209

Dimensions: 23.2x19 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk.

Description

Plain weave textile with two identical, parallel decorative tapestry bands. Each consists of a red kufic pseudo-inscription, between the thin, long shafts of which equal compartments with pairs of opposed birds are formed. A decorative horizontal line of wedges stands below the inscription. These wedges are in some cases formed by the tails of the letters, but in most cases they are irrelevant to them. Each compartment contains a pair of opposed, green birds, with an oblong body decorated with a red stripe, a downward, pointed tail, a round head with a white eye and an oval wing, that has, in most cases, an undulant shape and ends in an upward tip. Above and below the birds are two brown bands, each consisting of three horizontal rows of white, toothed decoration. These bands are underlined with a blue line, that is inserted at intervals into the toothed decoration, creating short and long shafts. The alternation between short and long shafts could indicate another pseudo-inscription. The textile preserves its right selvedge, reinforced by 10 densely set warps.

Comments

Here, the main iconographic element appears to be the inscription and the birds have the role of fillings, illustrating the growing importance of decorative inscriptions on post-conquest textiles. The letters with the crescent-shaped tails are encountered in textiles of the period of al-Mustanṣir (1036-1094),[125] although a ṭirāz of al-Muqtadir (908-932) in the Benaki (VIII 6) and one of al-Muktafī (902-908) in Michigan[126] also bear similar letter tails. The epigraphic evidence together with the arrangement of the decoration, which does not follow the commonplace, from the 11th century, framing inscription bands, could support a date in the 10th-early 11th century.

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[125] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte,* nos 129 and 130, p. 218-220

[126] Day, "Dated Ṭirāz", no 5, p. 426, fig. 5.

I 37. 15306

Dimensions: 26.4x19.4 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Description

Tapestry weave with three decorative bands and on a plain linen weave ground. The central band consists of three oblate, ochre octagons. The middle one contains a pair of affronted, stylised green birds with a rectangular body, a triangular neck, a trapezoid head, dominated by a large square, white eye, an upward, gamma-shaped tail, a spiral, white wing, and two white, triangular legs. The other two octagons contain a white quadruped, walking to the right, with a narrow, rectangular body, an upward, spiral tail and a square head with a large, green, rectangular eye and three projections, two at the back for the ears and one at the front for the muzzle. A green collar decorates the base of its neck. Its lower front leg is V-shaped, while its upper takes the form of a projection at the base of the animal's neck. Its right hind leg is long and C-shaped, while the other is short and straight. The quadruped's body is decorated with a brown rectangle on its chest. The octagons have a white border and are connected through a white stripe that bears an ochre square with a white cross in the centre. On the spandrels between the octagons are mirrored, ochre, helixes on a brown ground. The bottom right spandrel is occupied by an ochre lump instead of the helixes.

The two framing bands are decorated with a repetitive alternation of letters, that seem to be an *alef* and a *ha*, possibly repeating the word "allāh". The long shafts create compartments of equal size, each decorated with a circle with a dot in its centre. The circles' outline connects them in a continuous chain. The circles on the upper band are set on an ochre ground and have green outlines, while those at the bottom are set on a red ground and have ochre outlines. The bands end on the right side in thin, tassel-like stripes.

Comments

This piece follows the tradition of the friezes of birds and quadrupeds in medallions, flanked by inscriptions. The quadruped, interpreted as a dog or jakal, is very similar to that on ṭirāz textiles

of the period of al-Ẓāhir (1020-1035) (fig. 1),[127] and is also found on Benaki 15270 (fig. 2). This type of animal does not appear on earlier textiles and presents analogies with the dogs on certain Fāṭimid ivory panels (fig. 3).[128] The alteration of quadrupeds with pairs of opposed birds is also found in other 11th century textiles, some with blue, paired linen warps, like Benaki I 38, which is, however, less angular and more decorative, and others in the MET[129] (fig. 4) and the CMA.[130] The large, hexagonal compartments recall textiles of the 9th-10th centuries. However, the arrangement of the decoration in a central band with flanking inscriptions suggest that it cannot be older than the late 10th- early 11th century, when this particular arrangement prevails. This type of fabric, with the large, stylised, angular quadrupeds in medallions and the use of rosettes and volutes on the spandrels is attributed to a revived archaism, occurring in textiles of the second half of the 11th century,[131] although it is possible that it represented a tendency of continuation of older designs by certain workshops or towns. A dating to the first half of the 11th century could therefore be proposed.

fig. 1 ṭirāz of al-Ẓāhir in the MIC (footnote 129)

fig. 3 Ivory carving in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore (footnote 130)

fig. 2 Benaki 15270.

fig. 4 Fragment of a textile in the MET, inv. no 27.170.67 (footnote 129)

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[127] Marzouk, "Four Dated Ṭirāz Fabrics", p. 45-47. Also Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 125, p. 211.

[128] Ettinghausen, "Early Realism in Islamic Art", in *Studi orientalistici in onore di Georgio Levi della Vida*, I, Rome 1956, fig. 5, p. 257.

[129] MET 27.170.58-60 and especially 27.170.67 with light blue, double linen warps, in https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/448111 This piece is more elegant, but it is also flanked by inscriptions that repeat the word "allāh".

[130] CMA 1950. 535 in *2000 Years of Tapestry Weaving*, no 53, p. 29 and CMA 1950.536 in http://clevelandart.org/art/1950.536.

[131] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 255 and Golombek and Gervers, "Ṭirāz Fabrics", p. 88.

I 38. 15267

Dimensions: 19x15.7 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: light blue linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, double linen wefts, warp grouping 2/2.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Description

Tapestry band with three decorative friezes on a light blue linen ground. Large part of the wefts of the middle band, which features animals and birds in red ground medallions is missing. The first medallion from the left contains a white quadruped with a brown outline, walking to the left. It has an oblong body, a rectangular neck, with a narrow collar, a square head with a projecting muzzle, two V-shaped ears, a square eye, an S-shaped tail and four stretched legs. Its back thigh is highlighted with a brown spiral. The next medallion contains a pair of affronted, white birds, outlined in brown. They have oblong bodies, with a brown spiral wing, and rectangular heads, with brown stripes for the eyes. A flower or tree must have existed between them, but only white parts of it survive. In the third medallion is a quadruped very similar to the first, facing to the right. A green, stripe could represent a wing, as seen on a similar animal in the ROM.[132] The fourth medallion survives in half and cannot be reconstructed. The medallions have white, intertwined borders, between which are brown volutes, none surviving intact. The framing bands are decorated with a white Arabic pseudo-inscription. The long shafts of the letters create equally sized compartments, each filled with a white, oval flower with a spiral stem on a red ground, forming a scroll.

Comments
This piece has some singular characteristics: the regularly paired warps and the double linen wefts. The quadrupeds and the alternation with birds resemble those of I 37, although this piece is more decorative. Two similar piece are found in the MET.[133] The pseudo-inscription is similar to that on I 40 (thereafter type B). This textile could be dated to the 11th century.

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[132] ROM 970.117.3 in Golombek and Gervers, " Ṭirāz Fabrics", no 18, p. 112-113.

[133] See p. 64, footnote 129 and fig. 4.

I 39. 15312

Dimensions: 35x17 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, double linen wefts.
Weft: linen,S; silk.

Description

White, plain weave textile with a white tapestry band with double wefts. The band bears a red, kufic pseudo-inscription of slender proportions. The letters are largely destroyed, but it seems that each long shaft bears a white circle with a red dot close to its tip. The spaces between the long shafts, which vary in width, are filled with blue vegetal ornaments, which do not form a unified scroll. They appear in three different versions, depending on the space provided. In most cases they take the form of a diagonally placed leaf with a stem that extends downwards, almost touching the letters of the inscription. Each leaf bears one or two small "rings" on its outline. Where the space between the shafts of the letters is wider, two opposed leaves are represented. In narrower spaces the ornament takes the form of a spiral with a hooked mounting.

Comments

A similar, elegant design between the letters is found on a piece of the Bouvier,[134] which mentions the caliph al-Mustanṣir (1036-1094). It has different colouring and single wefts, but has a predominant warp count on the plain weave, as our piece. Comparable decoration and epigraphic style is also found on another piece of the Benaki, which mentions the name of al-Ẓāhir and the date 1032.[135] Based on these comparisons we could date this textile to the first half of the 11th century. The floriated decoration that fits into the compartments created by the letter shafts illustrates the pronounced decorative effect of Arabic script on post-conquest textiles.

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[134] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 127, p. 213-215.

[135] Combe, *Tissus Fāṭimides du Musée Benaki,* Institut francais d'archéologie orientale, 1940, no 15, p. 268, pl. III.

I 40. 15085

Dimensions: 14.5x22.3 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: dark blue linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk, some Z (the ones covered with gold?); linen?

Description

Four tapestry bands on a dark blue plain weave ground. Three of the bands have the usual arrangement of a central frieze with medallions and two framing pseudo-inscription bands. On the central frieze four oval medallions with "trembling" outlines survive. On the first and third the decoration is very reductive. They seem to contain an abstract bird or birds, which have the form of two yellow, opposed C-shapes. The other two medallions contain a cruciform rosette, each with two lance-shaped leaves, yellow on the second medallion and blue on the fourth. The former has a "trembling" appearance, and its design looks quite distorted, basically due to a displacement of the warp yarns. All the medallions have a brown ground and a red outline and are set within wide, yellow frames with a white border. The medallions are connected through red lozenges. The spandrels between them are decorated with yellow, mirrored volutes, outlined in brown. The inscription bands have a yellow ground. The inscription on top, which is barely visible, is yellow and that at the bottom is red. Another, poorly surviving tapestry band with oval medallions is found further below. Two medallions seem to contain rosettes similar to those of the upper zone, though larger, with wider cores and with petals that look more like opposed hooks. The other medallion

could contain a bird like that above. The medallions have a brown ground and red or yellow borders. On the spandrels between them are volutes similar to those of the central frieze.

Comments

This piece follows the usual decoration of a central frieze with medallions, bordered by inscriptions. The medallions, however, contain rosettes, alternating with a very stylised decoration that it is impossible to interpret. The inscription is similar to that on I 38 and belongs to type B. It is loosely woven and the wefts in most parts are not beaten closely together, so that large parts of the blue warp are visible, creating an interesting colour contrast. Traces of gold, which covered some weft yarns are found on the spandrels of the central frieze. It is not clear, though, in what extent gold was used, since most part of it has vanished. The use of gold may seem incompatible with the highly stylised decoration and the use of pseudo-inscriptions. However, it is possible that small amounts of gold were also used on textiles of medium workmanship, in imitation of precious ṭirāz.

The proportions of the medallions, the volute partitions, recalling early textiles, the absence of elaborate frames and of a floriated inscription could support a dating to the first half of the 11th century.

I 41. 15245

Dimensions: 14x8.3 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: natural and dark blue linen, S.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry band with three decorative friezes. The central is wider and bears four circular medallions on a red ground. Starting from the left, each of the first two medallions contains a stylised, white quadruped on a red ground. It has an oblong body, a square neck, a bump-shaped head, a blue, rectangular eye, a tail that curves towards its head and ends in a triangular tip and four angular legs, the front of which spring from the animal's neck. A brown, diagonal stripe runs across its body. The second bird, which is slightly larger, has one more projection that looks like a fifth leg. The medallions are set on yellow, oval frames. The frames bear brown diagonal stripes on their surface, which on the left and right side are replaced by half-stripes with a triangular tip. The upper spandrels between the medallions are yellow and bear large volutes, outlined in brown. The bottom spandrels have small ochre, rhomboid rosettes, with a brown X-shape. brown stripe in the middle, which forms four triangular petals.

The third, and especially the fourth medallion, are very different in size, design and colours, giving the impression that they belong to a different piece, a fact that cannot, however, be supported by the structure of the textile. The third medallion is quite larger and contains what seems to be a stylised pair of addorsed, brown, C-shaped birds, highlighted in red, with interlaced tails on a yellow ground. Part of the wefts is missing and the design cannot be accurately reconstructed. A red triangle is found at the bottom of the medallion, and an inverted at the top, in concordance with the triangular areas of red ground visible above the previous medallions, though here, the red area is inside the roundel, since this larger medallion reaches to the border of the frieze. The fourth, oval medallion is, again, larger than the first two and contains two abstract birds standing on either side of a stylised tree on a red ground. The birds have a thin, C-shaped body and neck, a triangular,

upward head, a red, triangular eye, two small, rectangular legs and a hooked wing with a projection in the middle. The bird on the left is smaller and yellow, while that on the right is larger and white. The yellow "tree" consists of a vertical line with an outward arrow head on its base and top. Each arrow head envelops a yellow rhomboid shape. These medallions do not have frames. Traces of volutes appear on the spandrels, but the design is very confused and fragmentary in these areas.

The two framing bands are narrower than the central. Their decoration consists of pairs of opposed, leaf-shaped ornaments, springing from a common stem. Larger, yellow pairs of leaves alternate with smaller, which have a double, thick outline of red and yellow. At the base of each leaf are single or double, brown, horizontal veins. either two horizontal brown lines or, in one case, two opposed gamma stripes in the shape of stamens. Their tips end in hooked projections. The decorative friezes are bordered by narrow, yellow bands, each filled with an undulant stripe.

Comments

This piece also falls into the category of textiles with friezes of animated medallions. The frames of the medallions seem to represent a step further from the palmette interstices towards the more complicated and elaborate frames of the textiles of the late 11th-12th century.[136] A decoration similar to the leaf-shaped ornaments is found in a piece in the TMW[137] and in another piece of the Bouvier,[138] both dated to the reign of al-Mustanṣir (1036-1094). The latter is considered characteristic of that period, mainly because it includes a motif of two addorsed birds, which appears often in ṭirāz textiles with al-Mustanṣir's name[139] and also appears in our example, though in a different form. The leaf motif, however, figures also in 12th century textiles, [140] but the still relatively simple interstice and frame decoration suggest an earlier date. The alternation of plain and dark blue warps creates interesting stripes of contrasting colours on the background, seen sometimes in textiles of the 11th century, when the use of blue linen warps became a kind of trend.[141] Based on all the above evidence, a date to the second half of the 11th century could be proposed for this piece.

The birds and quadrupeds are very reductively woven, especially those on the right medallion. The difference in the design of the medallions could be attributed to a change of weaver in the process.

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[136] The fact that the medallion frames on this piece belong to an intermediate stage becomes evident if we compare, for example, the interstices and frames of I 38, with those on I 45 and, even more, with I 47.

[137] See I 34; Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue*, no 73.375, p. 75, pl. XXXIV. It bears an inscription with the name of al-Mustanṣir and the vezier al-Yāzūri, who was in office from 1050 to 1058.

[138] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 137, p. 230-231.

[139] MCl 22300, MHTL 30 457/3, 30 457/13 and 30 457/14, TMW 73.673, in Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue*, p. 77, pl. XXXV; BAV 6719, in Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 271-272.

[140] Bouvier 149 and MIC 9350 in Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 248-249.

[141] See ibid., no 143, p. 239-240, with similarly reductive birds, though in a smaller scale.

I 42. 15253

Dimensions: 19.3x5.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry band with three decorative zones. The central bears alternately red and brown lozenges, each containing a pair of white, affronted birds with brown outlines. Nine complete and two half lozenges survive. The birds are represented in a standing position, with outstretched heads and wings, as if ready to fly. They have oblong bodies, hook-shaped necks and heads, an upward tail and a triangular or arched wing. The heads of most birds are highlighted with a brown spiral which denotes their eye. Between the birds is a small triangle or circle, blue on the red lozenges and ochre on the brown. Above and below the lozenges are trapezoid bands, ochre for the red lozenges, blue and green for the brown. Each of these bands is decorated with two brown, diagonal hook-shapes, one upward and the other downward. The areas between the lozenges and the bands are filled with two brown diamonds, one on top of the other. Each diamond contains an ochre cross, with triangular tips. The trapezoid bands, together with the diamonds, form a kind of frame that surrounds the lozenges. The central frieze is bordered by two narrow, brown bands decorated with a beige plait.

On either side of the central frieze is a red band with a white, kufic pseudo-inscription, underlined and highlighted in brown. Between the long shafts of the letters, which here do not reach to the top of the frieze, are small, circular medallions with birds. The medallions, sixteen on the bottom band and twelve very fragmentary on the top, are alternately brown and blue or green. The birds on the brown medallions, which are white, resemble those on the lozenges. The birds on the green and blue medallions are yellow and their design resembles either that of the central frieze, or that on III 4. The birds face alternately to the left and right. An exception appears on the thirteenth and fourteenth bottom medallions, which both face to the left. All the medallions have a white border. Traces of two more plait bands are discernible beyond them. All bands are separated by white lines.

Comments

Pairs of confronted birds with open wings, though more naturalistically drawn, are seen in BAV 6725, datable to the end of the 11th century.[142] Comparable birds are also encountered in a piece of the MMT, datable to the beginning-middle of the 12th century.[143] Similar pairs of birds, accompanied by small triangles, are seen in a piece of the Bouvier, although with much plainer decoration and different colour scheme. That piece is datable to the second half of the 11th century, mainly because of its epigraphic style and its resemblance to the "veil of st. Anne", which is dated to 1096-7.[144] However, the pseudo-inscription on our piece belongs to type A, already seen on I 33, which is datable to the late 10th-early 11th century. Therefore, a date to the first half of the 11th century could be proposed.

The Fāṭimid textiles with friezes of birds and quadrupeds continues, on one hand, the animated scroll artistic tradition, but, on the other hand, gives it a different aesthetic concept with elaborate frames and geometrical compartments, also found on other aspects of Fāṭimid art (fig. 1).

fig. 1 Wooden Panel. Qalaun, Cairo, 11th century, in Gelfer-Jørgensen, *Medieval Islamic Symbolism*, p. 127, fig. 69.

[142] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 275-276 and 551. The S-shaped ornaments below the cartouches of the central frieze are encountered on the ṭirāz of al-Mustaʿlī (1094-1101), like the veil of St. Anne.

[143] *Égypte, la trame de l'Histoire,* no 151, p. 190.

[144] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 134 and 135, p. 225-229.

I 43. 15120

Dimensions: 41x18 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
It consists of more than one pieces of plain weave. The two added side bands are of Z-spun linen warps and Z-spun linen wefts.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk, some Z; linen, S.

Description

Large textile, with two parts of tapestry decoration on top and bottom of a linen plain weave ground. The bottom part consists of three bands. The central has a red ground and bears eight stylised quadrupeds, facing to the left. These have an oblong body, upward, hooked tails, four rectangular legs, square or arched heads with a small oval ear attached to their back side, and a large eye, set in the middle of their heads, giving them an unrealistic appearance. Above and below their eyes is a horizontal row of small brown squares. Their thighs are highlighted with brown curves. Their bodies and neck collar are decorated with an oblong band with diagonal, brown stripes and their thighs and abdomen with Λ-shapes. The animals are blue, green or yellow. On the blue and green animals the eye, ear and body decoration are white, while on the yellow ones they are blue. The second blue quadruped has a white head and a blue eye, ear and collar. Between the first and the second animal is a much smaller, white one, resembling those on I 37. The animal's body is decorated with an irregular green oval that has a brown curved element inside it. Between the animals are single or double spiral ornaments and heart-shaped volutes. Above the smaller animal is a double, horizontal row of white spiral meanders.

On top of the animal frieze is a white band of similar width, containing a red, stylised pseudo-inscription, comprising pairs of opposed “letters”, which create open squares. The “letters” consist of a vertical shaft with four horizontal projections: a triangular on the tip, a rectangular below, a hooked projection below that, and another hooked one close to the base. The hooked projections of the opposed letters form square frames, on which stand red oblate diamonds with a white dot in the centre Between the tips of the letters are small, red rectangles. Below the inscription is a band of red diamonds with a white dot in the centre. A similar band appears below the central frieze.

On the upper side of the textile is another tapestry band, decorated with nine red fish, set on oblate, green, octagonal frames. The fish have an oval body with three projections for the tail, and four pairs of diagonal, slightly curved projections for the fins. Their body is decorated with leftward, white arrow heads, and a white circle or square, next to their eye. The sixth fish has one leftward, one double and one rightward arrow. Between them are formed blue triangles, each with a pair of brown volutes. This frieze is bordered by two narrow, white bands, each bearing a row of red spiral meanders. Several parts, like at the extra fins on the snout of the first fish, the green fragment with part of a fin in the place of the blue triangle between the sixth and the seventh fish and the condensed triangles between the seventh and eighth fish, indicate that parts of the textile have been repaired, either by replacement with parts from a similar piece or by omitting the destroyed pieces and sewing the remainder together. The plain weave ground also consists of different pieces.

Comments

The lack of medallions or frames on the main frieze, differentiate this piece, as does the highly stylised repetitive pseudo-inscription. Similar inscriptions are found in BAV 6915, datable to the 12th century.[145] The style of the letters brings to mind those on the pieces from the ṭirāz factory of Ṭūṭūn in the Fayyūm,[146] although in a larger and much more stylised and repetitive version. Also, the presence of fish, a quite uncommon iconographic element in Fāṭimid textiles, together with the large, naive and angular quadrupeds, bring to mind textiles of the 7th-9th century.[147] The colours and the rendering of the quadrupeds with the single eye and the pearled decoration, evokes the birds on V 8, datable to 8th-10th century and it is possible that they come from the same pictorial tradition. The highly stylised letters of the inscription and the use of silk on a naive-designed piece, however, rather suggest a date in the 11th century, bearing testimony of the continuation of an older iconographic tradition and weaving style, well into the Fāṭimid period.

[145] Cornu, *Tissus, islamiques,* p.

[146] See IV 27. See also chapter, 1e. Centres of production, p. 61-63 and 2d. Inscriptions, p. 128.

[147] See, for example, IV 8 and IV 9 with marine creatures. Fish were represented oftener on earlier textiles. See, for example De Bourguet, *Catalogue*, nos D 48-49, p. 138, possibly 6th-7th century, Pritchard, *Clothing Culture*, p. 79-80, fig. 4.29 and the tunics in the MAK, dated to the 4th-6th century, in *Verletzliche Beute,* nos 1 and 2, p. 40-42.

I 44. 15039

Dimensions: 28x17 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk; linen S;
(This is the back side of the textile!)

Description

Textile with four decorative tapestry zones on a white linen plain weave. Only a very small part of the upper zone survives. It features pairs of confronted birds on either side of a stylised flower or tree. The birds have an ochre, oval body that extends into an oblong tail, a C-shaped neck and head, a circular, brown eye, two L-shaped, brown legs and, possibly, a spiral wing. The tree seems to consist of a brown, vertical shaft and an ochre, inverted, heart-shaped base. The pairs of birds are separated by single, ochre palmette partitions with a spiral bud on top. Below the birds is a row of sparsely arranged triangles, two of which survive. They consist of consecutive rows of inverted hearts, red, blue or ochre, on an ochre ground.

The second tapestry zone has three registers. The central consists of red lozenges containing reductive, white animals, running to the right. Their body is a thin, horizontal strip, that ends in two C-shapes, an inward, signifying the tail, and an outward, denoting a leg. They have a C-shaped head, not attached to their body. Above and below the animals are ochre fillings that follow the curves of their bodies, C-shaped and in the shape of palmettes. On the spandrels are ochre, mirrored, heart-shaped volutes. The central frieze is framed by two brown narrow bands bearing a

white, undulant line with toothed projections. Then follow two ochre inscription bands on a red ground, that seem to contain several fillings, often confused with the letters. Among them are discerned white leaves at the top and undulant bands at the bottom. Between the central and the inscription bands are. Further below is another row of four triangles with heart-shaped decoration.

The third decorative zone consists of four stylised, ochre trees on either side of which are confronted quadrupeds at the base, and confronted birds on the top. The trunks have couples of rectangular projections. The upper part of the trees has an oval shape with a diamond in the centre and five pairs of downward branches. The bottom pair ends in two bunches of ochre circles on a brown frame, possibly denoting some kind of fruit. The quadrupeds at the base of the trees have a rectangular body, oblong, stretched legs, an upward, C-shaped tail, a circular head, two projecting ears at the back and a wide neck collar. The pairs of quadrupeds are alternately ochre and blue and their collars have the opposite colour. The birds on either side of the tree tops have an ochre, S-shaped body, ending in a straight, oblong tail, and a blue snail-like spiral wing. More birds are found between the trees, at the height of their branches. These face to the right and are similar to those above, but with a red body, un upward tail and an oval wing.

The fourth zone consists of six standing human figures in orans position, largely destroyed. Their heads are large, oval, with large, round eyes. Two thin stripes denote their mouth and two thicker and curved, their eyebrows. On their chin is an ochre triangle, possibly a beard. The body survives only in two figures. It seems to be triangular, with attached, rectangular, raised arms and covered in a kind of clothing. Parts of red and ochre sleeves survive. The clothing of the fifth figure seems to be made of alternating blue, ochre and reddish bands, sometimes curved, creating a circular design on the torso. They seem to wear a kind of rectangular, ochre hat with a toothed decoration. That of the second figure is decorated with green squares and that of the fifth with blue. Between the figures is a vertical row of triangles, green, red, ochre or blue with a differently coloured small circle at their base.

Comments

Elements like the heart-shaped volutes and the framing inscription bands are present in textiles of the 11th-12th century, although others, like the orans figures are not often encountered. An almost identical figure in the orans position is found on another textile of the Benaki, pictured under an arch with a hanging lamp, possibly signifying a mosque.[148] On this textile, datable to the 11th-12th century, similar birds also appear. Another such praying figure, though differently designed, is encountered in a carpet fragment in the Bouvier.[149] However, the orans figures are an uncommon iconographic element in Islamic Art and seem rather to originate in Christian iconography.[150]

The motif of the tree of life, flanked by birds and quadrupeds continues being used, here in a more naturalistic form than that seen on 9th-10th century examples (e.g. IV 17 and IV 24). Similar trees flanked by quadrupeds are also found in a piece in the CMA.[151] In any case, the motif of trees

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[148] *Byzantium and Islam*, no 187, p. 264-265.

[149] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 60, p. 120-122, datable to the 9th century.

[150] See, for example a curtain with a praying couple, dated to the 5th-6th century, in *Byzantium 330-1453*, Exhibition Catalogue, Cormack and Vasilake eds., London 2008, p. 424, mentioned by Mina Moraitou in *Byzantium and Islam*, p. 265. Also, the pieces of Islamic metalwork of the 13th century with Christian iconography, in Eva R. Hoffman, "Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteen Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity and Memory", *Gesta*, 1 January 2004, vol. 43(2), p. 129-142.

[151] CMA 1930.89 in http://clevelandart.org/art/1930.89

or gardens, with allusions to paradise and prosperity, was a popular theme for hangings and curtains since pharaonic times.[152]

The decoration of the CMA piece is accompanied by cursive inscriptions, which indicate a dating in the 12th century. Similar trees are also found in a piece excavated at Naqlūn and dated to the second half of the 12th-beginning of the 13th century.[153] Birds with a spiral wing also appear in BAV 6907,[154] datable stylistically to the third quarter of the 12th century. The face of the figures is similar to that of a rider in a Bouvier piece, datable to the middle or the third quarter of the 11th century.[155] Consequently, our piece could be dated to the early-middle 12th century. The difference between the highly stylised quadrupeds of the inscription band and those of the lower registers is quite interesting. It could be attributed to a different weaver, or to the difference in function, the former being treated as fillers or accompaniments of the inscription, the latter, possibly as the main decorative theme.

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[152] For a survey of this iconographic preference and a presentation of the pre-conquest examples see Stauffer, *Textiles d'Egypte*, p. 35-49. See also the "semis" design in 21510-I 5.

[153] Wlodzimierz Godlewski, " Les textiles issus des fouilles récentes de Naqlūn", in *Égypte, la trame de l'Histoire,* p. 103, fig 12.

[154] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 337-338 and 570.

[155] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 139, p. 233-235.

I 45. 15280

Dimensions: 16x8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: light blue linen, S.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry fragment with three decorative friezes. The central consists of five and a half oblate medallions with a beige ground and a white border, that contain white, running quadrupeds, possibly hares, facing alternately to the left and right. They have an oblong body with a "trembling" brown outline, curved legs, round heads and oblong ears, the outline of which extends and forms their eye. They are surrounded by two yellow, curved bands, divided into unequal compartments by brown, hooked stripes. The top and bottom larger compartments, bear a couple of opposed hooks that form a heart-shape. The white borders of the medallions extend forming circles, which connect the medallions. Above and below these circles are white, heart-shaped rosettes, set on rhomboid, beige frames (the first frame from the left is red). The triangular areas between the medallions are green, decorated with diagonal, opposed hooks, forming a kind of volutes on either side of the diamonds. The central frieze is framed by two narrow, yellow bands with an undulant decoration and two bands with white pseudo-inscriptions on a beige ground, the bottom of which is inverted but not mirrored. The long shafts of the letters form square compartments, each decorated with a rosette, consisting of irregularly shaped, yellow petals set around a green core, which is not always in the centre of the flower. Traces of two more tapestry bands with an undulant design are also seen.

Comments

This textile belongs to a well-represented type with floriated inscriptions, wide medallion frames, decorated with brown stripes, light blue warp and yellow, green, beige and deep red or blue silk wefts.[156] The inscription repeats a phrase, which could be "naṣr min allāh" (victory from God). Similar pieces are found in the BAV,[157] the Bouvier[158] and the ROM.[159] Our example could be dated to the beginning of the 12th century, mainly because of the medium complexity of its design.

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[156] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 306

[157] Ibid., nos 6812, 6813 and 6913, p. 303-307 and 559-560.

[158] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 144 and 146 p. 240-241 and 244-245.

[159] Golombek and Gervers, "Ṭirāz Fabrics", no 19, p. 114 and no 22, p. 117, without inscription bands.

I 46. 15185

Dimensions: 20x10 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: light blue linen, S.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry band with five decorative friezes. The central consists of medallions with stylised birds, alternating with rectangular compartments with quadrupeds. The medallions, six of which survive, have a circular, “trembling” shape and contain a yellow bird, similar to those on 15115-III 4 on a red ground. They have a yellow border and are set on green irregular oval frames, most of which have a pointed tip. The compartments, five and a half of which survive, have slightly concave sides and are convex at the top and bottom, often also with a pointed tip. The white quadrupeds are represented running to the left or right, forming alternately addorsed and confronted pairs. They have an oblong body and a spiral head, that extends into X-shaped ears (the first quadruped from the left has a square head), curved hind and right front legs and an upward left front leg, an S-shaped tail with a split end, and a green, curved band across their bodies, possibly signifying a wing. The coil of their head is highlighted in brown, denoting their eye and their back thigh with a brown spiral. Below and above them are two rows of yellow, circular medallions with white borders, each containing a red bird. The birds have an S-shaped body and head, an upward, also S-shaped tail, facing the opposite direction than the body, a triangular beak, a white round eye, a small leg springing form the middle of their abdomen, and an oblong green wing. Between them and the central frieze is an undulant band that follows the outline of the medallions and is decorated with small brown, irregularly shaped compartments, each with a white hook, leftward or rightward. On the side touching the inscription bands, there are only small triangles between the medallions, alternately brown and red, with a small, white, vertical stripe in the centre.

These friezes are framed by two bands with yellow inscriptions on a red ground. Between the long shafts of the letters, is a yellow bud with three petals, enclosed in a yellow, hook-shaped stem. The inscription bands are bordered by yellow bands with brown, undulant stripes.

Comments

This piece falls into the same category as I 45, though the decoration is richer and more complicated here. The inscription is very similar to that on I 47 (hereafter type C). This type of

inscription seems to have been popular during the first half of the 12th century and it is believed to repeat the word "jalīla" (power). Similar inscriptions are found in the Bouvier,[160] and the ROM[161] and are usually encountered on the ṭirāz of al- Āmir (1101-1130).[162]

The winged quadrupeds are seen in many 11th century textiles, like I 38, Bouvier 141,[163] MET 27.170.67.[164] Similar, winged quadrupeds in rectangular compartments, alternating with medallions and accompanied by inscriptions with resembling buds, are found in a piece of the Bouvier, datable to the first half of the 12th century.[165] Our example could also be dated to the first half of the 12th century.

[160] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 145, p. 241-243

[161] Golombek and Gervers, "Ṭirāz Fabrics*",* no 20 and 21, p. 115-116, dated to the 12th century.

[162] Marzouk, "The Evolution of Inscriptions on Fāṭimid Textiles", *Ars islamica,* vol. 10 (1943), p. 166, fig. 12

[163] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 141, p. 236-237.

[164] See p. 64, fig. 4.

[165] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 147, p. 245-246.

I 47. 15175

Dimensions: 31x25 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: natural, blue, light blue linen, S.

Plain Weave
Belonging to a different textile on which the tapestry bands are sewn.
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk; linen, S.

Description

Large textile with two identical tapestry areas, each consisting of three decorative bands. The central band, which is much larger, bears a row of small, red roundels, each containing a white bird that consists basically of an S-shaped body and an attached C-shape that denotes its wing and tail, a small leg and a a long beak. The medallions have white borders and are set on yellow, octagonal frames, separated by brown stripes into compartments. These compartments contain brown, hooked stripes, except from the top and bottom triangular ones. Above and below the medallions and attached to them, run two zig-zag, yellow bands, with a trembling outline, also divided into compartments and decorated with hooked ornaments.

The curved triangles between the zig-zag bands and the borders of the frieze are blue, decorated with white rosettes on red frames, circular on the upper band and triangular at the bottom. The areas between the medallions, which have the shape of two diamonds, one on top of the other, have a brown ground. Each is decorated with a red, curved square, which in many cases takes the form of a heart and is outlined in white. Inside each square is a white decoration in the form of a fleur de lis. From the three sides of the square project short shafts with small attached circles. At the

bottom side of the upper squares and the top side of the bottom ones are small lumps, which touch a small, red roundel found between them and decorated with a white cross. The central frieze is framed by two yellow, narrow bands with hooked, brown lines, forming a kind of spiral meander.

The inscription bands bear white letters on a red ground. The square letters have a brown dot in their centre. The vertical shafts of the letters form rectangular compartments, each decorated with a yellow, stylised flower, consisting of three petals and an oblong base. The flowers are enclosed in a yellow border, which ends in a diagonal stem, connecting them with the letters of the inscription. These bands are bordered by another yellow, narrow band with hooked, brown lines, possibly imitating a cursive inscription.

The upper side of the textile has a selvedge made in the weft-twining technique.

Comments

We see here, fully developed, the system of decoration with animals or birds in compartments, set in complex and elaborate, interconnected frames, which was formed during the early 12th century. The framing system of the medallions takes actually a lot more of space than the birds in medallions themselves and dominate the decoration. The inscription belongs to type C, which is usually attributed to the first half of the 12th century (I 46).

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II. Textiles with a linen, S-spun, Z-plied warp

II 1. 6949

Dimensions: 23x23 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Extended use of slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp.

Description

Ochre tapestry roundel with a double border. In the centre, a nimbed male figure appears to be struggling with a lion. The figure has an oval head with black hair and beard, a large nose created by a hooked line, a square-shaped right eye with a white centre and a black dot on its lower part and another black dot for the left eye. Only one eyebrow is visible above the right eye and one ear created by a triangular gap between the hair and the beard on the right part of the face. The figure seems to be dressed in a cloak, the drapes of which are visible on his right arm. The head and torso of the figure are depicted in a frontal position, while the legs are shown in profile, although the left foot is also drawn in a frontal view. The abstract character of the design and the particularities of the weaving technique make it difficult to discern the position of the figure's hands and the pattern represented on the lower part of the figure's torso. It could be assumed, judging by other pieces with the same iconography, that his right hand is wrapped around the lion's neck.[166]

On the right upper part of the roundel is another nimbed figure that seems to be floating in the air and looking towards the fight scene. It has an oblong body, an oval, striped collar and an oval head with big square eyes and a large oblong nose. Its legs are stretched backwards and its hands

[166] Dale, "The Power of the Anointed", p. 29.

are bent in front of its chest. Here, again, the body is represented in a three quarter view, while the head is in an almost frontal position. There is a striped green band behind the figure's back.

On the left of the central figure is stylised vegetation consisting of vertical branches with ochre, heart-shaped leaves in an oblong dark green and ochre frame. Below the central figure's feet is another animal, or carcass, in an unidentified position with only one eye visible.

The inner border of the medallion is wider and consists of a stylised vine scroll with spirals and leaves, while the outer border is narrower and features a multicoloured interlocking-gamma design. Around the roundel parts of tapestry weave of the same ochre colour are visible. In the right upper corner, a light green element suggests another design that does not survive.

Comments

The roundel depicts a lion-fighting scene, well known in different forms of art since Antiquity. Animal-fighting scenes appeared frequently in ancient Near Eastern art, in the popular "Master of the Animals" type and also in the ancient Greek mythology, in Sasanian art, and, later, in the repertoire of Christian art. Although in most cases such scenes originally represented episodes in the life of a single hero, like Hercules, Bahram Gur, David or Samson, early in the Christian period, the iconographic tradition often tended to depart from its narrative foundation, so that it is often impossible to be sure of the identity of the hero. It is true that pagan themes appear more than often in Coptic textiles, particularly earlier ones, while, at the same time, the classical iconographic tradition is also used, altered or not, for the representation of Christian themes.[167] The type of the "Master of beasts" seems also to have been incorporated into Islamic art, as indicate later textile fragments, like the Almoravid silk dalmatic of St. Bernard Calvò.[168]

The roundel possibly depicts a scene from the life of David, namely the slaying of the lion. The iconographic rendering of the scene is exactly the same as in a series of pieces in various collections, like the VAM,[169] the AS,[170] the MET, the Louvre,[171] the MAF[172] and the HM.[173] On all these pieces, the slaying of the lion is depicted amongst other scenes which can be identified as scenes from the life of David, like David volunteering and fighting Goliath. However, the scene on these fragments is not in perfect accordance with the iconography of David on other artefacts.[174] The iconographic type of the lion slaying in these textiles might have been influenced by the type of Samson killing the lion,[175] which, in its turn, has been influenced by the pagan theme of Hercules

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[167] See Weitzmann, "The Survival" p. 43-68.

[168] Johns, "Muslim Artists", p. 70-71.

[169] Kendrick, *Catalogue*, no 631, p. 14, pl. VIII.

[170] Stauffer, *Koptische Wirkereien*, p. 246-248.

[171] Dale, "The Power of the Anointed", p. 29-34, figs. 12, 23,24 and 25.

[172] Guerrini, *Le stoffe copte,* p. 89-91.

[173] *Byzantium and Islam,* no. 7, p. 18.

