

Original article

THE KNOTS DECORATION IN THE ISLAMIC ARTS OF KHORASAN PROVINCE FROM THE 10TH TO THE 13TH G. CENTURIES

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Abstract:

This research paper aims to study a type of geometric decorations that prevailed in all Islamic arts in Iran and some regions of Central Asia, especially Khorasan Province, from the 10th to the 13th G centuries. Then, it spread through the Islamic world and was found in the Ayyubid and Mamluk arts in Egypt and the arts of Morocco and Andalusia. The paper also explores the reasons for the emergence, relation to place, and symbolism of this decoration at the time. It highlights the origin of this decoration. The arts of the eastern area of the Islamic World experienced the prevalence of geometric decorations, including all types of knots on their products. The present paper explores the "knot of good luck" with its various forms known as decorative items in the ancient era and many cultures. It discusses this decoration's several names and symbolism. It highlights the causes of using these knots in the Islamic arts of that period and corrects some misconceptions about the emergence of this knot.

1. Introduction

Knots are geometric shapes that have been found decorating buildings and applied artifacts in Islamic arts throughout the ages. Therefore, I am keen to know the identity of this complex decoration in form and content because a few studies tackled this decoration, addressing them as geometric decorations only. The present study aims to explain this decoration through descriptive and analytical methods. Knot decoration spread in Persia, especially the Khorasan province and some cities of Transoxiana. It took two forms. The first was simple (four-sided): It is made of two closed interlaced rings if put in a flat mode. The two rings are intertwined upon each other, and their parts are intersected interchangeably, taking the form of the sides of a central square. Additionally, four rings extend outside in four directions. The four extended rings may include oval, square, or triangular ends that can end in free shapes, such as leaves, lobes, and wings. However, the most common form during the 10th-13th G centuries was the double-ended knots [1]. It was usually encompassed in a circle. The second form of this decoration was the endless knot with multiple ends that spread in Islamic art in different regions from the 13th G century. It was found in Iranian arts and widespread in Egypt in the Mamluk art. It also spread to Islamic arts in Morocco and Andalusia. It was found in Chinese, Mongo-

lian, and Roman arts. This study discusses this decorative form in some examples.

2. The Lucky Knot "Panchang Knot":

This geometric motif spread throughout history in many ancient artistic cultures as a magical symbol^(a). It took several names, such as *Salomonis sigillum*, a common name for a traditional decorative concept that spread since ancient times, *Il nodo di Salomone* [2] in Italy, and as a symbol of all Christian sects in the Christian tradition. In many other cultures, it was a symbol of wisdom and immortality. It was often found in ancient Roman mosaics. The double knot took the name of the *Roman knot* or the *Hercules knot* [3]. Additionally, the term *Salomonis sigillum* was applied to both the double and endless forms in the Roman and Christian arts [4].

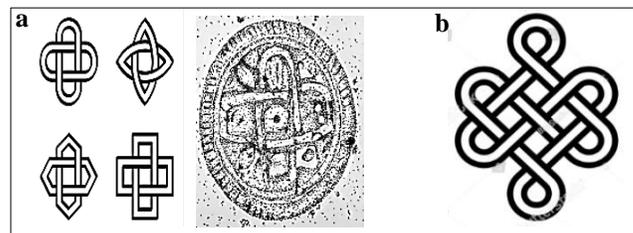


Figure (1) a. double-ended knots b. endless knot

It was commonly known among the peoples of the Near East and Central and Southern Iran. It was found in the decorations of buildings and applied artifacts, where it was known as an eternity knot because it did not have a visible beginning or end. Furthermore, it was known by many people as a form of the *endless knot*, an endless complex Buddhist symbol, symbolizing survival and wishing good luck [5]. It took different forms on silver and copper coins, with various names, such as the “lucky knot” [6], “the knot of eternity”, “the knot of infinity”, and the Panchang knot. This symbol means infinite wisdom in Tibetan mythology because it has no beginning or end, denoting the changing nature of time. The double knot and the infinite knot spread mainly on the coins of the Golden Horde of the first Mongol rulers, the Uyghurs [7]. The people of Central Asia considered this knot one of the oldest popular knots in the region, used on most of their products. It was commonly believed to refer to the continuous periodic change of natural phenomena or the universe and the association with the idea of survival and immortality [8]. The knot decoration appeared in the Islamic arts in Iran, especially the province of Khorasan from the 10th to the 13th G centuries in the reign of dynasties independent of the Samanids, Ghaznavids, and Seljuk Ghurids. Thus, it coincided with the emergence of local ruling dynasties in Khorasan and Transoxiana who were known for their desire to imitate the culture of their ancient kings, beginning with the Samanids^(b), who argued that they originally belonged to the Sasanian Empire [9]. All studies relevant to the Islamic arts of Khorasan reported that the decoration of this knot is a distinctive artistic feature of the historical period under study. Others argued that it could have a mystical significance. Many studies named it the “lucky knot” [10]. Foreign literature called it *Solomon's knot*. For instance, A.S. Melikian Chirvani used this name when seeing it on the artifacts discovered in the excavations of Ghazna, Sarakhs, and other cities in Khorasan. He reported that it had been used in Khorasan since the Samanids [11]. It might take this name because of its similarity to the decoration of the Romanian knot known as Solomon's knot. The Persians used it to decorate their artistic products because they believed it gave happiness and good luck to the owner [12]. This could be true because such pieces had inscriptions of happiness and pleasure to the owner. He also noticed several papers about artifacts or buildings dating back to the period under study, referring to this decoration without paying attention to it or mentioning a distinct term. They only reported that these were geometric motifs without study [13].

