

# YUEZHI ON BACTRIAN EMBROIDERY FROM TEXTILES FOUND AT NOYON UUL, MONGOLIA

Sergey A. Yatsenko

*Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow*

The interrelationships of the Xiongnu and Yuezhi nomads of Central Asia as early as the 4<sup>th</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE were quite dramatic. They remained complex in subsequent centuries as well, judging from written sources and the nature of Bactrian "imports" found in the Xiongnu tombs of Mongolia and the region of Lake Baikal. The dominance of one of these peoples twice (in the middle of the second century BCE and later, during Vima Takto's reign in the 80s-90s of the first century CE) gave way to the domination of the other, with fortune smiling on the Yuezhi at the beginning and end of the rivalry.

This short article will concern only one aspect of Bactrian Yuezhi imports to Mongolia, the embroideries on wool textiles made at the turn of the era which depict anthropomorphic images. More precisely, we will focus on those examples which have been best preserved or even in a quite fragmentary state contain a range of important elements of costume. Some scholars have thought these textiles were made in China (Lubo-Lesnichenko 1994)<sup>1</sup> or, alternatively, in Syria or Palestine.<sup>2</sup> Some time ago a third provenance for their production was suggested – Bactria (see, e.g., Trever 1940; Rudenko 1962; Elikhina 2010, p. 156).

My interest is not the centers of production of the fabrics (a subject which is still disputed) but the place where the embroidery on them was done, which was often later and in a different region. It is easy to see that the details of the appearance of people depicted on the embroidery (the characteristic features of their faces, the small details of costume, and also the composition itself of the embroidery, its style) are not characteristic for China or Syria but have direct parallels precisely amongst the Yuezhi/Kushans of Bactria, who lived there beginning around 120 BCE (see, e.g., Yatsenko 2006, pp. 171, 195). It seems unlikely that these are imitations of Bactrian subject matter: the themes of such embroideries, it seems, were a rare or unique phenomenon, ethnically entirely specific, and thus could not have inspired a large series of conscious imitations in leading textile regions of the world. One can suppose that the anthropomorphic depictions on the textiles for the most part were ones obtained by the Xiongnu elite precisely from Bactria, and there can be little doubt but that the Xiongnu, at least to a minimal degree, selected the subject matter. Nataliia V.

Polos'mak believes that the embroidery on the fabrics made in the Near East was done on the territory of the Indo-Scythians in the Indus Valley (Polos'mak 2010). I have made a special study of the specific details of Indo-Scythian costume (Yatsenko 2001; 2006, pp. 192-97, Figs. 137-50) and the identification of Indo-Scythians on metalwork (Treister and Yatsenko 1998, pp. 61-66, Fig. 1). This comparative evidence shows that there is not a single detail of their costume which coincides with that known from the embroidery found at Noyon uul, the exception being a rare type of shoes [Fig. 4.11, p. 41 below].

Of greatest interest for us are six fragments which come from only three barrows in Noyon uul cemeteries on the northeastern border of Mongolia (Batsumber somon, Tuv aimag). They were found there in various years by Russian scholars. The unique preservation of textiles in this cemetery opens correspondingly unique possibilities for the study of imported fabrics. The fragments are as follows:

- 1-3) Three pieces of a carpet found recently in Barrow 31 by the expedition of N. V. Polos'mak (Polos'mak et al. 2009): a fabric 192 x 100 cm depicting a collective sacrificial ceremony and a fabric 133 x 100 cm. with a battle scene (Erdene-Ochir 2011, No. 386, pp. 256-9) [Figs. 1-3].<sup>3</sup>
- 4) A fragment 270 x 153 cm from the same Barrow 31 depicting ten individuals (Nos. 1-10), including a ruler sitting in an armchair (Erdene-Ochir 2011, No. 383)<sup>4</sup> [Fig. 5].
- Two fragments among the more than 100 examples of textiles from the early excavations in that necropolis during the Sixth Central Asian expedition of the famous Russian traveler and scientist, General Petr K. Kozlov (Rudenko 1962):
  - 5) A fragment of textile from Barrow 6 (1924) depicting three dismounted horsemen (Nos. 1-3) (Nowgorodowa 1980, Fig. 160; Erdene-Ochir 2011, No. 384) [Fig. 6.1];
  - 6) A fragment from Barrow 24 (1925) with a man's head (Erdene-Ochir 2011, No. 385) [Fig. 6.2].

In the decorative components of some textile fragments [Figs. 5 and 6.1] are obvious Hellenistic (Graeco-Bactrian) elements (vegetal and zoomorphic motifs of the borders below the given scenes, details of the poses



Figs. 1-3. Three textile fragments from Noyon uul Barrow 31. After: Erdene-Ochir 2011, pp. 256-59.

Noyon uul. Unfortunately, everywhere in the embroidery are regrettable lacunae; almost all the figures have been incompletely preserved. The most fragmentary depictions must be excluded from our purview in order to avoid mistakes.

