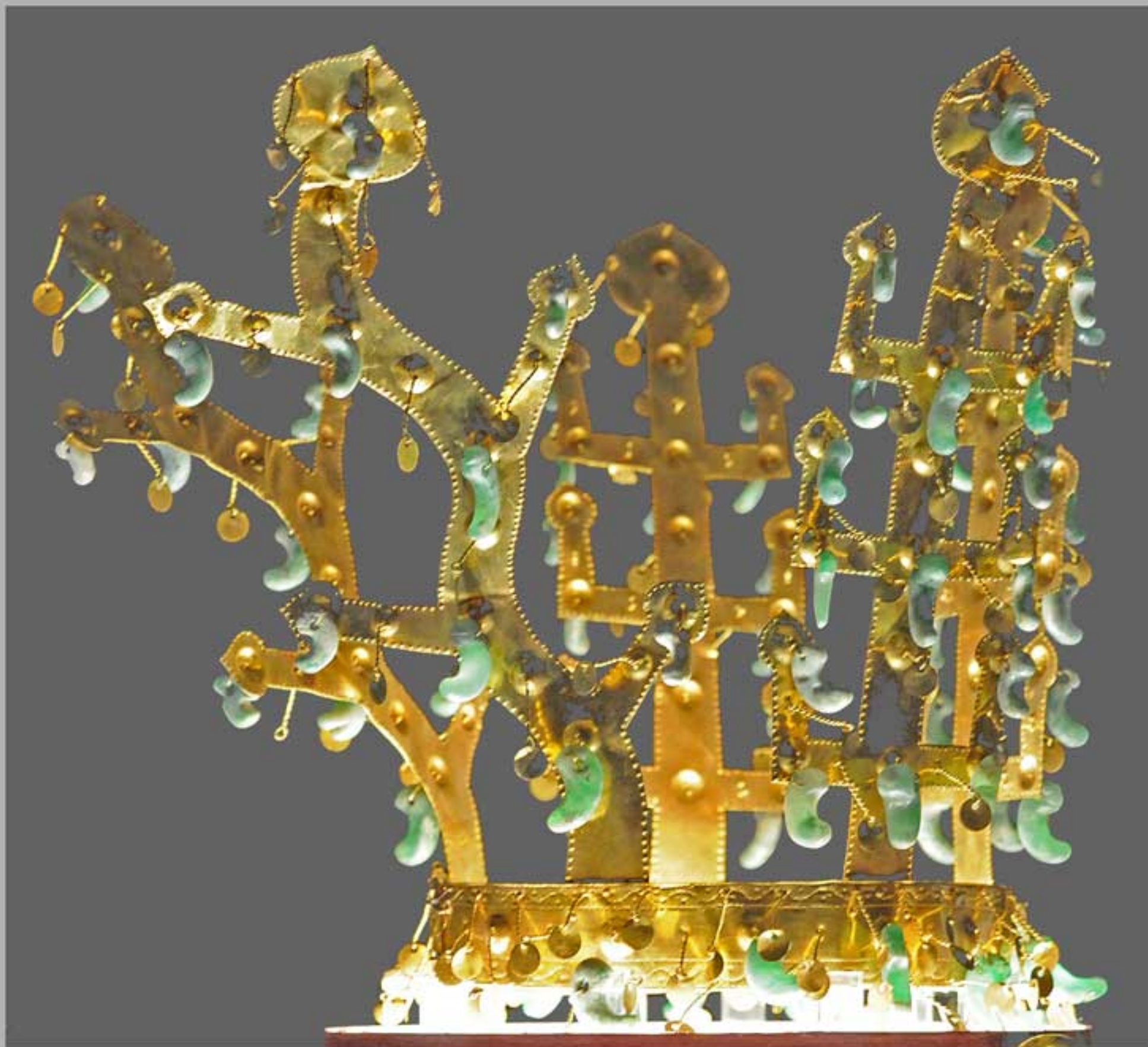


The

Silk Road



Vol. 6, No. 2 Winter/Spring 2009

The
Silk Road

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Cover photo: *The golden crown from the northern mound of Tomb 98 in Kyôngju. Collection of the National Museum of Korea, Seoul. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.*

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The Silkroad Foundation
14510 Big Basin Way # 269
Saratoga, CA 95070

Editor: Daniel C. Waugh
dwaugh@u.washington.edu

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"The Bridge between Eastern and Western Cultures"

From the editor's desktop

This is the eleventh issue (of the twelve published) of this journal for which I have had editorial responsibility. I trust readers will agree that we have made a lot of progress in providing a publication of some substance and of interest to a broad audience, in keeping with the Silkroad Foundation's commitment to public education about the history and cultures of Eurasia.

An important part of our goal here is to make available information that may not otherwise be readily accessible. Clearly even specialists still have a difficult time accessing materials published in other countries and languages. I am particularly proud of our success in publishing the work of scholars whose writing otherwise might be inaccessible to an English-speaking audience of non-specialists. This issue of the journal offers several examples. Such articles are valuable not only for the specific information they contain but also for what they tell us about different emphases in scholarship, where the concerns of the authors and their audiences at home may often be different from those of readers in other countries. Those steeped in traditional European appreciation of the Hellenistic world might, for example, find Professor Yang Juping's emphasis on Alexander familiar, but in a tradition of scholarship where often the Silk Road has been viewed through an East Asian lens, his is a different approach. There is much in this issue which should be new to students of the "Silk Roads," from the intriguing and important questions concerning the "Korean connection" raised by Professor Staffan Rosén to the provocative hypotheses about the historic origins of Islamic mazar practices in Professor Rahilä Dawut's beautifully illustrated article.

The success of the journal depends on a continuing flow of stimulating and well-researched contributions. The next issue, to appear in autumn, will include articles on current directions in textile research, on the Tahilt excavations in Mongolia in 2008 co-sponsored by the Silkroad Foundation, and on an important ongoing project to document the Buddhist sites in Mongolia. Starting in 2010, the journal will appear as an annual, somewhat larger in size than an individual issue of the current semi-annual publication.

I have formatted the issue you have before you using software (Adobe InDesign CS4®) which has the virtue of making it easy to reproduce non-Roman characters, something which is critically important for rendering terms and proper names in Chinese. I trust that this upgrade of the digital editing tools has not generated significant error, even though there is always a steep learning curve in computer matters. There are many options here for continuing to improve the journal's appearance and better accommodate authors' wishes and readers' expectations. A detailed style sheet for contributors should soon be available on the Silkroad Foundation's Internet pages containing the electronic version of this journal.

Please send your contributions and suggestions to:

Daniel Waugh, Editor
Professor Emeritus
University of Washington (Seattle)
dwaugh@u.washington.edu

KOREA AND THE SILK ROADS

Staffan Rosén

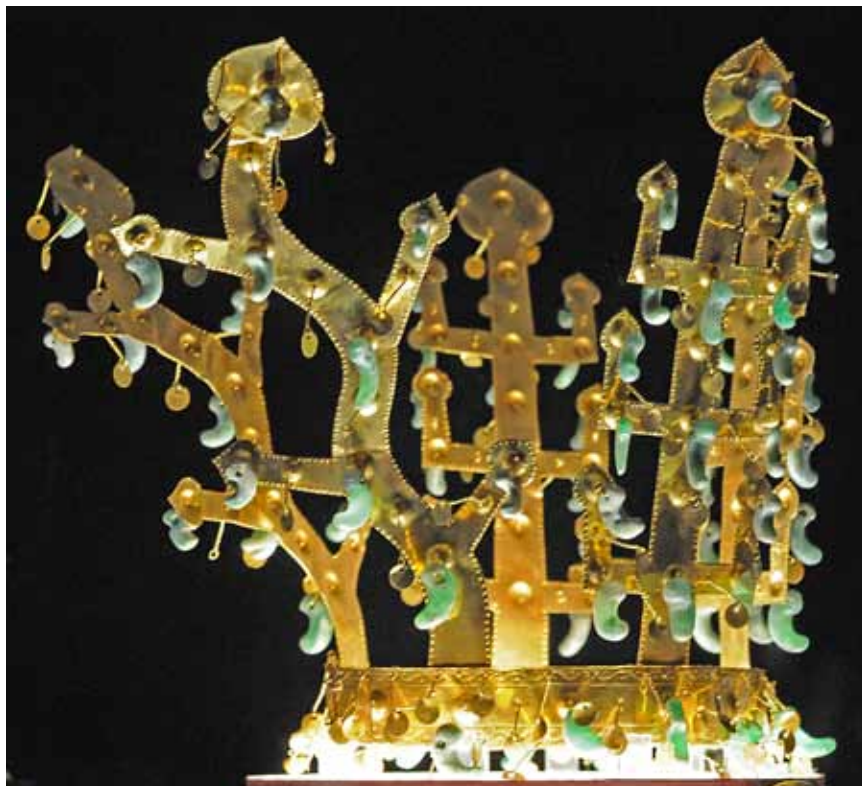
Stockholm University, Sweden

In 1926 the then Crown Prince of Sweden and noted archaeologist Gustav Adolf (later King Gustav VI Adolf, 1882-1973), on the invitation by the Japanese authorities, visited Korea and the excavation of one of the royal tombs in Kyôngju 慶州, the capital of the former Silla 新羅 kingdom [Fig. 1]. There was the expectation that the tomb, later to be named Sôbong ch'ong 瑞鳳塚 "The Tomb of the Auspicious (= 'Swedish') Phoenix" in honor of its royal visitor, would yield a spectacular golden crown of a type similar to the one found by the Japanese archaeologists five years earlier in connection with the very first excavation of a Kyôngju royal tomb, the so called Kûmgwan ch'ong 金冠塚 "The Tomb of the Golden Crown." Indeed the royal party was lucky, and as anticipated could witness the excavation of a splendid and exquisitely made golden crown with a stylized tree rising in front of the headband and a representation of antlers on each side [Fig. 2]. The whole construction was studded with



Fig. 1. HRH Crown Prince Gustav Adolf of Sweden (front left) during the excavation of the Sôbong ch'ong tomb in Kyôngju 1926. Photo © National Museum of Korea. Published with permission.

"leaves" of thin gold sheet and comma-shaped jade pendants. This type of crown, of which several more were to be excavated from the tombs in Kyôngju, for a considerable time was considered unique to the Korean peninsula and to a large extent came to be used as a symbol of "Korea" and indigenous "Korean culture" (Ch'oe 1992; Kim 1998).



While the crown embodied both religious and secular symbolism, only gradually did the obvious connection between the Silla gold crowns and their North Asian/Siberian shamanistic parallels come to be recognized. The Silla crowns indeed seemed to indicate that the former monarchs of this kingdom must have fulfilled the double role of shaman and king, at least from the 5th century on. Further evidence to this effect was provided by other paraphernalia found in the royal tombs, especially the golden belts, which all reflect a Central-North Asian nomadic

Fig. 2. The golden crown from the northern mound of Tomb 98 in Kyôngju. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.



Fig. 3. Detail of Royal belt from the northern mound of Tomb 98 in Kyôngju. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

model with a clear religious, shamanistic function [Fig. 3]. In comparison to their nomadic parallels both the crowns and the belts from Silla represent a kind of "aristocratized" shamanism, in the sense that the the Silla objects were made of pure gold and in an exquisite technique, while the Central and North Asian objects normally were of simpler construction.¹ However, it would be a mistake to treat the design and style of the Silla crowns as only an indigenous redesigning of a simpler Central and North Asian model. Rather, the development of the specific "Silla features" of these crowns was the result of Silla from the 4th century being integrated into a cultural-religious sphere connected with Central and Northeast Asia. The technique of constructing a crown by adding upright trees and studding it with round or oval thin golden leaves attached to the crown by means of thin gold thread was used before the 4th century as far west as the old Kingdom of Bactria. A spectacular find of a golden crown (and many other golden objects) at Tillya Tepe in present day north-eastern Afghanistan made by the Russian archaeologist Victor Sarianidi in 1978, revealed a technique and craftsmanship strongly resembling those of the Silla crowns

[Fig. 4].² Especially striking in this connection is the technique of attaching small gold leaves to the crown in a manner that is almost identical to the one found on the Korean peninsula. The golden objects at Tillya Tepe have been identified as belonging to the 1st century CE, and are also believed to have been locally made (Cambon 2006). From a stylistic point of view the Tillya Tepe objects reveal obvious influences not only from the Graeco-Hellenistic side, but also from the Scythian and more eastern "Scythoid"³ cultures in the north, as well as features from China in the Far East and India in the south.

The striking parallels between the crowns from Bactria and Silla have led to far reaching speculations about early Bactrian-"Korean" connections during the first four centuries CE. In her magisterial work on the technical lineage of the Silla crowns, Yi Songnan argues for a Bactrian origin under heavy Greek influence on the technique and style of this kind of crown. According to Yi this technique and style spread via commercial contacts to the Xianbei 鮮卑 and further via Koguryô 高句麗 to Silla. The dating of the relevant artefacts so far found strongly speaks in favour of Yi's argumentation (Yi 2005). Pierre Cambon confidently suggests that "the relations between Tillya Tepe and Korean art in the Three

Fig. 4. The crown from Tillya Tepe, tomb 6. Second quarter of 1st c. CE. After: photograph © Thierry Ollivier/ Musée Guimet, first published in Cambon 2006, p. 206, and reproduced as <http://www.curatedobject.us/photos/uncategorized/2008/04/17/afghan_gold06.jpg>.



Kingdoms period (1st–7th centuries CE) demonstrate that there is a connection, but not via China, before the T'ang period" (Cambon 2006, p. 109). Be that as it may, at least it seems safe to state that the Bactrian and the Silla crowns, in spite of some obvious differences (the Bactrian crown is collapsable and lacks the comma-shaped pendants and antlers), nevertheless share a number of features (the "tree of life," birds in the tree, the golden leaves) important enough to permit us to treat them as belonging to a common Central-Northeast Asian cultural sphere with clear nomadic traditions. It stretches from Bactria eastwards through the old Xiongnu 匈奴 and Xianbei areas and reaches the Koguryô and Silla states on the Korean peninsula. During the first half of the 1st millennium CE many art objects of this vast area show a complex picture involving a number of common techniques such as filigree, the type of leaves just mentioned, as well as a number of common features of ritual symbolism (like the tree and the birds) to be connected mainly with shamanism (Yi 2005). The exact nature of these "Bactrian-Korean" connections remains unclear, although existing differences and chronology strongly seem to argue for a movement of ideas and techniques from west to east.

The Xianbei-Koguryô-Silla cultural complex

The shamanistic symbolism is stronger in the eastern Xianbei-Koguryô-Silla group than in the Bactrian material. The stylized tree pattern or the so-called "tree of life," ingeniously combined with the antler pattern, is represented in the material of this eastern group through a unique genre of objects excavated in present day Inner Mongolia, showing a deer head with antlers equipped with leaves of the "Silla-type" [Fig. 5]. In this way the upper part of the deer head fulfils the unusual double function of antler and tree. The exact function of these golden objects is not quite clear, but their religious

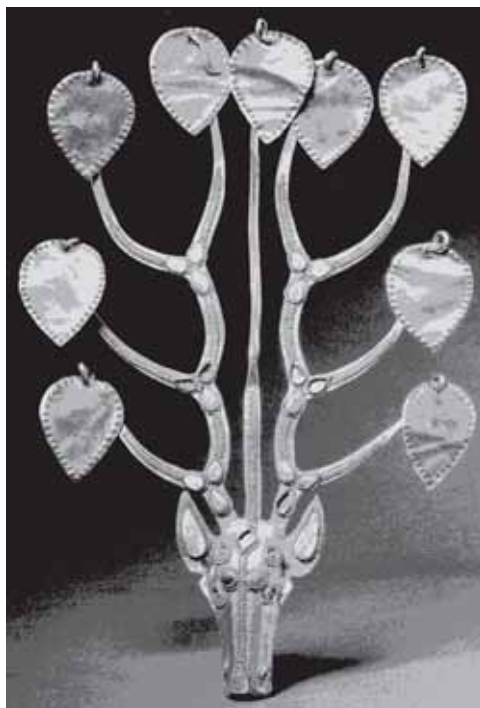


Fig. 5. A "Deer-tree" from Inner Mongolia, excavated in Darhan Mumingan Banner, Ulanqab League. 3rd-5th century. After China 2005.

symbolism is evident, and expressed in an artistically economic and minimalistic way, which is truly remarkable.⁴ Although so far this type of object has not been detected on the Korean peninsula or its immediately adjacent areas, there can be no doubt of the existence of an intellectual-artistic connection between these Xianbei deer heads and the Silla golden crowns. Chronologically they are close in time, since the golden deer heads excavated in Inner Mongolia

have been dated to the 5th century CE. It is essential to note that this genre is represented by several finds outside of the former "Korean" Three Kingdoms area.

The comma-shaped pendants (*kogok* 曲玉; Jap. *magatama*), which profusely adorn especially the Silla crowns, constitute another clear indication of the close connection between Silla and the northern cultures. They are also found on the ear-pendants and necklaces from the same archaeological context as the crowns. The exact origin and meaning of these objects have been hotly debated, but much seems to speak for the interpretation that they represent an animal claw (bear or tiger?) in its function as a totemic symbol. Such comma-shaped objects and decorative elements are well-known from the "Scythoid" burials in Noyon uul and Pazyryk (Rudenko 1960), and consequently go back to at least the 5th century BCE, i.e. almost a millennium before they appear on the Korean peninsula. At any rate, the comma-shaped pendants constitute another tangible evidence of the longstanding existence of the north-south axis in the North Asian-Peninsular cultural flow during the millennium here under discussion.

In this connection it is important to remember that the construction of the Silla crowns does have parallels of much later date and of simpler making in eastern Siberia, pointing to a longstanding shamanistic tradition in this vast area.



Fig. 6. Deer-mask for a horse. From Pazyryk tomb I. Late 4th–early 3rd century BCE. Photo @ 2005 Daniel C. Waugh.

Indeed, the Siberian “shaman crowns” very well might be late material representations of a very long local, and not necessarily aristocratic, tradition — obviously going back to at least the 4th–5th centuries CE (Kim 1998). It is reasonable to assume that it in fact is considerably older than that. The Scythoid tombs at e.g., Noyon uul, normally considered remnants of Xiongnu culture, which in its turn was heavily influenced by earlier and more western transformations of older Scythian artistic features, also have yielded several objects with shamanistic associations. From the kurgans at Pazyryk ca. 5th–3rd centuries BCE the Russian archaeologists excavated the now famous deer-mask, obviously used to turn a horse into a religiously more important deer [Fig. 6]. Hence, this deer-mask, the comma-shaped decorative elements from Noyon uul, the deer with the tree-antlers from Inner Mongolia and the royal crowns from Silla all are representatives of the northeastern cultural-religious complex, which found its perhaps most refined expression in the Silla culture of the 5th and 6th centuries. Nowhere else within this area do the finds so clearly speak of the combination of political and religious functions in one person, and nowhere else does the “aristocratization” of the paraphernalia involved stand out in as clear, many-faceted and refined a way as in Silla.

Not only the crowns, but also the golden belts found in the Silla tombs together with the crowns give eloquent testimony to the Central

and North Asian connections of the Silla royal paraphernalia. Indeed, these golden belts with their many symbolic pendants clearly were modeled on “every day items” prevalent among nomadic peoples in vast areas of both Central and perhaps even Western Asia. Such belts obviously were developed in order to provide a mounted warrior quick and comfortable access to the various instruments (knife etc.) attached to the girdle by means of perpendicularly hanging leather strips. The Silla versions again represent an “aristocratized” and “religionized” version of

their Central and Western Asian counterparts. No longer are the pendants attached to the belt for practical purposes, but have acquired a totally symbolic function and are in fact only miniatures of the objects (knife, tweezers, fish, curved beads of jade or glass, whetstone) they represent. This development from a practically oriented item to a symbolic one, signalling both religious function and social status, is not unique to the Korean peninsula, even though the peninsular belts (as well as the crowns) are the most luxuriously and exquisitely made of all types so far known. A similar development is traceable, for example, among Turks in Central Asia (Kubarev 1984 and Jansson 1986). It must be noted, though, that while the functional concept of the Silla belts clearly is Central Asian in origin, the artistic style in which the belts and their different components are manufactured very well might originate elsewhere, most likely in China.

It is an open question how to interpret the fact that the sudden emergence of golden objects, religious and otherwise, in the Kyôngju royal tombs happens to coincide more or less with the new dynasty in Silla, the Kim 金 or “golden” clan, which came to power with the reign of King Silsông Maripkan 實聖麻立干 (r. 402–417). At any rate, it seems that the royal authority before the 5th century and its eventual priestly functions were represented neither by golden king-priest paraphernalia nor by huge and labor-intensive burial mounds of the type prevalent during the 5th and 6th centuries. The strengthening of hereditary principles within the monarchy, leading to increased trade in gold along the Silk Road, might be one of the factors

responsible for this development (Yi 2005).

The north-south and west-east axes

The case of the Silla royal paraphernalia and their complex connections with the northern cultures clearly shows that, apart from the inroads of influence from the Chinese mainland, the Korean peninsula and its early state formations were not only part of a west-to-east system of transportation, normally referred to as the "Silk Roads." Perhaps more importantly, the peninsula, as well as the Japanese islands, were heavily dependent on a north-south axis of cultural flow, which was partly independent from and partly interacted with the traditional Silk Road.

