Arts of Asia Lecture Series Fall 2018  
Desert Encounters: Arts, Cultures and Kingdoms of the Silk Roads  
Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art  

Textiles Along the Silk Road  
Dr. Mariachiara Gasparini  
Visiting Assistant Professor of Asian Art History, UC Riverside (2018-19)  
September 28, 2018  

PEOPLE AND OTHER IMPORTANT DATES  
Chinese Dynasties  
Han Dynasty 202BCE-220CE  
Sui Dynasty 581-618  
Tang Dynasty 618-907  
Song Dynasty 960-1279  
Liao Dynasty 907-1125  
Jin Dynasty 1115-1234  
Yuan Dynasty 1271-1368 (part of the Mongol Empire 1206-1368)  

Iranian Empires  
Achaemenid Empire 550–330 BCE  
Parthian Empire 247 BCE–224CE  
Sasanian Empire 224–651CE  

Turkic people  
Uighurs established the Kindon of Qocho (Turfan) in the 9th cent. It was destroyed by the Mongols in the 14th cent.  

Viking Age: ca. 800-1066  
Battle of Talas 751: Arabs-Turks army against the Chinese. Talas River, Kyrgyzstan.  
An Lushan Rebellion 755-763: led by General An Lushan (of Sogdian or Turkic origin) against the Chinese.  
Byzantium began to produce silk in the 6th cent.  

MAIN TEXTILE STRUCTURES  
The (three basic) binding systems from which all the other structures developed are: tabby, twill, and satin.  

A brocaded textile is a textile with an extra brocading weft that is limited to a specific area of the width without touching the selvages.  

Damask or (technically known as) self-patterned compound. A textile usually made in satin, with a sequence of one warp and one weft, which appears around the 12th century. In China a similar type made in tabby or twill was recorded as qi or ling and it is conventionally called “Chinese Damasks.”  

Kesi is a Chinese silk tapestry, possibly a later development of the Iranian wool gelim.  

Lampas is a complex patterned textile that can be constructed in tabby, twill, satin, damask, etc. with an extra weft (sometimes floating on the back) bound with a binding warp in tabby or twill structure. The pattern consists of weft effects. It began to appear at the end of the 10th cent. but became very popular during the 13th cent. During the Mongol period, in the East, this structure was especially used to produce the popular “golden cloths” which are recorded as nasij or nashishi and transliterated in Italian sources as nacchi or nachetti, or simply “panni tartarici” (Tartar cloths). Among the main types produced there was also the the sadalaqi that was initiated by the Persian scientist Jam al-Din in 1287 in Kabaliq (modern Beijing).  

Tiraz: an Islamic textile generally made as a plain structure with an embroidered, painted, or printed inscription in Arabic (also Persian, etc.). The term was used also to name textile workshops.  

A warp-faced compound is a ground with complementary warps in series (generally of two) and one weft only. Ground and pattern are woven simultaneously. Simply known as jin during the Han was produced until the 8th or 9th century.  

A weft-faced compound is a weft-patterned textile with complementary wefts in series (a main warp, a binding warp, and a weft composed of two or more series of threads). Like in the warp-faced compound, ground and pattern are woven simultaneously but the pattern is visible only on the verso. It was very popular during the Tang and was of two types in tabby, known in the West with the name of taqueté, and in twill with the name of samit(e). In Chinese sources are also recorded as “foreign patterned textiles” and “Barabarian textiles.”  

Zandanījī. A term generally accepted in the last sixty years to name weft-faced compound twill produced in Central Asia, in particular in Zandan, Uzbekistan.
MAIN PLACES AND TEXTILE ITEMS/ICONOGRAPHY

Sogdian-Turfanese region refers to that area that stretched from Bukhara (Sogdiana, modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) to Turfan (Xinjiang, China) and beyond to Dunhuang (Gansu, China).

Yingyang, Henan Province, and Huzhou, Zhejiang Province: earliest silk fragments.

Pazyryk, Altai Mountains: oldest woven carpet in the world (5th cent. BCE).

Niya and Loulan graveyards, Xinjiang Province: Han textiles.

Temple of Bell, Palmyra, Syria (1st CE): Han fragments.

Yingpan, Xinjiang Province: man (mummy) wearing a caftan with Roman-style cherubs (3rd – 4th cent. CE).

Astana cemetery, Xinjiang Province, and the Mogao caves in Dunhuang, Gansu Province: many Tang textiles.

Taq-e-Bostan, Iran: Sasanian rock reliefs with textile iconography (7th cent.).

Afrasiab (Sogdiana): Wall paintings in the Hall of Ambassadors (7th cent.).

Moschovaya Balka, Northern Caucasus: textile fragments and clothing from the 7th to the 10th cent.

Dulau, Qinghai Province: Tibetan royal tombs (7th-10th cent.).

Taiyuan, Shanxi Province: Xu Xianxu tomb, Northern Qi Dynasty (6th cent.).

Chengdu, Sichuan Province, is called “the city of brocade.”

Fondaco dei Turchi (Fonduq of Turks), Venice, Italy (13th cent.).

Palatine Chapel, Norman Palace, Palermo, Sicily, Italy (12th cent.). Famous for the wooden muqarans (honeycomb) ceiling and its mosaic. It was built in the 12th cent. by Christian, Muslim, and Jewish people.

Beijing also called Dadu or Kambaliq during the Mongol period.

OTHER TERMS

Solidus: Byzantine coins.

Kufic script: a type of Arabic script created in the 7th cent. The quadratic form began to appear around the end of the 14th cent.

Yassa: Mongol secret law.

Arbans: Decimal division system of the army in group of ten created by the Mongols.

Yam: Mongol postal system created on the old caravanserais.

Phags-pa: quadratic script of the Mongols.

Paizi: Mongol passport.

Boghtaq or Kuku: Mongol female headdress.

Further Readings

Gasparini Mariachiara. Transcending Patterns: Silk Road Cultural and Artistic Interactions through Central Asian Textiles (7th-14th century). University of Hawaii Press. Forthcoming (Fall 2019).


http://www.transoxiana.org/14/yatsenko_turk_costume_chinese_art.html