[174] See, for example, the contemporary with our textiles silver plates from Cyprus. In these plates, David is depicted using a club to kill the animal, and, instead of being naked, he is fully dressed. The iconographic elements of the tree and the carcass, though, are there too and the position of the figure, with the right leg stretched and the left bent is quite similar to our example. Steven H. Wander, "The Cyprus Plates: The Story of David and Goliath", *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, Vol. 8 (1973), p. 94, fig. 7 and p. 101-102.

[175] For an iconographic survey of the subject see also Johns, "Muslim Artists", p. 75-79; see also Grube and Johns, *Cappella Palatina*, p. 204-220.

slaying the Nemean lion.[176] A silver plate in the *Cabinet des medailles* in Paris, dated to the 6th century, depicts the naked Hercules grabbing the lion by the neck with his right foot stretched and his left bent in front, a tree completing the composition.[177] Stauffer interprets the lion fighting figure on the AS piece as Hercules and the figures in the other medallion of the same piece as Apollon and Daphne.[178] According to Dale, however, the depiction of the carcass below the figure's feet in our textile indicates that David – and not Hercules or Samson – is represented here,[179] because the biblical text mentions that, the lion, before being killed by David, had managed to grab a sheep, which David finally took from his mouth. However, in a representation of Samson in the catacombs of the Via Latina, the carcass of a dead animal is also seen below the fighting scene,[180] which is the carcass of the same lion, the artist having conflated two chronologically distinct scenes. The crouched figure could be identified, according to Dale, either with *Dynamis*, a personification of Power, or with a personification of *locus*, both of which are depicted in a scene of David slaying the lion in the Paris Psalter, albeit from the 10th century.[181]

It appears that the type of a warrior kneeling on the back of an animal and slaying it with or without a weapon was a common iconographical type in early Byzantine art,[182] possibly also deriving from representations of Mithras killing the bull.[183] The iconographic type of the warrior confronting the animal from the front was also used. The latter is represented in the "Samson and the lion" textile in Dumbarton Oaks, datable to the 6th-7th century.[184]

The confused composition and the maladroit execution on our textile not only obscure the details of the scene and thus impedes identification of the iconographic model or models, but also suggests that the weaver was not concerned to illustrate a particular narrative and was merely concerned to give a highly impressionistic account of a fight between a human and one or more lions. It also seems that our textile, as well as the other known pieces with similar compositions, depended upon the conflation or confusion of different iconographic traditions originally inspired by different narrative accounts of various distinct lion-killing heroes, a mixture often encountered in Late Antiquity and, especially during the first two centuries after the conquest of Egypt. It is not clear whether the synthesis of traditions in these textiles is an original one or an imitation of a prototype not yet known to us. Nevertheless, it seems that the specific iconographic type became a kind of fashion that was imitated by different textile workshops, as the differences in the execution and the design among the known "David" textiles clearly indicate.

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[176] Samson, like the figure in our example, is often depicted grabbing the lion by the neck, an iconographical type that seems to derive from the model of Hercules, See Weitzmann, " The Survival", p. 58, fig. 25-26.

[177] Dale, "The Power of the Anointed", p. 30

[178] Stauffer, *Koptische wirkereien*, p. 246-248, pl. 67 and Shrenk, *Textilien,* no 57, p. 169-173. This piece is of Z-plied linen warp of 8-9 per cm and S-spun woollen (24-52 per cm) and linen (24-34 per cm) wefts and has traces of the flying shuttle technique. It is also described as a Hercules scene.

[179] Dale, "The Power of the Anointed", p. 30.

[180] Antonio Ferrua S.I., *Le pitture della nuova catacomba di via Latina*, Vatican 1960, pl. CIX.

[181] Dale, "The Power of the Anointed", p. 31 .

[182] Wander, "The Cyprus Plates", p. 101-102; Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, *Early Christian Art*, New York 1962, p. 180.

[183] Beckwith, *The Art of Constantinople,* London 1968, p. 53.

[184] W.F. Volbach, *Fruhchristliche Kunst, Die Kunst der Spätantike in West und Ostrom*, Munich 1958, pl. 256.

Most of these roundels are parts of bands decorating the lower hem of T-shaped tunics, as the AS and and the MET examples indicate, in both of which a large part of the tunic is preserved. Dale argues that these scenes were chosen for their apotropaic value, which ideally transferred the heroic nature of David's deeds, an archetype for Christ's miracles, to the baptised Christian wearer.[185]

These pieces are usually dated between the 6th and 9th centuries. The vine-scroll borders appear in Byzantine silver dishes, dated by stamps to the late 6th- early 7th century.[186] In particular, in a silver plate in the Nicosia Museum of Antiquities, also dated by hallmarks to the beginning of the 7th century, there appears a combination of borders quite similar to the double borders of this textile.[187] The interlocking-gamma border is seen on many textiles with roundels, datable to the 7th to the 9th centuries.[188] A similar, but more complicated border is found on a silk samite textile in the AS, radiocarbon-dated to 620-724[189] and also in an *orbiculus* with Old Testament scenes, radiocarbon-dated to 776-972.[190] The "David" textiles were possibly woven in imitation of Byzantine silk pieces. The silk prototypes appeared in the late 6th century and their tapestry imitations seem to date from the second half of the 7th to the 9th century, a fact also supported by the epigraphic evidence that some of these imitations bear.[191] The type of border seen on our textile also, possibly, derives from Near Eastern silk prototypes.[192] The above mentioned evidence allows for a dating of our piece in the 7th- 8th century. Nevertheless, the rest of the textiles of this group all have a red ground, while our piece has an ochre one.

This piece could, possibly, be attributed to Akhmīm, since three of the "David" textiles (the VAM, AS and MAF examples) were found in this town. The characteristic, hooked nose of the figure on our example, is also present in several Akhmīm pieces.[193] This cannot, of course, be considered as conclusive evidence for attribution, but since it does not appear in any textiles safely attributed to any other centre, it can, at the moment be regarded as a possible local characteristic.

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[185] Dale, "The Power of the Anointed", p. 35-39.

[186] BM No 1899, 0425.1; Walter Arts Museum No 57.652.

[187] Dale, "The Power of the Anointed", p. 25; Erica Cruikshank Dodd, John Kent, *Byzantine Silver Stamps*, Washington 1961, p. 126-127.

[188] For example Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne and De Jonghe, *Textiles coptes,* fig. 77; Stauffer, *Koptische Wirkereien*, cat. 68; P. M.Van Hooft, M.J. Raven, E.H.C Van-Rooij and G.M. Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Pharaonic and early medieval Egyptian textiles*, Leiden: RIJKS Museum van Oudheden 1994, No 413-414.

[189] Schrenk, *Textilien*, no 82, p. 224-225.

[190] Ibid., No 154, p. 335-337.

[191] Shepherd, "Alexander the victorious emperor", *The Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 58, no 8 (October 1971), p. 246, 249-250.

[192] Stauffer, *Textiles d'Egypte*, p. 160.

[193] Lafontaine-Dosogne and De Jonghe, *Textiles coptes*, pl.81; Stauffer, *Koptische Wirkereien,* No 67, p. 246-248.

II 2. 7175

Dimensions: 15x33 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, vertical weft brocading.

Description

Tapestry band, possibly sleeve decoration from a tunic. It consists of a flower or tree in the centre and on a vertical axis, at the base of which are two opposed quadrupeds. On each side of the central composition are two horizontal registers, one above the other, containing running quadrupeds enclosed in medallions. The whole decoration is woven in yellow on a red ground.

The central theme, probably a version of the candelabra tree, or tree of life, consists of a trunk with an inverted V-shaped base and two consecutive hearts above. On top of the trunk is a couple of downward, curved, oblong leaves, decorated with opposed, thick C-shapes. On top of the leaves is another inverted V shape, and on either side of it, attached to the lower leaves, are two curved inward stems, each ending in a tripartite leaf. Above them are traces of other spirals, but they do not survive. On either side of the trunk is a quadruped, consisting of a C-shaped body with two front projecting legs, an upward, also C-shaped tail, with a forked edge, a triangular neck, which extends into an oblong head with a brown dot for the eye, three parallel projections for the muzzle, and two for the ears or horns. Their neck does not touch their body, but a stripe of red ground stands in between, taking the place of a collar. The same also happens on different parts of the tail. The central rectangle is defined by two vertical stripes woven in vertical weft patterning.

Each of the registers on either side of the central composition contains two oblate medallions with running quadrupeds. The medallions consist of a double outline. The inner is thicker and broken in the middle. On the sides of the outline are two rings. These double outlines, held together with rings bring to mind the medallions on I 16 or I 17. The quadrupeds inside them seem to belong to two types, one resembling a hare and the other a deer or dog. These animals are repeated on either side of the textile in a diagonal symmetry. They all consist of an irregularly shaped body, with projecting legs. Their hind legs are bent, while their front are stretched on the hares and bent on the deer. On all animals the articulation of the front right leg is formed by an indentation on their body. Their heads, which are not attached to their bodies, are circular for the hares and oblong for the deer. The heads of some animals are turned towards the back. The ears of the hares are oval, while the deer have small, upward projections. All the animals have a small,

brown eye and a curved, upward tail, short or longer. The body of the deer on the bottom left register is decorated with a horizontal row of red rectangles. The hare on the bottom left register is slightly different, with a fuller body, lowered head and large, oblong ears.

On the spandrels between the medallions are pairs of mirrored hearts, one on top and another at the bottom of each register. Between the registers are narrow bands, decorated with a stylised scroll, with crescent-shaped leaves stemming from either side of it. At the bottom of the textile is a band of small, upward volutes, the tips of which are connected with arches.

Comments

The use of woollen wefts of only two colours for the decoration is not very usual on tapestry bands. It is possible that this occurs in imitation of exclusively linen decoration, like that on 7136 (fig. 1), which has a similar character. This textile is probably an example of a cuff band decoration.

Despite its plied warp, the textile is woven with fine woollen yarns. This, together with the carefully planned and executed design, implies expert craftsmanship and a qualified workshop. The presence of plied warps, which were not used for the weaving of tunics, suggests that this piece was an applied decoration that illustrates the growing preference for stitched decorative elements that were not woven simultaneously with the tunics after the conquest.[194]

The overall impression is that of a lively composition, with the running quadrupeds and the multiple scrolls and vegetal themes. It seems that the tree flanked by quadrupeds or birds was a popular central motif in such sleeve bands, as it is encountered in two more bands in the VAM, datable to the 6th-8th century, which are however quite different technically and stylistically.[195] The design and posture of the animals, with the long, thin legs and the stylised plants bring to mind pieces of the 7th-8th centuries, like those attributed to Al-Qays (e.g. IV 22). The stylised candelabra tree has been a popular theme of the Umayyad period.[196] Also, the arrangement of the running animals in roundels brings to mind the 9th century friezes with animals (e.g. I 16 and I 17). This textile could therefore be dated to the 8th-9th century.

fig. 1 Benaki 7136

[194] See also Pritchard, *Clothing Culture*, p. 93-94.

[195] Kendrick, *Catalogue*, nos 689 and 690, p. 30 and pl. XIII.

[196] See also IV 13.

II 3. 21186

Dimensions: 66x29.5 cm

Technical analysis
Plain Weave
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: linen, S.
Tapestry
Some double warps(?), slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, soumak, gimp, two-coloured shed.
Warp: linen, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Decorative weft: linen, S.

Description

Two tapestry *clavi* with almost identical decoration. On a red ground stands a human figure on a vertical axis, flanked by putti and animals in a horizontal arrangement.

Starting from the top, two white feet are visible, possibly belonging to a putto that doesn't survive. Below them is a quadruped, possibly a lion, facing to the right. It has an ochre body, outlined in white and blue and bearing a light blue triangle at its rear thigh, a large green mane - inside which two short, white stripes probably signify the animal's ears- a white oval head, blue square eyes, a white, toothed abdomen, bent legs and an upward tail ending in a white tuft that reaches to the lion's head. Below the lion is a floral design, consisting of two ochre, heart-shaped buds, inside which are smaller, yellow hearts with blue, W-shaped stems. The buds emanate from ochre stems, which are unified, creating two irregular shapes, decorated with blue areas and a white dot and having on their left side an ochre, downward, oblong leaf, decorated with green stripes.

Below the flower is a putto, flying towards it. It has a square, white body and head, outlined in pink and blue, with two blue, opposed, C-shaped elements in its centre, blue rectangular eyes with yellow C-shapes, blue, curved eyebrows, a blue curved line for the mouth, a yellow band of hair with two white stripes in the centre, quite like those on the lion's mane, and two oblong wings, green and blue or ochre, each with a small white stripe. The putto's hands and legs are stretched. It seems to be holding a triangular element with a T-shaped base, probably meant as a basket with fruit. The basket's base is ochre and green, while the triangular top is ochre with a white centre, decorated with blue and yellow dots.

Below the putto stands a haloed figure, orientated on the vertical axis. It has a square, white head, outlined in pink and blue, the right part of which extends downwards, forming the neck and giving the impression that the figure is seen in a three quarter view, although its face and body are in a frontal position. It has blue round eyes, connected to curved eyebrows and an oblong blue nose. A blue dot stands on its forehead and its cheeks are highlighted with two pink ovals. Its halo is red on the upper part and ochre on the sides. On top of it is a blue dot, outlined in yellow. The figure wears a long garment, consisting of several differently shaped and coloured bands, red, pink, blue, green, yellow, ochre and white. It has a dark blue hemline, decorated with white crosses, enclosed in ochre diamonds and staggered, white elements. The figure wears blue shoes and its feet are turned outwards. The figure is bordered by two white lines in a herringbone pattern.

Below the figure the design is a second putto. The only difference is the colour of its wings, which are blue and ochre. Another lion follows, but this time it is green, with a yellow mane and has an ochre triangle on its rear thigh. Another floral design comes next and another putto follows, this time with green hair and ochre wings. On the red ground appear white triangles, dots and a small cross. The whole composition is surrounded by a border consisting of a blue band with an ochre and light blue spiral meander, bearing white dots with a red centre on the spirals.

The *orbiculi* and the bands that connected them with the *clavi* luckily survive on this piece. The connecting bands continue the border design, which also surrounds the *orbiculi* and the medallions contain lions, similar to those above.

Comments

These tapestry *clavi*, comparable to Benaki VI 2, belong to a category well represented in many collections, featuring standing human figures, in most cases accompanied with animals, putti, and vegetal decoration and usually datable to the 7th-9th centuries.[197] The specific *clavi* were separately woven and were afterwards sewn onto the linen, plain weave tunic. A double tapestry band in the MDA, datable to the 6th-7th century and probably part of a tunic's border, bears striking similarities with our example. On it is a bust, identified by Apostolaki as a representation of Christ.[198] On a piece in the Chemnitz Collection, which happens to be one of the finer of the

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[197] See, for example those in the Louvre (nos 10154, 10162) in the Louvre, in Pfister, "Matériaux", p. 11, pl. I; in the MDA in Apostolaki, *Koptika Yfasmata*, no 736, p. 162-163, ill. 130, no 1364, p. 154-155, ill. 26, no 1376, p. 152-153, ill. 120, no 1373, p. 155, ill. 122, no 1726, p. 156, ill. 123, no 1368, p. 157, ill. 124, no 1374, p. 157-158, ill. 125, no 748, p. 159, ill. 126, no 746, p. 159-160, ill. 127, no 745, p. 160, no 747, p. 163-164, ill. 131; in the ROM, inv. no 980.78.27 in rom.on.ca; in Brooklyn, in Thompson, *Coptic Textiles*, no 27 (Acc. no 38.748), p. 64-66; in the PC, in De Jonghe et al., *Ancient Tapestries*, no 7014, p. 99 and ill. XLVII, p. 274; in the MRAH, in Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Textiles coptes,* no 36, where the figures are combined with naked women, probably nereids; in the Chemnitz Collection, in *Ägyptische Textilien*, nos 123, 125-126, 131-133 and 139, p. 124-126, 130-132 and 136; in the PMFA, in Lechitskaya, *Coptic Textiles*, no 188, p. 350-351; the KAM, in Dauterman Maguire, *Weavings*, nos C26, C29-30, p. 168-169, 172-173; Baginski and Tidhar, *Textiles from Egypt,* nos 139-140, p. 102; in the MHTL, in Bourgon-Amir, *Les tapisseries*, pl. 96-101.

[198] Apostolaki, *Koptika Yfasmata,* no 736, p. 162-163, ill. 130.

collection, the nimbed figure holds a leaf, interpreted as the palm leaf of the martyrs, and, again, associating the figure with the Christian faith.[199] The figures on these *clavi* have been interpreted, more often than not, as Christian saints or apostles,[200] although there is no safe indication that they are related in any way to the Christian religion. Moreover, in many examples, the posture and the dress of these figures recalls Byzantine representations of royals.[201]

It is therefore, possible, that the finer of these bands were indeed of Byzantine origin, or were copies of a Byzantine model in textile or other form of art, but the extremely large number of these bands found in Egypt and appearing in many diverse qualities, materials and techniques, suggests that they had become a kind of fashion, which was imitated in workshops of poorer quality and the original meaning of the nimbed figures was soon lost.

It appears that this type of *clavi* were woven during a long period of time, undergoing several stylistic and iconographic alterations. They seem to have started being produced after the conquest of Egypt. A post-conquest date is established by the presence of Arabic letters on one pice of the group in the VAM.[202] Also, Pfister, who studied the Louvre piece, detected the presence of lac-dye on the red background, which started being widely used in Egypt after the Arab Conquest.**[203]** Since most of the examples seem to have been made later than the 7th century, we can accept that they constituted a post-conquest vogue.

On this pair, the overall appearance is more stylised than in VI 2. The stylisation and the design of the putti, which resembles that of earlier examples, such as IV 5, datable to the 7th century, could support an earlier dating than that of VI 2. Also, the linen plied warp, the restricted use of the red ground, together with the abstract iconography, give a more naive character to this piece, compared to VI 2. A pair of *clavi* in the KN that seems to belong to the same group, although it is adorned only with haloed figures on a red ground, has been radiocarbon dated to 689-885 (95,4%).[204] Based on this evidence, this piece could be dated to the 7th-8th centuries.

The "Christian" or "Byzantine figures" are combined here with the theme of putti or swimmers, carrying baskets, vessels or other objects, which is often found on Egyptian textiles and belongs to the pictorial tradition of gift-bearing children, winged or not, also found on other forms of art, carrying connotations of honour, richness and fertility, often associated with the Nile or with the seasons.[205] This mixture of iconographic elements is characteristic of the period and probably alludes to prosperity.

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[199] *Ägyptische Textilien*, no 131, p. 130.

[200] De Moor, *Coptic Textiles from Flemish Private Collections*, no 145, p. 257-259; Pfister, "Matériaux", p. 11; De Jonghe et al., *Ancient Tapestries*, no 7014, p. 99;

[201] See VI 2.

[202] Beckwith, *Studies,* p. 17 and fig. 26.

[203] Pfister, "Matériaux", p. 7-9 .

[204] www.textile-dates.uni-bonn.de/textile_list_start.php?textile_id=535

[205] For an analysis of the theme see Dauterman Maguire, *Weavings,* p. 27-29.

II 4. 7126a

Dimensions: 8.8x27.3 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, soumak, gimp.
Decorative weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Red tapestry band with human and animal scenes, arranged in a vertical row. The first and third scene are quite alike, having in the centre a seated figure that could be interpreted as a seated ruler. The figure on the first representation has a white, rhomboid head with two brown ovals on the forehead and mouth, two brown rectangular eyes with a blue outline and a blue stripe in the middle, a rectangular neck made of warps in gimp and two E-shaped hands that hold a cup-like object. A white inverted triangle below the cup could signify the figure's body. Head, hands and body are set on a blue frame that forms two lumps, a smaller for its head and a larger for its body. From the sides of the latter emanate two ochre and yellow, oblong bands, which could signify the crouched legs of the figure. Below each leg is an ochre circle, set between white brackets. Between these circles is another oblong band of ochre and one blue squares. An ochre crown is found on top of its head, decorated with red and green rectangles. The whole figure is surrounded by consecutive outlines, the outer of which are pearled. On either side of the figure's head are rows of white squares with a blue centre, alternating with ochre rectangles.

The second representation is even more confusing. It consists of what seems to be a very stylised, winged animal, topped with an ochre band containing human heads, which can be interpreted as the attendants of the seated ruler. The animal has a rectangular body, consisting of compartments of different shape, size and decoration. Its central part bears an ochre rectangular band and two square ones, green and ochre, decorated with rows of small squares, blue, ochre or

bicoloured. On the chest of the animal is a green, vertical band that extends to its abdomen. Its rectangular head is ochre with square, dark blue eyes with white centres. A third square possibly denotes its muzzle. On top of its head are two diagonal, green ears or horns. On top of its main body are two ochre ovals with a green centre and pearl outlines. On top of the ovals are two curved, upward, ochre bands, probably signifying wings. They are set on an ochre ground which extends to the animal's head and bears a green, C-shaped decoration. To the left of the wings is a yellow oval with a green and red, stepped decoration on top. The legs of the animal are two rectangular, diagonal bands, ochre and yellow. To their left are two orange-pink ovals with green and yellow squares, enclosed in pearl border. To the right of the legs is a small, dark blue cross. In front of the animal's neck are more rectangles, ochre, blue and white, in diverse sizes. It is possible that this winged creature also derives from the palatial cycle and could be interpreted as a winged lion.

The third representation, which survives only fragmentarily is similar to the first, with the addition of another band with busts on its top. The heads on the top band are highlighted in red, instead of ochre. The figure's head is smaller and the squares on either side of it are more regularly arranged, some of them also containing a red colour. Its legs consist of red and green squares.

The selvedges of the textile are both preserved, reinforced with double warps. The left selvedge bears dark blue, horizontal stripes, over which is a herringbone design, woven with decorative, white weft yarn. On the right selvedge, yellow, vertical and diagonal decorative weft yarns appear at intervals. The tapestry decoration seems to have continued, at least at the bottom part of the textile, where traces of yellow ground and red and green squares are discernible.

Comments

This band, which was woven separately, in order to be stitched to a garment, exhibits some peculiar characteristics. The weaving is based on an extant use of regular soumak, gimp and other types of warp wrapping. Weft yarns often go irregularly over two or three warps and decorative weft is also extensively used. The variety of colours and hues and the use of two types of red are also worth mentioning. An almost identical piece is found in the PC and is dated to the 8th-10th century.[206] A similar decorative concept and colour palette is found on a group of roundels, like that from Rouen (fig. 1), datable to the 8th-10th century.[207] Based on these examples, a dating to the 8th-10th century could also be proposed for our piece. The type of the seated ruler is used widely in the palatial cycle of Iranian, Islamic and Turkish art and derives from eastern prototypes,[208] although it doesn't appear often on textiles of this period. Here it exemplifies the introduction of themes of the Islamic palatial cycle into the textile art of Egypt. Seated rulers are also found in VIII 4, in a tapestry hanging of the 9th-10th century in the TMW, attributed to Bahnasā, and in a tapestry in the textile museum of the district of Columbia.[209]

fig. 1 Tapestry roundel with rider (footnote 207)

[206] De Jonghe et al., *Ancient Tapestries*, no 7038, p. 100, ill. L, p. 277, also with an S-spun, Z-plied warp

[207] *Égypte, la trame de l'Histoire,* no 114, p. 146-148 and footnote 6. It is dated on the basis of comparable pieces and of its border, also found on a textile radio-carbon dated to the second half of the 8th-10th century.

[208] For an iconographic study of the theme see Grube and Johns, *Cappella Palatina*, p. 138-139. See also chapter 2c. Iconography, p. 112-113.

[209] TMW 721.14 in linen and wool, in Mackie, *Symbols of Power,* p. 76, fig. 2.41; Cooney and Riefstahl, *Pagan and Christian Egypt,* p. 86, no 271; Ettinghausen, "Painting in the Fatimid Period", p. 121, fig. 25.

II 5. 15150

Dimensions: 24.7x20.8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, Z.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry fragment with the rear part of a quadruped on a green ground. The animal is represented running towards the left. Its oblong body is white with a light brown outline. It is decorated with a light brown triangle, a diamond and three dots, two green triangles and a dark brown dot close to its neck. On the front, bottom part of its abdomen is a brown band. The quadruped's back is outlined in dark brown and seems to rise towards the tail, in a kind of hump, which does not survive. Its tail is curved upwards. Above the animal's back is an area of brown-ochre colour. Only its hind legs and part of its front, left leg survive. The former are thicker and end in triangular feet, the outlines of which extend forward. Its thighs are highlighted with brown, hook-shaped lines. A curved, upward, brown band stands between the animal's legs and part of another light brown band with a pointed tip is found below its hind legs. Below the quadruped is part of another unidentified, funnel-shaped, ochre-brown decoration, set on a white frame.

Comments

Since only a small part of this furnishing textile, survives, its categorisation and dating is difficult. It can be associated with furnishing textiles decorated with large animals, which were produced in towns like Bahnasā and are datable to the 8th-10th century (e.g. II 6). Nevertheless, it exhibits some unique characteristics, as the variety of brown colours, the green-coloured ground, achieved with a mixture of blue and yellow wefts, the spinning of the linen wefts in a Z direction, when, at the same time the woollen wefts are S-spun. The latter indicates that Z-spun linen was occasionally used in Egypt during this period.

II 6. 15145

Dimensions: 21.5x12.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun-Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing.

Description

Tapestry fragment with a hare on a blue ground. The hare, of which only the upper part survives is white, with a red outline and is quite realistically represented. It has a large, circular, half brown and half white eye, extending into a brown and yellow triangle, a red line for the mouth, two also red, opposed, hooked lines for the nose and long ears stretched backwards. Each ear consists of three bands, white, brown and yellow. Its body is decorated with a red diamond on the thigh, two oblong, yellow, vertical bands on the abdomen and part of a red semi-circle on the chest. A yellow band and a yellow stripe below it, run parallel to the animal's back. Another yellow band outlines the inner part of its tail or hind leg. Behind the animal part of a pearl border with red outlines survives, possibly belonging to an octagonal medallion with a yellow ground. Above the animal's head is part of a yellow circle, with a red outline and a red, vertical, curved line in the middle. A small part of another, white surface with a red outline is attached to its right side.

Comments

This piece seems to share the iconographic characteristics of the Bahnasā group, although in a different colour palette. The large-scaled animal, with the highlighted back and thigh and the pearls that create slits on the medallion are reminiscent of textiles of this group.[210] The vivid yellow, red and blue colours, together with its naturalistic rendering, give it a lively character. Although only a small part of it survives, a dating to the 8th-9th century could be proposed, based on its iconography and its similarity with the aforementioned group. This fragment is a slightly different

[210] See for example the highlighted back of the animal in I 14, the framing bands of I 14, I 16 and I 17, and the body of the animal in I 18.

specimen of a furnishing textile featuring large animals, though it is not possible to appreciate its whole decoration.

II 7. 15151

Dimensions: 31.2x22.4 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun-Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry fragment with a dark blue animal on a white ground. The details on its body are woven in white and ochre. The upper part of its head and the bottom part of its body do not survive. Its head has a trapezoid shape and is slightly raised. On it is a circular, dark blue eye, outlined in white. A white stripe runs parallel to the bottom of its head and neck. At the base of its neck is an ochre, narrow collar and an attached, dark blue, protruding oval, in the shape of a tie-bow. A circular, dark blue object with an ochre stripe in the middle hangs from its mouth. Its body has a bulky, almost circular shape and is decorated with a diamond in its centre and a diagonal band below its neck, both bearing white dots. An extension of the animals's back, also attached to its neck and head, forms a kind of comb or mane, the back side of which ends in trident-shaped, oblong protrusions. Each protrusion has an ochre centre. The species of the stylised animal cannot be defined, though it could be interpreted as a griffin.

Comments

This piece has a characteristic coarseness, evident on the remarkably thick, plied warps and linen wefts. Its part of a group of textiles with similarly coarse materials and execution, believed to represent birds, usually in a two colour scheme, like those of the Bouvier, the MHTL, the TMW, the Cluny,[211] and the MET.[212] They could have been used as furnishing textiles.

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[211] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 51 and 52, p. 107-110. (MHTL 41.812, Cluny 22.462, TMW 3290).

[212] MET 27-170-73 in https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/448117

On the comparable textiles, the animals are said to represent partridges or, in other cases, ducks, and to betray a Sasanian flavour and an iconographic connection to the friezes of the "harem" of Samarra, and are consequently assigned to the Ṭūlūnid period, when the influence of Samarra seems to have been stronger on the art of Egypt. Their place of manufacture is believed to be Bahnasā.[213] Partridges or similar birds are indeed found in Sasanian art,[214] and in fragments of wall paintings from Samarra,[215] and also in the art of Byzantine context, as for example, in the mosaic pavements of Syria, Jordan and Israel (fig. 1).[216] Comparable birds are also encountered in a sculptured frieze from Khirbat al-Mafjar[217] and it appears that it was a widespread Late Antique iconographic element. They are also encountered on a textile medallion datable to the 5th century, indicating an already existing iconographic tradition on textiles.[218] However, the association of this piece with the aforementioned birds is mainly based on the dotted decoration of its body. It is probable that an altogether different species is represented here and on some of the comparable pieces, possibly a griffin. A strange characteristic of this bird is its comb, which is too large and seems to be an extension of the bird's head an upper body. A similar, though smaller version of this comb is also seen on the MET example, placed in a way that reminds of the "Sasanian" ribbons, of which it seems to be a distant derivative.

The assignment to the Ṭūlūnid period, is tenable, as this piece falls into a category of textiles picturing large scale animals and birds, enclosed in roundels or free standing, which seems to have been popular during the 9th century (e.g. I 16, I 17, I 18, II 6 and II 8.) This piece represents another, coarser version of these furnishing textiles, featuring one of the most long lived themes in the Egyptian textile industry, particularly preferred on furnishing textiles.

fig. 1 Guineafowl from the "bird mosaic" in Caesarea Maritima, Israel in https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_guineafowl,_detail_from_the_6th_century_AD_Bird_Mosaic_that_adorned_the_atrium_of_a_large_palace_complex_outside_the_city_wall_of_Byzantine_Caesarea,_Caesarea_Maritima,_Israel_(15619248708).jpg

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[213] MIC 15017 and 14.841 in Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 108.

[214] See, for example the stucco decoration and silverware in *Les Perses sassanides,* no 9, p. 56, no 64, p. 122-123 and no 139-140, p. 194-195. Also, Carol A. Bromberg, "Sasanian Stucco Influence: Sorrento and East-West", *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica,* vol. 14, (1983), pl. IX.

[215] Herzfeld, *Die Malereien*, pl LXIX; BM OA 11214, 11053 and 11054 in www.britishmuseum.org; VAM A22-1922 in http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O449084/wall-painting-fragment-unknown/

[216] See, for example, the "Bird Mosaic" in Caesarea Maritima, Israel and mosaics in Antioch in Yosef Porath, Jacques Neguer and Yael Gorin-Rosen, "The Bird Mosaic Mansion in the Suburbs of Caesarea Maritima, Israel", *Musiva & sectilia* 2.2/3 (2005), p.1000-1019.

[217] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hisham%27s_Palace_(Khirbat_al_Mafjar)_remains_at_the_Rockefeller_Museum_IMG_7198.JPG

[218] Stauffer, *Textiles d'Egypte*, no 33, p. 112.

II 8. 15647

Dimensions: 30x15.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry fragment picturing a quadruped on a blue ground. Only the front part of the animal, which seems to be in a forward movement, survives. It has an oval head, dominated by a large circular, white eye with a dark blue disk in its centre. Its eye is set on a dark blue frame that extends, covering the upper side of its head. On top of its head is a yellow outline. The animal's muzzle and the front part of its neck are white. Its muzzle has a yellow dot on top, denoting its nose. Its teeth are represented with indentations, made of pairs of warps, wrapped together in white weft, alternating with pairs of bare warps. Its neck is rectangular and bears a dark blue collar, outlined in white. The lower part of the animal's head, the rest of its neck and its body are yellow with a white outline on the chest and abdomen and are decorated with small, dark blue triangles, which bear a white dot at their base. A white, horizontal band, with a blue part in the middle, runs across the quadruped's body and green, triangle is diagonally attached on its upper side. The white band extending outside, projecting forward from the animal's chest, probably signifying its front leg. The other front leg, which does not survive complete, is also yellow and emanates from the front part of the animal's abdomen. On the blue ground in front of the quadruped is part of a horizontal, yellow, band, ending in an upward arrow. It is possible that it belonged to a letter of an inscription, but this cannot be ascertained as no other trace of it survives.

Comments

The textile is made of coarse materials and has some especially thick warps and wefts, which bring in mind those on II 7. It belongs to a group picturing similar quadrupeds, possibly lions, which are considered to be inspired by far eastern models and are attributed to the 9th-10th century.[219] The design of the animal, with the large eyes and open mouth with visible teeth is indeed reminiscent of Chinese models of the 6th-8th century (fig. 1),[220] although similarly designed animals appear also in sculptures in Khirbat al-Mafjar (fig. 2).[221] Lions with comparable large, boldly outlined eyes are seen in a probably Byzantine silk with running animals in the cathedral of St Ambrogio in Milan, dated to the 7th-8th century.[222] Relevant pieces with different colours and more elegant materials, execution and design, are found in the Bouvier, the MIC, the MHTL[223] and the Cluny.[224] The latter is described as having a hybrid appearance, found on marine creatures and is dated to the 9th-10th century. Its body, and also that of the Bouvier piece, bears a decoration consisting of dark blue disks with a white dot in the centre, associated by Lamm with the "eye" decoration found on ceramics from Samarra.[225] An association of this type of animals with the pottery from Samarra is also proposed by Cornu.[226]

Our example seems to be a simpler, coarser version of the aforementioned, comparable pieces and could also be dated to the 9th century.

fig. 2 Standing ruler from Khirbat al-Mafjar in Robert Hillenbrand, "La Dolce Vita in Early Islamic Syria: The Evidence of Later Umayyad Palaces, *Art History* 5.1 (1982), p. 1-35, fig. 10.

fig. 1 Earthenware lion from China in the MET, 7th-8th century, in https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/65102?&searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=20024781&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1

[219] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 110.

[220] See, for example, the sculptures in the MET 30.661, 2002.478.1 and 2, 50.145.330 in metmuseum.org

[221] Ettinghausen et al., *Islamic Art*, p. 43, fig. 49.

[222] Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving,* M14 A,B, p. 169, 102B (also in A. de Capitani d'Arzago, *Antichi tessuti della Basilica Ambrosiana*, p. 41-61).

[223] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte,* nos 53 and 54, p. 110-112. Also MHTL 41.859 and 41.819 MIC 15632).

[224] Lorquin, *Les tissus* coptes, no 79, p. 217-218.

[225] Lamm, "Some Woollen Tapestry Weavings", p. 73.

[226] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 110, footnote 1.

II 9. 15689

Dimensions: 70.5x20.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, Z; linen, S; cotton, Z.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, two-coloured shed.

Description

Fragmentary, ochre tapestry band with two hexagonal compartments in a vertical axis, and white decoration, the design of which cannot be accurately reconstructed. Inside the upper compartment is a highly stylised, white quadruped. It has a trapezoid body, decorated with alternating rows of white and ochre rectangles, a triangular neck and a trapezoid head with a large, ochre, rectangular eye, an oblong ear, slightly curved downwards, a forked tail stretched backwards and four parallel, rectangular legs, placed diagonally to its body.

The decoration inside the second medallion seems to consist of diamonds and triangles, although it is impossible to reconstruct it. A central, white diamond, bears alternating rows of white and ochre rectangles and an ochre diamond, next to it, bears two white rectangles. Above the diamonds, are two small, white triangles with ovals attached on their tip, looking like the headgears

of two confronted figures, though no figures are discernible and the textile is too fragmentary to allow a certain interpretation.

Between the two hexagons are several, scattered, geometrical elements in white and red, squares, rectangles- some with a blue centre- stripes and ovals, and an ochre band, decorated with the technique of two-coloured shed. There is also a small, stylised, white quadruped. The animal has a rectangular body, a triangular neck and head, with a square, ochre eye, two inverted, V-shaped legs and a thick, triangular tail with a downward protrusion on its left corner. Its body is decorated with three white ovals.

Both hexagons have inner, pearl borders and thick, outer borders with toothed decoration. elaborate, geometrical borders. Above the upper hexagon and attached to its border is a white ground, bearing what seems to be a standing human figure, with thin, short, Λ-shaped legs, a triangular torso, bent hands resting on its thighs and a circular head with ochre, round eyes. In the place of its mouth is a horizontal band decorated in the technique of two colours, white and brick red, on a single shed. To the left of the figure are more white decorations, some reel-shaped. Below the lower medallion is another white area of unidentified shape.

Comments

Most of the ochre ground of this piece is not woven continuously, from one side to the other, but in smaller parts, with slits created between them. Also, most of the white decoration is based on the alternation of linen and cotton parts and the contrast in hue and texture between them. Both these techniques create an interesting shading and variation on the textile.

Its decoration is highly geometrical, abstract and stylised. A similar, geometrical appearance and the presence of different elements scattered on the ground, are found in a textile of the PC, also with an S-spun, Z-plied linen warp, though multi-coloured, dated to the 8th-9th century.[227] The design of the quadruped on the upper hexagon, especially the rendering of its feet and head and the shape and decoration of its body, is comparable to that of pieces associated with the Fayyūm (e.g. I 24, I 26 and IV 30).

Based on the presence of cotton, we could date this piece close to other textiles that employ the same material (e.g. IV 15, IV 23, IV 32, V 6 and IV 7) and, possibly, even later, to the 9th-10th century, since cotton is here embedded and exploited decoratively by the weaver, indicating familiarity and previous experience with the material.

This piece is a different example of a monochromatic, furnishing textile of the transitional period, which sticks to the tradition of large animals, free or enclosed, but this thematic seems to be rendered here in a different, more naive, but also technically competent manner.

[227] De Jonghe at al., *Ancient Tapestries*, inv. 7388, ill. LVIII, p. 102, 285.

II 10. 15691

Dimensions: 20x34 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp.
Decorative weft: wool, S.