The west-east cultural flow is best represented on the Korean peninsula by a number of imported items, which partly have been found in tombs and partly standing on the ground. Such objects in most cases serve as undeniable testimony to the inclusion of the Korean peninsula to the Silk Road system, particularly during the 4th to the 9th centuries. However, in some cases indigenous archaeological materials equally clearly point to the import not only of the objects themselves, but rather of the models or ideas of certain types of objects. In this way the case of the Korean peninsula well illustrates the well-known fact that the Silk Road system transported not only material objects but also "immaterial objects" in the sense of designs and concepts. Speaking of the west-east axis, it is important to note that transportation in either direction of this complexity of roads and passages did not necessarily take place only between the extreme points of the road system, but just as often might have started or ended at practically any point along the way.

Here it is impossible to provide a complete list of Silk Road items found on the Korean peninsula. It will suffice to give a few examples of the most conspicuous genres of objects that made the long journey either from the Far West or from the "Western Regions" 西域 in the present-day Chinese province of Xinjiang. The number of genres of objects directly imported via the Silk Road to the Korean peninsula is in fact surprisingly small.

Indeed, glass constitutes one of the very few evident and irrefutable evidences of such direct import. During the period of the "golden"



Fig. 7 (above). Glass cup from the Kûmnyôngch'ong tomb in Kyôngju. Excavated in 1924. Imported from

the Roman Empire (present day South Germany?), probably during the 5th c. CE. National Museum of Korea. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.



Fig. 8 (left). Glass ewer. Silla, 5th-6th century CE. From the South mound of tomb 98 in Kyôngju. Import from the Mediterranean area. Kyôngju National Museum. National Treasure No. 193. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

dynasty of the Silla kingdom larger glass objects were not yet manufactured on the Korean peninsula. Consequently, all glass objects from this period, except perhaps glass beads, found among the grave goods in Silla and adjacent areas were imported. Glass vessels (cups, bowls and ewers) derive from the Mediterranean area, southern Europe and Persia [Figs. 7, 8] (cf. *Silla* 2008, p. 68). These fragile elite objects must have been extremely expensive once they had reached their destination in the Far East, and it is no wonder that they appear in such abundance in the royal tombs.⁵ However, glass was represented in the Silla and Paekche



Fig. 9. Persian scabbard from tomb no. 14 in Kyôngju. 5th-6th century CE. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

elite tombs not only by vessels of various kinds, but also by glass beads in different colours and shapes as material for necklaces and bracelets. Some of these beads may have been locally manufactured.

In a splendid exhibition at the National Museum of Korea, devoted to early Persian art and early contacts between Persian culture and the Korean peninsula, a Persian-style ceremonial dagger and scabbard made of gold and agate attracts special attention [Fig. 9]. This type of dagger and scabbard is well attested in other places along the traditional Silk Road, but the one exhibited was found in the vicinity of the tomb of King Mich'u 味鄒王陵 in Kyôngju. The tomb itself hardly was a royal one, but contained as well a number of swords of simpler manufacture and some other high-quality items indicating high social status of the person buried in the tomb. The exquisitely manufactured dagger has lost its iron blade and wooden sheath, but its profusely decorated golden hilt has been comparatively well preserved. Scabbards of this type were in vogue in the Hun Empire (434-454) and have been found in tombs from the end of the 4th to the 7th centuries in Siberia and Central Asia (*P'erûsia* 2008). The scabbard from Kyôngju was made in a technique which was common in Egypt, Greece and Rome. Although it has been suggested that it was locally made according to western models, there can be little doubt that we have here an object imported from the West which most likely reached Silla via the Silk Road.

A conspicuous and important example of immaterial transport along the Silk Road is given by the few finds of rhytons (drinking horns) on the territory of the Silla kingdom (Kwôn 1997) [Fig. 10]. We first meet with the idea of rhytons

equipped with an animal head (lion, ibex, ram, horse) at the lower tip in the Persian and Greek cultural context, where they appear already during the second millennium BCE [Fig. 11, facing page]. The material used ranges from gold to simple clay. Unlike, e.g., Persian-style scabbards, there is no evidence that rhytons were transported along the Silk Road as material objects. Instead, it seems that the concept was utilized by local makers along the road, and eventually also came to serve as a model for craftsmen in Silla and Kaya during the 5th-6th centuries. The time span for this category of objects thus is fairly long, ranging from the second millennium BCE in the "West" to the 5th-6th centuries CE on the Korean peninsula.

The Parthian Shot

Moving into the realm of paintings and their motifs, in his fundamental work on Central Asian art and Korea, Professor Kwôn Yông-p'il

Fig. 10. Rhyton. Silla 5th-6th century CE. This stone-ware rhyton is one of a pair, and was excavated in Bokch'ôn-dong in Pusan. Dong-a University Museum, Pusan. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.



(1997) has elaborated on the famous genre of "The Parthian Shot," which is said to have originated in the Parthian kingdom as a military tactic. It depicts a mounted warrior turning backwards and with both hands shooting with his bow towards his persecutors or prey, while riding forward at a gallop. This difficult technique became widely popular among the Scythians, Huns, Turks and Mongols, and was often utilized as a motif in painting and sculpture. Even Roman artists, obviously working for the Scythian market, produced highly skilled metal objects, like the famous bronze lebes from Campania in Italy, showing such a scene. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the Parthian Shot is found explicitly represented also among the mural paintings in the so-called "Dance Tomb" 舞踊塚 in the kingdom of Koguryô [Fig. 12]. Here it constitutes another clear and incontestable example of an intellectual concept rather than an object hav-



Fig. 12. "The Parthian shot" on a mural from the Dance Tomb, Koguryô. After: Murals of Koguryô Tumuli (n.p., n.d.).

ing been transported along the Silk Road. That such was the case is further corroborated by the fact that this basically western or central Asian scene in the Koguryô case is executed in a perfectly local setting, showing Koguryô style clothes, horse harness, weapons etc.

Silk Road visitors

More direct evidence of Central Asian–Korean peninsular contacts on the personal level during the Silla period is found in the remarkable tomb guardians of stone standing in front of the grave mound traditionally ascribed to King Wônsông 元聖 (?-798) at Kwaerûng 掛陵 in the vicinity of Kyôngju [Fig. 13]. There are many problems connected with the interpretation of these stone statues, but there can be little doubt



Fig. 13. The "Central Asian tomb guardian" at Kwaerûng, Kyôngju. Photo © Staffan Rosén.

Fig. 11. Rhyton. Northern Iraq. Late 1st millennium BCE. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.



that at least one of them, and possibly two, in fact represent a person who is neither a local inhabitant nor a Chinese, but rather somebody from the "Western Regions" in Central Asia. The figure's heavy full beard, his cap and other clothing reveal his "western" origin. Whether the direct model for this statue was a Central Asian mercenary or an ambassador is perhaps of little consequence. In any case, this effigy demonstrates that the Silla Kingdom still in the 8th century had living contacts with Central Asia that were strong enough to warrant the erection of this exceptional kind of statue in a royal context.

Westward export from the Korean peninsula?

So far our examples of material and immaterial transport along the Silk Road have been going exclusively in the direction from West to East. Unfortunately, evidence pointing in the opposite direction is disappointingly limited. A concrete, but somewhat uncertain indication of a "Korean" presence in Central Asia is the much publicised section of a wall-painting in a palace at Afrasiab near modern Samarkand (mid-7th century CE). It depicts among many other things two persons with round-pommel swords of a type common on the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands at the time, and with clothes which well may be identified as "Koguryô style," as we know it from the Koguryô tomb murals. It is not inconceivable that these figures really depict officials from the Kingdom of Koguryô having arrived as official representatives in connection with some kind of state ceremony of great importance. However, such an identification must remain within the sphere of speculation until it can be corroborated by other evidences.

Equally surprising but more tangible evidence of what might constitute an example of early trade contacts between the Three Kingdoms and areas in or adjacent to Central Asia, is a painting of a Buddhist *preta* from the ruined city of Khara Khoto in the Xixia 西夏 (Tangut) kingdom (1038-1227), once situated west of the bend of the Yellow River and covering areas of present day Gansu, Shaanxi and Ningxia. This painting, which together with many other paintings and thousands of manuscripts and blockprints was brought to St. Petersburg by Petr Kozlov's Russian expedition to Edzinglyol



Fig. 14. Detail of hand holding spoon in the *Preta*-painting from Khara Khoto. Late 12th-early 13th century CE (?). The Hermitage, St. Petersburg. After: *Lost Empire* 1993, p. 179.

and Khara Khoto in 1908–1909, shows the unfortunate and constantly hungry *preta* with his narrow throat and swollen belly in the traditional pose, holding a bowl of rice in his left hand and a spoon in the other. Russian specialists have dated the painting to the late 12th to early 13th century, or possibly even early 14th century (cf. *Lost Empire* 1993, p. 179; Samosiuk 2006, p. 346). What is remarkable in this painting is the spoon which the *preta* is holding [Fig. 14]. It is a perfect representation of a type of shallow bronze spoon with a snake-tongue-like upper ending, which was prevalent in Silla and Koryô 高麗 (918-1392), but, to the best of my knowledge, did not occur outside of the three peninsular realms. Two explanations are possible: either the painting itself was imported from the contemporary Koryô kingdom, or the spoon might indicate that bronze utensils of this kind were exported by Koryô westwards. If this last, and in my opinion more likely, case can be shown by further finds to be correct, we here have unique documentation of trade between the peninsula and a country closely connected to the Silk Road system during the centuries immediately preceding the Mongol conquest.

Paekche and the Scythian echo

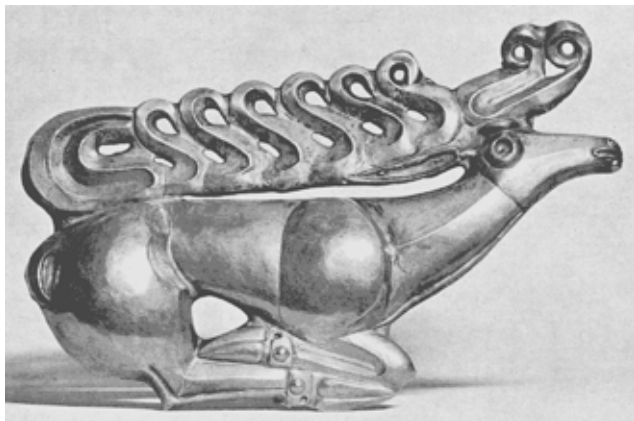
When the untouched tomb of King Munyông 武寧王 (? - 523) of Paekche 百濟 accidentally was found in 1971, close to the modern city of Puyô 夫餘 in the Republic of Korea, one of the first items that met the archaeologists entering the elegant brick tomb was a guardian animal of stone in the corridor leading to the main cham-



Fig. 15. Paekche tomb guardian-beast. From the tomb of King Muryong of Paekche. 523 CE. Kyôngju National Museum. After: <http://lh4.ggpht.com/_ld-FHRuuCIbE/RqQkT7k8LHI/AAAAAAAAAWM/5rM3OgqjFnw/0+008+042+K+Paekche>.

ber [Fig. 15]. This remarkable animal, of a species difficult to determine, is equipped with a strange, and in this context unusual, "horn," the functional and art historic significance of which largely seems to have been overlooked in the literature on the subject. The beast's single "horn" is of a small scale that poorly matches the rest of the animal's body. It is pointing backwards with its wave-like profile stretching out over the animal's head and beginning of its back.

Stylistically the figure might have its closest parallels in China, but the very existence and form of the iron horn seem to point in the direction of Central Asia and its Scythian and Scythoid artistic traditions. In the Scythian so-called "animal



style" with its characteristic reduction of the natural forms, the stylized horns of the animals (stag, deer, ibex) more often than not were grossly overemphasized in size, and in some cases could cover practically the whole back of the animal. It is not inconceivable that this feature had its origin in shamanistic beliefs akin to the ones we have met in connection with the Silla crowns. The well-known golden stag [Fig. 16] from Kostromskaia in the Krasnodar krai in southern Russia is one of the finest objects of this kind of Scythian "animal style" (end of 7th c. BCE), which eventually spread eastwards and is found, e.g., in the kurgans of Tuekta I (ca. 5th c. BCE) [Fig. 17] and of Noyon uul (ca. 1st c. BCE). Several centuries later we find in the Paekche royal tomb a guardian-beast equipped with a horn or "antler," which makes it difficult not to treat it as a bleak and perhaps dying echo of the Scythian horn or antler so magnificently represented by the golden stag from Kostromskaia and its generic relatives further east. The fact that the horn of the Paekche beast is not double but single, in combination with its wave-like profile further strengthens the idea that the intellectual and stylistic model of the Paekche horn indeed had its roots in the Scythian or Scythoid artistic tradition, which essentially should be "read" in profile. Tomb guardian beasts — whether Chinese or "Korean" or oth-



Fig. 16 (left). The Kostromskaia stag, a shield emblem excavated in Kostromskaia kurgan no. 1, Kuban Region. End of 7th c. BCE. After: Dawn 1974, plate 36.

Fig. 17 (above). Saddle decoration from Tuekta kurgan no. 1. 5th c. BCE. After: Golden Deer 2000, No. 185, p. 261.

erwise — do not normally sport a horn or antler. Although some features of the beast, like the flames on the sides of the animal's body, might have been inspired by Chinese models (Goepfer and Whitfield 1984), the rest of the animal and its horn are completely unique, and seem to draw on Paekche traditions and mythology prevalent in the first quarter of the 6th century. Our Paekche beast bears silent, but nevertheless eloquent testimony to the existence of Scythoid artistic traditions — however weak and distorted — in the kingdom of Paekche at a time when the “golden” Kim dynasty with all its Central and Northern Asian traditions was still reigning in neighboring Silla. Whether these Scythoid artistic features had reached Paekche via China (from the Ordos area?), or through the north–south “axis” will for the time being remain a challenging task for future research.

Conclusion

With these random notes on the Korean peninsula and its early connections with the non-Chinese world in the West and the North, I hope to have demonstrated at least two important things. Firstly, the “Silk Road(s)” did not end in China as so often, and somewhat uncarefully, is implied in the popular (and sometimes not so popular) literature on the subject. Instead, the Silk Road system included the Korean peninsula with its Three Kingdoms Koguryô, Paekche and Silla together with Koguryô's successor Parhae 渤海 (Chin. Bohai, 698-926), as well as the Japanese islands. Secondly, the Three Kingdoms' cultures on the peninsula were part not only of the traditional Silk Road system, but just as importantly, also of a north–south cultural community, which played a crucial part in the creation of the indigenous peninsular cultures and societies.

About the Author

In 1974 **Staffan Rosén** received his PhD in Korean Studies at Stockholm University, where he now holds the chair of Korean Studies. He has been a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities since 1994 and in 2004 received an honorary doctorate from the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. As secretary of the Sven Hedin Foundation at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, he organized in 1994 and 1996 with Chinese colleagues from Beijing and Urumqi two joint Chinese–Swedish research expeditions through

the Taklamakan desert. In 2000 as a member of an international team of scholars, he published an extensive work on the history and historiography of the eastern part of the Silk Road, based on documents in Chinese, Japanese and Swedish collections. He has also published on Korean and Mongol historiography, Korean historical linguistics, the history of the Silk Road and early contacts between China and the Mediterranean world. Among these works are “Problems concerning the Eastern Part of the Southern Silk Road” (in Japanese; 2001); “Korea in Mongolian Sources” (Paris 1989); “Conquerors of Knowledge: Swedish Prisoners of War in Siberia and Central Asia 1709-1734” (Stockholm 2004) and “The Forged Saka Documents in the Sven Hedin Collection” (in Japanese; 2001). Work on this article was supported by a fellowship from the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in Uppsala. Prof. Rosén may be contacted at <Staffan.Rosen@orient.su.se>.

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Notes

1. Cf. the purely religious/shamanistic models of "crowns" used by Tungus shamans in Siberia. They were all made of leather and wood and obviously had a purely ritual function. The nomadic belts consisted of a leather belt with a number of pendants to which various practical objects were attached and seem to have been designed to suit the needs of a person spending much time on horseback. This type of belt is found in various parts and cultures of Central Asia, e.g., on the Turkish stone figures in present day Mongolia, and on the wall paintings at Bezeklik.

2. The impressive treasure found in connection with the six burials at Tillya Tepe — one man and five women — consists of over 20.000 objects in gold, turquoise and lapis-lazuli, and is now in the custody of the authorities in Kabul. The treasure, which hap-

pily survived the Taliban destruction of the National Museum of Kabul in the 1990s and 2001, was exhibited in France 2006/7 and is currently on exhibit in the United States. See Sarianidi 1985 and Cambon 2006.

3. The term "Scythoid" is here used, in contrast to "Scythian," to denote a culture or style which is a later changed form of the proper Scythian counterpart that originally developed in the Pontic area between the rivers Danube and Don. The Scythoid style is found in the areas east of the Pontic Scythia, and stretches as far East as Noyon uul in present day Mongolia. Much speaks in favour of the suggestion that the so-called "Ordos bronzes," produced around

the bend of the Yellow River (4th to 1st c. BCE) also belong to the Scythoid group.

4. In connection with an exhibition in Japan in 1983 of four such objects, they were identified in the catalogue as "ornaments of [a] hat," in Japanese as "golden ornaments of [a] hat/crown" 金冠飾. Cf. *Chugoku* 1983, pp. 62-63 and 157.

5. Although glass vessels of various kinds were found in all the royal tombs excavated in Kyôngju, such finds were not restricted only to royal burials. Glass has been found also in other elite tombs of Silla, Kaya and Paekche (Ch'oe 1992; *Silla* 2008, pp. 76-91).



Some of the other objects excavated in the *Sôbong ch'ong* 瑞鳳塚 "The Tomb of the Auspicious (= 'Swedish') Phoenix," Kyôngju, and now displayed in the Kyôngju National Museum and the National Museum of Korea. Photos © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

Alexander the Great and the Emergence of the Silk Road*

Yang Juping 杨巨平
Nankai University
Tianjin, China

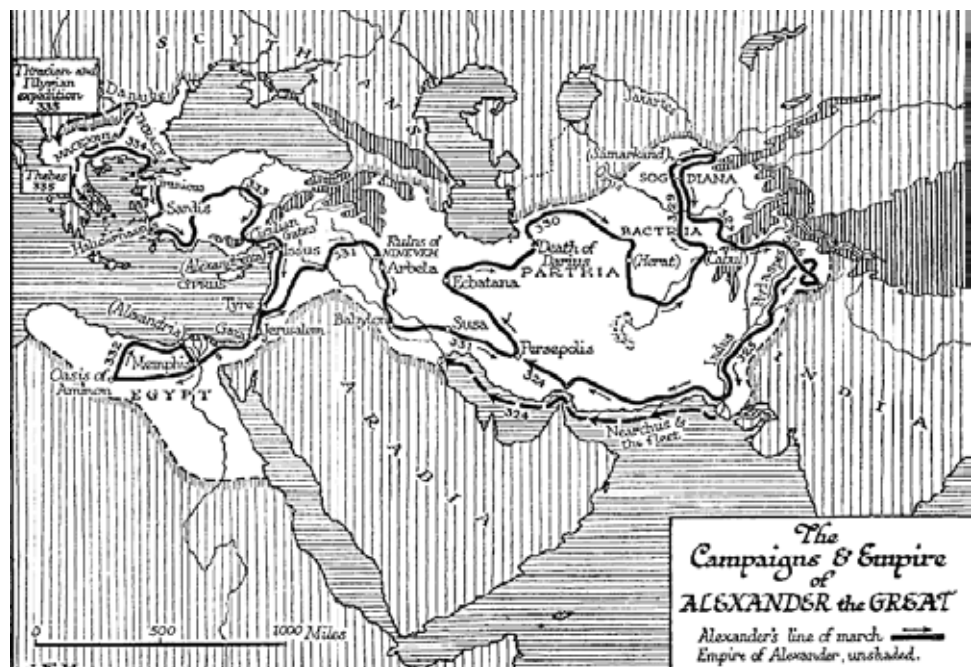
It has long been considered that the diplomatic mission of Zhang Qian, a Chinese envoy from the Former Han court to the Western Regions, played the most important role in the opening of the Silk Road. Equally important, as we emphasize in this article, were the eastward conquests of Alexander the Great [Fig. 1]. The creation of his empire and the enlargement of the Hellenistic world by him and his successors expanded communication and contacts between the Greeks and civilizations in the East and thus unintentionally prepared for the emergence of the Silk Road.

Prior to Alexander, there were certainly contacts among the main civilizations of the ancient world. Even some Greeks learned from hearsay that there was one country in the east which produced silk. The physician and historian Ctesias (5th/4th century BCE) is alleged to have been the first Greek who called this country Seres.¹ For all the classical authors the location of the Seres was not certain, but they came to believe that it was in the Far East, and some even guessed it might be China.² The Greek historian Herodotus mentioned a brave Greek traveler, Aristean, who went into the East as far as the land of the Issedones (Herodotus 1920-1925, Vol. 2: 4. 13-14, 16). According to the opinions of some Chinese scholars, the land of the Issedones should be roughly in the region from the Ural Mountains eastwards to the area between the Tianshan Mountains and Altai Mountains, perhaps even reaching the Tarim Basin (塔里木盆地), Loulan (楼兰), and Dunhuang (敦煌) (Sun

1985; Pédech 1976/1983, p. 22; Wang 1986, p. 53, n. 1; Ma and Wang 1990).