3. Examples

This decoration was found in the decoration of applied arts and buildings, such as some buildings of the Ghurids in Khorasan. The Ghurids used knot decorations in their architectural buildings [14]. Noticeably, these decorations were limited to stucco decorations on the façades of buildings in the Ghurid^(c); areas in Ghor. Using stucco in concrete architecture is one of the artistic traditions inherited from the pre-Islamic civilizations that ruled this region from the 1st to the 9th G. centuries [15].

3.1. The Minaret of Jam^(d)

The Minaret of Jam of the Great Mosque 590 AH/1193-1194 AD, fig. (2), which was built by Sultan Ghayyath Aldin AlGhuri Muhammad bin Sam 558-599 AH/ 1163-1203 AD in Firouzgoh^(e) in the province of Ghor, central Afghanistan^(f), which was the capital of the Ghurid dynasty^(g) that ruled Khorasan and parts of Transoxiana [16]. That Sultan built a mausoleum in Herat in 597 AH/1201 AD and was buried there in 599 AH/1203 AD. The decoration of the double knot was carried out in the minaret decorations in separate places, including a square-shaped stucco filling on the northern façade of the minaret [17]. The double knot had four oval-shaped sides repeated and intertwined in six horizontal rows, with six knots in each row.

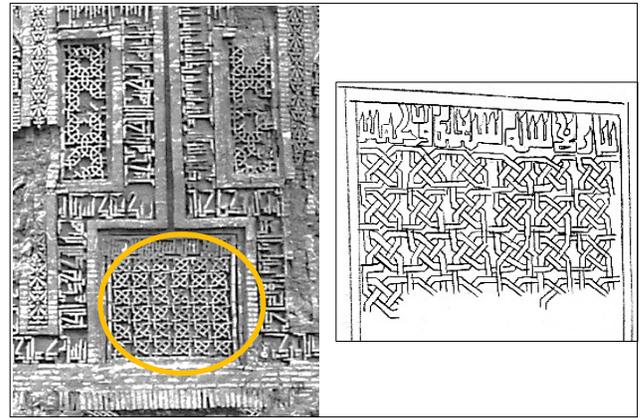


Figure (2) the decoration the northern façade of the minaret of Jam.

3.2. The stucco decorations on the façade of the Shahi Mashhad Madrasa

These decorations, fig. (3), (the Ghurid era)^(h), which is located in the city of Badghis (Jarjistan) in northwestern Afghanistan on the border with Turkmenistan, Herat, and Ghor [18]. The façade decorations have various forms of knots, including the double knot and the endless knots, whether in a single design decorating the frames of the knots or with geometric designs of other complex shapes. They sometimes decorate the heads of the inscription letters.

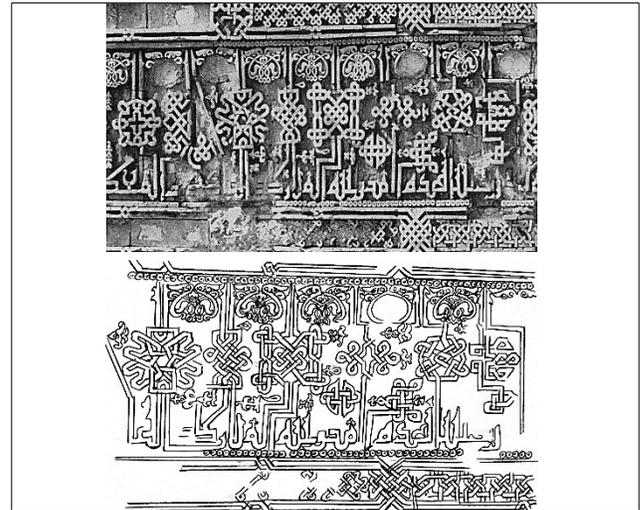


Figure (3) the double knot and the endless knot decorate façade of the Shahi Mashhad Madrasa

3.3. Stucco decorations on the façade of the mausoleum of Ghayyath al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam

These decorations, fig. (4) Ghurid attached to the Great Mosque in Herat in 597 AH [19], The double knots were repeated and intertwined in different places on the façade and inside the mausoleum. The double knot and the endless knot decorate the heads of the letters in Kufic in the inner decorations of the entrance [20].

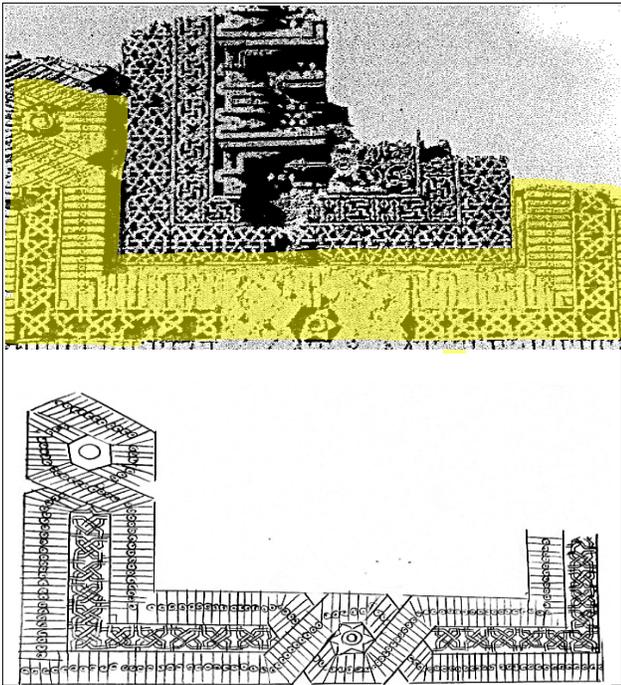


Figure (4) decorations on the façade of the mausoleum of Ghayyath al-Din

3.4. These knots were carried out in the same manner of buildings on a bronze incense burner

It dating back to the 10th-11th G. century and kept in the Alsubah Collection, Kuwait National Museum. fig. (5). The burner has a square structure and a domed cover. The square structure is decorated in its four facades with hollow motifs in the form of the double knot repeated next to each other and stacked in four horizontal rows, each with four knots with intertwined ends and a Kufic inscription that reads “A blessing by Abu Ishaq bin Isa, may his rule last long”, as a wish of honor and happiness”.