Description

Tapestry fragment with three decorative friezes, featuring geometrical designs and animals. The bottom frieze consists of a procession of naturalistic hares on an orange-red ground. The hares, of which three and part of a fourth survive, run towards the left. They have dark blue outlines, an oblong body, a protruding, pointed chest, a tear-shaped and slightly raised head with a large circular or oval eye, long, V-shaped ears and a short tail, curved towards their body. Their front legs are stretched, while their hind are bent. The first and the third hares are yellow, with green highlights on parts of their bodies. The second is green, with yellow highlights and a predominant yellow hue, since its green colour is achieved by the mixture of indigo and yellow wefts. Above this frieze is a row of ochre squares in a pearl effect, bordered by a dark blue and a red stripe and two ochre bands. The next, narrower decorative frieze has a dark blue ground and is decorated with red, oblate medallions containing dark blue, cruciform rosettes.. The spandrels are decorated with mirrored V-shapes with white dots. The top frieze preserves only its bottom part and its design cannot be reconstructed. It consists of two triangles, green and orange-red, alternating with what seem to be green, reclined rectangles. All have dark blue outlines and inside each rectangle are two small rosettes, ochre and orange-red. The left triangle and the area on the edge of the textile, next to the right rectangle seem to have a toothed decoration.

Comments

The fragmentary survival of this piece does not allow a full estimation and classification.The plied warp gives a coarse appearance, although the hares are quite lively and naturalistic. The small medallions and the running hares bring in mind silk Fāṭimid textiles, though the motifs are here larger, free standing and more naturalistic. The small rosettes are comparable to those seen in Fāṭimid shawls, like, for example on I 33 and I 47. It could be suggested that this textile is a product that slightly precedes the aforementioned Fāṭimid textiles or that it represents a contemporary production of furnishing textiles, made, of course, with coarser materials. A dating to the 9th-11th century could be proposed.

II 11. 7135

Dimensions: 16.8x17 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun-Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp?

Description

Medallion with a rider on a dark red ground. The white, walking horse is seen in profile. It has an oblong body with a deep indentation on its bottom rear part, which emphasises its rear thigh, also highlighted with three light green stripes. Its left, front leg is stretched forward, while the rest are bent. It has a short, trident-shaped, fluttering tail and its body is decorated with red dots and two small red, C shapes on its abdomen. A horizontal, yellow stripe with red outlines, runs across it, possibly part of its bridle. On top of its back is a green band, decorated with white squares, which are extensions of the horse's body. Its thick neck is decorated with beige stripes and has a red rein with beige hanging decorations. Its head is naturalistically turned to the viewer and its bottom part touches the animal's chest. Its front part is run by a yellowish band, signifying the horse's forehead and nose. Its surviving eye is a yellowish square with a brown dot. On top of its head are two small, white, triangular ears.

The rider is represented in a peculiar posture. The shape of his blue torso cannot be clearly defined because its wefts do not survive. His open arms create a T-shape, together with his body. His right arm, which consists of a dark blue and a light blue band, creates a right angle and touches the horse's back, ending in a large, curved, W-shaped hand. His left arm, barely visible, consists of a dark blue and a yellow band and seems to be holding a small, yellow shield. The rider's leg is missing, apart from a blue area at the bottom, indicating that it was stretched downwards. His white head has a triangular shape and his eyes and mouth seem to be defined by brown lines. He has yellow hair, running parallel to the back of his head. He wears a yellow mantle with dark blue stripes, attached to his shoulders with white, round buckles, and floating backwards. Above the mantle are two yellow spiral clouds, large and small, highlighted on top with dark blue. In front of the horse are two yellow crosses.

Below the horse's legs is another animal, possibly a hare. It has a white, rectangular body and long, bent legs, of which the front are yellow and the hind are white. The rear part of its body and its head do not survive, only parts of a muzzle and two lance shaped brown ears are visible. The

quadruped's body is decorated with a yellow band and a row of yellow squares. The hoof of the horse's hind leg touches this quadruped, giving the impression that the horse is trampling it. The medallion has an inner, white, pearl border with two beige dots alternating with two blue. It also has an outer border consisting of alternately beige and blue bands.

Comments

The theme of the rider has been very popular in Egyptian textile art. Horsemen can be identified with several Christian saints, many of which were especially popular in Egypt, like Sisinnios, Theodore, George, Mercurius and Menas.[228] The theme of the rider was also popular in pre-Christian iconographic traditions, like that of Dionysus, Alexander the Great or the Imperial iconography of the victorious emperor.[229] The horseman is also associated with hunting scenes, very popular in Sasanian art among others, and carries not only royal connotations, but was also a symbol of a battle of virtue against evil and death.[230] More specific iconographic origins can be defined according to the posture of the horse and rider: the frontal, nimbed rider on a walking horse is generally associated with the victorious emperor, while riders with weapons in galloping horses are rather connected to a warrior saint or hero. Of course, these distinctions are not always clear and conflations of different iconographic traditions often occur. It seems that the horseman was used in textiles as a symbol of power and victory over evil and death, believed to protect the wearer, although it is not clear up to when this symbolisms persisted. The polychrome images of riders in medallions, which usually have a red ground, became popular after the conquest.[231] It seems that here, is represented a hunting scene, iconographically inspired by the warrior saints of the coptic tradition and the triumphant emperor of Roman art, in another case of iconographic fusion of different traditions, symbolisms and beliefs, often encountered in the art of the period.

The red ground of the composition brings to mind the tapestry imitations of silk textiles. Also, the spiral cloud resembles those found in some Central Asian and Chinese silks.[232] These facts could indicate that this piece was inspired by a silk textile of possibly eastern origin and could be attributed to the 8th-9th century. A roundel very similar to our example is found in the DM[233] and is datable to the 7th century. Similar crosses are found also on other similar medallions, like[234] that in the Liebieghau. The motif of the animal below the horse, possibly a hare, is also encountered on other examples.[235]

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[228] Alan Michael Jones, *The Equestrian Motif in Coptic Textiles including a Catalogue of Textiles in the Collection of the Kelsey Museum of Ancient and Medieval Archaeology*, Ph. D thesis, Wayne State University 1974, p. 41-51, 75.

[229] Jones, *The Equestrian Motif ,* p. 93-94, 102-105.

[230] Lewis, "Coptic Horseman", p. 45-49.

[231] The horsemen of previous periods were mostly two coloured and appeared in the centre of panels, around which evolved scrolls with other animals or personages, Ibid., p. 31.

[232] *When Silk was Gold,* no 9, p. 44-45, fig. 14, p. 57 and no 18, p. 78-79, no 23, p. 87-90. Also no 2, p. 31. See also Zhao Feng, The Evolution of Textiles, p. 67-69.

[233] davidmus.dk, inv. no 3/2006

[234] Naureth, *Koptische Stoffe*, no 6, p. 23-24.

[235] Like in two panels from Akhmīm, now in the VAM, a panel in the KM and another panel in the MDA. See, respectively Lewis, "Coptic Horseman", fig. 4, 5, both dated to the 6th century; Jones, *The Equestrian Motif ,* p. 128, pl. X; Apostolaki, *Koptika Yfasmata*, no 723, p. 124, fig. 88.

III. Textiles with a linen, Z-spun warp

III 1. 15314

Dimensions: 46x25 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen (perhaps silk?), Z.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, Z.
Decorative bands
Weft: silk.

Embroidery
brown silk.
couching stitch, chain stitch.

Description

Plain weave textile with two decorative bands. The upper bears a brown, angular inscription on a white ground, embroidered in couching stitch. On the white ground the wefts are double. The inscription band is bordered by two narrower green tapes. The weave in these tapes and on the white ground around the inscription is denser than on the plain weave areas, nevertheless it cannot be characterised as tapestry, since it lacks the basic decorative properties of tapestry weave. The second decorative band consists of a central white tape, also bordered by two green ones. The central tape, which also has double wefts, is decorated with a row of elongated ovals, alternately red and green, embroidered in chain stitch. The ovals seem to have a brown outline, which extends connecting them. Between the ovals are small, brown semicircles. Traces of wefts of the opposite

colour are found inside each oval, but their function is unclear. A third yellow band is found below and traces of a fourth band with some kind of green decoration are visible further below. The textile preserves its right selvedge, reinforced with 16 double or triple warps, some alternating with single warps.

Comments

The alternation of embroidery with bands in multicoloured plain weave is a very interesting feature of this textile. The inscription seems to repeat the phrase "al-amr li-llāh kullu-hu", although is only partially preserved. Its style brings to mind some ṭirāz textiles of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Muqtadir (908-932).[236] This piece could be dated to the first half of the 10th century, when embroidery seems to have been widely used for inscribed pieces.

[236] See Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 97, 98, p. 171-174. In no 98 the long shafts of the letters are also embroidered in couch stitch.

III 2. 15282

Dimensions: 12.7x6.7 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: natural and blue linen, Z.
Weft: silk; linen?

Tapestry
Single and double warps (at times one natural and one blue), slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry band consisting of three friezes. On the central frieze three roundels survive, all containing the same complex of animals, apparently representing a falcon- or two- and their prey. The alternately blue and green falcons face downwards, as if diving towards their prey, and have an oblong, C-shaped body with a forked tip and an attached, long tail with toothed decoration on the upper side. The creatures on their right are oblong too, but slightly different. They face to the right, they have no tail and a white, vertical line divides their head from their body. Two small, white, inverted gammas below their neck look like legs. Both creatures have a circular, red eye. The white quadruped below, outlined in dark blue, has a rectangular body, an oblong, pointed tail projecting backwards, short legs, a circular head with a a projecting, forked muzzle and a circular red eye. Its body is decorated with four leftward arrow heads, alternately dark blue and red. The medallions have a red ground and a white border, outlined in dark blue. The spandrels between the roundels are dark blue, decorated with pairs of affronted birds, one blue and one green, in a triangular configuration. The birds have an S-shaped body and head, filled with a red, triangular wing, two short legs and a large, oblong, downward tail. Between the pairs of birds are two white rosettes.

The central frieze is framed by two narrower, red bands, decorated with a white, repeating, stylised floral ornament. It consists of a cruciform rosette enclosed in a diamond, the upper side of which extends into a small rectangle, the whole shape resembling a bottle. From either side of this rectangle sprout small, horizontal branches with a pair of downward leaves each. Between the diamonds are white, vertical shafts, with two rhomboid bumps and a base with curved branches.

Comments

The iconography of this piece is quite exceptional. The theme on the falcon on its prey occurs in Islamic- and also in Byzantine and Sasanian- art, though it does not seem to occur often

on textiles.[237] A similar composition is found in a Fāṭimid rock crystal ewer in the VAM (fig. 1).[238] The naive character and the simplicity of the surrounding decoration brings to mind textiles like I 24 and I 27 and the Fayyūmi textiles. The large proportions, the bird partitions, the blue, linen warp and the absence of flanking inscriptions could indicate a dating to the beginning of the 11th century.

fig. 1 Rock crystal ewer from Egypt in the VAM (1000-1050), inv. no 7904-1862 in http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O69906/ewer-unknown/

[237] For the motif of the falcon on its prey see Grube and Johns, *Cappella Palatina*, p. 174

[238] Ibid., no 46.7

III 3. 15070

Dimensions: 40x25 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, Z.
Weft: linen (cotton?) Z.
Plain weave, painted decoration.

Description

Linen plain weave with two painted decorative bands. The lower band is larger and consists of a central and two framing friezes, all enclosed in a rectangle. The central frieze is decorated with four cartouches with an alternately red and blue ground, all containing the same white inscription in angular script. and stand below them. Between the long shafts of the letters are black, comma-shaped elements. Three symmetrical, crescent-shaped letter tails extend below the inscription. Between the compartments are quatrefoils, containing a white, stylised flower on a blue or red ground. The cartouches and the quatrefoils have white outlines. The areas between the quatrefoil and the compartments are painted in yellow and have a black dot in the centre. The framing friezes contain red inscriptions, which seem to repeat a single word or phrase, and create rectangular compartments with their long shafts, on which stand blue, V-shaped branches.

The narrow band above is decorated with diamonds, containing a cruciform flower in a red, blue or yellow ground. The long, rectangular spaces between the diamonds are decorated with two thin, black, spiral vines with small leaves, one upward and another downward. The straight parts also bear small, diagonal leaves on their inner side. Above and below the vines are black dots, diagonal, V- and comma-shaped lines. This tape is enclosed in a rectangle, which also has a border made of two black lines. Its right end, which is the only surviving, has an arrow like ending.

Comments

The crescent shaped tails of the inscription are often found in ṭirāz textiles of al-Mustanṣir (1036-1094) (e.g. I 36). The arrangement in a central and two framing inscription bands, is common on textiles of the 11th century, on most of which, however, the central band is decorated with animals or birds (e.g. I 42 and I 45). The drawing is quite elegant and the vivid colours give a lively appearance to an otherwise very symmetrical and stylised decoration. Painted textiles, with almost

identical framing inscription and secondary, narrow bands, but with birds inside the compartments are found in the Bouvier, the MHTL, the AS[239] and the MET (fig. 1).[240]

Painted textiles seem to have been quite popular in Egypt during the pharaonic period and were scarcely produced in Roman and Byzantine Egypt.[241] Painted ṭirāz textiles are known, basically from Iraq.[242] An Iraqi attribution has also been granted to the group of textiles to which our example belongs, mainly because of the non-Egyptian character of its decorative elements, namely the spiral branches of the narrow band and the half palmettes and branches of the central band.[243] It is true that the style of this decorations is different than most Egyptian tapestries, but it has to be borne in mind that this is a different medium of decoration and that, painted designs have an overall different appearance than woven or embroidered ones.[244] The similarities of this group of textiles in technique and decoration could indicate their production in the same workshop, which might have specialised in painted decorations.

fig. 1 Painted textile in the MET(footnote 240)

[239] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 111, p. 188-190. (Also MHTL 41.692 and AS 512)

[240] MET 32-129-3 in https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/448690?&searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=321293&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1

[241] See, for example a group of shrouds, on which full length portraits were painted, dated to the late 2nd-early 4th century, one of them in Maurice Sven Dimand, "Coptic Tunics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art", *Metropolitan Museum Studies,* vol. 2, no 2 (May 1930), p. 241, fig. 2.

[242] See, for example, Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 109-110, p. 186-188.

[243] Ibid., p. 189-190 and footnote 3.

[244] See, for example, the quite similar border bands in III 4.

III 4. 15115

Dimensions: 63x59 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: blue linen, Z.

Plain Weave
Weft: linen, Z.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: silk; linen, Z.

Description

Large part of a dark blue shawl with two decorative tapestry zones. Each consists of three bands, a central, wider, bearing round medallions with stylised birds, and two framing narrower, decorated with pairs of spirals. The medallions of the central band have a red ground and a white border. The white birds consist of a rightward arrow head, forming the bird's head and tail, and enclosing a C-shaped wing. Around each medallion are four green, curved, E-shaped elements. with elongated shafts that follow the outline of the medallion. Some of the shafts are half green and half yellow. Between the medallions are pairs of yellow circles, with a thick, green outline, one on top of the other. Between the last two medallions of the lower tapestry zone are two pairs of circles instead of one. The upper half of the central friezes has a brown ground and the lower has a blue. The framing bands have a yellow ground and consist of small, white, cruciform rosettes set in hexagonal red frames. Between the rosettes are pairs of brown spirals forming a plait.

Comments

The Z spinning of the linen warps and wefts is documented on Fāṭimid textiles.[245] The piece follows the pattern of a central band with medallions, framed by two other decorative bands, which here do not bear inscriptions. Although the birds are stylised and abstract, the overall appearance of the design is fluent and elegant. Similarly designed birds, though not in medallions, are found in BAV 6813, datable to the beginning of the 12th century.[246] We could date this textile in the 11th or beginning of the 12th century.

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[245] See, for example, Golombek and Gervers, "Ṭirāz Fabrics", no 18, p. 112-113 and Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 136, 154 and 157, p. 229-230, 254-255 and 258.

[246] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 303-304 and 559

IV. Textiles with a woollen, S-spun warp

IV 1. 15345

Dimensions: 24x29 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, vertical weft.

Description

Two parallel tapestry bands in purple and white on a white ground. Each consists of three purple medallions, that form part of a highly stylised vine-scroll. Each medallion contains a large, white, circular, polylobed frame, with several lobes around it extending into stems ending in circles with a purple dot in the centre, resembling eyes. Inside the frames are a human figure, an animal, or a plant. The animals appear running to the right, while the figures and plants have a vertical orientation. At the edges of each band are large purple triangles, which cover the whole width.

The left roundel of the lower band seems to contain a hare. It has a rectangular body, an upward, round head with a white, C-shaped eye and open mouth, oblong, backward ears, a short, horizontal tail and oblong legs projecting forward. On the hare's body are some scattered white stripes. Above its head is a purple oblong ornament and three more square ones are found above its ear and front leg. The next roundel contains a standing human figure with a large, round head, large, white, square eyes, a square neck and a rectangular torso. His torso extends into oblong arms, ending in forked hands, and into his right rectangular leg. His left arm is stretched downwards, while his right is bent upwards, possibly in a dancing posture. His left leg, which is curved, is not directly attached to his body. To the right of the figure is a small plant with rows of V-shaped leaves. Below his right hand is a purple, circular element with white stripes. The third roundel contains a plant with a triangular base, a trunk with four branches, each ending in a polylobed flower.

On the upper band, the first medallion on the left contains another similar plant. The second roundel contains another quadruped running to the right, that appears to have a rectangular body,

the front part of which is decorated with white, horizontal, parallel stripes of unequal length, a square head and rectangular, bent legs. Parts of its head and back do not survive, so that its identification is impossible. The human figure on the next roundel does not survive complete, but it seems that he had a design similar to the figure on the bottom band.

Attached to the upper and bottom sides of the medallions are two thin bands, ending in spirals. Two polylobed flowers spring from the upper right and the bottom left side of each medallion. The bands are bordered by two rows of purple spiral meanders. On the white ground above the bands is a horizontal inscription with the Coptic or Greek letters ΔΘΗαβΙοΦΥΞ — apparently a pseudo-inscription, brocaded with double wefts of a purple, Z-spun yarn.

Comments

The decoration of this textile resembles that of I 2 in a more stylised and simplistic execution. Although they are not very common, there are other examples of two coloured textiles with comparable decoration which are made exclusively of wool.[247] These are probably cheaper versions of the two coloured linen textiles, a fact that also accounts for their greater degree of stylisation. It is also possible that the woollen examples had a different function, probably as overcoats.[248] The motif of hares in medallions alternating with trees is seen in a tabula in MTIB, datable to the 5th century. Similar "eyes" also appear in the medallions of another textile of the same collection, datable to the 7th-8th century[249] and also on other similar textiles.[250] The exclusive use of wool on our piece could support a date after the 6th century and close to that of I 2 namely to the 6th-7th century.

[247] Cabrera Lafuente, *La industrial textil,* no. 109, p. 489-490, dated to the 6th-7th century.

[248] Ibid., p. 489.

[249] Ibid., no 51, p. 357-358 and no 112, p 497-498

[250] See, for example, Bourgon-Amir, *Les tapisseries*, pl. 50.

IV 2. 7133

Dimensions: a) 17x35.5 cm, b)16x31.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool; S.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, vertical weft, flying shuttle.

Description

Two white tapestry pieces which bear almost identical decoration of blue bands with dancing figures and small animals combined with plants, free standing or enclosed in medallions. On the left band, the uppermost surviving medallion contains a white, stylised tree with two white, addorsed animals on either side of it and a third on its top. The addorsed quadrupeds have a squat body, a large trapezoid head with a blue, C-shaped eye, two triangular ears and hooked, upward tails. Their heads appear to be turned backwards, facing each other. The animal on top is similar, but has an oblong body, a round head with an open mouth, and a forked tail curved downwards. The tree has two opposed, horizontal branches, each with a tripartite flower, and two spiral branches below them. On the four corners outside the medallion is a white highly stylised S-shaped bird with a forked tail and a semicircular wing.

Below this medallion are two white dancing figures, outlined in blue and standing side by side. They have a square head, blue, Π-shaped eyes, a vertical blue line for a nose, a zig-zag mouth, Π-shaped hair, decorated with small Π-shaped elements in green, red and blue. They wear a V-shaped pendant, green on the left and red on the right figure, ending in a rhomboid jewel on their abdomen. They have a rectangular chest and a rounded abdomen, the left part of which extends into their left leg. Their right legs are crossed behind their left. Their chest and abdomen are decorated with broken stripes and semicircles. Their right hand is stretched upwards and their left downwards. Oval elements, white and red are found around the figures.

Below the dancers is an ochre medallion with a white border. Inside it are two opposed white figures with blue outlines, bent towards a white rod, which they hold with their hands. Their heads, which are represented in frontal view, are similar to those of the dancers above. Their pronounced hips, decorated with a red diamond and two vertical blue stripes, denote their bent posture. A red stripe is seen diagonally placed around their torso. Their legs are attached to each

other. The rod has a trident shaped tip and a triangular base. The rod and the figures are enclosed in a blue frame which follows their shape. This medallion also has a bird on each outer corner, one of them without a wing. Below it are three small roundels with white outlines, each containing a white, six petalled rosette. The middle has a green ground and the other two pink. The band is bordered by two rows of a white crenellation on a blue ground, with cruciform tips and triangular bases. The bases are decorated with blue triangles, bearing white diamonds. Between the tips of the crenellation are white rosettes with an X-shaped centre. At the bottom edge of the band is a row of white columns, possibly representing tassels. They consist of a forked base, a circle, decorated with a cross, and a spiral volute. The piece has thick fringes, blue below the band and white on the rest of the textile

The second piece, which is slightly longer has almost identical decoration. The details of the figures are given in pink instead of red. Below the lower medallion are two more dancers, instead of the three roundels with pendants of the opposite colour arrangement.

Comments

The dancers on our textile probably exemplify a different approach to the Dionysian cycle., with the decoration, the colours, and the composition being different and less naturalistic than those of the so called Mänadenstoffe. It is possible that our textile is a later example, where the original iconographic implications of the Dionysian theme had been lost, while the figures of the dancers persisted in different decorative arrangements. This type of highly stylised version of the Mänadenstoffe has in the past been dated by some scholars in the 11th or even 12th century, but radiocarbon dating has proved them to be earlier, with the dates on the examined textiles ranging from the 5th to the 9th century.[251] Radiocarbon dating has, in some cases, produced quite early dates (5th-6th century) for some examples with a very reductive design, like that of the AS[252] and the KN.[253] Naked dancers in a similar posture and with hanging medallions, although in a different decorative environment, appear in a textile in MTIB, datable to the 6th-8th century (fig. 1).[254] The lack of background on our piece, which still exists on the MTIB example, could indicate a date towards the end of this period, namely the 7th-8th century.

According to Pritchard, the presence of fringes could indicate that these bands are parts of an overtunic, which is in concordance with the exclusive use of wool.[255]

fig. 1 Tapestry fragment in the MTIB (footnote 254)

[251] Van Strydonck et al., "14C Dating", p. 240.

[252] Schrenk, *Textilien*, cat. 108, p. 265-266.

[253] http://www.textile-dates.uni-bonn.de/textile_show_pdf.php?textile_id=260

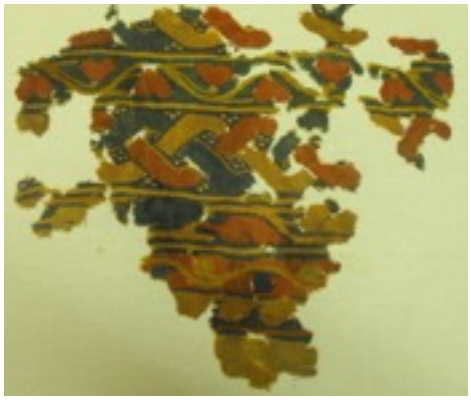
[254] Cabrera Lafuente, *La industrial textil*, no. 112, pp. 497-498.

[255] Pritchard, *Clothing Culture*, p. 74-75.

IV 3. 15332

Dimensions: 24x21.8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Some double warps, slit tapestry.



Description

Tapestry fragment with stylised vegetal and geometrical decoration in six bands, separated by ochre stripes. The uppermost consists of a braid, made of three interlocking ochre, red and blue bands on a brown ground. Inside the braid are groups of four dots arranged in a cross. Groups of three dots also appear on the ground outside the braid. The second band contains an ochre scroll with red hearts on either side of it, on a green ground. The third contains another braid. The fourth is occupied by an ochre, more stylised scroll, which bears ochre, blue and red lance-shaped leaves with a small indentation, on a brown ground. The next band is occupied by another ochre scroll with small, blue and ochre leaves on a red ground. The blue, on the bottom side of the scroll, are lance-shaped, while the ochre are circular. The last band bears a horizontal ochre stem, from the bottom side of which emanate ochre oval leaves on a dark blue ground.

Comments

The design and the execution are of high quality and the colours harmoniously combined. A peculiar characteristic is the pairing of some warps, unusual in woollen textiles, which was probably employed because of the low thickness of some warp yarns. Similar, though simpler plaits with dots, a motif very popular in Late Antiquity,[256] are found in several pieces in the Louvre, datable to the 8th century,[257] and in two pieces in the MRAH, datable to the 5th-7th century.[258] The motifs, the degree of stylisation and the exclusive use of wool could support a dating between the 6th and the 7th century. This furnishing textile represents a type of decoration popular throughout our period. However, large scale and relatively naturalistic scrolls are not encountered on later textiles, where the scrolls have become miniaturised and more stylised (e.g. IV 32).

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[256] See, for example the mosaics of Bishapur, in *Les Perses sassanides*, nos 18-19, pp. 65-66, and those of Jordan (6th century), where similar chains are used as border panels, *Byzantium and Islam*, no 67, p. 101.

[257] Du Bourguet, *Catalogue,* nos E106-110, pp. 228-229,

[258] Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Textiles coptes*, nos 17 and 18.

IV 4. 7011

Dimensions: 19.5x18.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool; S.
Weft: wool, S; few linen wefts of undefined spinning.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, vertical weft brocading.

Description

Tapestry tabula with a medallion enclosed in two concentric squares. The medallion has a dark blue border and ground and is filled with a tangle of creatures in blue, pink, green and brown. The composition is given in a “horror vacui" manner and is so confused that what is represented is unclear. The round heads of the creatures, with a square, dark blue eye, inside which is a white crescent or two parallel white stripes, are recognisable, but sometimes they appear alone, and sometimes are attached to differently shaped, worm-like bodies, with three, four or five legs. Parts of bodies also stand on their own. Multiple-shaped fillings, zig-zag, S-, C-, or wedge-shaped appear between the bodies. Some of them bear stripes, rendered with vertical weft brocading. The square frames of the medallion are red, defined by thin, white lines. The vertical lines are made of double warps and linen wefts, set at regular intervals among the red, woollen weft passes. The horizontal lines are made by leaving a part of the warps bare. On the corners of the inner square are four green birds, facing outwards. They have an oval body, a C-shaped head and a yellow outline which creates horizontal stripes on their body. In the centre of their body is a white circle with a brown C-shape.

Comments

The confusing composition resembles an abstract design. The vivid colours, however, are attractive and give a lively appearance. The construction of the eyes brings to mind textiles like IV 5 and MDA 744, which can be dated to the 6th-7th century.[259] The vivid colouring and the almost exclusive use of wool point to a date towards the end of this period. A comparable piece is found in the DOC (fig. 1), interpreted as a bucolic scene, on which, however, the animals can be more clearly distinguished and a central figure is also discerned.[260]

fig. 1 Tapestry roundel in the DOC (footnote 260)

[259] Apostolaki, *Koptika Yfasmata*, p. 133-134.

[260] DOC BZ.1953.2.22 in https://www.doaks.org/resources/textiles/catalogue/BZ.1953.2.22

IV 5. 6960

Dimensions: 44x15.7 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: indigo wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Decorative weft: linen, S.

Description

Tapestry roundel with putti. The roundel has a red ground, decorated with yellow, green, light blue and orange bands, each underlined with a white stripe, probably denoting the see or sky. Four floating putti survive, looking towards the centre of the roundel and carrying large, green or yellow baskets with fruit. The latter are represented as heaps of white diamonds in a triangular arrangement, except from those of the third putto, which have the form of a single triangle. The bodies of the two uppermost putti are turned to the left, while those of the other two are turned to the right, with their heads turned backwards. One of their legs is stretched forward, except from the fourth putto, who has both its legs stretched. The other leg is crouched or bent. The putti wear only short pants with horizontal stripes, yellow, white or green, and a collar, orange or yellow, around their necks. Their bodies are white with dark blue details and outlines. They have square eyes, with a dot on their left side, small stripes for the eyebrows and mouth, and a dot for the navel. Their dark blue hair has a triangular shape, with a white band holding its upper part and are decorated with groups of four white dots.

The medallion has a dark blue border, decorated with large, white pearls, crowned with orange, green, light blue and yellow crescent-shaped bands. Small white dots are scattered between them. Parts of the decoration that originally existed outside the medallion also survive. On a yellow ground above the roundel, the legs of possibly another putto are discerned. Next to them are two striped bands, one green and one orange. Below the roundel, again on a yellow ground, are green and orange bands, underlined with white.

Comments

The putti motif is so widespread in Egyptian textiles, that it would not be significant, nor even possible, to mention every example. It has been employed in Egyptian art as a symbol of the abundance brought to Egypt by the inundation of the river Nile and are often accompanied by personifications of the River himself.[261] The association with the River on our piece could be implied by the bands running across the ground of the medallion, which could possibly signify water. The putti can also be associated with the Seasons, symbols of which they carry in their hands, though in that case, they usually carry a variety of objects, including birds, which do not appear on our example.[262] Similar putti are found in a textile of the PC, datable to the 7th century.[263] However, these putti have wings, which do not appear on our example. Putti in similar postures, carrying baskets and placed one above the other, are also found in a band of a neck slit decoration in the Cluny, datable to the 6th century,[264] but their design is considerably different.

The singular technical characteristic of this textile is its dark blue warp, and the fact that in many white parts, the linen wefts pass over more than one warps. The dark blue warp, the density, the large, pearl medallions, the triangular hair of the putti and the construction of their eyes (fig. 3) bring to mind textiles of the group with red or dark blue warp, decorated with large medallions, particularly Benaki 15333, datable to the 7th-8th century (fig. 1, 2). Taking into consideration the dating of the related pieces and the degree of stylisation, a dating in the late 7th or possibly early 8th century could be proposed for this piece.

This textile is another example of the continuous use, up to at least the 7th century, of mythological motifs and personifications of abundance and fertility, including nilotic scenes.

fig. 1 Benaki 15333a

fig 2.Detail of the eyes of the figure on Benaki 15333a

fig. 3 Detail of the eyes of a putto on IV 5

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[261] László Kákosy, "The Nile, Euthenia and the Nymphs", *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 68 (1982), p. 291. See also textiles with Nilotic scenes and putti, like that in the Sidney and Lois Eskenazi Museum of Art, William Lowe Bryan Memorial, Indiana University, no 60.92 A-B in www.artmuseum.indiana.edu and those in the Louvre, in Maguire,"Garments", p. 217-218, fig. 13, 14, dated accordingly to the late 5th-early 6th and the 6th-7th centuries.

[262] Lewis, "Coptic Horseman", p. 58.

[263] De Jonghe et al., *Ancient tapestries* inv. no 7347, p. 95, ill. XXXII, p. 256.

[264] Lorquin, *Les tissus coptes,* no 4, p. 63-64.

IV 6. 12962

Dimensions: 36.5x30 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: red wool; S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, restricted use of the flying shuttle.

Description

Tapestry band with three large roundels in a vertical arrangement, of which only the central survives almost complete. It is occupied by an ochre figure that has a round, red head with large round eyes, an extraordinarily thick neck-possibly a collar is implied-, long, akimbo arms that hang down, a trapezoid body and truncated rectangular legs, with a small inward curve at the bottom The outline and the details of the body are woven in dark blue. The dark blue lines on the shoulders might suggest that the figure wears a cloak, and the element in the centre of the chest could be either a pendant or the cloak's buckle. The breasts and the navel are blue circles with a dot in the centre. Each of the short legs has a rectangular shape. The figure appears to be holding two sticks, each bearing a highly stylised bird, woven in ochre with a red beak, depicted under the figure's armpits, while two more ochre birds with dark blue stripes and white beaks stand on either side of the figure's head. Behind its shoulders emerge a series of ochre bands in a rayed arrangement, creating a flame-like design. The border of the roundel consists of ochre squares or rectangles on a green ground, creating a pearl effect. and light green alternating squares.

The other two roundels share a similar, stylised vegetal decoration, in the form of a light green cross, the vertical arms of which are oblate and the horizontal have large, crescent-shaped tips. Red mirrored spiral stems, extend from the horizontal arms of the cross. These roundels have dark blue pearl borders. Further decorative elements seem to fill the red ground between the three roundels, but the only discernible is a light green basket full of fruit on a small, ochre roundel.

Comments

The design is abstract and the execution of the figure and the birds rather clumsy and crude, with distorted proportions and a rough rendering of the basic elements. The size of the design indicate that it was intended as a hanging or a furnishing textile and not as a piece of clothing. The iconography seems to be a combination of traditional Egyptian and hellenistic subjects, figuring duck-like birds and baskets with fruit with an arrangement in pearl roundels. The subject could be a version of an ascension theme. Ascensions -of gods, heroes or kings- were a popular subject in Late Antique and Medieval art.[265] It is possible that here is represented the Ascension of Alexander the Great, The existence of the birds above the figure's head and the shortened and rectangular appearance of its legs, which recalls the manner in which Alexander's chariot is occasionally represented, could support this identification. Alexander, in almost every illustration of the episode, is depicted with his hands turned upwards, usually holding two lances with bait, tempting the birds or griffins upwards (fig.1).[266] On our textile, the strange rendering of the lower pair of birds, connected with the figure's hands through vertical narrow bands, could be a version of this iconographic tradition. Alexander enjoyed great popularity in Egypt, and Coptic versions of the Alexander Romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes had an important place in Coptic literature.[267] Although he isn't commonly represented in Coptic art, there is a group of decorative roundels, which picture Alexander on horseback, identified by an inscription, in the type of the victorious emperor.[268]

fig. 1 Reconstruction of the complete pattern of half- silk fragments with the Flight of Alexander, Venice(?), 13th century, (Kunstgewerbe Museum, Berlin, inv. 1885, 12; 1888, 64 and Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, inv. 8581) in Lechitskaya, "Tabula", p. 181, fig. 24.

The theme of the ascension is also often associated with the triumph of Dionysus, returning from his victorious campaign to India, with whom Alexander, but also other rulers -among which the Ptolemies of Egypt- were also identified.[269] The triumph of Dionysus seems to share similar iconographic characteristics with the Flight of Alexander, though usually Dionysus is accompanied by two panthers. A tabula in the MFAB, known to represent the triumph of Dionysus, shows a

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[265] Lechitskaya, "Tabula" p. 177; Also, E. Herzfeld, "Der Thron des Khosrô", p. 106-136.

[266] For an iconographic survey of the subject see Grube and Johns, *Cappella Palatina*, p. 244-247 and 250-255.

[267] Shepherd, "Alexander", p. 249. See also, Thomas Steppan, "The Artukid Bowl: Courtly Art in the Middle Byzntine Period and Its Relation to the Islamic East" in *Perception of Byzantium and Its Neighbors 843-1261*, Olenka Z. Pevny ed., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press 2000, p. 84-101.

[268] Shepherd, "Alexander", pp. 244-250.

[269] V.F. Lenzen, "The triumph of Dionysos on Textiles of Late Antique Egypt", *University of California Publications in Classical Archaeology 5*, no 1 (1960) p. 1-38. See also Thompson, *Coptic Textiles*, no. 23, pp. 56-57 and Lechitskaya, "Tabula", p. 187-193.

figure with pronounced breasts, like those on our piece, although other elements, like the animals on the figure's feet, are absent from our example (fig. 2).[270]

fig. 2 Tapestry tabula with Triumph of Dionysus. Egypt, 5th- 6th centuries, MFAB, inv. 01.8352 in Lechitskaya, "Tabula", p. 191, fig. 24.

Ascensions were also often associated with Helios or Sun god, a theme common in ancient and medieval art, from Greece to China.[271] This motif seems to have later taken the form of a charioteer, symbolising the triumph or apotheosis of the emperor, found in both Roman and Sasanian art.[272] In many of these examples, a radiant halo is often depicted around the god's or emperor's head, an element that could be echoed on our piece in the rayed bands behind the figure's shoulders. The iconographic elements of the Ascension seem to derive from the ancient motif of the Master of animals, in which a figure is depicted among two animals or birds. Also, Dionysus and Alexander, were also both associated with the Sun god.[273]The ascension theme was inherited in Islamic Art and was also used in a courtly context, as seen in the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo.[274] It seems that our example, like other similar textiles, bears a syncretic iconography, incorporating many traditions, common in Late Antiquity and continued in Islamic art.

This piece belongs to a group of textiles with similar highly stylised animals, personages and geometrical decoration in pearl roundels, characterised by the use of red or dark blue woollen warps. The group is datable to the 9th century and attributed to Upper Egypt, because of the use of woollen warps,[275] although wool is proved to have been used as a warp material also in other areas of Egypt.[276] The cross with crescent arms is also encountered on other textiles of a similar stylised design, datable to the 7th-9th century,[277] and also on a woollen taqueté piece in the AS, radiocarbon

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[270] They are, however, present in IV 7.

[271] Herzfeld, "Der Thron", p. 106-136.

[272] Ibid., p. 184.

[273] Lechitskaya, "Tabula", p. 193

[274] Grube and Johns, *Cappella Palatina*, p. 244-247.

[275] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 31, pp. 82-83.

[276] Ibid., no 18, p. 67-68. It is a piece made with woollen warps and wefts, picturing an animal frieze. The inscription mentions the private ṭirāz of Miṣr .

[277] Stauffer, *Koptische Wirkereien,* no 84, p. 265-266.

dated to 422-607 (100%).[278] The baskets full of fruit are very common in early Coptic textiles, but continue to be used in pieces dated to the 7th-9th centuries.[279] A piece with a similar figure, accompanied with different geometrical decoration, is in the NMS and is datable to the 8th-9th century.[280] The birds represented outside the roundels on textiles of this group (see Benaki 15134 and 15330, figs. 4 and 5) resemble those on a piece in the DOC, with similar design and a red ground, datable to the 7th-8th century.[281] This piece, based on the radiocarbon dates of similar pieces, the still realistic rendering of the basket motif and the restricted use of the flying shuttle, could be dated between the 7th- 8th centuries and attributed to a provincial workshop of Egypt.