We begin with the recently restored fragments 1-2 depicting the scene of a sacrificial ceremony, which includes more than 13 male figures. The carpet on which it was embroidered was displayed for the first time after its restoration in an exhibition in Ulaanbaatar in August 2011. This single composition today consists of two large pieces. On the first of them are six individuals [Fig. 1], on the second are seven standing or walking figures [Fig. 2]. There appears to have been an attempt in every case here to convey the individuality of the faces of those depicted. The action takes place in the open air (on a meadow or in a garden), amid flowers and a great many fluttering butterflies and bees.

in the line of the individual figures, etc.). This should not surprise us, as at the beginning of the Common Era in Bactria, judging from coins, there were still local Greek rulers, vassals of the Yuezhi (Rtveladze 2002, p. 232), and in the middle of the first century CE some local Greek jewelers worked for the future occupants of the Tillya-tepe cemetery (Yatsenko 2003, pp. 171-2).

We will attempt to elucidate what is new in the external appearance of the pre-imperial Bactrian Yuezhi on the examples of textiles which have survived from

Let us look first at the second piece [Fig. 2], where the figures are better preserved. Here six of the seven men (Nos. 7–12) move toward a small altar with a fire, two of them looking back in the direction from which they came. On the other side of the altar they are met by one more individual (No. 13). Two of the participants in the ceremony lead toward the altar for consecration (?) a saddled horse, and the man walking at the head of this group holds over the altar a miniature footed vase.<sup>5</sup> In their external appearance the men share many features. They all have a large head, wide face (with a rounded or approximately rectangular form) and a massive neck, but narrow shoulders and waist. This last feature clearly reflects local aesthetic norms. In the later imperial period, waists of the Kushans are not stressed (Yatsenko 2006, p. 186). The nose is straight with wide wings; the arched eyebrows are large but drawn with fine lines.

The basic color gamma of the depictions is a combination of red/rose and white, which is characteristic for the Bactrian Yuezhi (Ibid., p. 184).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, there is a definite symmetry of these two basic colors. Thus, if an individual has a red caftan, then his shoes are also red but he has white trousers and a white belt, and, on the other hand, if he has a white caftan and shoes, the trousers and belt are red. Individuals in a “civilian” costume (that is, not armor) alternate the color of the basic upper body clothing in a strict rhythm (first white, then red).

All the figures have the same hair style — short, curly reddish hair without a part, longer on the sides (the lock at the temples bends toward the cheek). In the absence of beards, thin moustaches are always emphasized (often slightly drooping, less frequently almost horizontal) [Fig. 4.1] All this is entirely typical for other depictions of Yuezhi. Beards (even short ones) were rare even among the later imperial Kushans (Ibid., p. 183). Moreover, in the scenes both of sacrificial offerings and battles on one and the same carpet, the Yuezhi are bare-

headed (the first in the row of those participants in the ritual moving toward the altar has a decoration on his forehead — a narrow band or diadem), which underscores the special status of these situations. Understandably, in real life in hot Bactria it would be impossible to get by without covering one’s head. The unusual situation in the given scene is emphasized as well by the special role of the left hand of many of the men (raised in the gesture of adoration by individual No. 5; extended forward with an open palm by Nos. 6 and 8; with a finger pointing forward by No. 9; raised and touching the lip of No. 10). It is precisely in this hand that No. 12 holds the sacrificial goblet before the altar. The belt is usually narrow, attached to the waist by a buckle in the shape of an elongated rectangle (gilded or made of gold?; cf. Hiers 1997, No. 63). At the left side hangs a sword, attached to the belt by a thin but clearly visible strap. Nos. 4, 8–9, and 11–12 have an additional ribbon hanging from the right side of the belt with two triangular projections on each of

