

Hybrid Creature—Dragon-tailed Lion Motif in Eurasian Textile Imagery

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Abstract

The dragon-tailed lion motif is a hybrid creature motif usually composed of a lion's body with a dragon's head serving in place of the tail. As a decorative motif, the dragon-tailed lion mixes imagination and reality in Eurasian textile imagery, and is an excellent entry point for understanding medieval social culture. This article seeks to examine the symbolic meaning and development of this hybrid creature in different cultural contexts via Eurasian textile imagery and ancient documents. Broadly, the resulting shows that the combination, shape and symbolic meaning of the dragon-tailed lion are variable, whose symbolic functions are directly related to the cultural context of the lion and the dragon. The dragon-tailed lion motif as a long-standing imagery tradition and aesthetic, reflecting the common concept of creation and the extensive and diverse cultural connections in the Eurasian continent in the Middle Ages.

Keywords: Dragon-tailed Lion, hybrid creature, Medieval, textile motif, Eurasian

1. Introduction

The Middle Ages tended to understand the world through symbols. Therefore, medieval culture is not a reality-based phenomenology, but a cultural tradition-based phenomenology. Against this background, people from all over the world merged reality and imagination to create various nonexistent hybrid creatures as metaphors and symbols of desire.

Roel Sterckx has outlined four categories of the animal, animals as a natural or biological category, as a social category, as objects and mediums of power, and as adjuncts of human thought and function as images and symbols.¹ The dragon-tailed lion as a hybrid creature that does not exist in reality does not fit the first two categories, but it plays an important role as a medium of power, and as an adjunct to human thought. Although there are relevant researches on the themes of beasts and hybrid creature motifs, few scholars have paid attention to the dragon-tailed lion motif in Asian and European textile images.

Why were the lion and dragon joined together in this way? What is the meaning of the dragon-tailed lion motif? How has it shaped and developed in different cultural contexts? What kind of creational idea is embodied in this hybrid creature? This paper will try to answer these questions.

2. The Dragon-tailed Lion as the Carrier of Religious Belief

The Chinese nation has a unique system of animal images in terms of culture and aesthetics, two of which are the most important. One is the image of the dragon produced during the formation of the Chinese nation, and the other is the image of the lion produced by the Chinese nation during its interaction with foreign cultures.² The Square Beast Brocade 方格兽纹锦 from the Astana Cemetery in 1968 is a famous fragment that well depicts the beast-shape tail of the recumbent lions and is worthy of attention. The beast's head is raised upwards with the mouth slightly open. Whilst it is impossible to judge what kind of beast it is based on this fragment alone, if we compared it with the dragon-tailed unicorn relief carving from Konya Archaeological Museum, we can see that the beast-shape tails are similar in shape and structure. Based on the similarity, it is speculated that the beast-shape tail of the recumbent lions in the Square Beast Brocade is very likely to be a dragon's head. This paper tries to deduce the rationality of the combination of lion and dragon in its cultural context.



Figure 1. Fragment of square beast brocade, Northern Dynasties (368-581), Astana Cemetery, Silk, 18x13.5cm. Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Museum



Figure 2. Dragon-tailed unicorn relief carving, 13th century, Konya Archaeological Museum (888)

Firstly, on the visual level, the long and slender body shape of the dragon is very similar to the tail of a lion, which makes the structural design of grafting the dragon head to the lion tail more coherent and easier to be accepted by people. Secondly, on the attribute level, lions were introduced to mainland China during the Han Dynasty. According to *Hanshu Western Regions Biography* 汉书西域传赞: ‘Giant elephants, lions, fierce dogs, flocks of big birds, foreign food and objects were coming from all directions.’ ‘巨象, 狮子, 猛犬, 大雀之群, 食与外囿, 殊方异物, 四面而至。’³ Lions from faraway lands were uncommon to people in the Northern Dynasties at that time. Therefore, lions were considered as mystical creatures with supernatural powers similar to dragons.⁴ The lion and the dragon might be connected due to their similar mythical creatures’ attributes.