Figure (5) the bronze incense burner, the Alsubah Collection, Kuwait National Museum.

3.5. The lucky knot was repeatedly engraved on the decoration of a copper incense burner

It dated to the 10th-11th G century in the Louvre Museum, fig. (6). The incense has a spherical structure decorated with hollow floral motifs. These decorations are crossed by a circular medallion encompassing the double knot. Each knot is surrounded by a circle. The incense burner includes writings that support the common belief about this knot. These inscriptions suggest a wish of happiness and good luck to its owner and read: "...and total blessing, complete pleasure, adequate safety, and happiness for its owner [21]." This incense burner almost resembles another incense burner kept in the Polymer Collection in Bamberg, Germany [22].



Figure (6) a copper incense burner in the Louvre Museum

3.6. A vase with a high base and a spherical body

It is kept in the Islamic Museum, National Museums in Berlin, and dated the 10th-11th G century in Khorasan, fig. (7), is divided into eight longitudinal strips encompassing a double knot decoration. The four sides end with a leaf twisted inward. In the middle of the knot, a square emerges from the intersection of the two rings. An inscription tape circling the body at the bottom contains a repeated phrase that reads "a blessing to the owner of..."



Figure (7) a vase in the Islamic Museum, National Museums in Berlin

3.7. A copper alloy in the form of a bird

It dated back to the 10th-11th G century in Begram, Kabul, Afghanistan, fig. (8). It was found in the excavations of Begram and was preserved in the museum. It is only decorated with an inscription of a circle, encompassing a four-sided knot “double knot” [23].



Figure (8) the copper alloy, Begram museum, Afghanistan

3.8. A lamp holder dating back to the 10th-11th G century in Afghanistan

It is preserved in the National Museum of Afghanistan, fig. (9) In a circle, the decoration of the double knot was engraved on the plate. Other inscriptions were made on the standing column (A bara / Ka and / Yumn and / Sor/or and Saad^(a) Baraka, Yumn, Soror, Saada, salama, neama, nasr, rahma li-sahibha (blessing, pleasure, happiness, safety, grace, victory, and mercy for its owner [24].

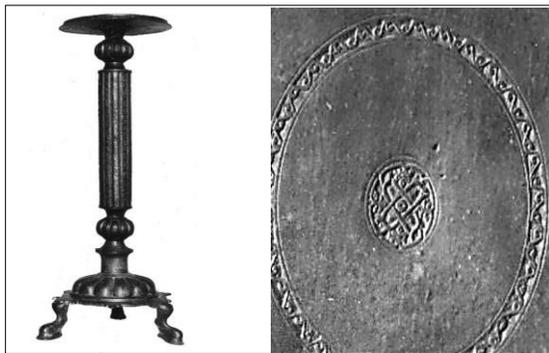


Figure (9) a lamp holder in the National Museum of Afghanistan

3.9. Pottery type from Nishapur

the knot was famous in the 10th G. century. pottery has black and white decorations. It was a feature of Nishapur pottery [25]. It took two forms: the simple double knot, and the endless knot. For example, a plate dated back to the 10th G century and preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, fig. (10) is decorated in the center with a circle encompassing a double knot with four square ends around with inscriptions of a saying by Omar Ibn Al-Khattab that read “the more you talk, the more mistakes you make” ... The decorations were carried out in black on a white background [26].



Figure (10) a plate -Nishapur pottery- the Metropolitan Museum of Art

3.10. A small crucible / melting pot

It is dated back to the 11th -12th G century, Khorasan, and preserved in the Polymer collection in Bamberg, Germany, fig. (11) Possibly, it was a tool for the pharmaceutical industry with a simple zigzag decoration around the edge. It has three edges, one at the back and two sides, decorated with carved decorations. The side edges have a circle decorated with a double knot with four ends in a square shape, while the back side has a flower.



Figure (11) melting pot, polymer collection in Bamberg, Germany

3.11. A copper incense burner from Khorasan

It dated to the 12th G century and kept in the Metropolitan Museum in New York; fig. (12) takes the form of a bird whose wings are decorated with hollow decorations of a double knot. It may be associated with good luck. (It has the word total happiness) [27].



Figure (12) incense Burner the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

3.12. A bronze bucket or caldron from the Ghurid period

(some writings denoted it to the Seljuk era) is encrusted with silver and copper. It is named the Bobrinsky bucket or caldron, derived from the title of its first Russian owner - Count Alexei Alexandrovich Bobrinsky, fig. (13), It is dated to Muharram 559 AH/December 1163 AD, made in Herat, and kept in the Hermitage Museum. It contains writings in the middle of the body wishing happiness and blessing. One inscription is a double and endless knot that repeatedly crosses all tops of letters on the circles of the body. At the top of the body, an inscription reads, “glory, prosperity, kingship, happiness, intercession, continuity, comfort, wellness, support, thanks, and survival for its owner.” In the middle of the body, an inscription reads, “righteousness, blessing, state, safety, support, comfort, strength, wellness, order, power, glory, renaissance, grace, continuity, praise, power, division, mercy, and survival for its owner.” At the bottom of the body, an inscription reads, “glory, prosperity, state, safety, happiness, comfort, intercession, wellness, thanks, victory, highness, completeness, dignity, support, helper, mercy, order,

vortex, and survival for its owner” [28]. These propaganda phrases spread during the 5th -6th H/11th -12th G. centuries and were used by writers. Old phrases, such as good fortune and blessing, were replaced by perpetual glory, comprehensive prosperity, a peaceful life for its owner, and other propaganda phrases [29].”

