

Dressing as horsemen

The universalisation of steppe dress in the first half of Tang dynasty China
(618-755)

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To my parents.

Abstract

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This thesis studies the widespread use of a kind of riding dress by the ruling class in the first half of Tang dynasty China (618-755). In contrast to the traditional type of dress of the Han people, generally a full-length attire with wide sleeves, the riding dress, an ensemble of tight-sleeved robe, trousers, belt and boots, had its origins in the typical attire of steppe peoples, developed out of the need to enhance efficiency and comfort while riding. The primary question of this thesis is: Why did the Tang elite choose to wear such practical clothing of foreign origin as ordinary attire? Previous studies tend to regard the diffusion of the riding dress as a natural consequence of the preceding situation, that is, the intrusion of steppe peoples and correspondingly of their clothing customs into mainland China during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (386-589). This thesis tackles the question from a new angle, first, by effectively synthesising iconographic, textual and archaeological materials and, secondly, by taking into account recent historiography on Tang politics emphasising on the interethnic political networking at the Tang court in the context of the competitive and entangled interstate relationships in Eastern Eurasia that the Tang experienced in its attempt to survive. To incorporate people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds into the political hierarchy, the Tang court needed a visual symbol of status and office that could be widely accepted by both the Han people and foreigners. This thesis defends that the riding dress served this role by being bestowed upon clients as a common insignia with Chinese titles and making the status ranking system visual. This thesis also reveals that the adoption of luxury silks with hybrid designs was an essential factor that contributed to elevating the status of the riding dress from a local steppe dress to a dress that suited the aristocrats' tastes.

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Introduction

When looking at visual material such as tomb murals and figurines dating to the first half of the Tang period, roughly corresponding with the seventh and first half of the eighth centuries,¹ one type of dress for male figures, especially government officials, is predominant. It is a front-closing, ankle-length robe with narrow sleeves normally worn in combination with trousers, boots and a thin black leather belt, typically exemplified by a group of civil officials painted on the west wall of the entry corridor of the tomb of Prince Yide 懿德太子 (buried 706) (Fig. 0.1).² The popularity of this type of dress is also indicated by textual sources. According to the *Jiu Tang Shu* 舊唐書 (Old Tang History), in the first half of the seventh century and later, this type of dress, identified as everyday dress (*changfu* 常服),³ was worn by everyone at court in most situations except on a few special ritual occasions.⁴ In

¹ Following the conventional periodisation, this thesis defines the first half of the Tang period as the period from the establishment of the empire in 618 to the outbreak of the An Lushan Rebellion in 755.

² Prince Yide (682-701), named Li Chongrun 李重潤 (682-701), was the only son of Emperor Zhongzong (r. 705-710). His tomb is one of the attendant tombs of Qianling 乾陵, the tomb of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r.649-683) and Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705). For the excavation report of the tomb of Prince Yide, see Shaanxi Museum et al. 1972a.

³ Everyday dress was one among four primary forms of men's dress along with court dress (*chaofu* 朝服), official dress (*gongfu* 公服), and ritual dress (*jifu* 祭服) (JTS 45: 1930).

⁴ "In and after the Zhenguan era (627-648), everyone wore everyday dress for all occasions with the exception of subjects' courtesy visits to emperor at New Year's Day and winter solstice, and special religious rite. (貞觀已後, 非元日, 冬至受朝及大祭祀, 皆常服而已)" JTS 45:1938.

contrast to the traditional type of dress of the Han people, which generally took the form of a full-length attire with wide sleeves, as exemplified by a group of officials depicted on the east wall of the passageway of the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai 章懷太子 (d.684) (Fig. 0.2).⁵ the Tang robe with narrow sleeves in its ensemble is a kind of riding dress, in the sense that it originated in the typical attire of steppe peoples that developed out of the need to enhance efficiency and comfort while riding. Before the Tang period, such a kind of riding dress in China was fundamentally regarded as a marker of the wearers' steppe origin and distinguished them from the Han people, who lived settled lives and did not ride. During the Tang period, however, riding dress, though still recognised as originally foreign, was universally worn as an ordinary attire by the Tang ruling class, who embraced people of various ethnicities. I use the word "universally" indicting three things. First, the dress was worn regardless of the wearers' ethnic background, that is, by both people of steppe origin and those of non-steppe origin. Secondly, it was worn at court on almost all occasions except for a few special rituals. Thirdly, it was not just widely worn but also institutionalised as a major category of dress and prescribed in the dress regulations, which correlated the dress with ranks and positions. I describe such a new situation

⁵ Prince Zhanghuai (654-684), named Li Xian 李賢, was the second son of Emperor Gaozong and Empress Wu Zetian. Li Xian's tomb is one of the attendant tombs of Qianling. It was constructed in 705-706 and renovated in 711. For an excavation report of the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai, see Shaanxi Museum and Qian Country Bureau of Culture and Education 1972.

in the first half of the Tang period as the universalisation of riding dress. This is the subject of this thesis.

Generally speaking, the elites' choices of dress (any group of elites, whether political, economic, military, intellectual or religious) reveals something about their social standing and self-recognition, that is, their identity.⁶ For example, an American social philosopher, Thorstein Veblen, argued that the leisure class in nineteenth-century America wore clothes that were not only conspicuously expensive and up to date, but also inconvenient, such as patent-leather shoes, easily stained linen and lustrous cylindrical hats for men, and bonnets and high heels for women. According to him, this is because such clothing functioned as evidence of financial prosperity by demonstrating that the wearer was not engaged in any kind of productive labour.⁷ Another example is seen among the contemporary Silicon Valley elite. Casual dress, which means t-shirts, jeans and sneakers, is their perennial choice, not only for everyday scenes but also for formal situations.⁸ A full discussion about the reasons for their choice is beyond the scope of this introduction, but their choice, which differs from the standard jacket and tie may be read as an expression of their stance to differentiate themselves from the establishment. They save time

⁶ "Choice" here means collective rather than individual choice.

⁷ Veblen 2009 [1899], 171-3.

⁸ For example, Steve Jobs, an Apple co-founder, was known for his signature black turtleneck and jeans. Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's CEO, is famous for wearing the same thing every day: a grey shirt, blue hoodie, jeans, and Nike shoes.

and money through their outfit choices, and this can be read as a statement that they attach much more importance to enhancing efficiency than showing off financial power. Getting back to the Tang case, the Tang male elite's choice can be characterised as a preference for practical clothing of foreign origin over the traditional Han-style dress. How can it be interpreted? What does it reveal?

A full interpretation has never been offered, though the phenomenon is commonly referred to as generally recognised and even understood within studies relating to Tang dress history. The interests of many scholars, though not all, tend to lie more in the background than the phenomenon itself. To be more precise, more space is devoted to the description of the politically turbulent preceding few centuries, the so-called Northern and Southern Dynasties period (386-589), when rulers of steppe origin established their states in north China, as an explanation for the intrusion of steppe peoples and correspondingly their clothing customs into China. The situation in the Tang period tends to be treated just as a natural consequence of the preceding political situation. The significance of the phenomenon and what it tells us about the Tang period has never been sufficiently explored.⁹ One example is a study by Kate Lingley, an art historian, who reveals the process of “naturalizing nomadic dress,” as she calls it, in central China from the fifth

⁹ The sole exception is Jonathan Skaff, who discusses the political use of riding dress with a clear focus on the Sui and Tang period (2012, 155-68). I will review Skaff's study later in the literature review section.

century onward, based on the close observations of clothing in depictions of the figures of Buddhist donors.¹⁰ Lingley concludes that “it appears that over a century or less, this particular form of nomadic dress lost its ethnic significance and became a type of ordinary dress for men of the Tang, as it grew further removed in time from its original introduction to China.”¹¹ When highlighting the loss of ethnic significance, she is quite right in describing an aspect of the common use of the dress across the ethnic boundary in the seventh century. Her study, though, as is the case with other studies, lacks the perspective of the fresh meaning that the dress now gained instead.

Regarding the adoption of foreign dress during the Tang period, it is women’s clothing that has been much more focused upon and discussed than men’s.¹² It is a shared understanding that Tang women, especially urban elite women, eagerly adopted foreign, especially Central Asian and Iranian, fashion for their entire outfits, not only garments but also hats, makeup, hair, shoes, jewellery and belts, enjoying its novelty and luxury. The riding dress under discussion was one example of foreign clothing adopted by women as well. This trend in women’s fashion has often been associated with freedom, both physical and social, as the foreign fashion, typically a fitted jacket and loose trousers, allowed women to be more active in various activities,

¹⁰ Lingley 2010.

¹¹ Lingley 2010, 56.

¹² See, for example, Cahill 1999; Hua 2011.

one of which was horse riding.¹³ In addition, as Cahill points out, for women, the adoption of foreign clothes could be a means of expressing freedom from the strict regulations of dress and various social constraints, based on Confucian values which were codified in the *Liji* 禮記 (the Record of the Rites).¹⁴ In the historical context, the adoption of foreign fashion by women is interpreted as representing the legendary glory of the Tang empire, more specifically, the increasing contact with western regions through the so-called Silk Roads and the cosmopolitan culture of prosperous Chang'an.¹⁵ The discussion on the women's case, however, cannot be applied to the men's case, although they are sometimes lumped together without careful consideration. Given that men's adaption of riding dress was presumably promoted and completed through its incorporation into the dress regulations, it is a matter of institutionalisation rather than freedom and creativity. Another point of difference is the timing of the occurrence. While women's foreign fashion seems to have become noticeable in the early eighth century, generally recognised as the

¹³ Referring to an image of court ladies sitting astride, Valerie Hansen highlights the relative freedom Tang women enjoyed in contrast with "the sequestered lifestyle of upper-strata women in later centuries, whose bound feet would have hindered their walking and who rarely ventured outside the house" (2000, 208-9).

¹⁴ Cahill 1999, 112-4. The *Liji* is a collection of texts describing ritual matters attributed to the Zhou dynasty (1046-256BC). It was probably compiled in the Warring States period and edited under the Han. It served as the part of traditional Confucian canon throughout the Chinese dynastic history.

¹⁵ Cahill 1999, 103-4; Hua 2011, 24-5.

height of the Tang period,¹⁶ riding dress for men had already been adopted as ordinary clothing in the early seventh century.

Then what will help us reach some form of interpretation? The primary question of this thesis is; why did the Tang elite choose to wear riding dress as ordinary attire? I pick up several key features of this case and divide the primary question into sub-questions to outline the direction of the research.

- Riding dress was worn at court in most situations as ordinary attire. This suggests that riding dress fitted comfortably into the lifestyle of the Tang elite. Riding dress must have met the practical needs arising from a variety of activities the Tang elite engaged in. Then what kind of lifestyle did the Tang elite have? How important were horses and horse riding to the Tang elite?
- Riding dress was institutionalised as a major category of dress and prescribed in the dress regulations, which correlated the dress with ranks and positions. What were the political roles of riding dress? How did riding dress serve these roles?
- Riding dress was worn by the elite, including emperors. It must have been suited not just to practical needs rooted in the lifestyle but also to the aesthetic

¹⁶ Based on mainly textual evidence, typically as condemnations by conservatives, and supplementarily visual evidence, previous studies situate the height of the vogue for foreign fashion by women in the eighth and early ninth centuries. See Zhou and Gao 1984, 93; Cahill 1999, 105-14; Abramson 2003, 127-8; Chen, 2013, 87.

tastes of the Tang elite. Riding dress was worn by people of lower positions as well, as exemplified by a man ploughing with cattle depicted in a mural of the third air shaft of the tomb of Li Shou 李壽(557-630) (Fig. 0.3).¹⁷ What were the essential physical qualities, which distinguished riding dress for the elite from that for people of lower positions: choices of textile, colours, patterns, attached items, or tailoring (length, tightness)?

- Riding dress was worn as an ordinary attire by the Tang ruling class, who embraced people of various ethnicities, both people of steppe origins and those of non-steppe origins. Who, specifically, made up the Tang ruling elite? Who wore riding dress in what kinds of situations? If not a marker of ethnicity, what kind of group identities did riding dress communicate?
- Riding dress had been adopted as ordinary clothing by the early seventh century. What are the historical aspects most related to the adoption of riding dress during the founding period and following years of the Tang empire? After the initial adoption, how did the use of the dress develop over time?

¹⁷ Li Shou was a cousin of Emperor Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618-626), the founder of the Tang. Li Shou, as a heroic warrior, joined the rebellion against the Sui dynasty and contributed to the founding of the Tang. For an account of the tomb of Li Shou, see Eckfeld 2005, 88-90.

Chapter 1

Direction of the research

1.1. Terminology and Genealogy

For the dress under study, various terms have been used in previous studies; for example, terms taken from old Chinese texts, such as *yuanlingpao* 圓領袍 (round-necked long robe) and *quekuapao* 缺胯袍 (robe with long slits)¹⁸ or descriptive phrases in English, such as “sewn, fitted jackets with sleeves.”¹⁹ Rather than following these examples, which describe stylistic features, I adopt the term ‘riding dress’ for two purposes. The first is to specify its origin in steppe life, even though the dress was worn for many occasions, not limited to horse-riding activities, during the Tang period.²⁰ The second is by adopting the term ‘dress,’ to inclusively indicate the set of

¹⁸ The term ‘*quekuapao*’ describes a robe that has long slits on its sides that reach the wearer’s hipbone. The pair of long slits was a common feature of riding dress for ease of movement. For a detailed account of *uekuapao*, see Huang and Chen 2004, 230; Chen and Xu 2002, 261.

¹⁹ Allsen 2006, 266. Allsen uses the term ‘jackets’ to describe the front-closing upper garment of the riding dress. Other terms such as coats, kaftans, and robes are used in preceding studies. These terms partly overlap and are sometimes used interchangeably. I adopt ‘robe,’ following Gordon’s usage in association with medieval investiture (Gordon 2001). I also use ‘jacket’ instead of robes, especially when I describe a shorter upper garment of waist- or hip-length, which is often observed in depictions of riding dress in the steppe in the first millennia BCE, as we shall see later in this section. For an account of the distinction between coats and kaftans in relation to riding dress, see Vogelsang-Eastwood 2004, 218-24.

²⁰ Horse-riding activities include cavalry, polo playing and hunting.

attire, not only the robe but including belt, boots and trousers. In using the term ‘dress,’ I follow Joanne Eicher and Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins who define dress as “an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements, displayed by a person in communicating with other human beings.”²¹ Their purposeful emphasis on the inclusiveness of dress and the sociocultural aspect of dress is in alignment with my objective to encompass the entire ensemble. Thus, under my definition, the term ‘riding dress’ is rephrased as the robe, trousers, belt, and boots ensemble, which is derived from the practical needs of horse riding. Riding dress could encompass all the variations of this type of dress in different regions and at different times. The Tang riding dress is one of them. Even though my focus in this thesis lies mostly on robes (not trousers, belts, and boots), it is still significant to note that robes were worn as a part of the riding dress ensemble in considering the social and cultural nature of robes.

It is generally agreed that a forebear of the Tang riding dress was the dress worn by the Xianbei, though it may not have been the only source.²² The Xianbei were a horse-riding people who rose in the eastern Eurasian steppe in the third century BCE. After the collapse of the later Han in the third century CE, one of the

²¹ Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992, 15.

²² For the connection between Xianbei dress and Tang riding dress, see Lingley 2010; Sun 2013, 189-99. For the history of Xianbei dress, see Song 2006. In addition to the Xianbei dress, the impact of dress customs of other Central Asians, most typically Sogdians, is suggested by Kobayashi 2009, 243; Ishimatsu et al. 2012.

branches, called the Tuoba Xianbei, intruded into north China and established the successive dynasties: Northern Wei (386-535), the Eastern Wei (534-550), the Western Wei (535-556), the Northern Qi (550-577), and the Northern Zhou (557-581).²³ As shown by a depiction of a noble man in a lacquer coffin found in a Northern Wei tomb at Guyuan, Ningxia, dating to the late fifth century (Fig. 1.1)²⁴ and a horse-riding figure in a mural of the tomb of Lou Rui, a Xianbei aristocrat in Northern Qi (Fig. 1.2),²⁵ the Xianbei dress shares basic similarities with the Tang riding dress. This continuity is supported by the fact that the founder of the Tang dynasty, Li Yuan 李淵 (566-635), was of mixed Han-Xianbei descent, and intermarried with Xianbei aristocrats.²⁶

But the origin of the Tang riding dress and also the Xianbei dress can be traced far back to the dress customs of mounted pastoralists living on the Eurasian

²³ Northern Wei was split into Western Wei (535-557) and Eastern Wei (534-550), which were taken over respectively by Northern Zhou (556-581) and Northern Qi (550-577).

²⁴ For a detailed account of the coffin, see Ningxia 1988; Karetzky and Soper 1991; Juliano and Lerner 2002, 77-81. These studies point out the multi-cultural aspect of the coffin and the tomb. The deceased is depicted in Xianbei dress but sitting under a Chinese-style platform. His posture, holding a wine cup with his two fingertips, shows a clear resemblance to typical Iranian-style banquet scenes. Since the context of the tomb is lost, it is not known whether the tomb occupant was a Xianbei influenced by Chinese culture or a Chinese who adopted Xianbei culture.

²⁵ Lou Rui was a high-ranking Xianbei aristocrat in Northern Qi. For an account of the tomb, see Shanxi Provincial Institution of Archaeology and Taiyuan Institution of Archaeology 2005.

²⁶ For the origin of the Tang imperial house, see pp.61-63.

steppe in the first millennium BCE. The steppe, a vast sea of grass, is an ecozone over 9,000 kilometres long through the whole of Eurasia from Manchuria to the Great Hungarian Plain, running unevenly but consistently between latitudes 40 and 55 north, up to 1,000 kilometres wide.²⁷ It is here that the first horses were domesticated and ridden.²⁸ It was around the tenth and ninth centuries BCE that a more extreme form of mobile pastoralism, characterised by higher mobility, long-distance migration and mounted warfare, rose and spread throughout the entire length of the steppe, due to a combination of factors, including the advent of iron metallurgy, increased access to horses and horseback riding.²⁹ The eventual formation of complex societies and the emergence of aristocratic elites, whose power source was not only military excellence, but also trading and political networking with sedentary societies, is suggested by the appearance of monumental burial mounds with their huge size, complex structure, and greater assemblages of exotic and precious goods.

²⁷ Cunliffe 2015, 11-12.

²⁸ For a recent discussion on the beginning and spread of domesticated horses in Eurasia, see Librado et al. 2021.

²⁹ For social changes in the steppe throughout the early to later mid-first millennium BCE, see Honeychurch 2013, 289-95. Climate change is also counted as one of the factors (Di Cosmo 2020, 15).

The best example comes from the elite tombs at the site of Arzhan in the north of the Republic of Tuva, in Siberia.³⁰ The Arzhan 1 kurgan, dating to c. 800 BCE, is a circular mound 120 meters in diameter and 4 meters high, with a complex internal subterranean wooden structure that houses more than 70 compartments. Excavations since the 1970s have revealed a pillaged central burial chamber with elaborate log coffins of an elite couple, together with accompanying human interments. The Arzhan 2 kurgan, excavated more recently between 2000 and 2003, turned out to be an undisturbed burial. Even though smaller in scale than that of Arzhan 1, the Arzhan 2 kurgan astonishes us with incredibly rich grave goods, especially those made of gold. The male tomb occupant, discovered in the wooden chamber of burial No. 5 dating to the late seventh century BCE, was gorgeously adorned with personal ornaments such as torcs, necklaces, earrings, pendants and pins that were made of gold and other precious materials, such as carnelian, garnet, glass paste, malachite, and turquoise. His headdress, garments and boots were covered with gold appliqués.³¹

³⁰ For a detailed account of the excavation and findings of the Arzhan tombs, see Čugunov et al. 2006.

³¹ The wooden chamber of the undisturbed burial No. 5 of Arzhan 2 yielded more than 5700 gold items. For gold items from Arzhan 2, see Armbruster 2010. Besides Arzhan kurgans, the burial mounds at Berel in the Kazakh part of the Altai Mountains have yielded well-preserved gold and silver objects, including horse trappings. For grave goods from Berel, see Stark and Rubinson 2012.

For the concern of this thesis about riding dress, I draw special attention to two things in the Arzhan kurgans, which represent key features of steppe society. The first is the skeletons of over 160 sacrificed horses with splendid accoutrements around the centre chamber of the Arzhan 1. Such emphasis on horses in rituals was specific to the steppe reflecting the growing importance of horses concerning higher mobility and mounted warfare. The second is the set of elaborately manufactured weapons found at the kurgan of Arzhan 2. The deceased was buried with weaponry consisting of an iron dagger with gold foil decoration (Fig. 1.3) and a gold quiver with fish-scale decoration (Fig. 1.4). Beneath the remaining parts of the quiver was a group of gold items including small plaques, a buckle, rings, and hooks that could constitute a belt for carrying the quiver (Fig. 1.4). Weaponry undoubtedly played a central position in the steppe as status symbols, given that a leader needed to display personal prowess to legitimise his rule in battle.³²

This steppe lifestyle, featuring horsemanship, formed the basic condition that created the prevalence of what I call riding dress that preserved the fundamental features for millennia,³³ though with many variations depending on differences in

³² Jessica Rawson discusses that showing personal martial prowess, especially in hand-to-hand combat, was crucial in the steppe and Western Asia. Thus weapons such as short swords or daggers were of great importance and often buried close to the body (2015).

³³ Elfriede Knauer emphasises the steppe origin of such dress in stating that “it is an accepted fact, that sewn and fitted clothes were not ‘invented’ in the great riverine civilisations of Mesopotamia and Egypt or classical world, but instead conceived by nomadic tribes in the Asian steppe belt with its harsh climate” (2004, 8).

ethnic groups and ages.³⁴ The combination of tight-sleeved robes, belts, trousers and boots met the demand for easy and quick movements during horseback riding.³⁵ The belt was not just for fastening the robe but for hanging weapons such as daggers,

³⁴ Anthony Karasulas gives examples of variations: “Typically the steppe nomad, of whatever era, wore loose-fitting trousers and a kaftan-like coat with one breast crossed over the other, this being tied or buttoned to one side – or simply held in place with the belt. The coat usually had extra-long sleeve, for use as hand warmers in winter, and rolled up in warmer weather. Overall the basic dress style did not change for millennia, despite the existence of different individual tribal styles – for example, the Mongols fastened the left breast of their tunics over the right, whereas the Sarmatians wore it crossed over the opposite way, and some people, such as the Scythians, liked heavily embroidered clothes while others, such as the Mongols did not. In later times, Turkic and Mongolian fashions included closer-fitting tunics that buttoned up the centre. The materials used in making clothing changed over time, with wool, leather, and linen-like materials being common in most eras, and cotton and silk in later times… Boots were also worn universally, usually heelless, and of varying heights – the Scythians most often being depicted wearing ankle-length boots, while the later Mongols wore knee-length boots that were so large they were reputedly difficult to walk in” (2004, 30-1).