Also, the lion and the dragon in the Northern Dynasties are both closely tied to Buddhist beliefs. Mr. Bai Huawen believes that the introduction of lions to China is basically at the same time as the introduction of Buddhism to China.⁵ Since Buddhism was introduced to China from India in the Han Dynasty, the lion has been regarded as a guardian of Buddhist law and the mount of Buddha.⁶ Additionally, as *智度论* (*The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*) points out, ‘Buddha is a lion among men.’ ‘佛为人中之狮, ’⁷ which means that the Buddha is outstanding like a lion, is the king of beasts. *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* 大般涅槃经 also uses different parts of the lion's body as a metaphor for the achievements of Buddha's teachings: ‘The Tathagata is enlightened, with wisdom teeth and claws, four wish-fulfilling feet, a body full of six paramitas, ten powerful strengths, and great compassion as the tail.’ ‘如来正觉, 智慧牙爪, 四如意足, 六波罗蜜满足之身, 十力雄猛, 大悲为尾。’⁸ In Chinese Buddhist literature before the Sui Dynasties, the Buddha was mostly named after a lion or a dragon. For example, the *Buddha Said the Buddha's Name Sutra* 佛说佛名经 contains Buddha names like *Nawu Lion Roaring at the Buddha of Free Power* 南无狮子吼自在力王佛, *Namo Lion Bright Buddha* 南无狮子光明佛. The *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Inquiry of Upali Regarding Determination of the Vinaya* 佛说决定毗尼经 also contains the Buddha names like *Namo Dragon King Buddha* 南无龙尊王佛 and *Namo Dragon King Buddha* 南无龙种上尊王佛.⁹ The similar revered status of lions and dragons in the Buddhist belief system may be the reason for the combination of the two.

The supernatural powers of the steed usually serve as the foil to the authority and power of Buddha and emperors. The lion has been regarded as the exclusive steed of the Buddha since Buddhism was introduced to China. For example, the mount of Bodhisattva Mahasattva is a blue lion.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the dragon has also been considered as the medium of communication between heaven and earth, and the steed of emperors.¹¹ According to *Da Dai Liji* 大戴礼记 (*Ritual Records of Dai the Elder*): ‘Zhuangxi... rides a dragon all around the world; Emperor Ku rides a dragon in spring and summer, rides a horse in autumn and winter.’ ‘颛顼.....乘龙而至四海;帝春春夏乘龙, 秋冬乘马。’¹² This ancient document, together with the large number of dragon patterns on the base of the Northern Dynasties’ Buddha statues in Shandong province¹³ gives us reasons to believe that the two creatures are connected due to their similar steed attributes.

So where did the hybrid tradition of the lion and the dragon head tail originate? Perhaps we can start with the

transformational relationship between lions and dragons in ancient literature. According to the *Taiping Guangji. Barbarians II* 太平广记.蛮夷二 from the Song Dynasty: 'The prince of the lord of the Ancient Kucha possesses supernatural powers and can subdue poisonous dragons.....The prince held a sword, crept to the dragon's lair, and saw the dragon lying down. He yelled at the dragon, which awoke the dragon and transformed into a lion, upon which the prince rode it. The dragon was furious, making thunder and soaring into the air. The king warned the dragon: "If you do not surrender, your head will be severed." The dragon feared the divine power of the king and said: "Do not kill me, I am willing to serve as your steed. Imagine your destination and we will be there.'¹⁴ First of all, it is worth noting that the dragon (or the lion) in the literature appeared in the form of a steed. Secondly, the ancient Kucha Empire in the literature was a big country in the ancient Western Regions, known as the 'Buddhist Capital of the Western Regions', and an important town in the Xinjiang section of the Silk Road. As early as the Han Dynasty, the ancient Kucha Empire had a close relationship with China. It was controlled by Rouran in the 5th century, and then captured by the Northern Dynasty. The continual regime changes and ethnic migrations during this period promoting cultural integration. Therefore, the above background explains why the textile imagery of the Northern Dynasties contains Central Asian motifs. Finally, based on the setting of the literature and the classification of the barbarian volume, we can deduce that the myth and legend of the transformation between the lion and the dragon may have originated from the barbarians of the Western Regions, which we call Central Asia today.

Due to the lack of ancient documentary records and other physical evidence, the symbolic meaning of the dragon-tailed lion motif in the Northern Dynasties still needs further exploration and discussion. Generally speaking, the dragon-tailed lion motifs are not common in the Central Plains 中原¹⁵ textiles. Why the combination of lion and dragon has not been further spread after the Northern Dynasties? On the one hand, the revered status of the lion in Buddhism was replaced by the tiger. The lion was the central animal in early Han Buddhism, while the tiger was marginalised.¹⁶ Before the Sui and Tang Dynasties, eminent monks were mostly named after 狮(lion), but after the Tang Dynasty, eminent monks were often named after 虎(tiger).¹⁷ The change of eminent monks' titles in Han Buddhism from lion to tiger reflects the transformation of the status of the two. On the other hand, the reinforces of the official correlation between the dragon and kingship. Dragon, this powerful creature with infinite power, as both the symbol of imperial power and discourse of monarchical legitimacy out of visual elements was used exclusively by rulers.¹⁸ And since the Tang Dynasty, the restrictions on the usage of dragon motifs became even more stringent, making the unauthorized usage of dragon motifs a dangerous violation of royal authority. The dragon-tailed lion motif as the carrier of religious belief reflects the multicultural interactions along the Silk Road during that time. Meanwhile, the decline of the pattern symbolizes a localisation of Buddhism and the centralization in visual culture after the Northern Dynasties.