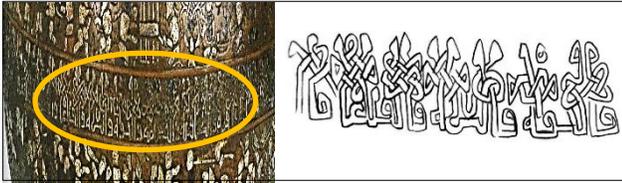


Figure (13) Bobrinsky caldron, Hermitage Museum

3.13. A copper talismanic bowl

It dated to the 13th G century is preserved in the Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, fig. (14). The edge contains knot inscriptions. In the middle, inscriptions wish happiness, pleasure, glory, prosperity, and honor [30].



Figure (14) a copper talismanic bowl- Royal Ontario Museum.

3.14. Mortar

This decoration was found on several mortars^(j). It was mostly engraved in a usual simple form, such as a copper mortar kept in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, fig. (15). dating back to the 12th-13th G century in Afghanistan (prosperity, satisfaction, peace, happiness, blessings, and long life for the owner). It was repeated interchangeably with raised decorations to fix it while grinding. This mortar is important because the inscriptions were related to the symbolism of this decoration and the function of the mortar. It was used in the court pharmacy for grinding medicines.



Figure (15) a copper mortar- the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

3.15. A copper mortar inlaid with silver

It dated back to the 12th-13th G centuries, Khorasan is preserved in the Khalil collection - Agha Khan -with accession no. MTV1354, fig. (16) It is decorated with raised rhombus shapes with the double knot decoration

inlaid with silver and repeated six times. The mortar was decorated with a band of inscriptions in Thuluth at the top and bottom of the mortar reading: "with success, blessing, prayer, safety, happiness, thanks, intercession, victory, exaltation, mercy, comfort, and survival for its owner".

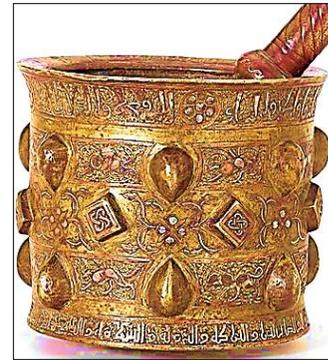


Figure (16) a copper mortar inlaid with silver the Khalil collection

This mortar resembles another in the same collection, fig. (17) dated to the same era, with accession no. MTV624. It is decorated with knot decoration, the composite or complex knot within motifs framing the base and the edge of the mortar inscribed interchangeably with inscriptions of supplications that correspond to the symbolism of the knot. In the upper band in Kufic script, they read "with success, blessing, prayer, safety, and happiness". At the bottom of the mortar, they read "eternal glory, survival, praise, compliments, righteousness, giving, and highness" [31].



Figure (17) a copper mortar inlaid with silver the Khalil collection

3.16. The double knot and the endless knot

They were carried on the bowls known as the magic bowl^(k) with other magical symbols that certainly have a magical significance and agree with the study, wishing happiness and blessings, fig. (18)



Figure (18) magic bowl-welcome collection

Noticeably, this form of the "four-sided knot" was associated with the decoration of the dragon, resulting from the wrapping of two dragons around each other. An example dated back to the Ghurids was part of a belt from Khorasan, fig. (19), and preserved in the Alsubah Collection, Kuwait National Museum⁽⁴⁾.



Figure (19) part of a belt from Khorasan and preserved in the Alsubah collection, Kuwait National Museum

The same shape decorated a sphere-conical pottery vessel^(m) found in the Golden Horde region (Ulus Jochi) dated to the 12th-13th G century and preserved in the State Historical Museum in Moscow, fig. (20). A study reported that the presence of the dragon and the knot together had magical connotations with chemical reactions, which agreed with the prevailing writings then, indicating the search for medicines for life or healing from incurable diseases using magic and medicinal formulas [30].



Figure (20) a sphere-conical pottery vessel- the State Historical Museum in Moscow

This association reminds us of the decorations of snakes that form the four-sided knot (the ancient Naga symbol) with the same shape of the knot engraved on a plaque dated back to the "Pallo Civilization" in Susa, Iran, dated to the period 2400-2600 BC⁽ⁿ⁾, fig. (21). It was found in the excavations of the Susa, Acropolis Temple and preserved in the Louvre Museum in Paris [32].