Two important archeological discoveries in the last century provided unequivocal evidence of connections across Asia from China in ancient times. One was the discovery of Chinese silk in a rich Celtic tomb of the 6th century BCE at Halstatt in Germany (Biel 1980). The other was the excavation of Chinese silk and bronze mirrors in the Scythian tombs of the Altai Mountains in southern Siberia dating from the 5th to about the 3rd century BCE (Rudenko 1957). These facts prove the existence of the so-called Eurasian Steppe Road in ancient times. Since this road might often be disturbed by natural and human causes, it could not become the main channel of cultural communications between East and West.

Fig. 1. Map of Alexander the Great's conquests. Source: Florida Center for Instructional Technology, University of South Florida <<http://etc.usf.edu/maps/pages/3600/3607/3607.gif>>, from H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1921): 323.



As early as in the Aegean civilization, Greeks began to have contacts with Near Eastern civilizations, but it was in the period of the Persian Empire that direct, extensive contacts between Greek and Eastern civilizations really developed.

To consolidate control of his vast empire across Asia, Africa and Europe, the Achaemenid ruler Darius I built a system of roads which led in all directions. The most famous was the 2000-km-long Royal Road which started at Susa, one of the capitals of the empire, passed through Mesopotamia, and ended at Ephesus on the coast of Asia Minor. Even though the channels of communication were open in the Persian Empire,³ in the 4th century BCE other civilizations in Eurasia, such as Rome, India and China, had not established contact with one another either because of their geographical isolation or their underdevelopment. There was as yet no link connecting the two ends of Eurasia. Forging such a link was the task fulfilled by Alexander the Great and Han Wudi (156–87 BCE), through his emissary Zhang Qian.

Alexander not only conquered the entire Persian Empire, but also added some areas to it. Although his empire fell apart after his sudden death in 323 BCE and was divided into several kingdoms, the pattern of Greek rule in the East did not change. Greek culture spread over the areas they occupied, even beyond, and the intercourse and fusion between Greek and eastern cultures intensified.

A new network of communication connecting



West and East emerged in the Hellenistic world and its neighboring areas. There were three main trade routes between India and West at the time [Fig. 2]. On the northern one goods were transported via Bactria, then along the Oxus to the Aral Sea, and from there further to the Black Sea. The middle route in fact had two tracks: one led from western India to the Persian Gulf by sea, then went up the Tigris River to Seleucia, one of the capitals of the Seleucid Kingdom; another ran by land across the Hindu Kush to Bactra in modern Afghanistan, traversed the Iranian plateau, and descended to the same city of Seleucia. From there a road went westwards across the Syrian Desert to Antioch, the other capital of the Seleucids. Then its branches turned west and southwest towards the Phoenician coast, and northwest across Asia Minor, finally to reach Ephesus on the Aegean. A southern sea route led to the Red Sea. From the head of the Red Sea at modern Aqaba a land road ran northward to Petra, Damascus, and Antioch, whilst from the Gulf of Suez the canal dredged by King Ptolemy II allowed Indian goods to be shipped across to the Nile and downriver to Alexandria. The discovery of the monsoon in the Indian Ocean around the 1st century BCE made the sea route look safer and more convenient (Walbank 1981, pp. 200-204). These three routes coincided more or less with the later routes of the western section of the Silk Road. There was only one section of the later Silk Road, namely the route from the Hexi Corridor to the Pamirs, that was not yet open at the time. But this unopened section was becoming shorter and shorter as an unforeseen result of the actions of both the Greeks and the Chinese.

According to Strabo, the Greek ruler of Bactria, Euthydemus, and his son Demetrius in the 2nd century BCE "extended their empire even as far as the Seres and the Phryni" (Strabo 1917-1932, Vol. 5: 11.11.1). At that time, the land of the Seres was still regarded by the peoples of the West as the region, however vague and hazy, where silk was produced, and not as the imperial China of the Han Dynasty. A. K. Narain has identified the Seres and the Phryni as the Sule

Fig. 2. Schematic map of early trade routes in Western Asia. Source for base map: <[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/archive/e/ed/20060603032139%](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/archive/e/ed/20060603032139%>)>.

(疏勒, Kashgar) and Puli (蒲犁) of the Chinese sources (Narain 1957, pp. 170-171). His viewpoint is reasonable because these two locations were precisely in the districts of Kashgar (喀什) and Tashkurgan along the eastern side of the Pamir range in today's Xinjiang province in China. Thus it appears that even before Zhang Qian arrived in Central Asia, the section of the later Silk Road to the west of the Pamirs had actually already been opened.

Moreover, the political situation and the cultural scene in the eastern Hellenistic world had changed greatly in the two centuries after the conquest by Alexander the Great. As early as the middle of the 3rd century BCE, the governor of Bactria declared his independence from the Seleucid kingdom. Following this, the Parthians revolted and founded their own kingdom. In the early 2nd century BCE, Bactrian Greeks extended their domains into the northwest of India, but within half a century they were forced to retreat there from Central Asia under the powerful pressures of Parthians and the nomads from the north.⁴ It is certain that Bactria had already been conquered by the Dayuezhi when Zhang Qian arrived there in ca. 129–128 BCE. Zhang Qian called Bactria Daxia (大夏).

Though the territory of the Greeks in Central Asia had been greatly reduced, the influence of Hellenistic culture stretched much wider and deeper. Wherever the Greeks went far away from their homeland, they kept their tradition of founding cities or settlements and living together. It is estimated that they might have founded more than 300 cities and settlements in the East. Among them, 19 cities were in Bactria and 27 in India (Cary 1959, pp. 244-245). The existence of these cities was confirmed by the discovery of the site of Ai Khanum in Afghanistan in 1960s.

So far as Bactria and other neighboring areas were concerned, the changes of their cultural outlook were especially remarkable. According to Strabo, under the rule of Greeks, the number of cities and towns in Bactria so increased that Bactria was called "a state of one thousand cities."⁵ Parthians adopted the calendar of the

Seleucid dynasty and issued Greek-style coins, set up the statues of Greek gods, performed Greek plays,⁶ and even built a gymnasium in the palace.⁷ The Indo-Greeks were influenced much more by Indian culture, as can be seen from the bilingual coins issued by some Indo-Greek kings [Fig. 3].

Fig. 3. Bronze coins of Bactrian King Eucratides I (170-145 BCE), with Greek and Kharosthi inscriptions. Collection of the British Museum CM 1894.5-6.1030; CM 36. Photo © 2007 Daniel C. Waugh.



It was against such a political and cultural background that Zhang Qian arrived in the former territory of the Greek Kingdom of Bactria. What, then, did he see and hear there?

According to the "Collective Biographies of Dayuan" in *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Scribe) (史記·大宛列傳), Han Wudi sent Zhang Qian twice to the Western Regions (Sima Qian 1959). In the first mission (139 or 138 to 126 BCE) he passed through four regions: Dayuan (大宛), Kangju (康居), Dayueshi (大月氏), and Daxia (outside of Xiongnu territory), and he received some hearsay information about five other large countries: Wusun (乌孙), Yancai (奄蔡), Anxi (i.e. Parthia, 安息), Tiaozhi (条支), and Shendu (i.e. India, 身毒). In the second journey (119–115 BCE) he himself went into Wusun, and from there he sent his vice-envoys to "Dayuan, Kangju, Dayueshi, Daxia, Anxi, Yutian (于寘), Hanshen (扞犂), as well as other neighboring countries." Since these areas once had been ruled and influenced by Greeks, Zhang Qian's report introduced into central China information about the Hellenistic world and provided some specific evidence about the remains of Hellenistic culture.

According to Zhang Qian, many walled cities and houses had been built in Dayuan, Anxi,

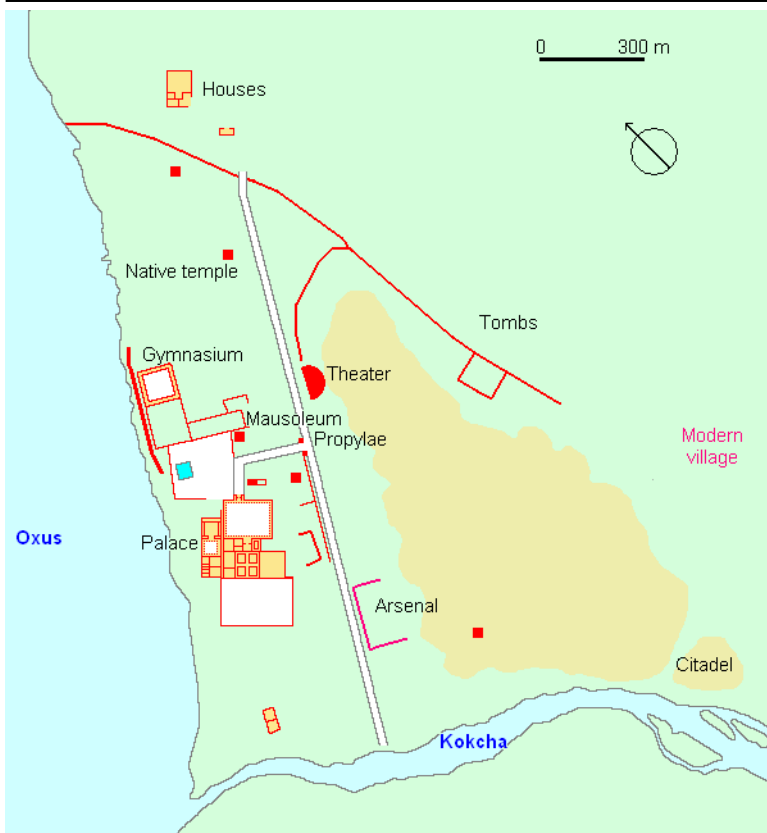


Fig. 4. Plan of Ai Khanum. Copyright © 2006 Jona Lendering <http://www.livius.org/a/1/maps/ai_khanum_map.gif>.

even more exaggerated. But the site of Ai Khanum in Afghanistan beside the river Oxus directly illustrates that at least some cities and towns had Greek features [Fig. 4].⁸ The finds at the site, such as Greek statuary, Corinthian capitals [Fig. 5], coins, a gymnasium, a theater, and a Greek inscription of maxims and philosophical texts [Fig. 6, facing page], confirm the existence of a Greek-style city that was over 5000 km. distant from Greece. Having toured through these cities and towns left by the Bactrian Greeks, Zhang Qian must have felt that he was entering a wholly different world from that of central China.

In these regions, not only grain (rice and wheat) was produced but also the grapevine was planted, and especially good wine was made and preserved. According to Strabo's account, Greeks were the first to introduce the new

and Daxia. The sudden appearance of such numerous cities and towns must have been related directly to Greek city-building activities. If the number of the cities and towns reported by Zhang Qian seems hard to believe, what Strabo said ("a state of a thousand cities") is

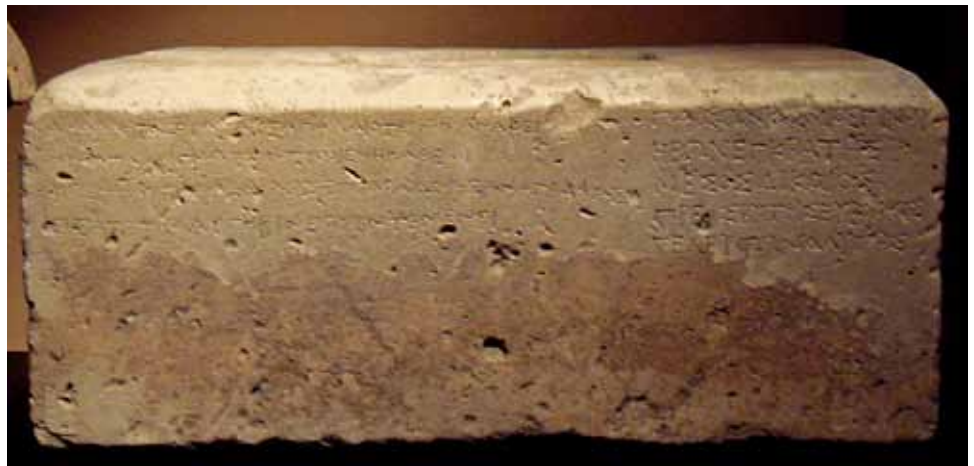
viniculture into Western and Central Asia (Strabo 1917-1932, Vol. 7: 15.3.11). He noted in particular that the land of Aria (bordering on Bactria) was "exceedingly productive of wine, which keeps well for three generations in vessels" (Strabo 1917-1932, Vol. 5: 11.10.1-2). Similar evidence can be found in *Shiji*. According to its source, wine was one of the special products of Anxi, Dayuan and other areas. The winemaking was so productive that the rich men even stored more than ten thousand *Dan* of it (roughly 300,000 liters or kg.), and the wine would keep well for several decades. The similarity between the records of Strabo and Sima Qian is not a coincidence, but a real reflection of the historical development of viniculture in these regions. With Zhang Qian's return, viniculture was introduced into central China for the first time. The Greek name for grape, βότρυς (botrus) might have been transliterated into Chinese as *putao* (蒲陶).⁹



Fig. 5. Corinthian capital from Ai Khanum. Source: <<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9c/CapitalSharp.jpg>>.

The political system in these countries, the same as in other Hellenistic kingdoms, was monarchy or kingship, but it appears that the aristocrats, local principals and chiefs of cities, could play important roles at key moments. For

Fig. 6. Greek inscription containing the Delphic maxims, from Ai Khanum. Source: <<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/39/KineasInscriptionSharp.jpg>>.



example, the aristocrats (貴人) of Dayuan could collectively decide to refuse to contribute the precious horses (*Hanxuema*, 汗血馬, blood-sweating horse) to the Han dynasty, attack and kill Chinese envoys, and even murder their own king (毋寡).¹⁰ Such evidence suggests a hypothesis that in Dayuan there was a political institution similar to the court councils in the other Hellenistic monarchies.

According to Zhang Qian, there were many marketplaces in Daxia and Anxi. The discovery of numerous Greek-style coins from this period indicates the extensive use of coinage for trade in the Hellenistic kingdoms and surrounding areas [Fig. 7].¹¹ As Zhang Qian observed, these coins were very different from Chinese coins of the time: "The coin was made of silver with the face-image of the king on the obverse. As soon as the king died, the coin had to be changed immediately. The face-image of the new king would appear on the new coin." Clearly the

Fig. 7. A coin similar to, if somewhat later than, one Zhang Qian may have seen. Silver tetradrachm of Parthian King Artabanos I, 126-122 BCE, minted at Seleuceia on the Tigris, dated 125/4 BCE. The reverse shows Tyche seated, holding a cornucopia and Nike. Photo copyright © Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <<http://www.cngcoins.com>>, published with permission.



coins of Daxia and Anxi were similar to those of the Hellenistic kingdoms.

In the report about Anxi, Zhang Qian provided additional very important, but usually unnoticed, evidence of Hellenistic culture, namely that the people of Anxi wrote their records horizontally on leather (畫革旁行，以為書記). This might surprise Zhang Qian, because in the time of the former Han Dynasty Chinese generally wrote vertically from top to bottom on bamboo and wood slips. Of course, the use of leather as material for writing had appeared long before. However, the term "parchment" (*pergamenum* in Medieval Latin) derived from the name of another Hellenistic kingdom, "Pergamum." It was said that the king of Pergamum had invented parchment (Pliny 1938-1963, Vol. 4: 13.21). Possibly though the people of Pergamum only improved the process of parchment-making and created a new, higher quality kind of parchment. Anxi must have acquired parchment from Pergamum. Zhang Qian probably saw parchment as well as Greek script written on it in Daxia.

To sum up, it was Zhang Qian who brought information about Hellenistic culture into central China and whose adventures in the western regions marked the opening of the whole Silk Road, but the key role played by Alexander the Great should not be ignored. Although he had no idea that was what he was doing, through the founding of his empire and its extension of the Hellenistic world he paved the way for Zhang Qian and the other later travelers on the Silk Road.

About the author

Yang Juping (杨巨平) is Professor of History at Nankai University, Tianjin, China. He is a specialist on the history of the Hellenistic world and is Vice-president of the Chinese Association for the Study of Ancient World History. His publications cover a broad range of subjects in the history of Greece and Rome and regarding ancient cultural interactions across Asia. Among his books is a study of Cynicism in the Greek and Roman world; he is chief editor of a book series on human civilizations.

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Notes

* This is a condensed version of a paper presented at "The Symposium of Japan, Korea, and China" in Tokyo, September 20-24, 2007, which has appeared in English in the conference proceedings.

1. Ctesias once served at the court of Persia, where he probably heard of the Seres. The veracity of his material has been doubted by western scholars such as Henry Yule and George Coedès, and the Chinese scholar Zhang Xinglang (Yule 1913-1916, Vol. 1, p. 14; Coedès 1910/2001, pp. 1-2; Zhang 1977, p. 17). Yule especially pointed out that the name appears only in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius. But the Greek word Seres was already known in Ctesias' time.

2. See also Coedès 1910/2001, pp. 1-54, 71-2. Having analyzed the related materials, Yule came to the same conclusion (Yule 1913-1916, Vol. 1, pp.14-15).

3. The Persian army invading Greece in 480 BCE came from all the satrapies of the Empire, and some of them even from far-away Bactria and India. Thus the important role of the Royal Roads should be evident.

4. Parthia once seized a part of Bactria in the reigns of Eucratides (c. 175-145 BCE) and his successors

(Strabo 1917–1932, Vol. 5: 11. 9. 2; 11.11. 2).

5. According to Strabo, at any rate, Eucratides, king of the Bactrians, held a thousand cities as his subjects. His information came from the *Parthica* of Apollodorus (Strabo 1917–1932, Vol. 7: 15. 1.3).

6. According to Plutarch, when the head of the Roman general Crassus, killed in the battle of Carrhae in 53 BCE, was sent to the palace of the Parthian king, a tragedy of Euripides, *The Bacchae*, was being performed. This shows that the Greek language was in vogue in the upper-class society of Parthia. Plutarch also mentions especially one of the guests who was present, Artarvasdes, king of Armenia, who could not only enjoy the Greek poems and plays with the master of the banquet, Hyrodes or Orodes, King of Parthia, but could himself write tragedies, orations and history in Greek (Plutarch 1914–1926, Vol. 3: Crassus, 33). The wide spread of the Greek language and the deep penetration of Hellenistic culture can thus be clearly seen.

7. The features of Hellenistic culture in Parthia are also treated in Fox 1975, pp. 492, 493, and Wiesenhöfer 1996, pp. 124-9.

8. For an excellent, lavishly illustrated essay on Ai Khanum, see Bernard 2008; for a reconstruction of the appearance of the city, see Lecuyot 2007.

9. According to Sima Qian, “the envoys of the Han Dynasty brought the seeds of the grapevine and purple medic back into Central China. So the emperor of Wudi (Tianzi, the son of heaven, 天子) began to plant them in the lands of fertility. The number of Horses of Heaven (天馬) was becoming more and more and many foreign envoys came to the capital, so that

the grapevine and purple medic were planted widely by the side of summer palaces and other buildings” (Sima Qian 1959). Regarding the transliteration of βότρυς into Chinese, see Liddell and Scott 1996, “βότρυς”, p.323; Chavannes 1896/1995, Chapter 8, p. 7. According to Paul Pelliot, while this explanation had been put forward by Ritter and confirmed by Kingsmill and Hirth, he himself doubted it (Pelliot 1920/1995, Chapter 5, pp. 82-83). Another sceptic was the American scholar Berthold Laufer (Laufer 1919/2001, pp. 49-51), some of whose conclusions in his book first published in 1919 are wrong or in need of revision.

10. The name “Wugua” seems to be the transliteration of the eulogy title “ΜΕΓΑΣ”(Megas) of kings that appeared in the legends on Hellenistic coins. Coins of one Kushan period ruler did not name the king but used only the title “ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ” (Soter Megas). Obviously Megas could have been understood as the king’s name. Whether “Wugua” of *The Records of the Grand Scribe* was just the transliteration of Megas is uncertain.

11. Since the first coin of the Greek king of Bactria, Eucratides (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΕΥΚΡΑΤΙΔΟΥ) was discovered, numerous Greek-style coins have been unearthed in this area. The largest hoard was discovered at the tiny village, Nir Zakah, in Afghanistan. An estimated 550,000 coins have made the journey from there to Japan, Europe, and America. This single hoard is almost six times larger than the total of all ancient hoards recorded throughout the territories of Greece and Macedonia (Holt 2005, pp. 125-148).

Centaur on the Silk Road: Recent Discoveries of Hellenistic Textiles in Western China

Robert A. Jones

University of Louisville

Among historians, the last century and a half has seen increased attention paid to the role of the so-called Silk Road or Silk Roads in world history. Although coined only in 1877, by the 21st century the term has become an all-embracing brand that permeates scholarship, international commerce and the popular imagination. It is recognized that the network of economic and cultural exchange occurring across the Eurasian continent since about 2000 BCE was part of a larger world system which assuredly included Africa. I am in agreement with historian David Christian's assertion that "the Silk Roads played a funda-

Fig. 1 (below). Map showing locations of Sampul and Yingpan. Photo source: NASA Visible Earth Taklimakan.A2002088.0525.500m.jpg.