³⁵ One of the earliest examples of trousers was excavated at Yanghai cemetery near the Turfan oasis, western China and radiocarbon dated to the period between the thirteenth and the tenth century BCE. According to the detailed report by Beck et al., the trousers consisted of three pieces of woollen fabric: two leg-pieces and one cross-shaped crotch-piece that bridged the other two. Considering that horse gear and weapons were excavated together as grave goods, Beck et al. conclude that this type of trousers was invented in relation to “the new epoch of horseback riding, mounted warfare and greater mobility (2014, 1).” Different from preceding tube-shaped leg coverings in combination with a separate loincloth (one example is the discovery of the Iceman in the Alps with his leather leggings dating to ca. 3350-3100 BC), the wide crotch-piece that joined the leg-pieces together allowed the wearer to sit astride the horse and protected the lower abdomen and genitals (2014, 1-2).

swords and quivers, and other tools.³⁶ Though it is a difficult task to precisely trace the beginning and the genealogy of the dress, archaeological findings from different regions demonstrate the establishment of the style in the steppe during the first millennium BC.³⁷ Most vivid depictions of such steppe dress are observed in objects from the graves of elite Scythians in the Pontic steppe.³⁸ A gold drinking vessel from a burial at Kul'-Oba, Kerch, on the Crimean Peninsula, dating to the fourth century BCE, depicts scenes from steppe life that include a Scythian man stringing his reflex bow and wearing a tight-sleeved jacket, belt, trousers, ankle boots and pointed hat (Fig. 1.5). A Saka grave found at Issyk, south of Lake Balkhash, dating to the fourth century BCE, yields the remains of dress of an elite member.³⁹ The reconstruction shows the same combination of tight-sleeved jacket, belt, trousers, boots and pointed

³⁶ Belts were elaborately decorated with precious materials and highly valued as status symbols. As extensively seen in massive burials across the steppes during 700-400 BC, such as Filippovka, Issyk, Pazyryk, and Majiayuan, belts constituted an assemblage of status possessions together with iron weapons, elaborate dress, and personal adornments made of gold (Rawson 2017, 382). Belts continued to be a common prestigious burial items for steppe elites in the following period, as shown by Ursula Brosseder (2011), who traces the wide distribution of belt plaques from the second century BC to the first century AD across Eurasia from China to the Black Sea.

³⁷ Knauer 2004, 8.

³⁸ For an overview of archaeological and textual evidence about Scythian clothing, see Gleba 2008.

³⁹ Sakas were Iranian peoples who occupied the south of the Kazakh steppe between the Caspian Sea and the foothills of the Pamir. They were closely related to Scythians and shared similar ways of life, according to Herodotus (Cunliffe 2015, 233-4).

hat, but lavishly embellished with gold (Fig. 1.6).⁴⁰ The grave goods from the frozen burials found at Pazyryk in the High Altai, dating to the third century BCE, include a felt rug with the depiction of a horse rider appliqué.⁴¹

Riding dress was officially introduced into China at the latest by the third century BC, though actual uses could have been earlier. According to the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the historian), Wuling, the King of Zhao, issued a decree of dressing his soldiers in *hufu* 胡服 (foreign dress) and training them as cavalry archers over strong opposition in 307 BC.⁴² *Hufu* was a term referring to the clothing of foreigners, especially steppe peoples on the northern and northwestern frontiers of China.⁴³ *Hufu* in this episode most certainly represented a kind of riding dress. An example of a visual depiction of a cavalryman wearing a riding dress is in the terracotta army of Emperor Qin Shihuang, dating to the third century BC (Fig. 1.8).⁴⁴ Riding dress,

⁴⁰ Cunliffe describes the reconstruction of the dress: “He wore a tunic sewn with thousands of gold plaques looking like scale-armour. His long- and short-swords were gilded and hung in decorated sheaths from a belt embellished with gold animal figures, and he wore a gold neck torc and finger-rings. Most remarkable was his tall, pointed hat, which was elaborately decorated with applique golden animals, to which were attached featherlike projections sprouting miniature spears” (2015, 234).

⁴¹ For the excavation of Pazyryk cemetery, see Rudenko 1970.

⁴² “In 19th year of the reign [307 BCE], (King Wuling) finally ordered the change to *hufu*, the military reform and the training for the mounted archery. (十九年…遂下令易胡服，改兵制，習騎射)” (SJ 43: 1805-1811).

⁴³ What was meant by *hu* varied depending on the time. During the early Tang period, *hu* was mainly used to refer to peoples of western and central Asia, including Sogdians and Sasanians, while the association with steppe peoples remained.

⁴⁴ Blänsdorf et al. 2001, 194-9.

however, seemed not to have been a primary choice for people belonging to the upper class in China at the time and in the following several centuries. The use of riding dress was largely confined to soldiers and others who engaged in physical work, such as farmers and servants.⁴⁵

The most popular type of dress for men during the Warring States period through the Qin and Han period was a robe called *shenyi* 深衣 (deep garment).⁴⁶ *Shenyi* was a one-piece robe with loose sleeves, combining upper and lower garments to wrap the wearer's entire body, standing in contrast to the basic features of riding dress: tight sleeves and fitted trousers. An example is a man wearing a *shenyi* tied with a wide sash and a black high court cap, painted on a lacquer box from Baoshan Tomb 2 in Jingmen, Hubei Province (c. 316 BC) (Fig. 1.9).⁴⁷ Actual *shenyi* examples were excavated from the tombs at Mawangdui in Changsha, Huan, dating to the Western Han period. One of them is a robe made of silk gauze found at Tomb 1 of Mawangdui (Fig. 1.10).⁴⁸ It shows full sleeves gathered into a narrower cuff, which is typical of the Han dynasty *shenyi*. *Shenyi* was worn by people at all levels of society, both men and women, on both ceremonial and informal occasions. *Shenyi* became one of the prototypes of the styles of dress associated with Han Chinese ethnicity in

⁴⁵ Lingley 2010, 57.

⁴⁶ For a detailed account of *shenyi*, see Gao 2010, 88-91; Sun 2013, 135-46.

⁴⁷ For an account of the lacquer ware painting, see Hu 1988.

⁴⁸ For examples and detailed description of the silk material found at Mawangdui, see Kuhn 2012, 120-40.

the following periods, whose basic characteristics were full-length attire with wide sleeves.⁴⁹

With the acceleration of the invasion and migration of steppe peoples, most representatively the Tuoba Xianbei, into north China from the third century onward, riding dress increased its presence. On the other hand, the full-length and wide sleeves type of dress became less dominant at least in north China, though not extinct.⁵⁰ In the figural art of the Northern Dynasties, that is, the fifth and sixth centuries, riding dress was worn not only by those who engaged in physical work but also by those who belonged to the upper class. I already mentioned the examples of the depiction of the Xianbei (or Xianbei decent) elite wearing riding dress (Figs. 1.1 and 1.2). Elites of other ethnic groups were also depicted in riding dress. The tomb of An Jia, a leader of a Sogdian immigrant community in Northern Qi, contained a remarkable stone couch.⁵¹ One of the stone panels of the couch depicts the encounter

⁴⁹ Lingley refers to such dress as “Chinese-style” in contrast to “Xianbe-style”. This is also referred as *hanfu* 漢服 (Han clothing) in contrast to *hufu* 胡服 (foreign clothing). Contrasting these two broad forms of dress in accounting for dress history during the Northern and Southern dynasties period and the Tang period is common in preceding studies.

⁵⁰ For example, Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471-99) of the Northern Wei implemented a set of policies of Sinicization that included forcing court members to wear Chinese style dress.

⁵¹ The Sogdians were an Iranian people whose homeland was the region of Sogdiana, today’s Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Throughout their history between the sixth century BCE and the tenth century CE, they did not form a unified political entity at Sogdiana but created a moderate federation of city states, joining together Samarkand, Bukhara and Varakhsha. Sogdiana was located at the key junction of ancient trading routes of east-west and north-

of An Jia himself with a short white cap and a long-haired Turkic leader, both of whom are riding horseback and wear riding dress tied with a black belt with gold plaques (Fig. 1.11).⁵² Even someone of Chinese descent is depicted wearing riding dress in a mural of the tomb of Xu Xianxiu in Taiyuan, dating to 571, where the deceased, a high-profile official of the Northern Qi, wears a Persian-style cloak of ermine fur over a narrow-sleeved red robe, probably a riding dress.⁵³ As a matter of fact, by the sixth century, the ethnic boundaries between different groups such as the Han Chinese, the Xianbei, the Sogdians and others became more and more blurred, partly through intermarrying. Hybridity was the norm of elite material culture in north China. Against this background, the correlation between riding dress and ethnic identity became weaker. This trend culminated in the early years of the Tang

south contacts. Using this advantage, they rose to prominence as skilled merchants. Even though Sogdiana intermittently experienced foreign domination throughout its history, the city-states thrived. Archaeological findings such as the murals at Afrasiab and Panjikent give us glimpses of the prosperity in their heyday during the seventh and eighth centuries. During the period between the fourth and the eighth centuries CE, when Sogdians played a dominant role in long-distance commerce across Eurasia, Sogdian immigrant communities spread widely in the Tarim Basin, north China, the Hexi Corridor and Mongolia. These communities functioned as commercial networks and formed the basis of their success in trade. For a history of the Sogdians, see De la Vaissière 2005.

⁵² For an excavation report of An Jia's tomb, see Shaanxi Provincial Institution of Archaeology 2003. For an overview of Sogdian tombs in northern China in the sixth century, see Lerner 2005; Cheng 2010.

⁵³ For an overview of Xu Xianxiu's tomb, see Taiyuan Institution of Archaeology. For an analysis of the dress and adornment of figures on the murals in the context of the multicultural situation of sixth-century north China, see Lingley 2014.

period and led to the universalisation of riding dress, which was stylistically more unified and institutionally formalised.

From a Eurasian perspective, the spread of riding dress occurred not only in Eastern Eurasia but also in western Eurasia during the first half of the first millennium CE. As Widengren and other scholars discuss, riding dress was introduced and developed in the Iranian world.⁵⁴ Monarchs of the Parthian Dynasty (250 BCE-224 CE) adopted it as ceremonial court dress. The Parthian fashion can be observed in the visual materials of contemporary Palmyra.⁵⁵ For example, in relief on a sarcophagus at Palmyra, two monarchs wear beautifully decorated sleeved tunics, instead of robes.⁵⁶ But combined with belts and loosely draped trousers tucked in short boots, the whole costume can be regarded as a kind of riding dress (Fig. 1.11). The dress was adopted in other Iranian dynasties including the Kushan (fell in 375CE) and the Sassanid (224CE-651). Besides, the dress penetrated to the west of the Roman Empire. A major cause is thought to be the invasion of the Huns in 375 CE, who caused other steppe peoples to flee into Roman territory and were soon recruited into the Roman army to defend them against further nomadic invasions.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Knauer 2004, 8-9; Widengren 1956; Yarshater et al. 1985-1999, 733, 737, 752-60.

⁵⁵ According to Widerngren, Parthian costumes became fashionable among the wealthy inhabitants of Palmyra (1965, 241).

⁵⁶ The tunic was put on by slipping it over the head, different from front-closing types of garments such as robes. Tunics were popular throughout the ancient Near East and Mediterranean world (Vogelsang-Eastwood 2004, 211-6).

⁵⁷ Knauer 2001, 137.

They brought their dress custom. Over the following few centuries, it influenced Roman costume and partly replaced togas.⁵⁸

After the middle of the first millennium CE, riding dress seems to have spread even more widely. Besides the Tang riding dress, examples of visual representations are found at various places in Eurasia; for example, a Hephthalite aristocrat at Balalyk-tepe in Afghanistan (Fig. 1.13), a group of Tokharian aristocrats as Buddhist donors in Kizil in Xinjiang (Fig. 1.14), a stone statue of a Turkic noble in Mongolia (Fig. 1.15), a group of Sogdian aristocrats in Panjikent, Tajikistan (Fig. 1.16), a Sassanid king in a stone relief at the Taq-i-Bustan in Iran (Fig. 1.17). A rare extant example of a silk robe excavated at Moshchevaya Balka in the North Caucasus (Fig. 1.18), dating to the eighth century, also supports the wide distribution of riding dress across Eurasia.⁵⁹ The robes depicted in these examples look different from each other in detail; length, with or without patterns on the surface, with or without trimming decorations in front and at the bottom edge, which panel goes over the other, right or left, and with or without lapels. However, they share the consistent feature of riding dress: the combination of sleeved robes, trousers, boots and belt.

⁵⁸ D'Amato describes the change in Roman costume after the third century: "Even though a law of AD 416 forbade the wearing in Rome of 'barbarian and skin garments' and long hair (*Cod. Theod.*, IV, 10, 4), the habit was too deeply entrenched to be eradicated" (2005, 3).

⁵⁹ For a detailed account of the findings at Moshchevaya Balka including the robe, see Ierusalimskaja 1978 and 1996. I will discuss the robe later. See pp.176-178.

I return to the Tang riding dress to look at its characteristics in comparison with other variations of riding dress use. The robe of the Tang riding dress is relatively long, midcalf to ankle-length. According to old texts, the custom of *jialan* 加欄 (adding a section) by putting an additional textile around the hemline of a knee-length robe to make it even longer was generally practised, since longer robes were thought more elegant and especially preferred at court.⁶⁰ *Jialan* practice is suggested by many examples of visual depictions of riding dress that show a horizontal line around the knee of the robe, one of which is a guard figure on the east wall in a passageway in the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai (d.684) (Fig. 1.19). The robe has long slits on both sides to give more freedom of movement to a wearer, as seen in some visual depictions, for example, a mounted polo player on the west wall of the passageway in the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai (Fig. 1.20). The robe is depicted in various colours, but, in most cases, it has no pattern on it and no trimming decoration. This simplicity of the Tang riding dress in visual depictions is in strong contrast with riding dress in other places, which are commonly more decorative, being made of patterned textiles and decorated with trimmings.⁶¹ The neckline of the Tang example is round and there is no lapel. When folded back, it forms lapels. These two ways of

⁶⁰ Zhou and Gao 1984, 114; Huang and Chen 2004, 230; Chen and Xu 2002, 261. In visual representations, lower-class servants, typically grooms, are often depicted in a similar type of robe but of shorter versions without *jialan*.

⁶¹ When Tang court women are depicted wearing riding dress, there tend to be more decorations with patterned textiles and trimmings, similar to cases outside China. I will discuss this point later. See pp.214-215.

wearing are illustrated by two gatekeepers sitting side by side, depicted on the west wall of the fourth corridor of the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai (Fig. 1.21). The neckline of the left one is closed and round, while the one on the right is open with lapels.⁶² The boots are black and knee-length. Trousers are often tucked into boots. Thin black belts are not just for fastening the jacket front, but also for hanging practical items, such as personal weapons, pouches and handkerchiefs (Fig. 1.22). Finally, riding dress almost always comes with the hairstyle called *futou* 幞頭 in that the hair is swept up into a topknot and wrapped in a black kerchief (Fig. 1.23).⁶³

1.2. literature review

The universalisation of riding dress has generally been mentioned in works relating to the dress of the Tang period, despite a variety of different terms and different levels of attention and areas of focus. This section aims to clarify what has been done and more of what has not been done in the previous studies by critically reviewing them, and in so doing laying out the direction for this thesis.

In the studies of Chinese dress history in Chinese, the universalisation of riding dress is referred to as a part of the general history of sartorial change in tandem

⁶² The ways to fasten the neckline are not totally clear from the visual depictions. The combination of a loop and a soft button attached to an actual robe example preserved in Shōsō-in (正倉院) in Japan may serve as a useful reference. I will discuss the robe of Shōsō-in in Chapter 5. See pp. 174-176.

⁶³ I will discuss *futou* in Chapter 3. See pp. 97-98.

with Chinese dynastic histories. It is only in the 1980s that the study of Chinese dress as a material culture started in full swing in China, based on the development of modern field archaeology throughout the twentieth century.⁶⁴ One of the most pioneering and influential works is *Zhongguo gudai fushi yanjiu* 中國古代服飾研究 (Research on Premodern Chinese Dress and Adornment), first published in 1981. According to the author, Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902-1988), his contribution to this emerging field was that, unlike earlier traditional approaches that relied mainly on textual sources, especially official writings, such as official dynastic histories, he integrated into his dress history an examination of visual sources, such as painting and archaeological materials, and various types of texts, such as poems and essays.⁶⁵ Shen's methodology, offering an encyclopaedic narrative of sartorial practices from the Neolithic period to the Qing (1616-1912), based on extensive references from both textual and visual sources,⁶⁶ has had an impact on the works written by later

⁶⁴ To research this paragraph, I referred mainly to two studies: Bu Yun Chen, *"Dressing for the Times: Fashion in Tang Dynasty China (618-907)"* PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013, pp. 20-25, and Hu Ji 胡戟 et al. eds. *Ershi shiji Tang yanjiu* 二十世纪唐研究 [*Tang studies during the 20th century*]. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2002, pp. 865-882. The latter has a useful bibliography on pp. 860-70, though it lists only literature published before 2001.

⁶⁵ Shen 2011,1.

⁶⁶ According to Chen, the methodology established by Shen and followed by subsequent Chinese scholars has its roots in Yoshito Harada 原田淑人 (1885-1974), a Japanese archaeologist (2013, 20-2). Harada published an article on Tang dress and adornment in 1921, as *Shina Tōdai no fukushoku* 支那唐代の服飾 (Tang China Dress and Adornments). It was translated and published in Chinese in 1958 and continued to be regarded as the

China-based scholars, which include *Zhongguo lidai fushi* 中國歷代服飾 (Chinese Dress and Adornment through the Ages) (Zhou and Gao 1984), *Zhongguo gudai fushi shi* 中國古代服飾史 (History of Chinese Dress and Adornment) (Zhou 1984), *Huzu xisu and Sui Tang Fengyun* 胡族習俗与隋唐风韵 (Manners of Nomadic peoples and Fashion in the Sui and Tang period) (Lu 1994), and *Zhongguo fushi shi* 中國服飾史 (History of Chinese Dress and Adornment) (Huang and Chen 2004), and *Zhongguo gu yufu luncong zengdingben* 中國古服輿論叢 增订本 (Collected Papers on Ancient Chinese Dress and Carriages, enlarged and revised edition) (Sun 2013).

Though the authors refer to both types of evidence, the fact is that these studies are characterised by primary reliance on textual evidence. Fundamental parts of the descriptions are made by quoting or summarising ancient texts.⁶⁷ Many visual examples are mentioned, but they mostly play a secondary role to support textual evidence. Because of this approach, each study gives a more or less overlapping account of every topic. In addition, there is no mutual criticism among these studies. This is the case with the Tang riding dress, which is identified in these studies as *yuanlingpao* 圓領袍 (round-necked robe), *quekuapao* 缺胯袍 (robe with long slits) or *xiaoxiupao* 小袖袍 (small cuff robe), based on precedents in textual sources.⁶⁸ The

authoritative text on Tang dress. Later, Harada revised and expanded the 1921 article into a book, *Tōdai no fukushoku* 唐代の服飾 (Tang Dynasty Dress and Adornments) (1970).

⁶⁷ For example, Shen often uses the phrases “*shichuan shuo* 史傳說” and “*shizhi shuo* 史志說” (both meaning ‘historical records say’) (2011).

⁶⁸ As replacement for *pao* 袍 (robe), *shan* 衫 or *paoshan* 袍衫 are also used. Besides these names that describe stylistic features, *changfu* 常服 is also commonly used in parallel.

main points of the shared accounts relating to the Tang riding dress can be summarised in three points. The first is that the Tang clothing custom as a whole was the product of the encounter of two different clothing customs: that of the Han with that of the steppe peoples⁶⁹ during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period.⁷⁰ The second is that a representative example of such encounters is the Tang riding dress, which originated in steppe clothing customs, became popular in north China during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period and then finally prevailed as a dominant dress for men during the Tang period.⁷¹ The third is that the Tang riding dress was, as *changfu* 常服, incorporated into the dress regulations during the

⁶⁹ These two clothing customs are typically called *hanfu* 漢服 (Han clothing) and *hufu* 胡服 (foreign clothing). The studies highlight the contrast between these two by describing stylistic features and quoting words from ancient texts. For *hanfu*, the most conventionally used phrase is *kuanyi bodai* 寬衣博帶 (loose-fitting garment with a wide belt). In contrast, words such as *zhuaixiu* 窄袖 (tight sleeves), *duanyi* 短衣 (short garment), *changxue* 長靴 (long boots) are correspondingly used for describing the essential characteristics of *hufu*. In addition to the stylistic comparison, Lu makes several points in his book *Huzu xisu yu Sui Tang Fengyun* 胡族習俗与隋唐风韵 (*Manners of Nomadic Peoples' Fashion in the Sui and Tang Period*) (1994). First, *hanfu* played an essential role as a sign of political rank in the stratified Chinese society since ancient times, while *hufu*, in its origins, did not play any such role, with a clear emphasis on practicality. Second, while silk and other material were used for *hanfu*, *hufu* was originally made of wool and leather. Third, while the upper garment in *hanfu* was closed with the left panel over the right (*youren* 右衽), the jacket of *hufu* was closed with the right panel over the left (*zuoren* 左衽)(Lu 1994, 1-46).

⁷⁰ Shen 2011, 239–40; Zhou and Gao 1984, 74; Zhou 1984, 130; Huang and Chen 2004, 196-7, 230; Sun 2013, 201; Lu 1994, 1-45; Zhou 1984, 174; Zhou and Gao 1984, 78.

⁷¹ Shen 2011, 239; Zhou and Gao 1984, 114; Huang and Chen 2004, 230; Lu 1994, 12, 40-3; Zhou 1984, 177; Zhou and Gao 1984, 113-4.

Tang period, and became a sign of official rank through colours and corresponding belts.⁷²

This account provides the basis for an understanding of the Tang riding dress. The range of evidence, both visual and textual, referred to in these studies is a helpful starting point.⁷³ However, the studies have serious drawbacks, that is, a data-collection-oriented approach rather than an analytical one. The uncritical quotation from texts puts a limitation on the scope of the research. I point out two major problems arising from this. First, more space is devoted to the process of the adoption of riding dress during the turbulent Northern and Southern Dynasties period. No interest is shown in how the dress played an active social role during the Tang period, once it was adopted. These studies mention that the dress served as a sign of official rank in the Tang period, but they offer just the quotations of the regulations from ancient texts and no discussion about how the regulations worked in practice, nor

⁷² Huang and Chen 2004, 231; Zhou 1984, 177-8; Zhou and Gao 1984, 114.