Figure (21) a plaque - Pallo Civilization- in the Louvre Museum

In sum, the double or endless knot, known as the Panchang knot, appeared on the daily artifacts of common people, especially in the Ghor regions of Khorasan, in current Afghanistan. Although the early spread of Islam in the Ghor and Afghanistan started in the Umayyad state, conquests continued in the Abbasid era because the area was difficult to conquest due to tough roads and cold weather. Most people in the Ghor region and its surroundings remained Buddhi. The real Islamic conquest of the Ghor regions and Afghanistan was in the era of Sultan Mahmud Al-Ghaznavi in 401 AH / 1010 AD [33]. Many studies showed that from the 7th to the 9th G century, Muslims did not have complete control over the Ghor regions but were ruled by local rulers whose origins belonged to the local Kushan dynasty [34]. Noticeably, the people who converted to Islam inherited these decorations that had magical symbolism among the peoples of these regions before conversion to Islam due to their lack of knowledge of the rules of the Islamic religion and the survival of some popular beliefs that prevailed among them while they were pagans, including this knot, believing that they brought happiness. This supports the connection between the decoration under study and the accompanying inscriptions that refer to wishing happiness, blessing, and good luck. It agreed with the symbolism of this knot in Chinese art, known as the Panchang knot. Therefore, the study agrees with others that the origin of this decoration was inherited through generations and prevailed among the ancient peoples of Asia. Then, it was used by Buddhists as a Buddha's symbol that brought good luck, wisdom, knowledge, and infinity to the universe. Hence, the Persians in Khorasan and Transoxiana used the "lucky knot" in the decoration of artifacts to bring happiness and good luck to the owner, following the ancient common belief.

4. Origin of the Panchang Knot "Lucky Knot"

To know the origin of this decoration, I tracked its emergence in the arts of ancient civilizations. This decoration prevailed in many, if not all, ancient civilizations in the same or a more complex form, as mentioned below:

4.1. The endless knot from the Harappa civilization to the 9th G century.

Most studies agreed that the emergence of the endless knot, fig. (22) dated back to pre-Christian times, especially to the "Harpa" civilizations of the Indus Valley in northern India and Central Asia. The endless knot "Knot of Eternity" was engraved on clay seals and on several square copper tablets dated back to Mohenjo-Daro, symbolizing immortality. It was indeed an unusual phenomenon in the Indus Valley civilization (3300-1300BC) [35]. It was believed that these interconnected rings denoted safeguard from evil forces, immortality, and eternity [36].

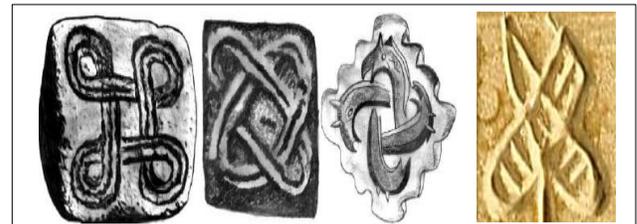


Figure (22) endless knot from the Harappa civilization

Excavations in the Bactria complex found seals with endless knot decoration were widespread in the Indus Valley Civilization. The relationships between the Indus Valley Civilization and the Bactria complex in the ancient city of Ariana (Afghanistan) showed that the Bactrian peoples knew the endless knot decoration in two forms: The simple one with two intertwined rings and the complex one with several rings of the "endless knot"^(o). After that, the region was part of the Achaemenid Empire before being ruled by Alexander the Macedonian during the Hellenistic period 312-36 BC. Alexander's invasion was followed by contact between the Greeks and Buddhism^(p). Later, a Persian-Greek dynasty, i.e., (the Kushan Dynasty) appeared and ruled the region from the 1st Century BC to the 3rd G century. There were many examples with the characteristics of Roman civilization and traditions of the Bactria civilization and Begram, "currently in Afghanistan", called the Roman Buddhist art [37]. There was a strong belief in the ancient Ghor during the Parthenon rule about the magic knots based on hidden powers that prevented evil forces from carrying out their goals. Additionally, each knot involved magical protection that intercepted those forces or brought a certain luck. Buddhism survived in this region from the 3rd BC to the 9th G century [38], highlighting the reason for the existence of the lucky knot in the region as a tradition. Excavations in this region and its surroundings found several pieces of evidence about the survival of this decoration in Islamic times, especially in the 10th-13th G centuries, in Central Asia and Greater Khorasan [3], "including the Ghor regions in current Afghanistan" from the earliest centuries until the Islamic era. It was the most famous knot in ancient times [30].

4.2. Development stages of the Panchang knot

The endless knot, fig. (23) has evolved since its appearance on clay and copper seals and copper amulets in Taxila, the "Indus Valley Civilization", symbolizing immortality and eternity⁽³⁾, until its shape of several endless sides. Later, it was a symbol of Buddha made of a simple double knot, which resembled the belt of deities Yaksha and Bodhisattva in the arts of Kushan and the Parthenon. It was the same elaborate knot associated with the turban that crowned the heads of the immortals in the arts of Gandhar. It was associated with Buddhism as one of the eight auspicious symbols of Buddha [3]. The ancient symbolism of the knot as an endless knot, which symbolized the endless cycle of the universe, wisdom, and knowledge, resembled the belief of Buddhists in the endless wisdom and knowledge of Buddha. It was also believed that it helped ward off evil and bring good luck [39]. Many people believed that the knot understudy was of Chinese origin because of the spread of Buddhism in China, the conversion of the Chinese emperors to Buddhism, and the frequent appearance of the eight symbols of Buddha in Chinese art^(q). It was called the Chinese knot [39].



Figure (23) endless knot

It was not only a unique knot or decoration, but it also expressed the artist's feelings. It denoted wisdom and directed people towards mystical insight; thus, it appears in sacred architectural places [40]. The symbols of luck, prosperity, long life, happiness, and wealth are all important in Chinese culture [40]. Symbols of these virtues are often seen in daily life and appear during holidays and festivals. They are also used for decorating homes and wishing good luck in all spheres of life [41]. The traditional decoration of the knot evolved into a set of specific signs: by combining the various knots or other decorations. Its mere appearance brought joy, happiness, and a long life. Noticeably, most metalworks in the Khorasan region with this decoration were found at the nozzles of the lamp, especially the area emitting light because the artist possibly made it to wish good luck and happiness as the spread of light everywhere [22].