Fig. 2 (right). The Sampul textile depicting the centaur and warrior. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

mental role in creating and sustaining the unity of Afro-Eurasian history" (Christian 2000, pp. 1-2). Through the study of several specific cultural objects, this paper seeks to provide some clarity with regard to cultural diffusion and economic exchange along the west-to-east corridor which linked the sedentary civilizations of the Mediterranean, Persia, Central Asia and China.

For the last century, ongoing archaeological work in western China has produced some spectacular finds, including the mummies of 3800-year-old Caucasoid peoples, previously unknown written languages, the remains of Buddhist kingdoms abandoned to the desert, and a plethora of early textiles and other artifacts. Climate and other geographical factors have provided for the excellent preservation of organic and cultural material. The Tarim Basin of Xinjiang in western China is one of the driest places on earth, and within the basin's Taklamakan Desert human and animal remains, clothing, food stuffs, and other organic material many thousands of years old have been preserved [Fig. 1].

Among these discoveries have been rare textiles, the motifs on some of which showing unmistakable Hellenistic origins. At the site of Sampul (or Shanspula), near the southwestern Tarim Basin oasis of Luopu, a Saka grave has yielded a piece of woven woolen cloth [Fig. 2] that shows Hellenistic and Persian inspiration in the depictions of a centaur and a lance-





Fig. 3. *The Yingpan man*. After: Waugh 2008a, p. 4.

bearing warrior (Xinjiang weiwu'er 2001). At the site of Yingpan, in Yuli county in the north-eastern part of the Tarim Basin, a tomb revealed the wealthy male occupant wearing a fine woolen robe decorated with Hellenistic motifs that include nude fighting figures, bulls and goats, and pomegranate trees [Fig. 3] (Xinjiang wenwu 1999).

While there is no doubt that the objects discussed in this paper are distinctly Hellenistic in character, the question of Hellenistic artistic influence on local culture in ancient Xinjiang is not the focus of my research. That subject has been belabored over the last century. I make no contention one way or another regarding the possible influence of these objects on the indigenous cultures, and I entertain the great possibility that these are rare objects brought in by merchants or other travelers into the region.¹

Instead, I ask two questions. The first is, how do these finds help determine the chronological range of trade in western textiles between Greek (Seleucid) Bactria or regions farther west and the intermediate Tocharian and Saka kingdoms of the Tarim Basin that lay along the trade routes to China? The second question is, how do the motifs that these objects display compare to those of other works of art in the Hellenistic tradition?

The Chinese silk trade in Eurasia has been the subject of much scholarship, but the study of trade in western textiles along the Silk Road caravan routes has not been so well addressed.² Here I will compare these woven objects with artifacts found in western cultural contexts of the Hellenistic period in order to identify potential derivative, or at least parallel, designs and

motifs, with special attention paid to mosaics.

The discovery of Hellenistic textiles in Inner Asia (comprising Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang) is not unprecedented. The Russian explorer Kozlov recovered such textiles during his expedition to Mongolia between 1923 and 1926. Aurel Stein discovered a number as well at the ancient sites of Loulan in the eastern Tarim in the winter of 1906-07 and at Niya in the south-central Tarim.³

It is reasonable to assume now that at the time of the Han envoy Zhang Qian's journey to Bactria in ca. 139 BCE one or more of these kingdoms in the Tarim was of Saka origin, a people closely related to those whom the Greeks called Scythians. The dating of the material from Sampul suggests that that trade contacts between the Hellenistic kingdoms to the west and the kingdoms of the Tarim Basin already had some history. During the Hellenistic period (from the death of Alexander in 323 BCE until the battle of Actium in 31 BCE) and post-Hellenistic period up to the 7th century CE, trade in textiles by sea and by land was an important economic activity in the West. While silk began to move westward in ever increasingly quantities in the first century BCE, woolen textiles from across the Pamir Mountains had already been moving eastward.⁴

Centaur and warrior from Sampul

The ancient cemetery of Sampul is just south of the modern oasis town of Luopu and east of the important Silk Road city of Khotan in western Xinjiang. The cemetery was excavated four times between 1983 and 1995 by the Xinjiang Museum and the Xinjiang Institute of Archaeology. Three separate grave areas were located and in all 168 graves and two sacrificial

Fig. 4. Detail showing the upper portion of the Sampul textile. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

horse pits were excavated (Xinjiang Weiwu'er 2001, Foreword, pp. 2, 4; text, [second pagination] p. 1). Radiocarbon dates for the cemetery fall between about 900 BCE and 300 CE. Half of the ten samples tested fell between the 3rd and 1st centuries BCE (Xinjiang Weiwu'er 2001, p. 43).

In 1984 one of four group tombs was excavated in the cemetery. In the tomb designated 84LS I M01 were found 133 individual corpses, with adult men and women in the majority. The tomb yielded many ancient textiles, especially articles of clothing. Fifteen pairs of trousers were found. In one tomb was a pair of trousers (or knickerbockers) made of a cut-up woven woolen tapestry. What distinguishes the find is that on the left leg fragment is a woven image of a warrior holding a spear at his side, while on the right leg fragment is the image of a running centaur, cape flying while playing a flute, within a rosette of flowers (Xinjiang Weiwu'er 2001, pp. 37, 38, 188-189; pls. 360, 360-1, 360-4). Both images are clearly western in style and subject matter, and, given the C14 date of the tomb of about 100 BCE, Hellenistic in chronology.

Let us examine the centaur and associated images first [Fig. 4]. The centaur is running to the viewer's left, front legs raised in a gallop, and of the two rear legs, at least one is firmly on the ground. The centaur is holding and blowing a vertical flute, his left arm outstretched to grasp it firmly. A Hellenistic period mosaic from Delos also shows centaurs with similar dramatic poses (Pedley 2002, p. 377; fig. 10.53). However, the Sampul piece seems to have a unique iconography. I am not aware of any other image that shows such a musically-inclined centaur. Centaurs are usually depicted brandishing more threatening objects in Greek art, if they hold anything at all. Usually they



clutch a bow and arrows, or a tree branch or club, as in the depictions of belligerent and drunken centaurs battling the Lapiths on the Parthenon and on the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (Padgett 2003, pp. 129-224).⁵ Here we may have a weaver from the eastern provinces who might not have been so familiar with Greek mythology and iconography, and who exchanges the flute of the satyrs (who are sometimes depicted playing the *auloi*, or double flute) for one of the preferred weapons of the wine-loving centaurs (Padgett 2003, pp. 254-258; exhibits 11, 12).

Above and to the right of the rosette is the end of an outstretched wingtip, but the body to which it is attached is missing. It could very well have belonged to an erote, similar to Hellenistic winged figures seen in many works in the



Fig. 5. Erote in mural of Shrine M.III excavated by Stein at Miran. Source: Stein 1921, Vol. 4, pl. xl (Stein inv. no. M.III.viii).

Greco-Roman world. Stein found several similar painted erotes in Miran in the southeastern Tarim (Stein 1933, pp. 118-121; fig. 54) [Fig. 5].

The use of roundels and rosettes is a Persian (Achaemenid, Sassanian and even Sogdian) motif, as seen in many extant textiles and paintings from the first few centuries of the Common

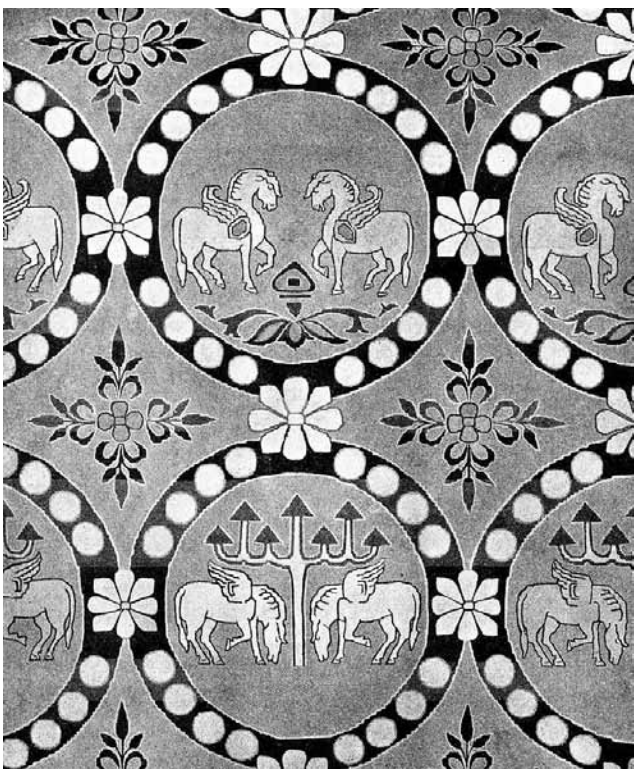


Fig. 6. Drawing of silk textile with roundel pattern, excavated by Stein at Astana. Source: Stein 1928/1981, Vol. 3, pl. lxxx (Stein inv. no. Ast. ix.3.02).

Era, and found commonly enough in China in contexts dating from the Northern Dynasties to the Tang (Pope 1945, pp. 21, 47; pl. 31E; Rice 1965, pp. 111-113; figs. 95-99; Compareti 2003; Luo 2004; Zhao 2004) [Fig. 6].

Now let us turn to the other piece [Fig. 7]. The two trouser legs were at one time one piece of cloth, with the longer left leg below the right leg fragment. This lower fragment depicts a standing warrior, spear

Fig. 7. Detail of lower part of woolen textile from Sampul depicting a warrior with a spear. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.



or lance held in his right hand and leaning against his right shoulder. He is seen in three-quarter view, peering out to the viewer's right. His long hair, pulled back behind his ear, is bound with a headband or fillet. His black hair recedes from the forehead in rows. The hair style is reminiscent of that of the sculptured male figure from Halikarnnusus in Asia Minor, whose long hair is also pulled back in rows, Persian fashion (Pedley 2002, p. 303; fig. 9.24).

The warrior is clothed in a red long-sleeved blouse, open in a V at the neck. The front of the blouse is decorated repeatedly with a double quatrefoil, a petal-and-cruciform design of dark blue and red. To the side is a vertical stripe of alternating black (or blue) and white. Greek warriors in Classical and Hellenistic periods were mostly rendered nude or at least with a cape. Here we can presume that despite the Hellenistic rendering of his face, the figure pictured is non-Greek, perhaps Persian or Saka, due to his hair style and the revealing fact that his upper body is clothed, not nude in the Greek style.

The particular double quatrefoil design which decorates his blouse is one which is found in many Hellenistic contexts, in both the West and in the Tarim Basin, and in both earlier and later

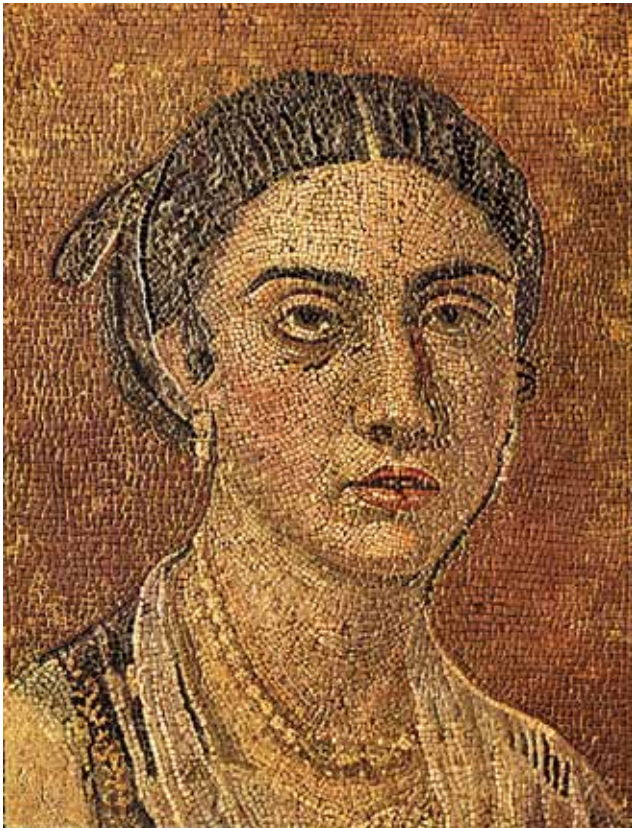
chronological contexts. The oldest knotted carpet extant, of Achaemenian origin and found in frozen Scythian kurgan V at Pazyryk, shows the same motif repeated in one of the borders, and dates from ca. 5th-3rd century BCE (Rice 1965, pp. 34-35; fig. 26). Stein recovered at ancient Niya in the south-central Tarim a piece of wooden furniture with the same motif carved on it, dating from the 3rd to 4th centuries CE (1933/1982, p. 84; fig. 41; Whitfield and Farrer 1990, p. 153; fig. 124; Rice 1965, p. 177; fig. 163) [Fig. 8, facing page]. Farther to the west it is found among the mosaic designs from



Fig. 8. Wooden base for an altar or table (detail). Niya, 1st-4th c. CE. Collection of the British Museum OA 1907.11-11.85 (N.vii.4). Photo © 2007 Daniel C. Waugh.

a domestic building at Aphrodisias in western Turkey dating as late as the mid-fifth century CE (Campbell 1991, pp. 20-21, pl. 72). The motif is very likely Persian in origin, and spread both west and east through Hellenistic contacts.

The face itself seems almost painted, as the superb use of hue and tone in the threads reveals a three-dimensionality usually associated with paintings employing chiaroscuro. The rendering, in the use of shading, highlighting and polychromy, is highly reminiscent of the faces



from the well-known mosaic of actors from the Villa of Cicero at Pompeii, which dates from the late 2nd to early 1st century BCE (Pedley 2002, pp. 377, 379; fig. 10.55; Ling 1998, p. 15; fig. 6), but the portrait of a woman from a Pompeii mosaic shows a closer resemblance in style and expression (Ling 1998, p. 124; fig. 88) [Fig. 9]. The right side of the warrior's face is shaded, as is his neck, and the use of shading elsewhere on his face contributes to the three-dimensionality. It is much more realistic than the textile fragment with image of Hermes and associated caduceus (herald's staff) found by Stein at Loulan (1928/1981, Vol. 1, p. 241; Vol. 4, pl. xxx), which may possibly have been part of a shroud (Baumer 2000: 134).⁶ [Fig. 10]

Through radiocarbon dating, we are certain of the absolute chronology of the interment of the



Fig. 9 (left). Mosaic portrait, House IV 15.14, Pompeii. Late 1st century BCE. In collection of Museo nazionale di Napoli. Source: <http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2088/2108423733_f7df0ceeda_o.jpg>.

Fig. 10 (above). Woolen textile fragment depicting Hermes, found by Stein in a grave pit at Loulan. Source: Stein 1928/1981, Vol. 3, pl. xxx (Stein inv. no. L.C.iii.010.a).



Fig. 11. Detail of head and shoulders of the Yingpan man. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

Sampul textile, bracketing ca. 100 BCE. Determining how old it was when it was buried in the tomb would require further testing of a sample of the garment itself. I suggest a date of the mid-second century BCE, firmly within the early Hellenistic period in the East.

The Hellenistic robe from Yingpan

Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) sources record a number of small kingdoms which dotted the local trading and communication routes, including those of ancient Kroran (Loulan) and Yingpan. Many lay directly athwart the caravan routes from China to the west and because of their advantageous locations were the recipients of various cultural influences from China, India and the West.

The Yingpan site which lies in the northeastern Tarim Basin [Fig. 1] was visited by Kozlov, Hedin and Stein in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1995 the Xinjiang Institute of Archaeology undertook emergency excavations at Yingpan. Thirty-two tombs were excavated and over two hundred relics were recovered. The tombs date roughly from the Han dynasty to the Jin (206 BCE – 420 CE) (Li 2001, p. 149). One

shaft tomb, Number 15, contained plentiful relics including the body of an unusually tall (1.9 meters) male occupant buried in a richly decorated coffin and dressed in splendid attire [Fig. 3]. The corpse is of a young man about 30 years old. He was not buried with the usual collection of funerary items found in other Yingpan tombs. However, what he is buried in seems to make up for the paucity of accompanying funerary objects. The wooden coffin was sumptuously painted and covered with a pile carpet depicting a lion. Placed upon the occupant's face was a painted hemp mask with gold foil [Fig. 11]. The quality and decoration of his coffin and his attire indicate a high social status while he was still alive. He is dressed in several layers

of woollen clothing and he wears a pair of reddish-purple wool pants decorated with chain-stitched embroidered double quatrefoil floral designs inside lozenges made up of circles and flowers (Li 2001, p. 155) [Fig. 12].



Fig. 12. Detail of the legs and feet of the Yingpan man. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

The design of the silk-lined caftan is composed of six different sets of nude figures and animals (goats and cattle), with pomegranate trees standing between them [Fig. 13, p. 29]. The character and poses of the nude putti are clearly Western in style. Each of the six sets is composed of a balanced pair of confronting figures, with spear or sword, either leaning away from or toward each other. Capes swirl from their shoulders. The pomegranate tree is perhaps a Persian motif, while the motif of confronting pairs of animals, in this instance goats



Fig. 13. Detail of the caftan of the Yingpan man. Photo © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

and oxen, is reminiscent of the animal art of Central Asia.

The stance and composition of the figures are not without precedent. A mosaic from the Villa of Good Fortune at Olynthos (4th century BCE) shows a similar, though female, pairing with weapons (Pedley 2002, p. 299; fig. 9.17). A floor mosaic (325 – 300 BCE) from Pella, the Macedonian capital, also shows two dramatic scenes of two nude youths, capes flying and weapons in hand, about to slay a lion in one instance, and a stag in the other (Pedley 2002, pp. 324, 333; figs. 9.58, 9.68; Ling 1998, p. 22; fig. 12) [Fig. 14].

That the robe was valued by the wearer in life there is little doubt, as he was buried in it. However, whether it was a newly woven item or an heirloom piece is impossible to determine at this time. It can be tentatively concluded that the cloth was the work of a weaver familiar with both Greek and Eastern motifs, perhaps in an eastern Hellenistic kingdom. Whether the robe was tailored especially for entombment is unknown, though it may well have been, as the pieces that are sewn together are somewhat mismatched (Waugh 2008b). According to the excavation report, the deceased possibly may have been a “rich merchant from the West.”

The report also suggests a late Eastern Han dynasty date (25 – 220 CE), which falls comfortably within the post-Hellenistic period (Xinjiang Wenwu 1999, p. 16).

Intriguing connections and conclusions

From even before the time of the establishment of the earliest urban centers in Eurasia, the weaving arts provided textiles for functional purposes and to adorn the human body. Records indicate that textiles were bartered and sold along the trade routes throughout

the ancient world. Discoveries of ancient textiles in arid western China have given us a window into the manufacture and especially trade in textiles along the trans-Eurasian trade routes. A relationship between the Hellenistic art of the Greco-Roman world and the textiles found in western China is seen clearly in the shared



Fig. 14. Floor mosaic from Pella (325-300 BCE) depicting two youths about to slay a lion. Source: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3d/Lion_hunt_mosaic_from_Pella.jpg>.

motifs and subject matter. Motifs derived from Persian art are not so foreign to Hellenistic art, as seen in the sculpture of great architectural monuments of the period such as the Mausoleum at Halikarnassos in Caria. The art of the Greek mosaic itself derives from Phrygia in Asia Minor, where Eastern, including Persian, influences were strong (Pedley 2002, p. 323).

Of exceptional interest to the writer is the nature of the relationship between the textile arts

and mosaics. It is accepted that a great mosaic like the Alexander Mosaic from the House of the Faun in Pompeii (ca. 100 BCE) was a more durable version of a monumental wall painting by Philoxenos of Eretria, painted around 310 BCE. Indeed, Pedley addresses their relationship, albeit briefly, when he discusses the importance of the textiles of the time: “[I]t may be that the more striking of the woven textiles were influential and also provided a stimulus to the creation of mosaics, particularly border designs” (2002, pp. 322, 326). There is an admission that scholars are ill-informed about these perishable objects, but it may be just as reasonable to suppose that mosaics (and paintings as well) provided as much stimulus and inspiration for the creation of textile motifs as the other way around.

Ling acknowledges the possibility of the connection between the two media, especially with regard to motifs seen in the Olynthian mosaics (Ling 1998, pp. 20-21) [Fig. 15], while Dunbabin is convinced that mosaics share more than a passing resemblance to similarly two-dimensional carpets. She says, “Some of the common ornamental motifs [in mosaics] are among those found in textile decoration or [are] suitable for weaving; and it has been argued that the (apparent) sudden appearance of such floors should be seen as a translation into permanent forms of the luxurious textiles from the Near East fashionable in the later fifth century” (Dunbabin 1999, pp. 9-10).