This and the next example belong to a type of textiles that imitate fabrics- mostly made of silk- of the 5th-8th century of Eastern origin- Chinese, Sogdian or Iranian- with pearl roundels enclosing animals, birds or vegetal decoration (fig. 3).[282] The crosses on the medallions of our piece and the decoration consisting of a central square- often bearing a human face- with "ribbons" at the corners, appearing complete in other textiles of this group (15134 and 15330, figs. 4 and 5), could be an interpretation by Egyptian weavers of the four-directional interstice or central floral motifs of these Eastern textiles (figs. 3, 6, 7, 8), which also appear on pieces like the Achmīm silks. Similar panels with human faces, accompanied by geometrical decoration are also found in Sasanian stucco reliefs (fig. 9).

fig. 3 Silk Iranian or Sogdian child's coat in the CMA, 8th century, in http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1996.2

The pearl roundel is a widespread motif that is generally believed to be a Sasanian imitation. In fact, decoration with pearl roundels appears often in Chinese, Central Asian and Iranian textiles and seems to have been especially popular during the 6th-8th centuries in all the above artistic spheres, although the question of its origin remains open.[283] These design reached the weavers of provincial Egyptian workshops through a process of copying.

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[278] Schrenk, *Textilien*, No 47, p. 137-140.

[279] For example Stauffer, *Koptische Wirkereien,* no 85, p. 266

[280] Lamm, "Some Woollen Tapestry Weavings" p. 68-69.

[281] Ball, "Rich Interiors".

[282] See, for example, Von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte*, Abb. 28, p. 22; Meister, "The Pearl Roundel", figs. 1, 18, 22-27, 31-33, 43-46; *When Silk was Gold,* no 4, p. 33, no 5, p. 34-37.

[283] Meister, "The Pearl Roundel", p. 255-267; McDowell, "Sassanian textiles", p. 70; Compareti, "The role of the Sogdian Colonies".

fig. 4 Benaki 15134.

fig. 5 Benaki 15330.

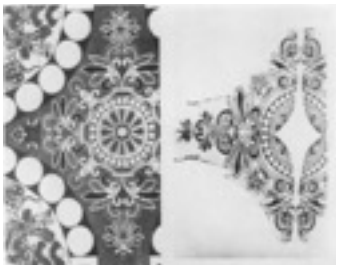

fig. 6 Interstice motifs :“Shomu banner” (left) in the Horyuji temple in Nara (early 8th century) and the “Deer fabric”, recovered by Otani mission at Astana (right), in Meister, “The Pearl Roundel”, pl. 14, fig. 46. The leaves of the floral decoration resemble the “ribbons” of the Benaki pieces.

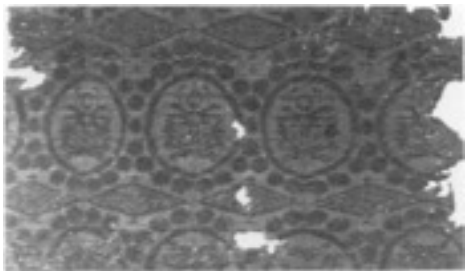

fig. 7 Damask, Shosoin Collection, II-58 in Meister, “The Pearl Roundel”, pl. 3, fig. 8.

fig. 8 Polychrome warp-faced twill weave, Shosoin Collection, II-36, in Meister, “The Pearl Roundel”, pl. 5, fig. 14.

fig. 9 Sasanian stucco decoration in www.cais-soas.com

IV 7. 12975

Dimensions: 25.7x20 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: dark blue wool, S
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, multiple dovetailing.
Decorative weft: linen, S.

Description

Poorly preserved tapestry fragment, with two ochre, pearl roundels in a vertical arrangement. The top roundel contains what seems to be a human figure, of which only parts of its stretched open legs, its unusually oblong torso and its hand, wearing a beaded sleeve survive. In the middle of its torso is an ochre square with a red cross. Its hand is depicted on a red frame that seems to extend upwards. Two small green circles with white dots on the upper part of its torso possibly signify the breast, as in IV 6. On either side of its legs are two well preserved white quadrupeds with spiral tails. They seem to be moving away from the central figure, but their heads are turned backwards, facing it. Their legs and their backs have dark blue stripes and the same colour is used for their square eyes. On the left of the figure, is an element with a blue outline, possibly a bird. Below the figure's legs is a green geometrical element with oblate endings. This roundel has a green border with white pearls. The ground between the medallions is dark blue.

The second roundel preserves only its uppermost part. A green stylised, vegetal design is visible, consisting of two branches starting from a common stem with spirals. Below it, on the left, is a red band, quite similar to the ribbons of Benaki 15134 and 15330 (p. 124, figs. 4 and 5). The border of this medallion is red with white pearls.

Comments

This piece is similar in design to the textiles of the red warp group (Benaki 15134, 15330, p. 125, figs 4 and 5, and 15333, p. 119, fig. 1), but the warp here is dark blue and the weave is denser. Although the design is quite maladroit here too, the artistic quality seems more elevated than in the red group examples. The position of the figure could indicate another ascension scene, or the

triumph of Dionysus, like on IV 6, with which the two animals on the figure's feet are in concordance. Another possible identification is with the biblical theme of Daniel and the lions. Animals, looking towards a central figure are also encountered on silk textiles of the 6th century from Antinopolis, and on a silk of the 5th century, where the orant figure is identified with Daniel (fig. 1).[284] Another possible identification is with St. Menas, flanked by kneeling camels, a subject common in Egyptian art.[285] A similar pearl roundel with St. Menas in an orant position and camels on either side, is found in terracotta flasks of the late 6th-mid 8th century, like that of the MET (fig. 2) and the Benaki.[286] It is worth noting, however, that both Daniel and St Menas undergo several iconographic transformations, deriving from a mingling of iconographic elements of different narratives, but they are both closely linked to the theme of the lord of animals, which had been very popular in the East, to the tradition of which Samson and David (II 1) also belong.[287] Although no representations of Daniel in the lion's den survive in medieval Islamic art, the written tradition testifies that the biblical episode was known and recognised by Muslims, as early as the 9th century.[288] A stucco decoration from Barz-Qawaleh in Iran, found in a late Sasanian-Early Islamic settlement represents a similar scene, with a figure-most probably female- under an arch, holding a bird and a bunch of flowers, flanked by winged creatures, which turn their heads towards her (fig. 3).[289] The symbolism of the scene is not known, but it indicates another possible source of inspiration for this textile.

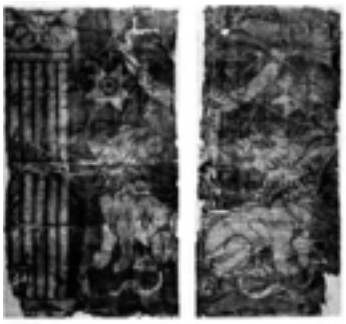

fig. 1 Silk textile in Düsseldorf (footnote 287)

fig. 2 Pilgrim's ceramic flask from Egypt with St.Menas in the MET, in https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/27.94.27/

fig. 3 Stucco decoration from Barz-Qawaleh

The arrangement in pearl roundels and the alternation of figural and geometrical themes chronologically place this piece together with the red warp group, despite the differences. It could therefore be dated between the 7th and the 8th century. On these examples is represented an Eastern type of decoration arrangement in pearl roundels, which, however, enclose scenes that intermingle Near Eastern, Greek and Christian iconographic traditions, also incorporated into the Islamic artistic repertoire, accompanied with traditional Egyptian and hellenistic decorative elements.

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[284] Von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte,* Abb. 40, Lyon, and Abb. 54, p. 41, Danielstoff in Düsseldorf.

[285] See for example the ivories of the "Grado Chair" in *Byzantium and Islam*, no 24 M, p. 48.

[286] Ibid., fig. 38, p. 87.

[287] Fransisco de García, "Daniel"; Warren T. Woodfin, "An Officer and a Gentleman", p. 111-143.

[288] Johns, "Muslim Artists", p. 70-71.

[289] Gholamreza Karamian, Kaveh Farrokh, "Sassanian Stucco Decorations from the Ramavand (Barz Qawaleh) Excavations in the Lorestan Province of Iran", *Historia I Świat,* no 6 (2017), p. 75-77, figs. 9-11.

IV 8. 7078

Dimensions: 11.8x6.2 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, soumak.
Decorative weft: a) double or triple woollen yarn, S, b) single or double linen yarn, S.

Description

Red tapestry band, probably a *clavus* or sleeve band. In a vertical arrangement are two figures floating or dancing, and other decorative elements of marine character. All have dark blue outlines. The uppermost figure has its long hands turned upwards. Its nose and eyes are depicted as a red curve with two hooked endings. Its hair or headgear is green with white and yellow stripes. A dark blue curved line with a dot above represents its belly, while its legs are stretched open in a peculiar, possible dancing position. Details on the body, hands and legs are woven with red zig-zag lines. On either side of the figure are two circles with a dot in the centre, green and light brown, with forked bases, ochre and blue. The figure below has one hand turned upwards and the other bent downwards. It has yellow hair and its eyes and nose are a curve ending in a straight line. The figure has no visible legs and its body ends in a pointed oval, which could indicate that it is a marine creature. Its body is decorated with green and red zig-zag lines. On the bottom left of the figure is an ochre circle, similar to those above, with a white forked base, and on the top a green circle with white stripes and a red centre. On the bottom right of the figure is an ochre heart, outlined in white. Below the figures is, possibly, an abstract representation of a marine creature,[290] consisting of two opposed green curved bands in a W shape, with white stripes, a white, soumak outline and ochre forked endings. Between them is a double white, M-shaped pattern with an orange semicircle on top. The red band has a thin white border and is set on an ochre tapestry ground. Its bottom border bears a double row of soumak weave.

[290] See, for example the nereids and marine creatures with similar green curved and striped bodies with forked tails on No 32 (Acc. no 41.800) of the Brooklyn Museum in Thompson, *Coptic Textiles,* p. 74-75.

Comments

The design is abstract, although quite imaginative. The type of iconography seems to belong to the "marine thiasos" cycle, comprising nereids, sea horses, dolphin riders, tritons and other aquatic creatures, which appears in ancient Greek art and continued being popular during Late Antiquity, appearing even in the medieval period.[291] Aquatic themes, also often associated with the river Nile and its deified properties, have been quite popular on Egyptian textiles[292] and they, apparently continue being used up to the 7th-8th centuries.

The middle figure resembles an aquatic creature, but the first figure, with its clearly drawn legs, resembles a dancer or menad. It is possible that we have here an intermingling of Dionysian themes with that of the "marine thiasos" with selected types from both cycles, which were believed to bear similar connotations to the viewer, alluding to the pleasures of this or the afterlife.[293] A similar combination of marine creatures with dancers are seen on IV 9 and on a band in Michigan.[294] Figures with similar face characteristics are known in many collections, in similar or different colour schemes and decorative contexts. One of them, in the KN has been radiocarbon-dated to the 6th-7th century (fig. 1).[295] The geometrical interlacing patterns that accompany the figures of the KN example, however, point to an earlier date, so that our piece could be dated to the 7th or 8th century.

Figure 1 Fragment of a woolen tunic (Katoen Natie 561 / DM85) in Van Strydonck et al.,"14C Dating", p. 240, fig. 9.

[291] Papagiannaki, "Nereids and Hippocamps" , p. 71-103.

[292] See, for example Du Bourguet, *Catalogue*, nos C 76-78, p. 115-116, dated to the 6th century.

[293] Papagiannaki, "Nereids and Hippocamps", p. 75-76, 81.

[294] Wilson, *Ancient Textiles,* no 157, p. 61, pl. XIV.

[295] Van Strydonck et al., "14C Dating", p. 239-240.

IV 9. 7060

Dimensions: 28x11.3 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, restricted use of soumak and flying shuttle?

Description

Tapestry band with figural decoration in two pieces. It consists of a central red frieze with two ochre medallions containing animals, on either side of which are human figures. The medallion on the left contains an ochre quadruped with an oblong body, a triangular head, turned backwards, stretched legs and a long, upward, green tail that reaches to its head. The medallion on the right contains a very abstract design, which could be an ochre, stylised bird, walking to the left. A green, crescent-shaped element below its head, a green band on its abdomen, a red band on its chest and a red oval on its head could signify details of its plumage. Both medallions have a light blue border and are set on ochre frames.

Starting from the left of the frieze, we see the head of a human figure, on the vertical axis, which we can reconstruct based on its repetition, found before the second medallion. It is represented riding a marine creature, with one hand stretched upwards and the other bent downwards. It has a large oval head with a long nose, blue and red rectangular eyes and blue, short hair with ochre dots. The figure wears a green piece of clothing with two ochre stripes, which is attached to its neck and falls to the front. The creature beneath has an oblong, V-shaped body, separated by dark blue lines into four compartments, decorated with red stripes. The front compartment bears a circular black eye. Two small feet seem to be attached to its body, but it is not clear whether they belong to the creature, as the left could also be the rider's foot. Next is an ochre horse rider, facing to the right. His lower body is pictured in profile with his right, bent leg visible, while his upper body and head, with his raised right hand, is pictured in an almost frontal view. His outfit has a belt and is decorated with a few blue stripes. His head is round and topped with blue hair or a headgear with pulled edges. His round eyes are made of blue and red wefts. The animal he is riding is green and has an oblong body, decorated with ochre dots, bent legs in a galloping posture, a C-shaped neck and head, a large upward ear and a short, downward tail. Next, is a larger standing human figure, also facing to the right. He has a rectangular body, a raised right hand, bent on his head, an ochre head, which forms, together with his neck, a crescent shape with a thicker upper part, and rectangular blue and red eyes. He is wearing a short green tunic with an ochre belt, decorated with short horizontal stripes, in a vertical row and, possibly, ochre boots. In the place of

his left hand is an ochre circle with a green centre. To the right of the first medallion is another rider, similar to the first, but the textile is torn at this point. His garment, is decorated with green stripes and blue wefts. The animal is decorated with ochre and blue dots and a V-shaped, ochre element on its stretched backward tail.

The second piece starts with two animals, one on top of the other. The animal on top, which faces to the right, has an ochre, oblong body, decorated with blue dots, a triangular eye and double horns or ears. Each pair of feet is rendered as a triangle. The animal below is in a walking position and faces to the left. It has a green body and head, decorated with blue dots. Next to them is another nereid riding a marine creature and next to it, the second medallion. The decoration seems to have continued to the right, with, possibly, another animal. On the red ground around the figures are several decorative elements, such as circles, heart or lance-shaped leaves, green and ochre. The red frieze is set against a dark blue background, which, in turn, is bordered by red bands, each decorated with a row of ochre hearts.

Comments

This piece has similarities with IV 8 in the representations of nereids and marine creatures, the rendering of the nereids' faces and the circular, forked and heart-shaped elements of the background decoration. In IV 8, however, the presence of linen, which is absent on this example, gives an overall different appearance.

The theme of the band seems to be inspired by the "marine thiasos",[296] although the presence of the horse and other quadrupeds does not fit in. It is possible that we have here an intermingling of marine themes with other motifs popular in Egyptian textiles, like the horseman -a popular motif in both Coptic and Islamic art- and the encircled animals, or that the figure of the sea horse and, possibly other sea creatures, were misinterpreted by the Egyptian weaver, having lost their original connotations and meaning.Heart borders are a common Late Antique decorative motif, also found, for example, in Sasanian silver plates,[297] in the faces of the arches of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock and in textiles, the most renowned of which is the Marwān silk, possibly dated to the middle of the 8th century.[298]

Based on the comparison with IV 8 and on its iconography, this piece, which exemplifies the transformation of mythological subjects into more abstract and generic representations, we could date it to the 8th century.

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[296] For the theme of the "marine thiasos" see IV 8.

[297] See, for example, a plate in the HM, in *Les Perses sassanides*, no 49, p. 110-111.

[298] Day, "The Ṭirāz Silk of Marwān",in *Archaelogica Orientalia. In Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld*, George C. Miles ed., JJ Augustin, 1952, p. 48-49, pl. VI.

IV 10. 7123

Dimensions: 32.8x66.3 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, two-coloured shed, flying shuttle, weft twining.
Decorative weft: single or double woollen and linen yarn, S.

Description

Large tapestry piece with human figures, birds, quadrupeds and vegetal decoration on a white ground. The textile survives in its full width and the two reinforced selvedges can be clearly seen. The decoration can be divided into four zones. The uppermost consists of two opposed riders, on the left and right corner. That on the left has outstretched arms in a T shape. On one hand he holds a green lance ending in a cross, and on the other, the horse's bridle. His posture is quite unnatural, his head seen in a three-quarter view and his chest and hands in frontal view. He wears a blue upper garment -which is decorated with dark blue stripes on the sleeves and the chest and has pink cuffs and collar- blue trousers and a white belt. He has an ochre face, with dark blue curves for the mouth, eyebrows and nose, and circular eyes. The figure wears a conical headgear, that resembles a Phrygian cap, consisting of ochre and dark blue squares, made with the technique of two-coloured shed. The horse, which has its front, left leg raised in a walking posture, has a red body, decorated with white and yellow stripes, and a white head. Like the rest of the horses on this piece, its rear part forms a pronounced hump, decorated with small white and red stripes. The horse has a yellow saddle and bridle and green reins and harnesses. Its long, downward tail is made of two thin, pink and dark blue, zig-zag lines with forked endings. The rider on the right side has both hands stretched forward, probably holding the bridle. He also wears a blue costume. He has a red band around his neck, which floats to the back and has an attached sword or quiver below it. Between the riders are two opposed, stylised quadrupeds, with their front left legs raised in a walking movement. They have a rectangular body, a trapezoid head with a large white eye bearing a red dot, horns, backward ears and tuft-shaped tails. That on the left has a dark blue body with a white and yellow stripe, red hoofs and red horns. That on the right has a red body with a yellow stripe, dark blue hoofs and green horns.

The second zone consists of six, alternately red and dark blue triangular arches, made of small square dots. On top of them, stand small, stylised birds, alternately dark blue and red, with S-

shaped bodies, double forked tails and square wings on their back. The blue ones stand on top of the red arches and have a red beak and wings, while the red follow the opposite pattern. Two birds stand on the outer sides of the apical arches. The first bird on the left has a yellow, rhomboid head, framed by a pink, undulant halo, one red and one dark blue leg, and an almost circular body, blue and yellow, with a pink dot in the centre, overlapped by a second circle on its rear part, on which is inscribed a crescent-shaped, blue and yellow tail. To the right of the last arch is another bird in a fragmentary state. It has a red oval body, decorated with a yellow cross, and diagonally placed wings of blue, pink and green, each bearing a white stripe.

In the spandrels between the arches are five human figures. The first holds a large, yellow pole under his right arm, ending in circles, pink on the front and yellow with two blue semicircles at the back. On his raised, left hand is probably a round green shield. His feet are unnaturally bent outwards. He wears a yellow undergarment, a red vest, a red rhomboid skirt with a white vertical stripe inscribed in a circle, and green trousers or boots with a white tip. His hair is blue. The second figure is a rider, similar to the left of the upper zone. He wears a pink costume with a green collar. The horse is green, decorated with yellow bridle and reins, from which hang red pendants with white crescents. The third figure faces to the left. His hands do not survive, but he seems to be holding a large blue, horizontal pole, ending in a hook behind his back, and a large, yellow zig-zag, vertical object in front of him, the two edges of which are connected by a dark blue stripe. They could possibly signify an arrow and bow in enlarged proportions. The figure wears a red garment and blue trousers and shoes, similar to those of the first figure of this zone, although its upper part does not look like a vest and is decorated with dark blue stripes, possibly forming a cross. His feet are also bent outwards. His hair is green with white stripes. Another rider, similar to the first follows, this time orientated to the left. His hair is green, his horse is blue and its upward tail is made of two parallel zig-zag lines, red and blue. The last figure has his back turned. His hands are raised, supporting a yellow pole on the back of his neck, from the edges of which hang two small quadrupeds, dark blue and red, similar to those of the upper zone, tied up from their extraordinarily long hind legs. He wears a green garment, decorated with a white T-shape with red stripes and a red circle at bottom. His hands and feet are white with red stripes. His hair is pink with dark blue squares.

Under the arches, starting from the left, is a dark blue stylised flower with a short stem, a core of concentric yellow diamonds and a crowning crescent with pink, blue, green and yellow, oval petals, each bearing a white stripe. From the outer sides of the core start two thin, red, downward sprigs with red flowers, turned inwards. Under the second arch stands another yellow, stylised flower, consisting of a central zig-zag stem, with two rows of oblong leaves, the lower with X-shaped flowers on their tips, half green and half red. Another flower stands on top of the stem. Below the next arch is a figure that resembles a putto, although largely destroyed. It seems to be carrying two baskets with fruit, one yellow and one green, although it is possible that these represent wings. The putto's garment has a pink collar and a yellow hemline with a red horizontal stripe. Part of blue hair with dark blue squares survive. Its legs are bent outwards. The next arch contains a rosette, with four heart-shaped petals, bearing two white dots, around a yellow, X-shaped core. The petals on the vertical axis are pink, while those on the horizontal are red. Below the fifth arch is a white, unclear figure in frontal view, with irregularly shaped hands holding a yellow, spiral object, possibly extending behind his back. His feet are bent outwards. Two blue bands are attached to his legs. His body, hands and feet bear small red stripes. On his face, red stripes are used for the eye and mouth. His hair is green with white stripes. The last arch hosts a yellow bird with an oblong head, turned to the right, a triangular red beak and a white circular eye with a dark blue dot, a circular body, decorated with dark blue stripes and a pink, oval wing in the centre and red legs with protruding claws. Its thick, downward tail consists of three parallel bands, yellow, blue and pink.

The third zone contains a repeated, stylised, floral pattern, consisting of green stems, which end in V-shaped branches, inverted at the bottom, enveloping alternately red and pink hearts. In the middle of each stem is a dark blue rosette. These stems, alternate with other, shorter stems, with dark blue triangles on the edges, decorated with rectangles, in different colour combinations, ochre, blue, green or pink. In the middle of these stems is a red diamond and on either side of it are two pairs of pink, yellow or blue crescents. The last zone consists of a red undulant band made in the weft-twining technique, with a green, narrower band in the middle. Inside each curve are blue and red diamonds, like those on the stems of the previous zone.

Comments

The theme of this richly decorated textile seems to allude to hunting. The hunting theme is a long-lived iconographic allusion to virtue, triumph over the forces of nature and, of course, to royalty, as a characteristic past time of the rulers. It seems that it also formed part of the repertoire of "good life" that decorated Late Antique households[299] and it was incorporated into the Islamic palatial cycle. Some narrative hunting scenes are encountered on early textiles,[300] although hunting is usually represented in the form of isolated or coupled riders attacking their prey. The figure balancing a stick on his shoulders seems to be a hunter with his prey, possibly hares, as seen in examples from different cultural spheres, from Classical Greece to Medieval Germany.[301]

The piece bears certain singular characteristics, like the weft-twining and the unusual iconography, of the hunters with the poles. On the other hand, other details, like the rosette with heart-shaped petals, have been widely used and can also be found in the art of the Umayyad period, like in the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock, Khirbat al-Mafjar and Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī.[302](In the latter monument we also encounter the stems with the V-shaped branches and hearts). A very similar rosette is also employed in the silk textile of Marwān, dated to either the end of the 7th or the middle of the 8th century.[303] Also, the weaving of the eyes, resembles that on textiles of the 6th-8th century (IV 5). No exact parallels have been traced, but a piece of the PC resembles our textile in the arrangement of the decoration in triangles, between which floral decoration and birds appear.[304] Also, in another fragment in the KAM, is a rider confronting a swordsman, similar to the third figure on the spandrels of our piece. Although the design is different, the swordsman has the same posture and holds a similar, large object.[305] In another fragment in the Mayer Memorial collection a rider seems to hold two crosses similar to those of our riders, and a large lance behind him. This fragment is also decorated with brocaded details, which give an impression similar to our example. This piece is dated by the publishers to the 9th-11th centuries.[306] Based on these parallels and on the variety of weaving techniques, which suggest an early dating, we could date this piece to the 7th-8th century.

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[299] Maguire, "The Good Life", p. 64.

[300] See, for example, the tapestry at DOC in https://www.doaks.org/resources/textiles/catalogue/BZ.1937.14 See also IV 20.

[301] See Grube and Johns, *Cappella Palatina*, p. 178.

[302] Day, "The Ṭirāz Silk", p. 42-48, fig. 8, 9, 11.

[303] Ibid., p. 39-61, pl. VI.

[304] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, no 6885 A, C and D., p. 461-462.

[305] Dauterman Maguire, *Weavings*, no A 38, p. 82.

[306] Baginski and Tidhar, *Textiles from Egypt*, no 249, p.

IV 11. 7085

Dimensions: 10.5x8.8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Descriptio

Tapestry roundel with geometrical decoration on an ochre ground. The decoration consists of three rows of oblong, polylobed elements, possibly leaves, with lobes of unequal size, placed along horizontal stems. The leaves and the stem of the first row are green and a red diamond is pictured between them. Four brown dots decorate the upper part of the circle. The second, brown stem is longer, corresponding to the diameter of the circle, and bears three leaves, two large on the edges and a smaller in the middle. The middle and right leaf are brown, while the left is ochre. The third row also consists of a brown stem and leaves. It has the same length as the first, but the leaves here are slightly smaller, probably owing to the lack of space at the bottom of the roundel. Below the middle of this stem is a green diamond. The roundel has a brown border.

Comments

An interesting characteristic of this piece is the fact that the brown colour of the wefts is obtained by the twisting of red and dark blue threads together. A mixture of green and ochre threads is also apparent on the green wefts. No exact parallels have been found. Nevertheless, the shape of the leaves reminds the polylobed elements on textiles with woollen warp and wefts, like V 2 and V 3. That fact, together with the exclusive use of wool, could be an indication for a dating to the 7th-8th century. This is an example of geometrical decoration on post-conquest textiles.

IV 12. 7178

Dimensions: 31x14 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: brown wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; cotton, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Red tapestry band with three birds, walking to the right. The birds have a wedge-shaped body, pointed at the tail, a trapezoid neck, with a narrow, horizontal band at its base, a triangular head with a pointed beak, a red, square eye, outlined in yellow and a triangular, backward crest. The first bird from the left has a green body, head and crest. Its body is decorated with yellow, diagonal stripes and has a dark blue outline at the bottom and a wider, yellow at the top, framed by dark blue lines. Its head has a yellow outline. The second bird has a dark blue body– of which only a small part survives– with a green outline on top, framed by yellow lines, and a green head, also outlined in yellow. The third bird has a yellow body with green stripes, a green outline at its bottom and a white on top, framed by green lines. Its head is dark blue. On top of the birds' bodies is a green wing, which seems to have an oval or rectangular shape, though none survives complete. The wings have a red centre, from which start radial, yellow stripes. The birds have yellow legs, the front of which is bent, and trident-shaped feet. The space between their front prongs is filled with green. Between each pair of birds is a dark blue, irregular, octagonal rosette, with a red square in its centre and eight white squares with red centres arranged around it. The red band is framed by two yellow stripes, followed by two narrow bands, a green and a red, decorated with white, rhomboid pearls.

Comments

The shape and design of the birds, which can be identified as peacocks, with their projecting crest, neck band and forked feet, as well as the colour palette, bring to mind examples associated with Eastern textiles.[307] The presence of cotton could corroborate an eastern attribution, but its limited use and the employment of S spinning for both warp and wefts, wool and cotton, rather point to an Egyptian manufacture. A dating close to the aforementioned examples, namely the 7th-8th centuries could be proposed. The arrangement of the birds, however is here in a frieze, and not in medallions, following the iconographic tradition of the animal friezes, and exemplifying how the same or similar themes could be executed in different styles, compositions and materials.

[307] See, for example, the Jouarre Abbey silk in Van Strydonck and Van der Borg, "The Construction of a Preparation Line" p. 228-234. Also VII 3, VII 4 and VII 5.

IV 13. 6906

Dimensions: 43.5x52.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: red wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing.

Description

Large tapestry piece, consisting of a large red part with green leaves and a horizontal, purple, border band, with stylised vegetal decoration. On the red ground is a green, rectangular, frame, decorated with a white scroll, from either side of which spring triangular buds with a red, zig zag base, a green and white tip, and a small, red leaf at the base of their stem. All buds are orientated to the right. The scroll thickens towards the tips of each curve, creating red parallelograms, which give a three dimensional impression. Inside this frame are three staggered rows of heart-shaped leaves, orientated to the right, alternating with a stylised vegetal element. The leaves are green with a white outline and each contains a flower. There are three different types of flowers. The leaves of the long rows, close to the frame, contain all the same type, that consists of a central, white stem with a heart-shaped bud on top and another at its base, similar to the buds of the frame scroll, with two pairs of small, upward leaves springing form its sides. The heart is alternately red or white with a red zig zag inside. The flowers on the leaves of the central row belong to two types, which appear alternately. The first type is heart-shaped, divided in three parts, each bearing a red dot. The other consists of a central, white stem with three white, rhomboid buds with red centres, one on top and two below, and a zig zag base. The stylised vegetal elements between the leaves consists of a white, rhomboid centre, highlighted on the inside with green V-shapes and decorated with red diamonds. From the top of the rhomboid centre springs a small, white V-shaped bud and two inverted V-shaped branches. At the base of the diamond are two large, green circles with a white centre on a white frame, from which project two white, downward stems. Some leaves also appear outside the frame to the right.

The purple border band is decorated with white bunches of grapes, which create hexagons. The grapes are supported by T-shaped stems, which are all connected in a stepped vine. Each stem

also holds an oblong, white leaf, with an alternately red and green dot, which create the inner sides of the hexagon. The upper and lower sides of the hexagons consist of two small green leaves and a red bud. The hexagons are connected through small, red and green leaves, which stem from the apical grapes. Inside each hexagon is another stylised, white flower, consisting of a central white stem with small, spiral and V-shaped sprigs at the base, a large, heart-shaped flower above, surrounded by two curved, upward leaves, similar to those on the grapes, and, on top, a small red bud with green leaves. Between the hexagons, on the top and bottom of the band, are white, half-stars, decorated with red and green vegetal and geometrical elements.

Comments

This piece is probably part of a furnishing textile. Although the orientation of the red, main part and the border band are different, they were woven simultaneously, as the warps have the same direction along the whole surface of the textile and what is different is the direction of the tapestry weave. This differentiation could possibly reflect the multiple viewpoints from which the textile could be seen when applied to furnishings. It is also possible that it is part of a woollen tunic, with the purple band being the tunic's hem.[308] The vegetal decoration, in which are included candelabra trees and bunches of grapes, brings to mind Late Antique motifs rendered in a stylised form, particularly favoured in the Umayyad period, as those seen in the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock, the Mshatta facade[309] and Quṣayr ʿAmra[310] and also in other textiles of the period.[311] A scroll similar to that of the green frame, though more stylised, and also accompanied by candelabra trees, is found on the *clavi* of a tunic in the KN, which has been radiocarbon dated to 710-1000.[312] A dating in the 7th-8th century seems therefore plausible for this piece.

fig. 1 Tunic in the KN in www.textile-dates.uni-bonn.de/textile_show_pdf.php?textile_id=606

[308] For this interpretation see also Pritchard, *Clothing Culture*, p. 89.

[309] Ettinghausen et al., *Islamic Art,* p. 18, fig. 8 and 9 and p. 50, fig. 67.

[310] Mohammad Nassar, "The Geometric Mosaics at Qusayr 'Amra in Context", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, vol. 55 (2015), p. 420-423, fig. 5.

[311] See, for example, the trees of Benaki 7136 p. 88, fig.1.

[312] De Moor and Hugo Maertens, *3500 Years of Textile Art*: The Collection in HeadquARTers, Lannoo 2008, inv. no 614, p. 200-201.

IV 14. 12981

Dimensions: 16.5x46.2 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: brown wool, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, double warps.
Weft: wool, S.

Description

Brown, woollen plain weave with a red tapestry band, decorated with animals, birds and stylised vegetal elements. First from the left is a creature, the body of which resembles a bird, while its head a quadruped. It has a beige, squat, S-shaped body with a dark blue outline, a rectangular, upward tail, a dark blue circular eye with a red, inverted C-shape inside and two small, dark blue, triangular ears. Between its neck and body is a round, red wing with small parallel, dark blue stripes. Its dark blue feet have an inverted Y-shape. Above it is a white, oblate circle with an inscribed ochre E-shape. Next to it is a medallion with a thick white border, slightly undulant at the base. Its upper half has a red ground and is decorated with an ochre, polylobed element, while its bottom half has a dark blue ground on which are white dots and a small, red triangle with a blue counterpart on the border below it.

The next animal resembles a lion. Its body is made of two white, attached bumps. It has a red, oval eye with an ochre C shape inside and a mane consisting of parallel, dark blue stripes. To the back of the mane is attached a dark blue V-shape, which resemble ears, but look rather large and misplaced. The rear bump is decorated with two ochre semicircles and ends in a trident shaped tail with a dark blue stripe in the middle that extends downwards, in a vertical weft patterning. Its thin legs are diagonally attached to its body and each foot is made of opposed semicircles. Next to this animal is a white, inverted triangular element, which, according to Tsourinaki, is a basket with fruit. It has an inverted Y-shaped base and is filled with white circles with dark blue dots, outlined in dark blue and resembling eyes. On either side of it is a pair of white circles with an inscribed, dark blue E-shape. Next to it is a dark blue bird, outlined in white. It is similar to the first animal, though its head resembles more that of a bird, ending in a pointed, open beak. The bird has a white eye with a red, square outline. Above the bird is a white circle with a dark blue E-shape. After the bird follows

another medallion, similar to the first, and further to the right is possibly the rear bump of another lion, decorated with dark blue semicircles and ending in a white tail. The red tapestry band is bordered by two white lines and two rows of white hearts.

Comments

The design of the animals and other elements of the decoration are quite naive. The exclusive use of wool and the multi-coloured decoration on this textile favours a date after the 6th century.[313] On the other hand, the free-standing animals and the absence of medallions or compartments could point to a date earlier than the 9th-10th century, when the decoration of rows of medallions with birds or quadrupeds becomes widespread. The heart-shaped borders and the polylobed and E-shaped elements seem to have been popular in textiles during the 7th-9th centuries (e.g. Benaki 15134, p. 124, fig. 4, IV 3, IV 9, V 2, V 3). Based on these assumptions, a date between the 7th-8th, or, possibly, early 9th century could be proposed for this piece. A decoration similar to the tree or basket of our piece is found in a piece of the PC, accompanied with characters associated with Fayyūmi production.[314] The decoration and its arrangement on this piece illustrate the continuous popularity of the animal and bird friezes, alternating with vegetal or other elements, throughout the period in question, although differences in design occur. This piece represents a rather unskilful specimen, that could have been made in a household or cottage industry establishment.

[313] Cabrera Lafuente, *La industrial textil*, p. 212-213.

[314] Pfister, "Matériaux", pl. XXIX, C14.

IV 15. 6985

Dimensions: 16.5x5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: brown wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; cotton, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry piece picturing a mouflon on a red ground. Only the front part of the animal, which faces to the left, survives. It has a white body, decorated on the chest with an ochre band, that follows the outline of its body and bears a light blue undulant stripe. Attached to this band, on the animal's thigh, is a dark blue, flame-like, polylobed element, with an ochre outline and a red core. A dark blue, curved stripe defines its thigh. Its only surviving front leg is bent and is run by a red stripe. The animal has an ochre collar with two white vertical stripes in the middle, overlapped by a horizontal, with another red stripe in its centre, all with dark blue outlines. From this collar project three white bands with red, tear-shaped tips and light blue outlines in a radiant arrangement, probably a kind of pendant, or fluttering ribbon. The mouflon's white head is rectangular with a protruding, oblong muzzle, a dark blue, circular eye with an ochre and light blue, C-shaped outline at its back side and another, large, red, C-shaped outline at the front, extending into a red stripe that runs across the muzzle. A dark blue dot and a thin, red stripe below it denote the nose. The animal seems to have an open mouth and a long, protruding, orange tongue. Its spiral, white horns, of which one survives, stem from a triangular base at the top of its head and have a dark blue, toothed outline. Above the mouflon is a white narrow band and a row of white squares with dotted sides. Inside the squares are white, cruciform flowers with four heart-shaped leaves.

Comments

The use of cotton for the white parts and the brown warps are peculiar features of this textile. Similar pieces are found in the Cluny,[315] the MET,[316] the NMS,[317]

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[315] Lorquin, *Les tissus coptes*, no. 70, p. 202-204 and Desrosiers, *Soieries*, no. 5, p. 66-67.

[316] Harper, "Ancient Near Eastern", p. 21.

[317] Lamm, "Some Woollen Tapestry Weavings", no 21, pp. 48 and 66, pl. VI d.

the MHTL,[318] the MFAB[319] and the ROM (fig. 1).[320] The Cluny piece, which is the only studied in detail, also has S-spun, brown woollen warps. The Cluny, NMS and MFAB pieces also have cotton wefts.

In all publications, the Sasanian inspiration of the design is particularly stressed and it is true that wild sheep were popular in Sasanian art as a symbol of royal glory, found in stucco decoration and seals,[321] in silver plates, (fig. 2)[322] and in textiles, such as the silk in Lyon, all dated to the 6th-7th centuries (fig. 3).[323] The circular decoration on the chest and thighs of the animals, evident in the examples where the whole animal survives, is a usual iconographic convention on Near Eastern and Central Asian textiles.[324] Iraq, Iran and Egypt have all been proposed as places of manufacture of these pieces. Desrosiers and Cornu propose a clearly Egyptian provenance, at least for the Cluny piece, which they date to the 9th century, mostly because of its stylisation and the use of multiple, multicoloured geometric surfaces, all believed to be characteristics of Ṭūlūnid style, commenting, at the same time, on the deterioration of the naturalism of the Sasanian prototypes, a fact supporting their late dating.[325] The MET and MFAB pieces are datable to the 7th-8th century and the NMS piece to the 8th. The Egyptian provenance of our piece is indeed supported by its technical details and, especially by the S-spun warp and weft, both wool and cotton. A date between the 7th and the 8th century could be proposed for this piece.

Publications: Sophia Tsourinaki in *Égypte, la trame de l'Histoire*, no 122, p. 153.

fig. 1 Tapestry in the ROM (footnote 320)

fig. 2 Silver vessel with ram on a mountain in the MFAB (footnote 319)

fig. 3 Silk textile in Lyon (footnote 323)

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[318] Bourgon-Amir, *Les tapisseries,* pl. 150-151.

[319] mfa.org, nos 34.120 and 37.380

[320] rom.on.ca inv. no 970.364.10

[321] *Les Perses sassanides,* p. 52, fig. 2, no. 7, pp. 54-55, no 177, p. 212

[322] HM, inv. nos S-216, S-520, in Trever and Lukonin, *Sasanidskoe serebro*, nos 8-9. Also, MFAB no 1971.52 in https://collections.mfa.org/objects/155820/plate-with-ram-on-a-mountain-top?ctx=2d29c52e-4823-410d-92fb-7f5a0910e8ab&idx=26,.

[323] Von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte*, Abb. 50.