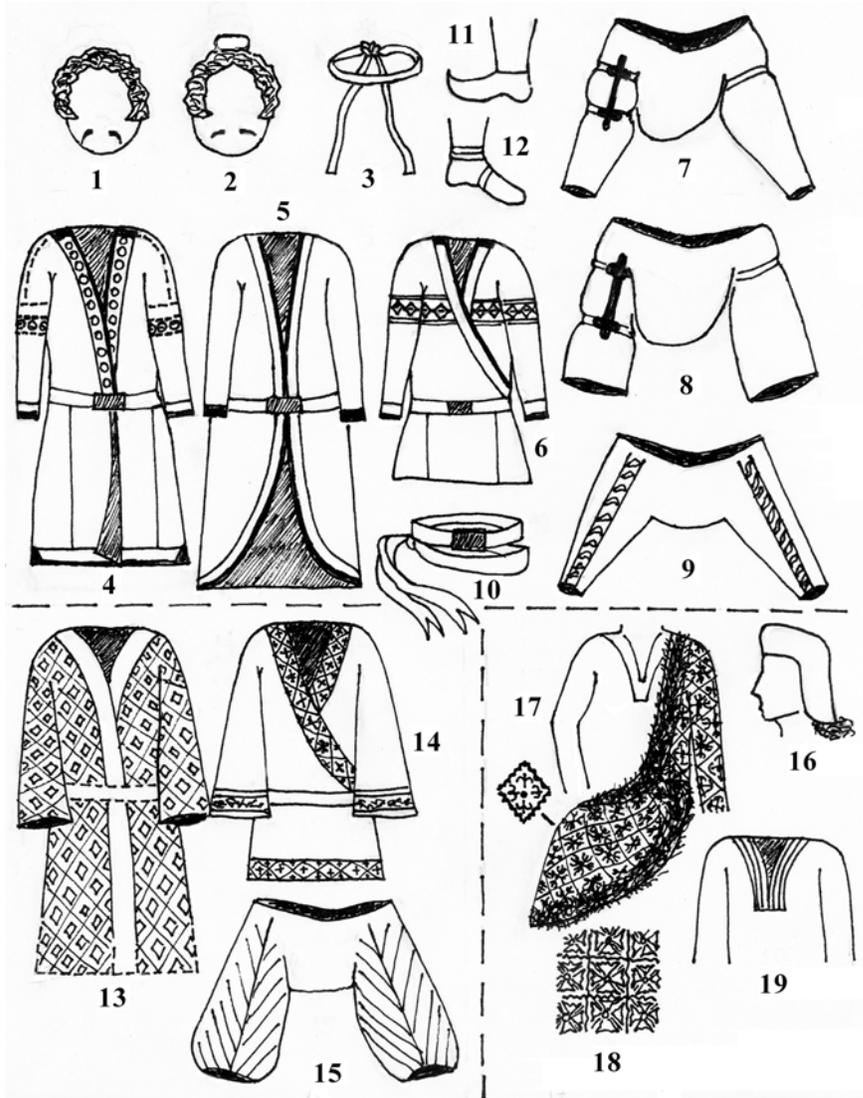


Fig. 4. Elements of costume of individuals on embroideries of Noyon uul: 1-12), sacrifice scene of Barrow 31 (2009); 13-15), scene with seated ruler, Barrow 31 (2009); 16-19), from Barrow 6 (1924).

the ends [Fig. 4.10]. Footwear (the exception being on No. 13) is entirely of one type – that is, shoes without a heel, with a rounded toe, fastened by a strap over the upper edge and passing under the arch of the sole (this is most clearly visible on No. 12) [Fig. 4.12]. The men (except for those who stand at the altar) are armed: usually with a short dagger, tied with a strap to the trousers at the right hip, and long narrow swords. In addition, the men numbered 4 and 7–9 hold spears in their hands or on the shoulder.

The clothes worn by the men include either short (above knee-height) caftans that open in the front but have a wide flap folded over to the left; or long coats (extending to the middle of the shins) with linings of a different color<sup>7</sup> and whose flaps are secured by a belt and, apparently, two buttons above and below the waist. Both the caftans and coats have long sleeves. Such upper garments in part reflect the distinctive features of Bactrian Yuezhi clothes of the pre-imperial period. A feature in all of the depictions which also relates to the earlier stage of the development of that people is the absence of undergarments (shirts)<sup>8</sup> – that is, the caftans and long coats were worn on the bare body (cf. Yatsenko 2006, pp. 178–9). This fact apparently is to be connected historically at that early stage amongst many nomads with a deficit in thin, high-quality fabrics for undergarments and at the same time the universality of thick basic clothing (which was worn in all seasons of the year either with its rough side out or inside out). A specific feature of the clothes of all the figures is the narrow black border along the edges of breast, hem and cuffs.<sup>9</sup> Among other things, both the long coats and caftans have on the hem at the sides short (about 5 cm) slits with the same border. In the crotch of all the trousers is a large inserted panel, which noticeably sags at the bottom of the pelvis. The legs are quite wide and always tucked into the shoes [Fig. 4.7].

Figure No. 7 (who faces left toward the person who is speaking with him and gesticulating) wears a white long-sleeved coat, with rose-colored decoration of the breast and cuffs and bands of a red lining visible at the bottom. The red caftan of figure 8 in the upper part of the breast and upper sleeves is distinguished visually by a single horizontal band with a row of rhombs in it (an imitation of gold appliqué?) [Fig. 4.6]. A similar band of round appliqué on an identical red caftan can be seen on No. 3. This decorative element is so far unique for male clothing of the Iranian peoples of that time (it appears also in the scene with the seated ruler discussed below). The black band bordering the breast of the caftan widens at the collar (probably this is a narrow and short stand-up collar, as on Nos. 9 and 11–13; cf. on probable Bactrian Yuezhi, *Ibid.*, p. 178, Figs. 121.45; 122.38, 41). Figure 10, leading from its side the

consecrated horse with the saddle and parade harness in the direction of the altar (No. 11 leads it by the reins from in front), is attired in a long coat of mail down to the knees, from under which can be seen trousers. In his hairdo part of the locks are gathered into a small knot at the crown, as is completely normal for Bactrian Yuezhi (the same can be seen on No. 5) [Fig. 4.2] (*Ibid.*, Figs. 121.30; 124.1).