3. The Dragon-tailed Lion as the Symbol of Kingship

As mentioned earlier, the lion and the dragon are closely related in the Middle East.¹⁹ From the end of the 12th century to the beginning of the 14th century, dragons were generally shown at the end of the tails of lions or at the wingtips of double-headed eagles in Anatolia Seljuk Art.²⁰ In Seljuk cosmic Eagle-tree²¹ themed textile images (Fig.3-a,c,d), the winged lions' tail terminates in a beast-head. At present, it is controversy in the academic circles in terms of the animal species of the beast-head. V&A museum for example, defined the structure on the lions' tails (Fig.3-a) as sheep heads,²² while Professor Sara Kuehn and the Cleveland museum defined the structure on the lions' tails (Fig.3-b,c) as dragon heads. Judging from the horns and round eyes, the beast-heads in Figure.3 should be the same animal. Since there is no literature documenting the relationship between lions and sheep, the author prefers to define the beast-heads as dragon heads. It is not difficult to determine that the attitude and style of the lions in Seljuk textiles are considerably different from those of the Northern Dynasties. The dragon-tailed lion motifs in China are mainly in recumbent pose presenting a gentle and endearing style; whereas the dragon-tailed lion motifs in the Seljuk textiles are mainly fiercer in attitude, presenting a mighty affronted and aggressive style. The majority of them are decorated with wings (Fig.3-a,c), making them appear more mythical. However, there are also commonality between the lions with dragon-headed tails of the Northern Dynasties and the Seljuk Empire. Firstly, we can see that the lion's heads are both presented face-on, while the beast's heads are both presented in a profiled form.²³ Secondly, the dragon heads are both have a pointed mouths and round eyes. Lastly, the position of the dragon heads are both located behind the lions.

The current academic circles have the following views on the symbolic meaning of the dragon-tailed lion motif in Seljuk textiles: Since the custom of using the name of the top predator as part of the title of king was widespread in ancient civilizations around the world, the frequent usage of Arslan [lion] in the title of Turkish Khans since the early ages²⁴ shows that the dragon-tailed lion is the symbol of supreme kingship. Also, the winged lions often appear as guardians of kings,²⁵ therefore the textiles with dragon-tailed lion motif were

popularly believed to provide the wearer with a prophylactic or apotropaic safeguard against a variety of real or imaginary dangers.²⁶ Lastly, the double-headed structure of the dragon-tailed lion has duality, the head of lion and the head of dragon are depicted with different orientations, which has been interpreted as symbols of opposite qualities as good and evil, light and dark.

So how are the dragon-tailed lion motifs in the Northern Dynasties and Seljuk dynasty related? From the history of Central Asia we know that the Rouran Khaganate and the Northern Wei were homologues the former was eliminated by the Turks (Göktürks) in 552AD, became the Turkic Khaganate. The latter entered the Central Plains and gradually Sinicized. During the process of moving westward, the Turkic Khaganate successively intersected with the Uighur Khanate, the Kara Khanate, the Seljuk Turkic Empire, and the Khwarazm Empire. The integration of the Central Asian immigrants leads to an extraordinary cross-cultural artistic and technological innovation, as well as the manifold linkages between culture and politics.²⁷ Despite the widely application of the lion with dragon-headed tail in various media, such as monumental sculpture, relics, and utensils, the tradability and the value of the inanimate decorative art like textile media undoubtedly played a crucial part in the transmission of this hybrid creature motif in the Middle Ages.²⁸



a. sheep-tailed winged lions, Iran, 11-12th century, woven silk, 18x14 in. Victoria & Albert Museum (T.184-1930)

b. dragon-tailed lion relief, 13th century, 45 × 56cm, Jacobite church, Cizre

c. dragon-tailed winged lions, Iran Buyid or Seljuk period (899-1160), silk, 47 x 26.7 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art (1975.45)

d. dragon-tailed lions. Anatolia, 13th century, silk with gold thread, 112x74.5cm. Musée des Tissus, Lyon (23.475)