It is not possible at this time to determine where the two woven items that I have described in this paper (and others) were originally manufactured. There is much disagreement over the origins of the textiles. Despite the likelihood that many textiles with Persian motifs — particularly pearl roundels — found in Xinjiang were woven by Chinese weavers (Compareti 2003),

it is reasonable to assume that these two objects were not local products and are manufactures of Hellenistic-era weavers who lived and worked in one of the eastern kingdoms (Zhao 2004, p. 71). Baumer, to the contrary, suggests the Yingpan robe was not imported but “made by artists in the eastern Tarim Basin familiar with western patterns” (Baumer 2000, p. 136). Stein suggests that certain weavings which bear more purely Hellenistic motifs (such as the figure of Hermes cited above) because of the similarities to the Miran frescoes found in situ,



Fig. 15. Dionysus mosaic in the Villa of Good Fortune, Olynthos. After: David M. Robinson, *Excavations at Olynthos, Pt. xii* (1946), pl. 1.

were “...produced within the Tarim basin and not an import from the distant West” (1928/1981, Vol. 1, p. 241). Further scientific analysis may reveal more about this in the future.

The remarkable textiles we have looked at are evidence that Hellenistic and Greco-Persian influenced woolen textiles were being transported eastward

along the trade routes between Central Asia and the Tarim Basin kingdoms from about 100 BCE, just as silk was being carried west. While the knowledge and history of such contact is widely accepted, and while much study on the question of Hellenistic influences on the art and culture of ancient Xinjiang has already been done, new and sophisticated techniques in textile analysis will point “in directions which ultimately are going to tell us a lot we did not know” (Waugh 2008b). Nevertheless, the spectacular nature of these particular discoveries described above is compelling, and while it is easy to show that the textile motifs demonstrate strong parallels with similar art motifs from the Hellenistic world, further investigation in other analytical directions is warranted.

About the author

Robert A. Jones is Adjunct Instructor in the Humanities Department of the University of Louisville. He has a B.A. in Chinese Studies from San Francisco State University and an M.A. in Anthropology from National Taiwan University. He has studied and traveled the Silk Road for almost 25 years, and as an archaeologist he is especially interested in the early history of the trade route. His research interests are Silk Road archaeology and seals of Bronze Age China. He may be contacted at <rajone09@louisville.edu>.

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Notes

1. This paper is a preliminary treatment of material which has been the subject of numerous short articles, many in Chinese, but until very recently of no major treatises in a Western language. That is changing as knowledge of these textiles becomes more widespread through exhibitions such as that published by Wieczorek and Lind 2007. For a review of this exhibition, see Waugh 2008a.

2. A good overview of exchange in silk textiles, weaving techniques and styles is Zhao 2004.

3. Kozlov's discoveries are discussed by Schaefer 1943 and Rudenko 1962, esp. Chs. 4, 6, 11. Stein (1928/1981) reports on his textiles in *Innermost Asia*, and discusses them briefly and illustrates some in his book *On Central-Asian Tracks* (1933/1982, pp. 153-154; figs. 64B and 65). Stein's materials are surveyed by O'neale 1936.

4. Silk in smaller quantities had been moving west far earlier than this, judging from its discovery in ancient Egyptian, Siberian and Bactrian tombs. It is likely though that some of the silk found in the West is "wild" silk and not imported from China.

5. The centaur apparently has Assyrian antecedents, as seen on cylinder seals of Middle Assyrian date (13th century BCE) (Padgett 2003, pp. 129-133; exhibits 11 and 12).

6. The object next to the figure of Hermes in this fragment has been identified as a caduseus (or *kerykeion*), one of the attributes of Hermes. However, it appears to be a knotted rope, in the intertwined form of the deity's rod. Further research might establish the object's true nature, caduseus or not.

Dialogue Among the Civilizations: the Origin of the Three Guardian Deities' Images in Cave 285, Mogao Grottoes

Zhang Yuanlin 張元林
Dunhuang Academy

Cave 285 of the Mogao Grottoes, which was completed around 539 CE, contains some of the most striking imagery of all the Dunhuang caves [Fig. 1]. Of particular interest here are the murals on its western wall. While for the most part the iconography in the cave is Buddhist, the fact that many of the images on the west wall can also be found in Indian myths or the Hindu pantheon has led most scholars to think they derived from Hinduism. However, some of those images do not correspond precisely to any extant Hindu imagery, a fact which has posed many questions. What was the source of the unique features of the paintings, and who might have introduced this particular iconography? What do the images signify? Why do they exist only in Cave 285? The extensive literature on the cave, which has unraveled many of its mysteries, has yet to provide satisfactory answers (He 1990; Jiang 1990; Duan 1994; Jiang 2004).

This article will explore the possibilities of multiple origins of these images in the context of the broad historical and cultural background of the ancient Silk Road. We shall focus on the three guardian deities (the Buddhist "devas") — Maheśvara, Sun Deva (Āditya) and Moon Devi (Candra). The author has compared these images, analyzed their historical background and studied the ethnic backgrounds of the cave patrons. Of particular importance is the possible Sogdian influences on these imag-

es, which raises the question of whether Sogdians even participated in the building of this cave.

The three guardian deities on the west wall

On the top part of the south side on the west wall is a long blue rectangular belt with a white circle and six white ovals (from south to north) [Fig. 2, next page]. In each oval is a figure rep-

Fig. 1. Interior of Mogao Cave 285, the west wall on the left. Photo by Wu Jian (吴健), copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.



resenting members of Sun Deva's family. Sun Deva rides in a chariot drawn by four horses inside the circle, has a nimbus, wears his hair in a high bun, and joins palm to palm. The four horses are harnessed as pairs running in opposite directions away from the chariot. This image is said to symbolize Sun Deva (Sūryaprabha)



Fig. 2. The southern upper corner of the west wall, Cave 285, depicting Sun Deva and his family. Photo by Sun Zhijun (孙志军), copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.

patrolling everywhere in heaven all day and night. Under the circle of Sun Deva, there is a chariot drawn by three phoenixes, which appears to run quickly towards the main niche. In the chariot are two strongmen, the one in front holding in his left hand a shield decorated with a human face, and with his right hand raised as if he is driving the chariot. The other man has both his arms raised above his head as if he is supporting the sun circle.

Correspondingly on the north side of the west wall there is also a long blue rectangular belt with a circle and seven ovals (from north to south) [Figs. 3, next page; 14, p. 40]. They contain Moon Devi (Candraprabha) and her family. Because this section of the mural is poorly preserved, we can barely make out in the circle a figure with the hair tied in a bun, both arms crossed in front of her chest and sitting in a chariot. Next to the south side of the chariot wheel are heads of two birds and some wings. Under the circle of Moon Devi is a chariot drawn by three lions, in which there are two strongmen, the one in front with arms raised as if he is supporting Moon Devi. The pose is analogous to that of the figure on the south side.

On the main part of this wall, there are three niches, with various guardian deities painted on the space outside the niches. The mural between the main niche and the smaller one on the south side depicts Nārāyana-deva (那罗

延天) and his family in three registers [Fig. 4]. He is the equivalent of Vishnu, the Primordial Man, originally one of the three main gods in Hinduism, and then a guardian in Buddhism. One of the figures below him represents Indra (因陀罗), who has the third eye in the middle of the forehead. Like Vishnu, he became a Buddhist guardian. On the bottom register are two of the four



Fig. 4. Nārāyana-deva and his family, mural to the south side of the main niche, west wall, Cave 285. Photo by Wu Jian, copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.

Fig. 3. The northern upper corner of the west wall, Cave 285, depicting Moon Devi and her family. Photo by Sun Zhijun, copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.



Guardian Kings, which represent the four directions.

There are also three corresponding registers between the main niche and the smaller one on the north side [Fig. 5]. On top is Maheśvara, whose image with a crown is the only example at Dunhuang from the period of the Northern Dynasties (420–589 CE). He wears a hide skirt and sits on a blue bull in *lalitāsana* (half-lotus position). Maheśvara originally was Śiva, one

of the three great gods in Brahmanism, who was considered the creator and the destroyer of the universe. He was later absorbed into Buddhism also as a guardian deity, belonging to the same class of deva as Mahāmaheśvara, and is called Maheśvara in Buddhist sutras. Usually he is “three eyed and eight armed, riding on a white bull.” We can see his three faces: the central one looks dignified like a guardian, the right one looks elegant like a Bodhisattva, while the left one looks very ferocious like a yaksa. His two upper arms hold the sun and the moon respectively. The right arm in the middle seems to hold a bell and the left one seems to hold a short arrow. The lower two hands are in front of the chest, with something like a bow in the right one, while an indistinct object is in the left. Below are images of his two sons, Kumāra, who looks like a child, and Vināyaka (毗那夜迦, the Hindu god Ganeśa) who has an elephant head and human body. And correspondingly, on the lowest register are the other two of the four Guardian Kings.



Fig. 5. Maheśvara and his family, mural to the north side of the main niche, west wall, Cave 285. Photo by Wu Jian, copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.

Iconographic origin of the three images

1. The image of Maheśvara

Images of Maheśvara are also known from the Yungang Grottoes and Khotan. In Cave 8 at Yungang, sculpted images of Maheśvara and Kumāra flank the entrance to the main chamber. One of Maheśvara’s hands even holds grapes [Fig. 6, next page]. There are three works with the image of Maheśvara discovered



Fig. 6. Image of Maheśvara in Cave 8, Yungang Grottoes, 5th century. After: Li, 2004, pl. 32.

at Dandan-Uiliq, a Buddhist site in the northeast of Khotan. The best-known one is on the obverse of a wooden panel dated ca. 6th century CE, discovered by Aurel Stein in 1900 (Stein 1907, Vol. 2, pl. ix; Whitfield and Farrer 1990, p. 163, no. 134; Whitfield 1984, pl. 70-1). It depicts the three-headed and four-armed Maheśvara seated with ankles crossed on two back-to-back crouching bulls [Fig. 7]. He has a piece of tiger skin tied around the waist and exhibits the features of male images in Indian murals. The upper two hands hold the sun and the moon respectively, and the lower two hold jewelry and a thunderbolt. A second example is a mural discovered at Dandan-Uiliq in 1998, dated to the 8th century, where Maheśvara has been identified as the figure on the left, with three heads, three eyes and four arms, seated on a black bull with legs crossed. Of his three faces, the central one looks like a Bodhisattva and the



Fig. 7. Image of Maheśvara, obverse of wooden panel excavated at Dandan-Uiliq by Aurel Stein. Collection of the British Museum, OA 1907.11-11.71 [D.VII.6]. Source: Stein 1907, Vol. 2, pl. ix.

other two look like boys (Baumer 2000, p. 89; Whitfield and Sims-Williams 2004, p. 159, fig. 13). The third image is a badly-preserved panel, also discovered by Stein, which seems to depict a three-eyed, three-faced, and four-armed deity seated with ankles crossed, but without Vahara, the bull (Lahore Museum D.X.8, Stein 1907, Vol. 2, pl. lxii/1). As with the other images from this site near Khotan, presumably this also is Maheśvara, a guardian deity of Buddhism (Williams 1973, pp. 142-143).

There are both literary and iconographic materials which suggest that Maheśvara became a Buddhist guardian deity not only via Hinduism but also via Zoroastrianism. One of the earliest Chinese materials which record Maheśvara clearly as a Zoroastrian deity is *Tongdian* (通典), edited in the 8th century, which mentions "the coordinator of the Sabao Department (薩寶府祆正)," and explains, "the so-called Xian (祆) is the heavenly deity of the Western Regions and that which the Buddhist sutras term Maheśvara. In the 4th year of the Wude period (621 CE), the Zoroastrian temples and related offices were established, where the foreigners always worship with a fire altar" (Du 1988, Ch. 200: 40).

Archaeological discoveries show that Maheśvara was the wind god in Zoroastrianism. In the 1960s, fragments of a mural depicting Maheśvara were discovered in Panjikent (in today's Tajikistan). The image is depicted in armor, three-headed and four-armed, with two upper hands holding a bow and a trident respectively. On his right leg, there is a Sogdian inscription which has been deciphered as "Veshparkar," denoting the wind god. Zoroastrian deities were greatly influenced by Hinduism: for example, the three great gods Zurvan, Adbag and Veshparkar in Zoroastrianism correspond respectively to the three main gods Brahma, Indra and Śiva in Hinduism,

both in their functions and graphic features. Citing such evidence, Markus Mode has identified the images on another panel discovered by Stein at Dandan-Uiliq as the three great gods in Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda, Nana and Veshparkar (BM OA 1907.11-11.72, depicted in Whitfield and Farrer 1990, p. 160, no. 131; Mode 1991/1992, pp. 182-183; cf. Stein 1907, Vol. 1, pp. 260-261, and Williams 1973, pp. 140-142). The latest discovery of an image of Maheśvara which may be connected with Sogdians and Zoroastrianism is that found in 2003 on a sarcophagus relief at Xi'an on the tomb of Shi Jun (史君), a Sogdian who died in 579 CE [Fig. 8]. Here, Maheśvara is depicted as rid-



Fig. 8. Maheśvara depicted on the sarcophagus in the tomb of Shi Jun (史君). After: Shi Anchan 2004, p.193, pl. 119.

ing on three bulls, with a trident in his right hand (Yang 2005). This discovery suggests that Maheśvara had been brought into China as the wind god in Zoroastrianism not later than the end of the 6th century.

Of particular interest here is a Turfan text written in 535 CE, that is, almost precisely at the time Cave 285 was being painted. The text includes sentences describing "presenting offerings to Fengbo" (風伯, the wind god), "presenting offerings to Dinggu tian" (丁穀天, possibly an alternate name for the god of victory Verethraghna), and "presenting offerings to Dawu Amo" (大塢阿摩, Ahura Mazda). Thus we find in the same text mention of the Zoroastrian main god Ahura Mazda and the god of victory. Since Zoroastrians in Central Asia usually worshiped a trinity of gods, the third one, Fengbo, may well be the wind god Veshparkar



Fig. 9. The figure in the crown on the head of Maheśvara, Cave 285. Photo by Wu Jian, copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.

(= Maheśvara) (Zhang 1999).

In general there is evidence to show that, as early as the 6th century, the Sogdians adopted the iconography of Indian gods to represent their own divinities, although the mechanism of this phenomenon is not completely clear. At least one scholar considers that the Indian iconography of the Sogdian gods is evidence of the diffusion of Hinduism in this part of Central Asia (Compareti unpubl.).

Returning to the figure of Maheśvara in Cave 285, we note one feature in particular, the image in the god's crown [Fig. 9]. While there are Indian images of Śiva with a figure on his hair dress holding the sun and the moon dating at least back to the Kushan period, no similar example has been found outside India except in Cave 285. At one time, this figure was previously regarded as a celestial musician manifested from Maheśvara's hairline, the evidence being in the instructions laid out in the *Sadhana Maheśvara Kala Devi Japa* [摩醯首羅大自在天王神通化身伎藝天女念誦法]: "First, paint Maheśvara with three faces and six arms and in special and fearful appearance. A celestial girl with various decorations and devi's garment is manifested from his hairline" (*Taishō* 1924-1932, Vol. T 100: 21, no. 1280).

However, in 1997 Sasaki Ritsuko identified the figure in Maheśvara's crown in Cave 285 as the wind god (Sasaki 1997). She determined that the depiction is that of a non-Han male holding the two sides of an inflated bag (or scarf). Analogous images cited by Sasaki are the wind god in Kizil Cave 38 [Fig. 10, next page] and a painting in Cave 155 at Bamiyan (see also Zhu 2003). In contrast, the image of wind god



Fig. 10. The wind god in Cave 38, Kizil Grottoes, Xinjiang. Photo © Sun Hongcai (孙洪才), published with permission.

in Mogao Cave 249, which was constructed at nearly the same time as Cave 285, is horned and beast-headed with a human body, like the images in Chinese mythology [Fig. 11]. There is additional evidence to strengthen Sasaki's argument. Similar images of the wind god, running with arms raised and holding a curved scarf, can be seen on the silver coins of the second-century Kushan rulers Kanishka I and Huvishka. Tanabe Katsumi indicates that this is the wind god Oado worshipped in the Kushan Dynasty, and believes that these coins have the earliest depictions of the wind gods in Central Asia (Tanabe 1990). Such evidence suggests that the figure of the wind god in Maheśvara's crown in Cave 285 derived from western iconography. However, the inclusion of this image suggests that the iconographic model for Maheśvara was not directly Hinduism. Neither was the image in the crown a simple copy of the image of Veshparkar from Zoroastrianism. The designers or painters of Cave 285 must have had a clear understanding of Maheśvara's characteristics in Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Indian Buddhism, and added a figure of the wind god well known in Hinduism or Buddhism to emphasize strongly his characteristics.

Another iconographic detail in this section of the west wall mural suggests a Sogdian connection. Maheśvara's son Kumāra, placed just below him in Cave 285 holds a cluster of grapes in his right hand. Grapes were a characteristic crop of the Sogdians. The *Hou Hanshu* (後漢書) recorded that Sogdiana produced a wealth of



Fig. 11. The wind god in Mogao Cave 249, Dunhuang, 6th century. Photo by Wu Jian, copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.

fruits including grapes (*putao*, 葡萄) and wonderful grape wine (Fan 1965a, 90: 78; Hill, tr. 2003, sec. 17). The grape motif may be seen on the sarcophagus reliefs of the Sogdians An Jia (安伽) at Xi'an and Yu Hong (虞弘) at Taiyuan. In noting that the image of Maheśvara in Yungang Cave 8 [Fig. 6, above, p. 36] holds a cluster of grapes, Éric Trombert concluded that the depiction was of Sogdian origin. He regards that the Yungang Grottoes contain the only exact evidence for the contribution of the Sogdians to art and techniques of the Northern Wei (Trombert 2005). Since there is no Zoroastrian or Buddhist textual evidence claiming that the grapes are attributes of Maheśvara (or Veshparkar) and Kumāra (the Zoroastrian god of victory), the only explanation for this motif is that it shows Sogdian influence.

2. Image of Sun Deva (*Āditya*)

The earliest extant Indian example of Sūrya, the sun god of Hinduism, was made in the 3rd century BCE. Indian scholar Shanti Lal Nagar has documented that in most cases the god is depicted on a seven- or four-horse chariot (Nagar 1995, pp. 133-134). The most famous such image is on a railing at Bodh Gaya dated to the first century BCE. There Sūrya stands, flanked by two female deities in shooting postures, on a chariot drawn by four horses. The four horses, two on either side, run in opposite directions with the front legs raised high. The two examples in India most similar to that in Cave 285 were made in the Kushan Dynasty. The first is



Fig. 12. *Sūrya*, Mathura Museum. Kushan period. After: Nagar 1995, pl. 5.

a pseudo-Corinthian capital with solar quadriga found in Abarchinar, Swat, and stored in the Peshāwar Museum. On it the half-length image of *Sūrya* appears facing forward in a two-wheeled chariot drawn by two horses moving in opposite directions away from the chariot. In each side of the chariot is a servant who grabs the rein to drive the horse (Rosenfield, 1967, fig. 88). The second example is the one most similar to that in Cave 285. This half-length image of *Sūrya*, sitting and facing forward in a four horse chariot, has a nimbus. His thick hair is shoulder length and each hand holds an object [Fig. 12]. A similar image is also found in Kizil Cave 17, where Sun Deva is depicted in the form of a bodhisattva or deva, sitting cross-legged in chariot, whose horses face in opposite directions [Fig. 13] (Zhu 2003).

There are several different explanations regarding the source of the image of Sun Deva in Cave 285. Duan Wenjie suggests that it can be traced back to that of the sun

god Apollo touring Paradise in a four-horse chariot as described in Greek mythology. He Shizhe considers that it derives from *Sūrya*, the sun god in ancient India. Among the most intriguing hypotheses is that of Jiang Boqin, who suggests that the image is that of the Zoroastrian Mithra, the god of the 16th day of the Sogdian calendar whose worship as the sun god in the Iranian Middle East can be traced back to around 1500 BCE. He argues that the imagery of Mithra was brought to Dunhuang by the Hephthalites. A weakness in all of these interpretations is that their authors have focused either on the Sun Deva image or that of the strongmen in the phoenix-drawn chariot below it but not considered the images as part of a unified iconography.

Moreover, it is unnecessarily limiting to suggest a single point of origin or transmission of the image. For example, Penelope Riboud suggests that *Sūrya* borrowed characteristics from Iranian gods and that Mithra inherited some from Apollo (Riboud 2005). In his research at Bamiyan Tanabe Katsumi concludes that "the Sogdian and Tocharian influences are so obvious in the costumes of *Sūrya* and the surrounding donors, it is more credible to think that this style was brought to Bamiyan via the Sogdian-Tocharian region" (Tanabe 2001/2002). In particular, he notes the wide stripes on the Mithra image at Bamiyan, which resemble the typical folds

of clothing of the Sogdian nobles, and the design of three round pendants which were also widespread in Sogdiana. While Sun Deva is not of equal importance in various religions, his essential functions and basic iconographical elements have not changed.

I conclude that Sun Deva in Cave 285 combines characteristics from various cultures. Common



Fig. 13. *Sun Deva* in Cave 17, Kizil Grottoes, Xinjiang. After: Fine Art Institute 1981, pl. 55.

Fig. 14. The image of Moon Devi, upper north corner of west wall, Mogao Cave 285. Photo by Sun Zhijun, copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.



to images of Sūrya in the Hindu tradition and in Indian Kushan style, in the Zoroastrian Mithra and in the Sun Deva in Kizil Cave 17 is a chariot driven by two or four horses in opposite directions. As is the case with the image of Maheśvara, Sun Deva in cave 285 must have been designed or painted by artists familiar with the sun god in Hinduism, Mithra in Zoroastrianism and Sun Deva in Buddhism.