⁷³ Regarding the Tang riding dress and its origins, commonly quoted texts in these studies include the *Jiu Tang shu* 旧唐書 (Old Tang History), the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New Tang History), the *Liang shu* 梁書 (History of the Liang), the *Wei shu* 魏書 (History of the Northern Wei), the *Jin shu* 晋書 (History of the Jin), the *Song shu* 宋書 (History of the Song), the *Nan shi* 南史 (History of the Southern Dynasties), the *Bei shi* 北史 (History of the Northern Dynasties), the *Sui shu* 隋書 (History of the Sui), the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (discussing writing and explaining characters), the *Shi ming* 釋名 (explanation of names), the *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang), the *Mengxiban* 夢溪筆談 (The Dream Pool Essays), and the *Hufu kao* 胡服考 (research on hufu). As visual evidence of the Tang riding dress, the studies refer to mural paintings, mortuary figurines and paintings.

what they meant in actual social contexts. Second, consideration tends to be confined within the traditional view of Chinese history based on Chinese textual sources. The concept of the dynamic political networks in Eastern Eurasia, for example, is not considered.⁷⁴

Regarding the perspective from Eurasia, Elfriede R. K. Knauer and Thomas Allsen offer hints at a different orientation by positioning the universalisation of the Tang riding dress as a part of a broader phenomenon across Eurasia. They both recognise that the sleeved robe of steppe origin became widely worn in the wide area of Eurasia from China to Europe by the early medieval period. Knauer, a classical Greek art historian, explores her long-lasting interest in the sleeved jacket and its diffusion across Eurasia in two of her works in particular; “Toward a history of the sleeved coat: A study of the impact of an ancient eastern garment of the west (1987)” and “A Quest for the Origin of the Persian Riding-Coats: Sleeved Garments with Underarm Openings (2004).”⁷⁵ Through observing various types of archaeological material such as actual garments, statues, murals, paintings and reliefs that were found across a large area and covered a long period, she expresses her view that “the sleeved jackets and coats – originally the creation of Indo-European peoples roving

⁷⁴ For the essential importance of integrating the new approaches to the Tang history, see Section 2.3.

⁷⁵ Knauer’s aim is to trace the roots of the hussar style of Kaiser Wilhelm of Prussia in the 1978 article and the roots of the so-called Persian coat excavated from Antinoe in Egypt in the 2004 article.

over the Asian steppe some time at the end of the second millennium BC – were known and worn from the Chinese Sea to the Mediterranean by peoples of varied ethnic background at the beginning of the early medieval period.”⁷⁶ She incorporates Tang China into her perspective, by referring to a pottery figurine of the Tang.⁷⁷ However, her work offers only a general suggestion to contribute to this thesis, because her primary interest was not China. She has a useful perspective in reviewing the overall phenomenon across a wide area over a long period, but she does not consider the motivation for or the mechanism of the diffusion of the sleeved jackets.

Allsen, a historian of the Mongol empire, offers slightly more concrete suggestions about the background of the diffusion of “sewn, fitted jackets with sleeves” by comparison with Knauer, but lacks Knauer’s detail. Allsen refers to the issue of dress towards the end of his work, titled “The royal hunt in Eurasian history (2006),” where he discusses the custom of the royal hunt, which was widely practised as a vital component of the elite political culture of the Middle East, India, Central Asia, and China from antiquity to the nineteenth century. In the context of his basic concern about the rise of an international culture across Eurasia, he writes “the emergence of an international culture, which certainly dates to the rise of the Silk Road in the centuries just before the Common Era, if not before, is manifest in institutions, social practices, entertainments, and fashions drawn from the high

⁷⁶ Knauer2004, 10.

⁷⁷ Knauer2004, 10.

cultures and folk traditions of many distant and different regions that in time achieved a continental currency. Among these were sewn, fitted jackets with sleeves which by the early Middle Ages were in vogue from China to Europe.”⁷⁸ Though he offers no detailed discussion, his comment is suggestive in that both the “international culture” as he calls it, and hunting as a common aristocratic activity are indeed deeply related to the common use of riding dress among medieval Eurasian aristocrats, including the Tang elites.

Distinguished from the studies mentioned above, Kate Lingley and Jonathan Skaff both offer a clear focus on the social role of the Tang riding dress, but they have different interests, in constructing identity and visualising power relations, respectively. While most of the other studies draw primarily on textual evidence, Lingley, as an art historian with a special interest in Buddhist votive sculpture of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, is unique and outstanding in that she draws entirely on visual evidence, with the assumption that visual representations of dress serve as signs of identity. Based on close observation of clothing depiction in visual material, especially figures of Buddhist donors, Lingley reveals the process whereby the particular form of dress which originated among steppe peoples, which she calls “Xianbei dress”, lost its ethnic significance through the fifth and the sixth centuries and became a type of ordinary dress for men in the Tang. The point of her unique and persuasive approach is that she observes what is juxtaposed with male

⁷⁸ Allsen 2006, 266.

figures in Xianbei-style dress to interpret its shifting meaning. More specifically, she observes the dress style of female figures next to male figures. Based on meticulous observation of the Buddhist donor figures, she reveals that male and female figures in the same donor group are dressed in the same style, either in Xianbei-style dress or in Chinese-style dress during the fifth and early sixth centuries, but the combination of male worshipper figures in Xianbei-style dress with female figures in Chinese-style dress becomes the norm after the late sixth century. She interprets this as the beginning of a shift in the meaning of male Xianbei-style dress from a marker of ethnic identity to a sign of gender identity. According to her, this shift was completed by the turn of the seventh century. She is quite right in emphasising that the dress had lost its ethnic significance by the seventh century.⁷⁹ But she does not explore the changes of meaning and association that the dress now gained instead. Lingley concludes that the dress became a sign of gender, being associated with masculinity or activities that were characteristically male. Her conclusion is not entirely wrong, but too general. The dress, which had a steppe origin, could have been imbued with several more specific meanings and associations relating to the political identity of the Tang elite, given the Tang's entangled relationships with its steppe neighbours, a topic that Lingley does not consider. After all, her interests lie

⁷⁹ Based on the observation on the depiction of foreigners during the Tang period, Abramson reaches the same view. According to Abramson, the ethnic differences were represented by exotic physiognomy rather than clothing in the Tang visual art (2003, 123-125).

more in the process of normalising the exotic dress during the fifth and sixth centuries rather than the ensuing situation in the seventh century.

Partly based on the works of Knauer and Allsen, Skaff shares the basic recognition of the phenomenon in the context of Eurasia, writing that “the jacket, pants, belt, and boots ensemble, which derived from the practical needs of horse riding, became a uniform element of Eurasian court style in the fourth through seventh centuries.”⁸⁰ But unlike Knauer and Allsen, Skaff, a historian whose main interest is China's northern frontier from the sixth through ninth centuries, offers a much more detailed and concrete discussion with a clear focus on Sui and Tang China and the political entanglement with their Turk-Mongolian neighbours. In the fifth chapter of his book, devoted to the discussion of diplomatic rituals which lubricated interstate relationships in Eastern Eurasia, he gives special attention to riding dress together with belts as an important component of shared Eurasian court culture. The most notable point of his perspective is that he discusses the role of riding dress in investiture rituals that were an important aspect of Tang's relationships with its vassals, who were often foreigners. He reveals how dress as a political gift created and maintained the bonds between the Tang court, the patron, and its clients. He also discusses the role of dress as a sign of status ranking at the Tang court, not just by quoting the regulations from ancient texts, but by examining how the dress created a visual effect at court rituals and how the dress served as a

⁸⁰ Skaff 2012, 156.

tool for the vassals to communicate and negotiate their rankings with the Tang court. I am indebted to Skaff, whose excellent analysis of Tang politics in the context of Eastern Eurasia gives a basic framework for the whole thesis. The political role of riding dress in the aspect of visualising power relations will be discussed in Chapter 4, partly based on Skaff's discussion but extended by adding more examples and comparative perspectives.

However, Skaff's study is not adequate for the major concern of this thesis, even though it is useful. Skaff mainly draws on textual evidence and has no consideration of material evidence like many other studies. This omission is probably in part because no actual example of the Tang riding dress of good provenance survives. There are, however, some comparable examples of riding dress outside China, and many fragments of silk textile excavated from various places in Eurasia, both of which I will examine in Chapter 5 to explore the material aspect of the Tang riding dress in the context of the common court culture of Eurasian elites.

1.3. Theory on dress

The study of dress is a vast field and encompasses a variety of disciplines, such as art history, history, anthropology, archaeology, sociology, folklore, philosophy, economics, ethnology, psychology, marketing, fashion and museum studies, and women's studies. A wide range of research topics is covered, such as identity, gender, body, class, performance, economics, mass consumption, and the west versus 'the

rest.’⁸¹ Theoretically, the study targets the dress of all human societies, from the Neolithic to the contemporary, including, for example, minimum cloth covering a body, intricately tailored costumes, and mass-produced fast fashion. However, ancient evidence tends to be left behind in contemporary dress theory.⁸² The same is true for the subject of this thesis. Even though Lingley and Skaff consider some social aspects of the dress, the political role of the Tang riding dress, as a whole, has not been fully discussed with theoretical terms and approaches.

For consideration of the role and capacity of dress, it is helpful to first look at the topic of the relationship between dress and the body. The topic has gained more and more focus as a dynamic and interactive aspect in the field of studies of dress, against the background of the impact of the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose theory was that “the body is not a passive object but the means by

⁸¹ As dimensions of dress, Peter Corrigan includes (but does not limit to) class, gender, occasion, religion, time, beauty, season, occupation, mode of circulation, comfort, age, eroticism, health, ethnicity, location, power, performance, and economics (2008, 162).

⁸² Fashion studies, for example, basically concern the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Nicklas and Pollen 2015, 3). Even in the field of dress history, concerns about topics of archaeological nature have been limited. Martin and Weetch discuss two reasons for this. One is the conventional view within dress history that “fashion did not exist before the Renaissance,” and “prior to this, dress was largely practical and borne out of necessity.” The other is the emphasis on actual textile preservation, if not whole dress, when talking about dress. Due to this emphasis, periods earlier than the second millennium AD tend to be outside the scope of dress history. On the other hand, such earlier ancient evidence has been dealt with in the academic discipline of archaeology, but the primary interest tends to lie in chronological and geographical variation of dress styles and technologies rather than exploring various social aspects of dress (Martin and Weetch 2017, 1-5).

which we perceive the world around us.”⁸³ Dress is now often understood as embodied practice essential to our perception of the world.⁸⁴ Meanings of dress are not static but arise through repeated bodily actions. This view has developed, partly stemming from the criticism of the semiotic approach that sees dress as something that just encodes and expresses information, and partly as supported by Alfred Gell’s theory that objects “do not have ‘meaning’, but instead constitute a system of action that changes, rather than encodes, the world.”⁸⁵ The aim here is not to offer the whole picture of this trend, but just to set the direction of this thesis, by suggesting that dress is active and can construct, maintain, and change social reality. Taking this as an underlying assumption, I explore three aspects of dress relating to this study: constructing identity, visualising power relations and material.

Identity has long been a major subject among various social aspects of dress. Usually making up a main part of appearance together with other sartorial elements, such as jewellery, hairstyles, and grooming, dress often serves as an immediate signal about who the person is and what role(s) he or she carries out. Dress communicates a range of cultural information about gender, age, ethnicity, class, social role etc. with its uniquely expressive capacity, which can be attributed to its public and declarative nature, sensual and aesthetic qualities, and proximity to the body. Creating

⁸³ Lee 2015, 31.

⁸⁴ Lee 2015, 31; Martin and Weetch 2017, 6.

⁸⁵ Gell 1998, 6; Martin and Weetch 2017, 9.

similarities and differences, dress unites people and at the same time distinguishes some groups from others. Dress has long been thought of as an indicator of the identity of the wearer, but consideration of the relationship between dress and identity has developed recently, reflecting the redefinition of the concept of identity in recent decades. Previously prevailing assumptions emphasised fixed inherent criteria, such as genetics and biology, as determinants of who a person is. Instead, identity is now viewed as a cultural construct, which is fluid, contextual and dynamic. It can be chosen, created, practised and negotiated.⁸⁶ This shift has contributed to reconsidering the role of dress in identity. Dress is not just a sign that conveys various information about the wearer but also how a person (or a group) constructs his or her identity. The identity can also be different depending on who the wearer is with at a particular moment. The focus is put more and more on that construction process and the active role dress can serve in it. This trend of identity discussion is important for this thesis.

The Tang riding dress could serve as a sign of male identity, as Lingley suggests.⁸⁷ The dress, however, may have represented and communicated other potential aspects of identity. It might form an occupational identity as a kind of uniform for government officials at court. It might communicate ranks through colours and accompanying items. It might serve to create a political identity as a

⁸⁶ Martin and Weetch 2017, 8.

⁸⁷ Lingley 2010.

member of the Tang government. It might convey cultural identity expressing closeness to the steppe culture. To interpret the identity construct and social meanings that were created through wearing riding dress, we need to see the context of use. I would like to emphasise the multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of the early Tang high elite.⁸⁸ Given that riding dress was commonly worn across the ethnic boundary, it could serve as a common denominator among people with various ethnic backgrounds. I will examine what kind of sense of identification the Tang elites communicated with each other through wearing riding dress, based on comparisons with other potential indicators of identification in visual representations, such as physiognomy, hairstyle and deportment, and observations on the activities the wearers of the dress were engaged in, such as court rituals, diplomatic ceremonies, polo and hunting.

Besides identity, power is another important subject relating to dress. Dress is often fundamental in structuring power relations by creating both equalities and inequalities between people.⁸⁹ This is especially evident in societies which are characterised by their emphasis on hierarchy. They are called a “courtly society,” according to Jane Schneider, who is known for considerations on dress from the perspective of anthropology and material culture, though her academic interest is not

⁸⁸ See Subsection 2.3.1.

⁸⁹ Martin and Weetch 2017, 2.

confined to dress.⁹⁰ Proposing to use the two categories, courtly societies and capitalist societies, Schneider aims to highlight different modes of how cloth and clothing are produced and consumed, though the contrasts elude simple oppositions. Courtly societies are characterised by “arrangements that privileged elite consumption, in which the opportunities for self-enhancement were intensely hierarchically distributed.”⁹¹ She gives special attention to the distribution and redistribution of dress as important aspects of the exercise of power specifically sumptuary paraphernalia and gift exchange. Drawing on various examples of courtly societies, ranging from the Inca state and the Mughals to the Northwest Coast potlatch of the late nineteenth century, she suggests that “hierarchy rests heavily upon sumptuary paraphernalia to objectify and communicate rank, and to constitute material bonds between the past and the present, the rulers and the ruled,” and “kings offered them [luxury textiles] as gifts to attract the fealty of lords in newly incorporated peripheries and forbade their wear or display in the absence of royal approval.”⁹² This thesis will focus on these two mutually interrelated mechanisms, regulations on dress and political gifts, in more general terms, following the proposals made by Schneider.

⁹⁰ Schneider 2013[2006], 203.

⁹¹ Schneider 2013[2006], 203.

⁹² Schneider 2013[2006], 204.

While Schneider suggests that the widespread enactment of sumptuary laws in various places in the world was significantly observed in and after the late Middle Ages,⁹³ the codification of social rules about dress in China had exceptionally ancient roots in much earlier periods. Growing out of a set of values called Confucian, which are central to traditional Chinese civilisation, the basic principles of dress regulations were codified in the ancient canonical texts, the *Liji* 禮記 (the Record of the Rites). According to Confucian teaching, human relationships both in private and public spheres were hierarchically stratified, with emphasis on filial piety within the family and loyalty to the state, and dress regulations were minutely set out reflecting such strata by choices of designs, fabrics, and colours. Dress regulations were continually revised through successive dynasties, but the *Liji* remained a source of principles for the official dress systems, offering unchanging ideals.⁹⁴ The dress regulations of the Tang, including the rules on the riding dress under discussion, were part of a long Chinese tradition.⁹⁵ In the case of the Tang riding dress, named as everyday dress in

⁹³ Schneider 2017, 207.

⁹⁴ Cahill 1999, 113. For a review of the part of the *Liji* related to dress and dress regulations, see Sugimoto 1979, 120-7.

⁹⁵ The dress regulation during the Tang period was recorded in the “Treatise on Carriages and Dress” (*yufuzhi* 輿服志) in each of the two official histories of the Tang: the *Jiu Tang Shu* and the *Xin Tang Shu*. For more information about the textual material, see the next section. Cahill argues that people could identify each other’s gender, wealth and social status by what they wore. According to her, it was shared recognition among contemporaries that “cotton-clad” in Tang poetry meant a commoner, and that “green clothes” in Tang poetry meant an unmarried servant girl (1999, 113).

the regulations, the colours of clothing and materials of belt plaques (gold, silver, copper, jade, ivory etc.) communicated ranks within the bureaucracy and wider court society. Against the background of the multiethnicity in the Tang society, it was not unusual that people of various ethnic origins were employed as government officials, both in civil and military duties. The dress, together with belts, was used as an important political gift, often given at investiture, and served as a tool to incorporate new members into the political hierarchy and consolidate political ties. I will explore how the dress could work as an appealing gift item for both Chinese and foreigners.

The last topic is the material of culture. The concern about material concerning the social role of dress has a long history. One of its roots can be traced back to the legacy of Marcel Mauss. He argued that objects could have a spiritual dimension, because the spirit of the user was embodied in them and deepened through repeated uses, such as gift exchange.⁹⁶ This idea was applied to dress in the field of anthropology in the 1980s, as exemplified by successive works by Annette B. Weiner and Schneider.⁹⁷ The material of the dress and its aesthetic and sensual qualities such as colours, patterns, and textures were regarded as sources of its capacity to serve social roles on various occasions, such as rituals of birth, initiation, mortuary rituals, and marriage.

⁹⁶ Mauss 1970.

⁹⁷ The most representative work is “Cloth and human experience (1989)” edited by Weiner and Schneider.

Applying this idea to this case, I will focus on the material of riding dress, which has been ignored in previous studies. A full discussion of the material of riding dress may be difficult due to the nature of the evidence; we have only textual and visual evidence but no actual examples of the Tang riding dress. However, instead, we have silk fragments found at various places in Eurasia and some comparative examples of riding dress found outside China. By examining this evidence, I will explore an aspect of the material of riding dress, that is, the use of silk. In its origin in the steppe, riding dress was made of wool or leather, but for riding dress worn by the medieval Eurasian aristocrats including the Tang elite, silk was most probably used as the common material, backed by the diffusion of silk-production technologies from China to other parts of Eurasia from the third century onward.⁹⁸ Given the aesthetic qualities and the high value of silk, I hypothesise that the application of silk, especially luxurious types of silk, to riding dress was crucial for building its value as desired political regalia.

1.4. Study material

1.4.1. Visual material

⁹⁸ The diffusion of silk production technologies has been discussed by, for example, Liu 1996; Schorta 2006; Kuhn 2012. I will discuss this topic in Section 5.2.

There is no actual example of the Tang riding dress of good provenance.⁹⁹ Thus evidence for the Tang riding dress comes from two sources: visual material and textual material. Visual depiction of the Tang riding dress comes primarily from mortuary art in the form of murals, pottery figurines, stone sculptures, and engravings on stone panels.¹⁰⁰ I focus primarily on selected imperial tombs in the Xi'an area, which is the capital Chang'an of the Tang.¹⁰¹ Imperial tombs consist of not only emperors' tombs but also their attendants' tombs, whose occupants were often members of the royal family, meritorious ministers and successful generals.¹⁰² The reason for this focus is that my interest lies in the lifestyles and activities of the elite strata of Tang society in the capital Chang'an: court rituals, diplomatic ceremonies, and aristocratic pastimes, such as polo playing and hunting. The tombs of top-ranking individuals contain re-creations of such courtly environments in the forms of art.¹⁰³ In addition to the contents, the visual material of top-ranking

⁹⁹ See the part of *excavated textile* later in this section.

¹⁰⁰ Mural paintings were prevalent during the Tang period, not only in tombs but also in temples, palaces and public building. However, all paintings in freestanding buildings have been lost (Eckfeld 2005, 61).

¹⁰¹ According to Tomita, more than 2200 tombs dating to the Sui and Tang dynasties were excavated in the Xian area during the latter half of the twentieth century (1998, 131). This is one reason I need to be selective.

¹⁰² For an overview of the emperors' tomb and their attendant tombs (*peizang mu* 陪葬墓) of the Tang period, see Eckfeld 2005, 9-28.

¹⁰³ The mural paintings of themes such as hunting, polo, diplomatic envoys, taming exotic cheetahs and civil officials in court dress are found only in tombs of top-ranking individuals, such as princes, princesses and mothers of emperors (Li 2005, 129).

occupants' tombs is useful and informative as evidence since it is generally of higher technical and aesthetic qualities, and grander scale compared with that of tombs of lower-ranking individuals.¹⁰⁴ Preference is given to items, which have secure provenance information and better preservation.

Six tombs of emperors built during the first half of the Tang period all remain to be opened.¹⁰⁵ Only their above-ground features are available for study. Among them, I focus especially on two tombs, Zhaoling 昭陵 for Emperor Taizong (r.626-49) and Qianling 乾陵 for Emperor Gaozong (r.649-83). Zhaoling is the largest Tang Mausoleum at 12 km east-west and 10 km north-south, with additional 167 attendant tombs around. Qianling is the best preserved imperial mausoleum with 17 attendant tombs. Qianling's systematised form of the processional path became the model for the imperial tombs of the Tang and later dynasties.¹⁰⁶ Each passageway of Zhaoling

¹⁰⁴ "The use of murals in Tang tombs was reserved for the highest social elite, with the number, scale, technical and aesthetic quality and content of the murals in accordance with the status awarded to the burial. Huge expenditure, the influence of famous talented artists and the employment of large numbers of painters were assertions of the patron's power, and tributes to the tomb occupant's rank" (Eckfeld 2005, 62).