The appearance of figure 12, who leads the procession to the altar, is very interesting. First of all, he is the only one on whose head can be seen a narrow, white, diadem. As in other depictions of early Yuezhi, its two ends hang down in back [Fig. 4.3] (*Ibid.*, p. 178); however, here the ends are longer than normal. Only on this individual do the main elements of costume (clothes and trousers, shoes) have various shades of red (crimson and rose). The decoration of his long red coat with its white lining also deserves attention [Fig. 4.4]. First of all, it has sizeable inserts of a different (rose) color which widen the hem. Secondly, on the shoulder seam and on the forearm it is decorated with lines consisting apparently of small gold cylinders strung on a narrow strap, something which is common for the costume of the elite Iranian peoples of the Parthian-Sarmatian period, among them the pre-imperial Yuezhi (for example, Tillya-tepe, grave No. 4 and a series of other depictions) (*Ibid.*, pp. 176, 210, Figs. 114.1, 121.51). Moreover, the upper arms and breast of the coat are decorated with a band of round plaques. It is significant that on that individual (as on the red caftan of No. 8), an important role in the decoration is played by the combination on one and the same object of clothing of two panels of darker and lighter shades. It seems unlikely we should attribute this feature only to the artistic devices of the embroidery: on the coat, the light insertion is on the back, on the trousers on the front. To consider this accidental would be naive, since in many archaic societies the combination of differently colored left and right or rear and front halves of major items of clothing was connected, among other things, with the symbolism of Universe zones, the juxtaposition of opposing forces (see striking examples in the clothing of Siberian shamans: Burykin 2007, p. 126).

Finally, an entirely distinct role in the given scene is played by the costume of the person who stands on the other side of the altar from the worshippers – probably the priest (figure 13), whose image unfortunately is less well preserved especially in its central part. It is distinguished, first of all, by the predominance of the sacral white color, something which has been documented before for the priests of Yuezhi Bactria (Yatsenko 2006, p. 184). Here only some details of the trim (of the trousers and breast of the long coat) are red. It is difficult to say whether the figure is armed

(it is possible that a quiver hangs down on the left). He seems to be holding something over the altar in his right hand, which is raised and clenched in a fist. His long coat (even longer than that on Nos. 7 and 12) is not wrapped over and, apparently, is secured only by a belt [Fig. 4.5]. It is clearly sewn of thick cloth or felt (since the long, tapered hems do not sag); these hems are markedly raked back. To date there are no precise analogies to this clothing. However, it was popular among many peoples of Transoxiana in the earlier Achaemenid period and also was among the Persians an important element of the visual stereotype of a "man from Transoxiana" (Yatsenko 2011, Figs. 1-5). The use of such a dated cut is natural for clothes with ritual functions, such as was, apparently, the coat of the priest. On the front of each leg of the white trousers is a decorative vertical red band, on which has been embroidered a row some kind of stylized figures of a single type, possibly zoomorphic [Fig. 4.9]. The white shoes have pointed and slightly bent tips [Fig. 4.11], something not known amongst the Yuezhi of Bactria but documented for their neighbors, the Indo-Scythians of Gandhara, who had quickly been absorbed into the Kushan Empire (Yatsenko 2006, Fig. 137.56-7).

Let us turn now to the less well preserved fragment 1 of the same composition with the processing and standing donors (Erdene-Ochir 2011, No. 386.1) [Fig. 1], this one depicting individuals Nos. 1-6. Apparently it was originally attached to the left of the fragment described earlier and forms its beginning. However, between the pieces is, apparently, a small lacuna (from an "unpreserved" soldier, presumably wearing a red caftan, all that remains is one hand at the torso of figure 7). Starting at the left, apparently, were originally placed two pairs of men facing each other, each pair with the symmetrical juxtaposition of white and red elements of costume. The leftmost figure is now missing; the right figure (No. 1) in that first pair is preserved only from the stomach to the heels. Between the first and the second (the better preserved) pair there was apparently no altar (compare the pair comprising Nos. 12 and 13), as a flower has been embroidered growing on the ground between them. The costume and hairdos of the figures depicted here are of the same type. I will focus only on a few specific details.

There is a vertical band of decoration on the front of the red trousers of Nos. 4 and 6; it is decorated with a row of similar appliquéés. Furthermore, the legs widen markedly at the bottom [Fig. 4.8]. The figures in white trousers and red upper clothing (on No. 3 a caftan; on No. 5 a long coat) have the visually identical horizontal bands of decoration on the upper sleeves and breast, decorated with round plaques. No. 5 has

a hairdo with a knot on the crown, similar to that already described for No. 10.