3. Image of the Moon Devi (Candra)

Unlike the Sun Deva's images, Moon Devi's image in a swan-drawn chariot [Fig. 14] cannot be found in Hindu literature or sculptures. But outside India, her images can be seen on the ceiling of Cave 111 and in the painting of Mahāparinirvāna in Cave 330 at Bamiyan, the style similar to that in Mogao Cave 285.

The origin of the image at Dunhuang has attracted little scholarly attention: Duan Wenjie thought that its ultimate origin should be the image of Artemis, Apollo's younger sister, in a chariot drawn by four swans in Greek mythology (Duan 1994). A Minoan sculpture, "The Mother of the Earth," shows that in Greek pre-history, the goddess was accompanied by swans. It is our opinion that Sun Deva and Moon Devi in Cave 285 should be considered together and likely have the same origin. The same combination of the two images is also found in Bamiyan Cave 111, where Sun Deva in the horse-drawn chariot and Moon Devi in the swan-drawn chariot are painted on the two upper corners outside the north niche. Although the mural is flaking badly, the contour of the deities standing in the cen-



ter of the chariots and the four swans in two groups are still visible [Fig. 15; Higuchi 1983-1984, pl. 11]. Furthermore, they can be seen in Bamiyan Cave 330. Judging from this evidence, I hypothesize that the image of Moon Devi was adopted in Sogdian Buddhism in Central Asia, where it was paired with Sun Deva. An interesting variant is at Kizil Cave 17, where the Moon Devi is depicted as a rabbit inside a circle. In fact, none of the images of Sun Deva and Moon Devi in Cave 285 correspond exactly to depic-

tions in India, Central Asia or the Kizil grottoes.

The lion-drawn chariot below Moon Devi also suggests significant connections with Sogdians and the West, since it reminds us of another important goddess, Nana, in Zoroastrianism. Originally in the Zoroastrian Avesta, the goddess who personified fertility was Anahita, but it seems that she was replaced later by Nana. Nana has many functions and visual forms. She is the moon god's daughter at one time and the sun god's sister at another (Jiang 2004, pp. 254-255). One of her important iconographical features is the lion (Ghose 2006). There is a well-known image of Nana riding a lion in the mural in Hall No. 2 at Panjikent. Another image of Nana is that on a Sogdian sarcophagus dated to the Northern Qi period (550-577 CE) which is now in the Miho Museum in Japan (Whitfield and Sims-Williams 2004, p. 117, fig. j). This Sogdian goddess with a wreath on her head holds the sun and the moon and is seated on a throne with two lion heads. No exact correspondence to these images has yet been found in Central Asia or at the Kizil grottoes.

Thus, the swan or lion chariot is one of the essential characteristics of Moon Devi

Fig. 15. The sun god and moon god in Cave K (no. 111), Bamiyan. After: <http://www.transoxiana.org/Eran/Articles/Images/TS_5b-Bamiyan-k.JPG>.

Nana, whether in Buddhist art of the Sogdian area or in her native Zoroastrian art. The image of Moon Devi in Cave 285 has no traditional Chinese symbols of the moon goddess, such as the bay tree, a jade rabbit or a toad, but has both the swan and lion. These comparisons and contrasts suggest that the artists blended characteristics from both the Buddhist Moon Devi and Zoroastrian Nana.

There are other examples to illustrate that this imagery existed in later Chinese Buddhist art, even if none of them are exactly the same as the paintings in Cave 285. Later Dunhuang



Fig. 16. Sun Deva and Moon Devi, Mogao Cave 384, Dunhuang, 9th century. Photo by Sun Zhijun, copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.

paintings include images of Sun Deva sitting in a chariot drawn by four horses running in pairs in opposite directions, and Moon Devi riding on swans. For example, in Cave 384 (dated to the 8th–9th centuries) Sun Deva is exactly the same as described above, while Moon Devi rides on five swans [Fig. 16]. A stele (now in the Xi'an Stele Museum) made in the 8th century, with the inscription "The Buddha is converting the heretics" (釋迦降伏外道時) displays the sun and moon images, Sun Deva sit-



Fig. 17. Stele with images of Sun Deva and Moon Devi. The Beilin Museum, Xi'an. 8th century. After: Xi'an Museum 2000, p. 133.

ting with ankles crossed riding on two horses running in opposite directions, and Moon Devi sitting on two swans running in opposite directions [Fig. 17].

How did those Buddhist guardian deities in Cave 285 (Sun Deva, Moon Devi, especially Maheśvara with a wind god in his crown) come to have Hindu and Zoroastrian characteristics? Who brought them to Dunhuang? Neither Dunhuang natives without Hindu or Zoroastrian backgrounds, or Han artists from central or southern China could be expected to have produced them. Nor could Indian priests or artists with only Hindu or Buddhist backgrounds do it. Those who created these images must have been familiar with Hindu and Indian Buddhist art, as well as Zoroastrian art. The best candidates who meet these requirements are the Sogdians, who were active on the Silk Road when the decoration of Cave 285 was started in the early 6th century.

The background of the three images' representation in Dunhuang

The activity of the Sogdians in China has received considerable attention in recent scholarship, cited elsewhere in this article, and need not be discussed here in detail. While in the first instance they were engaged in commercial activity both as merchants and craftsmen, they also entered Chinese civil and military service. Their surnames recorded in the Chinese texts attest to their having come from various centers in Central Asia. Among the most striking documentary evidence for their presence is the "Ancient Sogdian Letters," dating to the early 4th century, which Aurel Stein found in the ruins of a watchtower west of Dunhuang. These letters make it clear that, while the "home

office" was in Samarkand, Sogdian colonies existed at Dunhuang and points further east all the way to the capital Luoyang.

And when the Northern Liang were defeated in 439 CE, many local people, including Sogdians who had been living in the Hexi region and in Liangzhou (涼州), were moved to Pingcheng (平城), the capital of the Northern Wei Dynasty. During the reign of Emperor Gaozong (高宗) (452–465 CE), the Sogdian king sent envoys to ask the Emperor's permission to buy back the captured Sogdians from the Northern Wei" (Wei1974, Ch. 124: 120). Yu Taishan documents from the official annals, the *Weishu* (魏書), 19 instances of interaction between the Sogdian kingdoms and the Northern Wei.

Cai Hongshen's research on Sogdian marriages, based on evidence from the Sui and Tang periods, documents that some Sogdians married within their ethnic community, some intermarried with non-Han ethnic groups, and some also intermarried with the Han (Cai 1998, pp. 22–24). Further evidence regarding the marriages may be found in recently-discovered inscriptions and burials. For example, Shi Shewu (史射勿) belonged to the Sogdian Kang family (from Kang [康國], Samarkand) and Shi Suoyan's (史索岩) wife had a Sogdian surname An (安). Another example is that An Jia's (安伽) wife might be a Turk, judging from the, granted, problematic evidence of her costume.

Just as in their homeland the Sogdians seem to have been open to various religious influences, so also in China do we find that they professed various faiths or some syncretism of more than one. We recall that one depiction on Shi Jun's tomb (dating from the Northern Zhou Dynasty, 557–581 CE) is that of Maheśvara (or Veshparkar), one of the main gods worshiped in Sogdian Zoroastrianism. If we just judge by Dunhuang documents, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism played the leading role in Sogdian religious life (Yu 2005).

However it seems that the present studies on Buddhist beliefs of the Sogdians in China have been confined to the period of the Sui and Tang dynasties. If Cave 285 indeed has Sogdian connections, then we should also look at the pre-Sui period for evidence about Buddhist beliefs and related activities of the Sogdians at Dunhuang. That the local Sogdians had accepted Buddhism as early as the 5th century is dem-

onstrated by manuscript No. 0343 in the Dunhuang Academy, written by a Sogdian Buddhist devotee Kangna (康那) on the 8th day of the 4th month of the 2nd Year of Huanxing (15 May 468 CE), the birthday of Śākyamuni. In addition, there are two manuscripts in the National Library of China (BD.09149 and No. 5961 separately) dated the 3rd year of Zhenguang (523 CE) containing copies of the Mahāparinirvāna and Saddharma-pundarīka sutras, with inscriptions by a Buddhist devotee Zhai Ande (翟安德). According to *Zizhi tongjian* (資治通鑒), the Zhai Family was an elite family in the Dingling and Gaoche regions. "The family of the Dingling Zhai Bin had lived for generations in Kangju; later they moved to China. When at this point he entered the court of [Later] Zhao, they gave him the title of Prince of Juding" (Sima 1957, Ch. 94: 2977). The Zhai were a powerful family of Dingling–Gaoche, and we find their surname frequently in inscriptions related to the Sogdians in China. Some of them even became the Sabao (薩寶), who was a community leader and had responsibilities for Zoroastrian worship. Being linked by marriage, the Zhais were strongly associated with the Sogdians for several centuries (Sasaki 1997). To a degree then, documents about the Buddhist activities of the Zhai family may support the opinion that the Sogdians at Dunhuang had accepted Buddhism and engaged in related Buddhist activities at least in the period from 439 to 535 CE.

The donor figures depicted on the northern wall of Cave 285 provide important evidence which may help us to establish a connection between its construction and the local Sogdian community in Dunhuang. The middle register of the cave's northern wall depicts seven preaching scenes with rows of donor images below each scene [Figs. 18, 19, facing page]. Of the preserved inscriptions, counting from the west, two are of particular interest: a) Below the second preaching scene — "The female lay devotee Shi Chongji is making an offering [to the Buddha]"; "The male lay devotee Yin Angui is making an offering (清信女史崇姬所供養時; 信士陰安歸所供養時); b) below the seventh preaching scene — "The female lay devotee He..."; "The male lay devotee Hua Heinu is making an offering" (清女何口; 清信士滑黑奴供養).

What might we establish about the ethnic origin of these donors? Duan Wenjie considered that the female donor Shi Chongji (史崇姬) [Fig. 18]



Fig. 18 (top). The female donor Shi Chongji (史崇姬) and her family, north wall, Mogao Cave 285. Photo by Sun Zhijun, copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.

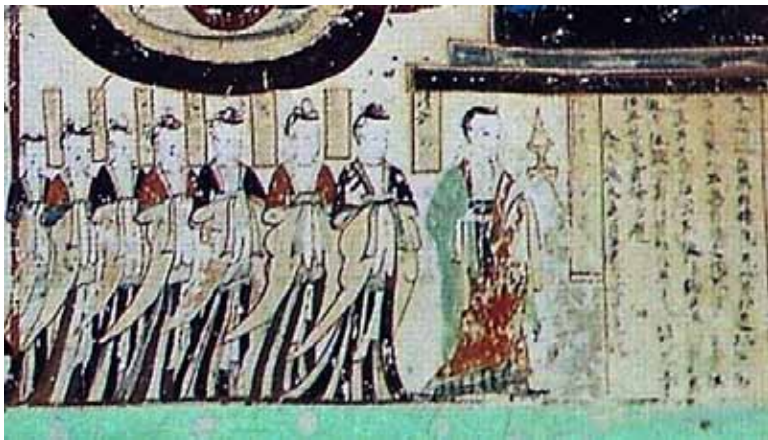


Fig. 19 (bottom). The female donor He (何) and her family, north wall, Mogao Cave 285. Photo by Sun Zhijun, copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.

came from a northern people. Zheng Binglin presumed, moreover, that hers is the earliest inscription at Dunhuang relating to a Sogdian (Zheng 2005). I feel that there are three reasons to consider that she came from the Shi family of the Sogdians.

First, as Duan Wenjie has pointed out, the name of Chongji (崇姬) is indeed a non-Han name used among Central Asian peoples in northwest China at that time. Second, at least in the beginning of the Northern Dynasties, the Sogdians had settled down in Dunhuang and took their kingdoms' names as their surnames. Yao Weiyan has concluded that the people surnamed Shi (史) originally came from the Shi kingdom (史國) (Kesh, the modern Sahr-i-Sabz) and took Shi as their surname (Yao 1958, p. 390). Sogdian families Shi living in the Hexi area in 6th century. Among the important Sogdians with this surname was the Shi Jun (史君) whom we have mentioned earlier. The epitaph on his tomb, built in 579/580 CE in Xi'an reads: "Shi Jun came from the kingdom Shi, originally from the West...and was appointed to be Sabao

of Liangzhou..." (Yang 2005). Another Shi, Shi Jingxiang (史敬香), is mentioned along with other individuals with clearly Sogdian names in a Dunhuang religious manuscript S.0613(V) which dates to the 13th year of Datong period (547 CE).

A third consideration here, of an indirect nature, is that Shi Chongji's husband, Yin Angui, was probably from an elite Han family in the Hexi (河西) region. Such marriages between the Sogdians and the local elite were a common means of strengthening connections in local society.

In contrast to the case of Shi Chongji, to date scholars have paid no attention to the female donor He (何) [Fig.

19]. In part because of her husband's surname Hua (滑), I believe that He was also a Sogdian. The He family in the Western Regions has been documented as coming originally from the He kingdom (何國), a branch of the Kangju (康居), i.e. from an Iranian people who were distinguished as merchants (Yao 1958, p. 389). He's husband, Hua Heinu, was obviously from the Hua kingdom (滑國) (also known as the Hephthalites, 嚙噠) in Central Asia which had ruled the Sogdian region. Attacked in the 6th century by the Sassanians and Turks, the Hephthalites were scattered around Central Asia, where they gradually integrated with the local population. Thus, a marriage between the Huas and the Hes might be expected. Because of the inscriptions left by the Hua family in Cave 285, Jiang Boqin considers that the Zoroastrian/Sogdian influences there should be ascribed to the Hephthalites (Jiang 2004, pp. 206-208). In my opinion though, the Huas would have come to Dunhuang along with the Sogdian caravans or integrated with the local Sogdian community rather than coming from the Hua kingdom directly. In these "non-Han communities" (Rong

2004), the non-Sogdians probably were assimilated into the Sogdian customs and religious beliefs. Hence, it is reasonable to consider that the female donor He, married to a Hua, was a member of the local Sogdian community, it would be reasonable to hypothesize further that culture of the Sogdian community influenced the decoration of Cave 285.

The Han-style costumes of the female donors in the two preaching scenes do not contradict this proposed identification of them as Sogdians. As Frantz Grenet has observed, "in the periods from the Northern Dynasties (420–581 CE) to the Sui (581–618 CE) and the Tang (618–907 CE), the Sogdian female costumes had been misused, and become the dress for the low class women, such as non-Han dancers. Therefore, the non-Han noble ladies who settled down in China were ashamed of their traditional costumes but became fond of the Han-style noble ones used in the Southern Dynasties" (Grenet 2005; Fan 1965b, fn. 1, p. 3521). We can see evidence of this fact on the sculpted panel of the sarcophagus of An Jia (安伽), a noble in the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557–580). It shows the Sabao's wife and her maids dressed in the same Han-style costumes as are the donors on the north wall of Cave 285 [Fig. 20].

Assuming that we are correct in identifying Sogdian donors in Cave 285, we can then easily understand why Zoroastrian–Sogdian iconography is to be found there. It would be reasonable to assume that the culture and art of the local Sogdian elite would have influenced the construction of the caves. Scholars have noted that the first preaching scene on the west side of the northern wall in Cave 285 depicts both



Fig. 20. Sogdian women in Han-style costumes, Tomb of An Jian, Xi'an. After: Archaeology Institute Shanxi 2003, pl. 77.

male donors dressed in tall hats and official robes and female donors dressed in local elite costumes of the Wei and Jin periods. This was clearly an important cave, and the Sogdians were part of this local elite, a situation that contrasts to their beleaguered life reflected in the Sogdian letters of more than two centuries earlier.

Moreover, there is evidence that the Sogdians participated in the construction of

other caves at Mogao. Caves 294 and 297 were constructed in the second half of the 6th century (545–585 CE), about 20 to 30 years after Cave 285. These two caves are on the same level and in the vicinity of Cave 285. Both caves have murals with donors in non-Han costumes, and scenes of musicians and dancers with Central Asian characteristics [Fig. 21]. The costumes and postures of the dances are very similar to those in the sarcophagus relief in An Jia's tomb mentioned above [Fig. 22]. Similar scenes and figures appearing in different places in about the same period suggest that they reflect the same cultural milieu of the influential Sogdian

Fig. 21 (left). Dancers and Musicians, Mogao Cave 297. Photo by Du Juan (杜娟), copyright © The Dunhuang Academy, published with permission.

Fig. 22 (right). Dancer, Tomb of An Jian, Xi'an. After: Archaeology Institute Shanxi 2003, pl. 65.



communities in northern China in the 6th century.

Conclusions

As recorded in the *Hou Hanshu* (後漢書), edited in the 5th century, early in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), “Dunhuang is a metropolitan city consisting of multi-ethnic groups, Chinese and non-Chinese” (華戎所交，一都會也) (Fan 1965a, Ch. 90: 78). The *Shilaozhi* of the *Weishu* (魏書·釋老志) edited in the 6th century, notes, “Dunhuang touches upon the Western Regions, and the clergy and laity both acquired the old fashions. The villages one after the other, had many reliquaries and temples” (敦煌地接西域，道俗交得其舊式，村塢相屬，多有塔寺) (Wei 1974, Ch. 114: 3032; tr. Hurvitz, p. 61). These texts indicate that in its unique location on the Silk Road Dunhuang could integrate East and West geographically and culturally. The flourishing mural art reflects this historical reality.

While Cave 285 is a “dharma center,” presenting a Buddhist message, the manner of that presentation is multi-cultural and the work of the Sogdians. The cave is special precisely because it combines motifs from Central China, the Southern Dynasties, Central Asia, India, Persia and even the Hellenistic world. The analysis above demonstrates that the images of the three deities in Cave 285 are neither directly from Hinduism, nor are they simple reproductions of images from Zoroastrianism. They record a dialogue among the different civilizations, with the Sogdian being the most prominent. Research on the Sogdian elements of the deities in the cave will enable us further to appreciate perceptually the Sogdian contribution to the mural art under the Northern Dynasties.

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About the author

Zhang Yuanlin 張元林, obtained his B.A. degree (History) in Fu Dan University, Shanghai, 1989, and was a visiting scholar in the National Tōkyo Art University, Japan (1997–1999). He is currently Research Fellow at the Dunhuang Academy, the Department Head of the Academic Information Center of the Academy, and a member of the Association for the Study of the History of Foreign Relations, China. His research and publications focus on Buddhist iconography in Dunhuang and the relationship between Dunhuang art and that of other regions. E-mail: <zhang660823@sina.com>.

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***Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute:* Possible Religious Symbolism within the Late-Song Paintings**

Lauren Arnold

*Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western
Cultural History
Center for the Pacific Rim
University of San Francisco*

Beginning in the Tang dynasty, the remarkable saga of Lady Wenji became the source of a famous series of poems and paintings collectively known as the *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute*. Historically, Lady Wenji was a Han noblewoman abducted from her city home by nomadic marauders (ca. 195 CE) and held captive for many years on the borders of China. Her story, as written by the Tang-dynasty poet Liu Shang, traced this forced, unhappy encounter between barbaric nomads and urban Han Chinese.¹ As such, Lady Wenji's story became associated with cherished Han notions of the superiority of Chinese culture over other civilizations and the Confucian concept of loyalty to one's ancestral family and country. Wenji's saga thus had great cultural resonance in China and has been told and re-told in successive eras. The Tang-era cycle of poems by Liu Shang became the basis for *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute*, illustrated versions of which were produced in the Song and Yuan eras, accompanied by remarkable images of camp life among the barbarians (Rorex and Fong 1974, Introduction, p. [1]). It is these scenes of camp life which will be the basis for this article [Fig. 1].²

Lady Wenji's life on the borders of China would be fascinating even without illustrations. The legend tells us that as a young widow, she was forcibly removed from her family home in

Fig. 1. The unhappy hostage Wenji sits with her barbarian husband on a pile carpet in the nomad's yurt. Detail from song 5, "The Encampment by the Stream."
Photo © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

present-day Honan and taken into Inner Mongolia to live as a hostage, albeit a privileged one, among the nomadic Southern Xiongnu. While in captivity she was married against her will to Liu Bao, the *zuoxian wang*, or commander-in-chief of the tribe's left wing (Rorex and Fong 1974, Introduction, p. [1]). According to the legend, Lady Wenji assuaged her longing for home by writing poetry that became *The Laments*. Some of the early illustrations of the poems show her with her *qin*, the *literati* musical instrument of choice, to emphasize Wenji's refined upbringing and her loneliness among those so totally devoid of Han culture. The third poem of Liu Shang's cycle alludes to the vast cultural differences the lady experienced as an outsider in the nomad's camp:

*I am like a prisoner in bonds,
I have 10,000 anxieties but no one to confide them to.
...They can eat my flesh and drink my blood...,
but to make me his wife is worse than killing me.
Alas, how a pretty face has made me suffer,
How I resent that I am weak and soft like water.*





Fig. 2. Wenji's elder son is excited by the unexpected arrival of his kinsmen from China. Detail from song 11, "Watching the Geese Fly South." Photo © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Nevertheless, while in captivity she grew to love her captor and she bore his children, two sons, while living among the nomads for twelve years. Then, during the infancy of her youngest son, emissaries from her family suddenly arrived to negotiate her ransom [Fig. 2]. To her joy, Lady Wenji learned that she was to be ransomed by her family and returned home. But to her mounting dismay, the realization came that she must return alone [Fig. 3].