[324] See, for example, the silk with bulls, dated to the 8th-9th century, and the one with confronted deer, dated to the 7th-8th century, both in the DM www.davidmus.dk, inv. no 10/1996 and 4/2005

[325] Desrosiers, *Soieries*, p. 67.

IV 16. 7138-2

Dimensions: 11.5x12.6 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, soumak, two double warps on the selvedge.
Decorative weft: double linen and woollen yarn, S.

Description

Red tapestry roundel with a stylised tree and birds. It has a white, soumak outline and a wide, green, border, with an ochre spiral meander. In the middle is a cruciform tree with a white vertical arm, bearing double helixes, alternately ochre and white, a white, rhomboid top, with a blue semicircle, and a circular base with helixes. Its horizontal arm is blue, with an attached ochre band, bearing downward, radiant projections. Each quadrant of the cross houses a bird, the upper opposed, and the lower addorsed. All have the same basic design, which consists of a rectangular body, a hook-shaped head and neck, a triangular, white eye with a a blue outline, and white, parallel, straight legs with forked feet. Their bodies are white, outlined in dark blue and decorated with blue or pink squares. The birds on the upper half have a kind of hood between their bodies and heads, pink on the left bird, and blue on the right. Those on the lower half have a semicircular wing attached to their back, pink for the right bird and blue for the left. They are also slightly inclined, probably due to lack of space. Parts of white tapestry ground survive around the medallion.

Comments

The motif of birds, or other animals, around a tree of life is quite common on textiles,[326] and also popular in ancient Near Eastern, and Late Antique art, surviving into the medieval period, in different variations and connotations to after life and paradise (e.g. I 44). It was very popular in the Umayyad period.[327] The high degree of stylisation and abstraction and the misplacement of the birds of the lower half, due to the lack of space, betray a mediocre craftsmanship. Nevertheless, the vivid colours give a lively result. The presence of the spiral meander and the soumak could indicate a date in the 7th-8th century.

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[326] See the roundels in the VAM, in Kendrick, *Catalogue*, vol. 3, nos 641 and 642, pl. XI and 839, pl. XXX; Stauffer, *Textiles d'Egypte*, no 66 and 70, p. 153-154 and 160; Baginski and Tidhar, *Textiles from Egypt*, no 74, p. 68; *Verletzliche Beute*, no 34, p. 82-83. See also 12966-IV 17 and 7195-IX 3.

[327] Ettinghausen et. al., *Islamic Art,* p. 61-62, pictures 87, 88

IV 17. 12966

Dimensions: 39.5x33 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Single warps, slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing.

Description

Part of a red ground tapestry with a roundel. The roundel has a white border with a dark blue spiral meander, of which only the upper right part survives. In the centre is a light blue cruciform tree with helixes and small shafts on its arms. On its four corners stand stylised large animals or birds facing the centre. Only two on the right survive and a small part of the top left. The creature on the top right corner appears to be a bird. Its body is green with orange stripes and has a white face with a pointed, slightly open beak, a large oblong, orange eye, with a dark blue dot on its outer corner, a dark blue outline and a curved eyebrow, and what seems to be a long crest, curved downwards and consisting of three bands, white, yellow and blue. It also has white, diagonal legs and inverted V-shaped feet. The creature below rather resembles a quadruped. It has an ochre body with a dark blue stripe in the middle and a white face, similar to that of the bird above, but without the beak. The back of the animal does not survive. On the top left corner only a small part of an ochre body with dark blue stripes remains. Outside the medallion part of red ground survives with traces of a scalloped decoration, ochre, blue and yellow.

Comments

This textile represents another version of the tree of life, in a large decorative pattern belonging to a furnishing textile. The subject of animals flanking a tree is also encountered on silks from Antinoupolis, datable to the 6th-7th century.[328] It is possible that this and similar textiles were manufactured as imitations of luxurious silk pieces. This piece has large wefts and warps and the general appearance is quite crude. A fragment with a similar arrangement is found in the Bouvier,[329] but its design is quite different and there is also a plied warp. Similar textiles are found in the NMS

[328] For example, Kendrick, *Catalogue*, vol.III, p. 87, no 839, pl. XXX.

[329] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 78, no 26.

and the RM,,[330] the DM (fig. 1),[331] and the ROM,[332] said to represent leopards. All are datable to the 8th-9th, or possibly 10th century. The vegetal design, the degree of stylisation and the colours in these pieces are very similar to those of the red warp group, the group with pearl roundels and the group with spiral decoration (e.g. Benaki 15134 and 15330, p. 124, fig. 4 and 5, and IV 24) therefore a similar date in the 8th-9th century could be proposed for our piece.

fig. 1 Tapestry in the DM (footnote 331)

[330] Lamm, “Some Woollen Tapestry Weavings”, p. 70-71, nos 49 and 52, pl. XII c and XIII c.

[331] DM inv. no. 1/1989 in https://www.davidmus.dk/en/exhibitions/previous/flora_islamica/selected-works/1-1989

[332] ROM inv. no 978.76.136, in rom.on.ca

IV 18. 15133

Dimensions: 22x17.5

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, vertical weft brocading.
Decorative weft: linen, S; wool, S.

Description

Tapestry fragment with a blue ground and a palmette in the centre, consisting of ochre volutes, topped with a pink and a green curved band, above which are two consecutive semi-circles, red and pink. Around the palmette are three human faces, not wholly preserved. The faces have large round yellow eyes outlined in blue, with a blue dot in the centre. The mouth and the eyebrows are depicted as red bands, while the nose is rendered with pink wefts in a vertical weft brocading. Two of the faces wear pyramidal hats, consisting of ochre and red bands. Between the masks and the palmette are three ochre hexagonal dots.

Comments

Similar pieces survive in the Bouvier, datable to the 9th century,[333] and in the RM and the KL, datable to the 8th-9th century.[334] It seems that the masks or faces are used in textiles either as a repeated pattern, like on this example, or as a single motif amongst vegetal or geometrical decoration (e.g. 15330, p. 124, fig. 5). The motif is also employed on large tapestry textiles, related to the Antinopolis silks and usually dated to the 4th-6th century, like those in the TMW (fig. 1),[335]

[333] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 78-80, nos 27,28.

[334] Lamm, "Some Woollen Tapestry Weavings", p. 69, Nos 28, 30, 31 and 32, pl. VIIIc, e, f and g.

[335] No 71.14 in Kitzinger, "The Horse and Lion Tapestry", p. 44-45, fig. 46.

the AS[336] and the CMA (fig. 2).[337] It seems that the patterns were repeated in woollen tapestry weaves in imitation of the silk pieces.[338] Although the proposed date of manufacture for similar tapestries, decorated with heads is usually the 8th-9th century, an earlier date in the 6th or 7th century, which brings them closer to the large tapestries, cannot be excluded.

fig. 1 Woollen tapestry at the TMW (footnote 335)

fig. 2 Wollen tapestry in the CMA (footnote 337)

[336] Shrenk, *Textilien*, nos 18 and 39, p. 75-77 and 120-121.

[337] CMA 1960. 273 in http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1960.273?f%5B0%5D=object_location:Gallery%20106a

[338] For a discussion of whether the silks or the woollen pieces were the prototypes see Kitzinger, "The Horse and Lion Tapestry", p. 3-72.

IV 19. 15131

Dimensions: 34.2x19 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: red and natural wool, S.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry piece with a human figure and geometrical decoration on an ochre ground. The piece survives in a very fragmentary state, so that it is not possible to fully reconstruct its design. The upper zone is decorated on the left side with a large green X-shape that has oblate endings. To the right are consecutive, horizontal bands. The uppermost is blue, that below is green, the next is ochre with a scalloped upper outline, below it is a straight, blue one, followed by two more scalloped ones in green and ochre. Below is a human figure, possibly a woman, surrounded by geometrical elements. The figure has an ochre head, crowned with semicircular, ochre hair with a green part on its top right side. The details of her face are given in pink, except for the eyebrows and mouth, which are red. The almond shaped eyes have a dot on their left corner. The body of the figure is also very fragmentary. She seems to wear a garment decorated with pairs of red, toothed designs and a blue stripe on the waist. On either side of the figure's head is part of red ground on which stand two wing-like elements, each consisting of two parts, an outer, ochre and toothed, and an inner, blue and scalloped, highlighted with ochre. The left wing also has an ochre semicircle on top. To the left side of the figure appear several rows of blue and green triangles, and also what could possibly be the figure's hand.

Comments

A peculiar characteristic of this piece is the fact that its left half is woven in a red warp, while the right half has a natural-coloured warp.This coexistence is not only very unusual, but also incomprehensible, since it does not seem to correspond to any decorative purposes.

The theme of this piece remains unidentified, mainly because of its fragmentary survival. However, the presence of wings points to the identification of the figure with a putto or a female deity or personification, associated with abundance and prosperity (see I 3). The face of the figure is very expressive and its overall appearance is very soft and serene. Its finely rendered features and the toothed decoration of its garment can be compared with those on a fragment of a hanging from the ROM, with red warps, datable to the 7th-8th century (fig. 1).[339] This piece is said to represent a Roman city goddess, judging by the mural crown of the figure.

The dating of this piece is quite difficult because of its condition. Nevertheless, the expressiveness of the figure's face on one hand, and the use of differently shaped and coloured surfaces for the composition, could propose a dating between the 7th and the 8th century, attesting thus to the continuity of mythological representations to the Early Islamic period.

fig. 1 Tapestry in the ROM (footnote 339)

[339] ROM inv. no 980.78.6, in rom.on.ca,

IV 20. 15331

Dimensions: 20x23.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, soumak, two-coloured shed.
Decorative weft: triple woollen yarn, S.

Description

Tapestry band, bearing a central frieze with human figures. The frieze has an ochre ground on which appear three dark blue figures. That on the left has a red outline and is facing the viewer. He has a trapezoid body and an unnaturally long left arm, which is raised and bent over his head. His right hand seems stretched to the left, but only a small part of it survives. He has a long neck and an almost circular head, with slightly oblate sides. Small ochre dots denote his eyes, nose and mouth. He wears an ochre, conical hat with a red outline and a red stripe, which resembles a Phrygian cap. His legs are irregular and very short and the right doesn't survive complete. The figure seems to wear a garment, decorated with short red stripes, ending in an ochre hemline, outlined in red. The next figure is that of a rider. He has a triangular neck and an almost circular head, on top of which is a hat, similar to that of the first figure. Ochre wefts signify his eyes, nose and mouth. His right leg is visible over the horse's body, his red, square right hand holds a long, green pole in a horizontal position, while his left arm is hidden behind the horse's head. The figure wears a garment decorated with red dots on the upper part, a red belt and ochre stripes on the leg. The pole has two red irregular circles on the edges. The horse he is riding is red, decorated with green and dark blue stripes and dots and a C-shape on its rear part. A dark blue and ochre band woven with the technique of two-coloured shed, runs across the horse's body, the front part of which is placed a little higher than the rear. Attached to the band are small, dark blue, triangular pendants. The horse also wears a dark blue harness. It has a green square eye, green triangular ears and a C-shaped, protruding mouth and a long, dark blue, undulant tail. Its mane is represented with toothed endings at the back of its neck. The vertical sides of its body also have a toothed appearance, because of the employment of dove tailing. Its galloping feet have ochre dot-like hoofs. To the right of the rider is part of another, green figure. He seems to have the same position as the first. Above the figures is a red band, ending in spiral meanders. It bears another decorative band in

the middle, the right part of which has a mauve ground, while the left has an ochre. The decoration is not clear, as it is very fragmentary. Parts of what appear to be heart-shaped elements are discernible on the mauve part. They have an ochre ground and red and dark blue or green soumak outlines. Other elements of mauve, red and green also appear on this band, but their shape cannot be reconstructed.

Comments

The fragment seems to be part of a furnishing textile. Similar pieces are found in the Louvre,[340] all dated by Du Bourguet to the 11th century. A similar band is also found in the Cluny, also dated to the 11th century, following Du Bourguet's estimation[341] and in the CMA (fig. 1),[342] which, has been dated rather early, namely to the 5th-7th centuries. The accentuated breasts of the figures on the CMA piece, which could point to female representations, are associated with the theme of the Amazons, which is known on Egyptian textiles.[343] On our example, no such feature is visible, but the theme seems also to be associated with hunting or fighting in a narrative rendering, similar to that of IV 10, though in a totally different design. The persistence and continuity of the hunting theme could be assigned to its popularity also in Islamic art, as a royal past time representation. The element between the horse's legs on our example, present also on the CMA and the Cluny pieces, can be recognised as a reminiscent of the shield, usually placed there in the representations of horsemen.[344] A similar horse, accompanied by what seems to be a building, the outline of which is woven in soumak, is represented in a fragment of the Bouvier, which is also given a late dating based again on Du Bourguet's assumption.[345] On this piece are also traces of a coptic inscription. Although an 11th century date cannot be discarded, there are no indications for such a late dating. The use of the spiral meander, the soumak and the technique of the two-coloured shed, were all quite popular on earlier textiles. On the other hand, the soumak outlines have here a more decorative character, stressed by the use of coloured wool. A dating to the 7th-9th centuries could, therefore, be proposed.

fig. 1 Tapestry in the CMA (footnote 342)

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340 Du Bourguet, *Catalogue*, nos H 62 and H 65-66, p. 518 and 520.

341 Lorquin, *Les tissus coptes*, no 47, p. 154-156.

342 CMA, inv. no 1982.288 in http://clevelandart.org/art/1982.288

343 See, for example, the "Amazon silks", found in Achmīm and dated to the 7th-9th century in the MET, inv. no 70019557 in https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/70019557?exhibitionId=%7Bd6ffe869-398e-4e2b-960b-b138eb7b851d%7D&oid=70019557&ft=*&fe=1 and the CMA, inv. no 1952.104 in http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1952.104.

344 Lorquin, *Les tissus coptes*, p. 155; Lewis, "Coptic Horseman", p. 30.

345 Stauffer, *Textiles d'Egypte*, no 95, p. 196.

IV 21. 15630

Dimensions: 25.6x10.4 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: indigo wool, S.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, gimp?.

Description

Tapestry band decorated with flowers and bordered by rows of circles. The central band is occupied with a row of flowers, orientated on the vertical axis. Each flower consists of three petals, of which the middle is larger and lance-shaped, while the other two are oblong. The middle petal has a dark blue dot in the centre. The petals are surrounded by an ochre, trilobe frame, which is, in turn, enclosed in a red semicircle, creating a kind of medallions. The petals spring from a pair of lance-shaped, bicoloured leaves, made of undulant bands of either dark blue and ochre or dark blue and green. On the ochre spandrels are created pairs of an oblong and a bump-shaped leaf. The central band is bordered by bicoloured bands of red and dark blue. In the middle of the latter is a row of ochre circles with a dark blue dot in the centre.

Comments

The dark blue, S-spun warp and the predominance of ochre and red on the piece, recall a group of textiles attributed to Al-Qays in Upper Egypt and usually dated to the 8th-9th centuries.[346] Although the density of the warp yarns is quite high in our example, the thick wefts create a rather low weft density, also encountered in at least three examples of the Al-Qays group.[347] The attribution to Al-Qays is based on a similar textile in the MIC, which bears an inscription, mentioning that town and the date 784-785 (fig. 2).[348]

The specific flower design, however, is not found in any textile of the group and the association remains a hypothesis, based mainly on technical characteristics. Circles with dots also decorate the borders of textiles with woollen warp and woollen and cotton wefts, representing palmettes and usually attributed to the Ṭūlūnid period (e.g. V 6 and V 7), and some textiles of the

[346] For example, Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 10-17, p. 55-66.

[347] Ibid., nos 13-15, p. 60-64.

[348] Beckwith, *Studies*, p. 16-17, fig. 24.

group with double linen warps, such as I 14 and I 18, also datable to the 8th-9th century, although the circles there are white and form double rows. This band seems to be the border band of a furnishing textile. Rows of buds enclosed in pearled or scroll frames seem to have been employed as borders on large textiles, like those seen on the inner border of a piece in the PC, which belongs to the group of textiles with birds in roundels, datable to the 7th-8th century (fig. 1).[349] Based on all the above parallels, a dating to the 8th-9th century can be proposed for our piece.

fig. 1 Textile with birds in the PC (footnote 349)

fig. 2 Tapestry fragment in the MIC mentioning the town of Qays (footnote 348)

[349] Pfister,"Coqs sassanides", pl. XXVIIc.

IV 22. 15663

Dimensions: 23x49.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: indigo wool, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, gimp?

Description

Tapestry band in a fragmentary state, decorated with animals in roundels on a red ground. The animal on the first and third medallion seems to be a bull, while the other two are probably a deer or gazelle and a hare. The bull has a blue body, a yellow abdomen with two dark blue vertical stripes, a thick neck and small, yellow, triangular ears. Its muzzle has a yellow outline forming a spiral at the tip, denoting the animal's mouth and nose. It has very thin legs in a galloping posture and a yellow tail, curved upwards and ending in a long, Y-shaped tuft, dark blue with yellow stripes. The rear part of the animal is highlighted with a yellow band, connected to the yellow part of its abdomen. Yellow outlines also appear on its legs, chest and head. The yellow deer in the next medallion has two dark blue stripes on its abdomen. Its head is raised a little and has a dark blue rectangular eye, with a yellow dot in the middle, triangular ears, that protrude backwards, and, possibly, long, curved horns. Its thin legs appear in a galloping posture. Though the tail does not survive complete, it seems to be short, consisting of three yellow stripes on a dark blue triangular frame. The third medallion is also occupied by a bull, similar to the first. On the last surviving medallion is a yellow hare, with two vertical stripes on its abdomen and a pair of bands above it, yellow and dark blue, decorated in the technique of two-coloured shed. The rear part of its body is missing. Its head is quite similar to that of the deer, though not raised. It has a dark blue square eye, with a yellow, gamma-shaped line inside and very large, oblong ears with dark blue centres. Its thin legs are also pictured in a running posture.

All the medallions have yellow borders with dark blue outlines. Only small parts of the decoration of the red ground between them survive. On the spandrels are large, yellow triangles, bearing rows of blue squares. It seems that the borders of the medallions were connected, creating small circles. Part of such a circle survives between the first and the second roundel. The frieze with the roundels is bordered by blue bands, bearing a yellow vine scroll in the shape of an undulant line,

bearing a long. horizontal stem with a lance-shaped leaf inside each curve. The leaves are yellow with a red core. These border bands are followed by a red band, bearing a broken, yellow, zig-zag line, also seen on other textiles of this group, bearing groups of dots on either side of it. Parts of a dark blue, plain weave are seen above and below them.

Comments

The piece belongs to the group of textiles that can be attributed to Al-Qays. The dark blue warp, the predominance of yellow and red colours, the zig-zag lines with dots and the animals with thin legs, pictured in roundels, all agree with the characteristics of the group (see also IV 21).

We have here another version of the inhabited scroll, which has been in continuous use on Egyptian textiles throughout the period in question. This scroll seems to be further away from its vegetal origins, in comparison, for example, with those seen on the Bahnasā group (I 8-18), although the piece is too fragmentary for a safe conclusion. The animals, however, are here more lively and naturalistic. Besides the hare and the gazelle,[350] the bull also has a long history in the Eastern Mediterranean pictorial tradition and is associated with fertility.[351] Bulls alternating with gazelles are also found on the scrolls of the Samarra wall paintings.[352] The scroll of the border bands, with the lance-shaped leaves is comparable to that seen on the *clavi* of a tunic radiocarbon dated to 652-768.[353] Based on all this evidence we can date this piece to the 8th-9th century.

[350] For the hare motif see Gelfer-Jørgensen, *Medieval Islamic Symbolism*, p. 127-129. For the deer/gazelle see I 14.

[351] For the bull as a symbol see *The Bull in the Mediterranean World, Myths and Cults*, Hellenic Culture Org., 2003.

[352] Herzfeld, *Die Malereien*, pl. L.

[353] A. De Moor, *3500 Years*, inv. no 614, p. 200-201. See p. 138, fig. 1.

IV 23. 15635

Dimensions: 23x9.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: natural and brown wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; cotton, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Fragment of a tapestry roundel with a quadruped on a dark blue ground. The piece is very fragmentary and some parts of its iconography are not clear. The animal has an ochre, long, rectangular, body, decorated with a dark blue horizontal stripe at the bottom. Its long, curved neck and head are turned backwards. Its neck is ochre and has a white band at its base, bearing a dark blue stripe. The upper part of its neck has white outlines. Its head is almost circular and has an oblong muzzle, a large, ochre, circular eye with a brown outline and a brown oval in the centre, and two oblong, white ears, with an ochre core. Only its front legs and a small part of the hind survive. One of the front legs is raised, conveying a sense of movement. Ochre and white, flower-like decorations appear on the ground, above the animal's body. A white, arrow-shaped element is pictured to the left of the quadruped's head, possibly the tail of some other animal. The roundel has an ochre border, outlined with pearl bands, the bottom of which has white and ochre rectangles, while the upper has white and dark blue. The border seems to consist of ochre, heart-shaped elements. A small part of ochre tapestry with some dark blue wefts is discernible above the medallion.

Comments

This piece, which seems to represent a deer or gazelle, is connected to the group of furnishing textiles with large roundels (e.g. IV 6, IV 7) and to the medallions with birds (e.g. I 8), though the two-coloured warp and the use of cotton differentiate it. The textile presents a variety of weft sizes, ranging from very thin to much thicker, and also has thick warps, made of brown and natural woollen threads. It could be dated to the 8th-9th century, close to the aforementioned groups of textiles. This piece attests to the use of cotton in small quantities in Egyptian textiles that are not different iconographically from those decorated with linen, especially during the 8th-9th centuries.

IV 24. 12965

Dimensions: 55x23.8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S.
Weft: wool, S.

Tapestry
Double warps, slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing.

Description

Tapestry piece with figural and geometrical decoration in two vertically arranged rectangles. The first has a red ground and bears a beige human bust in the centre, enclosed in an ochre square, from the corners of which start four multicoloured bands forming an X shape. The bust has a red headgear, large, ochre eyes, outlined in blue, and a vertical row of red wefts denoting the eyebrows, nose, mouth and details of the neck and chest. On either side of the bust are two cruciform elements, consisting of white squares and a central dot. In the dark blue compartments between the X-shaped bands and the borders of the rectangle are four S-shaped birds, ochre, green and blue, with an indentation at the back of their bodies for the tail, and a bump-shaped wing above it, decorated with dots. The lower birds also have horizontal backward ears and a white, u-shaped filling in the curve of their heads, denoting their beak. Another pair of birds stands below the central square, flanking a very stylised tree with a rhomboid top and a pair of short, spiral branches below. These birds are similar to those above, but have larger, circular, ochre bodies, decorated with green and red details. The whole design has a white outline that follows its shape, creating indentations on either side of the central square. The second rectangle consists of two pairs of red, spiral volutes, the upper upward and the lower downward, on a dark blue ground. The upper left and the bottom right ones are bicoloured, ending in green helixes. In the centre is a red cross with oblate arms, which stem from a central lozenge, decorated with red stripes and a green X design in the centre. The arms of the cross bear a row of green and white diamonds. The upper part of a third rectangle also survives below.

Comments

This piece falls into the same category as V 4. The warps are very thin, a fact that explains their reinforcement by pairing, a practice that is otherwise very uncommon in woollen warps. It might have been used here as a method of strengthening, other than the plying of the yarns, used in the above mentioned example. Similar birds appear in pieces of the NMS.[354] This piece, which can be dated together with V 4 to the 9th century, demonstrates that the same iconography was employed in textiles made of different materials. It is possible that this piece was a product of a qualified workshop, while V 4 was a version woven in a home establishment. These two examples attest to the survival of Late Antique motifs, like the tree of life and the busts, seen, however, through a more stylistic and decorative approach, enhanced by the developments in the art of the ʿAbbāsid realm and their introduction into Egypt by the Ṭūlūnids.

[354] Lamm, "Some Woollen Tapestry Weavings", nos 36 and 41, pl. IX d and X b.

IV 25. 7113

Dimensions: a) 7.5x57 cm, b) 5.2x48, c) 6.5x19, d)7x23.8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: light blue wool, S.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S, Z.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, wide use of soumak.
Decorative weft: wool, S; single or double linen yarn, Z.

Description

Four similar tapestry bands, on a light blue ground. The bands are divided in compartments, which have alternately a white and a red ground. Those with the red ground are slightly longer and are decorated with quadrupeds and stylised putti. Each compartment with a white ground bears three medallions with birds. The quadrupeds of the red bands are woven in green, blue, light blue, ochre or white and have a rectangular body, stretched front legs and slightly bent hind legs, an upward curving tail, an oblong head and V-shaped ears. No eyes or mouth appear. The bodies of some animals are decorated with short stripes in different combinations of blue, red, green, ochre and white. Their outlines are either white or blue. Between the legs of each animal is a diagonally placed yellow, green or blue band. The putti have an oblique, T-shaped, white or ochre body, with the horizontal shafts probably denoting their arms. The right shaft splits into four fingers and seems to be holding a zig zag band, orange, yellow, green, or white, with a forked tip. The putti's bodies are decorated with a red parallelogram. On its inner right corner is a diamond with a red cross in the centre. The putti's heads are diamond-shaped, and bear an inverted V-shaped headgear, light blue, yellow, green, orange, ochre or blue colour. The putti have C-shaped blue eyes with a blue dot in the centre. On their foreheads is a red, horizontal stripe from which starts a red, vertical, soumak line that reaches down to their mouth, denoted by another red, horizontal stripe. The putto of the fourth band has red eyes.

The roundels on the white compartments have a red, white or blue ground, on which stand ochre, red, white and green stylised birds, decorated with small squares, red, white, green and orange. Thy have an S-shaped body with a triangular bump on its rear part, and a tail that curves downwards. Their feet are turned to the right, inwards or outwards. The medallions have a wide, red or blue border, the top and bottom side of which are decorated with a white or yellow triangle and diagonal stripes of the same colour. The borders are outlined in soumak of different colours. The inner outlines are yellow, orange, green or blue, while the outer are white, ochre or yellow. All the

borders are encircled by green soumak outlines, that envelops only the sides. The spandrels are occupied with white diamonds in the middle, each bearing a red cross, and white, stepped squares at the top and bottom. The roundels are set on a rectangular blue banner that ends in two spirals.

Comments

The piece has a highly stylised design and presents some peculiar characteristics, like the vivid and variant colours, the light blue warp and the presence of Z-spun linen wefts, together with S-spun ones.

Tapestry bands with friezes of animals, birds and putti are quite popular in Egyptian art, though no exact parallels to our piece have so far been identified. The high degree of stylisation, the absence of any vegetal decoration and the symmetrical arrangement could help to attribute this piece to a date no earlier than the 9th-10th century. This piece is characteristic of a transitional period, where Late Antique themes, like the putti, appear alternately with the motif of miniature birds in roundels, a motif which will prevail after the 10th century.

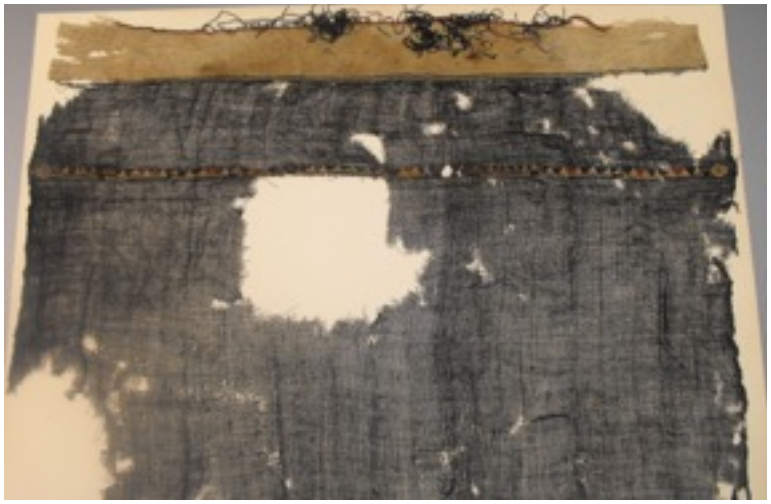
Publications: Sophia Tsourinaki in *Égypte, la trame de l'Histoire*, no 124, p. 174.

IV 26. 15669

Dimensions: 62.5x46cm

Technical analysis
Warp: dark blue wool, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: wool, S.
Tassels: wool, S, multiple yarns.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.



Description

Dark blue shawl bearing a narrow, dark blue tapestry band with a pseudo-inscription. The letters of the inscription, which are woven in undyed linen or yellow wool and are all of a similar shape, appear in groups of "words". They consist of a horizontal base line, very short shafts and a triangular tip. The shafts of the final letters of each group are S-shaped. Some letters have a red outline. The space between some other letters is red. In the space between others stand very stylised white or yellow birds, made of a single curved line. One of the birds towards the right end of the piece, has a full body, decorated with a red and a white stripe. Small, curved "letters" also appear in the space above and between words. At the two edges of the inscription are two six-pointed, white stars. They have green or red tips and a red, cruciform centre set on a yellow, octagonal frame, outlined in blue. The piece survives complete on three sides. On top is a white, linen, horizontal band and a red fringe attached to its upper part. The fringe is made of two double, red, woollen yarns, woven in the weft-twining technique. Tassels made of multiple warp yarns also survive. On the left and right side the edges are reinforced with three triple warps. There are several holes and missing parts on the textile.

Comments

The inscription resembles those on the so called " Fayyūmi textiles", which consist of letters with pyramidal tops and dots or birds as fillings.[355] This group of textiles is usually dated to the 9th-11th century –although radiocarbon dating has given even later dates–[356] and is associated with the Coptic community, since pieces with Coptic inscriptions are numbered among them.[357] Textiles with similar epigraphic bands and decoration are found in many collections, like the Bouvier[358] and the MET (fig. 1).[359] The lack of any other kind of decoration and the scarce decorative fillings of the inscription are indicative of a textile of low quality.

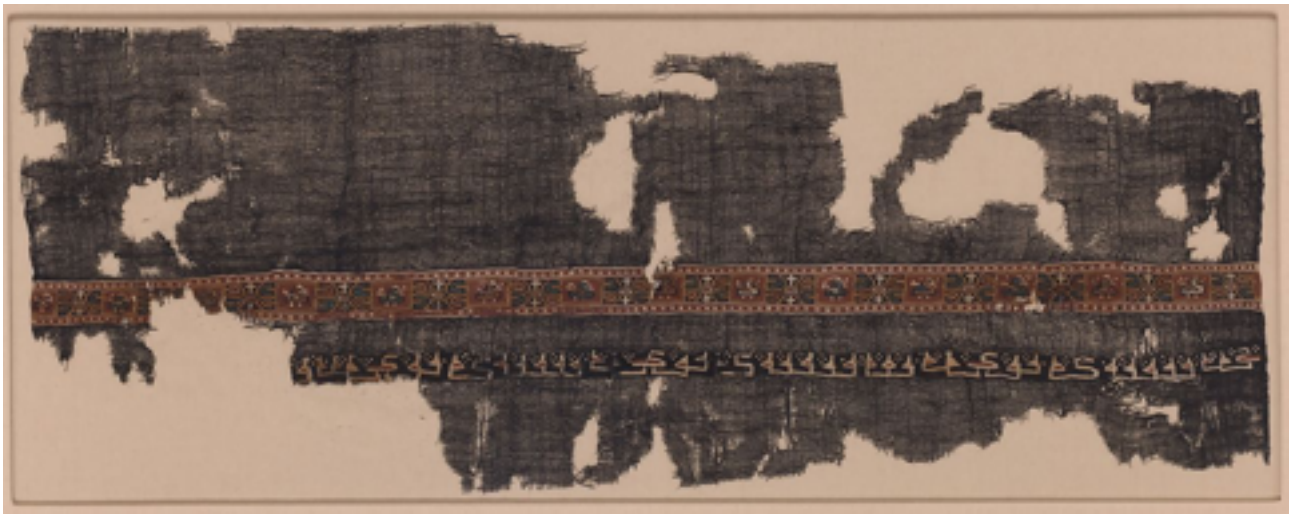


fig. 1 Fragment of a shawl in the MET (footnote 359)

[355] The textile responsible for the attribution of these pieces to the Fayyūm is one in the MIC, bearing an inscription that mentions a private ṭirāz factory of the Fayyūm region. See Wiet, "Tissus et tapisseries", p. 285-286, pl. XLVIIa.

[356] See chapter 1e. Centres of production, p. 60.

[357] Wiet, "Tissus et tapisseries", p. 285-286, pl. XLVII; Golombek and Gervers, "Ṭirāz Fabrics", p. 88 and footnote 59; De Moor et al., "Relevance", p. 224-226. For Coptic inscriptions in Fayyūmi textiles see also CMA 1956.330 in http://clevelandart.org/art/1956.330

[358] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 70, p. 139-140.

[359] MET 31.19.14 in https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/448573?&searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=Fayyum&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=3

IV 27. 15351

Dimensions: 26.3x21 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: dark blue wool, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Dark blue textile with three bands of tapestry decoration. On the central, red band survive six and a half hexagons with double borders, which contain stylised birds, animals and stars. Starting from the right, the first three hexagons have a red ground and a green and yellow border. The fourth has a white ground and a red and yellow border, the fifth and sixth have a red ground with a blue and yellow border, while the last repeats the colour arrangement of the first two.

The first hexagon contains a green bird with a yellow wing. The second hexagon contains a six-pointed star, with a red centre and six triangular tips of dark blue, orange and light green, outlined in white. The third hexagon contains a light green bird, similar to the first, but with a pink wing, a white eye and a yellow, forked leg. On the fourth hexagon is a pink quadruped with a thin body and thick legs, a thick, upward, rectangular tail and a large white eye. On the fifth compartment is another star, similar to the previous, but with green, white and dark blue tips. The sixth hexagon contains a yellow bird, made of a curved line, with a small attached wing and without legs. The decoration of the last, half hexagon cannot be discerned. The hexagons are connected through red horizontal strips, decorated with white dots. Above and below each strip is a mirrored decoration consisting of two opposed, E-shaped wings, standing on either side of a dark blue centre

with two white dots. The first five couples of wings on the top side are alternately pink/light green and yellow/green, while those on the bottom side follow the opposite scheme. On the two last groups the opposite colour arrangement is found on the bottom side of the adjacent couple. The central band is bordered by two narrow bands containing a yellow undulant stripe. The part above the stripe is red, while that below is red. The bottom border band has the opposite colour arrangement. Inside each curve of the undulant strip are three white dots. The central band is flanked by two pseudo-inscriptions containing groups of four white letters. Each letter consists of a base line on which stands a spiral. The spirals are leftward except for the last of each group, which is rightward. Above it is a horizontal shaft, followed by a triangular top. Between the letters stand stylised birds with C-shaped heads, oval bodies, inverted, T-shaped legs and a red stripe, probably denoting a wing.

Comments

This type of textile decoration, a version of which has already been seen in I 21, is a type very popular during the 9th-10th centuries.[360] It is generally associated with the Fayyūm, although there is a number of these textiles that does not bear any indications for such an attribution. This style of decoration seems to have begun as early as the 8th century, as the evidence of one of the earliest epigraphic textile, the turban of Samuel Ibn Musa indicates.[361]

The inscription on our piece conforms with the Fayyūmi type. The decorative band has a stylised and naive character. This specific type of star with coloured triangular tips and a void centre is also seen on other textiles attributed to the Fayyūm (e.g. IV 28 and IV 31). The pairs of E-shaped butterflies are a quite common design in Egyptian textiles datable to the 9th-10th centuries.[362] More specifically, the type with a central shaft decorated with dots and with a pearled band between the two pairs, is encountered in BAV 6848, 6854 and 6888, which are dated to the 9th-beginning of the 10th century[363] and at the KAM.[364] The shape of the letters is characteristic of the textiles produced in the private ṭirāz factory of Ṭūṭūn in the Fayyūm.[365] Consequently, our piece could be dated to the 9th-10th century and attributed to Ṭūṭūn.

The theme of the friezes of birds and quadrupeds continues the Late Antique motif of the inhabited scrolls, but the vegetal predecessor has been transformed here into purely geometrical borders, which enclose the stylised animals, like picture frames. This type of decoration seems to have been the first step, and also to have coexisted for a time, with the more sophisticated and elaborate friezes of the silk Fāṭimid shawls.

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[360] See, for example, BAV 6848 (linen warp), 6854 (woollen warp) and 6863 (woollen warp. It bears an inscription with characteristic "Fayyūmi" letters) in Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 31-32, 111-113, 98-99, 469, 495 and 492. Also ROM 975.403.5, dated to the 9th century, in https://collections.rom.on.ca/search/975.403.5#filters and MET 1974.113.4, in Stauffer, *Textiles of Late Antiquity*, no 60, p. 41 and 48.

[361] Marzouk, "The Turban Of Samuel Ibn Musa", p. 143-151

[362] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques,* p. 609, fig. 3, nos h, i and j. For other examples see Lechitskaya, *Coptic Textiles*, no 116, p. 225.

[363] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques,* p. 29-32, 111-113, 468, 469 and 495. The dating of BAV 6854 is corroborated, according to Cornu, by a piece in TMW with a similar brocaded decoration that bears the date 926-928 AD. (Kühnel- Bellinger, *Catalogue*, no 73.15, p. 30, pl. XIV.) However, the brocaded decoration on the TMW piece is more decorative and complicated. See also MIC 5261 in *Exposition,* no 81, p. 24.

[364] Dauterman Maguire, *Weavings*, no A 42, p. 86.

[365] Durand and Rettig, "Un atelier sous contrôle califal", p. 167-170 and 198.

IV 28. 15667

Dimensions: 49x8 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: dark brown wool, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, vertical weft brocading, soumak.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Tapestry band with birds and geometrical decoration on a dark brown ground. The band consists of nine compartments, separated by columns, made of two parallel stripes, woven in the vertical weft brocading technique. These stripes end in Arabic "letters" with an S-shaped base and a triangular or stepped pyramidal tip, facing outwards. Some letters have an elongated, cruciform tip. On two of the columns the stripes are white and hold white letters. On three others a red stripe is woven between the white ones. The rest of the columns have one yellow and one white stripe -each supporting a letter of the same colour- and a red stripe between them. The columns that bear a middle, red stripe have a red, T shape between the letters.