Yet another part (fragment 3) of this same carpet/hanging depicts a battle scene, from which have been preserved only four figures (numbered 1-4) of foot soldiers fighting with swords (Ibid., No. 386.2) [Fig. 3]. Unfortunately other images on either side of them have not been preserved. Here "ours," as in other similar group scenes in the art of the Iranian peoples, are clearly those on the left (Nos. 1 and 3), and the enemies on the right (Nos. 2 and 4) (Yatsenko 2000). On the left, struck by the enemy, a Yuezhi man in armor falls and drops his sword. More important is the other Bactrian soldier (No. 3, fortunately preserved almost entirely), who is attacking an enemy defended by a large shield with a bold design of concentric rhombs. The appearance of his clothing, hairdo and armament is the same as on the soldiers in the previous scene (Nos. 4, 7-9, and 11-12). He has a white caftan and shoes, red trousers and belt. The caftan of the hero is decorated on the breast and on the cuffs by red cloth with a design of rhomboids having a dot in the center. The net-like ornament of the fabric (including the net of the rhombs with the dot) was popular among the Bactrian Yuezhi, judging from other depictions (Yatsenko 2006, Figs. 121.47, 53; 122.41; 123.16; 124.1), and after the collapse of the Empire is documented as well by actual remnants of such cloth (from the "Kurgan" in Old Termez: Maitdinova 1996, Figs. 8-11). On the upper part of the sleeves we see a band of the same red cloth, decorated with round appliquéés. The trousers are decorated with a vertical stripe down the front of each leg.

No less interesting is the appearance of the enemies. Thanks to a whole series of specific details we can establish the ethnic identity of these opponents. First of all, their clothes are not open in the front; moreover, the separately attached hem in both cases is made of cloth with rather wide vertical stripes. Secondly, we see on the left one of them (No. 2) a head covering (in the form of a low cylinder of cloth decorated by two rows of circles). Thirdly, unlike the Yuezhi, they sport a small, thick beard, closely trimmed, somewhat longer on the sides, with medium-sized moustaches. All these elements indeed are found in the costume of only one ethnos of that time, one moreover a neighbor of the Bactrians — the Sogdians (cf. Yatsenko 2006, Figs. 152.6, 13-14; 153.9), the eastern part of whose territory rapidly came under the control of the Yuezhi-Kushans.

Yet another important scene is on fragment 4 found in the same year 2009 [Fig. 5, next page], one which likewise appears to be missing its edges. Unfortunately, of the 10 male figures shown on it only two (Nos. 4

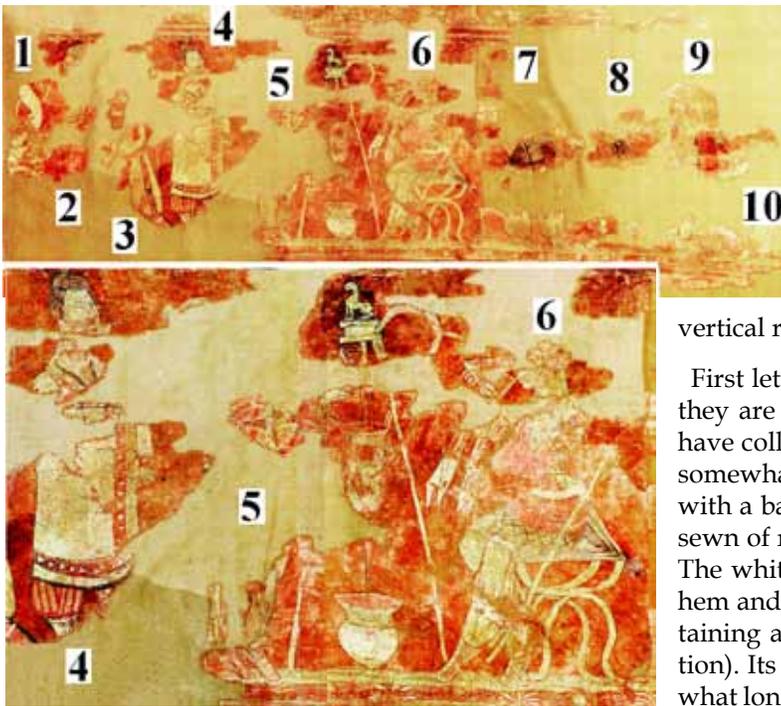


Fig. 5. Fragment 4 from textile found in Noyon uul Barrow 31. After: Erdene-Ochir 2011, pp. 252–53.

deep wrap (Nos. 3 and 5–7) and the longer coats, decorated with a wide band along the breast (Nos. 2, 4, 8 and 10 [?]). The trousers, tucked into the shoes, vary in decoration: monotone (Nos. 5–7), sewn of yellowish (?) cloth with vertical red stripes (No. 4) [Fig. 4.15]; white trousers with a vertical red stripe on the front of the legs (No. 3).