The joy of Lady Wenji's homecoming — back to everything that had made her the woman she was — is painfully offset by the painted scene in the nomad camp after the decision has been announced. Everyone in this scene is bereft, from Wenji on down through the ranks of maids and barbarian guards. Quite simply, the painting reveals, the whole camp family has grown to love each other in their mutual captivity. The real-life implications of the decision to return Lady Wenji to her homeland in China are heart-breaking.

Nevertheless, her nomad husband and her young sons stoically accompanied Wenji to the border before turning back, never to see their wife and mother again. In the last scene, Wenji is depicted re-entering her old family compound

In the 12th century, the tale of Wenji's captivity had particular resonance among the Chinese elite, when members of the Southern Song royal family, including the emperor Song Gaozong, were taken into Chin Tatar custody as hostages. Although he survived, his wives, father and brothers all died in captivity while waiting to be repatriated. According to Rorex and Fong (1974, Introduction, p. [7]), "an anonymous narrative handscroll of the period has recently been identified as illustrating the return from the Chin territory in 1142 of Kao-tsung's [Gaozong's] mother, the empress dowager Wei. This event occurred only after years of negotiations between the Southern Song emissaries and the Chin, and the thousand-year-old story of lady Wen-chi must have seemed a prefiguration of the contemporary home-coming." Thus one can understand why copies of Liu Shang's poems were being made at the court

of Song Gaozong, one of them even in the emperor's own hand, and why some scholars date the extant illustrations to them around 1150, soon after the traumatic return of the empress dowager.

Others speculate, however, that the paintings date to the mid- to late 13th century, and for equally compelling historical reasons. Be-

Fig. 3. The negotiations for Wenji's return to China. Detail from the album of eighteen paintings entitled Wen-chi kuei Han t'u, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.



ginning in the early 1200s, the Song dynasty was being drawn into the vortex of the coming cataclysm that would see the end of its rule, as northern warriors began massing on the borders of western China. These nomadic tribes — many of them the traditional enemies of the Han, including the Keraits, the Uighurs, the Naimans — were already making military inroads into weakened Chinese territory before aligning themselves as powerful allies of Chingis Khan and his Mongolian horsemen. By mid-century vast reaches of the known world would know the scourge of this alliance of skilled and brutal riders.

I find that the dating of the paintings to this transitional period of cataclysmic foreign incursion in the mid-13th century has considerable cultural merit; as an art historian interested in east-west exchange, I perceive some intriguing western religious symbols being incorporated into the paintings that point to this later date (Gantzhorn 1998, pp. 142-55). To demonstrate this, let us examine some of the details in the paintings that might have iconographical meaning.

If the literary poignancy of Lady Wenji's decision did not move the viewer, then certainly the details of the paintings, especially the minute depictions of camp life, could not help but charm. The unknown Song artists who painted the Boston and Metropolitan scrolls did not depict the nomads of a thousand years before them: their contemporary observations are apt, humorous and telling. In the words of one scholar, "when [the Boston scroll painter, a possible member of the Emperor's painting academy], some three and a half centuries after Liu Shang, undertook to illustrate the Tang retelling of the Han story, he employed the imagery of his own time.... He was a sensitive reporter of the details of nomad life" (Rorex and Fong 1974, Introduction, p. [7]). The artist's observations — of the

camp cooks tending their pots over fires, or of the Central Asian landscape and surroundings with their camels and yurts — all are wonderfully acute and speak of an intriguing familiarity with "barbarian" life [Fig. 4]. It is tempting to think that the painter had genuine peaceful contact with his nomadic subjects.

Certainly the artist must have observed Central Asian objects of material culture very close at hand, if not *in situ*. All of the elements of cultural exchange are interesting, among them Central Asian ewers patterned after Persian examples (similar real examples made their way into the famous collection of the Shoso-in at Nara in Japan in the 8th century; Hayashi 1975, pp. 90-95). The inclusion of woven carpets is particularly noticeable: all of the surviving versions of the story of Lady Wenji contain Central Asian pile carpets. Central Asian pile carpets have a long history that substantially pre-dates both Christianity and Islam, as the famous Pazyryk carpet from the 3rd century BCE attests (Opie 1992, pp. 29-33).

In the domestic scenes from the barbarian camp in the New York and Taiwan versions, the artist has clearly chosen to depict a significant number of woven pile carpets, and has taken great care to provide each carpet with an intricate, carefully drawn motif [Fig.5]. If we accept the mid-13th century dating of the last two paintings, these carpets hold considerable iconographic interest, as the motifs are almost uniformly crosses. In the words of one scholar these are "imposing Greek crosses, leaf-form crosses, or a combina-

Fig. 4. Horseman with carpet saddle-bag. Detail from song 13, "The Farewell." Photo © Metropolitan Museum of Art.



tion of crosses, or a combina-

Fig. 5. Details of carpet in Fig. 2 and saddle-bag in Fig. 4 with cross motif.



tion of the two" (Gantzhorn 1998, p. 143). This motif is significant, since it is a fact that, by the time Song China was overrun, many of these nomadic tribes allied to the Mongols — particularly the Keraites, the Uighurs, and the Naimans — had sizable segments who were converts to Eastern Christianity. The cross motif in these paintings could indicate intimate contact with these Christian tribes.

Unfortunately, the cross motif is an art-historical battleground; so a little art-historical context is helpful at this juncture. Beginning in the early 20th century, an influential group of art historians, led by the Persian art specialist Arthur Upham Pope, vehemently dismissed the idea that the cross motif might ever suggest a Christian context when included as a design element within Middle Eastern or Central Asian carpets.

Pope and his colleagues argued that the cross was a pre-Christian symbol and therefore it was pre-Islamic as well, a geometric motif found in most folk cultures world-wide. As such, they categorically stated, in art created in the non-European world, the cross was therefore devoid of specific Christian religious meaning. Pope was equally vehement about rejecting any Christian participation (i.e. by Armenian or Greek weavers) in the craft of carpet making. He and his colleagues concluded that, since all oriental carpets were exclusively made by nomadic Muslims in the Middle East and Central Asia, the cross motif frequently found repetitively interwoven into their patterns was nothing more than a decorative device of no symbolic or religious value whatsoever — it was simply a geometric form easy to weave and its inclusion held no iconographic weight (Pope 1925, quoted in Der Manuelian and Eiland 1984, p. 13). Pope's assertion caused tremendous wrangling among carpet aficionados and pitted Armenian and Greek carpet weavers (who are traditionally Christian) against many Islamic scholars, who insisted that the craft was exclusively Muslim.



Fig. 6. Christian grave marker from area of Lake Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan. Source: <<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/67/NestorianTombstoneIssykKul1312.jpg>>

Recent research, based on materials from Central Asia and China not available to Pope and his 19th-century predecessors who wrote on the early origins of oriental carpets, has shown conclusively that Pope was wrong (although his authority still carries weight among some Persian art specialists). We now know that carpet-making was far from being an exclusive Muslim art form in Central Asia or the Middle East: Christians in the area wove carpets too (Der Manuelian and Eiland 1984; Eiland et al. 2002). In addition to the recent scholarship balancing the carpet debate, new archaeological evidence has seriously eroded 19th-century notions of the monolithic Muslim nature of Central Asia. During the past twenty-five years, excavations of cemeteries and monasteries along the old Soviet portions of the Silk Road, have exposed the vibrant presence of the Church of the East at sites all across Central Asia right to the borders of China, and even within the urban centers in China itself [Fig. 6] (see, e.g.: Savchenko ca. 2007; Nestorian n.d.). The renewed archaeological evidence of religious diversity in Central Asia between the 10th and the 15th centuries is incontrovertible proof that, even though largely forgotten by the 19th century, Christians in fact lived alongside Muslims, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Manicheans, and Jews in those areas long before the arrival in Asia of the sea-faring European explorers and Jesuit missionaries of the 16th century (Lieu and Parry 2003; Lotus 2007).

In light of these recent archaeological discoveries, it becomes clear that the inclusion of the cross motif in the Late-Song depictions of carpets and saddle bags in Lady Wenji's story should be re-examined and now can be reasonably interpreted as specific references to the military incursion of Christianized nomads from the boundaries of China during the era of Chingis Khan (d. 1227).

Although Moule, Pelliot and others made note of it in the early 20th century, many western historians today are still surprised to find that a

number of the tribes that comprised the backbone of the Mongol invasions of the 13th century — particularly the Ongut, Kerait, and Uighur — had Christian converts. This Christian identity was mostly due to the missionary activity of the Church of the East on the borders of China beginning in the Tang era (Pelliot 1959-1963; Moule 1930; Arnold 1999).

For some reason, the fact of an Eastern Christian presence in Inner Asia during this era has always been a source of annoyance to the Latin West. In the late 1250s, for instance, the Franciscan William of Rubruck reported with great chagrin that he was not the first Christian to enter the Mongols' camps at Karakorum — far from it. He described in some detail the strong presence of the Church of the East among the Mongol elite there, his Euro-centric and Latin-Christian bias designating those Christians by the pejorative (and inaccurate) term "Nestorian." The biases of the Latin West notwithstanding, the Church of the East had strong ties in Central Asia and on the borders of China until the brutal repressions of Tamerlane doomed the church in those areas after 1400 (for its history down to the present, see Baumer 2006).

Certainly, during the 13th and 14th centuries the descendents of Chingis Khan relied upon these largely Christianized tribes for military support as they established their hegemony across the Middle East and into China itself. The Ongut, Kerait, and Uighur all had high-ranking Christian members, especially among their women, many of whom then married into the highest levels of Mongol nobility [Fig. 7]. There they became not only influential consorts but mothers to an impressive number of Mongol rulers. To name just a few prominent examples: Chingis Khan himself took as his chief wife a Kerait princess who was a Christian: the Uighur mother of Qubilai and Möngke Khan was the famous Church of the East devotee, Sorqaqtani Beki; and Doquz Khatun, the wife of the Il-Khan Hülegü, convinced her husband to spare her fellow Christians during the sack of Baghdad in 1258 (Rossabi 1979; Blair 2002).

Conclusion: Yuan-era reality mirrored in a noble woman's lament

The story of Lady Wenji is a particularly "women's" story of divided loyalties and affections at the highest levels during a turbulent time



Fig. 7. Detail from grave marker of high-ranking Christian woman, Elisabeth, wife of a government official in southern China named Xindu, who died in 1317. The inscription (not shown here) is in Chinese, Uighur and Syriac. After: Baumer 2006, p. 167.

of cultural exchange. Both the painter and the poet have captured the conflicted feelings of the lady, as she explains in the 15th poem:

*I was grieved... by coming away, and now
I hate returning.
I no longer understand such emotions...
... I only feel a sharp knife stabbing at my
heart...
My thoughts are at cross-purposes. I keep
asking myself this:
Unless it was fate that pre-ordained such
a marriage,
How could I have become bound to my en-
emy in love and trust?*

We do not know for whom the scrolls and albums of *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute* were painted, but they clearly reflect an awareness of the impact of cross-cultural contact on the most intimate aspects of domestic life, contact that was at once painful, complex, yet compelling. I emphasize that Wenji's story is not that of a rape; it is rather of two cultures colliding, learning to accommodate and trust each other, and producing offspring that combined the best features of both [Fig. 8, next page].

When we add the possibility that the motif of the cross, so prominently featured on the nomad carpets, indicates a religious incursion as well, another level of cultural nuance enters the mix. To my mind, these paintings with their crosses vividly depict the reality of the situation in China around 1250: that these border cultures and their foreign religions had once again forcefully entered China and therefore into the consciousness of the upper echelons of Han culture as well, mirroring the personal conflict and accommodation that had to occur during the end of the Song and the beginning of the Mongol Yuan dynasty.



Fig. 8. Lady Wenji nursing her first-born son. Detail from song 10, "A Child is Born." Photo © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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About the Author

Lauren Arnold is an independent art historian and a research fellow with the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, University of San Francisco. Educated at the University of Michigan, her field is east-west artistic and cultural exchange. She is the author of *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and Its Influence on the Art of the West 1250-1350*, and she hopes to finish in 2009 a companion volume with the working title of *When the Buddha Became a Saint:*

The Dominican Mission to the East and its Influence on the Art of the West 1250-1530. E-mail: <laurenarnold@cs.com>.

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Notes

1. Liu Shang (ca. 773) based his cycle of poems on two poetic *Laments* purportedly written by Lady Wenji herself, which formed part of her biography in the History of the Latter Han Dynasty, assembled around 440. Another version based on Liu Shang was written by the Northern Song statesman Wang Anshi (1021- 1086). Lady Wenji (Wen-chi, born 177, death date unknown), also known as Cai Wenji, was the daughter of Cai Yong (132-192), a scholar of the Eastern Han dynasty. Much of Cai Yong’s work has been lost. Both father and daughter have interesting biographies as members of the talented Cai family (Cai Yong, n.d.).

2. Six important paintings of the subject are known. Boston holds the badly damaged original that the others follow. Rorex and Fong (1974, notes to the Introduction, p. [9]) list them as follows: “1. The album leaves in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (the original). 2. The handscroll in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number 1973.120.3. 3. Eighteen paintings reproduced in the periodical *I-lin yueh-k’an* (Peking, 1930-34). 4. An album of eighteen paintings entitled *Wen-chi kwei Han t’u*, National Palace Museum, Taiwan, described in *Ku-kung shu-hualu* (Taipei, 1956), vol. VI, pages 4–9. 5. A handscroll with eighteen illustrations, Yamato Bunkakan, Nara, Japan; see Shujiro Shimada, “Concerning the Handscroll Painting of Wen-chi’s Return to China” (in Japanese), *Yamato bunka* (Nara, 1962), No. 37, pages 18–30. 6. A handscroll with eighteen illustrations, Nanking Museum; see *Hu-chia shih-pa-p’ai* (Shanghai, 1961).” According to the notes, dating the original and the copies is problematic: number 2 has seals from the 15th century and a “questionable” seal of the Song chancellor Jia Sidao, who died 1275; number 5 is believed to be a late-Ming copy. Three late-Song paintings, those held in Taiwan, Boston, and New York, are the basis for this paper. Note that Figs. 1–2, 4–5 and 8 are details from the handscroll in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, accession no. 1973.120.3, Gift of the Dillon Fund, reproduced with permission in process and pending.

Shrine Pilgrimage among the Uighurs

Rahilä Dawut

*Xinjiang University
Urumqi, China*

The practice of shrine pilgrimage has long been prominent on the global Islamic landscape. Its significance has been noted by many scholars (Hawley 1987; Werbner 2003; Kieckhefer and Bond 1990; Tyson 1997). People across the Islamic world go on pilgrimages to fulfill a wish expressed in the name of a saint or to seek the blessing of a particular shrine [Fig. 1].



Fig. 1. Shrine pilgrimage in Xinjiang. Except as noted, all photographs in the article are © 2009 by the author.

In Xinjiang, there are numerous such shrines (mazars). Some of the earliest evidence about mazars in Xinjiang is that left by foreigners from various European countries and Japan in the 19th and early 20th centuries. They came to this area as travelers, scholars, diplomats, and missionaries and have provided us useful information related to the historical situations, shapes, locations and legends of some of the mazars of that time. Also, under the Qing Dynasty, Chinese scholars or rulers recorded important information on mazars.

However, since 1949 there have been few ethnographic studies of shrine-centered religious activities in Xinjiang (for recent publications in Western languages see Harris and Dawut 2002; Sawada 2001a, 2001b; Zarccone 2001, 2002).

Chinese scholars have tended to be more interested in the historical aspects of Islam among the Uighurs, while researchers from other countries have often encountered difficulties in gaining access to rural areas in Xinjiang. An examination of current Uighur pilgrimage practices, coupled with knowledge of religious behavior in the region from a historical perspective, will demonstrate that that shrines have long been critical focal points of Islamic practice among the Uighurs (cf. Tyson 1997).

In this paper, I shall draw on information obtained from fieldwork and written resources to provide insight into the mazar culture among the Uighurs by exploring the classification, distribution and physical evidence for rituals of worship at mazars. Of particular interest is the way this material suggests a relationship between Islamic mazar culture and pre-Islamic traditions, including those of Buddhism and shamanism.

In the Uighur language, *mazar* means "tomb" or "shrine." It often refers to the burial place of a saint or a place where miracles are believed to have occurred. Mazar pilgrimage refers to the practice of making journeys to the tombs of saints, which are scattered around the deserts and towns of Xinjiang. The mazars are the sites of pilgrimage in part because they are believed to have the power to cure infertility and diseases and avert natural or other disasters. In principle, mazar worship involves the activities of worship: reading of the Quran, prayers, offerings of sacrifices and other rituals for the purpose of securing the divine protection of the mazar [Fig. 2]. Mazar worship is popular among the broad

Fig. 2. Praying at the mazar in Pichan. Photo © Zulpiye Zumaratshah.



masses of the Uighur people, and has become an inalienable part of their religious belief. Worshipers at the mazars pour out the sorrows and bitterness of their hearts and use different forms to express their needs and wishes. Some pray for revenge on people who had done them wrong, some for protection from disaster or for material wealth. Still others pray for harmony in marital relationships or for an ideal marriage partner. Others pray for financial security in old age or for relief from extended drought. People look on the mazar as a place which can protect them from disaster, where they can pour out their innermost feelings, where they can seek cure for diseases, where their souls can be saved, and also as a place where they can seek pleasure. Therefore, whether in extreme cold or heat, regardless of how dangerous or difficult the journey, people will make pilgrimages to mazars. Some will not stint their fortune to offer sacrifices at the mazar in order to gain its divine protection. There are individuals who hold mazar worship to be of equal importance to a pilgrimage to Mecca. Many local cemeteries have a shrine around which people of the community are buried. In the course of several years' fieldwork I have documented more than seventy in the Khotan region alone (Dawuti 2001).

The types and geographical distribution of mazars

The most common pilgrimage sites, which attract the greatest number of worshippers, are the tombs of kings, Islamic missionaries and Islamic martyrs (*shehit*) killed in *jihad* [holy war] against the Buddhist kingdoms of Xinjiang. Major sites of pilgrimage include the tomb of the founder of the Qarakhanid¹ empire Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan,² and the Ordam Padishah [Fig. 3], "Court of the Emperor" (located about 24 km. southeast of Harap county in Yengisher prefecture), which is reputed to be the shrine

Fig. 3. The Ordam Padishah mazar.



of Sultan Ali Arslan Khan, grandson of Satuq Bughra Khan. Shrines of Sufi leaders are also quite common, but their rituals are more localized. The most widely known are the tombs of the Khoja rulers of Kashgar including that of Afaq Khoja and the "fragrant concubine" Ipar Khan.³

Although they are considered an Islamic phenomenon, many sites of worship are not directly linked to Islam. The tombs of philosophers and writers have in the past been important sites of pilgrimage for students at Islamic schools. Most famous of these are the tombs of the prominent 11th century Uighur scholars, Yusuf Khass Hajib, author of "Wisdom of Royal Glory" (*Qutadgu Bilig*), and Mahmud Kashgari, author of the "Compendium of the Turkic Dialects"



Fig. 4. The Büwi Märyäm mazar.

(*Divanu Lughat-it-Türk*). The tomb of the first is in Kashgar city, the second in the village of Upal some 50 km. to the south. Other sites of pilgrimage are the tombs of craftsmen, which are believed to be effective in healing specific ailments such as skin diseases. Many tombs of female historical figures are sites of pilgrimage for women, especially those who seek to have a child. The most famous of these is the tomb of Büwi Märyäm (located in Beshkerem county near Kashgar) [Fig. 4], also of the Qarakhanid dynasty. According to local legend, Büwi Märyäm was a sister of Ali Arslan Khan, and grand-daughter of Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan, founder of the Qarakhanid dynasty.



Fig. 5. The Hazriti Beg mazar, Yengisar, Kashgar prefecture.

Most mazars in Xinjiang are concentrated in the south and east, although there are some in the north, in the Ili River valley. The distribution of the mazars is uneven; some mazars are situated in traffic hubs and densely populated areas, while others are in remote areas [Fig. 5]. Especially in the Khotan area some mazars are located on the edges of the Taklamakan Desert or even farther out in the desert. Although such mazars are far from any community, their surroundings are scenic, with a water source and shady trees, and mosques, hanikas, inns, and similar affiliated constructions.

Travel on the ancient Silk Road meant following paths which led from one oasis to another in order to reach a remote destination, the mazars often serving as road markers. Between the oases are either the barren gobi, mountainous paths or dense forests. In the southern parts of Xinjiang, many mazars have

the name of *langar* which literally means “station” or “inn” in Uighur. Mazars located at traffic hubs and way-stations usually have caretakers and adjoining inns and are situated in quiet and elegant surroundings with springs and trees. While resting there, travelers can recover from the weariness of the journey and can also pray at the nearby mazars for blessings and protection for the remainder of their trip.