The first compartment from the left contains a green, S-shaped, left-facing bird with a red stripe in the middle and a yellow, oval wing, decorated with dark brown stripes attached on its back. The front part of its head is also red and bears a white, rectangular eye, a white beak and a curved, rectangular, red comb on top. Its legs are two white squares with a red centre, connected to its abdomen through short gimp warps. On the next compartment is a horizontal, red rectangle with five white, vertical half stripes and five outlines of white, dark brown, yellow, red and white. On top of it is a yellow diamond with a red and a white outline, from the two sides of which stem two horizontal white shafts, each bearing white, diagonal branches. The inner, bottom branches are spiral, while the outer, top form a rectangle and a gamma, respectively. On the next compartment are two six-pointed stars, one on top of the other. The bottom star, which is bigger, has a yellow and dark brown, rhomboid centre and yellow, rounded tips with red outlines. That on top has a dark brown, octagonal centre with a red dot in the middle and red tips. On the following compartment is another red rectangle, similar to the previous, but with green stripes and dark brown, yellow, red and white outlines. On top of it is a yellow diamond with a dark brown dot in its centre and a red and white outline. From its sides stem two white, downward, diagonal stripes that extend into horizontal lines, parallel to the rectangle, each ending in an Arabic letter, similar to those on the columns. On top of the diamond are two more red letters, facing inwards. On the next, larger compartment are two opposed birds, facing a small cruciform ornament. The birds are similar to the first. That on the left has a red body with a blue stripe, a dark blue wing with white stripes and red,

triangular legs. The right bird also has a red body with a brown stripe and a red wing with a white stripe. The birds are connected to the cruciform decoration through a white line that stems from their beaks. The same design must have existed in the first compartment, since a similar line appears on the beak of that bird. The central cross is made of four squares, two white on the vertical arm and two yellow on the horizontal, and is set against a cruciform, red frame. The decoration seems to have originally continued with another triangle on top of the cross. At the base of the cross is a dark brown triangle, framed by five consecutive pointed arches of white, red, yellow, green and white and decorated with an inscribed diamond and two smaller, red triangles. The following compartment contains a rectangle, similar to that on the second compartment. On top of it is a large, red trapezium with a red diamond in the centre. From both sides of this diamond stem white, horizontal stripes. On top of the trapezium seems to be a white triangle. The next compartment is very narrow and contains a white spiral standing on a white, diagonal shaft. Traces of another decoration are seen on top of the spiral. Two more stars follow on the next, also narrow compartment, the bottom of which has a red and dark brown centre and the upper a green centre and yellow tips, outlined in red. The last surviving compartment repeats the pattern with opposed birds. The left bird has a blue body with a red stripe and a red wing with yellow stripes. The right has a red body with a blue stripe and a blue wing with white stripes. The central cross has four white, cruciform arms, set against a rhomboid, red ground. The triangular base is white, with a blue inscribed diamond and triangles and has red, green and white outlines.

All compartments contain small dots, some in cruciform arrangements. Additional ornaments exist above the main decoration, but their survival is very fragmentary: a red and yellow and a white unidentified shape, white and red Arabic “letters” with a common base line, two small stylised birds, blue and green, with a white rectangular eye and a white and red wing -denoted either with a rectangle or with two diagonal stripes- and white squares with brown or red centres, which could also be birds. At the base of the band is a white soumak stripe, bearing red and brown triangular or trapezoid projections with a white outline. Most of them have on their sides two parallel stripes of the same or opposite colour. Below this stripe is part of fragmented, brown plain weave, bearing horizontal and vertical lines, woven in the vertical weft brocading technique.

Comments

This richly decorated band seems to follow the general concept of the bird frieze, but with the geometrical and abstract designs prevailing. The textile could be assigned to the Fayyūmi group. as the Arabic “letters” on the columns conform with those on many textiles of the group. Similar pieces are found in the Bouvier Collection,[366] the BAV,[367] the TMW and the AS.[368] The latter two bear Coptic inscriptions. That of the AS textile, is the same as on a piece in the MIC,[369] which reads “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”, and is datable to the 9th century. The fragmentary lines on the plain weave on our piece could also be the remnants of an inscription. The incorporation of Arabic letters in the decoration is interesting and also characteristic of Islamic art. The presence of the Coptic inscription, if there was one, could indicate a Coptic speaking, Christian patron and the presence of the Arabic letters, an element incorporated into the artistic expression of the period, which could be defined to the 9th-10th century.

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[366] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d’Egypte*, no 69, p. 138-139.

[367] BAV 6872 and 6873 in Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 105, 108-109, 494 and 495

[368] TMW 721 11 and F. Ab. C 18 in Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d’Egypte*, p. 139

[369] MIC 9483 in ibid., p. 139

IV 29. 15348

Dimensions: 75x24 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: dark blue wool, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: dark blue wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: linen, S.

Description

Large, dark blue plain weave textile with three tapestry bands. The upper, widest register consists of a beige, mirrored inscription on a dark blue ground. The low letters of the inscription take the form of diamonds and triangles, some of which have a dark blue square in their centre. The tall letters form larger diamonds which have a forked tip and spring from square or rectangular bases. At regular intervals is a meander-like "letter" which ends in two triangles, one inverted and suspended from an upward, diagonal extension of the meander, and the other directly below, stemming from the base of the meander.

The second, narrower tapestry band is decorated with opposed, stylised quadrupeds on a red ground. These have a trapezoid body that forms a reclining A-shape. The two frontal projections of this shape represent the animal's leg and neck and C-shaped projections represent the rest of their legs, their head and possibly their ears or wings. A green square is found in the centre of their body. One dot, representing their eye, fills the indentation of their head. The quadrupeds have alternately a beige body and eye with an orange head and the opposite colour arrangement. There is also a quadruped that has a green body with a beige square in the centre and beige eye and ears. Another animal has a white square in the middle of its body and another has a red eye. All animals are outlined in dark blue. Between the quadrupeds are mirrored partitions, consisting of a beige, vertical line with forked edges, each extending into a trident shape with two beige and a central orange, green or beige prong. The space between the prongs is filled with dark blue colour.

The third tapestry zone at the bottom of the textile consists of a central red band, framed by a narrow red stripe on top and an orange at the bottom. This piece preserves its right and bottom selvedge, the former reinforced with three double and triple warps, the latter ending in fringes.

Comments

This is another example of decoration with an animal frieze of free standing animals, which are here repetitive and very stylised. The inscription band is much wider than the animal frieze and looks as if it is the central part of the decoration.

This piece bears certain characteristics of the Fayyūmi textiles, like the dark blue woollen warp and the reductive, geometrical rendering of the animals. Nevertheless, the inscription does not belong to those characteristic of a Fayyūmi manufacture. A similar inscription is found in BAV 6868, dated to the 9th-10th century,[370] though in that piece it appears evolving around a central rectangle, separated into compartments, which are decorated with opposed quadrupeds. The dating of the BAV piece is based on the geometrical design of the animals which consist of juxtaposed coloured areas, a characteristic seen on many textiles of the end of the 9th-10th century.[371] A similar dating seems also possible for our piece.

The central role of the inscriptions on the textiles is characteristic of the growing impact of the aesthetics of Islamic art on textile production.

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[370] Cornu, *Tissus islamiques*, p. 82-84 and 486.

[371] See, for example, Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 26-31, p. 78-83 and Cornu, *Tissus isalmiques,* no 6896, p. 200-201 and 525, the latter dated by its inscription to 987-988.

IV 30. 15344

Dimensions: 36.8x15 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: dark blue wool, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Description

Tapestry piece with three decorative bands and parts of dark blue plain weave. The central band represents a procession of quadrupeds on a red ground. The quadrupeds face to the right and have a trapezoid body, two rectangular legs towards the back part of their body and an S shape in the place of the front legs, and a hook-shaped neck and head. The animals, the hunched backs and protruding heads of which resemble camels, are woven alternately in undyed wool and white linen with a dark blue outline. On the inner side of their necks, this outline extends into two horizontal half stripes. Their bodies are decorated with three rows of rectangles and squares, green, red, brown with green outlines and white with green outlines. The animals have a large eye in the middle of their heads, ochre with a dark blue outline on the white camels and green with a red outline or red with a green outline on the woollen camels. An S shape, alternately regular or inverted stands above each woollen camel's back, and an ochre square with an inscribed, green, I-shaped element above each white camel's back. A stripe is attached to each camel's head, following the outline of their muzzle, ochre on the white and white on the woollen camels. Green, horseshoe- shaped ornaments surround the lower tips of these stripes. The central tapestry band is flanked by two bands of linen, brocaded decoration with stepped, rhomboid designs, each bearing a cross in its centre, formed of warp and single weft yarns. The brocaded design consists of double or triple linen yarns which pass over one to six warps, according to the design. Above and below the band with the rhomboid designs are two narrower, each consisting of two rows of linen wefts, passing alternately over one and five warps.

Comments

An almost identical procession of camels is found in a piece of the BAV, datable to the 9th-10th century, and attributed to the Fayyūm,[372] though there it is combined with a mirrored inscription of peculiar angular letters. A similar procession is also found on a piece in the CMA,

[372] BAV 6858, in Cornu, *Tissus isalmiques,* p. 86-88 and 489.

which bears an Arabic and a Coptic inscription.[373]Another piece decorated with a row of camels, though of a different design, is found in the MIC (fig. 1). It bears an inscription that mentions a private factory in the Fayyūm and is the prototype for the attribution of all similar textiles to the area.[374] The brocaded decoration is also found on many Fayyūmi textiles.[375] Among them are two ṭirāz pieces, one of al-Muqtadir, dated to 926-928[376] and another of al-Muṭī' (946-974).[377] A comparable brocaded design is found on another BAV textile,[378] where the wefts are made of silk instead of linen. Our piece could, therefore, be dated to the 10th century and attributed to the Fayyūm. Camels are a frequent theme in Islamic Art of the period (fig. 2), but camel caravans were already present in Roman and Byzantine Art of the Eastern Mediterranean, in church mosaics (fig. 3) and are believed to represent wealthy donors.[379] Camel caravans are also found in Umayyad wall paintings in Quṣayr ʿAmra and Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt.[380] However, in contrast to the mosaics, no caravan leaders appear on the surviving textiles, but the fact that they do not survive complete does not allow for a safe conclusion. It is a possibility that the caravans on the textiles reflected the occupation of the commissioners, although the schematisation and decorative character of the animals rather implicate that these were simply different versions of the animal friezes.

fig 1.Tapestry band with a procession of camels in MIC (see footnote 373)

fig. 2 Lustre-painted bowl from Iraq in the MET, 10th century, in https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451768

fig. 3 Camel caravan in the church of Saint George in Deir al-ʿAdas, in http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01977

[373] CMA 1956.330 in http://clevelandart.org/art/1956.330

[374] Wiet, "Tissus et tapisseries", p. 286, pl. XLVIIa.

[375] See Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 76, 82 and 83, p. 146-147 and 153-155, the first with silk and the other two with linen brocaded decoration.

[376] Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue*, no 73.15, p. 30, pl. XIV.

[377] MIC 8269, in Cornu, *Tissus islamiques,* p. 82, footnote 5.

[378] BAV 6854 and 6855 in Ibid., p. 111-113, 80-82 469 and and 486.

[379] Lihi Habas, "Camel Caravans and Trade in Exotic Animals in The mosaics of the Desert Margin", *Man near a Roman Arch, Studies presented to Prof. Yoram Tsafrir*, Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society, 2009, (p. 54-73), p.

[380] See accordingly Michele Piccirillo, "Archaeological Excavations at 'Ayoun Mousa-Mount Nebo 1984–1987", *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*, vol. 32 (1993), fig. 784 and Bisheh Ghazi, Pavimentazioni musive ommiadi di Qasr el-Hallabat in Giordania, in M. Piccirillo ed. *I Mosaici di Giordania,* Roma 1986, p. 130.

IV 31. 15346

Dimensions: 21x53.3 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: dark blue wool, S.

Plain Weave
Weft: dark blue wool, S.
Pattern weft
red wool, S; silk.

Description

Large, dark blue plain weave textile with zones of tapestry and pattern weft decoration. The central zone consists of red bands, filled with alternately white and yellow attached X shapes. Between the X shapes red diamonds are created with a green dot in the centre. The bands have a yellow and a red outline and are framed by two zig-zag lines, yellow in the centre and white towards the edges. The bands end in two outward arrow heads, one red with white stripes and the other yellow, set along a red stripe with white dots. After the arrows is a white, six-pointed star with red tips followed by a row of yellow Coptic letters. On the far left side of the textile is a yellow diamond with red dots on its corners and centre, flanked by two white cruciform elements, also with red dots on the tips of their arms and in their centre.

Below the central zone are three parallel, horizontal lines, each consisting of three rows of dense, dark blue weft passes. Below that is a narrow, white band with denser wefts, than on the plain weave, decorated with brocaded, white diamonds, alternating with X shapes. This band is framed by two white lines. Traces of a similar band are also found above the central zone.

At the bottom of the textile is a wider yellow band, with brocaded decoration of large hexagons. Inside each hexagon is an eight-pointed star with a diamond in its centre. In the middle of this diamond and between the side tips of the star are small crosses. Between the large hexagons, X shapes are created, on the top and bottom corners of which are brocaded triangles. The yellow band is bordered by two stripes with alternating red and white weft passes and a row of white, brocaded, inverted V shapes.

Comments

The coexistence in this piece of a number of weaving techniques, like pattern weft or brocading, soumak and two-coloured shed, make it a very interesting example of experimentation. The left part of the inscription reads "ϵρϵ πϫοϵιc ιc π", which should be completed by ϵ χc and can be translated as "May the Lord, Jesus the Christ". The letters cnc in the middle remain undecipherable. The right side of the inscription reads "ογτϵ ⲁ or ϫ", which resembles the word πνογτϵ, meaning "God".[381] The Coptic inscription connects this piece with a Coptic speaking clientele and possibly weaving workshop. The stars at the end of the bands are similar to those encountered at the edges of the inscriptions of many Fayyūmi textiles (e.g. IV 26). The brocaded decoration is also encountered in many of these textiles.[382] The stars and the brocaded bands are found in pieces datable to the 10th-11th centuries. A slightly later date, given the wide use and the complexity of the pattern weft and the brocading technique, could be proposed for this textile, namely the 11th-12th century. A similar, large piece (94x104 cm) with Coptic inscriptions interrupted by stars and geometrical decorative bands is found in the MAK, though the published picture is too out of focus for an examination of its decorative technique, which is described by the publishers as "embroidery".[383] Comparable pieces are also found in Düsseldorf, Brussels, Leipzig, the Musées Royaux des Arts Décoratifs and the KN, the later radiocarbon-dated to 1029-1219.[384]

[381] Coptic inscriptions with invocations to God and calls for help for the owners are very common in textiles of the period. There are also local variations of the invocation formulas, to which, however, it is not possible to rank our piece because of its fragmentary survival. See Fluck, "Koptische Textilien mit Inschriften", p. 161-172.

[382] See IV 30. Also Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 82-83, p. 153-155 with a possibly late dating to the 13th century.

[383] *Verletzliche Beute*, no 111, p. 178-180.

[384] KN inv. no 711 in ibid., no 111, p. 180.

IV 32. 15707

Dimensions: 11.7x37.3 cm cm

Technical analysis
Warp: brown wool, S.
Weft: wool, Z; cotton, Z.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Fragmentary tapestry band with two decorative friezes, a wider, containing roundels on a red ground and a narrower below with vegetal decoration on an ochre ground. On the upper frieze three medallions survive, but only the first from the left is almost intact. It has a central, beige disk, decorated with two unidentified, spiral elements, one ochre with a dark brown outline, set on a red frame and the other red. The disk has a wide, blue border bearing light blue spirals and a narrow, ochre outer border. The second medallion has a red disk in the centre, decorated with a flower that appears to consist of a dark brown stem with three beige dots along it, on either side of which grow triangular leaves, ochre, with a dark brown centre and green, with an ochre and brown centre. The disk is enclosed in an ochre border, decorated with red double spirals. Traces of an outer, dark brown border are seen at the bottom. The third roundel has a red central disk, on which are represented ochre, beige and green spiral, triangular and trident intertwined shapes. The inner border of the roundel is dark brown with alternating green and ochre spirals. The outer border is ochre. Between the roundels are almost identical flower-like partitions, none of which survives intact. They have a central, ochre stem which splits at the base into two feet. On either side of the stem grow four leaves. The uppermost are ochre, oval or triangular and diagonally placed and each contains an oval, dark brown bud with a red tip. The lowermost are also ochre, but oblong. Each bears an ornament similar to the previous bud. The middle leaves are beige and almost square, decorated alternately with green or blue S shapes. Each foot at the base of the flowers consists of two semi-circular or semi-oval, beige leaves also decorated with a blue and a green S shape. A similar design seems to have been repeated on the top of the flowers.

The second decorative frieze contains a blue and light green vine scroll on an ochre ground. It consists of curved stems that overlap and form an undulant design. Each stem bears two flowers, one on its left edge and another on a projecting branch on the concave part of its curve. These flowers have a rhomboid or cruciform core, blue, ochre or red, around which are circular petals, ochre with beige dots, beige, ochre or green with red dots and brown, red or blue with beige dots. Next to these flowers are smaller ones, consisting of a triangular or square core, on either side of which is a circular petal with a dot in the centre, following the colour combinations of the larger

flowers, though the cores are also green or green and blue. The band placed vertically on the right edge of the textile seems to belong to the lower frieze, as the ochre ground, the scroll and the flowers with circular petals indicate. However, it is not clear whether it has been misplaced during conservation, or the scroll frieze actually extended upwards.

It appears that a third decorative frieze originally existed below, as traces of red ground with beige decoration, survive on the bottom right part of the textile.

Comments

The fragmentary survival of this piece, together with its highly stylised decoration, do not allow a recognition of its iconographic elements. It seems to fall into the category of silk Fāṭimid shawls with birds and animals in elaborated roundels. Also, the spiral borders of the roundels are reminiscent of the borders on some Fāṭimid textiles, usually dated to the 11th-12th century,[385] as is the treatment of the shapes inside the roundels, especially the last one. However, the tree-like partitions between the medallions and the quite naturalistic scroll bring it close to earlier examples (e.g. I 22 and I 23). The presence of cotton, the brown warp and the Z-spinning of both woollen and cotton wefts are worth mentioning as peculiar characteristics of this piece, which could be dated to the late 10th-early 11th century.

[385] See, for example, Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 144, p. 240-241 and 149, p. 248-249.

V. Textiles with a woollen S-spun, Z-plied warp

V 1. 15138

Dimensions: 15.2x16 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry band with a central, ochre, star motif on a pink ground, of which only the upper tip and the centre survive. In the centre is a turquoise hexagonal frame, inside which is another pink, six-pointed star with an ochre border, an ochre and brown lozenge in the centre and ochre dots on its tips. On the turquoise ground around the star are four ochre dots with a green centre, and two more ochre dots on the sides. On the tip of the large, ochre star is an Λ-shaped frame made of horizontal brown stripes, inside which is a small green triangle with a pink outline. Similar triangles appear on the other two visible points of the star, which survive fragmentarily. The upper side of the star is embellished with a horizontal band of a brown chain-like decoration. On the pink ground, on either side of the tip of the large star are two smaller ochre, six-pointed stars with brown outlines and diamond-shaped centres, each bearing a green dot.

Comments

The geometrical decoration of the piece, the exclusive use of wool and the plied warp, classify this textile among the less sophisticated products of the Egyptian industry, possibly intended for use as a hanging or furnishing textile. Nevertheless, despite the sturdy warps and the repetitive design, the execution and the materials are quite refined, a fact that possibly points to a product of an established workshop and not of household weaving. The pink and turquoise colours are quite unlike the colours used in similar textiles with geometrical decoration and resemble those of VI 1, which is, however, executed in woollen, Z-spun warps. It is possible, that they were woven in the same establishment or town and they could be contemporary and datable between the 7th and 9th centuries.

V 2. 12967

Dimensions: 42x27 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Single warps, slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry fragment divided in three zones. The upper, a small part of which survives, has a red-orange ground and a medallion with a white border with dark blue diamonds. Inside the medallion is a green rayed decoration and outside an ochre-green element. The middle zone has a dark blue ground. In the middle is a large, inverted triangle, containing smaller, multicoloured triangles, white, ochre, dark blue and ochre-green. On either side of it, are two white, large, C shapes, the left run by a green and the right by a red stripe, which could represent animals, judging from the two "eyes" projecting on their top and their zig-zag "feet". Below the triangle is an ochre lozenge with a dark blue outline and a central stripe, set on a green, rhomboid frame. On either side of it are two cruciform elements. That on the left is white, consisting of multiple triangles, two green diamonds in the centre, one above the other, and crescents in the place of the horizontal arm. That on the right has an ochre quatrefoil in the centre and ochre-green triangular and rhomboid projections. On the ground between them appear white and red C shapes. The last zone bears a roundel with a red-orange ground and a dark blue border with ochre and white diamonds. Inside the roundel, is a white, rayed design with a dark blue circle in the centre. In parts of the textile, a striped effect of intermingling colours is achieved by using weft yarns made of differently coloured threads.

Comments

This piece bears similar decorative elements to the blue and red warp groups (e.g. IV 6, 15134 and 15330, p. 124, fig. 4 and 5, IV 7) and also V 3 and V 4. It belongs to the same abstract and stylised artistic concept and betrays a similar inspiration from eastern textiles, interpreted, however, in a more stylised and geometrical form, where the colour palette is also more pale and restricted. This piece could be contemporary with those textiles, and dated to the 8th-9th century. Similar decorative elements are found on two textiles in the NMS and the RM, datable to the 9th century.[386]

[386] Lamm, "Some Woollen Tapestry Weavings", p. 68, nos 26, 27, 43 and 50, pl. VIIIa and b, XIa and XIIIa.

V 3. 12979

Dimensions: 46.5x18 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dovetailing.
Decorative weft: wool; S.

Description

Tapestry band with three decorative zones. The uppermost bears a large triangle in the centre, quite similar to that on V 2, on a dark blue ground. The triangle has a red outline and an ochre border, and contains smaller ochre, dark blue and green triangles. Below is an ochre diamond, framing a rhomboid adornment with a red outline, which resembles a basket with food. On either side, is a cruciform element, partially preserved, consisting of multiple triangles in a stepped arrangement and a rhomboid centre with an inscribed cruciform star. That on the right is red, green and pink with an ochre dot in the centre. That on the left is pink, red and ochre, with a dark blue dot in the centre. They bear small crosses on their corners. The second zone has a red ground. In the middle of it is a roundel with a wide ochre border, embellished with small stepped diamond pearls of the same colour, which encloses a star-shaped decoration with four small dark blue diamonds inside a lozenge in its centre and others attached to its sides. On the four corners outside the medallion, are ochre hearts. Between them is again an ochre, cruciform star. The third zone has a dark blue ground. In the centre, is a large dark blue triangle with a wide ochre border. The triangle bears rows of ochre dots, resembling a bunch of grapes. The border bears dark blue stripes on its-shape sides and dark blue diamond outlines on its top, where an ochre triangle also stands. Small ochre, green and red lozenges appear on either side of the grape-shaped triangle.

Comments

This piece falls into the same category as V 2, though it is made exclusively of wool. It should be of approximately the same date, between the 8th-9th century. Its large size and plied warps betray a similar use as a furnishing textile, but probably a product of a different workshop that worked exclusively in wool.

V 4. 15130

Dimensions: 52.4x12.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool and linen (?), S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S.

Tapestry
Single warps, slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing.

Description

Tapestry piece with geometrical decoration in a vertical arrangement. On the upper part is a large dark blue rectangle, outlined in ochre, on a red ground. In the middle of the rectangle, the outline curves inwards on both sides. Inside the rectangle, at this point, is a small green square with an ochre human bust bearing a red halo. Its design is very abstract and the face is signified only by two round green eyes. Two blue lines give the details of the cloth and one more stands on top of the head. From this square start four ochre ribbons, in an X arrangement, reaching to the corners of the rectangle, of which only the lower half part survives. On the dark blue ground between the ribbons are baskets with fruit, stylised to the point that they are depicted as pairs of triangles.

On the lower part is a large, cruciform, spiral design on a dark blue ground. It consists of red helixes ending in ochre coils. In the centre they form a rhomboid core inside which stands a smaller, ochre diamond and inside which is what is another red, rhomboid element. From either side of the diamond core start two double red narrow bands with oblate, outward tips, each decorated with two ochre triangles, one above and another below.

Comments

This furnishing piece echoes the iconographical features of V2 and Benaki 15330, p 124, fig. 5, which seem to have undergone here a further step of stylisation, clearly seen in the spirals and the baskets with fruit. The square with the mask is similar to that on the group of textiles with

red warp, exemplified most clearly in 15330. The overall design is similar to that of IV 24, although, here, the plied warps and the more unstable execution betray a lower quality workshop or a less competent weaver.

The spiral motif is probably a very abstract and stylised version of the tree of life, a quite popular decorative element especially favoured in the Umayyad period.[387] Also, stylised spiral vegetal decoration is often encountered in different forms of Egyptian and Iraqi art during the 9th century, especially in architectural decoration and woodwork, inspired by the Samarra stuccos (fig. 1).[388] Similar pieces exist in the Bouvier, datable to the 9th century,[389] the NMS, the RM and the KL, also datable to the 9th century.[390] The degree of abstraction, the large decorative elements and the vivid colours corroborate to the dating of the piece in the 9th century.

fig. 1 MIK inv. no I.3467, carved stucco decoration from a private house in Samarra, in https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/mik/miksamarra.html

[387] For the tree of life motif see IV 16 and Ettinghausen et. al., *Islamic Art,* p. 61-62, pictures 87, 88.

[388] Ettinghausen et al., *Islamic Art*, p. 57-59, picture 82, 83. See the decoration of the soffits and capitals of the mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn in Cairo and pieces of woodwork from Egypt and Iraq, for example: *Byzantium and Islam,* p. 257, fig. 108 and no 165, p. 232.

[389] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 74-77, nos 24, 25.

[390] Lamm, "Some Woollen Tapestry Weavings", p. 70-71, nos 36-39 and 41, pl. IXd, e, f and g and Xb.

V 5. 15614

Dimensions: 31x14 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: linen, S spun-Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp.

Description

Tapestry band with two opposed vine scrolls on a dark blue ground. The scrolls consist of half-leaves growing along a thin, undulant, ochre stem with white outlines. The leaves are either ochre or ochre with a brick red highlight in the centre. Each has two lobes, one on top of the other, and a long, pointed tip and face alternately the outer or inner side of the scroll. A ring appears around the base of each leaf. The leaves are curved, following the waves of the stem and form circles with those of the opposite scroll, where the two stems draw close together and are together enveloped in a large ring. Inside each circle is a palmette, which resembles a complex version of a fleur-de-lis. This has an ochre, trefoil base with a white or ochre ring, outlined in red. Their upper part consists of two pairs of oblong leaves – the outer slightly curling outwards – and a central, heart-shaped petal. The outer leaves are white, ochre and red, the inner are ochre with a red outline and the central petal has a white core, an ochre and red upper part and a white or ochre protruding oval on top. In some palmettes, the inner and outer pairs of sepals have the opposite colour arrangement. Similar palmettes also appear outside the scrolls, on either side of the large rings.

Comments

The piece, which was probably part of a hanging or furnishing textile, is characterised by symmetry and harmony of design and colours, achieved mainly through the rhythmic alternation of curves and the combinations of similar colours. Although the strict symmetry produces an effect of stylisation, the leaves still have a naturalistic shape and movement. A similar scroll decorated with

birds, is found on the border of a tapestry with naturalistically woven nereids in the DOC, datable to the 5th-6th century (fig. 1).[391]

The dating of our piece is difficult, the palmettes and rosettes, however are a popular motif in hangings of the 8th-9th century (e.g. V 6, V 7 and VII 3) and the vine-scrolls were widely represented in the art of the Umayyad period.[392] However the palmettes and the leaves of this type have been a long-lived decoration, appearing from the Sasanian to the ʿAbbāsid and Fāṭimid period.[393] Taking these into consideration it is possible that this textile was manufactured between the 7th-9th centuries.

fig. 1 Tapestry with nereids from the DOC in https://www.doaks.org/resources/textiles/catalogue/BZ.1932.1

[391] Marie-Hélène Rutschowscaya, *Tissus Coptes*, Paris 1990, p. 120-121.

[392] See, for example, the palmette trees of the wooden soffit from Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem and the stucco window grille from Qaṣr al-Ḥayr West in Ettinghausen et al., *Islamic Art,* p. 61, fig. 87, 88.

[393] See, for example, the leaves on the stucco relief from Ctesiphon in Dimand, "Aspects", fig. 29 and 31. Also the marble relief of the DM, dated to the second half of the 10th century in davidmus.dk, inventory no 86/2004; also the "wings" of the pinecones on a wooden frieze in the MET, dated to the 8th-9th century and the foliage on an alabaster capital from Syria, now in the MIK, dated to the 9th century, both in *Byzantium and Islam*, no 154, p. 223 and no 161A, p. 228; also the Fāṭimid rock crystal ewers in Jonathan M. Bloom, *Arts of the City Victorious, Islamic Art and Architecture in Fāṭimid North Africa and Egypt*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2007, p. 102-103, figs. 72-73.

V 6. 15641

Dimensions: 45x24 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool S; cotton, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Tapestry fragment representing a palmette on a red ground, possibly in a roundel. The palmette has four rows of petals. The upper consists of two consecutive Λ shapes, the topmost white and the other light and dark blue. The second row consists of two pointed petals divided into three zones. The inner zone is light green, the middle is brown, with green horizontal stripes, and the outer has the form of a half white and half ochre fleur-de-lis. The green, inner parts of the petals cross each other at the base, creating an X shape, on the sides of which are attached ochre, upward hooks, with their tips touching the base of the fleur-de-lis. The third row also consists of pointed petals, similar to those above, but reclined and also having three zones. The upper is ochre with stripes extending into the red ground of the middle zone and the bottom is green with a brown triangle and brown undulant lines. These petals stem from a green cup shape, on top of which stand two semi-circular tricoloured stamens of ochre, blue and light blue. Inside the cup shape are two smaller, inscribed cups, a red and a white, the latter decorated with ochre diamonds. Below them is a red semi-circle, outlined in ochre, which encircles two small white circles topped by a blue triangle. From the base of the green cup start ochre, oblong, pointed sepals, which envelop the central part of the palmette. These have an acanthus shape and bear, at intervals, groups of thin brown stripes. At the base of the palmette are two oblong, blue, C-shaped leaves, with a double outline of light blue and white, stemming from a central ochre circle with a light blue dot in the centre and a white outline. Their upper, wider part almost touches their lower, pointed part. Below the palmette are parts of another fragmentary vegetal decoration Parts of blue, curved, pearl bands are visible, the white circles of which have a red dot in the centre.

Comments

Our piece is characterised by its fineness of materials and colours. Despite the plying of the warps, their thickness is quite moderate, which means that very fine yarns were used. The employment of cotton for the white parts could be put down as a peculiar characteristic, although the S twist of warps and wefts- both woollen and cotton- rather points to an Egyptian provenance.

This piece belongs to a group of textiles with palmettes (see also V 7), which usually have plied woollen warp and woollen and cotton wefts. These are usually attributed to the Ṭūlūnid period- a period of intense artistic communication with Iraq- mainly because of the resemblance of these palmettes with the flowers on the stuccos and other artefacts from Samarra.[394] We should, in any case, bear in mind that the palmette is a particularly long-lived motif that is also encountered, especially in a stylised form like this, well into the 11th century.[395] However, some comparisons could be indeed made between this palmette and that on a bowl from Samarra (fig. 1) and certain stucco decorations from the same sight (fig. 2 see particularly the palmettes inside the right diamond). Also, some carved Syrian capitals, dated to the 8th century, bear palmettes with similar design,[396] especially in the outer leaves and the split tip (fig. 3, 4). The construction of our palmette, which is made of multiple, differently coloured parts brings to mind textile designs of the 7th-8th centuries (e.g. IV 19). Similar palmettes are also found in a silk tapestry found in the reliquary of Saint Anastasius in the cathedral of Saint Domnius in Split, Croatia and dated by Shalem to the late Umayyad period (fig. 5, 6).[397] Two comparable, though very fragmentary pieces are found in the KL, both with a natural woollen warp and woollen and cotton wefts.[398] Lamm dated them to the 7th-early 8th century and described their patterns as Sasanian, proposing a Persian, and, more specifically, Susangird origin. Based on this evidence a date between the 8th and 9th century seems possible for this textile.

fig. 1 MIK, inv. no I.1105a, fragment of a bowl from Samarra. Painted and glazed earthenware, in https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/mik/miksamarra.html

394 Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 115.

395 See, for example, Fāṭimid lustre pottery of the 10th-11th century in Marilyn Jenkins, "The Palmette Tree: A Study of the Iconography of Egyptian Lustre Painted Pottery", *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, vol. 7 (1968), p. 119-120, I-IX, 122-126.

396 Dimand, "Aspects", fig. 25, 46.

397 Shalem, "Garments of Blood", in https://www.doaks.org/resources/textiles/essays

398 Lamm, "Some Woollen Tapestry Weavings", nos 2 and 8, p. 59, plate I b and III c.

fig. 2 Carved stucco decoration from a private house of Samarra in the MIK, in https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/mik/miksamarra.html

fig. 3 Capital found in Syria in Dimand "Aspects", fig. 25

fig. 4 Capital found in Syria in Dimand "Aspects", fig. 46.

fig. 5 Medallion A, detail of the Split tapestry

fig. 6 Medallion E, detail of the Split tapestry, both in https://www.doaks.org/resources/textiles/essays/shalem

V 7. 15645

Dimensions: 18.5x22 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; cotton, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft.

Description

Two-coloured tapestry medallion in a fragmentary state, representing a palmette. The medallion is slightly oblate and has a brown ground and a white border. Inside is a white and brown palmette with two rows of petals. The upper row consists of a white trefoil, with two semi-circular petals at the sides and a tear-shaped on top. The second row, which forms the central part of the palmette, has a cup shape, inside which are two large, white, slightly outward, pointed petals with circular bases and a thin, dark brown stripe directly above them. Between these petals a dark brown inverted triangle is formed, which corresponds to the top side of the cup shape. Below these petals is a concave, white stripe that forms the base of the cup, which ends in two circles. From the base of the palmette only two white, attached circles survive in the centre and traces of a, possibly, inner border, of which only the right part remains. Below the medallion are traces of brown ground, followed by a white band. On top of the medallion part of brown ground is visible and two large, white circles on either side.

Comments

This piece belongs to the same group as V 6. Similar, bicoloured examples of this group are found in the Benaki,[399] and various other collections, such as the Bouvier,[400] the MIC[401] and the

[399] For the analysis of a similar textile from the Benaki by Moraitou see *Byzantium and Islam*, no 159, p. 226-227.

[400] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 56, p. 115.

[401] nos 12.194/2, 8695, 15.661 and 6277/2 in *Exposition,* p. 4, 16. Also Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 115.

Cluny.[402] A relevant piece with a palmette on a red ground but made of wool and linen has also been excavated at Fusṭāṭ and dated to the 10th century (fig. 1).[403] A dating to the 9th century could be proposed, although a later manufacture, based on the long life of the palmette motif, cannot be discarded.

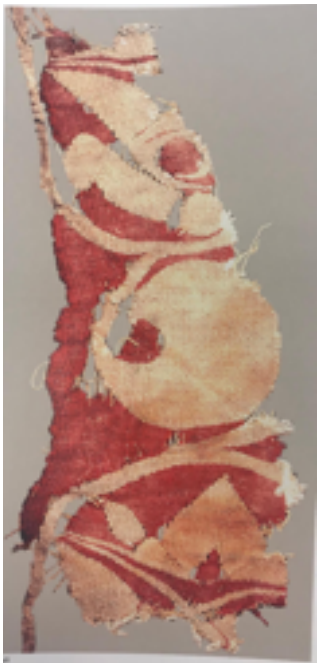

fig. 1 Hanging with palmettes from Fusṭāṭ in Mackie, *Symbols of Power*, p. 80, fig. 2.46.

[402] Desrosiers, *Soieries*, no 8, p. 69.

[403] This fragment was found together with a 10th century marriage contract. Mackie, "Textiles", p. 90, pl. 1.

V 8. 15690

Dimensions: 27.5x81 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, two double warps on the selvedge.

Description

Tapestry band with birds or quadrupeds and borders with geometrical and vegetal decoration. The piece is divided into three decorative bands with a vertical orientation. The wider band on the left bears eight fragmentarily surviving birds, one on top of the other, on a red ground. These have large, hexagonal heads and triangular necks, which are alternately ochre and blue, except for the second from the top, which has a green head and neck. In the centre of their heads is a brown, circular eye, with a white border, outlined in brown. The outline extends to the right, as a thin, horizontal stripe. At the base of the birds' neck is a small element, either a blue semi-circle, an ochre oval or a red cross. Their bodies are small, compared to their heads and necks and consist of three oblong bands The upper, straight bands are either red and ochre- a combination which appears oftener- red and green, red and blue or ochre and red. They bear small rectangles, red or blue for the ochre ones, blue or ochre for the red and red for the green band. The third band, which signifies the birds' abdomen, curves upwards, covering part of their chest. It is white and decorated with straight or undulant brown stripes. The birds' legs are two parallelograms with a brown, horizontal stripe in the middle and a forked ending. Their tails have the shape of upward arrow heads, divided in coloured compartments, either red, blue and ochre, blue ochre and red, or green, red and ochre, each with a blue, ochre, or red dot in the centre. Their tails seem to continue below their bodies, forming a white diamond with horizontal, brown stripes and a second, blue, ochre or green diamond in the centre, but this design is fragmentary on all birds. The heads and tails of the birds, are outlined with a white band bearing brown, square pearls. Between the neck and the tail of each bird is also a white, cruciform element.

To the right of the bird band is an, ochre stripe, followed by a brown band, decorated with a double row of white pearls. Further to the right is a wider, ochre band, decorated with blue, stylised vegetal elements, each with a rhomboid centre and four spiral shafts of irregular size. Red dots appear on these elements and on the ground between them. To the right of this band is another ochre stripe.

Comments

This piece is possibly the double border of a large, furnishing textile. Double borders separated by rows of pearls and often containing figural representations, together with vegetal or geometrical, are a common element on furnishing textiles of the 7th-9th century.[404] However, this type of decoration and the specific design of the birds doesn't seem to have parallels. The low density of the weave and the naive, stylised design of the birds indicate a low quality, counterbalanced by the vivacity and the variety of the colours. It is possible that this piece represents a popular, less sophisticated version of the aforementioned pieces, although the absence of the central decoration does not allow safer conclusions. It could be dated to the 7th-9th centuries.

[404] See, for example, the tapestry in Kitzinger, "The Horse and Lion Tapestry", pp. 1+3-59+61-72, that in the CMA, in Shepherd, "An early ṭirāz", pp. 7-14 (and p. 299 fig. 1), and that in the PC in Pfister, "Coqs sassanides", pl. XVIIc (also p. 230, fig. 1).