¹⁰⁵ The six tombs are Xianling 献陵 for Emperor Gaozu (r. 618-26), Zhaoling 昭陵 for Emperor Taizong (r.626-49), Qianling 乾陵 for Emperor Gaozong (r.649-83) and Empress Wu Zuzetian (r.690-705), Dingling 定陵 for Emperor Zhongzong (r.684, 705-10), Qiaoling 桥陵 for Emperor Ruizong (r.684-90, 710-2), and Tailing 泰陵 for Emperor Xuanzong (r.712-56). Including these six tombs, eighteen tombs in total were built throughout the Tang. Among them, only one has been excavated: that of Emperor Xizong (r. 873-88), small and of inferior quality. For a list of the eighteen tombs and a map, see Eckfeld 2005, 4.

¹⁰⁶ For a detailed account of Zaoling and Qianling, see Eckfeld 2005, 16-28.

and Qianling is flanked by a series of stone sculptures that include statues of foreign emissaries and imperial guards. The clothes of these statues are of interest to this thesis. Besides these two tombs of emperors, I refer to attendant tombs at the emperors' complexes for information on the interior of tombs and grave goods.¹⁰⁷ The occupants of the tombs I refer to include; Li Shou 李壽 (dated 631) , Zhang Shigui 张士贵 (died 657), Princess Xincheng 新城公主 (dated 663), Zheng Rentai 鄭仁泰 (dated 663), Princess Yongtai 永泰公主 (dated 706), Prince Zhanghuai 章懷太子 (dated 706), Prince Yide 懿德太子 (dated 706), Prince Jiemin 節愍太子 (dated 710), Prince Huizhuang 惠庄太子 (dated 724), and Li Chengqi 李成器 (died 742) .

¹⁰⁸ Though not an attendant tomb, I also refer to the tomb of Xianyu Tinghui 鮮于庭誨 (died 723), as it yielded ceramic figurines of fine execution.¹⁰⁹ Figures on murals and ceramic figurines found at these tombs offer information about the clothes of civil and military officials, foreign emissaries, polo players, hunters, attendants, guards, animal tamers, and entertainers.

Scroll paintings are another source of evidence, though we need to bear in mind that they usually survive only in copies from later dynasties. I refer to a short handscroll painting by Yan Liben (c. 600-73), called "The Imperial Sedan Chair

¹⁰⁷ The attendant tombs were built following the same design principles as the emperors' tombs, though on a much smaller scale and with a lower grade.

¹⁰⁸ For an occupant's profile and a bibliography of the excavation report of each of these tombs, see Li 2005, 409-18.

¹⁰⁹ For an excavation report of the tomb of Xianyu Tinghui, see Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 1980, 56-65.

(*Bunian tu* 步輦圖)” in the Palace Museum in Beijing, which depicts the scene of Emperor Taizong greeting the Tibetan envoy Mgar.¹¹⁰ This painting is significant because it portrays what they wore at this important diplomatic event.

1.4.2. Textual material

Each of the Chinese official dynastic annals contains a section named the “Treatise on Carriages and Dress” (*yufuzhi* 輿服志).¹¹¹ The treatises catalogue the rules on the use of dress and vehicles that accord with the social ranks, for every member of the society from emperors to commoners, for both men and women and for every occasion, ceremonial, ritual and everyday. Two versions of the treatise for the Tang dynasty exist, one in the *Jiu Tang Shu* 舊唐書 (Old Tang History) and the other in the *Xin Tang Shu* 新唐書 (New Tang History).¹¹² These two serve as useful sources of information, documenting not only the dress regulations and their revisions during the Tang period, but also the historical accounts of sartorial change

¹¹⁰ For an account of Yan Liben and his works including ‘The Imperial Sedan Chair’, see Barnhart 2002, 60-2.

¹¹¹ The earliest “Treatise on Carriages and Dress” is one contained in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (The Book of the Later Han). The last one is contained in the *Qing Shi Gao* 清史稿 (The Draft History of the Qing). For an overview of all these treatises, see Hua et al. 2015.

¹¹² The *Jiu Tang Shu* was completed in 945 under the direction of Liu Xu 劉昫 (887-946). It is a work of official history covering the Tang dynasty, comprising 200 chapters. In 1160, Ouyang Xiu 歐陽脩 (1007-1072) along with Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061) revised and expanded the dynastic history under the title the *Xin Tang Shu* with 225 chapters.

during the successive dynasties, and anecdotes relating to dress.¹¹³ The dress regulations and related anecdotes are also collected in the *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 (Major administrative documents of the Tang), the *Tang da Zhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集 (The collected major imperial edicts of the Tang), the *Quan Tang Wen* 全唐文 (Complete Prose of the Tang), the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Comprehensive Mirror for the Aid of Government), and the *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 (Ancient documents to aid the divining of the past).

For the political gifting of dress, I draw primarily on the *Cefu yuangui*, which is an encyclopaedia on statecraft compiled during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1279).¹¹⁴ It is a kind of archival work on the administration of the successive dynasties in China, from ancient times through to the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907-979). Among 31 sections of the book, one named the *Waichen* 外臣 (Foreign Subjects) contains a section named the *Baoyi* 褒異 (Special Rewards) that lists the bestowals of gifts to foreign clients on the occasions of their visits to the Chinese court in chronological order. The relevant descriptions are found also in official historiographies, such as the *Jiu Tang Shu*, the *Xin Tang Shu*, and the *Zizhi tongjian*, and other texts, in the forms of poetry, fiction, anecdotes, and letters, such as the *An Lushan shiji* 安祿山事跡 (The Story of An Lushan), the *Quan Tang wen*

¹¹³ For a review and discussion on these two Tang treatises, see Harada 1970; Sun 2013, 329-478; Hua et al. 185-262.

¹¹⁴ The encyclopaedia was commissioned by Emperor Zhenzong in 1005 and the finished work was presented in 1013.

前唐文(Complete prose of the Tang), the *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華(Essential blossoms of the literary garden), and the *Qujiang ji* 曲江集 (The collected works of Qujiang).

1.4.3. Material outside China

For a comparative perspective, I look at evidence of the dress of contemporary Eurasian aristocrats outside China, with a special focus on Turks, Sogdians and Sassanians, all of whom had a major impact on the Tang, both culturally and politically. For visual depictions of nobles, preference is given to mural paintings and rock reliefs rather than portable items such as metal vessels because the former tend to be securely dated and their production places are certain. For visual depictions of Sogdian aristocrats, I refer to the murals at Penjikent in modern-day Tajikistan and those at Afrasiab in modern-day Uzbekistan.¹¹⁵ The mural on the west wall of the so-called ambassador hall at Afrasiab, dating to the mid-seventh century, is especially important since it depicts a ceremonial scene, in which not only Sogdians but also Chinese, Turks, Tibetans and other central Asians met together. Visual depictions of Sassanid kings and aristocrats are abundantly available in a series of large rock reliefs at Taq-i Bustan, which were carved intermittently from the late fourth century to the seventh century. The most relevant to this study is the boar hunt scene, in

¹¹⁵ For the Penjikent murals, see Hermitage Amsterdam 2014, 90-7, 180-97. For the Afrasiab murals, see Mode 2006; Compareti 2011. For an overview of the visual evidence of Sogdian costume in Chinese art, see Yatsenko 2019.

which King Khosrow II (r. 590-628) and his attendants are carved with minute depictions of dress.¹¹⁶

For the dress of contemporary Turks, visual evidence is available in the form of stone statues found in Turk-dominated territory.¹¹⁷ Textual material serves as informative evidence from a different perspective. Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-44), a Chinese Buddhist monk, made a journey from China to India lasting 19 years, which is recorded in the *Da Ci'en Si sanzang fashi zhuan* 大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (Biography of the master of the three scriptures of Great Ci'en Temple [Xuanzang]) written by Hui Li 慧立, and Yan Cong 彦棕. The biography contains a vivid description of the colour and material of dress and hairstyles of the Turkic Khan and his subjects witnessed by Xuanzang on his visit to the court of the Western Türks in 628. Menander Protector, a sixth-century Byzantine historian, also offers a detailed account of the court of the Western Türks when describing Zemarchus (a Byzantine diplomat)'s visit to Dizabul Istämi (r. 552-575), the great Qaghan of the Türks in 568.

1.4.4. Excavated textiles

¹¹⁶ For a detailed observation on the clothing on Taq-I Bustan, see Peck 1969.

¹¹⁷ In addition to stone statues, petroglyphs and wall paintings provide visual evidence of Turkic costumes. For an overview of Turkic costumes, see Kubarev 2000; Yatsenko 2009; Yatsenko 2013.

To consider the material aspect of the Tang riding dress, I look at excavated textiles, with a focus on silk textiles dating to the third to eighth centuries found at various places in Eurasia. Due to its organic nature, ancient silk can survive only under special conditions such as extreme dryness or permanent frost. Silk textiles are mostly found as fragments due to deterioration, though they are also found in various forms such as garments, shoes, and Buddhist banners. Silk textiles of this period are excavated from sites which include Niya, Yingpan, Loulan, Turfan, Dunhuang, Dulan, and Qinghai in China, Mugu in Tajikistan, Moshchevaya Balka in the North Caucasus, Dura-Europos and Palmyra in Syria, and Antinoe in Egypt. In addition, the Shōsō-in repository at Nara in Japan has preserved silk items in good condition.¹¹⁸

Two examples of silk robes are in near-perfect condition.¹¹⁹ One is a round-necked robe preserved in the Shōsō-in, Japan, dating to the mid-eighth century (Fig. 1.24). It is made of green silk with a pattern of confronted dragons in a pearl roundel. Another one is a robe excavated at Moshchevaya Balka, dating to the eighth to ninth centuries (Fig. 1.18). It is made of green silk with a pattern of *senmurv*, a mythical creature, in a pearl roundel. I examine these two robes and other silk fragments, to discuss the wide distribution of silk textiles over Eurasia and also the exchanges of silk-production technologies between China and other parts of Eurasia, both of

¹¹⁸ For an overview of the silk of this period, see Shorta 2006; Khun 2012, 167-256.

¹¹⁹ I will give a detailed account of these two robes in Subsection 5.1.3.

which resulted in the widespread use of silk for riding dress among medieval Eurasian elites.

Chapter 2

Historical background

2.1. Time and space for the discussion

This thesis targets the first half of the Tang dynasty, that is, the period from its foundation in 618 to the beginning of the devastating An Lushan rebellion in 755. This period was not politically serene, but rather full of turbulent events, such as Li Shimin's bloody *coup d'état*, gaining the throne as the second emperor in 626, the interruption by the brief Zhou dynasty (690-705) of Empress Wu and the political chaos caused by the monopoly of power by chancellors during Xuanzong's reign.¹²⁰ In addition, as I will discuss later, the Tang was bothered by incessant military conflicts with neighbouring states. Still, the first half of the Tang is commonly regarded as the golden age of Chinese history, enjoying prosperity with great achievements: a flourishing economy, military conquests, a strong central government, increasing contacts with the outside world and brilliant accomplishments in art and literature, until the breakout of the An Lushan rebellion, which almost overthrew the empire. In the light of world history, this period coincides with the rise and fall of the Türk Empires in the northern steppe, the

¹²⁰ For a historical overview of the Tang dynasty, see Twitchett 1979; Lewis 2009. For a Eurasian history of the period, see Beckwith 2009, 112-129.

establishment and expansion of the Tibetan empire, the collapse of the Sassanid empire in 651 (whose cultural impact lasted long after 651), and the subsequent rise of Islamic powers that greatly undermined Byzantium in the Mediterranean. Besides these great empires, the period saw the rise and fall of lots of small oasis states in Central Asia and is characterised by the activities of small ethnic groups, most representatively exemplified by the Sogdians.¹²¹ The aim of this chapter is not to offer a summary of the general history of the Tang empire but, instead, to purposefully construct a historical framework for the following discussion about riding dress. My special focus is given to three important aspects of the period; that is, the strong impact of horse culture, increasing interethnic political networking, and the formation of a common court culture among the Eurasian elite.

Regarding the geographical scope, the discussion centres mainly on Eastern Eurasia, which is here defined as the region that encompasses China, Korea, Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and the western part of Inner Asia. Eastern Eurasia was separated from the rest of Eurasia by natural obstacles such as the Taklamakan Desert, the Pamir Mountains, the Tianshan mountains, the Himalayas, and the Tibetan Plateau. Polities in Eastern Eurasia during the period of the Tang developed a web of dense communication networks and the eventual cultural uniformities in Eastern Eurasia through various interactions, both cooperative and hostile, as neighbours. At the same time, Eastern Eurasia was connected with the rest of Eurasia

¹²¹ For Sogdians, see footnote 51.

through various agents with higher mobility: steppe peoples, Sogdian merchants, pilgrims, and diplomatic envoys. Much of the communication took place along the steppe and the trade routes through Central Asia, often called the Silk Road. The political networks of Eastern Eurasia were nested inside those of greater Eurasia. The cultural uniformities in Eastern Eurasia were partly shared in the wider sphere of Eurasia though more attenuated. In this respect, I include some polities outside Eastern Eurasia into my account, such as the Byzantine Empire, the Sasanian Dynasty, Sogdian city-states in Sogdiana, the Umayyad Empire (661-750) and the Abbasid Empire(750-1258), based on their relatively close political and/or cultural relations with the Tang.

2.2. The horse culture

2.2.1. The need for horses

A key to interpreting the universalisation of riding dress is the importance of horses for the Tang elites. The dominant Tang elite, including the founding, Li family, had Xianbei steppe origins.¹²² Partly as a result of this, from the beginning horses were an essential element of the Tang elite's life, militarily, economically and culturally. The glorious military achievements of the Tang owed much to the dynasty's success in securing horses of good quality and maintaining strong cavalry armies, with which the Tang fought major wars against foreign enemies, instead of

¹²² For the closeness of the Tang ruling family to the steppe culture, see Lewis 2009, 146-8.

the infantry.¹²³ Horses were needed for the internal communication networks of post roads and courier stations, covering the empire. Thus securing a regular supply of horses was a major preoccupation for the empire. However, breeding strong horses was not an easy task. In mainland China, the Tang and other dynasties throughout China's history had to face fundamental difficulties in breeding horses. The difficulties in obtaining horses and some success in overcoming the difficulties were a dominant feature of the Tang period.

Several structural limitations on raising strong horses on the Central Plains have been pointed out by Jessica Rawson.¹²⁴ First, the climatic environment was not beneficial for horses. The combination of high humidity and high temperature during the summer in the Central Plains can cause serious health problems for horses, which are adapted to the colder and drier conditions of the steppe. The second problem is agricultural land-use practices. Suitable lands tended to be taken for agriculture rather than for breeding pastures. The third difficulty is the lack of expertise in breeding and training horses among the Chinese. Wild horses are too small to be used for hunting or warfare. To obtain larger breeds, selective mating was necessary which required specialised knowledge. Also, training horses for warfare was not an easy task, because 'the horse is an animal of "flight" rather than "fight",'

¹²³ Twitchett 2000, 134.

¹²⁴ For the discussion of difficulties in breeding horses in mainland China, I rely mainly on Rawson (2021, esp.521-523) and Whitfield (2020).

yet for warfare, it must be trained to ‘face loud noises, leap fences, charge into crowds, and gallop at man’s command, often to its own destruction.’¹²⁵

In addition to these limitations, as Rawson and Whitfield stress, there is another fundamental factor that provides a more persuasive explanation for the consistent failure of horse breeding in China.¹²⁶ That is selenium-deficient soil across much of central low-land China, especially in the valleys of the Wei River and the lower Yellow River. Selenium, a mineral contained in soil, is a nutrient essential for the health of humans and animals obtained through plant consumption.¹²⁷ Selenium deficiency can cause many issues in horse health, including muscle disease. According to the research on the geographical distribution of selenium across modern China, a selenium-poor belt stretches from the northeast (Heilongjiang Province) to the southwest (Yunnan Province), including the Central Plains.¹²⁸ Selenium deposition is largely offset by rapid volatilisation in the summer heat.¹²⁹ On the other hand, in southeast China, a normal or high level of selenium is available

¹²⁵ Skaff 2017, 35.

¹²⁶ Rawson 2021, 521-522; Whitfield 2020, 513-515.

¹²⁷ “Selenium was identified in 1817 but it was only in the 20th century that its importance to human health was understood following experiments on rats and farm animals. In 1935 Chinese scientists named an illness ‘Keshan disease’ after a county in Heilongjiang Province in the northeast of China where an outbreak occurred. It was later found to be prevalent from southwest to northeast China and in 1973 selenium deficiency was recognised as a factor in its aetiology. It had a fatality rate of over 80%.” (Whitfield 2020, 513)

¹²⁸ Sun et al. 2016, Fig. 1A.

¹²⁹ Sun et al. 2016, 6.

because of the heavy rain caused by the summer Monsoon, but this area is not suitable for horse breeding because of the summer heat and high humidity. Therefore, much of China's land, except for the northern and northwestern areas, does not have suitable climates or an adequate level of selenium, which may well have imposed difficulties in breeding strong horses for successive dynasties.

That is why the dynasties from the first millennium BCE until the early twentieth century had to rely on supplies of horses from the north, which includes the areas with better pasture, such as regions of modern Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, the Ordos region, the Hexi corridor and Xinjiang. It was necessary for them to maintain good relations with their steppe neighbours in the north or to incorporate a part of the land with good pasture in the north and create ranches by themselves. In any case, the border areas remained a major military and diplomatic preoccupation.¹³⁰

The search for a supply of horses from the north had already begun during the late Shang and Zhou dynasties as archaeological evidence suggests. They needed horses for horse-drawn chariots.¹³¹ The adoption of massed cavalry among the kingdoms of northern China was probably around the late fourth century BCE, in

¹³⁰ For the relationship between the Xiongnu and China, see Di Cosmo 2002a. For the relationship between the Tang China and its steppe neighbors, see Skaff 2012. For the relationship between the Uighur and China, especially in terms of the silk-horse exchange, see Beckwith 1991.

¹³¹ Rawson 2021.

response to the rise of horse-riding neighbours, such as the Yuezhi, Xiongnu, and Donghu. After that, horse riding became more common and horses for cavalry became essential to military life in northern China. The near-contemporary historian, Sima Qian (139-86 BCE) of the Han dynasty recorded that China received horses from the Yuezhi in exchange for silk and also that China introduced special breeds of horses from the Xiongnu.¹³² The prolonged conflicts with the Xiongnu forced the Han empire to expand toward the western regions (modern-day Xinjiang) seeking not only allies but also an alternative supplier of horses. The famous episode of the mission of Zhang Qian (d.c. 114 BC) well exemplifies this point. Although he failed in the primary aim to seek an alliance with the Yuezhi against the Xiongnu, Zhang Qian brought back the information about horses in the Ferghana valley, described as 'blood-sweating horses' (汗血馬), which greatly inspired Emperor Wu. Later, Emperor Wu successfully acquired thousands of these horses around 100 BCE.¹³³ In the several centuries following the fall of the Han, northern China was ruled by various regimes of steppe peoples. One of the most powerful was the Tuoba Xianbei, who established the Northern Wei and unified northern China in 439. The Xianbei, as a steppe people renowned for their cavalry skill, perfectly managed their horse

¹³² Whitfield 2020, 505.

¹³³ For the visual depiction of horses in the Han arts, see Cooke 2000, 136-137. The superiority of the horses of the Xiongnu over those of China was clearly recognized as shown by the statement of a Han official Chao Cuo 晁錯(ca.200-154BCE); 'In climbing up and down mountains and crossing ravines and mountain torrents, the horses of China cannot compare with those of the Xiongnu'(Whitfield 2020, 506).

supply, taking advantage of their control of good pastures in the Mongolian steppes. However, according to Muller, after the Xianbei rulers moved their capital south from Datong to Luoyang in the late fifth century, the Northern Wei government ceded control of some of the northern pasturelands and they moved into private ownership.¹³⁴

When the Tang unified China taking over the short-lived Sui, the Tang was said to have had only a stock of 5,000 horses. However, from this modest start, the number of horses abruptly increased to 706,000 in the mid-seventh century.¹³⁵ Looking at this achievement, we can say that the Tang was one of the rare cases in which the Chinese managed the horse supply expertly and could maintain large cavalries, albeit temporarily. To achieve this success, the Tang made various efforts, such as importing good breeding stock, employing skilled horse breeders from neighbouring Turkic and Mongolian lands, introducing specialised fodder, and actively trading with steppe neighbours, the Turkic groups in the seventh century and later the Uighur, from whom the Tang obtained horses in exchange for silk.¹³⁶ But, above all, as Skaff discusses, this success in securing horse supplies should be attributed to the achievement of the Tang in extending control over the good pasturelands in the China-Inner Asia borderlands and the establishment of ranches

¹³⁴ Muller 2009.

¹³⁵ Skaff 2017, 42.

¹³⁶ Skaff 2012, 266.

there for breeding horses.¹³⁷ The number of horses decreased to 24,000 in the early eighth century and devastatingly plummeted when the Tang lost most of the borderland ranches during the An Lushan rebellion.¹³⁸ The latter half of the Tang and the following Chinese dynasties, the Song (960-1279) and the Ming (1368-1644), again had difficulties breeding strong horses by themselves and had to rely on imports, while the Yuan empire (1279-1368) established by the Mongolian steppe people, of course, managed their horse supply by controlling steppe pastures as part of their territory and using their expertise and experience of horse breeding.¹³⁹

The success in securing horse supplies was made possible by the Tang's strong army and the active economic exchanges along the borders. Then, in turn, the good supply of horses made the cavalries of the Tang strong and led to further military excellence and economic prosperity. Also, horses were not just a matter of numbers. Horses were an essential part of the life of the Tang ruling elite. They not only fought on horseback, but also enjoyed dressage, polo, and hunting. Their love of horses was expressed in various forms of art, as I will discuss below. To sum up the argument, the fundamental difficulties mainly derived from the climate, the use of land for cropping and deficiencies of nutritional minerals in the soil that contributed to long-

¹³⁷ Skaff 2017, 36.

¹³⁸ Skaff 2017, 46.

¹³⁹ During the Song dynasty period, the major pastures in the north were occupied by the semi-nomadic Khitan and later taken by the Liao (Whitfield 2020, 510). For an overview of the period after the Tang, see Whitfield 2020, 509-511.

term struggles for horses throughout the history of Chinese dynasties, including the Tang. The period of the first half of the Tang, though, is distinguished from other periods in that the rulers successfully, at least to some extent, secured the supply of horses by controlling the good pastures in the borderlands; they also developed a horse culture deeply related to the elite life. These two points are vital aspects of the history of the first half of the Tang. The universal use of riding dress should be understood from this perspective.