Figure 3. Dragon-tailed lion motifs in Seljuk decorative art

There are two textile fragments (Fig.4-a,b) with the same pattern of a double-headed eagle and dragon-tailed lions in Abegg-Stiftung and Cleveland Museum of Art. The double-headed eagle with spread wings is the main motif, while the dragon head appears as a secondary motif. These exquisite fragments are brocaded in gold, with beige details on a deep rose-pink background is likely associated with Rum Seljuk royalty.²⁹ The rampant lions in the textiles (Fig.4-a,b) are similar to those of Seljuk textiles (Fig.3-c,d), whereas the orientation and position of the dragon-headed tail are different. The dragon-headed tails of the Seljuk dynasty (as well as the Northern dynasties) are positioned behind the lions, with their head facing against the lion's head. However, in these fragments, the dragon-headed tail extends through the hind legs of the lion, directly facing the twisted lion in a confrontational state.

The art of animal motifs has a long and continuous tradition throughout the medieval period. As it is well known, the eagle is not only the symbol of light and the sun, but also dominance and power.³⁰ The chronicle of the Seljuk court historian Ibn Bibi (1281) reports with its flowery sentences that: 'The eagle of the imperial baldachin had opened its plumage and its wings of happiness above the sun of the sultans and had spread out the shadow of power.'³¹ The dragon-tailed lions surmounting double-headed eagles can be assumed to epitomize the power of the sultān, and are usually depicted together in the luxurious medium like silk that carries similar regal significance to the dragon in the Central Plains in Seljuk Iran, Anatolia.

Here, the juxtaposition of the different motifs emphasises the opposing symbolism again, in which case the eagles and lions are symbols of lightness and the dragons symbolize darkness.³² While Ackerman holds different views on this motif, he believes that the dragon-tailed lion as a whole, is an evil creature: "The lion creature

which the double-headed eagle dominates is a beast of evil is shown by the serpent's head on the end of its tail.....Here are the emblems of the Great God, the Sun, emblazoned as a manifest of the divine right of the Basileos.”³³

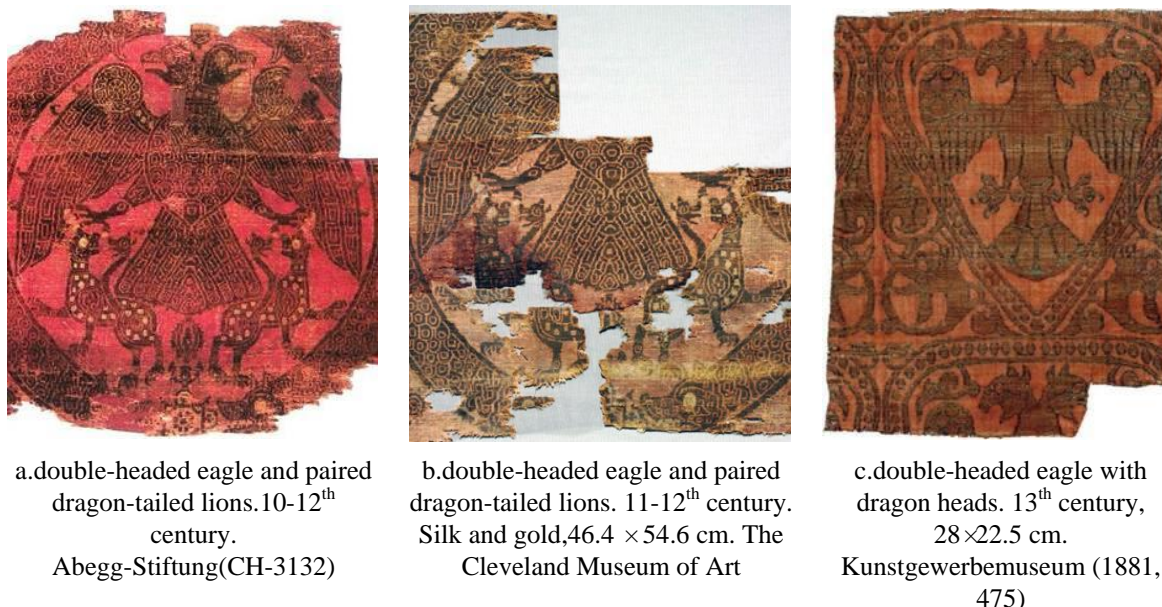


Figure 4. Double-headed eagle and dragon-tailed lions in Seljuk textile art

The motif of the fragment (Fig.4-c) from the shrine of Saint Apollinarius at Siegburg is closely related to the fragments above (Fig.4-a,b). Most notably, the motifs here are set within triangular shields, and the dragon heads does not appear in the form of a lion's tail, but extend from the wings of a double-headed eagle. The lion has been omitted, which can be seen as an extreme manifestation of its declining popularity as a textile motif. The German archaeologist Friedrich Sarre and Katharina OttoDorn attributed this fragment to a 13th century Seljuk workshop, and was probably made for a Seljuk sultan's coronation robe.³⁴ This illustrates that textiles with dragon-tailed lion motifs symbolize supreme kingship in a secular context, but the revered status they carried was also applicable in a religious context.