V 9. 7126b

Dimensions: 31.5x7.2 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, S spun, Z plied.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, gimp, double warp on the selvedge.
Decorative weft: wool and linen, S.

Description

Tapestry band with geometrical and figural decoration with a vertical orientation on a red ground. The right side of the textile preserves its selvedge, which is reinforced with a double warp. The decoration evolves in and around three -and part of a fourth- squares, which are alternately attached to either side of the band. On top of the band survives the bottom part of two opposed riders. The animals have oblong bodies, white on the left and orange on the right, decorated with green rectangles, and two parallelogram legs. The legs of the riders have the opposite colours and each bears a square on their round thigh, green for the left and red for the right rider. On the left rider part of a T-shaped weapon or arm is preserved and, possibly, the head of the animal, which seems to consist of a rectangle with a red, square eye. Crosses with an orange centre and white arms are found around the animals' legs.

The first square, attached to the left of the band, has an orange ground and contains a stylised quadruped, possibly a lion, with a white body- consisting of two thin, parallel and slightly curved bands-, four parallelogram legs in attached pairs, an upward, 7-shaped tail and a triangular head with a blue, quadrant shaped mane, outlined in red, on top of which are attached two white, square ears. The animal's left eye is an orange rectangle, while the right just a black rectangular contour. A red oval signifies its mouth. Below its abdomen is a green, hooked ornament. On the ground around the animal's head are small, black rectangles. The animal stands under a gamma-

shaped frame, with two orange-red shafts. The horizontal shaft has a forked tip and bears black diagonal half-stripes. The vertical shaft is toothed and narrower. On top of the horizontal shaft stands a trapezium, attached to the border of the square. It has a red ground and a blue and ochre outline and is decorated with white squares and a reclined, orange, gamma shape. A black, horizontal stripe extends from the trapezium and crosses two bicoloured diamonds, red and white, with stepped contours. The toothed border of the square is black and bears small, white crosses with black centres. On the red ground to the right are geometrical decorations set on white frames, a blu and red X shape, an orange rosette with an orange central shaft, outlined in green, and a white cross with green squares on its arms and a red in its centre. On the ground below the first square are two white, highly stylised human figures with trapezoid bodies, triangular heads, three-fingered hands attached to their shoulders, without the intervention of arms, and inverted V-shaped legs. On their bodies is inscribed a smaller, red trapezium with white squares, each with a black dot in its centre, in a quincunx arrangement. They have orange, square eyes, red, T-shaped nose and eyebrows and a red, rectangular mouth.

The second square has a white ground, on which figure three rows of I shapes, red, ochre, and blue, with differently coloured outlines, separated by small, red squares. The border is similar to the previous but thicker, outlined in ochre and with inscribed, alternately white and ochre crosses with a red centre. On the ground to the left of the square are geometrical ornaments, three parallel, attached stripes of red, ochre and blue, two parallel, red stripes and a blue cross to the right and another X shape. Below the second square are two opposed quadrupeds with rectangular, white bodies, decorated with rows of red rectangles and an extra row of green rectangles on the right animal. Their legs have forked tips and are stretched forward, conveying a sense of movement. Their upward, C-shaped tails end in a pyramidal tuft with black stripes, much bigger on the right animal. Their necks bear a kind of collar, consisting of two blue and a narrower, ochre band. Their rectangular heads end in front in three parallel projections. The right animal has two more at the back. On top of their heads is a horizontal band, supporting their small, triangular ears. On the ground between the quadrupeds is a fragmentary tree, from which survive two upward, orange volutes with white dots in the centre and a base highlighted with black. On the top and bottom, two white dots are visible connected with an ochre stem.

The third square has an orange ground on which appear rows of alternately white and blue C shapes with vertical protrusions. In the middle of the square are two rectangles connected with a black stripe. That on the right repeats the design with the red bands and the blue cross on a white frame. That on the right is divided into two compartments, the largest red and the smaller white and cruciform with a red dot in the centre. On the right side of the square is a vertical row of decorative elements: the first and third are three white, vertical, jagged lines on a black ground, while the second and fourth a red cross, outlined in white and black. The border of the square is similar to the first. Outside the square, to the right, are two decorations: the upper repeats the X-shaped pattern seen above, while that below consists of four small, white and black crosses in a cruciform arrangement, enclosed in an orange, rhomboid frame. Below the third square are three eight-pointed stars with a white, cruciform centre, outlined in blue or red and black points, all outlined in orange and white. The fourth square has a white ground and seems to contain stylised vegetal decoration. A flower survives on the top left corner with a red, trefoil bud with a long central shaft and black, curved sepals. The borders of the square are similar to those of the second.

On the left edge of the textile is a black border band, with a white, herringbone outline on its inner side. Its outer side survives only in part and is decorated with white crosses, alternating with blue and, every other two, with red crosses. The white crosses bear small, red stripes on the corners, while the blue bear white stripes. The crosses are set within rhomboid frames, outlined in ochre. The white and red crosses have a black frame, while the blue have a red frame.

Comments

Despite the abstract and stylised iconography of this piece, the elements of the design are clear and symmetrical and woven with skill. That, together with the high density of the weave, indicate a textile of quality. Traditional popular themes, like the horsemen and the animals flanking the tree of life intermingle here with abstract decorations and geometrical and vegetal elements. The concept of the decoration is not that of a single or narrative representation, but rather a decorative gathering of many different elements, that alternate rhythmically. The cruciform elements, the diamonds, the abstract geometrical designs and the stylised animals or birds are encountered in many Egyptian textiles. This iconographical treatment might imply that the original meaning of the variant themes had been lost and that they were used merely for their decorative properties. The animals on either side of the tree of life fall somewhere between those on I 20 and those on some early Fāṭimid pieces, like I 37 and 15270, p. 64, fig. 2.

Narrow bands of this type, apparently parts of tunic decoration, with squares, semi-circles or half rosettes, alternately attached to either side of them, are often encountered in textile collections. Most of them are found in the PC,[405] others in the MIC,[406] the KFM,[407] the Louvre,[408] the MIK[409] and the MET.[410] Pfister identified the presence of lac-dye in most of them and dated them, consequently, to a post-conquest period.[411] One of the MIC pieces, also bears a repeated angular inscription, which confirms its post-conquest manufacture.[412] Two other similar pieces, datable to the 9th-10th century are found in the Brooklyn Museum.[413] One of them, which preserves both its selvedges, has a Z-spun, 3plied S warp, which according to Bellinger, indicates that the piece was woven in a large textile centre, where warp yarns were prepared on a large wheel. She also suggests Armenia as a place of origin, based on the Z-spinning and the supposed use of a narrow loom.[414] Comparable human figures are found in a textile with the characteristic Fayyūmi script in the CMA.[415]

Taking all these into consideration, a 9th-10th century dating could be proposed for this piece. This band, together with II 4 indicate that such tunic bands continued being used, at least up to the 10th century.

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[405] Pfister, “Matériaux”, p. 15-16, pl.II, nos B1-B5.

[406] Ibid., p. 15-16, pl.II, no B6 and pl. III, nos B7, B7a.

[407] Ibid., p. 14, fig.1.

[408] Du Bourguet, *Catalogue I,* F105, p. 286, F112-113, p. 288-289.

[409] Wulff and Volbach, *Spätantike und koptische Stoffe,* pl. 115, no 4618.

[410] No 90.5.630, dated to the 6th-7th century and attributed to Egypt, metmuseum.org

[411] For the presence of lac dye in post conquest textiles see Wouters, “Dye Analysis”, p. 53-64. See also VI 2.

[412] Pfister, “Matériaux”, pl.III, no B7a.

[413] Thompson, *Coptic Textiles*, no 35 (Acc. no. 38.754), p. 80-81, pl. XV; ibid., *Late Egyptian and Coptic Art: an Introduction to the Collections in the Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn 1943, acc. no. 38.750, p. 24, pl. 54.

[414] Thompson, *Coptic Textiles*, no 35 (Acc. no. 38.754), p. 80-81, pl. XV.

[415] CMA 1950.537 in http://clevelandart.org/art/1950.537

VI. Textiles with a woollen, Z-spun warp

VI 1. 12984

Dimensions: 14.7x13.8cm

Technical analysis
Warp: natural and dark brown wool, Z.
Weft: wool, Z.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, plied weft yarns.

Description

Tapestry band with two decorative zones. The zones are divided by rows of ochre rhomboid pearls with brown outlines, set between red border lines. The upper zone consists of a pink-red band on an ochre ground. The bottom zone bears two scalloped bands of turquoise and pink-red, inside which are four diamonds, two on each band. Each diamond consists of two triangles with a small gap between them. Each triangle bears a small stripe. The diamonds on the left side are white and ochre, set within a brown frame. Those of the upper band have turquoise stripes; those below bear brown stripes. From the diamonds on the right side, only the upper survives, which has one turquoise and one pink-red triangle, each with a stripe of the opposite colour.

Comments

Most of the materials in this piece are of high quality. The wool of the wefts has a finesse and is quite shiny and the textile has a high density, although the geometrical design is somewhat confused and irregular. The use of wool of two different colours for the warp is a peculiar characteristic. Some plied, though very thin, weft yarns are occasionally employed. The direction of spinning, together with the exclusive use of wool, could point to a manufacture outside Egypt. Nevertheless, the rhomboid elements, deriving from the basket with fruit motif, is very common in Egyptian textiles, especially of the 7th-9th centuries, as already seen in V 3 and V 4, and this piece could be dated within the same time span. It is another example of a geometrically decorated textile of the 7th-9th century, the decoration of which consists of multi-lobed diamonds, multiple triangles and degenerated Late Antique motifs, different from the geometric textiles of earlier centuries, comprising plaits, knots, concentric shapes, meanders and stylised scrolls (e.g. IV 3).

VI 2. 6911

Dimensions: a) 61x6.5 cm
b) 57x6.6 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, Z.
Weft: wool, S; linen, S.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing, wide use of soumak, gimp.
Decorative weft: single or multiple wool and linen yarns, S.

Description

Two tapestry *clavi* with almost identical decoration. They have a red ground on which figure animal and human forms, in an alternately horizontal and vertical axis, amongst stylised vegetal decoration. The central motif is a haloed figure, with a vertical orientation, which wears a multi-coloured, bejewelled costume, consisting of several layers. Its lower part has the shape of a long tunic with vertical bands in shades of olive green and ochre, decorated with red and ochre or orange diagonal stripes, a green vertical stripe and white dots or red and ochre squares. A narrow band in the middle is black and bears small white crosses with a red dot in the centre. The bands are outlined in white linen soumak. The use of similar colours gives the impression of fading hues and shading on the tunic. The costume also has an oblong, pointed band to the right that seems to represent a draped piece falling in front of the body. On the left *clavus*, this is orange with red, V-shaped stripes, while on the right *clavus* it is light green, with blue stripes. The tunic has a narrower, black hem, decorated with white squares with brown, red or green dots. The upper part of the tunic consists of five short, oblong bands, ochre, orange and red, decorated with green dots with a white

centre, white dots with a green centre, ochre ovals and green and red vertical stripes. The left hand of the figure is raised in a speech gesture, while the right seems to be holding a staff or spear in a diagonal position, in front of its body. On the left *clavus*, the right hand of the figure has an olive green sleeve, while on the right *clavus*, an orange. Their left hand is dressed in a two-part sleeve, the upper part light green with white and orange stripes and the lower brown with white dots. A red collar, outlined in white seems to cover their necks. Their oval face is white with black, rectangular eyes bearing a white curved line in the centre, extending into a triangular nose. On either side of their nose are two red, curved, vertical lines. Above their eyes are two red and two black squares. Their mouth is a large, black, concave line. Their brown hair is undulant, with an orange, soumak line running across it, ending in two white, trident-shaped earrings. On the right *clavus*, the right earring is orange. Their brown, oblong feet are diagonally placed on the corners of the tunic's hem. The figure wears a crown consisting of three squares, two red, with an ochre dot, and one green in the middle, with an ochre and red dot. A halo encircles both head and crown, olive green for the left figure and yellow for the right. The figures are bordered by white lines in a herringbone pattern.

The composition of the animals -possibly a bear and a lion or panther- and putti is quite confused. The body of the upper animal is yellow, highlighted with orange stripes, a brown stripe on the ear and an orange square with green crosses and a white dot on its back. Its eyes are orange with a black outline and a small black stripe in the centre. Some unidentified elements appear attached to the animal's abdomen and next to his back. The animal seems to be attacking another creature, some parts of which are seen below its head and body. Above the animals' back is a yellow semi-circle and above its head a stylised, green bird with an oblong body, decorated with beige squares. The second animal has a yellow body, decorated with a green stripe on its back, feet and upward tail, black dots, V shapes and black and orange squares. Its eye is a black dot with a white centre. The red and ochre rectangle below, seems to be its tongue. An unidentified element figures below its abdomen. Above its back, is a semi-circle, green with a yellow outline. This animal also seems to be attacking another yellow animal, decorated with brown stripes and dots, but the composition is quite confusing and it is not possible to discern which parts belong to the attacking and which to the attacked animal.

The putti, figuring between the animals differ slightly. Those on the upper part of the *clavi,* appear with one leg kneeling and the other, which has a forked ending, bent forward. They have a beige body and do not seem to wear any clothing, apart from yellow shoes. It is not clear where their hands are, but a beige band crossing in front of their body and ending in a circle with a red and green centre could signify a hand. The putti have a large, oval, beige face. Their eyes are black, square outlines, each with a black dot, their nose a vertical black line that continues upwards and splits into two curving eyebrows and their mouth a large, concave line. The part of the face below their mouth is brown. Their yellow hair is semi-circular and decorated with black half stripes. A Λ-shaped, green wing appears on their back. The putti hold a red oval item with two yellow, V-shaped stripes -and dots on the left *clavus*- that could possibly be a basket. Another leaf-shaped element in light blue, orange and green stands above it. The putti on the lower part of the *clavi* have a slightly different design. Their legs are bent, their feet end in three toes and their hands seem to be stretched forward, one of them holding a multi-coloured leaf-shaped element with a black stem. A light blue and green rectangular element stands below the other hand. Instead of a wing, an oblong orange band is attached to their back.

Among the figures and animals is vegetal decoration, consisting of a thin yellow vine scroll from which stem stylised flowers, light blue and ochre or green and ochre, with a trefoil or grape-like shape, or bearing a diamond bud and consecutive, V-shaped leaves. The whole decoration is enclosed in an oval border, containing a vine scroll with flowers, identical to those on the bands.

Parts of woollen plain weave are visible around the edges of the bands.

Comments

These pieces are characterised by high weave density, fineness of materials, richness of colours and decoration. Although the design is in some places abstract and stylised, it betrays high quality craftsmanship, evident especially in the mixture of colours and the shading effects. The *clavi* with figural and vegetal decoration are widely represented in many collections.[416] Animal combat scenes, and, more specifically, that of a lion attacking its prey, are well known in the art of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East and have been very popular also in Islamic art, where they are often found in the context of the princely cycle. The prey of the lion is often a bull or a gazelle, though other creatures as serpents or camels are also encountered.[417] It seems that the motif began its life as an astrological symbol, but it had acquired both religious and royal connotations, interpreted as a positive, life-giving symbol.[418] Although the design on this piece is confusing, it is possible that we have here a combat between a lion and a serpent, judging from the curved line above the lion, which could be interpreted as the body of a serpent. This scene could be a prototype of later similar representations in Islamic art.[419]

The costume of the central figure is highly reminiscent of byzantine royal dress, more specifically a heavily jewelled female version of the *loros,* seen in many representations of Byzantine empresses, popular after the 9th century. The hemline, the triangular drape, the bejewelled impression, the shape and position of the shoes and the staff and crown, all point to that direction.[420] On a related textile in the Brooklyn Museum, the soumak details and the red ground are attributed to Armenian workmanship,[421] an origin which, as well as a Byzantine, cannot be discarded. The stylised form of the foliage combined with the high quality of the piece and its similarity with 10th-12th century representations could suggest a date later than the usual time span of the group, namely between the 9th and the 10th century. The fineness of the materials and execution and the royal connotations of the iconography could suggest an important patronage for these *clavi*.

fig. 1 Nicephorus III Botaneiates and Maria of Alania in the Homilies of John Chrysostom in the Bibliotheque nationale de France, Manuscript Coislin 79 folio 2 bis verso, in https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/

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[416] See II 3.

[417] See, for example, the famous “coronation mantle” of Roger II.

[418] Gelfer-Jørgensen, *Medieval Islamic Symbolism,* p. 116-120; Willy Hartner and Richard Ettinghausen, “The Conquering Lion, the Life Cycle of a Symbol”, *Oriens*, vol. 17 (December 31, 1964), p. 161-171.

[419] For a study of this motif see Grube and Johns, *Cappella Palatina*, p. 220-223.

[420] See, for example, the manuscript miniatures of Maria of Antioch, together with Manuel Komnenos in the Vatican Library and of the empress Maria of Alania and Nicephorus III Botaneiates in the Homilies of John Chrysostom in the Bibliotheque nationale de France, Manuscript Coislin 79 folio 2 bis verso. Also, the representations of Zoe and Theodora in the crown of Constantine IX Monomachos, in Delvoye, *Byzantini Tehni*, p. 454, fig. 169 and the marble icon of Eudocia, in Alpay Pasinli, *Istanbul Archaeological Museums*, Istanbul 2009, no 118, p. 124, all 10th-12th century.

[421] Thompson, *Coptic Textiles*, no. 27 (Acc. no. 38.748), p. 64-66, pl. XIII.

VII. Textiles with a woollen Z-spun, S-plied warp

VII 1. 7184

Dimensions: 20.5x17 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, Z spun-S plied.
Weft: wool, Z.

Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing.

Description

Tapestry band with vegetal decoration on an ochre ground, consisting of two four-petalled flowers enclosed in rhomboid cartouches. The cartouches are formed by four oblong, pointed leaves, each coloured in two shades of green with a dark blue core. On the tips of each pair of leaves are dark blue, rounded squares, each decorated with four dots. These squares also appear in the space between the diamonds, unifying the design. The flowers consist of red, heart-shaped petals, highlighted with light green, an X-shaped, brown core and an ochre dot in the centre. Two half flowers also appear on the top and bottom side of the band, between the diamonds, but without the green highlighting of the petals. The piece has two different borders, neither of which survives complete. The upper has a brown ground and only its bottom part survives, possibly decorated with a row of flowers or hearts, woven in a very unusual hue of mauve. The lower border is green.

Comments

The piece is distinguished for its fineness of materials, its high thread count, and its symmetrical design, which suggest an expert weaver. The plied warp yarns, the Z-spinning of warps and wefts, the exclusive use of wool, the unusual colouring and the extensive use of the four-petalled rosette, could point to a non-Egyptian origin. Day suggests Syria as the place of origin of the four-petalled flower with heart-shaped leaves, which also appears on the ṭirāz of Marwān,[422] although the motif is so widespread that it cannot be claimed to be typical of any particular region.[423] However, Syria could indeed be the place of manufacture of our example, since it

[422] Day, "The Ṭirāz Silk of Marwān", p. 42-48.

[423] Kitzinger, "The Horse and Lion Tapestry" p. 31.

resembles certain textiles found in Dura Europos.[424] Similar four-petalled flowers are also found on pieces in the MAHG, datable to the 7th-8th century[425] and in Berlin, datable to the 4th-5th century.[426] Similar rosettes, though with a more pronounced, X-shaped core in an all over design also decorate the cloak of an attendant of Theodora in the Ravenna mosaic, as well as the curtain that hangs on the door towards which the entourage walks.

The clear design, the dominant motif of the four-petalled rosette and the resemblance with the Dura-Europos textile could point to an early dating, possibly in the 6th-7th century. Its plied warps suggests its use as a furnishing textile, possibly an imitation of the expensive, patterned silks. This piece is an example of the imported, Near Eastern pieces or the imitation of Near Eastern designs in the Egyptian textile market on the eve of the Islamic conquest.

[424] Pfister and Bellinger, *The Excavations at Dura Europos*, p. 39, pl. XXI.

[425] Martiniani-Reber et al., *Tissus coptes,* vol. 1, p. 63 and vol. 2, p. 41.

[426] Wulff and Volbach, *Spätantike und koptische Stoffe,* no. 9078, p. 9, pl. 7.

VII 2. 6976

Dimensions: 13.2x24 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, Z spun-S plied.
Weft: wool, Z, linen, S.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, dove tailing.

Description

Tapestry piece with six squares of a red grid pattern on a dark blue ground. Inside each square is a stylised flower with four ochre, triangular petals and a thick, X-shaped core. The X shape has a rhomboid, ochre core and a red and a green shaft. The petals on the horizontal axis and the corresponding sides of the squares have toothed endings, as a result of the dove tailing. On the corners of the grid are small white squares, except for the first row from the left. The bottom right part of the textile seems to have had a different decoration, forming a cross with dark blue and red elements on a white ground, although it is not possible to reconstruct the design. To the left of the grid pattern is a rosette consisting of concentric circles of red, orange and white, on which stands an eight-petalled flower. The flower has a dark blue core and dark green, oblong, rhomboid leaves.

Comments

The stylised floral decoration and its symmetrical arrangement, the plied warp and the Z-spun wool wefts allow a comparison with VII 1. The ornaments here have undergone a further degree of stylisation, which could be indicative of a different workshop and quality and not necessarily of a later date. The use of linen, which is S-spun, in contrast to wool, could be indicative of an Egyptian origin. Lattice patterns, with birds, flowers or figures are often seen on textiles, especially silks, datable up to the 9th century, although usually diagonally arranged,[427] and have been a trend in mosaics of the 5th-7th centuries.[428] Stylised flower patterns were also popular on wooden panel decoration, like those from Bāwīṭ Monastery, dated to the 8th century.[429] The association with panels is interesting, as in the rich households, the designs of the hangings and covers were often echoed on the painted wooden ceilings.[430] This lattice pattern, however, doesn't seem to survive on later textiles. Marangou dated this piece to the 6th century,[431] although a date in the 7th-8th century cannot be excluded.

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[427] See, for example the patterned silks in *Byzantium and Islam*, no 99A-D, p. 149-151.

[428] Gonosová, "The Formation", p. 227-237.

[429] *Byzantium and Islam*, no 52B, p. 84-85.

[430] László Török, *Transfigurations of Hellenism. Aspects of Late Antique Art in Egypt, AD 250-700*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2005, p. 120.

[431] Lila Marangou, *Mouseion Benaki: Koptika Yfasmata/ Coptic Textiles*, Athens 1971, p. 22.

VII 3. 15796

Dimensions: 51.5x49 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, Z spun-S plied.
Weft: wool, Z.
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, wide use of dove tailing.

Description

Large tapestry hanging decorated with birds in roundels and rosettes on a red ground. Three medallions with birds and a small part of two more medallions survive, the borders of which consist of rich vegetal decoration. The bird on the top roundel has a red body with scalloped ochre bands on its chest and back. It is decorated with light blue ovals -each bearing a dark blue diamond dot-and some ochre dots in between. The bird's head is green, but the area below its eye and beak is ochre. Its eye consists of a brown dot with a red outline. An ochre trefoil leaf hangs from the bird's beak. A green triangular crest stands on top of its head. Its neck is also green, with a tear shape in ochre, red and dark blue. Its legs and feet are ochre and stem from light blue ovals with dark blue dots in the centre. The bird has an upward, richly decorated tail, consisting of a central, ochre, pointed band, with a red stripe, splitting into a tripartite tip with small, green, trefoil leaves on top. On either side of the central band is a scalloped, light blue band, curling outwards, highlighted in dark blue, and a smaller ochre, highlighted in brown on the right side. The bird on the roundel below is similar, but with a straight outline on its chest, from which stem ochre and green trefoil leaves with dark blue tips. It is not possible to reconstruct the complete decoration of its body, but it seems that it included a green band with red and ochre leaf or flower designs. Its neck is ochre, with a dark blue and red tear shape and its eye is red. The bird's tail has no scalloped bands, but consist of ochre stems in the form of a scroll, which end in lance-shaped, trefoil or circular green, blue and ochre leaves and flowers. Only the head and tail of the bird in the left roundel survives. Its head, beak and neck are ochre, its neck has a red and blue tear shape, which extends to the head and curves around the eye. Its tail is made of three bands, a red with ochre dots in the middle and two blue with horizontal, ochre stripes on the sides, enclosed in an ochre outline, from the sides and the top of which emanate leaves and flowers of different shapes, similar to the ones appearing on the tail of the second bird.

The roundels have similar, rich, floriated, polygonal borders. The upper is ochre with an inscribed blue, scalloped band and ochre dots on the corners, and the lower is blue with a green band and red dots. From the dots stem flowers of different design. Some are cup-shaped, with multi-coloured petals, others trefoil, and others have four heart-shaped petals. Between these flowers are smaller, green, three-petalled flowers, emanating from the sides of the polygon. Inside the corners of the polygon are also small, trefoil flowers. Ochre trefoils are found between the inner flowers of the polygon and also on top of the flowers of the outer corners. On the ground between the roundels are two large rosettes, consisting of rows of triangular petals. The topmost rosette has a red, circular core, containing a flower with a blue, diamond centre and four ochre, circular leaves. The petals of the inner row are alternately blue and light green. Those of the second row are red and larger, with an ochre and yellow core. The third row consists of bicoloured petals of light green and blue. The rest of the rosette is made of consecutive rows of ochre petals with a brown outline, most of them arranged in trefoils, with a light green triangle in their centre. The smaller rosette below follows the same pattern. Its centre is blue with a red dot in the middle and ochre dots around it, in a cross shape. The outer row of petals is green and blue. Three half rosettes with the same arrangement in various colour combinations are found on the right edge of the textile, just before the start of the border.

The piece has a double border. The inner, narrower has an ochre ground, decorated with a vertical row of two kinds of flowers. One of these is similar to the heart-petalled flower of the medallion borders. The second kind is a bud, with two ochre and red, pointed petals, on top of which are trefoil leaves, a third, blue or green, oval petal between them, a triangular core with two circles on either side, and red, curling sepals. This band is framed by two narrow blue bands that bear ochre vine scrolls. The outer, wider border has a red ground, on which appear several vegetal decorative elements: dotted rosettes, trefoil leaves, tear-shaped buds, stemming from ochre sepals, which are parts of vine scrolls, four-petalled flowers with two rows of petals, curled triangular buds or leaves with a circular core and also three-petalled flowers with a triangular core and two semi-circles above. Blue dots also appear on the ground. The design of this band is not clear, since it is largely destroyed.

A second narrow textile fragment, catalogued under the same number and placed now, on top of the first, seems to have formed part of the same textile. On it, part of the vine scroll and flower of the border band of the larger piece can be identified

Comments

This piece belongs to a group of textiles with rich vegetal decoration and birds in roundels, represented in many collections. Most characteristic among them are those in the PC.[432] Pfister acknowledges the Iranian origin of these pieces and discusses parallels found in the reliefs of Taq-i-Bustan, in mosaics of Jerusalem, dated to the end of the 7th century and in stuccos of Ctesiphon. He argues that these pieces were made before the fall of the Sasanid empire, especially as they do not present elements of decadence.[433] Overlaet, who studied these pieces 50 years later, agrees with Pfister's dating for some of them and attributes them to the middle, or the second half of the 7th century. Of course, as Overlaet himself notes, there is no evidence to suggest that they couldn't have been made during the first decades of Islamic rule, since the Sasanian artistic tradition, as well as the Sasanian textile industry institutions are known to have survived for many decades and to have

[432] R Pfister, "Coqs sassanides", p. 40-47, pl. XXV-XXVIII; Overlaet, "Sassanian and post-Sassanian Tapestries", in De Jonghe et al., *Ancient Tapestries*, pp. 125-141, pl. LXIV-LXVIII and fig. 3-6, 11, 16, 21-22, 24-25, 29.

[433] Pfister, "Coqs sassanides", pp. 44-45.

been adopted by the new rulers.[434] Other related fragments of the PC, however, are attributed to a later period. No 7426,[435] presents striking similarities with our piece in the design of the medallion borders and the rosettes, but it is too fragmentary for a secure comparison. A quite similar floral border is also found in another fragment of the PC.[436] Overlaet, comparing these fragments with analogous textiles and taking into consideration what he claims to be a "degenerated Sasanian iconography", dated them to the 8th or early 9th century.[437] A similar fragment in the Cluny, which has the same warp and weft twist as our example and also analogous density, had also been studied by Pfister, who attributed it to Mesopotamia on the basis of the, strange to Egypt, red dye used and of the Z twist of the yarns, and dated it close to the Fāṭimid period, based on stylistic grounds.[438] Lorquin also suggested an 10th or11th century date, based mainly on Pfister.[439] Overlaet, on the other hand, places it to the 8th-early 9th century[440] and Desrosiers to the middle of the 8th, also suggesting an Iraqi or Iranian origin.[441] Another comparable piece in the TMW bears an inscription mentioning the name of the caliph Marwān- in all probability Marwān II- and is therefore dated to 744-749. Kühnel and Bellinger attributed this piece to Mesopotamia or Persia, because of the dove tailing, the plied warp and the Z spinning. They even formulated the hypothesis that it might have been one of the objects brought to Egypt by Marwān himself, on his flight to the country.[442]

Similar pieces are also found in the MIK[443] and the MIC.[444] Resembling vegetal decoration is also found in pieces of the Bouvier, attributed to Iran, Iraq or Egypt and dated to the 8th century, due to the similarity of the decoration with the mosaics of Umayyad monuments, like the Dome of the Rock and Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbi.[445] Furthermore, these complicated, multi-layered floral borders are also characteristic of 8th century Central Asian and Near Eastern textiles.[446] Based on these comparisons, we could date our piece, which exhibits the characteristics of high quality craftsmanship (high density, fine materials) but a more stylised design than the 7th century Pfister examples, to the 8th century. Its technical details (Z-spinning, wide use of dove-tailing, woollen warp and weft) could suggest an imported piece, although an Egyptian manufacture cannot be excluded.

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[434] De Jonghe et al., *Ancient Tapestries*, p. 127.

[435] Overlaet, "Sassanian and post-Sassanian tapestries", p. 130-131, fig. 11.

[436] Ibid., no 7440, pp. 136-137, ill. LXVII, fig. 22.

[437] Ibid., p. 131.

[438] Pfister, "Matériaux", p. 82-83.

[439] Lorquin, *Les tissus coptes*, nos 102 (especially), 103, p. 256-259.

[440] Overlaet, "Sassanian and post-Sassanian tapestries", footnote 66, p. 145.

[441] Desrosiers, *Soieries,* no 4, p. 65-66.

[442] Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue*, p. 5-6, pl. I.

[443] Wulff and Volbach, *Spätantike und Koptische Wirkereien.*

[444] no 66741, unpublished, in Lorquin, *Les tissus coptes*, p. 257.

[445] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 1-8, p. 43-53.

[446] Overlaet, "Sassanian and post-Sassanian Tapestries", p. 137; Guitty Azarpay, *Sogdian Painting: The Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art*, University of California Press 1981, p. 48-49.

The species of the birds represented in these textiles has been a matter of debate. Pfister saw them as cocks, birds with a sacred connotation in ancient Persian culture.[447] Picard, on the other hand argued that they are actually ducks. He also questioned the Sasanian origin of the iconography and, consequently, the Iranian manufacture proposed for many of these pieces, which he considers products of Egyptian workshops.[448] In fact, several slightly different bird designs are seen in these textiles, which could be either pheasants, cocks, ducks, doves, peacocks, birds of prey, griffins or a Chamrosh, an archetype of the Iranian mythology,[449] or even an adaptation of different iconographic characteristics. The Iranian flavour attributed to all these textiles derives from the existence of silk, so called "Sasanian", textiles, of eastern origin, which bear similar birds, with flamboyant tails and plumage bearing geometrical decoration and presented usually with pendants and fluttering ribbons. (figs. 1-3).[450] This type of bird is also found on other forms of Sasanian art, like silverware (fig. 4). In any case, it seems that these textiles were inspired by Near Eastern prototypes and that their continuous copying had lead to a distortion of the original characteristics of the species that were originally represented and, probably, a loss of their symbolism, if there ever was one.

Several other textiles seem to belong to the same category, although they present differences in design and, sometimes, in technical aspects. A very interesting example is a woollen tapestry with S-spun linen warp in the CMA, which Shepherd has dated to the first half of the 9th century, based mainly on epigraphic evidence (fig. 5).[451] The arrangement of the design is similar to that of our group, with rows of birds in roundels, alternating with rosettes and half-rosettes and bands of floral borders on the sides. Nevertheless, the CMA piece has S-spun warp and weft yarns and also has linen. Furthermore, the roundels have pearl instead of floral borders, the rosettes are more stylised and simple and the birds are considerably different. They seem to represent an intermediary stage between the "Sasanian-influenced" birds -a fact especially evident in the decoration of their bodies- and the birds in roundels of the group with double linen warp, already examined and attributed to Bahnasā (I 8-13).

It appears, therefore, that during Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid times there was a taste among the ruling class for textiles decorated with birds in roundels, which probably had their prototypes in the Iranian or Central Asian textile industry and some of which might have actually been made in those countries. This type of fabrics, it seems, kept being produced in Egypt for at least two centuries, by workshops of different quality, for both special clients and a wider public, with the iconography, the materials and the technical details being gradually more influenced by local weaving traditions.

Publications: Sophia Tsourinaki in *Égypte, la trame de l'Histoire*, no 123, p. 173.

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[447] Pfister, "Coqs sassanides", p. 44.

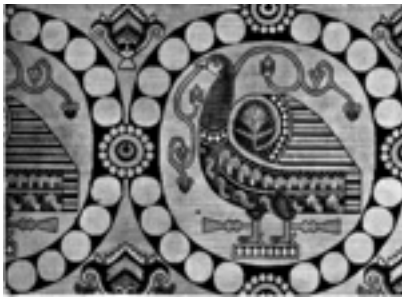
[448] Ch. Picard, "Propos archeologiques sur des pretendus 'coqs sassanides' ", *Revue Archeologique, Sixieme Serie*, T. 18 (Juillet-Decembre 1941), p. 61-120

[449] Abolala Soudavar, "Looking through the *Two Eyes of the Earth*: A Reassessment of Sasanian Rock Reliefs", *Iranian Studies*, vol. 45, no 1 (January 2012), p. 55-57 and fig. 22.

[450] See D. Talbot Rice, "The Third International Congress and Exhibition of Iranian Art and Archaeology, Leningrad 1935", *Ars Islamica*, vol. 3, No 1 (1936), p.102, fig. 3, datable to the 6th century, Von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte*, Abb. 96-100, datable to the beginning of the 7th century; Van Strydonck and Van der Borg, "The Construction of a Preparation Line", p. 228-234; The latter is found in the Jouarre Abbey and has been radiocarbon dated to the end of the 7th-beginning of the 8th century; also *Les Perses sassanides*, no 126, p. 176.

[451] Shepherd, "An Early Ṭirāz", pp. 7-14.

figs. 1, 2 Silks in Museo Sacro, Vatican, in Von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte*, Abb. 98, 99



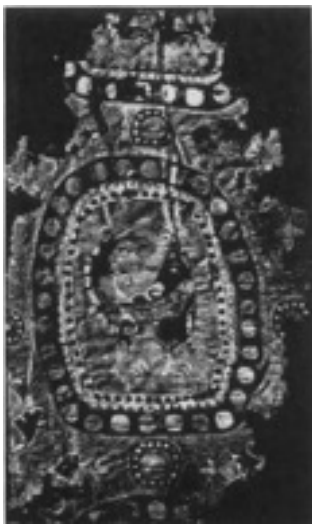


fig. 3 "Sasanian" textile in Talbot Rice "Iranian Art", p. 102.

fig. 4 Sasanian silver jug in the MFAB (footnote 452)

fig. 5 Tapestry panel in the CMA in Shepherd,"An Early Ṭirāz", p. 9.

VII 4. 15625

Dimensions: a) 33.6x12.5 cm
b) 15.5x7.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: wool, Z spun-S plied.
Weft: wool, Z.
Tapestry
Twill tapestry, slit tapestry, slanted weft, wide use of dove tailing.

Description

Two tapestry pieces with vegetal decoration and birds on a red ground. The condition of the pieces is very fragmentary. On the right part of the large fragment is the upper part of a bird, similar to those on VII 3. The decoration of its body consists of differently shaped, superimposed bands, each with a different design. The front part is ochre and bears a cloud-shaped adornment of dark blue and green. A similar, although smaller adornment is found on the back of the bird's body. In the middle of its body, is another, diagonal band. On its upper part is a light blue oval with an inscribed ochre heart, outlined in red. The rest of the band is decorated with ochre and green dots on a red ground. At the base of the bird's neck is a red band with ochre pearls that continues in front of its neck, in the form of a dark blue, semi-circular necklace with an attached large, cross-shaped jewel, protruding unnaturally forward. The cross has an ochre and green diamond centre and three brown arms, ending in light and dark blue crescents with a red and ochre tip. Behind the bird's neck flutters an ochre undulant scarf or ribbon. Its neck is light green, decorated with a tear shape in ochre, red and light blue. The top of its head is also light green, while the area around and below its eye is ochre with a red outline. Its eye is a brown dot enclosed in a dark blue circle and its beak ochre with a brown outline. On top of its head is a crest consisting of three brown stripes, each ending in a light blue and ochre circle. To the right of the bird are three ochre, oblong bands of different height, probably part of the bird's tail. They bear two parallel, vertical, red lines in the centre, from which stem light blue, diagonal stripes. To the left is a variety of decorative elements, but it is impossible to reconstruct the full pattern. At the bottom is a rosette with three flowers stemming from pairs of light blue sepals with scalloped edges in a circular arrangement. The flowers have a red triangular core, and two rows of petals, the lower ochre and oblong, the upper a dark blue trefoil with light blue and ochre outlines. Two small brown circles, each decorated with a flower made of six ochre dots and one red in the centre, are found above and to the left of the rosette. Further to the left seems to stand another bird, of which only part of its ochre body survives. Its decoration is similar to that of the tail of the first bird and consists of red stripes and short light blue bands – some of which are leaf-shaped – placed at different angles. In the middle are two symmetrically placed light blue ovals with a dark blue centre, possibly the bird's legs. This bird's brown outline bears prickly protrusions. On either side of it are groups of oblong bands of unclear function, almost identical to the tail of the first bird, but also with prickly outlines. A third bird seems to have existed further to the left and another group of bands next to it.