2.2.2. The steppe origin of the ruling house

The closeness to the horse culture among the Tang elite was evident partly as an outcome of influence from the origins of the Tang imperial family. The Tang dynasty, like its predecessors, the Northern Zhou and the Sui, was ruled by a family of hereditary warriors originally from border areas. The founder of the Tang dynasty, Li Yuan 李淵 (566—635 CE), was of Xianbei-Chinese descent and intermarried with Xianbei aristocrats.¹⁴⁰ The Li were typical frontier people, even though they made all kinds of efforts to disguise their non-Han Chinese ancestry and present themselves as the representative of the Han people and thus as the worthy inheritor of the Han dynasty.¹⁴¹ In addition to their background, the geopolitical power balance

¹⁴⁰ Li Yuan's ancestor served at the Northern Zhou court. He descended from the Xianbei on the maternal line and married a Xianbei. His son, the famous Emperor Taizong, was, therefore, of mixed Xianbei-Chinese descent and later married the Xianbei Empress Dugu.

¹⁴¹ The imperial family made a claim of Hanness by creating fictive genealogies and a birth myth of the empire and establishing it as one of the leading Han Chinese clans. They

especially during the early days of the Tang forced the Tang rulers to be deeply involved with their steppe neighbours and embrace elements of steppe culture. The most powerful and influential among the neighbours was the Türks.¹⁴²

The second emperor, Taizong, is a notable example of personal immersion in aspects of steppe culture, especially Turkic culture. He was a master of the pastoral way of combat, leading light cavalry, which brought him successive military achievements. He was skilled with horses, bow and sword, and had personally led his troops into combat, often placing himself at the front of a decisive charge.¹⁴³ His closeness with the Türks is demonstrated also by the process by which he gained the throne. Taizong, or Li Shimin 李世民 as a prince, had sworn personal oaths of blood brotherhood with Turkic associates, and his *coup d'état* was ratified with a horse sacrifice drawn directly from Turkish ritual practice. When he finally defeated the Eastern Turks in 630, he proclaimed himself the “Heavenly Qaghan” of the Turkic people. The emperor was the leader of steppe tribes as Heavenly Qaghan and, at the same time, the heir of the Han political tradition as the Son of Heaven to the Chinese

supported the indigenous Chinese religion of Daoism as the official state religion and carried out traditional Chinese Confucian rites to legitimise their rule. However, their ancestry, cultural practices and geographic focus were strongly oriented toward Inner Asia. For a discussion of the dual nature of the Li family’s cultural background, see Abramson 2008.

¹⁴² I will discuss the history of the Türks and their tangled relationships with the Tang in Subsection 2.3.1.

¹⁴³ Taizong’s love of horses is well expressed in the portraits of his favourite six horses at his tomb, Zhaoling. See Subsection 2.2.3.

world. These episodes, the emphasis on charismatic leadership at military scenes, the use of adoptive kinship, and ritual borrowing from steppe customs, all illustrate Taizong's familiarity with steppe culture.¹⁴⁴

2.2.3. Love of horses among the Tang elite

Against such a background, emperors and high officials of the court were familiar with horses. They made riding their primary means of transport.¹⁴⁵ Great importance was attached to equestrian skills.¹⁴⁶ Tang princes and princesses had to learn to ride while young.¹⁴⁷ Horses and horse riding were important aspects of the lives of the Tang elite. Their love of horses is well expressed in the culmination of horse-related art in the Tang period in a variety of forms: painting, figurines, reliefs, carving on mirrors, and poems.

The most representative is a set of six large stone panels, known as the Six Chargers of Emperor Taizong (Fig. 2.1). These works were commissioned by the emperor and set up outside his tomb, the Zhaoling, near Xi'an. The panels depict the

¹⁴⁴ According to Chen Sanping, they spoke a mixed Türk-Xianbei language at home, but they were equally proficient in classical Chinese (Chen 2012).

¹⁴⁵ This is notable, if compared with the previous period when riding was sometimes regarded as a rather undignified method of transportation for the high elite (Cooke 2000, 49). Cooke points out that the development of horse equipment was one element that encouraged the Tang elite to ride.

¹⁴⁶ Riding itself was a jealously guarded privilege. An imperial edict issued in 667 prohibited artisans and tradesmen from riding horses (Harrist 1997, 22).

¹⁴⁷ Wright 1976, 20.

portraits of six horses that were Taizong's favourite battle chargers. For each of the panels, Taizong himself composed a short text, describing the characteristics of a horse, its name, colour and markings.¹⁴⁸ In addition to describing the characteristics, Taizong, in the texts, emphasised the important roles of these horses in his life and career by citing the battles in which he rode them and the enemies he vanquished. The reliefs of Taizong's horses are novel in that they are portraits of real horses. Taizong was not the first one to place images of horses at his tomb. There are ample precedents in ancient burials, such as horse sacrifices along with chariots during the Shan period, the bronze horses and chariots at the Qin Shi Huang mausoleum,¹⁴⁹ and ceramic horses and riders in tombs from the Han through the Tang dynasty.¹⁵⁰ However, according to Harrist, there is no evidence that preceding images of horses were intended to represent specific, named animals.¹⁵¹ The Six Chargers and Taizong's personal feelings about the horses expressed in the art epitomise how

¹⁴⁸ These texts were inscribed on the stone reliefs in the calligraphy of Ouyang Xun (557-641). They are believed to be based on designs by Yan Ligen (ca. 600-674), the foremost painter of Taizong's reign, who frequently depicted notable events at court and made portraits of Taizong's favoured ministers. When the relief panels, each nearly six feet tall, were new, like most early sculptures, they were brightly painted. Of even more significance for the history of painting, the images of Taizong's horses mark the beginning of a genre of horse portraiture practised at the Tang court and at the courts of later dynasties (Harrist 1997, 19).

¹⁴⁹ The Qin Shi Huang mausoleum has yielded horses made of terracotta as well.

¹⁵⁰ For horse art during the Han period, see Cooke2000, 34-138.

¹⁵¹ Harrist 1997, 19.

horses mattered to the Tang rulers.¹⁵² Horses of good quality signified the owner's power, status and military might.

A genre of horse portraiture, whose beginning was marked by the Six Chargers, became popular at the Tang court in the following years. Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-756), another well-known horse lover, commissioned many portraits of his favourite steeds, one of which is a short handscroll titled *Night-Shining White* (Fig. 2.2), attributed to Han Gan (c. 706-783), a leading horse painter of the period. The performance of 100 specially trained dancing horses at Xuanzong's birthday celebration in 729 was, in the phrase of Cooke, "a living symbol of the glory of Xuanzong's court and the grandeur of the Tang equestrian culture."¹⁵³

My aim in reviewing the horse-themed art here is, first, to highlight the importance of horses to the Tang elite life. Secondly and more importantly, I want to show that riding dress was almost always worn in the depiction of horse-related activities. The Six Chargers are riderless and just allude to the presence of Taizong, but one panel of a horse named *Autumn Dew* appears with a man, General Qin

¹⁵² Taizong was involved with the horse administration. Taizong showed favour towards relatively low-ranking men because of their horse expertise and personally inspected some of the breeding ranches. Xuanzong, another horse lover, also get actively involved with horse administration (Skaff 2017, 48-49).

¹⁵³ Cooke 2000, 54.

Xinggong (585-665), who is removing an arrow from the horse's chest (Fig. 2.1).¹⁵⁴ General Qin is depicted wearing a kind of riding dress with a belt from which a quiver is hung.

A painting entitled 'Pasturing Horses' (Fig. 2.3) illustrates a panoramic view of a large herd of horses, probably in one of the Tang imperial pastures. The over-four-meter-long scroll consisting of over 140 figures and 1200 horses, is Li Gonglin's (ca. 1041-1106) remake of a painting by Wei Yan (active from the late seventh to the early eighth century), who served at the court of Xuanzong. The mounted herders are all depicted wearing riding dress (Fig. Fig. 2.4).

Besides the battle scene and the pastureland scene, aristocratic amusements, such as hunting, pleasure outings and equestrian sports, became the subjects of paintings, depicting riders donning riding dress. A hand scroll painting, entitled Lady Guoguo and Her sisters Setting Forth on an Outing (Fig. 2.5), depicts three sisters of the famous concubine Yang Guifei (d. 756) on a mounted excursion. This painting is believed to be a copy of a work of Zhang Xuan (active ca. 714-42), a famous painter during Xuanzong's reign. The painting is well known because of the three female riders beautifully dressed in foreign costumes and the expensively decorated horse trappings with ornamented bridles, red tassels, and richly patterned

¹⁵⁴ According to historical records, the horse was being ridden by Emperor Taizong during a great siege when an arrow pierced the horse's breast, and the emperor was forced to exchange horses with his general, Qiu Xinggong.

saddle blankets. My focus is rather on the attendants: three eunuchs, all of whom wear riding dress with the *futou* hairstyle.¹⁵⁵ The most popular equestrian activities among aristocrats were polo and hunting. These activities were not just for fun but also served as practical training in equestrian skills. The wall paintings in the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai (654–684), present a vivid scene of polo, in which riders are chasing a small ball (Fig. 2.6), and a hunting scene (Fig. 2.6). In both scenes, the mounted riders all wear riding dress.¹⁵⁶

Given that horses were important in the various aspects of the elite life, wearing riding dress as a standard attire was a natural choice for the Tang elite. Riding dress fitted their lifestyle featuring and valuing equestrian activities well.

2.3. Interethnic political networking

2.3.1. Multi-polar Eurasia and reconsidering the cosmopolitanism of the Tang

Cosmopolitanism, defined as “openness to foreigners and their diverse ways of life” according to Lewis, is a word commonly used to describe an essential nature of Tang society in its first half.¹⁵⁷ The enthusiasm for foreigners was prominent, particularly in the cities. Many foreigners, including Turks, Uyghurs, Sogdians, and

¹⁵⁵ According to Harrant, they are eunuchs (1997, 25). Two maids also wear riding dress.

¹⁵⁶ I will give a more detailed discussion of polo and hunting in the context of the common culture of the Eurasian aristocrats in Section 2.4.

¹⁵⁷ Lewis 2009, 147.

other Central Asian groups, set up residence or temporarily stayed in the empire as envoys, merchants, performers, soldiers, students and pilgrims etc.¹⁵⁸ Intermarriages with foreigners were usual for Chinese of both high and low social status.¹⁵⁹ Reflecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of residents, the capital city of Chang'an had institutions of various religions, such as Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity, Daoism, and Manichaeism. People, especially aristocrats and wealthy people, all followed fashions in foreign art, music, and clothing.¹⁶⁰ Such cosmopolitanism has been generally attributed to Tang's military, economic and political prosperity and the open-minded attitude of the ruling elite.

However, it is, if not a mistake, one-sided to simply link the multicultural and multi-ethnic nature to the prosperity of the empire and the tolerant mind of the ruling class. We should consider strategic necessity as a background. The Tang had no choice but to get deeply involved in the fierce clashes among empires and states in Eastern Eurasia. Indeed, the Tang empire was troubled with incessant military

¹⁵⁸ According to Hansen, "The center of the foreign quarter was the Western Market, around which clustered Changan's sizable foreign population – sometimes estimated at one-third of the city's total population" (2000, 205).

¹⁵⁹ Hansen 2000, 191.

¹⁶⁰ For example, the performance of a Turkic actress was hosted in the emperor's palace; a prince, a son of Emperor Taizong, insisted on speaking only Turkish; women at court enjoyed wearing tight dresses and shawls draped over their shoulders following Central Asian style; high ranking officials patronised popular musical troupes of Central Asian women who played exotic instruments on platforms carried by camels. These examples come from Hansen 2000, 206-19. For Tang exotics, see also Schafer 1963.

conflicts, both internal and external, from its founding through to its end.¹⁶¹ Figure 2.8 shows the major conflicts and campaigns the Tang had during the seventh and eighth centuries. Instead of reviewing all these conflicts and campaigns in detail, I would like to place a special focus on the relationships with the Türks, a chief competitor of the Tang, to describe an aspect of the changing power balance of the period.

It is no exaggeration to say that the fortunes of the Tang dynasty in the first half of its rule were strongly affected by the steppe polities, among which the most powerful were the Türk empires. Not much is known about the origins of the Turks beyond what their myths allow.¹⁶² In the fifth century CE, the Türks first emerged clearly on the stage of history. Chinese sources recorded that, in 439, five hundred Türk families, bearing the surname Ashina, fled northwest from the Altai to the Rouran State, for which they engaged in ironworking. Replacing the destabilised Rouran State, the Ashina clan under the leadership of Bumin Qaghan (d. 552) and his brother Ishtemi established a powerful new Türk confederacy, the Türk Empire, in 552. Being headquartered in the Altai Mountains, the Türk Empire rapidly developed as the main power of the Eurasian steppe, stretching from Manchuria to

¹⁶¹ Skaff has offered a chronological list of attacks on the North China circuits of Hexi, Longyou, Guanwei, Hedong, and Hebei from 599 to 755 (2012, Appendix A). Twitchett's paper (2000) focuses on the Tang's relationship with Tibet as its most powerful neighbour but also gives an overview of the Tang's military foreign policy.

¹⁶² For the origins of the Turks, see Golden 2011; Findley 2005.

the Caspian Sea. The vast empire was soon divided in two for administrative purposes, however. While Bumin's son, Mughan Qaghan (r. 554—572 CE) consolidated control in the Mongolian Plateau, Ishtemi (r. 552-576), as a subordinate Qaghan, ruled over the western part of the realm, which gradually became independent. The Türk Empire officially split into the Eastern and Western Türk empires in 582.¹⁶³

During the latter half of the sixth century and the early years of the Tang after the founding, the Türk empires enjoyed an overwhelming advantage over divided China.¹⁶⁴ When he tried to consolidate his power to unify China, Li Yuan was still just one of several leading rebels and needed to seek the Turks' assistance. In a personal letter to the Qaghan, Li Yuan acknowledged his inferior status and requested the Turks' military aid against the other Chinese rebels. Li Yuan became a vassal of the Turks, and in exchange, the Turks offered horses and five hundred Turkic warriors.¹⁶⁵ Taking advantage of their superiority, the Turks manipulated the situation. They, at the same time, supported several warlord rivals of the Tang region and refugees from the Sui court, with which the Qaghan was related by marriage.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Beckwith 2009, 115-6.

¹⁶⁴ Under the Mughan Qaghan (r. 554-572), the rival Northern Zhou and Northern Qi courts sent lavish annual gifts of silk to the Turkish court in hopes of securing its support.

¹⁶⁵ Beckwith 2009, 124.

¹⁶⁶ Twitchett 2000, 123; Lewis 2009, 149.

But the tables were turned in 627. The Eastern Turkic empire became unstable due to the famines caused by disastrous weather and the discontent among subject peoples over taxation.¹⁶⁷ In 629, allied with the Xueyantuo,¹⁶⁸ the Tang destroyed the Eastern Türk Empire. Li Shimin, best known by his posthumous title Emperor Taizong, became the lord of the Türks, being granted the title of Heavenly Qaghan. The Tang also defeated the Western Türk Empire in 659. However, while Chinese forces were preoccupied with successive campaigns in the Korean peninsula during the 660s and 670s, the Tibetan empire extended its hold over Central Asia, driving the Tang out of the area. These defeats allowed the Türks to revive their empire, the so-called second Türk Empire, in 682, which lasted until destroyed by the Tang and Uyghurs in 744. The Western Turkic empire was subjugated by the Tang dynasty in 657 and continued as its vassal until its collapse in 742.

In observing such ever-changing political scenes, recent historiography has persuasively offered a view of Asia's geopolitical landscape as multi-polar, where no entity was able to dominate, displacing the more usual view of China fixed at the

¹⁶⁷ Lewis 2009, 149-50.

¹⁶⁸ The Xueyantuo was a Tiele Turkic tribe who had been subjects of the qaghan. After bringing an end to the Eastern Türks in 630 in alliance with the Tang army, the Xueyantuo contributed to Tang's expeditions to Gaochang in Central Asia in 639. However, the Tang broke with the Xueyantuo and overthrew it by building an alliance with the Uyghur, another Tiele Turkic tribe, in 646.

centre of a widespread tribute system.¹⁶⁹ This new approach has resulted in a shift of emphasis from the stereotypical view of the Tang as the glorious golden age toward the constant struggles the Tang experienced to survive in a time of quite fluid and competitive international relations. The approach has also caused a shift of focus, leading to a new interpretation of the multiethnicity of Tang society, from the Tang's tolerance toward foreign cultures and other ethnic groups to the political consideration of responding to the harsh realities.

2.3.2. Foreigners at the Tang court

To survive and have a comparative advantage, the Tang adopted a variety of strategies as was the case with the interstate relationships in contemporary Eastern Eurasia. The strategies included not only the exercise of force, but also other channels of communications and negotiations, such as lord-vassal relations,¹⁷⁰ exchanges of envoys with gifts, marriage alliances, hostage exchanges, trade, the dissemination of Tang culture, and installing puppet regimes. Such communications

¹⁶⁹ This new approach has been most representatively argued by Wang Zeping in his book "Tang China in multi-polar Asia: a history of diplomacy and war" (2013) and Jonathan Skaff in his book "Sui-Tang China and Its Tuko-Mongol Neighbors: Culture, Power, and Connections, 580-800" (2012).

¹⁷⁰ Patrimonial relationships between lord and vassal, or in other words patron and client, were a basic form of political networking throughout medieval Eastern Eurasia for not only great powers and states but also small tribal groups and individuals. The basic principle was that a client served military duties with loyalty in exchange for a patron's support and rewards. I will discuss the nature and importance of patron-client relationships in Tang politics in Section 4.1.

pushed the movement of people and human interactions and made Tang society, at all levels, but especially in the border areas and at the court, increasingly multi-ethnic.

Foreigners stayed at the Tang court for a variety of reasons. The Tang court regularly received envoys from various places in Eurasia, which included Silla (southeast Korea), Japan, Linyi (south Vietnam), Chenla (Cambodia), Srivijaya (Sumatra), the Tibetans, the Turkic empires, the Türgish, the Uyghurs, Persia, Bukhara, and Samarkand.¹⁷¹ The envoys typically brought gifts and offered submission to the Tang in seeking patronage or alliance.¹⁷² In exchange, the Tang court treated them with hospitality, offering accommodation, banquets and entertainment.¹⁷³ In the end, the envoys returned home, having gifts, Chinese titles and insignias bestowed upon them.¹⁷⁴ Hostages were another common form of foreigners' staying at the Tang court. Hostages were typically sons or brothers of client rulers, like Murong Shun (d.635) of the Tuyuhun, Sun Wangrong (d. 697) of

¹⁷¹ Exchanging envoys was a custom shared among the courts in Eurasia. Even though not as systematically well documented as the Tang's case, the Tibetan court, for example, received envoys from countries such as the Tang, the Türgish and the Nanzhao. The court of the Western Turkic empire received envoys from Byzantine and Gaochang, an oasis kingdom at Turfan.

¹⁷² For the envoys to the Tang court and their gifts, see Höllmann 2015.

¹⁷³ For the hospitality the Tang court offered when it treated foreign envoys, see Wang 2005, 103-138.

¹⁷⁴ Robes of riding dress were a common insignia given with Chinese titles. I will discuss this point in detail in Section 4.2.

the Khitan and Ashide Yuanzhen (d. c.726) of the Türks.¹⁷⁵ The value of hostages was not just security. Hostages could be useful for both sides due to their eventual bilingual and bicultural personalities. The Tang court also received elite refugees. The most famous example is the exile of Sasanian king Peroz III to Chang'an on the verge of the collapse of the Sassanid empire due to the Arab invasion.

Besides the court at the capital, the borderland area was also the locus of interactions. For example, as a result of the defeat of the Türks in 630, many Turkic peoples and Türks came under the rule of the Tang, while some migrated westward in disgust at being integrated. According to Golden, on this occasion, as many as one million steppe people surrendered and settled on China's northern frontier.¹⁷⁶ To practically incorporate such foreign dwellers in the borderlands, the Tang adopted the 'loose-rein' or 'bridle' system (*jimi* 羈縻), which is an indirect mode of administration.¹⁷⁷ 'Bridle' prefectures were autonomous districts. The internal affairs were handled by their indigenous leaders, who were endowed with a Chinese title and worked as officials for the Tang government.¹⁷⁸ The prefectures were often

¹⁷⁵ While Murong Shun was installed as a qaghan with the backing of the Tang in 635, both Sun Wangrong and Ashide Yuanzhen later rebelled against the Tang using their knowledge of the Chinese language and Tang military (Skaff 2012, 131).

¹⁷⁶ Golden 2011, 41.

¹⁷⁷ For an account of the 'loose-rein' or 'bridle' system (*jimi* 羈縻), see Lewis 2009, 28-29; Skaff 2012, 61-62.

¹⁷⁸ Among the bridle officials, powerful ones came to the Tang court and went on to successful careers as high-ranking military officials.

beyond the direct supervision of the central government and even exempted from tribute, taxes, and providing census records to the Ministry of Revenue.¹⁷⁹

According to Lewis, bridle prefectures largely served as a buffer zone between the Tang and the truly hostile 'barbarians'.¹⁸⁰ However, in the event of military conflicts, the tribal groups living in the borderlands served a more specific and instrumental role, that is, as a source of highly skilled cavalry soldiers equipped with their own horses. Adopting Turkic practices, Emperor Taizong organised and commanded the less armoured and highly mobile cavalries, which contrasted with the heavily armoured cavalries employed by the northern dynasties and the Sui.¹⁸¹ Throughout the first half of the Tang, cavalry forces played a major role in the expeditions.¹⁸² To make cavalry forces operate efficiently, it was important to incorporate the steppe people, who were skilled cavalymen with knowledge of keeping and training horses. Encouraged by the Tang policies, many military men from the borderland were employed temporarily on Tang campaigns or moved permanently to Tang territory. Taking advantage of their knowledge of nomadic political and military traditions, they contributed to bringing victories over other steppe peoples. An example is Ashina She'er, who used to be a member of the Türk

¹⁷⁹ The Ministry of Revenue was in charge of population and land censures, assessment and collection of taxes.

¹⁸⁰ Lewis 2009, 29.

¹⁸¹ Graff 2002, 176.

¹⁸² Twitchett 2000, 134.

royal clan. After he surrendered to the Tang in 635, he served as a commander of the Tang expeditionary army. He led cavalry forces and his contribution was considerable in conquering Kucha, which had been a vassal of the Western Türks.¹⁸³ The presence of foreign mercenaries increased in border defence through such military recruiting.¹⁸⁴

It was not only on the borderlands but also in the central court that powerful frontier officials enhanced their presence. Some came to Chang'an and attended ceremonies. They were given Chinese court titles and integrated into the court hierarchy. After the system of military governors (*jiedushi* 節度使) was introduced in 710 for the reorganisation of the frontier armies,¹⁸⁵ this tendency of the increasing presence of frontier military elite at the central court developed even more. With the gradual concentration of power in the hands of military governors, they placed much greater value on staying at the court rather than serving on military duty in the frontier areas. According to Lewis, "most military governors held concurrent posts as civilian officials of high rank and regarded their time in the military as a means of obtaining a higher post in the central government. All military governors of the northeast before An Lushan served as chief ministers in the capital at least once in their careers, and as military governors for a relatively brief period, typically no more

¹⁸³ Skaff 2009.