First let us look at the figures in the long coats (here they are the ones more fully preserved). These coats have collars with oblique ends. The coat of No. 2 has somewhat flaring sleeves (decorated along the edge with a band having a row of round appliqués) and is sewn of red cloth decorated with rows of small rings. The white coat of No. 4 is trimmed along the breast, hem and the edge of the sleeves with a red band containing a row of ivy fronds (a Graeco-Bactrian tradition). Its sleeves, judging from the left one, are somewhat longer than the arms. Moreover, as with the long coat of figure 5 in the scene of the sacrificial offering, on the breast and the upper part of the sleeves is a horizontal red band containing a row of some kind of small appliqués. On No. 8 the fabric of the coat is covered with a net of large concentric rhombs and a broad red border on the breast. The sleeves, which have some kind of (vegetal?) embroidery, markedly widen at the edges [Fig. 4.13].

Among the figures wearing caftans with a deep wrap, the ruler seated on the throne is distinctive. His red caftan is decorated with a band of the already familiar net of rhombs [Fig. 4.14]. The belt buckle is fastened on the left side, not in the center of the stomach. On figure No. 9, the caftan has a very wide red band along the breast and somewhat flaring sleeves.

Overall the hairdo and costuming of the figures – especially, as described earlier, those wearing long coats which are unknown amongst the Parthians, Sogdians, Chorasmians or Indo-Scythians – provide convincing evidence that here also are depicted Bactrian-Yuezhi men.

One additional important motif is embroidered on fragment 5, the fabric found in 1924 [Fig. 6.1]. This is the depictions of dismounted horsemen (three of them preserved) standing behind their horses and holding them by the reins. Unfortunately all three figures, which are depicted turned in a three-quarter pose toward the viewer, are fragmentary. Apart from damage, because of the design of the composition, to a considerable degree they are hidden by the bodies of their horses (which are, in the given instance, the more

and 6, which have reddish hair) are largely intact, the others largely fragmentary. In the left corner is embroidered a god or ruler (No. 1) sitting with legs folded in Turkish style on some kind of elevated platform; an adorant or supplicant (No. 2) bends toward him with a raised hand. Next, three rather badly preserved figures (Nos. 3–5) process from left to right toward a ruler seated on a folding chair. Between them and the ruler is an interesting object, its function, apparently, similar to that of a still.<sup>10</sup> Directly in front of this object sits the ruler with a sword, carefully holding to his mouth with the aid of a special ribbon a cup with a hot or holy drink. To the right is attached a piece of cloth with an additional composition of four figures (Nos. 7–10, of whom are preserved only the lower parts of the torsos and the case of No. 10 only the lower part of one leg). Half of them are turned to the right (alternately, they either have both legs turned to the right or the toes pointed outward to each side). Their upper clothes are decorated in each case individually. All they have in common is white shoes with rounded toes (on Nos. 5 and 6 to the right, around the still, the shoes are red, corresponding, as in the previous composition, to the color of the clothes). The face and hairdo of the ruler sitting in the chair looks like that on the previous carpet. Only in the case of individual No. 4 is the face more elongated and the eyes smaller in size.

Now let us look at specific details of the costume of these figures. As on the carpet previously described, overall the clothing has a red-white color combination, and the upper garment of all of them is worn open. This is the already familiar short caftans with a

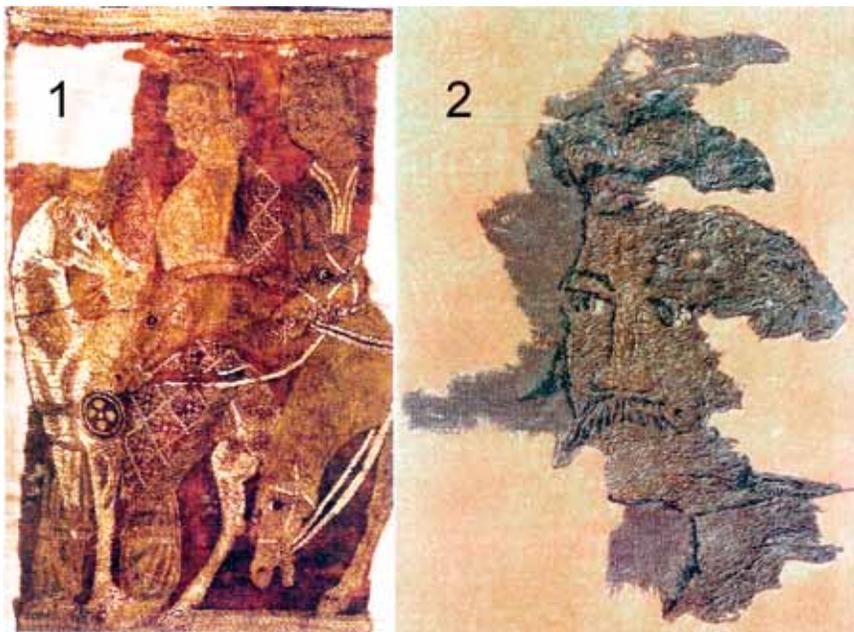


Fig 6. (1) Textile fragment from Noyon uul Barrow 6. (2) Fragment from Noyon uul barrow no. 24. After: Erdene-Ochir 2011: 254–55.

important figures!). The legs of the men are extremely elongated. They have neither beards or moustaches.

