

13th Warrior? St Josse

Scots Ancestry says its Joss... aka St Joachim... Joas... Jass. which is Dias Deus in Portuguese to Samoa, China and back 1488. Azores were Templars and Hospitallers Shields proof... St George and the Dragon. Heroism Azores...

Suaire de St-Josse

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The *Suaire de St-Josse*, the "Shroud of Saint Josse" that is now conserved in the Musée du Louvre,^[1] is a rich silk samite saddle cloth that was woven in northeastern Iran, some time before 961, when **Abu Mansur** Bakhtegin, the "camel-prince" for whom it was woven, was beheaded. It was brought back from the **First Crusade** by **Étienne de Blois** and dedicated as a votive gift at the Abbey of **Saint-Josse**, near Caen, Normandy. It has been described as "the major landmark in early Islamic silk weaving".^[2]

This fragmentary textile with elephants woven into the design is the only known surviving example of a silk textile produced in Eastern Iran, in the royal workshops of the Samanid dynasty, probably at either Merv or Nishapur.^[3] The "prince" referred to in the woven Kufic inscription, though decipherable in more than one way, is most likely to refer to the general and emir Bukhtegin, active in the service of 'Abd al-Malik I, the Samanid sultan of Khorasan, 954-61.

The cloth is now in two fragments, which are regarded as comprising about half of the original piece. They are 52 x 94cm and 24.5 x 62cm respectively, the first measurement being the length. The design was somewhat like a carpet (not that any from this date survive), with a central field containing two pairs of confronted elephants, one above the other, of which one pair survive. There is then a thin border with geometric patterns, outside which the sides have friezes of repeated camels and at least the bottom (which survives) an inscription in Kufic script. In all there are five zones of border between the elephants and the edge of the cloth.^[4]

Like many trophies of foreign adventure, both in the Middle Ages and in more modern times, in its new context, the rare textile was given new meaning, for it was used to wrap the bones of Saint Josse when he was reinterred in 1134.^[5]

When the Abbey of Saint-Josse was secularised just before the French Revolution,^[6] the abbey church became the parish church of the French commune of Saint-Josse; the *suaire* was kept there until it was transferred to the Louvre.

Notes

- ¹ ^ Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field", *The Art Bulletin* **85.1** (March 2003:152-184), p. 154, fig. 1.
- ² ^ Jones & Michell, p. 74
- ³ ^ Louvre Museum: "The Saint-Josse Shroud".
- ⁴ ^ Jones & Michell, p. 74. The image in Jones appears to be a photo-reconstruction, as more is shown than in the Louvre's photograph.
- ⁵ ^ M. Bernus, H. Marchal, and G. Vial, "Le Suaire de St-Josse", *Bulletin de Liaison du Centre International d'Études des Textiles Anciens* **33** (1971:1-57).

6. ^ The Abbey of Saint-Josse was closed in 1772, sold and then dismantled in 1789, leaving no traces of the monumental buildings.

References

- Louvre Museum: "The Saint-Josse Shroud"
(http://www.louvre.fr/llv/oeuvres/detail_notice_popup.jsp?CONTENT%3C%3Ecnt_id=10134198673226262&CURRENT_LLV_NOTICE%3C%3E)
- Exhibited as no. 4 in Jones, Dalu & Michell, George, (eds); *The Arts of Islam*, p. 74, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976, ISBN 0728700816

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