¹⁸⁴ Lewis 2009, 46-48, 152.

¹⁸⁵ For an overview of the military governor system and its historical significance, see Moribe 2013, 39-41.

than four years.”¹⁸⁶ The most famous and flamboyant example of the career of a military governor is offered by An Lushan, the Turko-Sogdian frontier general.¹⁸⁷ While he had built a successful career as a governor of Fanyang Circuit and Pinglu, he managed to get the favour of Chancellor Li Linfu and Emperor Xuanzong at the court but ended in launching a devastating rebellion against the empire in 755. The large-scale reliance on foreign troops helped achieve security, but ultimately lead to the An Lushan rebellion. The expansion of the cavalry armies and the increasing presence of members of the military elite from the borderland areas at the court are two important factors, which must have contributed to accelerating the universalisation of riding dress.

To sum up, foreigners of various origins stayed at the Tang court. They, including envoys and frontier military generals, received court titles and entered the hierarchy of the Tang court, whether nominal or substantial. The Tang also needed such foreigners against the background of fluid and competitive interstate relations. Given that such interethnic political networking was the norm of Tang politics, they needed a visual symbol of status and office that could be commonly acknowledged by members of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I suggest that riding dress

¹⁸⁶ Lewis 2009, 48.

¹⁸⁷ For an overview of the life of An Lushan and the historical significance of the An Lushan rebellion, see Moribe 2013.

served this role. I will discuss the use of riding dress, more specifically robes and belts, as a common investiture regalia in detail in Chapter 4.

2.4. The Eurasian aristocratic culture

2.4.1. Court diplomacy

Referring to the unprecedented level of interactions across medieval Eurasia, Peter Brown suggests that there was an intervisibility from one end of Eurasia to the other for the first time in world history.¹⁸⁸ The polities recognised the presence of each other through direct and indirect communications and competitively ranked each other in complex hierarchies. This inevitably led to the inclusion of foreigners into their views of the world, which were symbolically expressed in spatial arrangements at court rituals and in royal arts, especially in monumental representations. For example, the inclusion of statues of foreigners was an innovation in imperial tomb design in Tang China.¹⁸⁹ At the Zhaoling Mausoleum, the tomb of the Emperor Taizong (r. 626-49), there used to be 14 statues of foreign kings, flanking the path to the north of the altar inside the north gate, though the statues remain only partially now (Fig. 2.9). In the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai (653-684), murals of foreign emissaries lined the passage that led to the central tomb chamber (Figs. 2.9; 2.10). At the Qianling Mausoleum, the tomb of Gaozong (d. 683) and Wu

¹⁸⁸ Brown 2014, 20.

¹⁸⁹ I will discuss the representations of foreigners in more detail in Chapter 3.

Zetian (d. 705), there used to be 64 life-sized statues of foreign dignitaries, of which 61 have survived and cluster at the ritually appropriate place (Figs. 2.12; 2.13). Just like envoys visiting the court, they wait outside the monument's inner wall, which symbolically corresponds to the gatehouse of the actual imperial city. Another example is the throne room of the Sasanian king. According to a textual description, in the room, the golden chairs for the Chinese, Roman and Hephthalite kings were placed on the right, left, and rear of the throne of the Sasanian king, and below the throne were the chairs for governors and nobles. The Sasanian king, as Canepa argues, “appears to have also used the symbolic arrangement of golden chairs around his central thrones to provide a tangible experience of the ideal world order according to the Sasanian royal imagination, creating from the chairs a ritual map of the known political world in his throne room.”¹⁹⁰ In both examples in Tang and Sassanid Persia, foreigners or statues of foreigners were positioned according to their relative importance to the imperial centres and served as a tool to highlight the rulers’ far-reaching power at the apex of the hierarchies of diverse powers.

The process of close interactions eventually promoted and supported the convergence of cultural elements among elites from culturally and ethnically diverse regions of Eurasia. The common aspects of the Eurasian diplomatic rituals and underlying political ideology are well surveyed by Jonathan Skaff.¹⁹¹ The strong

¹⁹⁰ Canepa 2009, 143.

¹⁹¹ Skaff 2012, especially Chapter 5.

patrimonial elements, including the creation of splendid courts, pageantry, status ranking, display of obeisance, hospitality, gift exchanges, drinking and feasting, were ubiquitously present across Eurasia from Japan to Europe and lubricated interstate relations. Steppe polities were no exception. For example, in 568, the Türk ruler, Ishtemi Qaghan, sent an embassy of Sogdians and Türks to the Byzantine emperor Justin to discuss an alliance against Sasanian Iran. The Byzantine historian, Menander the Protector mentioned that Ishtemi's envoys handed over gifts of valuable raw silk and a diplomatic letter. When the Türk envoys returned, Justin dispatched his general Zemarchus to travel with them to continue negotiations with Ishtemi. Upon his arrival, Zemarchus and his retinue were treated to feasting and drinking parties for the first two days. Zemarchus presented gifts to Ishtemi, and later, when part of Zemarchus's retinue departed, Ishtemi gave them gifts in return.¹⁹² With this anecdote, Skaff explains that their meetings went smoothly because they shared common assumptions about hosting diplomatic visitors at court, with banquets and gift exchanges.¹⁹³

Their shared diplomatic rituals had a great emphasis on visual splendour. Matthew Canepa, with a special focus on the visual aspect of kingship, theorises the formation of international aristocratic common cultures among elites across late

¹⁹² Menander 1985, 115, 119, 121.

¹⁹³ Skaff 2012, 149.

antique Eurasia.¹⁹⁴ According to Canepa, in parallel with the competitive interactions in politics, visual culture was also a field of competition and dialogue between Eurasian elites. They all created splendid courts by cultivating “grand architectural settings, rich visual and sartorial experiences, and complex systems of ritual” to display their power and negotiate their identity with their allies and foes. Appealing to audiences from varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds, they eagerly and selectively incorporated aspects of one another’s visual and ritual material into their own culture and practices.¹⁹⁵ As Canepa argues, ‘at the highest level of exchange, the cultural material that moved between courts was itself potently significant and carried a message or meaning that persistently challenged the recipients, tempting them to integrate it or demanding that they defuse and counter it.’¹⁹⁶ The common use of riding dress among Eurasian elites, the centre of the discussion, must be understood in the context of such elite-level, multicultural diplomatic interaction.

The creation of splendidly decorated courts was a common feature of Eurasian diplomacy. The sedentary empires, such as the Byzantine, Sasanian and Tang empires, created monumental architecture that impressed both domestic and foreign audiences with the imperial power. Steppe polities, as well, held court in a mobile form; a beautifully decorated tent that could often be huge and accommodate more

¹⁹⁴ Canepa 2010.

¹⁹⁵ Canepa 2010, 127.

¹⁹⁶ Canepa 2010, 123.

than one hundred. Menander the Protector noted how lavishly decorated the Turkic courts were with gold and silk. “Ishtemi held audiences for the Byzantine ambassador Zemarchus in three different locations. The first was in a tent where Ishtemi was seated on a golden throne with two wheels that allowed it to be drawn by a horse. The interior of the tent was decorated with silk hangings. On the next day, they met in a yurt with silk hangings, statues, golden urns, water-sprinklers and … golden pitchers, where Ishtemi sat on a pure gold divan. On the third day they met in what may have been a permanent dwelling with gilded wooden pillars and a couch of beaten gold which was supported by golden peacocks.”¹⁹⁷ Half a century later in the seventh century, Xuanzang, a Chinese Buddhist monk, was also astounded at the dazzling beauty of a large tent decorated with gold ornaments, when he met Ton Yabghu, the Western Türk Qaghan.¹⁹⁸

2.4.2. The riding dress worn by the Eurasian elite

Besides the architecture and interior decoration, the body was also an essential component of the splendour of court display, beautified with luxurious items, such as silk robes, headgear, adornments made of precious materials, and bejewelled belts and personal weapons. Among them, luxurious versions of riding dress made of silk were a common item worn by Eurasian elites. Visual depictions give us glimpses of how riding dress fitted into court activities simultaneously at

¹⁹⁷ Menander 1985, 119-21. Skaff 2012, 150.

¹⁹⁸ DCES 2:27.

different places in Eurasia. An example of a scene of court diplomacy is the hand scroll painting that depicts Emperor Taizong and the Tibetan envoy Mgar, who was at the Tang court to escort a Tang princess being sent to marry the Tibetan ruler (Fig. 2.14).¹⁹⁹ At this formal and honourable moment, Mgar is depicted in a riding dress made of a beautifully patterned red textile, most likely silk.²⁰⁰ Taizong himself is also probably wearing riding dress, though his dress is not fully visible because of his sitting posture. Another example of court diplomacy is illustrated on the western wall of Afrasiab, in which a court ceremony was being held by the local king of Samarkand (Fig. 2.15). Foreign envoys and attendants from different places, such as Tang, Turks, and Iranians, are wearing riding dress.²⁰¹

Examples of depictions of riding dress can be also found in the scenes of feasting at court. Feasting was politically important in both domestic and diplomatic contexts, as an occasion for aristocrats to impress their guests with generosity and benevolence, their wealth and abundance, which gave legitimacy to their rule. In this way, feasting helped build the patron-client relationship, which was the key social bond in medieval Eurasia.²⁰² In discussing the political relationship between the Roman and Sasanian empires, Canepa argues the crucial importance of feasting as a

¹⁹⁹ For a detailed description of the painting, see pp.112-114.

²⁰⁰ For the textile of the robe of Mgar, see pp.113-114.

²⁰¹ For a detailed discussion about the murals at Afrasiab, see pp.124-128.

²⁰² Skaff discusses this aspect of the political importance of feasting as a patrimonial element (2012, 154-5).

“political spectacle,” that included not only abundant food and wine, but also luxurious vessels, fine table services, distributing gifts, dancing, music, theatrical and military spectacles, and hunting. According to Canepa, “the protocol and various elements of the feast formed yet another common focus of competition, display, and debate. The attendance, seating, and dining arrangements represented, in a tangible form, the ideals and power relations of both courts’ social world.”²⁰³ In a parallel fashion, Skaff focuses on the importance of feasting in diplomacy in medieval Eastern Eurasia, referring to anecdotes about feasts held by Tang emperors and steppe rulers.²⁰⁴ Conspicuous visual examples of feasting include the murals in Balayk-tepe in Bactria, dating to the end of the sixth century or the beginning of the seventh century (Fig. 2.16),²⁰⁵ and those in the ruins of Penjikent, a Sogdian city that reached its height at the beginning of the eighth century (Fig. 2.17).²⁰⁶ Both murals depict figures seated on a carpet, holding gold or silver cups.²⁰⁷ The figures all wear riding

²⁰³ Canepa 2009, 182. For a more detailed description of the patron-client bond, see Skaff 2012, 75-91.

²⁰⁴ Skaff 2012, 154-5.

²⁰⁵ Al’baum 1960, Bekenitskij and Marshak 1979, 35.

²⁰⁶ For an excavation report of the ruins of Pendjikent, see Belenitskii et al. 1977, Belenitskii and Marshak 1973. For wall painting in Sogdian cities including Pendjikent, see Azarpay 1981, Belenitskii and Marshak 1971, 1981.

²⁰⁷ For the importance of gold and silver vessels for feasting and as a part of the Eurasian common aristocratic culture, see Jiemin Fang (2017). According to Fang, the specific manner of holding vessels with the thumb and the index finger was widespread across West and Central Asia and called the aristocratic mannerism. Gold and silver vessels, along with the aristocratic’ mannerism, were indispensable to each other in the representation of distinction and prestige.

dress made of beautifully patterned silk and other items including belts, and accessories, all of which testify to their high status.

Examples of the use of riding dress were observed in equestrian activities. I draw attention, especially to polo and hunting. I have already mentioned these two activities as the favourites of the Tang elite, but they were also practised commonly by many Eurasian elites, sometimes combined with diplomatic ceremonies. Although its exact origins are unknown, polo probably first became popular among aristocrats in the Iranian world during the period of the Parthian empire.²⁰⁸ It was an important pastime in the court of the Sasanian Empire and spread both eastward and westward, which was confirmed by the presence of polo courts in the palace grounds of Constantinople and Chang'an.²⁰⁹ Polo attracted nobles by its qualities, such as “the challenge of managing horse and polo stick simultaneously, the excitement of speed, and the thrill of pursuit,” but it was also valued as good cavalry training.²¹⁰ The enthusiasm for polo amongst the Tang nobles, including emperors, members of the royal family, and not only men but also women, during the first half of the Tang

²⁰⁸ Bower 1991, 24.

²⁰⁹ The exact timing and the route of the introduction of polo into China is not known, but the popularity of polo in the early Tang period is generally associated with the settlement of the Sasanian prince Peroz (active ca. 638-677) in the Tang capital of Chang'an in the 670s and the craze for Iranian culture at the Tang court. The timing of the introduction of polo into the Roman Empire is not as well known. Canepa suggests that Theodosius's reign (408-450) is the logical point of entry for polo into the Roman court, when the Tzykanisterion, a polo field, was first built on the southeastern part of the palace precincts (2009, 180).

²¹⁰ Bower 1991, 44.

period is testified by depictions in tomb murals, ceramic figurines and mirror decorations and references in poems and historical texts.²¹¹ A most exciting depiction is the wall painting in the tomb of Li Xian, Crown Prince Zhanghuai (654–684), which presents a vivid scene of polo with more than 20 riders, five of whom were fiercely galloping and fighting over a small ball (Fig. 2.6). The riders are depicted wearing riding dress fastened with a black belt. Polo was also a part of diplomatic communication, as recorded by an anecdote in the *Jiu Tang Shu*; when a Tibetan delegation visited Chang'an in 709 in connection with the marriage of a Tang princess to the Tibetan king, the Tibetans played polo with Tang royals at a polo field within the palace on the orders of emperor Zhongzong.²¹²

In addition to polo, hunting was commonly practised by Eurasian elites.²¹³ Canepa discusses how important hunting was for both Roman and Sasanian sovereigns as not only a popular royal pastime but also a part of the diplomatic exchange between the two.²¹⁴ The Sasanian kings kept hunting fields that contained thousands of wild and domestic animals, at magnificent palaces at Ctesiphon, Dastagerd, Qaṣr-e Širin, and Ṭāq-e Bostān. Roman emperors also maintained hunting lodges in the vicinity of Constantinople. Royal hunts, often with foreign

²¹¹ For both visual and textual references to polo, see Bower (1991) and Liu (1985). In the latter half of the Tang period, polo became less popular and criticism by Confucius scholars more evident.

²¹² Bower 1991, 26.

²¹³ For a general history of royal hunts in Eurasia through history, see Allsen (2006).

²¹⁴ Canepa 2009, 174-80.

envoys involved, were grand events to display the sovereign's power through "the creation of this perfect paradisiacal space, the marshalling of human and animal resources (such as multiple elephants), and the inclusion of refined activities such as feasting and listening to music."²¹⁵ The most vivid depiction of a royal hunt as a spectacle is found in the rock reliefs at Tāq-e Bostān, in which Kosrow II is depicted wearing a riding dress with patterns of simurghs and flowers holding a set of bow and arrow in his hands (Fig. 2.18).²¹⁶

In the case of China, though a hunting scene was a common artistic motif already in the Han period, they gained a renewed interest in the Tang period with more exotic connotations, by using foreign animals, such as cheetahs and camels, as depicted in a wall painting of the tomb of Li Xian (Fig. 2.19).²¹⁷ The mounted hunters in the painting all wear riding dress. Hunting sometimes served as an opportunity for diplomatic interactions. Emperors and Tang nobles hunted together with foreign guests, as in 631 when Emperor Taizong hosted a grand hunt for his foreign guests and in 725 when Xuanzong did the same on the journey to Mount Tai.²¹⁸ Besides the

²¹⁵ Canepa 2009, 176.

²¹⁶ For an analysis of the costumes in the Reliefs of Taq-i-Bustan, see Peck 1969. Besides such hunting scenes as a group activity, the motif of royal hunters was common in Sasanian art, especially on silver plates.

²¹⁷ For a discussion and description of the hunting scene of the Li Xian's tomb, see Eckfeld 2005, 114-8.

²¹⁸ Skaff 2012, 147-8.

formalised contacts at court, hunting outside together could allow them to get closer, through competitively displaying martial skills, pursuing prey, and feasting together.

Chapter 3

Formation of a common identity

3.1. The dual nature of the visual scheme of depicting foreigners

This chapter considers the role of riding dress in creating and expressing identities in the context of the multi-ethnic nature of Tang politics. In so doing, a special focus is given to the visual depiction of foreigners in the art of the Tang.²¹⁹ In the visual representations, riding dress serves as a common feature joining foreigners and the Han instead of a marker of difference. This is significant because, generally speaking, in visual representations, clothing tends to serve as a stereotypical feature that distinguishes foreigners from non-foreigners. For example, in ancient Greek art, the close-fitting body suit is considered a marker of barbarians in contrast with draped Greek garments.²²⁰ Clothing is also used for distinguishing multiple ethnic groups. For example, in the Persepolis relief of the Achaemenid empire, tribute bearers of more than 20 tribes are depicted. They are distinguished by their robes,

²¹⁹ To denote the fundamental ethnic geography during the Tang, I simply use the terms ‘the Han’ and ‘foreigners’, that is, non-Han. Various terms were historically used; such as Hua (华), Zhuhua (诸华) and Xia (夏) for the Han, and hu (胡), fan(番), man(蠻) and yi(夷) for foreigners. I avoid these terms because of the evaluative connotations that contrast the civilised and normative self and non-normative and uncivilised others. For a more detailed explanation of the terminology, see Abramson 2008, 23.

²²⁰ Lee 2015, 120.

together with other elements such as headdresses and tribute items in their hands. In the case of the early Tang visual culture, however, clothing is not included in the repertoire of stereotypical features of foreigners. As Marc Samuel Abramson pointed out, what distinguishes foreigners from Han people is primarily physiognomies, gestures and hairstyles, rather than clothing.

Foreigners, typically grooms, guardians, entertainers, visiting envoys and tribal leaders offering tribute to the Tang, notably became a subject of interest in early Tang visual representation, appearing as mortuary figurines in tomb murals, and in sculptures and paintings.²²¹ They are constructed consciously with a set of particular visual vocabularies to mark them as foreign. One of the most stereotypical features is a combination of deep eyes, a large nose and a bushy beard, which was attributed primarily to inhabitants of Iranian Inner Asia but also associated with foreigners in general.²²² One of the examples of “deep eyes and high noses” is a figurine on horseback with a small hunting animal, unearthed from the tomb of

²²¹ According to Abramson, the vast majority of images of foreigners contained in mortuary art date to the first half of the Tang period, that is, before 750, rather than the latter half (2003, 147).

²²² The stereotypical features in visual representations often have their counterparts in written texts, though they do not necessarily correspond with each other. “Deep eyes and high noses” (深目高鼻 *shenmu gaobi*) is the most common phrase used to describe non-Han physiognomy in Chinese texts (Abramson 2003, 124). For example, “to the west of Gaochang, the various people of the many states have deep eyes and high noses (自高昌以西, 諸國人等深目高鼻)” WS102: 2262-2263.

Princess Jinxiang in the east suburb of Xian (Fig. 3.1).²²³ In addition to facial features, hairstyles, gestures and clothing can serve as ethnic markers. The main focus of previous scholarship in art history and archaeology has been on the differences that distinguish foreigners from the Han to confirm that the Tang aristocrats were eager to create an image of a cosmopolitan world for their afterlife.²²⁴ However, at a closer look, in most cases, foreigners are not only marked by differences but also have features that are shared with the depictions of the Han. I propose that combining both features of differences and similarities between the Han and non-Han significantly characterises the visual scheme of foreigners in the early Tang period.

An example is offered by a pair of guards painted on a tomb wall at Jinsheng village, Taiyuan, Shanxi Province dating to the Tang period (Fig. 3.2).²²⁵ The two guards facing each other are sharply contrasted by their different facial features. The typical exotic physiognomy (deep eyes, a high nose, and a bushy beard) of the left guard marks his foreignness and distinguishes him from the right guard, who is most certainly depicted as a Han. In addition to the facial features, the differences in their gestures are relevant. Both figures carry official tallies, but the non-Han figure grasps his in one hand with a sword in the other, while the Han figure holds the tally in both hands. According to Abramson, this signals “the non-Han figure’s greater martiality

²²³ Princess Jinxiang (金鄉縣主) was the third daughter of Li Yuanying, the King of Teng or the granddaughter of Emperor Gaozu. She was interred in 724.

²²⁴ Examples of such studies are Mahler 1959; Schloss 1969; Abramson 2003.

²²⁵ For an excavation report, see Shanxi Provincial Institution of Archaeology 1988.

and lack of propriety”, as “etiquette demanded holding the tally in both hands.”²²⁶ They share basic similarities in clothing and headdress. They both cover their heads with black cloth in the hairstyle, called *futou* (幘頭).²²⁷ They both wear riding dress, though they show a difference in that the foreign figure wears the dress with two lapels folded back, while the collar is fastened in the dress of the Han figure. The thin black belts and black boots are shared. In sum, the foreign guard is depicted as different from the Han in physiognomy and gestures, but he is not extremely different, sharing basic similarities in clothing and hairstyle with his counterpart.

This feature of the visual scheme, combining similarities and differences, is highlighted by a comparison with tomb arts of the Han dynasty (206BCE-220CE), where foreigners were depicted basically as totally ‘other’ with conspicuous feelings, such as disgust, hostility or awe.²²⁸ According to Zheng Yan, in visual representations

²²⁶ Abramson 2008, 210, note 34.

²²⁷ *Futou* was a most common hairstyle for both commoners and aristocrats in the Tang. It bound the hair into a knot at the top of the head with a black cloth. For more explanation, see pp.97-98.