The head of the left figure (No. 1) is missing. He wears a short caftan with brown (possibly fur) trim along the breast. The fabric of this garment is entirely covered with a net of large rhombs, in each of which is a flower with four petals [Fig. 4.18]. The man has trousers with wide legs, tucked into shoes; below the knees they are decorated by a horizontal band. Both legs on this fragment belong to this individual. The two other personages do not really have legs in the embroidery on account of the sketchiness and stylistic conventions of the composition.

On the head of the central figure (No. 2) (shown in profile) is a low flat headdress with a narrow projection down the back (cf. for Bactrian Yuezhi: Yatsenko 2006, Figs. 123.26, 121.24). From under it in back wavy hair extends down to the base of the neck. The upper garment is a long, solid coat, worn in a manner common in Central Asia — for the warm season or if necessary for the greater freedom of the right arm, it is dropped off the right shoulder, and its lower part is wound around the waist. It also has thick brown (fur?) trim along the breast. The fabric is also decorated all over with a design of a net of rhombs, whose decoration differs from that in the rhombs on No. 1. Here extending inward from each point of every rhomb is a cross, the ends of whose bar curve in the form of a trefoil [Fig. 4.17]. Large openwork decorations made of gold foil and with such a design are known as well from the Parthian state in that period (Pfrommer 1993, p. 213, No. 118). Such a decorative motif is preserved down to our own day, for example, in

only a shirt with a collar of the type just described, with a wide band of decoration [Fig. 4.19].

Finally, the small fragment 6 from the excavations of 1925 depicts only a male head [Fig. 6.2]. It has the same hairdo and type of face that is already familiar to us from the description of the carpet with the scene of ritual offering.

On the territory of the Xiongnu only two kinds of frequently discovered artifacts can be related to Bactrian wares: rather expensive carpets with various embroidered motifs, and inexpensive brass buckles (Miniaev 1976). How might one interpret what may seem at first glance to be such a strange combination of “imports”? Above all, it is clear these are not imports in the sense of trade objects. At the time when Zhang Qian arrived in Transoxiana, the Yuezhi in their new homeland still feared the Xiongnu and paid them tribute. A century later, in the period of the burials at Noyon uul, Bactria was still divided and the Xiongnu strong. I believe that we are dealing here with more or less regular gifts in the form of carpets, for whose packaging in bales were used straps secured by brass buckles. From Chinese information about booty seized by the Xiongnu it is clear that such carpets were second in importance only to cattle.

In general, the Bactrian-Yuezhi embroideries found far from Bactria in northern Mongolia supplement our information both about the appearance of that ethnos (unfortunately only its male members), as well as concerning certain aspects of everyday life, religious traditions and their interactions with their neighbors (with the Xiongnu, Sogdians and Greeks of Transoxiana). The style of the embroideries and the correla-

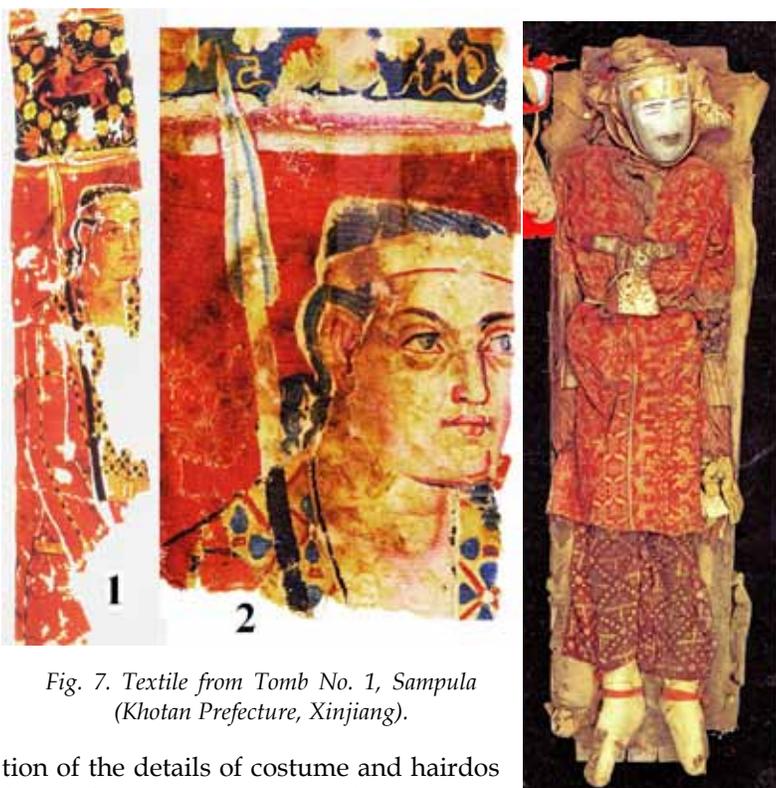


Fig. 7. Textile from Tomb No. 1, Sampula (Khotan Prefecture, Xinjiang).

tion of the details of costume and hairdos (Yatsenko 2006, Fig. 121.29, 51) permit one as well to count as one of the more valuable depictions of Bactrian Yuezhi the piece of fabric with the figure of a soldier holding a spear found in Tomb No. 1 of the Sampula I necropolis in the ancient Kingdom of Khotan in Xinjiang (first century CE) (Ursprünge 2007, p. 213) [Fig. 7].