Comments

This piece belongs to the same group as VII 3. The design is confused, basically due to the fragmentary state of the piece, but the finesse of the materials is remarkable, although the textile bears heavy traces of dust and dirt. A similar representation of the bird's feathers as diagonally placed bands, is found in one of the earliest fragments of the PC.[452] The presence of twill tapestry on this piece is certainly rare and, again, reminding of the PC fragments.

The necklaces or pendants, often ending in ribbons, fluttering behind the animal's or bird's neck, is a motif very common in Sasanian art, which outlived the Sasanian empire and spread towards both East and West.[453] This motif gradually lost its original significance, and is often presented, in later examples, in an abstract form, although here it is still clearly recognisable. The decorative pendants seem to have existed in Egyptian art at least since the Ptolemaic period.[454] Pendants in an almost vertical position, though not cross-shaped, are found in a number of textiles, such as on a tapestry fragment in the TMW[455] and on silk weaves from Antinopolis[456] and Jouarre - the latter dated to late 7th-early 8th century.[457] The birds on the PC example also bear a protruding pendant. The clearly shaped fluttering ribbon, the pearled necklace, the pendant and the arrangement of the plumage in superimposed bands bring this example closer to the Near Eastern prototypes in silk, already discussed above.

Based on all evidence, we could date this piece slightly earlier than the rest of the group, possibly to the 7th- early 8th century.

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[452] Pfister, "Coqs sassanides", pl. XXVIIb.

[453] Overlaet, "Sassanian and post-Sassanian Tapestries", p. 129. See also chapter 3c. Iconography, p. 105.

[454] Gustave Lefebvre, *Le tombeau de Petosiris*, Le Caire 1923, pl. XX, XXXV, XLVI, XLIX.

[455] Bier, "Textiles", p. 137, no 61.

[456] Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus coptes*, p. 44-45.

[457] Van Strydonck and Van der Borg, "The Construction of a Preparation Line", p. 228-234.

VII 5. 15627

Dimensions: 27x11.5 cm

Technical analysis
Warp: undyed wool; Z spun-S plied; 0,48-0,67mm
Weft: wool; Z; 0,17-0,54mm
Tapestry
Slit tapestry, slanted weft, wide use of dove tailing.

Description

Tapestry medallion with confronted birds on either side of a tree, on a red ground. The birds, of which only the left survives complete, are of a type similar to those on VII 3 and VII 4. It has an ochre body with a large rectangle, consisting of dark blue and olive squares with an ochre or red dot in their centre. The rectangle is enclosed in an uneven, undulant red frame. Its neck is dark blue with an ochre triangle, reminiscent of the tear shape of the previous examples and a red pearl band. Its head is ochre with an ochre circular eye, outlined in dark blue and a pointed beak. Its upward tail with the curved tip, consists of an olive green and a dark blue zig-zag band, and two shorter, ochre bands on either side, with outward, curved tips. The ochre band on the left has a scalloped edge and a twofold blue leaf attached to it. The bird's ochre, rectangular feet have a blue stripe in the middle. Ochre trefoil leaves appear behind the bird. The central tree has a long trunk of alternating ochre and green parts. Its base is ochre and has two "legs". Its top is green ending in two sepals, which, together with two more ochre above them, envelop a flower. The flower has a core consisting of two ochre ovals with red centres. Above them is an ochre and green, triangular bud ending on top in three triangles, two ochre on the sides and a dark blue with an ochre centre in the middle. On either side of the bud are traces of ochre petals and a smaller, ochre, oval bud, highlighted in dark blue. The birds and the tree stand on two dark blue leaves with green dots and green and ochre highlights, emanating from a common stem.

The roundel has a double border. The inner is made of a row of flowers, each consisting of two green circles, partly outlined in dark blue, on either side of an ochre trefoil, and ochre, curling sepals. The outer border consists of obovate ochre elements with a dark blue outline and a twofold tip, curved outwards. In the centre of each is a dark blue stem with two pairs of pointed protrusions and a bilobed tip, outlined in red. Between the obovate elements are small ochre dots and a double row of stylised trefoil leaves.

Comments

The design is here more stylised and linear, compared to the previous specimen of the group, a fact evident especially in the posture, decoration and expression of the bird. The motif is a variation of the tree of life. Confronted birds are also found in the textile of Marwān in the TMW, dated to 744-749, where we encounter the same linear rendering, although the design is slightly different.[458] Birds on either side of a cruciform tree are also found on a piece in the Aachen Cathedral, datable to the 8th-9th centuries (fig. 1),[459] the decoration of which is highly stylised and geometrical. The plumage of the birds is given in the form of squares, as on our example, although the squares have foliage decoration. Another similarity is the leaf below the birds. The arrangement of a bird's plumage in squares is also seen on PC examples,[460] datable to the 7th-9th century and also in a 7th-century fresco from Kyzil in Central Asia[461] and in a Sacramentary of the National Library in Paris dated to the end of 8th-beginning of 9th century.[462]

The flowers forming the inner border of the roundel are also seen in a piece of the Bouvier-datable to the 8th century and attributed to Iran or Iraq.[463] Similar flowers are found on a piece of the PC (fig. 2),[464] which Overlaet interpreted as pomegranates, rendered in a stylised pattern – namely with their interior compartments shown and differently coloured – that was characteristic of the Umayyad period, and proposed a 7th-8th century date.[465] A dating to the 8th century could also be proposed for our piece.

fig. 1 Textile in Aachen (footnote 465)

fig. 2 Textile in the PC (footnote 470)

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[458] Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue*, p. 5-6, pl. I.

[459] Carl Baldwin, "Sassanian Ducks in a Western Manuscript", *Gesta*, vol. 9, no 1 (1970), p. 9.

[460] Pfister, "Coqs sassanides", pl. XXVIIb; especially Overlaet, "Sassanian and post-Sassanian Tapestries", n 7443, pp. 137-138, ill. LXVIII.

[461] De Jonghe et al., *Ancient Tapestries*, p. 157, fig. 9.

[462] Baldwin, "Sassanian Ducks", p. 3, fig. 1, 2.

[463] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no 2, pp. 45-46.

[464] Pfister, "Matériaux", p. 83, pl. XXXII, no E4.

[465] Overlaet, "Sassanian and post-Sassanian Tapestries", no 7444, p. 138-139. (For the attribution of the pomegranates to the Umayyad period see Jens Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*, P. Von Zabern 1982, p. 235-236).

VIII. Embroidered textiles

VIII 1. 6990

Dimensions: 9.5x9.7 cm

Technical analysis

Plain Weave
Warp: cotton, S.
Weft: cotton, S.
Embroidery
Weft: wool, S spun, Z plied; cotton, Z spun, S plied; green linen, S spun, Z plied.
split/chain stitch, back stitch.

Description

Embroidered medallion with six running animals around a rosette. The rosette consists of elongated, rhomboid petals, alternately red and green, with a white cross. Between the tips of the rhomboid petals are small dark blue, triangular petals. The rosette has a dark blue outline framed with ochre. The animals around the rosette resemble hares. They are set on a red ground and appear to be running to the right. They have an oblong body and four oblong legs of which the hind are bent and the front are stretched forward. They have oval heads with an open mouth, a round eye and two oblong ears projecting backwards. Their tails are long and hang downwards, except for one case, where it curves upwards and another where it is short, probably due to lack of space. The hares are ochre, white, dark blue, ochre, white and green. All except from the dark blue have a green outline. The white and ochre hares have a green eye while the rest have ochre. The medallion has the same outline as the rosette.

Comments

This piece could be part of a garment or furnishing textile. The mixture of stitch types gives a somewhat uneven appearance. The backstitch is not only used here for the outlines, as is the usual practice, but also as a filling.

The popular theme of the hares[466] is here combined with a rosette in a circular composition to fit with the shape of the medallion. This decoration is not very common on textiles, though hares in octagons around a central vegetal and geometrical composition are found, for example, in a bicoloured tapestry roundel in the MTIB, radiocarbon dated to 250-430, a piece, however, very different technically and aesthetically from our example.[467]

A group of fragments with similar, allover embroidery is well represented in many collections and is generally attributed to the 9th century, mainly because a number of them have been found in an ʿAbbāsid level during the Fusṭāṭ excavations.[468] This dating was confirmed by the radiocarbon analysis of a comparable piece with rosettes on a red ground from the KN, which produced a date between 726 and 890 (fig. 1).[469] Most of these fragments have a cotton ground and are embroidered with plied woollen and cotton yarns in chain stitch. The origin of these pieces is debatable, considered either Egyptian, Iranian or Iraqi, mainly because of the use of a cotton base and of their vegetal themes, which seem inspired by Sasanian models.[470] However, it seems that cotton was employed in small quantities on Egyptian textiles of the 8th-9th century (e.g. V 6-7).

These pieces seem to continue the tradition of allover embroidery that was alive in Egypt since Late Antiquity,[471] but, based on the evidence known so far, it does not seem to continue in this form after the 9th century.

fig. 1 Fragment of embroidered textile in the KN (footnote 469)

[466] For the hare motif see Gelfer-Jørgensen, *Medieval Islamic Symbolism*, p. 127-129.

[467] Cabrera Lafuente, *La industrial textil,* p. 291-293.

[468] See, for example, Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, nos 175-177, p. 277-280.

[469] KN inventory number 1374-03 in http://www.textile-dates.uni-bonn.de/textile_list_start.php?textile_id=436

[470] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, p. 277-278.

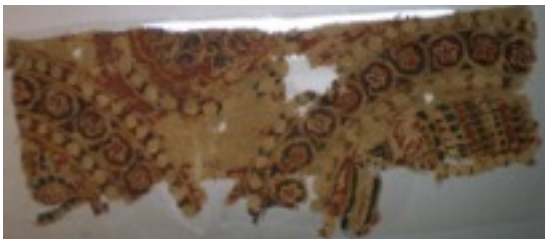
[471] See chapter 2b. Techniques, p. 88-91.

VIII 2. 7204

Dimensions: 66x26.5 cm

Technical analysis

Plain Weave
Warp: cotton, S.
Weft: cotton, S.
Embroidery
Weft: wool, S spun, Z plied; cotton, Z spun, S plied.
split/chain stitch, back stitch.



Description

Poorly preserved embroidered piece with parts of two large and a smaller pearl bordered medallions. The large ones have borders consisting of two rows of white pearls, framing a central stylised scroll. The pearls stand on a red ground and are separated by dark blue or light green I shapes. The yellow scroll is set on a dark blue ground and is made of consecutive, open circles each enclosing a red, four-petalled flower, highlighted with an alternately white and yellow outline and having a dot of the opposite colour in the centre. The medallion on the left preserves only a small part of its decoration on a red ground. A leaf with an outline of dark blue pearls is visible and traces of a yellow area and of another leaf border with red pearls are also seen. The medallion on the right preserves a foiled decoration, of consecutive rows of square, rectangular or semi-circular foils, red or dark blue outlined in green, set in yellow or white bands. It is bordered by a row of white pearls. To the left of it is a small triangle and below it a stripe of dark blue dots, which also appear on top of the foiled decoration. Further below is an oblong, white outline framed by dark blue stripes with green outlines. The small medallion has a single pearl border. On its red ground appear white, curved stems bearing dark blue, comma-shaped leaves, with a yellow or green dot in their centre. Other ornaments also appear, like dark blue and yellow stripes, dark blue dots and white C-shapes, all enclosed in a yellow, polylobed frame.

Comments

This textile belongs to the same group as VIII 1 and can be dated within the same time span. It is very fragmentary so that its decoration cannot be reconstructed. Nevertheless, the surviving parts bring to mind the tapestries with birds and rosettes on a red ground (VII 3-5) and the relative Central Asian or "Sasanian" silks. The foiled decoration could indeed represent the plumage of a bird. A group of silk embroideries, attributed to Iraq and dated to the 10th century are decorated with birds in smaller and larger medallions.[472] Our example could have been inspired by such luxurious pieces. It seems that the decoration with birds in pearl roundels was employed in tapestries, compound weaves and embroideries alike.

[472] Wiet, "Tissus brodes Mesopotamiens", *Ars Islamica*, vol. 4 (1937), p. 54-63.

VIII 3. 7206

Dimensions: 25x13 cm

Technical analysis

Plain Weave
Warp: cotton, S.
Weft: cotton, S.
Embroidery
Weft: wool, S spun, Z plied; cotton, Z spun, S plied.
split/chain stitch, back stitch.

Description

Embroidered fragment with a rider on a red ground. Only the front part of the horse survives. The rider has his right arm stretched on top of the horse's head, possibly holding the reins and his left hand, the arm of which does not survive, holds a yellow lance in a horizontal position. His body consists of a funnel-shaped torso and a diagonally placed lower body, separated by a white belt and outlined in ochre, red and white. He wears a green costume with a red oval on its torso and a yellow on its lower body. On the rider's ochre, frontal, round head are traces of the brown outlines of the large eyes, nose and mouth, but their shape cannot be defined. He has a short, ochre neck. On top of his head is an oblong, yellow hat with a red stripe in the centre. The rider's right arm consists of green, ochre and red stripes, which are extensions of the outlines of his torso. His hands, which are very large and look like clenched fists are ochre with brown lines denoting the fingers. The green, realistically rendered horse is seen in profile. It has a hooked shaped neck and head bent downwards, an ochre and brown square eye, small, triangular ears and an ochre mane with brown vertical stripes. The reins are white with red outlines. The horse is decorated with patches: a yellow and curved square around its right front leg, an ochre triangle on its neck, an ochre oval with a red and white centre below its eye and an ochre circle at the base of its head. Below the rider is a red area with a white square inside, set on a round, ochre frame, possibly a saddlecloth. The horse has its left front leg raised, while its right stands on the ground. Below the horse are two rows of oblate, white pearls.

Comments

This piece falls into the same category as VIII 1 and VIII 2, although its figural representation differentiates it. The motif of the rider was common in textiles of the 4th-6th centuries, but seems to continue being in use well after that.[473] The fragment does not allow us to conceive the full composition. This figure brings to mind those on tapestries of the 8th-10th centuries,[474] a fact that corresponds with the radiocarbon dating of this group of embroidered textiles.

[473] For the horseman motif see II 11.

[474] See, for example, the Benaki tapestry fragment with the musician, museum no 8496 in https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/477931 and two roundels in Cleveland (nos. 1950.541 and 1952.255 in http://clevelandart.org/art/1950.541 and http://clevelandart.org/art/1952.255 See also the tapestry hangings with riders in Mackie, *Symbols of Power*, fig. 2.43-2.44, p. 78-79.

VIII 4. 7213

Dimensions: 11x7 cm

Technical analysis

Plain Weave
Warp: cotton, S.
Weft: cotton, S.
Embroidery
Weft: wool, S spun, Z plied; cotton, Z spun, S plied.
split/chain stitch, back stitch.

Description

Fragment of an embroidered medallion picturing a drinking figure on a red ground. The figure, only the upper part of which survives, has an oval, beige head with large, dark blue and white oval eyes, a straight nose, connected to slightly curved eyebrows and mouth, and semi-circular ears. He seems to have originally had long, yellow hair, which is now missing. He also has a short, thick neck. On top of his head are two red semi-circles with yellow outlines. He wears a turquoise costume with long sleeves, outlined in red and has beige hands. His right, extremely thin arm is bent to the chest and his hand holds an orange, triangular cup, also outlined in red. His left arm is bent upwards, and his clenched hand holds a red, tear-shaped bottle with a thin, long neck and a yellow centre, outlined in green.

Comments

The image of the drinking figure alludes to the pleasures of the court and the princely cycle, as the figure seen on II 4. Although these representations, as already discussed, are not common on textiles, these pieces show that they existed and must have not been isolated examples, since they are employed on textiles of different technologies and qualities, indicating that several different workshops or individual weavers had included them in their repertoire. The figure's face resembles that on VIII 3 and the related figures on tapestries of the 8th-10th centuries, and it could be dated within the same time span, when the first representations of the Islamic princely cycle seem also to appear on textiles.[475]

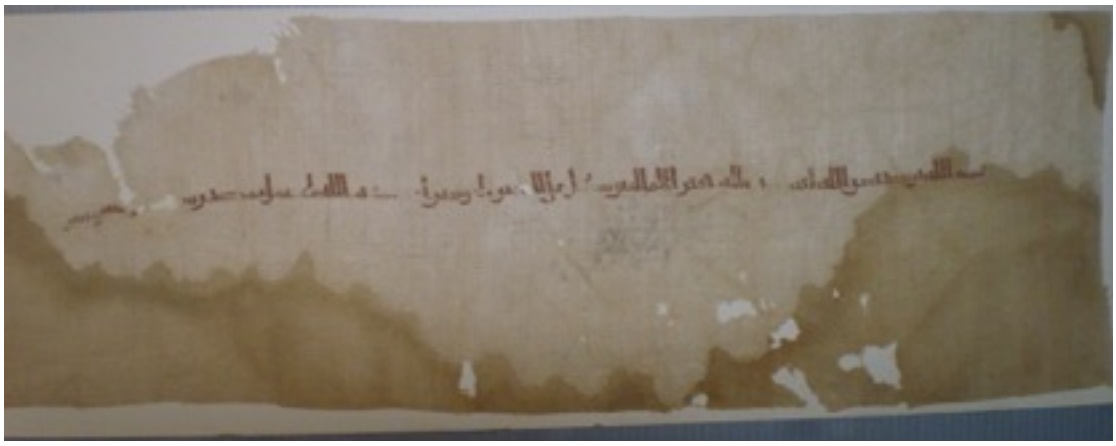
[475] For the theme of the seated ruler see also chapter 2c. Iconography, p. 112-113.

VIII 5. 14855

Dimensions: 14.5x43.3cm

Technical analysis

Plain Weave
Warp: linen, S.
Weft: linen, S.
Embroidery
brick-red silk
flat stitch, couching stitch, chain stitch.



Description

Embroidered brick red, angular inscription on a white linen ground. The inscription has relatively small proportions, without particularly tall letter shafts. It runs on a straight line, except for the letters that go below it. It reads *bi-smi llāhi barakatu mina llāhi li-binti (?) ʿabdi llāhi jaʿfari l-imāmi l-mutawakkili ʿalā llāhi amīri l-muʾminīn ayyadu-hu llāhu mimmā ʿumila bi-miṣri sanat ...*" In the name of God, the blessing of God on the daughter (?) of the servant of God Jaʿfar, the imam al-Mutawakkil, he who relies upon God, commander of the believers, may God protect him, what was made in Miṣr, in the year…".[476]

Comments

The base line of the inscription and the circular letters are made in couching stitch, the shafts in flat stitch and the tails in chain stitch. The inscription states that it was made in Fusṭāṭ for the ʿAbbāsid caliph al Mutawakkil, who reigned from 847 until 861 (or possibly for his daughter). Two pieces with similarly embroidered inscriptions, also mentioning the caliph al Mutawakkil and one of them the factory of Miṣr and also the year 240AH (854-855AD) are found in the TMW.[477]

Ṭirāz bands with embroidered inscriptions seem to have been produced in Egypt during the 9th-early 10th century, possibly in imitation of the Iraqi embroidered pieces with the caliphal protocol.

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[476] Benaki Museum archives

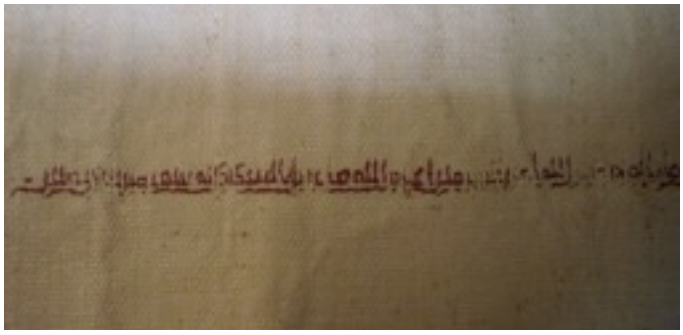
[477] Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue*, nos 73.645 and 73.652, p. 6 and 8, pl. II.

VIII 6. 14797

Dimensions: 24x29.5cm

Technical analysis

Plain Weave
Warp: linen, S. (silk???)
Weft: linen, S. (silk???) see the TMW piece
Embroidery
red silk
couching stitch, stem stitch?



Description

This minuscule, fragmentary, embroidered, red, kufic inscription (the letters have a height of about 5mm) is set on a glazed linen ground. The letters are angular and quite short. The lam and alef form an X shape, connected at the base. Some of the letters go below the base line of the inscription, where a second, possibly continuous line is formed. The inscription reads “bi-smi llāhi a-raḥmani a-raḥimi barakatu mina llāhi li-ʿabdi llāhi aḥmadi l-īmāmi l-muʿtamid ālā llāhi āmīri l-muʾminīni aʿza-hu llāhu bi-ʿumila fī ṭirāzi l-Īskandarīa sanat thamānīa…”, “ In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate, the blessing of God to the servant of God Aḥmad the imam al-Muʿtamid ala llah, commander of the believers, may God make him glorious, that which was made in the workshop of Alexandria, in the year …8”.[478]

Comments

The ʿAbbāsid caliph Muʿtamid reigned from 870-892. A similar inscription is found on a piece of the TMW,[479] also mentioning al-Muʿtamid, Alexandria and the year 272AH (885-886 AD). The couching stitches seem to be characteristic of Egyptian embroidered ṭirāz, in contrast to the chain stitches of the Iraqi products. Bellinger argues that the earliest Egyptian ṭirāz were worked in couching stitch, which seemed logical for weavers who were used to work with tapestry, as the Egyptians.[480] This example also agrees with Bellinger’s description of Alexandrian ṭirāz, on which the base line of the inscription was laid first and the vertical stitches of the letters started just below them, couching them down.[481]

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[478] Benaki Museum archives

[479] Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue,* no 73.634, p. 11, pl. IV.

[480] Ibid., p. 105.

[481] Ibid., p. 106.

VIII 7. 14821

Dimensions: 24x17cm

Technical analysis

Plain Weave
Warp: linen, S. (silk???)
Weft: linen, S. (silk??)
Embroidery
red silk
flat stitch, chain stitch, back stitch, couching stitch.

Description

Part of an embroidered, red, angular inscription with a decorative character on a white linen ground. The letters are medium-sized, have tall shafts and are quite bold, due to the double or triple lines of stitches. The tall shafts end in an inverted gamma-shaped projection, the medium shafts have a right-angled triangular tip, while the round letters have a cross on their top. From the beginning or the end of the words start tails that go below the base line of the inscription. These tails do not always correspond to specific letters, but have a decorative character and run across the whole length of the inscription. The inscription reads "[ḥā]mid bin al-aʿbāsi fī ṭirāzi tinisi aʿlā yadī shafīʿ mawlā āmīri l-muʾminīni sanat tisaʿ thalāthmāīʾā", "Hamid ibn al-ʿAbbas, in the workshop of Tinnīs under the supervision of Shafiʿ client of the commander of the believers, in the year 309".[482]

Comments

The inscription states that it was made in Tinnīs in the year 921-922, which falls under the reign of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Muqtadir, who reigned between 908 and 932, and is therefore very close chronologically to 14803-VIII 7. The style of the inscription is, however, very different. The little crosses seen above the letters are among the characteristics of the ṭirāz products of Tinnīs that Bellinger has described.[483] A similar inscription is found on a piece of the TMW, mentioning the supervisor Shafiʿ and the year 307AH (919 AD).[484]

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[482] Combe et al., *Repertoire*, vol. 3, no 1038, p. 135.

[483] Kühnel and Bellinger, *Catalogue*, p. 106.

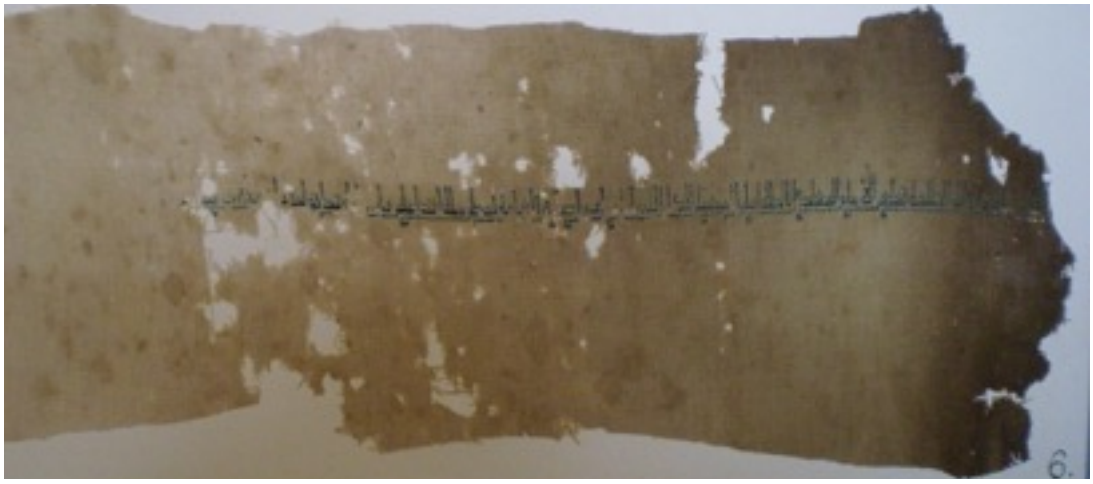
[484] Ibid., no 73.530, p. 26, pl. IX.

VIII 8. 14803

Dimensions: 25x10.5cm

Technical analysis

Plain Weave
Warp: linen, Z.
Weft: linen, Z.
Embroidery
green-blue linen?
couching stitch, back stitch.



Description

Part of an embroidered, green-blue angular inscription on a linen ground. The letters are angular with tall shafts giving to the inscription an overall tight and slender appearance. Some of the letters, mainly the first or last of the words, go beyond the base line, forming lines of different length, which end in a rightward comma. This line is similar to that on VIII 6. The lam and alef seem to form an X shape, connected at the base. Towards the end of the inscription, the green-blue thread at the base line is replaced by a dark blue one. The inscription reads "[barakatu mi]na llāhi wa yumnu li-ʿabdi llāhi l-khalifāti jaʿfari l-īmāmi l-muqtadiri bi-llāhi āmīri l-muʾminīni āṭāla llāhu baqāʿ fī ṭirāzi l-aʿāmmati bi-miṣri sanat āḥdā aʿshrat thalāthmāiʾā", "The blessing of God and prosperity to the servant of God, the caliph Jaʿfar al-imam al-Muqtadir-billah, commander of the believers, may God prolong his reign. In the public workshop of Miṣr, in the year 311".[485]

Comments

This is another example of an embroidery of Egyptian manufacture made in the year 923-924 for the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Muqtadir, who reigned from 908 to 932. It presents similarities with VIII 6, which is said to have been made in Alexandria, like the X-shaped lam alef, the second line below the base line of the inscription and the rhomboid shape of the mims, although here back stitch is used for the base line.

[485] Combe et al., *Repertoire*, vol. 3, no 1061, p. 146.

IX. Compound weave textiles

IX 1. 15421

Dimensions: 22x16 cm

Technical analysis
Weft faced compound tabby (taqueté)
Warp: 1 binding to 1 main warp, wool, Z-spun, S-plied.
Weft: wool, Z-spun, S-plied.

Description

Taqueté fragment with an ochre, stylised scroll, which consists of a central zig-zag line from which stem spiral tendrils, creating heart shapes and opposed, spiral leaves. The central line forms two triangles, one at the top of the fragment and another at the bottom. Each triangle encloses a smaller, ochre triangle. Below the scroll is a red border band bearing an ochre meander design. This band is framed on top by pairs of lines. The outer are striped, brown and ochre and the inner are green on the upper side and brown at the bottom.

Comments

This fabric must have been meant to be extremely durable, as its plied warps and wefts indicate. It might have been used as a cover and needed to be sturdy. It falls into the category of vegetal and geometrical decoration with scrolls and meanders -although it is not possible to reconstruct its complete design- which has been very popular among taqueté fabrics and also found on other types of textiles, continuing the Late antique traditions. The dating of this piece is very difficult. A comparable piece in the Louvre, with similar colouring and border bands, also with single warps and Z- spun wefts, found at Antinopolis, has been radiocarbon dated to 535-620,[486] and despite the differences could provide a base dating for out piece.

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[486] De Moor, "Radiocarbon Dating of Ancient Textiles. State of Research", in *Methods of Dating Ancient Textiles*, p. 108. See also M. Martiniani-Reber and D. Bénazeth, *Textiles et modes sassanides, Les tissus orientaux conservées au département des antiquités égyptiennes*, Paris 1997, no 70, p. 122-123. See also Pfister, "Le rôle de l'Iran dans les textiles d'Antinoé", *Ars Islamica* XIII-XIV (1948), p. 46-74 for a dye analysis.

IX 2. 15142

Dimensions: a) 14x14.5 cm
b) 12x8 cm

Technical analysis
It has not been possible to examine these pieces on the obverse side. However, the structure of the weave on the reverse side and the weaving technique of similar textiles in other collections, point to a weft faced compound twill (5/1).
Fragment A
Warp: wool, S; 1 binding to 2 main warps.
Weft: red wool, S; cotton; S.

Fragment B
Warp: wool, S; 1 binding to 1 main warp.
Weft: red wool, S; cotton, S.

Description

Two bicoloured, red and white, compound weave fragments which belong to different textiles. The upper fragment is decorated with birds in pearl bordered medallions in two consecutive rows. Parts of four medallions survive and parts of two birds. On the upper, left medallion a bird's legs and small part of its body survive, while at the bottom left survive a bird's head and neck. The bird's legs are thin and long. Their upper part is oblong and thicker, extending downwards into two stripes which end in forked claws, turned towards the right. Above the claws is a small leftward projection, representing their hind toe. The bird's triangular head below is turned to the left and is slightly raised. It has a hooked beak, an oval red eye, set on a white circle, possibly a crest, and a triangular, curved neck. The medallions seem to be oval, although none survives complete. Their borders bear red pearls. The borders of neighbouring medallions touch each other. At the points of contact the rows of pearls are interrupted by small roundels, shared between the medallions, also with pearl borders and a crescent in the centre.

The bottom fragment represents the body and legs of a similar bird, but no medallions are visible. It is possible that this bird was enclosed in a compartment, judging from the red border on the left side of the fragment. The body of this bird is oblong and diagonally placed. It is decorated

with diagonal stripes at the back, while its front part has parallel horizontal stripes. At the bottom part of its body is a red semi-circle. The legs of this bird are similar to those of the upper fragment, although their upper part is much shorter and has a roundish shape. Below the bird is part of a scroll, consisting of two spirals that end in carnations.

Comments

Although the birds in these two fragments are quite alike, the fragments belong to different textiles. This is evident from the absence of medallions on the bottom fragment and more importantly, from their different structure, namely the use of double main warps on the upper fragment and single ones on the bottom. The textiles appear to have a red decoration on a white ground. However, I believe that this side is the reverse and that their decoration is white on a red ground. I have not been able to examine their other side because they are firmly glued to a canvas, however, their structure resembles the reverse side of 5/1 twills, which is the weave used for all the published comparable pieces.[487] Also, comparable pieces, like that in the Cluny and the TMW, are also decorated in white on a red ground.[488]

These fragments belong to a group represented in many collections, with similar birds in medallions or compartments, usually dated to the 7th-9th century and attributed either to Iran, Iraq or Egypt. The pearl borders, interrupted by smaller roundels, which also have pearl borders and usually encircle a small crescent, are often seen on Sogdian or Sasanian textiles, usually dated to the 7th-8th centuries (fig. 1).[489] Therefore, their design is clearly eastern. As already seen, between the 7th and the 8th centuries, eastern inspiration is evident on a number of Egyptian textiles (e.g. IV 6, and p. 124, figs. 4 and 5, IV 7 and IV 15). The same time spun could also be proposed for these pieces, which can be interpreted as different versions of the tapestries with "Sasanian" birds (VII 3-5), made on different materials and techniques to serve different purposes. Although animals and birds in roundels continue to be a popular theme in textiles for a very long period of time, the popularity of this specific type has been attributed to the role of the Sogdian textile production of the period and of Sogdian commercial activities with both China and Iran.[490]

fig. 1 Iranian or Central Asian silk in the VAM in http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/virtual_museum/sasanian/Artifacts/textile.htm

[487] See, Desrosiers, *Soieries,* no 120, p. 226-228; Vogelsang-Eastwood, *The Development,* no 130, p. 804, fig. 349; TMW 73.623 in Bier, "Textiles", no 57 and 59, p. 133-135.

[488] The Cluny and the TMW pieces are also photographed in the catalogues on the reverse side, because, as both publishers mention, their obverse side is extensively damaged. The extensive damage on these textiles could be indicative of a use that caused them heavy wear on the visible surface. It is possible, therefore, that they were rather used as pillow or seating covers and not as wall hangings.

[489] See, for example Elmira Gyul, "Sogdian Textile Design: Political Symbols of an Epoch", *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings* (2012) in http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/689, fig. 6 and 7, p. 6; also Dominique Bénazeth, "Essai de datation par me méthode du radiocarbone de vêtements à la mode orientale retrouvés à Antinoé et de quelques soieries apparentées" in *Methods of Dating*, p. 121.

[490] Compareti, "The Role of the Sogdian Colonies".

IX 3. 7195

Dimensions: 23x17 cm

Technical analysis
weft faced compound twill (samite)
warp: silk, Z, 1 binding to 1 main warp.
weft: silk.

Description

Fragment of a two-coloured band, decorated with four white birds on a green-blue ground, enclosed in a rounded square. The birds are arranged in pairs, one above the other, the upper turned upside down. The birds of each pair are opposed, flanking a stylised flower or tree. They have an upright, semicircular body, decorated with two green-blue V-shapes. Their body extends into a circular head with a pointed beak and a white, square eye set on a green-blue frame with a comma-shaped projection at its bottom. To the upper part of their body are attached two arch-shaped wings. The inner is smaller, due to lack of space, it touches the trunk of the central tree and could also be seen as leaves stemming from it. The birds have a short, downward tail, consisting of a horizontal base line and three vertical, diagonally placed stripes,. The birds' legs are oval and their feet are two inverted gamma shapes. The inner legs are shorter, giving the illusion of perspective. The trees' trunks spring from a stepped base, which stands outside the compartment, interrupting its border, and reaches to the heads of the birds, ending in two upward spirals. The stepped base forms the tip of a vegetal decoration found above and below the central square. The white border of the compartment is decorated with attached spirals. On the top and bottom side of the border are two circles, interrupted by the tree's trunk. The spirals on either side of these circles have a three petalled flower in their centre and small curved projections on their tips, resembling leaves. In the middle of the right and left side of the compartment the border turns inwards, creating a triangular projection inside the compartment, highlighted with a green-blue triangle.

Above and below are parts of a stylised flower, comprising possibly a white, central stem with large, white leaves, only two of which survive on each example. The stem is rectangular with a stepped tip, which is the base of the tree of the compartment. In the centre of the stem is a vertical row of small, green-blue squares, some of which irregularly shaped. On either side of the squares is another row of green-blue Z-shapes. The leaves have an oval shape with an elongated tip and pearl

borders. In the centre of each leaf is a doubly toothed, upright, white rectangle, set on a green-blue frame. From the top outer corner of each leaf springs a small, cruciform, white flower. Below is a longer, white, cruciform flower with a hooked stem. On the sides of the textile are two white border bands, decorated with an unclear, green-blue, zig-zag design that resembles attached M shapes.

Comments

The leaves on this piece are similar to those of the textiles of the "stylised" type attributed to Akhmīm. The date and place of manufacture of these textiles has been much disputed. Radiocarbon dating of some of these examples has produced dates from the 7th to the 10th century. Similar dates have been attributed to textiles with either "organic" or "stylised" designs, so that the former belief that the stylised examples belonged to a later period has to be discarded. The leaves on our example particularly resemble those of a textile in the AS, radiocarbon dated between 655 and 827 (91,9% probability) (fig. 1).[491] Our piece could therefore be dated within the same time spun.

This piece illustrates a different version of the tree of life motif inhabited by four birds (e.g. IV 16-17). The difference in design, stylisation and, of course, material and weaving technique show how the same iconography, during the same period, could be employed on textiles of different technologies, materials and design, reflecting different uses, needs and financial situation of the clientele and also different weavers and workshops.

fig. 1 Akhmīm silk, "stylised" type in http://www.textile-dates.uni-bonn.de/textile_show_pdf.php?textile_id=49

[491] De Moor, S. Schrenk, C. Verhecken-Lammens, "New Research on the so Called Akhmim Silks", in *Textiles in Situ,* p. 85–94.

IX 4. 15490

Dimensions: 16x30 cm

Technical analysis
Weft faced compound twill (samite)
warp:, wool, S, 1 binding to 2 main warps.
weft: wool, S; cotton, Z.

Description

Part of a large compound weave textile decorated with a bird enclosed in a square and rows of small, geometrical ornaments on a yellow ground. The square is found in the middle of the right side of the fragment. It has rounded corners, a red ground and a pearl border with green, square pearls. The border is defined by a yellow inner outline. Only the bottom left part of the compartment remains, where a stylised bird is discerned. It has a roundish, yellow body from which project two rectangular legs, the front diagonally placed, with a forked tips. The bird has a green collar. Only part of its head is preserved. A square eye and traces of green and yellow, possibly denoting a crest and a beak respectively. On the yellow ground around the square are rows of white and green crosses, consisting of small squares outlined in red, three for the horizontal and two for each vertical arm, alternating with a red ornament consisting of two attached, upward crescents. On the top right side of the fragment is part of another pearl border with white and green square pearls. On the left side of the textile is a red vertical band, decorated with double, upward, angular volutes, alternately green and white. The band appears to stop towards the bottom of the fragment and traces of another red area are seen below it.

Comments

Similar textiles are known from other museum collections, like the Bouvier (fig. 1).[492] They are usually dated to the 9th century, a fact that is confirmed by comparable textile finds in an ʿAbbāsid level in the excavations of Fusṭāṭ.[493] Lamm, based on the use of cotton, argued that such

[492] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte*, no. 23, p. 73-74; J.C. Lamm, *Cotton in Medieval Textiles of the Near East*, Paris 1937, p. 17-28.

[493] Cornu and Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus d'Egypte,* p. 74, footnote 3.

textiles were products of Iran or Iraq.[494] However, the use of cotton, at least on this example, is very limited and it could not form sufficient evidence for an eastern attribution, since, as already seen, some Egyptian textiles are decorated with cotton wefts, especially during the 8th -9th century (V 6-7). The theme of the birds in pearled enclosures, already seen in tapestries and compound weaves, seems to be repeated here, although in a different arrangement and colour palette.

fig. 1 Fragment of a compound weave textile in the Bouvier (footnote 492)

[494] Lamm, *Cotton*, p. 17-28. He also dated them to the 6th-8th centuries.