4.3. The knot of the Uyghur Turks

The author noticed that some studies mentioned the Turkish-Uyghur origin of the knot due to its survival among the Uyghur Turks to date. This knot was known as (ulzi), («улзий»), or wishing happiness and well-being, fig. (24) Its examples were found on the textiles of the Mongolian Bedouins dated to the Hun dynasty of the 1st Century BC. Their shape corresponds to the Deer Hoof endless knot. The Ulzi decoration is a major ethnic sign of the Mongols, which calls for interconnectedness, friendship, happiness, and peace. It is a symbol of national identity and originality [42]. Research showed that they knew this knot because they converted to Buddhism [43].



Figure (24) Ulzi decoration in Turkish-Uyghur

4.4. Knot decoration in Roman art

"Solomon's knot" is the common term for the knot decoration understudy. It spread in ancient Roman mosaics and had several forms, fig. (25). Most relevant studies on Roman art agreed that it is a form of knots in ancient Celtic art, denoting the endless cycle of the universe. It spread in Europe with the Roman conquest in the decoration of Roman mosaics from the 1st G century. Later, it was used continuously after the spread of Christianity in decorating places of worship, believing in its sacred mystical symbolism. Christians believed that it suggested the connection between man and God, no one could escape God's will, and a connection exists between the Creator and the creature forever because man's ultimate goal is to return to God^(r). This shape was known as the Roman or the Hercules knot in ancient Greek mythology in the 1st Century BC. The Roman knot was believed to be a sacred symbol decorated with floral ornaments [44].



Figure (25) Roman's knot- ancient Roman mosaics

In the Roman era, this decoration was also called the Gordian knot [45]. Using knots in Greek and Roman art with Solomon's knot denotes the influence of Jewish magic traditions and its use in many talismans in magical papyri. Confusion occurs between Solomon's ring and the knot. The former is a five- or six-pointed star that differs from the knot under study [30]. Using this shape was part of a common magical ritual in architecture and artwork to ward off evil, expel evil spirits, and bring good luck. The knots were the center of resisting evil. The more complicated the knot, the better its effectiveness in warding off evil. This belief spread in many Christian countries in the Roman and Byzantine times⁽⁶⁾ [46]. Some studies argued that the presence of this knot in the mosaics of Roman art was due to the influence of the Parthian culture and Buddhism [47].

4.5. The relationship of this decoration to Solomon

Foreign literature used to call this decoration Solomon's knot for no reason, relating it to the prophet Solomon or relevant myths. Many European studies used the term *Solomon's knot* [48] for the Roman knot. When studying the Islamic decorations executed on the arts of Khorasan, European Islamic archaeologists used the common name, i.e., Solomon's knot, without giving a reason or studying the relationship between the decoration and the term. According to a study on Roman mosaics, "... one the mosaic decorations on the floors of churches was the knot called Solomon's knot or Hercules knot, which we believed was a magical symbol in Byzantine art. The appearance of the "*Solomon's knot*" was frequent in the symbols and writings of the protector necklaces, which were popular in the Byzantine period. For example, a copper amulet contained a knight riding a horse with the inscription "O Seal of Solomon, ward off evil from the holder of the amulet [46]." Noticeably, the seal or ring of Solomon was confused with the knot under study [49]. Knoten Salomos appeared for the first time in the scientific literature in 1889 in an article by M.W. von Schulenburg, arguing that the reported sign appeared in Liguria, Italy, resembled *nodo di Salomone* and appeared on the walls and doors of many houses. This knot also resembled another used by sailors who fixed it on masts for protection during storms [50]. In 1918, Leite de Vasconcelos conducted a study on *Signum Salomonis*, covering all five- and six-pointed star shapes in Italy, Spain, and Portugal that were traditionally associated with Solomon in the ancient Jewish resources. In a short appendix called *Nóde Salomao*, Schulenburg indicated all symbols of Solomon, including the double knot under study. Two years later, this term was acknowledged and translated into different languages, esp-

pecially with the spread of this traditional decorative form in various cultures, imposing an urgent need to use one term for this decoration to distinguish it from swastika-pelta, guilloche, and Kramo bone. In spite of this interest in studying this knot, few Scientists endeavored to determine the origin of this name and illustrate the relationship between the present name and form. This knot was widespread in Roman arts to decorate the columns and floors at the entrances to churches. It was loved by Europeans, especially in Italy, because of its obvious similarity with the cross. Thus, it was painted with the cross and the swastika [50]. Some studies argued that the origin of the idea dates back to the ancient tradition of tying a column with a knotted ribbon with the Holy Land. With the Crusades, this knot was associated with Christian Europe in Jerusalem and the alleged Temple of Solomon, which, as they claimed, had a swastika and knotted columns. Consequently, the name of Solomon related to this knot due to this explanation, as this decoration under study was used from ancient times and known as the Hercules knot. The name associated with Solomon was not used until the Middle Ages during the Crusades. Those who believed in this opinion argued that the knot of the columns of Solomon's temple, executed with great skill, not by humans, associated the knot with Solomon's ability to harness non-humans to serve him, which gave the knot a magical influence to ward off evil spirits [51].