All the main details of the costume of the merchant mummy of the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE in Tomb 15, discovered in 1995 in the Yingpan necropolis near Lake Lopnor, Eastern Xinjiang (Zhou and Li 1999; Li 1999) correlate precisely with the costume of the Kushans of the imperial period. The merchant was buried in the costume of his country, but with traces of Chinese cultural influence (Yatsenko 2006, pp. 186–7) [Fig. 8]. Here we have well preserved examples of the fabrics of the Kushan Empire, which bear witness to the long preservation of Graeco-Bactrian traditions.

*Note:* This article is an expanded version of a text prepared in September 2011 for a Collection in Memory of Academician Boris Litvinskii in the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences.

### About the author

A specialist on the culture of the ancient Iranian peoples, **Sergey Yatsenko** is a professor in the Russian State University for the Humanities. He has participated in archaeological expeditions in southern Russia (since 1974), southern Kazakhstan (2004–6), southern Siberia (2007–8) and Mongolia (since 2009). His main research concerns the ancient costume of Iranian-speaking and Turkic-speaking peoples and the

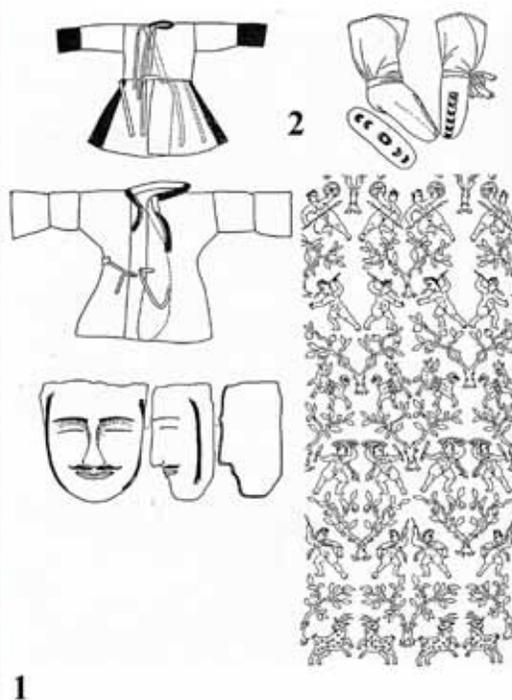


Fig. 8. Costume of a Kushan merchant of the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Yingpan, Eastern Xinjiang Tomb No. 15 (1995).

clan signs of Pre-Islamic Iranian nations. In that field he has published *The Costume of Ancient Eurasia (the Iranian-Speaking Peoples)* (2006) and *Tamga-Signs of the Iranian-Speaking Peoples of Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (2001) (both in Russian) and dozens of articles, some of them in English. He has also worked on mythological and epic scenes in ancient nomadic art, on the ethnic and political history of European nomads (Sarmatians and Alans). He is co-author with B. Ia. Staviiskii of a textbook, *Art and Culture of the Ancient Iranians* (2002). E-mail: <sergey\_yatsenko@mail.ru>.

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## Notes

1. This interpretation currently is supported by Tatiana N. Krupa (Khar’kiv University, Ukraine).

2. This interpretation is currently supported by Ol’ga V. Orfinskaia (Institute of Cultural Heritage, Moscow).

3. The individuals in the multi-figured compositions are numbered from left to right (i.e., in the normal order of the sequence of episodes in the art of the ancient Iranian peoples).

4. In this catalogue, the fragment of carpet has mistakenly been identified as coming from barrow 20, excavated in 2006 (see Polos’mak et al. 2011).

5. We see such a vase later in an analogous scene in Bactria/Tokharistan in a mural at the Buddhist monastery Adjinatepa. N. V. Polos’mak believes that this is not a vase but a large mushroom and sees in this scene a ritual of the preparation of sacred haoma (Polos’mak 2010). But there is no known credible depiction of mushrooms in connection with rituals of the Iranian peoples.

6. Today white textiles among the fabrics excavated at Noyon uul generally appear to be pale yellow.

7. The red long-sleeved coat has a white lining, and the white a red one.

8. A possible exception is figure No. 3.

9. Usually until very recently the peoples of Central Asia used a red border in such cases.

10. This is a large metal tripod, decorated at the top with a sculpted panther and under the center of which are attached vertically, one above the other, two large vessels, the upper of which is connected to the lower by a funnel. On the preparation of distilled liquor among the ancient nomads, see, e.g., Ochir-Goriaeva 2004.

– translated from Russian by Daniel C. Waugh