From the textile images (Fig.4-a,b,c) highlighted above, we know that using hybrid creatures as symbolic carriers of kingship is a long-standing ideology, whereas its visual form was constantly changing and based on cultural continuity and development.

4. The Dragon-tailed Lion as the Carrier of Lineage Continuation

Seeking legitimacy for power through the specificity of animals is a common means of maintaining political order. The Mongols created exceptionally sumptuous cloths of gold to symbolize their imperial authority and legitimacy. Fragments preserved in the Cleveland Museum (Fig.5, 7-a,b) are the most resplendent examples. In Fig.5, the winged-lions in the roundel have tails that terminate in the heads of dragons, the griffins have tails that terminate in the heads of felines (Tab.1-Fig.5). The felines' heads are similar to the dragons' heads on the tail of roosters (Fig.6), the former is thought to have been woven in Bie-shi-ba-li 别失八里,³⁵ where local artisans collaborated with artisans from northern China and Eastern Iran who were relocated there by the Mongols. The latter is thought to have been woven in the Samangan province of Afghanistan in northeastern Iran. Although the two places are far apart, they are both on the main line of the Silk Road (Fig.9). The mix of Chinese style and Iran style dragon-headed tails in Figure.5 not only shows the distinctive regional characteristics carried by hybrid creatures, but also shows a fusion of Central Asian styles across Eurasia in the 13th century.



Figure 5. Dragon-tailed winged lions and griffins, 1240–1260. Silk, gold thread, lampas weave, 124 × 48.8 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art(1989.50)



Figure 6. Dragon-tailed roosters, 12th or 13th century, 52 × 11cm, Putative origin, Samangan province, Kuwait National Museum(LNS 617 T)

The regional characteristics of hybrid creatures are also reflected in other textiles of the same period. The tails of double-headed eagles (Tab.1-Fig.7-a,b) are different. The dragon-headed tail in Fig.7-a is a typical mouth-opened Seljuk dragon, which is similar to the dragon on the candlestick (Fig.7-c) of the same period. While the dragon-headed tail in Fig.7-b is a typical Chinese dragon. Judging from the style of the dragon-headed tails, the two cloths of gold came from different workshops. The former workshop might be located closer to the West Asia region of Turkey, Iraq and Eastern Iran, while the latter workshop might be closer to the Central Plains.



a. dragon-tailed felines and double-headed eagles with dragon-headed tails, 13th century, silk with gold thread, 170.5 x 109 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art (1990.2)



b. double-headed falcons with dragon-headed tails, 13th century. silk with gold thread, 57.5 x 18.4 cm, The Cleveland Museum of Art(1996.297)



c. candlestick base with dragon-tailed dragons, the Jazira. 13th century. Copper alloy, silver inlay. Metropolitan Museum of Art (91.1.561)

Figure 7. Dragon-tailed beast motifs in 13th century decorative art

It can be seen from Tab.1, there are commonalities in the position and shape of dragon-headed tails in Il- Khalid textiles. The tail connecting the dragon-head was thin and long with a smooth curve like penis pattern 男根纹.³⁶ With the dragon and the snake being symbols of fertility in ancient China, it is unsurprising that the dragon-headed tails frequently appear under the two hind legs of the hybrid creatures, with the shape of the dragon head and the snake head are similar to the male genitalia. Indeed, there is a time-honored folklore that connects the dragon with descendants' prosperity in China.³⁷ According to *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字 (*Explaining Simple and Analyzing Compound Characters*), 'Dragon, can be hidden and visible, the scale of which can be