4.6. Confusion between the lucky knot and Solomon's ring

Consequently, this decoration that European scientists currently called *Solomon's knot* was known long ago, but its current name was not used at the time. The earlier examples suggest a match between the current name "*Solomon's knot*" and the decoration dated back to the early 17th G century, although. However, it was found in many examples of Roman mosaics in the 1st G. century. Simply, the association between the name Solomon's knot and this knot is coincidental [52]. Some studies illustrated that this title was due to the common legend of Solomon's ring. It was said that this knot related to Solomon's knot in the Old Testament, as King Solomon was given a ring by an archangel, on which a powerful symbol was engraved, giving him the power of controlling demons [53]. The popular belief associated with this symbol, which sometimes appeared as a five-pointed or six-pointed star or an "endless knot", was that demons were curious and stupid, and if they saw a line, they had to follow it. Concerning *Solomon's knot*, the line was endless, and Satan was trapped in the symbol itself. Some might think it was a symbol of knowledge and contained the wisdom of the Prophet (King) Solomon [1]. Some studies confused the knot with the ring. They reported that, according to the Italian legend, King Solomon was on a hill, and God assigned him to protect a village from large rocks that would roll and destroy it. Solomon held three large bellows and took a rope, and created this knot to support the rocks and protect the village [54]. Hence, the seal of Solomon in traditional Judaism denoted the mystical meaning as a symbol of immortality [54].

5. Results

The study concluded that knot decoration prevailed in many ancient cultures. Despite different symbolism, they all believed that it had a role in good omens and happy wishes. The study corrected the misconceptions about the emergence of this decoration, denoting it to the civilization of Harappa and the Indus Valley. It highlighted the reason for the common belief that this decoration was of Chinese origin, as the Chinese borrowed the endless knot inherited from ancient times among the peoples of Asia due to its similarity with their beliefs in the endless science and knowledge of Buddha. The study illustrated the relationship between inscriptions on the artifacts in Khorasan arts in the Islamic eras and the prevailing belief about the symbolism of this knot. It reported that the reason for the survival of the belief in the symbolism of the lucky knot in the period understudy was that those people newly converted to Islam in the 9th G century, and their pagan beliefs survived. Islam greatly affected the development of geometric decorations that covered Islamic buildings. The more complex geometric decoration Girih dominated the idea of the knot until became mere geometric motifs. Thus, the symbolism of the knot declined to a simple sign, along with other signs, such as the swastika, as a relic of the pagan past in the new Islamic reality, such as the emergence of the knot in the decoration of the Seljuk era. It was widely used because Muslims considered it an element of the traditional art of the nomadic ancestors, associating the past with the present. It no longer distinguished any belief, but it was a social tradition not associated with religion. It was widespread before Islam and used in the early Islamic period with the same ancient symbolism, as shown by the inscriptions that corresponded with the symbolism of wishing happiness. Later, it became a mere geometric decoration.

6. Discussion

In this paper, the author discussed a geometric ornament, the "knot of good luck", with its various forms known as decorative items in the ancient era and in many cultures. The Study discussed this decoration's several names and symbolism. It highlighted the causes of using these knots in the Islamic arts of that period and corrected some misconceptions about the emergence of this knot. Knot decoration spread in Persia, especially the Khorasan province and some cities of Transoxiana. It took two forms: The first was simple double knot (four-sided), and an endless knot with multiple ends. In addition to searching for the origin of this decoration, I tracked its emergence in the arts of ancient civilizations. This supports the connection between the decoration understudy and the accompanying inscriptions that refer to wishing happiness, blessing, and good luck. It agreed with the symbolism of this knot in Chinese art, known as the Panchang knot. Therefore, the study agreed with others that the origin of this decoration was inherited through generations and prevailed among the ancient peoples of Asia. Then, it was used by Buddhists as a Buddha's symbol that brought good luck, wisdom, knowledge, and infinity to

the universe. Hence, the Persians in Khorasan and Transoxiana used the "lucky knot" in the decoration of artifacts to bring happiness and good luck to the owner, following the ancient common belief.

7. Conclusion

The current research is an artistic-archaeological study of a type geometric decorations that prevailed in all Islamic arts in Iran and some regions of Central Asia, especially Khorasan Province, from the 10th to the 13th G. centuries, believing that this knot brought happiness. The study recommended conducting a more extensive artistic and analytical comparative analysis of the ornaments and inscriptions of the Khorasan and Transoxiana regions at that time; and the periods proceeding to link Islamic history and an attempt to document it through their inscriptions and ornaments and the main reason for their spread in the era.

Endnotes

- (a) In the past, the knot was thought to be a magic symbol as a means of knotting magic powers. The ritual practices of knotting the robe and blowing were one of the most dangerous magic or remedial magic in the pre-Islamic era. See [30].
- (b) The Sammanids (261-389 AH/874-999 AD) came to the throne after the Safarids, seizing their properties in Khorasan. Then, the Ghaznavids (351-582 AH/962-1186 AD) ruled in Khorasan, Afghanistan, and North India. They were followed by the Ghurids (390-612 AH/1000-1212 AD) in the same regions. The Ghaznavids and the Ghurids spread Islam in India [55].
- (c) The Ghurid rule covered most areas of Afghanistan, Kashmir, Central India, and Pakistan. It was bordered by Amu Darya from the northeast, Khorasan in the north, and Sijistan in the west. Firozkuh was its summer capital. They were preceded by the Ghaznavids and the Samanids. The southern areas of the Samanids experienced riots and disorders, but the Samanids, led by Subaktakin, controlled this region and took Ghazna as the capital. After his death, his son Mahmud Al-Ghaznavi was entrusted with the same task. When the Samanids weakened, Mahmud Al-Ghaznavi announced himself as a ruler and controlled north India and Khorasan and approved the reign of the local rulers as subordinates of the Ghaznavid Emirate. When the Ghaznavid Emirate weakened, the Ghawian princes could control the region and established the Ghurid Emirate in 543AH/1148 AD, which continued to rule the region and expanded its influence and control in new regions in northern India until it was overthrown by the Khwarizmi Emirate in 612 AH/1215 AD. [56].
- (d) Minaret of Jam is an important Islamic monument in Afghanistan on the Hari River. It is 70 m high with an octagon base of 4 m long a side and 2 m high. The base is topped by a cylinder of 40 m high, followed by another cylinder of 10 m high, and a third one of 7 m high. Then comes the window of the muezzin, followed by the Jawsaq covered with a dome. The minaret was built of baked bricks with inscriptions of the establisher Ghayyath Aldin Ghurid 545-588 A.H. in Kufic [57].