²²⁸ The Han period is comparable to the Tang period in that foreigners and foreign affairs were of critical concern. During the Han period, the defence of border against the threat of northern mobile pastoralists, especially the Xiongnu, was a major preoccupation. Also the awareness of foreign affairs was heightened by the more frequent contacts with northern and western regions through expeditions of military or diplomatic purposes, as most typically exemplified by Zhang Jian’s expedition toward the west in the second century BCE. See, for example, Benjamin 2018, 68-90, for the diplomatic and military expansion of the Han towards Central Asia and the wars between the Han and the Xiongnu.

in the Han period, foreigners are often engaged in work, such as door guards, cattlemen, musicians or performers.²²⁹ The status of the foreigners depicted at work was generally quite low, reflecting the situation that was common at the time, as foreigners were taken as prisoners of war and became slaves or servants. For example, a foreign door guard carved on a stone slab, excavated in Fangcheng, Henan province, demonstrates the status of a low servant, with a circular mark on his face, which Zheng interprets as a tattoo of the type commonly branded on slaves as a form of punishment (Fig. 3.3).²³⁰ Foreigners are also depicted in battle scenes, being beaten brutally. The most conspicuous example is a carved stone statue of a war horse trampling a Xiongnu warrior (Fig. 3.4), found at the tomb of General Huo Qubing at the Maoling necropolis, Shaanxi province, in the Western Han period (206-8 BCE). The Xiongnu warrior, shown holding a bow and arrow, is pinned to the ground. His facial features (high cheekbones, flat nose, and sloping eyes) indicate his foreignness.²³¹ Not confined only to these cases during the Han period, but generally

Contemporary historical narratives on the Xiongnu are found in the *Shiji* (Historical Records), the *Han shu* (History of the Former Han), and the *Hou Han shu* (History of the Later Han). They basically emphasise how foreigners were different in terms of, for example, burial customs, ways of life, military culture, languages, and state crafts and rituals, with the underlying ideological dichotomy between civilised China and uncivilised foreigners. For a discussion of the historical accounts in these texts, see Di Cosmo 2002a; Chin 2010.

²²⁹ Zheng 1998, 56-57.

²³⁰ The inscription “胡奴門 (hu nu men)”, which means “gate of a barbarian servant”, also indicates that he is a low-status foreigner.

²³¹ For the drawing of the warrior’s face, see Takacs 1938.

speaking, the typical representational practice was to depict foreigners explicitly emphasising differences through sharply opposed binary extremes both in appearance in terms of skin colour, physiognomy, clothing, hairstyle, and in nature good/bad, civilised/primitive, and moral/immoral, with the negative parts always associated with foreigners.²³² Contrastingly, it was the norm that the foreigners depicted in the Tang period were intended to look like someone sharing a common ground or a member of the Tang empire in some ways. In this context, I will explore the meaning of the riding dress that serves as a shared feature between foreigners and the Han.

3.2. Case studies

3.2.1. Four components

I divide the visual representations of foreigners into two categories. The first category comprises foreign dignitaries, including emissaries and vassal leaders. They were elite-class foreigners. The second category includes foreigners engaging in various occupations and activities. By comparison with the first category, the second includes relatively low-status foreigners, such as merchants, grooms, entertainers, attendants and slaves. The first category is the main focus of the argument, in terms

²³² For a general discussion of visual depictions of foreigners, see Hall 1977, 223-290. He addresses the theme of representing difference, focusing on the variety of images of Black people on display in western popular culture and the mass media.

of the concern for the elite network in Eastern Eurasia. For this category, I examine the three case studies - the 14 dignitaries at the Zhaoling, the 61 foreign dignitaries at the Qianling and the six foreign dignitaries at the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai. After a discussion of the first category, I will also briefly describe the second category to offer a more comprehensive view and highlight the features of the first category by comparison.

To systematically analyse the complexity of the strategies in depicting foreigners, I break the visual language into four selected components: physiognomy, hairstyle (and headdress), deportment, and clothing. Before starting the case studies, I first outline how these four components could serve as markers of differences and similarities between the Han and foreigners. In so doing, I have benefited from the works of Mahler (1959) and Abramson (2003), both of whom observe many examples of visual depictions of foreigners and have collected various elements which distinguish foreigners from the Han.²³³ But my focus is different from theirs. Mahler is interested in categorising the types of depictions of foreigners and tries to identify their homelands individually, such as Khotanese, Sogdians or Uighurs, when applicable. However, my primary concern is the distinction simply between the Han and foreigners, rather than sorting out various types of foreigners. Abramson analyses the construction of the visual language of foreigners as a deviation from the

²³³ Mahler and Abramson also collect descriptions of appearances of foreigners in documentary sources.

norm. In other words, Abramson's basic interest is to show how foreigners are depicted differently from the Han. My focus is rather to highlight how foreigners are depicted as similar to the Han despite the differences between them.

Physiognomy

Exotic physiognomy is a basic strategy used in wall paintings and tomb figures to depict foreigners. "Deep eyes and high noses" combined with a thick beard is the most stereotypical depiction of foreigners. This description was applied to the inhabitants of the countries of the western regions, in particular, Iranians (Sogdians and Persians) as set out in texts. According to Abramson, these facial features were also mentioned as the typical traits of foreigners in general. Thus these facial features in visual representation might represent either a particular ethnic people, Iranians, or a type of general foreigner. One example of "deep eyes and high noses" is a figurine unearthed from the tomb of Princess Jinxiang that I mentioned above (Fig. 3.1). The thick beard, the naked shoulder and the small exotic animal could also signal the rider's foreignness. Although smaller in number, another distinct foreign physiognomic type is offered by a group of dark-skinned figures, called Kunlun in Chinese texts. Though the exact location of Kunlun is not known, with prominent eyes and curly hair, Kunlun figures are assumed to be either native inhabitants of South and Southeast Asia or blacks from Africa.²³⁴ An example is a figurine of a dark-

²³⁴ For Kunlun, see Abramson 2003, 125; Watt 2004, 312.

skinned attendant boy (Fig. 3.5), who is probably a black African, excavated from the tomb of Pei Tai in the southern suburb of Xian.²³⁵ In addition to these two types (Iranians and Kunlun), exaggerated facial features that give non-normative impressions in some ways may have been meant to distinguish multiple ethnic groups.²³⁶ But it is often difficult to categorise them and identify their origins. Equally difficult is to comprehensively summarise the typical physiognomy of the Han.

Hairstyle

In visual representations, hairstyles serve as a significant marker of ethnicity.²³⁷ Han men usually covered their hair either with ceremonial caps for high officials or, the so-called *futou* (幘頭) both for officials and commoners. There were various types of ceremonial caps according to rank and occasion. Figure 3.6 shows

²³⁵ According to Watt, “Pei Tai was a descendant of the renowned statesman Pei Xingjian (619-682) who, as Ambassador of Appeasing Dashi (Arabia), escorted the Persian prince Firuz to his homeland in 677. It is likely that these figures are representations of the African attendants her family had acquired” (2004, 313).

²³⁶ Examples of unusual physiognomic features for foreigners are discussed by Abramson, for example, red hair and green eyes (2003, 123-137).

²³⁷ According to Abramson, besides the ethnic meaning, “hairstyles and head coverings had additional significance in that they were viewed both in Inner Asia and China as markers of political allegiance and thus played a vital role in the constant negotiation between political and ethnic identities” (2003, 125-6).

examples of ceremonial caps.²³⁸ *Futou* was a cloth head covering that wrapped around the forehead and bound the hair into a forward-leaning knot at the top of the head. A black cloth was normally used.²³⁹ A group of officials with the *futou* hairstyle wearing the Tang riding dress are depicted on a mural of the tomb of Prince Yide (d. 701)(Fig. 3.7). Any other hairstyles, which differ from Chinese ceremonial caps or the *futou* hairstyle, may suggest foreignness.²⁴⁰ Uncovered hair also suggests foreignness.

Deportment

By comparison with physiognomy and hairstyle, the correlation between deportment and ethnicity seems weaker. Regardless of whether a Han or a foreign individual is represented, the deportment of a figure is defined primarily by the occupation or activity in which he is engaged, as we will see later in figures such as a groom holding reins or a polo player in action. In some cases, though, an association between deportment and foreignness can be observed. Abramson suggests that the distinction between a Han and a foreigner was correlated by whether a figure conforms to the appropriate behaviour or not. A typical example of appropriate behaviour in visual representation is standing in a straight posture, with legs slightly

²³⁸ For an overview of ceremonial caps in the Tang period, see for example Huang and Chen (2004, 235-50).

²³⁹ For an overview of *futou* during the Tang, see Huang and Chen (2004, 232-5). Sun discusses the origin and historical development of *futou* during Sui to Yuan (1993, 156-66).

²⁴⁰ Abramson 2003, 125.

apart and hands clasped before the chest as a mark of reverence.²⁴¹ An example of this deportment/stance is offered by a figurine of a civil official excavated from the tomb of Zheng Rengtai, Liquan, Shaanxi Province (Fig. 3.8).²⁴² For the sake of simplicity, the focus here is kept on this deportment. According to Abramson, when a foreigner is depicted with this deportment, it means that he accepts the propriety set by the Han standards and shows his conformity. There are several variations of this deportment, such as clasping hands hidden in sleeves or holding a tally or a sword (Fig. 3.2). A military man is often depicted as resting one hand on his chest and the other on a personal weapon on the waist. This is also a typical deportment to show reverence, exemplified by a group of military guards standing in front of a halberd rack depicted on a mural at the tomb of Prince Yi De (Fig. 3.9).

Clothing

Typical attire for the Han in visual representations is either court dress for officials or more commonly the Tang riding dress for both officials and commoners. There were various types of court dress according to rank and occasion, corresponding with ceremonial caps (Fig. 3.6). Court dress typically took the form

²⁴¹ In contrast, as the expression of the deviation from appropriate behaviour, foreigners “are frequently seen in a crooked posture, whether gyrating as part of a performance, hunched under a burden, or poised in a posture of menace or control” (Abramson 2003, 129).

²⁴² Zheng Rentai 郑仁泰 (-663) was a military general, who played a role in the founding of the Tang state in 618. His tomb is one of the attendant tombs of Zhaoling. For the excavation report, see Shaanxi Museum et al. 1972 b.

of a full-sleeved robe and skirt or voluminous pants. Examples are a figurine of a civil official excavated from the tomb of Zheng Rengtai (Fig. 3.8) and a group of three high officials depicted in a mural in the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai (Fig. 3.10). Any dress other than the Tang court dress and the Tang riding dress or nudity could be signals of foreign ethnicity.

3.2.2. Case 1: The 14 emissaries at the Zhaoling

The Zhaoling (昭陵) is the mausoleum of Emperor Taizong (d. 649).²⁴³ Its construction was started in 636 and continued until 649. Inside the north gate, there used to be 14 life-sized stone statues of foreign vassal leaders, standing on both sides of the approach path to the altar. None of the statues survives in a complete form. The excavations conducted in 1965, 1982, 2001 and 2002-2003 revealed fragments representing torsos, legs, heads and busts, and seven inscribed pedestals.²⁴⁴ They list 14 vassal leaders with their names, titles and places of origin.²⁴⁵ Eleven of them are Inner Asians; four Turkish Khans, a Xueyantuo Khan²⁴⁶, four kings of oasis states (Khotan, Qarashahar, Qizil and Khocho; all in modern Xinjiang, China), a king of Tuyuhun (modern Qinghai, China), and a leader of Tubo (modern Tibet). The other

²⁴³ Zhaoling is one of the eighteen tombs of Tang emperors that are located north of Xian. For an overview of Zhaoling, see Eckfeld 2005, 16-9; Zhou 2009.

²⁴⁴ Zhou 2009, 84-7.

²⁴⁵ THY: 20, 395-96. The record in THY is partially confirmed by the discovered pedestals. For the decipherment of the inscriptions, see Zhang and Shi (2004).

²⁴⁶ For Xueyantuo, see footnote 168.

three are a king of Silla (modern South Korea), a king of Nafudi (modern India) and a king of Linyi (modern South Viet Nam). Eight out of 14, four Turkic qaghans and four kings of oasis states, were given honorary titles of general (*jiangjun* 將軍) or grand general (da jiangjun 大將軍) by the Tang government.²⁴⁷

Eleven torsos and 13 heads have been recognised through the restoration.²⁴⁸ Based on the study of Zhang Jianlin and Shi Kao (2004) and complementing it, Zhou Xiuqin gives detailed descriptions of, not all, but most of the fragments: ten torsos and several heads.²⁴⁹ In addition to Zhou Xinqin's descriptions, photos of three torsos and five heads in total are available from Sun (1984), Zhou (2004) and Kashihara (2010). My argument is based on these materials. I have made a table, which lists the ten torsos with numbers from one to ten (see No.1 to No.10 below) and the corresponding description by Zhou (Table 1).

Two torsos are well enough preserved that we can observe almost their entire costume. One (No.1) is a 130 cm high statue wearing a tight-sleeved long robe with both lapels open (Fig. 3.11 a and b). The robe is almost identical to Tang riding dress.²⁵⁰ The belt and the items that hang from it (a dagger carried horizontally, a

²⁴⁷ Sun 1984.

²⁴⁸ Zhang and Shi 2004, 87.

²⁴⁹ Zhou 2009, 86-88.

²⁵⁰ The statue wears riding dress with right side over left. As discussed in the previous chapter, the conventional rule in China was left over right for males. Right over left was considered barbaric and associated with steppe people's customs.

small knife, and a round pochette) are also similar to those with which the Tang riding dress was usually accompanied.²⁵¹ He rests the right hand on his chest and the left hand on the dagger, in the deportment typical of Han military men (Fig. 3.9). As the statue is headless, we have no information about physiognomy. Regarding hairstyle, the five thick braids clipped with hair ornaments partially remain on his back, hanging to reach his waist and reflecting characteristics of the Turkic custom (Fig. 3.11-b). In sum, while the statue shares characteristics in common with a normative Han in terms of clothing and deportment, his foreignness is expressed in his hairstyle.

The other full torso (No.2) wears a distinctively foreign dress (Fig. 3.12). The sash covers the left shoulder but the right shoulder is left bare. He wears a twisted cloth belt that holds the skirt. From the style of the dress suitable for warm weather, it can be inferred that he was either a king of Nafudi (modern India) or a king of Linyi (modern South Viet Nam). Since the figure has no head and arms, no information is available about physiognomy, hairstyle, and deportment.

Apart from these two full torsos (No. 1 and 2), I have information about eight torsos (No. 3-10 in Table 1), all of which survive as only the upper half or only the lower half. Two upper torsos (No.3 and 4) show common characteristics with the Tang riding dress. They wear tight-sleeved robes with lapels open for No.3 and with

²⁵¹ For an overview of belts and hanging items for Tang officials and the dress regulations on belts, see Yoshimura 1976.

a fastened round collar for No. 4.²⁵² According to the descriptions by Zhou, two torsos wear robes that are probably foreign; one upper torso (No.5) wears “an outfit with large collars across each other and wide open” and one lower torso (No. 6) shows a hem of “three-layered robe and the tips of a pair of small feet.”²⁵³ For No.6, the wearer is identified as a king of Silla with high probability based on the type of dress.²⁵⁴ There are four lower torsos (No. 7-10) wearing skirts. They carry items, such as knives, sheaths and hooks at their waists. Three torsos (No. 8-10) among the four carry fish-shaped tally bags, which were the credentials of Tang officials.²⁵⁵ For these four lower torsos, we cannot be certain whether their dress accords with the Han custom or not.

In sum, based on the available material, three figures (one full torso (No.1) and two upper torsos (No.3 and 4)) presumably wear garments that are the same or similar to the Tang riding dress. Three figures (one full torso (No.2), one lower torso (No.5) and one upper torso (No.6)) presumably wear foreign dress.

Regarding hairstyle, one full torso (No. 1) and two upper torsos (Nos. 3 and 4), show Turkic thick braids reaching the waist (Fig. 3.11-b and 3.13). Five heads, images of whose figures I have obtained, all show foreign characteristics, both in

²⁵² Two upper torsos both show braided hair, one with two thin braids hanging down to his belly and the other with seven thick braids hanging over his waist (Fig. 3. 11).

²⁵³ The descriptions are quoted from Zhou (2009, 87).

²⁵⁴ Zhang and Shi 2004, 83; Zhou 2009, 87.

²⁵⁵ For fish-shaped tally bags, see footnote 342.

physiognomy and hairstyle, though none of them is in complete form. Among the five, two heads have knotted hair tied with bands (Fig. 3.14 and 3.15), two wear tight caps with either a floral pattern (Fig. 3.16) or striped pattern (Fig. 3.17) and one shows curled hair hanging over his forehead (Fig. 3.18). According to Zhou, a head has been matched with an upper torso (No.5). I have no picture of that head, but its hairstyle shows foreign characteristics, according to Zhou's description: "his hair is knotted and hanging, touching both shoulders." Their faces, when observable, all show foreign characteristics, such as bulging eyes, thick beards, bushy eyebrows, and up-curved moustaches.

Regarding deportment, in addition to one full torso (No. 1) wearing the Tang riding dress (Fig. 3.11) that takes a respectful pose, two upper torsos (No. 4 and 5) are reported to have folded arms with hands inside the sleeves.²⁵⁶

3.2.3. Case 2 - the 61 foreign dignitaries at the Qianling

The Qianling is the tomb complex of Emperor Gaozong (628-683) and Empress Wu (624-705).²⁵⁷ Stone statues of foreign dignitaries were added after Empress Wu's death in 705. Flanking the central path leading to the southern gate

²⁵⁶ Zhou 2009,

²⁵⁷ For an overview of Qianling, see Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau 1960; Eckfeld 2005, 19-28.

to the inner tomb, there used to be 64 life-sized statues of foreign dignitaries, among which 61, either partially or completely headless, have survived.²⁵⁸ Although the statues originally had inscriptions of names and titles on their backs, the inscriptions have been badly eroded. Based on the studies that have combined legible parts of the inscriptions and relevant records in Chinese historical texts, 36 have been identified, who include many Inner Asians (such as Turkic peoples and others from Tuyuhun, Tubo tribes, and from the oasis states in present-day Xinjiang province) and two Sasanians.²⁵⁹ There are various categories of foreigners among the stone figures. In terms of their status, they include rulers, who were bestowed honorary titles as high officials by the Tang, tribal leaders who led their troops to serve the Tang, captives, ambassadors from independent states, and governors or military commanders of *bridle prefectures*.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Among 61 statues extant at the site, 29 are on the east side and 32 on the west side. For some of them, bodies are only partially extant, from the chest, waist or knees down.

²⁵⁹ Chen Guocan's study (1980) offers a thorough examination of the identities of the statues, based on numerous materials, both contemporary reports and historical texts from different Chinese dynasties, such as *Jinshi Lu* (金石录; twelfth century) and *Chang'an Zhitu* (长安志图; mid-fourteenth century). Also see Zhang Qun (1990, 85-94), who supplements Chen (1980). Especially for two Sasanians, see Compareti (2003) and Zanous and Sangari (2018). After the Sasanian Empire fell in 651 due to the Arab invasion, some Sasanian nobles went into exile in Tang China.

²⁶⁰ According to Chen (1980, 191), most of the *bridle prefectures* they belonged to were under the administration of three major protectorates (Duhu Fu 都护府) Anxi (安西) Protectorate (West Turkestan and a major part of modern Xinjiang), Beiting (北庭) Protectorate (northern part of modern Xinjiang) and Anbei (安北) Protectorate (modern Outer Mongolia).

The statues align in four rows perfectly placed on both sides of the passageway (Fig. 3.19 and 3.20). This gives an impression of order, which is strengthened by the fact that most of them share basic uniformity in clothing and deportment. Most of them wear a tight-sleeved, ankle-length robe with a thin belt that is almost identical to the Tang riding dress (Fig. 3.21). They are depicted in the pose of reverence, standing with hands clasped before their chest. Some of them may have held a tally or other items, though most of these are partially or completely lost.²⁶¹ At a closer look, they are not uniform. Robes similar to the Tang riding dress show some variations in necklines (round, V-necked, or open-lapelled), and wrap closures (right over left or left over right). Pochettes hung from belts show various shapes: round, rectangular, and semi-circular (Fig. 3.22).²⁶² At least one statue, holding a bow, wears a different garment: a loose-sleeved robe tightened with thin strings at the waist, worn over loose trousers (Fig. 3.23).

Regarding hairstyle and physiognomy, available evidence, though limited, all suggests foreignness. The lower halves of two heads were found. Each of them was matched with a statue on the west side of the passageway.²⁶³ One of the two heads shows curly hair and a vertical band, above which the top of the head is cut off (Fig. 3.24). The face has a moustache. Zanous and Sangari suggest the possibility that the

²⁶¹ It is reported that items held include a bow, a flagpole and gifts (Paludan 1991, 118).

²⁶² For descriptions of items hanging from belts, see Kashihara (2010, 29-30).

²⁶³ Zanous and Sangari 2018, 504-5.

head represents a Sasanian noble in exile, based on the hairstyle's resemblance to the traditional style of the Sasanian kings and the moustache in Parthian fashion.²⁶⁴ Standing in the pose of reverence, he wears a round-necked robe, tied with a thin belt, which is similar to the Tang riding dress. It looks as if he holds a small item in his hands, though it is not clear what it is. Another head shows thick braids hanging to the middle of the back, and a hairband bound at the back of the head, both of which follow Turkic customs (Fig. 3.24). His dress is similar to the Tang riding dress, but it is V-necked and he wears it with the right side over the left (i.e. the “barbarian way”). His physiognomy is not clear, since the upper half of the head and the nose are lost. He stands in the pose of reverence.

The foreigners at Zhaoling and those at Qianling share the same visual scheme; that is a tendency to depict similarities with the Han in clothing and deportment and differences in hairstyle and physiognomy. However, the political intention to depict foreign emissaries seems to be more detailed and highlighted in “the systematised form of the processional path at Qianling” (Fig. 3.26).²⁶⁵ The path

²⁶⁴ The inscription on the back of the statue has eroded and is not legible anymore. According to the reconstruction of the inscriptions through examinations of historical texts, there are at least two Sasanians 右驍衛大將軍兼波斯都督波斯王卑路斯 (Pērōz, King of Persia, Grand General of the Right Courageous Guard and Commander) and 波斯大首領南味 (Nanmei, the Grand Head of Persia) (Chen 1980, 198). Zanous and Sangari presume the statue may be one of these two Sasanians.