thin and huge, can be short and long.”“龙，鳞虫之长，能幽能明，能细能巨，能短能长。”³⁸ which is using the dragon as a metaphor for the male genitalia. *Road History. Postscript* 路史.后记 also notes and quotes a dragon in reference to fertility, starting with that ‘Fu Xi’s mother, swim in the abyss of Huaxu, felt a snake and inseminated.’ “伏牺之母帝女，游于华胥之渊，感蛇而孕。”³⁹ *Emperor’s Century* 帝王世纪 also contains similar notions with ‘The mother of Shennong... traveled in Huayang, met a dragon, then gave birth to Emperor Yan in Shangyang Mountain.’“神农氏母.....游华阳，有龙首感之，生炎帝于裳羊山。”⁴⁰ The notions above show the direct connection between dragon culture, emperors and fertility. Moreover, according to the ancient prose *Shangshu.Yaodian* 尚书.尧典 (*The Books of Chow*): ‘Birds and beasts breed and copulate.’“鸟兽孳尾”.⁴¹ 尾 (tail) signifying mating, and highlighting the long-standing correlation between the tail and fertility. Chinese scholar Yuyan Cheng considers the double-headed creatures symbolize the copulation between male and female, which is the manifestation of people’s beliefs that hermaphrodite creatures possess extraordinary fecundity.⁴² Therefore, the author would venture to guess that the dragon-tailed creatures in Il- Khalid textile are metaphors for male genitalia in a patriarchal society, further imprinted on the collective subconscious by the Mongolian people who praised male genitalia and developed the ‘metaphorical image’ from the dragon head into the ‘imaginary image’ in which the hybrid creatures represented by the dragon-tailed lion was formed to not only embody the admiration of masculine power, but to also express the Mongolian people’s firm belief in the lineage continuation.

Table 1. Dentails of the Dragon-tailed beast in Il-khanid textiles















Fig 5	Fig 5	Fig 7-a	Fig 7-a	Fig 7-b	Fig 8	Fig 8
winged-lion	winged-griffin	winged-griffin	double-headed eagle	double-headed eagle	winged-leopard	wigned-rabbit
						
dragon-headed	feline-headed	dragon-headed	dragon-headed	dragon-headed	snake-headed	normal tail
						



Figure 8. Lampas weave silk skirt with rabbits, lions and panthers.13th century. approx. 140x60cm.Private Collection.

Instead of defining the dragon-tailed lion as a motif, it is better to define it as a combination of strong attribute animals. The combination of the hybrid creatures in Table 1 of variable. Whether it is a dragon-tailed lion, a dragon-tailed griffin, or a dragon-tailed double-headed eagle, they are essentially the same kind of hybrid creatures. The creatures that use this combination are mostly aggressive animals in nature, such as lions and leopards, or mythical beasts with a high status in the cultural context, such as dragons and griffins. In contrast, weak attributes creatures, such as monkeys, gazelles, elephants, camels, rabbits or phoenixes have not been combined in this form.

The form reflects a hierarchy above the primary and secondary relationships. The primary and secondary relationship is reflected in two dimensions. The first layer of primary and secondary relationship exists within the hybrid creature, the creature on the mainbody is primary, while the creature on the tail is secondary. The second layer of primary and secondary relationship exists within the overall textile layout. Take Figure.5 as example, whether from the size or the position, it can be seen that the winged-lion is the main element of the textile, while the Griffin is the secondary element. The level of the winged-lion is higher than the Griffin. Meanwhile, the hierachy also reflects in the tail of the hybrid creature, the status of the dragon on the tail of the winger-lion is higher than the feline on the tail of the Griffin. Also in Tab.1-Fig.8, the winged-leopard is more aggressive than the winged rabbit. Therefore, the tail of the winged-leopard is decorated with a snake head, while the tail of the winged rabbit is only exaggerated, without animal head decoration.

The differential treatment of the hybrid creatures mentioned above, shows that real animals, mythical beasts and hybrid creatures all belong to the established cultural system and hierarchy as much as natural beings. The textile designers inevitably projected these hierarchical structures from the culture onto the animals and beasts when creating hybrid creatures. Like Roel Sterckx summarized, the selecting and encoding of animals in an image reveals as much about human concerns as about animals themselves. Whether their function be material, symbolic, didactic, or decorative, animals are a vehicle for the perception of human society.⁴³ The hierarchy carried by the hybrid creatures is derived from the cognition basis that people compare the order of the animal world to the order of the human world.

