

Silk's Void Cross

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 21 Jan 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/38>

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Doug Eigsti — 21 Jan 1997, 15:17

Dave writes:

[Posted from Whorl, the mailing list for Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun]

A few minutes with the encyclopedia both illuminates and obscures. Silk's cross is referred to as a "gammadion," and as a "voided cross." As it happens, and has been already pointed out, the swastika or "fylfot" is a gammadion (because it is made up of four gammas). (A voided cross is one with a hole in the center of it.)

However, there's another definition of a gammadion (from the OED): "voided greek cross," where the gammas are "back-to-back." Unfortunately, there is no picture. However, a greek cross is one where the arms of the cross are equal in length (a roman cross, more commonly seen, has the lower arm longer).

Silk's cross has an "X-shaped void" in it, according to _Nightside_. So, there are several possible looks one could imagine. The only one I could come up with that matches all the criteria is:

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This looks rather like the cross one used to see on German warplanes (WWI vintage, for example).

It has the problem that the gammas aren't attached to each other, but that's a small drawback, easily cured by a small connector at the end of each arm.

Dave Lebling
(david_lebling at avid.com)

Dave,

I like your diagram it does seem to allow for the void-cross, and it is a nice plus-sign shape. I can find two things to take exception. One: The disconnected gammas which you mentioned. It would be more elegant if the gammas were self connected, not needing a framework to keep them together. Two: Gammas do not have arms of equal length. They look like an upside down capitol "L".

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Here is my best guess for Silk's gammadion:

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This has the advantage of being connected and built exclusively from four gamma shaped objects. One can see how Silk could use a gamma as a screwdriver for tightening the power connections on a window.

Question: What is a "fylfot"?

=Doug Eigsti=
douge at nti.com

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Fernando Q. Gouvea — 21 Jan 1997, 17:58 · follows Doug Eigsti

**** On Tue, 21 Jan 1997 15:17:47 -0700 (MST), douge at nti.com (Doug Eigsti) said:

Doug> I like your diagram it does seem to allow for the void-cross, and Doug> it is a nice plus-sign shape. I can find two things to take Doug> exception. One: The disconnected gammas which you mentioned. It Doug> would be more elegant if the gammas were self connected, not needing Doug> a framework to keep them together. Two: Gammas do not have arms of Doug> equal length. They look like an upside down capitol "L".

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Doug> This has the advantage of being connected and built exclusively from Doug> four gamma shaped objects. One can see how Silk could use a gamma as Doug> a screwdriver for tightening the power connections on a window.

It has the disadvantage, though, of not being a cross at all! Since Wolfe repeatedly says "voided cross", I'd expect something that was a cross but had some sort of hole in it. (Or was missing something---an allusion I think Wolfe intends but that is immaterial to the shape of the thing.)

Fernando

Fernando Q. Gouvea
 Chair, Dept. of Math & CS Editor, MAA Online
 Colby College <http://www.maa.org>
 fqgouvea at colby.edu fqgouvea at maa.org

COMMENT

Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song,
 A medley of extemporanea;
 And love is thing that can never go wrong;
 And I am Marie of Roumania.
 -- Dorothy Parker

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com