- (e) It is the foot of the Ghor Mountains. It means the Blue Mountain. It also means blue in the dialect of Khorasan. It is a great and fortified fort in the mountains of Gorchestan between Herat and Ghazna Dar. It was the country of Shihab Al-Din bin Sam, who was a pious man and ruled Ghazna, Khurasan, and India. Saleh's older brother, Ghayyath Aldin fortified the city and made it the capital [58].
- (f) This region was known as Ariana and ruled by Kushans, a Persian dynasty of Greek origin from the 1st G century until the mid-4th G century when seized by the Sassanids. After the Muslims' conquest, it was ruled by the Chinese Tang dynasty. Soon after, it was ruled by local rulers of Koshan origin. Buddhism survived as the main creed in this region from the 3rd G century to the 9th G century. See [38].
- (g) Historical narratives differed in determining the origin of the Ghor. Some historians attributed the Ghurids to al-Dahhak, who ruled Iran in ancient times. Others believed that the Ghurids were originally Tajik, resulting from the Arab-Iranian marriage relations. Most historians reported that the Ghurids had ancient Afghan origins in the mountainous region known as Ghor Mountain [59].
- (h) The establisher of the Madrasa has not been known yet, but it is absolutely a lady, as shown by the inscriptions on the façade (Bism Allah Arrahman Arrahim a(m)arat bi-binaa hazih Almadra(s)h Almubarak(h) A (.) h Almuazamh Alalimah. . . . In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful, The Great Scholar Lady. . . . ordered of building this Blessed School [60]. Some argued that the Ghurid Queen Taj Alahrar Malik, the wife of the Ghurid Sultan Ghayyath Aldin Muhammad, who was buried there with her father, mother, and brother. Others attributed it to the lady Mah Malik, the daughter of Sultan Ghayyath Aldin Muhammad bin Sam [61].
- (i) The mausoleum was destroyed in 1950. The pictures in this paper were taken by Oscar Fon Neider Mayer during the First World War. See [20].
- (j) The mortar was used by men of medicine for grinding medicines. It was equipped with raised almond shapes on the body of the mortar to be fixed while crushing medicines. [62].
- (k) The Magic Bowl is a small bowl used in folk medicine because people believed that it cured all diseases because of its magical inscriptions inside. It is filled with water, oil, or milk and repeated three times until the disease is treated [63].
- (l) A part of a belt made of 77 copper pieces, one of its parts has a Kufic inscription in the name of Muhammad bin Sam on a lion inscription; dimensions: 10.62 * 5.98 * 1.74 cm. It was discovered near the Minaret of Jam (Ghor). See [30].
- (m) Sphero-conical bowls made of ceramic at high temperatures to prevent water leakage; therefore, they were used in medicine and chemistry. See [30].
- (n) It was one of the earliest known civilizations c.6000/3000 BC and lasted about 2500 years. It dominated a large area that included present-day Iran, the Caspian Sea, Afghanistan, and a large part of the Near East, including Babylonia and Assyria [64].
- (o) Scholars called it the Bronze Age in Bactria–Margiana Archaeological Complex in Bactria on the sides of Amo Daria and the Merv Oasis. It could be dated to the first quarter of the second millennium B.C. It was considered the fifth center of the civilization of the ancient world (with Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China) and had strong relations with Mesopotamia, eastern and northern Iran, the Indus Valley, and China. [65].
- (p) Buddhism appeared in India in the 6th BC century, then spread in northeastern India. The Indian Emperor Ashoka spread it outside India in the 3rd BC century. Buddhism began to spread towards the east in Bengal, then in Kashmir. In the 3rd century BC, it spread to China and Central Asia. For further information on Buddhism and its spread in the ancient world [66].
- (q) The eight auspicious symbols of Buddha, i.e., Dharmachakra, Conch, Dhvaja, Parasol, Lotus flower, Bumpa, Golden Fish, and Endless knot, glorified the eternal life and endless rise of the sun god. The eternity knot intertwines with a rope with attached ends to have endless completion [67].
- (r) The Byzantine churches used to integrate the ancient popular belief of the evil eye and the Christian belief of Satan as the source of evil that uses envious people to achieve a goal. This social belief imposed itself on all social groups, including the rich who were the main financiers of building churches. Therefore, the church fathers integrated Christian and magical symbols, creating the shape of Solomon's knot with the cross to bring luck and protection from the evil spirit [68].
- (s) This belief spread among many ancient peoples. According to a tradition of the Indian peoples in Tamil Nadu in southern India, women are keen to draw the endless knot in various forms in front of the thresholds of houses, calling them Pulli or Chikku Kolam to protect the family from the evil powers and at dawn on the ground sprinkled with water and cow dung sanctified by Goddess Lakshmi and Genesha. See [3].

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