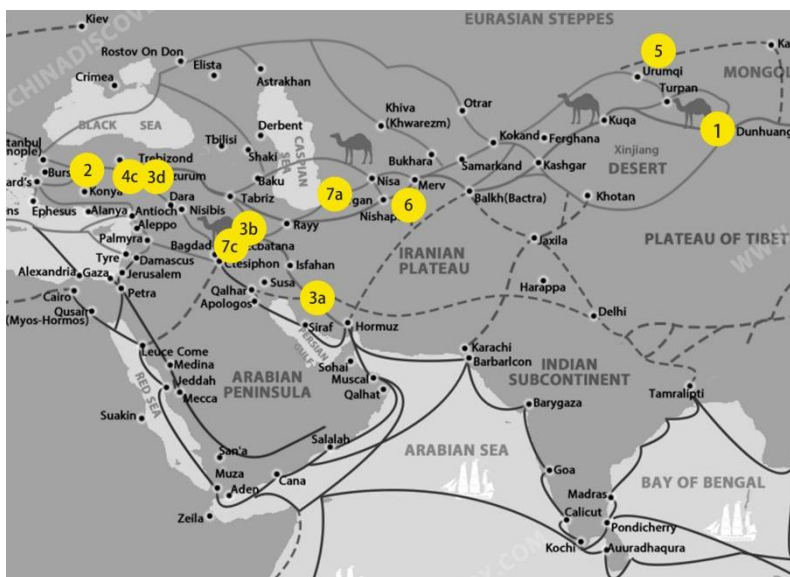


Figure 9. Place of origin of decorative art with dragon-tailed lion motifs along the Silk Road

5. Conclusion

The rich meaning of textile motifs embodies the psychological needs and sustenance of the audience. As a long-standing imagery tradition and aesthetic, the dragon-tailed lion shows the endless imagination of medieval people and their lasting fascination with hybrid creatures. Professor Zvezdana Dode believes the images of animals with dragon-headed tails originated from Iranian textiles from the 11th-12th century.⁴⁴ However, following a thorough review, it can be safely suggested that the presence of the dragon-tailed lion appeared as early as the Northern dynasties.

The shape dragon-tailed lion is related to the cultural context where the dragon and lion were situated. In Northern dynasties, the steed attribute of dragon and lion makes the dragon-tailed lion adopts a relatively static

recumbent pose. While the guardian attribute of the lion in the Seljuk Empire makes the dragon-tailed lion adopts a rampant attitude. The fertility attribute of the dragon in the Il-khan dynasty makes the dragon-headed tails frequently appear under the two hind legs of the hybrid creatures.

Generally speaking, the dragon-tailed lion motif, as an important component of the visual culture of religions and empires, has successfully cut across visual, political and cultural boundaries throughout Eurasia with the help of textile media. It is a perfect example of how cultures converged, and ideas were created to build a spiritual order in the Middle Ages.

Notes

Note 1. Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon*, 4.

Note 2. Zhang, "The Image of the Lion", 61.

Note 3. Ban, *Han Shu*: Volume 96, 966.

Note 4. Edward, *The Golden Peaches*, 249.

Note 5. Bai, "Lions and lion roaring".

Note 6. Wang, "The Origin and Development of Lions", 33.

Note 7. Nagarju, *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, 136-149.

Note 8. Dao, *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, 438.

Note 9. Chen, "Lion and Buddha", 58.

Note 10. Cheng, "From the inugami in Central Asia to the lions in Central China", 11.

Note 11. Zhang, "On the Chinese Culture of Dragon and International Cultural Exchanges", 158.

Note 12. Dai, *Ritual Records of Dai the Elder*, 116.

Note 13. Dragon decoration was commonly found on the Buddhist statues in Shandong in the Northern Dynasties, for more discussion on the connotation between the Chinese dragon culture and the Buddhist statues, see Zhai, "Investigation and Research on Dragon Decoration", 43.

Note 14. Li, *Taiping Guangji*, 1451.

Note 15. Central Plains 中原 means Middle China in ancient times, which comprising the middle and lower reaches of the Huanghe River in this context.

Note 16. Chen, *The Revival of Buddhist Monasticism in Medieval China*, 46.

Note 17. Chen, *The Revival of Buddhist Monasticism in Medieval China*, 154.

Note 18. For discussion of animals and cultural of empire, see Kinoshita, Sharon. "Animals and the Medieval Culture of Empire ." in *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral, Ethics and Objects* (2012): 49. and Chen, "On the Relationship between the Dragon and Chinese Emperors", 107.

Note 19. Francfort, "The Central Asian Dimension", 409.

Note 20. G ün ü l, "Dragon Figures", 193.

Note 21. The idea of the "Cosmic Tree" seems to exist in Jelal eddin Rumi's Mathnawi, namely in the description of "the Pear-tree of Illusion", the bows of which are "reaching to the Seventh Heaven". Professor Katharina Otto-Dorn speculates that the 'cosmic pattern' in textiles might be related to the prayer rituals of the mystics of Konya from Shamanistic traditions. See "Figural Stone Reliefs", 123.