However, most mazars do not have caretakers or inns to shelter the travelers, but rather are mainly burial sites even if the sites of some mazars are not really suited for burials. They may be marked by piled up stones or earth and the usual mazar sign of poles with colorful flags on them. On the poles and the trees near the mazar will be found many strips of cloth, and on the graves will be placed the horns of cows or sheep [Fig. 6].

The geographical location and form of such mazars suggest that they have the obvious characteristics of the shamanist *obo*. Sacrificial activity at an *obo* is an integral part of shamanist religious rituals, and played a very important role in the religious life of the ancient nomadic peoples of northern China. With the decline of shamanism and its absorption into Lamaist religious ritual among the Mongolian and Yugu nationalities, the *obo* has gradually lost its original significance and is retained merely as a symbol of the sacred ground for sacrifices. However, for the Uighurs, probably in conjunction with the concept of worshiping saints in Islam, in certain sacrificial rituals the *obo* continues to play a role in mazars. Indeed, there is much evidence

to suggest that the shrine tradition is not purely Islamic but has roots in a variety of pre-Islamic beliefs and practices (Dawuti 2001). Many shrines are named after animals and plants, such as Üjmä (Mulberry) mazar, and Ghaz (Goose) mazar.

Some sites of pilgrimage were also formerly Buddhist sites of worship (Dawuti 2001). It is well known that after the advent of Islam, in Central Asia and other regions local Buddhist and Zoroastrian temples and Chris-



Fig. 6. Offerings at the Akhterek Khojam mazar in Pichan, Turpan. Photo © Zulpiye Zumratshah.

Fig. 7. The Toyoq mazar near Turpan.

tian churches were converted into mosques. However, it was rare that Buddhist temples and caves be transformed into Islamic sacred ground such as mazars. Some mazars which we can document today are near the locations of Buddhist sacred sites recorded by Buddhist monks such Faxian (early 5th century) and Xuanzang (7th century). When Aurel Stein was looking for Buddhist ruins in Khotan, he first looked for local mazars. He believed that if one wanted to look for ancient Buddhist or Hindu holy sites, all he needed to do was to look for an Islamic mausoleum (Stein 1994, p. 129; 1904, pp. 180-181).

An example is Toyoq mazar near Turpan [Fig. 7]. The Toyoq Ravine was one of the important holy lands of Buddhism and Manichaeism before the advent of Islam. Not far from the eastern side of the mazar and on the left bank of the stream are the famous Toyoq Thousand Buddha Caves. The ninety-four caves contain some of the earliest and most significant Buddhist murals in the Turpan area and are the location of important discoveries of early Buddhist manuscripts. Worship at the mazar here centers on a cave as it does in Khotan's Kokhmarim (Snake Mountain) mazar, where people go to pray for rain [Figs. 8 and 9].⁴ The local population com-



bined local history and custom with the legend of the Seven Sleepers (*Ashāb al-kaḥf*) in order to transform the Buddhist holy land into an Islamic one and in the process greatly increase the influence of the mazar.

Even before the advent of Islam, the worship of saints was central to the religious system of the local people, because Buddhism, in which their world outlook was anchored, began with the worship of a holy one. Buddhists not only worshipped the saint himself but also worshipped any holy article connected with him — his remains, articles that had been used by him, and so on. In addition, places which had once housed the holy one or any of the saints, individual buildings, the places to which they traveled, bushes and groves, trees, etc., are all revered by devotees. Analogous to this phe-

Figs. 8 (below) and 9 (right). The cave and offerings at the Kokhmarim mazar near Khotan.



nomenon of saint worship are local beliefs in ancestor worship.

The activities at mazars not only adapted their form and content from Buddhism but also adapted the form of the offerings. Excavation of Xinjiang Buddhist ruins has uncovered small flags, strips of cloth, copper coins and other items left by worshippers as offerings. To pray to the gods for their protection, the devout believers placed such offerings in the base of the stupas or nearby, and also offered oil to light the lamps of the temple. Similar forms of offerings are commonly seen in mazar worship, where flags or strips of cloth hung near or on burial sites to mark Islamic sacred ground have become symbols of mazars in the southern parts of Xinjiang [Fig. 9, previous page]. The offerings and ritual practice will be discussed in greater detail below.

Even the architecture of the mazars may reflect the influence of Buddhism. The most prominent feature of mazar architecture of Central Asia, Xinjiang, and Turkey is the domed top and gumbaz, and most of the exterior of the construction is carved with niche-like decoration [Fig. 10]. The most likely source for these architectural forms is the Buddhist stupa. However, Buddhist architecture has considerable regional variation in Uighur territory, where the Gandharan and Bamiyan styles were of particular importance. Mazar architecture in its turn displays regional variations and changed over time, adapting the styles of local ancestral graves and temples to create a new synthesis.

Apart from the connection of mazar location and worship with pre-Islamic Buddhist traditions, many scholars have emphasized the importance of Shi'a religious practices among the Sunni Uighurs. After the advent of Islam, Shi'ite worship of saints was rapidly accepted by the Uighur people, and consequently many pseudo-saint mazars appeared, a phenomenon closely related to the local people's traditions. Almost every county in the Khotan region boasts tombs of one or another of the twelve Shi'ite imams, who historically never came close to Xinjiang. There are many mazars which are worshiped mainly because a certain saint had stopped there for a rest. Some mazars even

have rocks with symbolic footprints. The worship of a saint's footprints was especially popular in Buddhism.

The calendar of mazar visitation

In the southern part of Xinjiang most villages have a mazar, and the bigger mazars usually have an attached mosque. In the villages, people usually pray at the mazar mosques on the two important traditional Islamic holidays a year. On the 17th and 27th day of the month of Ramadan, people will go to the nearby mazars to pray through the night. Following longstanding tradition, many Muslims go to the mazars



Fig. 10. The Habib Ejem mazar in Atush.

to pray on the 15th day of the 8th month according to the Islamic calendar, the month of Barat, which means Atonement. On that day, which falls before the month of Ramadan, Muslims pray to Allah that He forgive the sins which they have committed in the past year; angels in heaven write down the charitable and sinful doings of the people on earth. In the evening children will hold a lighted gourd lamp hung from a pole, singing Ramadan songs in a parade or singing songs while begging from door to door. Some will pour oil into a gourd lamp, light it, and hang it on a tree near the mazar where they gather for prayers. The most influential mazar activity is called the Ordam, which is held in the month of Barat and on the day of Ashura. Ashura falls on the 10th day of the month of Muharram, according to the Islamic calendar. On that day the Shi'ite Muslims remember the

martyrdom of Hussein in the battle of Karbala. And Ordam is remembered for the martyrdom of the Qarakhanid general, Ali Arslan Khan, in the battle with the Khotan Buddhists.

Aside from special occasions, more people than usual go to the mazars to worship on Thursdays. For example, major mazar activities of the Khotan area are held on Thursdays. Many people gather at the mazars for activities that day, stay overnight, and then participate in the mazar mosque worship on Friday before returning home. According to legend, Thursday is a day of rest in Paradise; so all the souls of the buried dead return to their resting place on earth that day to hear the prayers and supplications of the people. The worshippers can pray directly to the dead, thus assuring that their prayers will be answered (Ma 1983).

While some Uighur visits to mazars take place according to a regular calendar of important dates, there are also irregularly scheduled visits for important events or personal needs [Fig. 11]. My data indicate that the mazar activities of the Khotan and Kashgar areas are of the former kind while those of the Turpan and Kumul areas belong to the latter. Given the deep roots of mazar locations in popular tradition, an interesting question concerns why there has developed a tradition of fixed itineraries of worship at certain mazars. There are two major "circuits," one centered around Kashgar, the other around Khotan. Each year, at fixed dates, people worship in sequence at mazars which are mutually connected along the route. Indeed, because of its many mazars and the prominence of the rituals at them, Khotan is sometimes referred to as the "Holy Land" [Fig. 12]. The mazar activities of Khotan are connected specifically with local seasonal changes and are usually held between the months of March and October.



Fig. 12. The Imam Asim mazar in Khotan.

Before the 1950s, the majority of the Uighurs in the Kashgar region participated in large-scale mazar visiting activities such as the *Hez-*



Fig. 11. Pilgrims praying at a mazar.

ret seylysi at the Apak Khoja mazar in the city of Kashgar and the *Ishqol seylysi* at the Uchtur Halipe mazar of Yarkand County. Such activities, usually held in Spring and Autumn, were mass gatherings of people to pray for good fortune and protection from disaster, for favorable weather, and also for a bumper harvest.

Prior to the advent of Islam, regular and fixed dates for sacrificial activities and prayer rituals had already existed amongst the Uighurs (Geng and Ayup, 1980). So it is reasonable to assume that the timing of mazar visits not only manifests the different Islamic memorial activities, but also would have a close connection with local primitive religious activities. Whether there may also be a connection with patterns of pre-Islamic Buddhist pilgrimage is an interesting question deserving of further study. Quite apart from any specific religious tradition and practice, such activities also express the people's wishes in life, in combination with their physical and psychological need for entertainment, leisure, and relaxation.

The offerings at mazars and their significance

In Uighur folk belief, many material objects are used to express ideas; there are specific regional characteristics, all of which have symbolic meanings. The use of symbolic material things to give expression to people's various needs and wishes is especially evident in Uighur mazar worship. Several important questions arise in examining this phenomenon: What is the origin of these symbolic objects? What kind of cultural data can they impart? And what are their regional characteristics? To answer these questions, let us examine the objects which are placed around the mazars, either as expressions of faith or with a utilitarian purpose.



Fig. 13. Ritual offerings at a mazar.

And what are their regional characteristics? To answer these questions, let us examine the objects which are placed around the mazars, either as expressions of faith or with a utilitarian purpose.

One of the most conspicuous phenomena of the mazar is the different sacrificial offerings which are placed around it. Some of these objects have become the symbols, or markers, of certain local Islamic sacred places, the mazars. Some objects express the wishes of the pilgrims or are the expressions of gratitude for prayers answered, while other objects are expressions of the continuation of traditional rituals. These sacrificial offerings are objects hanging on poles and objects with figurative meanings, such as a cradle, a piece of stoneware, a lantern, a doll, and others. To hang some sacrificial offerings on poles erected around a mazar is a custom most commonly found in the Khotan area of Xinjiang [Fig. 13; also Fig. 9 above]. It also exists in different degrees in the neighboring areas of Kashgar, but is hardly ever seen in the eastern or northern parts of Xinjiang.

In Khotan, there are generally three different types of mazar structures: 1) a simply built mazar inside a flat-roofed house, with the poles erected outside the house; 2) a mazar surrounded by a wall or a fence, with the poles erected inside the wall or fence (or the sacrificial offerings hanging from the wall or fence); 3) a mazar constructed of earth to form a distinct hill or a sand dune surrounded by a barren landscape. In this third type, poles for hanging the sacrificial offerings are erected next to the mazar.

The objects hung from such poles are varied, including strips of cloth, banners, chicken or bird heads, tails of a sheep, cow or horse, ram and cow horns, or a sheep or chicken that is stuffed with hay, carved wooden decorations, and triangles sewn with colored cloth and filled with cotton or hay and strung together. The number of erected poles and selection of objects will differ at different mazars. If there are trees around the mazar, one or more of the trees may be viewed as "sacred" and used instead of a pole to hang the various offerings [Fig. 14, facing page]. The most expressive of the hanging objects is the sheep or chicken which is stuffed with hay. From afar, it seems that the object is flying in the air. According to the local inhabitants, immediately after a religious ritual at the mazar they will hang the skin, head, wool or tail of the sacrificed animal on a tree or on an erected pole, and place the head and horns of the animal on the mazar or on the wall or fence surrounding the mazar. It is more



Fig. 14. A "sacred" tree.

common to see flags, or banners strung on the erected pole or poles which surround the mazar or directly on the mazar itself [Fig 12 above; Fig. 15]. The flags are usually of bright, solid colors such as red, white, black, blue, or green. Many are edged with saw-toothed designs of very brightly contrasting colors: for example, a black flag might have white edging.

Fig. 15. Offering flags at the Qadam Jay mazar, Maralbeshi, Kashgar. Photo © Zulpiye Zumratshah.



If erecting the poles and hanging some of the objects on them are the efforts of the men, then the objects decorating the surroundings of the mazar are the artistic creations of the women. Among those making vows at the mazars are many women who want children. They pray before the mazar, pour their hearts out, tie strips on cloth on the erected poles or trees, embrace the "sacred tree" and scatter grain on the mazar, throw coins and agate in the spring near the mazar, light lanterns around the mazar and give alms in the hope that the holy one in the mazar will grant them their wish. The mazars known for granting children to the barren are especially sought after by women who long for offspring. In the Kulja area there is the custom of offering a simulated cradle to the mazar to pray for offspring [Fig. 16]. Women leave a symbolic doll in the cradle and put it near a mazar or hang it from a "sacred tree." This custom is rare in the southern parts of Xinjiang where there are mazars with names like Cradle Mother (*Böshük ana*). Local inhabitants think that objects from caves called Cradle Mother not only have the power to grant children to women, but also have the power to cure sickness and grant physical health and are especially effective for the healing of sick children. In southern Xinjiang, those praying for offspring frequently



Fig. 16. Miniature cradle with a "baby" in it, Sultan Uwayis mazar, Kulja. Photo © Tamar Mayer.

put a doll near the mazar [Fig. 17, next page]. Among the Uighurs there is a close connection between the belief in mazars which specifically grant fertility and the age-old belief in the "God of Reproduction" and "God of Protection" of pre-Islamic times (Dawuti, 2004).

The desire for a happy marriage is also a prominent reason for offering sacrifices at a mazar. In the Khotan and Kashgar regions we often



Fig. 17. Symbolic doll left at a mazar.

see symbolic stoves made with small pieces of stone or bricks and containing firewood, leaves and kindling. Placing at a mazar two pieces of stone which have been tied together expresses the wish of becoming a pair with someone whom the heart desires. A custom in Yengisar and Yarkand counties of

Kashgar is to make a small symbolic arrow and place it at a mazar in the hope that the arrow will hit the heart of one's beloved. Such customs which reflect the idea of "using similar behavior to achieve similar results" are to a great extent very much like a practice in witchcraft (voodoo).

The custom of offering sacrifices in mazar worship has very deep historical and cultural roots. Mazar worship can be traced back in history at least to the times of the Turk Khaganate. According to *Legends of the Turks*, recorded in *Zhou Shu* (annals of the Northern Zhou Dynasty, 557-581 CE) and *Sui Shu* (annals of the Sui Dynasty, 581-618 CE), after a Turk's death, the relatives of the deceased slaughter sheep and horses for sacrifices. "After the burial, stones are erected as markers. The number of stones depends on the number of people the deceased had killed during his lifetime. The heads of the sacrificed sheep and horses are hung on the stone pillars" (Wu 1991). The Uighur historical epic *Oghuznamä* records that at the hero's triumphal return from war, the cheering crowds welcomed him at the square where two poles had been erected. On one was hung a golden cock and tied a white sheep; on the other was hung a silver cock and tied a black sheep (Geng and Ayup 1980, p. 39). The scene bears a remarkable resemblance to the Khotan custom of hanging a chicken from a pole.

Obviously, the Uighur custom of hanging sacrificial objects from an erected pole is closely

connected with a custom of their Huihu ancestors and other nomadic tribes of the steppe who practiced shamanism. Erecting a pole on which to hang sacrificial objects is a legacy from shamanism which the Uighur people have embraced for a long time. The appearance of this custom is closely connected to the worship of sacred trees, the worship of Tengri and many other kinds of beliefs. Although these beliefs appeared in pre-Islamic times when the slaughtering of animals for sacrifice was forbidden by Buddhism, even in Khotan where Buddhism had a stronghold this custom was not eradicated. The fact that this custom has continued to the present demonstrates that the dissemination and acceptance of foreign religions very much depends on the degree to which they accommodate local beliefs which are maintained even in the face of substantial pressure to accept an alien culture.

Another kind of offering at shrines is a flag [Fig. 18]. According to local inhabitants, the origin of the custom of erecting flag poles can be connected with the religious wars of the Qarakhanid Dynasty, with the flags seen to symbolize the military banners of its army. The custom of erecting flag poles is quite common in Kho-



Fig. 18. Flag at Qadam Jay mazar, Maralbeshi, Kashgar. Photo © Zulpiye Zumratshah.

tan and the Ordam Mazar of the Kashgar area — that is, the main battlegrounds where the Qarakhanid army fought the infidels of Khotan. In Islam, those martyred in a holy war are accorded very high positions. When members of the Qarakhanid army died in battle, it was pos-

sible that they were buried locally, and a flag which represented their army was erected on their burial ground as a symbol of respect for the dead and as a grave marker for the martyrs.

It is quite common for the believers in shamanism, Buddhism and Islam to mark a holy place with flags. The believers in shamanism and Lamaism among the Mongols, Yugu and Tibetans hang flags at obos and as sacrificial offerings in other activities. Archaeologists working on the Buddhist ruins of Xinjiang have uncovered many triangular banner head pieces left behind by pilgrims who had paid visits to former Buddhist holy sites.

Conclusion

In short, analysis of the various sacrificial offerings at the mazars demonstrates that mazar worship of the Uighurs is not merely an Islamic religious activity. Studying it from another point of view shows that it is a blend of many different cultures and religions, the most important influence being that of shamanism. Although the Uighurs had at different times embraced Buddhism, Manichaeism, Eastern Christianity and Islam, and there were great differences between these religions and shamanism, shamanism had always remained a part of Uighur life and customs. Its undiminished vitality is especially evident in the obo-like forms of many mazars and in the rituals of mazar worship involving sacrificial objects hanging from poles. Belief in shamanism and witchcraft (voodoo) transcends time. It has continued throughout history down to the present. Later, "artificial" religions such as Buddhism, Islam and others, all treated shamanism with tolerance; in fact, those religions even blended their own beliefs with shamanism in order to facilitate the spread of their own beliefs among the local people.

Prior to the advent of Islam into Central Asia, including Xinjiang, idol worship was a well-established religious tradition. Therefore, it was difficult for the converts to Islam to accept the worship of an abstract, formless concept of Allah. When their existing idols (Buddhist statues) were destroyed and the temples were torn down, they searched in their traditional culture for something that would make Islam more concrete and nearer to their former belief, and yet not clash with Islam. Thus they turned their attention to the mausolea of their ancestors.

Ancestor worship has always been an important part of the shamanist belief in spirits which was either passed down individually or in combination with other religious forms. In various pre-Islamic religions, a belief that the soul does not die combined with the social custom of praying to the ancestors for blessings. After the conversion to Islam, the people combined the worship of Islamic Shi'ite saints with the local ancestral veneration and thus created a mazar worship with local characteristics. The concept of the worship of saints in Buddhism and other religions, its form, and rituals of offering helped to promote the integration of mazar worship into the practices of the new faith.

According to Islamic belief, worshipping any person other than God is unacceptable; there is no intermediary between man and God. Muslims must express their hopes, requests, and confessions directly to God. In Islamic law the creation of grand tombs, the worshipping of graves, and the holding of large ceremonies in graveyards is forbidden. For this reason the original Arabic meaning of the word *mazaret* is "a place that is visited," not "tomb of a saint" or "place of worship." Nonetheless, religious activities intended to meet one's needs are held at mazars in many Islamic countries. People believe those buried at mazars to be close to God, and think the dead will convey their hopes and requests to God. The formation of this concept of "saints" and "sages" in Islam is in fact related to comparable ideas in Buddhism, Christianity, and Judaism. After the formation of Islam, the creators, disseminators, and martyrs of Islam took on a saintly character. This is especially evident in the development of mazar beliefs among the Uighurs, a process in which Shi'ite and Sufi Islam played an important role.

About the author

Rahilä Dawut (Reyila Dawuti) is currently Director of the Center for Anthropology and Folklore and Professor at the School of Humanities at Xinjiang University. She received her PhD in folklore from Beijing Normal University in 1998; her research mainly focuses on the folklore and local Islamic rituals of Uighurs in Xinjiang. She has been a visiting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania (2003), Indiana University (2004), University of California, Berkeley (2007), and the University of Kent, Canterbury, UK (2009). The Annemarie Schimmel

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Notes

1. The Qarakhanid empire was established in the mid-9th century and lasted for 150 years. In 1041

the Khanate divided into a western and an eastern part. The western part occupied the territory between the Amu Darya in modern Uzbekistan eastwards to the Ferghana Basin, with the capital at Bukhara. The eastern part was ruled by Hasan Bughra and his descendants from Balasaghun, while Kashgar served as an important religious and cultural center. The Qarakhanid empire was the first Muslim empire of the Turkic peoples.

2. Satuq Bughra Khan is reputed to have been the first convert to Islam among the Central Asian Turkic peoples. His shrine is located three km. southwest of Atush city. For details on his mausoleum and cult, see Hamada 2001.

3. Ipar Khan is considered by many Uighurs to be a Uighur heroine. There are controversies around this historic figure. Chinese historians call her Xiang Fei, the "Fragrant Concubine" of the Manchu Emperor Qianlong. For a discussion of the way her history has been treated, her tomb and its political implications see Millward 1994 and Zarcone 1999.

4. This was a famous Buddhist site before Islam. Here too, Buddhist ruins can be seen near the shrine. For detailed discussion see Dawuti 2001.



The Mazar of the Seven Girls, Turpan.