Note 22. <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O261556/woven-silk-unknown/>

Note 23. The duality of frontal and profile can signify the difference between good and evil, sacred and profane, heaven and earth, ruler and ruled, noble and commoner, active and passive, busy and passive, living and dead. For more discussion, see Mackie, *Symbols of Power*, 156. Schapiro, Meyer. *Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text*. Berlin:Walter de Gruyter,1983.and Sonik, Karen. "The Monster's Gaze: Vision as Mediator between Time and Space in the Art of Mesopotamia". *Time and History in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 56th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Barcelona, 26–30 July 2010* (2013): 285-300.

Note 24. Harmançı, "In The Context of Turkish Culture", 342.

Note 25. Collins, "Animals in the Religions of Ancient Anatolia", 318.

Note 26. Sara, The Dragon in Medieval East, 35.

Note 27. Sheng, "Why Ancient Silk is Still Gold", 151.

Note 28. The dragon-tailed lion motif could be found on the bronze pot and slab deco. See Dode, "Textile in Art", 137 and Androudís, Paschalís. "Evidence on the Role of Textiles as a Medium of Ornament Transmission between Seljuk Anatolian and Late Byzantine Art. The Case Study of two Marble Slabs from Episkopi, Ano Volos, with Double-headed Eagles fighting Dragons." *Niš & Byzantium 15: Vizantija kroz vreme i prostor* (2018): 242. For the implications of textile portability for cultural transmission, see Eva R. Hoffman. Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century[J]. *Art History* 24.1, 2001: 17-50.

Note 29. Shepherd, "A Medieval Brocade", 195-199.

Note 30. G ün ü l, "Dragon Figures", 193-216.

Note 31. Herbert, *Die Seltenschukengeschichte*, 97.

Note 32. Peker, Ali Uzay. "The Origins of the Seljukid Double-headed Eagle as a Cosmological Symbol", in *Art Turc/Turkish Art: Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Turkish Art* (Gen è ve 17-23, 1995), 559-566. and Androudís, P. Origines et Symbolique de l'aigle bic éphale des Turcs Seldjoukides et Artuqidés de l'Asie Mineure (Anatolie)[J]. *Βυζαντικά* 19 (1999): 309-345.

Note 33. Ackerman, "A Gold-woven Byzantine Silk", 86-91.

Note 34. Otto-Dorn. "Figural Stone Reliefs", 118-119.

Note 35. According to the *History of Yuan* 元史, Beshbalik 别失八里 was one of the largest of five towns 五城 in the Uyghur Khaganate. During 1236–39, 10-15% of the weavers at Beshbaliq were returned to Herat to revitalise the Herat textile industry, bringing new motifs and techniques with them into Ilkhanid territory.

Note 36. Zhao, *Reproductive Culture Worship Theory*, 293.

Note 37. For the correlations among Dragon-Worship, Snake-Worship and Fertility-Worship in ancient China, see Yang Changxin 杨昌鑫. "Dragon-Worship and Fertility-Worship—The Land of the Five Streams of Chu" 龙崇拜与生殖崇拜——楚五溪之域崇龙之溯源. *Ethnic Art*, 1995(01):148-168. and Yang Puwang 杨甫旺. "Snake-Worship and Fertility-Worship Culture Exploration" 蛇崇拜与生殖文化初探. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, 1997(01):64-68. Further more, Il-khanid Empire as one of the four Khanates, undoubtedly influenced by Liao Taizu Yelu Abaoji 耶律阿保机's "Dragon Worship". For more discussion, see Meng Fanyu and Tang Yuping 孟凡云, 唐玉萍. "The "Dragon Worship" of Yelu Abaoji and Its Religious Origin" 耶律阿保机的“龙崇拜”及其宗教渊源. *Journal of Zhaowuda Mongolian Teachers College (Soc.Sci)*, 2004(04):49-51+53.

Note 38. Xu, *Shuowen Jiezi*, volume 12, 258-270.

Note 39. In ancient culture, a snake like a dragon, so 'felt a snake and inseminated' means felt a dragon and inseminated. Luo, *Zhong Hua Zai Zao Shan Ben*.

Note 40. Huang, *Emperor's Century*, 3.

Note 41. Confucius, *Shangshu*, 2.

Note 42. Cheng, "Fertility-Worship Culture", 125.

Note 43. Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon*, 4.

Note 44. Dode, "Textile in Art", 135.

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