²⁶⁵ For a discussion of the passageway, see Eckfeld 2005, 23-5. According to Eckfeld, “the systematized form of the processional path at Qianling became the model for the imperial tombs of the Tang and later dynasties” (2015, 23).

is flanked by a series of stone sculptures from the beginning at the south toward the north end at the entrance of the underground palace. In the middle of the path are a pair of birds that are identified as ostriches (Fig. 3.27). Ostriches were not native to China but were brought to the Tang as tributary gifts twice in the seventh century.²⁶⁶ The inclusion of this real-life exotic element instead of mythical phoenixes, together with the figures of foreign emissaries, produced a synergistic effect by creating a visual impression of the dynasty's increasing international power. On the north side of the ostriches are ten pairs of ceremonial horses and grooms, five pairs on each side of the passageway. One of the grooms, which is better preserved, though completely headless, is shown wearing the Tang riding dress, with the left side over the right (i.e. the traditional Chinese way) (Fig. 3.28). While the grooms and the foreign dignitaries share similarities in clothing, 20 guard officials, placed on the north side of the horses and grooms, wear ceremonial robes and hold long swords (Fig. 3.29), showing a clear difference from the riding dress of the foreign dignitaries and the grooms. The grandness of scale of the guard officials, reaching 4m high, displays their comparative superiority over the foreign dignitaries, who are life-sized.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ An ostrich was presented by a qaghan of the Western Turks in 620 and another was presented on behalf of the rulers of Tukhara in 650. The setting of sculptures of ostriches at Qianling was subsequently practised at later emperors' tombs (Eckfeld 2005, 23).

²⁶⁷ The ethnicity of the official (Fig. 3.27) is not known. His bulging eyes could be a sign of foreignness but are not necessarily so. According to Abramson, bulging eyes could be a symbol of fierceness and courage that often transcended ethnic identity (2003, 132).

3.2.4. Case 3: The six foreign dignitaries at the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai

Prince Zhanghuai (654-684), named Li Xian, was the second son of Emperor Gaozong and Empress Wu Zetian. Prince Zhanghuai's tomb is one of 17 attendant tombs built at Qianling, where he was interred with his wife around 711.²⁶⁸ Excavated in 1971-1972, Li Xian's tomb serves as one of the best available examples of Tang imperial tomb interiors, as no Tang emperors' tombs of the first half of the dynasty have been opened. The underground space starts with the descending passage, a 20 m long and 3 m wide section. In the upper band on the middle section of the passage, three foreign emissaries with three Han officials are painted on each of the east and west sides of the walls (Figs. 3.30 and 3.31). On each side of the walls, three Han officials are positioned to the north (the more important direction due to the relative closeness to the persons buried) and engaging with each other, unconcerned by three foreigners. Three foreigners, by contrast, are positioned to the south and are all respectfully staring at the Han officials, as if waiting to be instructed. Their groupings highlight the superiority of Han officials over foreigners.

On the east wall, the three Han officials are depicted wearing a form of court dress: a wide-sleeved upper garment and a voluminous pleated long skirt tied with a sash. They wear black gauze covers over *futou*. From their appearance, they are identified as fourth or fifth rank.²⁶⁹ All three foreigners bow slightly forward, either

²⁶⁸ It was built three km southeast of the Qianling primary mound.

²⁶⁹ Fontein and Wu 1976, 94.

clasping hands reverently before the chest or folding their hands in their sleeves. The left man of the three shows his foreignness through his hawk-like nose and bald head, though his dark-coloured robe fastened by a thin belt resembles the Tang riding dress.²⁷⁰ The man in the centre of the group wears a wide-sleeved, V-necked robe with a high collar held by a sash over wide trousers. The hem of the robe, fringed with reddish textiles, is knee-length in front and curves upward hip-length at the sides. Based on the distinctive headgear of a feathered cap fastened with a chin strap, he is assumed to be a Korean.²⁷¹ The slanted eyes might have been intended to depict foreignness. The man standing at the far right wears a long overcoat hanging open and fur trousers that suggest his foreignness, though the round-neck robe under the overcoat seems similar to the Tang riding dress. The hat decorated with fur is foreign. His high cheekbones might have been intended to depict foreignness.

The three officials on the west wall wear another kind of court dress: wide-sleeved and knee-length gowns over wide trousers, the so-called *kuzhe*.²⁷² They tie their hair with *futou*. Two of the foreigners hold their hands in their sleeves and the

²⁷⁰ Not perfectly clear from the figure, but the robe seems to be worn left side over right (i.e. “the barbaric way”).

²⁷¹ This feathered headgear is also seen in a wall painting of the kingdom of Koguryo (-668), northern Korea. See Fontein and Wu 1976, 94.

²⁷² *Kuzhe*, wide trousers, became common during the Northern and Southern dynasties period and continued to be worn during the Tang period. For more explanation about *kuzhe*, see Shen2011, 219-221.

one on the far left carries an ivory tablet.²⁷³ The three foreigners all wear ankle-length round-necked robes over black boots, which resemble the Tang riding dress. While the man on the far left wears the robe with lapels open and uses a white thin belt, the other two men fasten the robes at the neck and use black thin belts.²⁷⁴ The hairstyles all suggest their foreign origins; a bare head, a black flat cap with two ribbons flowing down at the back, and a white pointed cap over wavy hair. The hooked nose of the man on the far left suggests his foreignness, while no distinctive characteristics are apparent in the physiognomy of the other two men.

As mentioned above, the man in the middle of the east wall is presumed to be a Korean based on the distinctive feathered cap. However, since no documentary evidence is relevant to these six foreigners, nothing can be said with certainty about their ethnic origins.²⁷⁵ Unlike the stone statues in Zhaoling and Xianling, we even do not know whether the six foreigners were actual persons or imaginary ones. Their foreignness is apparent because of their hairstyles: either bare heads or distinctive caps. Regarding physiognomy, a few of them at least show foreign features like

²⁷³ A tablet denotes official status.

²⁷⁴ The man on the far left wears the robe with the right side over the left (i.e. the Chinese way).

²⁷⁵ Some previous studies have attempted to determine the ethnic origins of the six foreigners based on their appearance: clothing, physiognomy and hairstyle, though the arguments seem to be a matter of speculation. For example, following Fotein and Wu (1976, 94) and Zhang (1995, 97), Eckfeld hypothetically presumes that the three foreigners on the east wall are a Roman, a Korean or Japanese, and a Mongolian, from left to right, and those on the west wall are a Greek, a Persian and an envoy from Gaochang (present-day Xinjiang) (2005, 113).

hooked noses. In contrast, their deportment, hands clasped in front of the chest, shows their reverence and acculturation. Four out of six wear robes that resemble the Tang riding dress.

3.2.5. The visual scheme: different and submissive but sharing similarities

The three cases discussed above have a common visual strategy for depicting foreigners. I have pointed out three things. First, the figures are readily identifiable as foreigners by demonstrating differences from the Han shown in the same context. This role is taken primarily by hairstyles. The hairstyles of the foreigners are, when identifiable, consistently different from *futou* or ceremonial caps. Exotic physiognomies also serve this role, even though less obvious. Second, the compositions of the second and third cases are designed to present the superiority of the Tang imperial house over foreigners, by contrasting foreigners with Han figures. Third, even though they are depicted as foreign and less important, they are depicted as loyal subjects of the empire. This is illustrated by their respectful deportment. Clothing also takes a role. Not all, but more than half of them, are depicted wearing dress similar to the Tang riding dress. The core characteristics of the visual scheme can be described as “different and submissive but sharing similarities”, by contrast with a way of depicting foreigners as just outsiders.

This visual scheme is also observed in a short handscroll painting by Yan Liben, called “The Imperial Sedan Chair” in the Palace Museum in Beijing (Fig.

3.32).²⁷⁶ It was originally mounted in 641, though known now only through a ‘possible’ Song copy. It depicts the scene of Emperor Taizong greeting the Tibetan envoy Mgar, who was at court to escort a Tang princess, a bride-to-be of the Tibetan king. According to historical records, Taizong offered to arrange a marriage between Mgar and an imperial clanswoman, though Mgar humbly declined.²⁷⁷ This marriage alliance agreement shows that Taizong considered the Tibetan king and Mgar as worthy of inclusion in his extended family. Mgar is depicted as a slender man, flanked by two officials with a *futou* hairstyle and holding tablets. Mgar’s hairstyle, a black headband, represents his foreignness. Taizong, facing Mgar and two officials, sits on a sedan chair, surrounded by nine female attendants: six of them carrying the chair, two fanning him and one holding an umbrella. Taizong is depicted as the largest figure, which emphasises his political superiority over everyone else, including Mgar. Mgar clasps his hands and bends slightly forward in the same way as two officials on either side of him. Mgar’s dress is almost identical to the Tang riding dress, except that the red robe has yellow patterns all over that look like pearl roundels.²⁷⁸ In this

²⁷⁶ For an overview of the painting and Yan Liben, see Barnhart et al.2002, 60-2.

²⁷⁷ ZZTJ 196:6164; Skaff 2012, 141.

²⁷⁸ When Tang officials are depicted in the Tang riding dress, the cloth usually has no pattern. Patterned textiles seem to be associated with foreigners. I will discuss this point in Chapter 5.

painting, the commonality in dress is especially emphasised since not only the two officials but also Taizong himself are probably depicted in the Tang riding dress.²⁷⁹

Besides elite-class foreign dignitaries, the depictions of other foreigners, who were relatively lower-class workers engaged in various occupations, basically follow the same discipline, even though they are more diverse and differ in detail. As with the foreign dignitaries, most of the foreign workers wear the Tang riding dress or similar types of dress; that is to say, clothing serves as a maker of similarities. However, they often wear the riding dress differently, as exemplified by a groom unearthed from the tomb of Li Chengqi, the first son of Emperor Ruizong (Fig. 3.33).²⁸⁰ The groom, accompanied by a camel, has his right arm out of the robe and reveals an undershirt. His hair is braided and coiled at his temples, which shows his foreignness. This way of wearing a robe, baring one shoulder, is observed not only in grooms but also in foreign horse-riders, as seen in the hunting figure unearthed from the tomb of Princess Jinxiang that I mentioned above (Fig. 3.1). Another way of wearing riding dress is to tuck up the skirt of a robe and tie it up at the waist. An example is a groom from the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai, who not only bares his right shoulder but also ties up the skirt to reveal his boots and bouffant trousers (Fig. 3.34).

²⁷⁹ As I previously discussed in page 83, Taizong's dress is not fully visible because of his sitting posture.

²⁸⁰ Li Chengqi was the first son of Emperor Ruizong (r. 684-690, 710-712).

Both ways of dressing are probably for ease of mobility and are not observed among the foreign dignitaries, who are attending official ceremonies.

Regarding deportment, in contrast with the foreign dignitaries, who are standing straight and clasping hands in front of themselves, the postures of the foreign workers are more likely to be determined by the activities in which they are engaged. Grooms are mostly holding the reins of a horse or camel, raising both arms and making fists with their hands (Fig. 3.33 and 3.34). Besides grooms for horses and camels, foreign keepers of animals, such as parrots, hawks, hounds and cheetahs, are shown in the act of caring and taming, as exemplified by four keepers accompanied by cheetahs depicted on a mural of the tomb of Li Chongrun (Fig. 3.35). The four keepers are all depicted in Tang riding dress with the *futou* hairstyle. Entertainers are depicted in the act of dancing or playing musical instruments, as exemplified by a figurine of five entertainers on a camel, from the tomb of Xianyu Tinghui (Fig. 3.36).²⁸¹ The five musicians are all depicted in the Tang riding dress with the *futou* hairstyle.

While the hairstyles of the foreign dignitaries are, when identifiable, consistently foreign, the foreign workers are depicted both with foreign hairstyles and with the *futou* hairstyle. Examples of foreigners with *futou* hairstyles are observed in the animal keepers (Fig. 3.35) and the entertainers (Fig. 3.36). Examples

²⁸¹ Xianyu Tinghui 鮮于庭誨 (660-723) was an official who achieved high military rank during the reign of Xuanzong (r.712-56).

of foreign hairstyles are the curled hair of the Kunlun attendant (Fig. 3.5), and the braided and coiled hair of the grooms (Fig. 3.33 and 3. 34). A dancer on a rug balancing on one foot on a mural at the tomb of Su Sixu wears a white pointed cap made of a soft material, probably felt, while 11 musicians around him all wear *futou* (Fig. 3.37).²⁸²

Some foreign workers do not wear riding dress. A typical example comes from a group of figurines of the so-called Kunlun people, who I mentioned above. (Fig. 3.2) They are usually shirtless and wear only short pants and have bare feet. Another group of foreigners who do not wear riding dress are those who wear court dress and look almost like Han officials, except for their exotic physiognomies. An example is a figurine of a military official unearthed from Tomb M31 in the southern suburb of Xian (Fig. 3.38).²⁸³ He wears a knee-length green robe with wide sleeves over a long skirt, holding a tablet in both hands in front of his chest. His headdress decorated with a bird is called a *heguan* (鷓冠), a formal ceremonial cap for martial officials. While his clothing, headdress and deportment all suggest his acculturation as a military servant, his foreign origin is obvious because of his physiognomy (prominent eyes, thick beard and a high-bridged nose).

²⁸² For the tomb of Su Sixu 蘇思勳, see Kaogu 1960.1. The dancer twirls standing on one foot on a square rug. This way of dancing is known as the “Sogdian whirl”, which originated in Central Asia and was popular in the Tang.

²⁸³ For the excavation report of M31, see Xi'an Institute of Archaeology and Conservation on Cultural Heritage 2004.

3.3. Discussion

3.3.1. The membership of the Tang empire

What kinds of sense of identification could riding dress convey both for the Tang and foreign elites, in the visual representations and the actual world? I propose two possible senses, that is, a sense of membership in the Tang political family and a sense of participation in the Eurasian elite culture.

To clarify the associations and social implications of riding dress, it is helpful to look into the political nature of the depictions of foreigners in the Tang royal art at Zhaoling, Xiaoling, and the tomb of Li Xian. In one aspect, the inclusion of foreigners in court activities was a kind of visual propaganda. The purpose was to glorify the emperors' magnificent achievements with monumental depictions of submissive foreigners and impress the audience, which included members of imperial families, Tang officials, and foreign diplomats attending rituals at the tombs.²⁸⁴ In this light, Canepa is quite right to discuss the royal art of the Tang in parallel with those of the Byzantines and the Sasanians.²⁸⁵ According to Canepa, these three great empires in Late Antiquity all "cultivated grand architectural settings, rich visual and sartorial experiences, and complex systems of ritual. These

²⁸⁴ According to Skaff, "One premodern source plausibly clarifies the secular purpose of both sets of statues when it says that Taizong's were supposed to explain and propagate his magnificent achievements and in particular manifest his martial merit" (Skaff 2012, 144).

²⁸⁵ Canepa 2010, 129-130.

translated their grand claims into tangible reality for their own people and visitors alike.” As a part of such “expressive whole,” the sovereigns of the empires depicted their opponents (i.e. foreigners) in monumental representations, “always in an ideologically correct position: defeated or submitting,” through which they constructed their identities and those of their opponents.²⁸⁶

Canepa mentions one of the rock reliefs at Bisapur in Iran (Fig. 3.39), which celebrates a Sasanian emperor, Sapur I (r. 241-72 CE)’s successful invasion of the Roman east. Sapur as the central equestrian figure “tramples the prone figure of one Roman emperor and with his right hand clasps the wrists of another, the Emperor Valerian, while yet another figure, Philip the Arab, performs the act of ritual submission before him.” The highest position of Sapur’s head over the crowd demonstrates his superiority. The opponents’ (three Roman emperors) absolute disadvantages are emphasised by their humiliating poses: being trampled by the horse, dropping their head down with their wrists caught, and kneeling. Another example Canepa refers to is a relief on Theodosius’ obelisk (Fig. 3.40), in which Emperor Theodosius and co-emperors receive Persian and Germanic envoys. The emperors facing forward with dignity in the upper line show a stark contrast with the envoys kneeling submissively offering tributes in the lower line. There is also a

²⁸⁶ Canepa 2010, 128-129.

contrast between the emperors' togas and the envoys' foreign clothing, probably kinds of riding dress.

In each of the cases, the superiority of the ruler is expressed by the composition and submissive poses of the opponents. In that sense, these cases of the Sassanids and the Roman share the same visual strategy as the Tang cases. However, the comparison also highlights the characteristics of the visual scheme of the Tang cases. The foreigners in the Tang cases are depicted in a submissive manner with the pose showing reverence, but they are not humiliated as in the Sassanid and Roman cases.²⁸⁷ While the foreigners in the Sassanid and Roman cases seem to be depicted as "others" who do not share common ground, the basic strategy of depicting foreigners in the Tang cases is described as "different and submissive but sharing similarities."²⁸⁸ The depiction of foreigners in the Tang cases has more emphasis on creating a visual effect of inclusiveness.

Indeed, elite foreigners were politically included in the Tang empire. Many foreigners stayed at the court for long or short periods as bridge officers, hostages or envoys.²⁸⁹ Such foreigners were incorporated into major state rituals, such as funerals of important members of the imperial family, the Feng and Shang rites, suburban

²⁸⁷ The way of depicting a Roman emperor as a trampled-down figure is comparable with that of depicting a Xiongnu warrior as a trampled figure in Han art, as I mentioned above. See p.93 and Fig. 3.4.

²⁸⁸ See Subsection 3.2.5.

²⁸⁹ See Subsection 2.3.2.

sacrifices to heaven and ancestors, and the visits of emperors to the tombs of their fathers. They participated as audiences along with imperial lineage members, civil and military officials, and capital guardsmen.²⁹⁰ Feng and Shang rites, for example, were offered by Chinese emperors at the sacred Mount Tai to receive the mandate of heaven by paying homage to heaven and earth.²⁹¹ As one of the most important rituals to display a sacral kingship, the rites involved the broadest constituencies of spectators and participants, including many foreign guests. The inclusion of foreign dignitaries, especially those from powerful neighbours, was necessary not only for visualising the cosmology of the empire but also for political manoeuvring. The ceremony held in 666, during the rule of Emperor Gaozong, included representatives of the Turks, Silla, Paekchae, Koguryō, Japan, India, Khmer, Khotan, and the exiled Persian court.²⁹² Skaff describes how the Feng and Shan rites in 666 could impress the Türks in attendanc: “For the Türks in attendance in 666, the Feng and Shan rites represented the most important ritual display of Tang dominance in external affairs since Taizong’s gathering to be re-proclaimed Heavenly Qaghan two decades earlier. As a result of Taizong and Gaozong’s campaigns, independent qaghans no longer existed in Mongolia or elsewhere in Eastern Eurasia. As the Türks stood among the

²⁹⁰ Skaff notes that the inclusion of foreigners in rituals and ceremonies was promoted only during the first half of the Tang period. In the late eighth century, the status of foreigners was downgraded and they were pushed out from political scenes (Skaff 2012, 141).

²⁹¹ For a detailed account of the Feng and Shan rites, see Wechsler 1985, 170-194; Skaff 2012, 144-148.

²⁹² CFYG 36:2a.

splendidly arrayed witnesses at the base of Mount Tai and watched Gaozong sacrifice to Heaven, it is easy to imagine them thinking that the Heaven-mandated qut to rule had transferred from their Ashina lineage to the Heavenly Qaghans of the Tang House.”²⁹³

The ceremony held in 725, during the reign of Xuanzong, included the Western Türks, the bridle rulers of the Khitan and Qay, and envoys from the Muslim Umayyad Caliphate as the foreign guests of the greatest strategic importance.²⁹⁴ Tibet and the Türgish were absent probably because of the souring of the relations. The Feng and Shan rites were combined with many ceremonies, which could serve to dazzle all in attendance, including foreigners, with the generosity of the emperors and strengthen the political ties between them with rewards and close contacts.²⁹⁵ For example, after performing the rite, Gaozong held an audience for civil and military officials on a specially built altar, where Gaozong received their congratulations. The audience was concluded by a grand day-long banquet, where wine was freely served and music was played.²⁹⁶ Gaozong also rewarded his officials with promotions to honorary ranks. Along with banquets, hunting was another ceremonial event which led to close contacts between foreigners and emperors. On

²⁹³ Skaff 2012, 146.

²⁹⁴ JTS 23:900.

²⁹⁵ Skaff emphasises the importance of such communications, especially in the context of the patrimonial nature of the power of the Tang emperors (2012, 148). I will discuss the patrimonial aspect of Tang politics in Section 4.1.

²⁹⁶ Wechsler 1985, 188.

the journey to Mount Tai in 725, Xuanzong hosted a grand hunt for foreign delegations, giving them the honour of accompanying him and his bodyguard. The episode illustrates how Xuanzong enjoyed hunting especially with the leader of the Türk delegation, showing his martial prowess.²⁹⁷

In the context of such physical and ritual inclusion of foreigners as an integral part of the Tang “political family,”²⁹⁸ Skaff interprets the visual message of the figures of foreigners in the royal arts (Zhaoling, Qianling, and ‘Imperial Sedan Chair’): “foreign elites were subjects of the Tang emperors, but were an important constituency of the empire, reverently supporting the emperor in this life and the next one.”²⁹⁹ I adhere fundamentally to this interpretation. However, regarding which elements exactly take the role of visualising the inclusion of foreigners in art, Skaff mentions only the composition and the pose of reverence of the foreigners. In addition to these two, I want to emphasise the similarities in dress for the role. More than half of the foreign dignitaries are depicted wearing versions of riding dress, which are similar to the dress of the Tang officials. This must have contributed to creating the impression that the foreigners were an important constituency of the

²⁹⁷ Skaff 2012, 147.

²⁹⁸ Based on the analysis on the patrimonial nature of the Tang politics, Skaff compares it to a family.

²⁹⁹ Skaff 2012, 144.

empire, as a part of the Tang political family, even though they were different in terms of the actual levels of political commitment.

My focus on riding dress in visual art as a sign of membership in the Tang empire is supported by the fact that a riding dress set consisting of a robe and a belt was frequently bestowed by the Tang court on foreigners together with honorary titles and ranks. These events suggest that riding dress, as a part of the investiture regalia, served as a symbol of political inclusion in the Tang empire. I will discuss the actual bestowal of robes and belts in the next chapter.

3.3.2. Participation in the Eurasian elite culture

While riding dress could be a sign of membership in the Tang empire in the context of Tang politics, the dress could have, in parallel, a different meaning in the context of interstate relationships. As I have discussed above, medieval Eurasia saw an unprecedented level of interaction among empires and states, which resulted in the creation of the common court culture shared by Eurasian aristocrats.³⁰⁰ Visual depictions give us glimpses of how riding dress fitted in court activities simultaneously at different places in Eurasia. Examples include the polo playing in the wall painting in the tomb of Prince Zhanghuai, the hunting in the rock reliefs at Tāq-e Bostān, and the feasting in the wall painting of Penjikent. In this light, we could infer that riding dress was regarded as a kind of “international style” in clothing,

³⁰⁰ See Subsection 2.4.1.

and wearing riding dress in the visual representations could be a sign of the wearer's participation in the common court culture to some degree.

To support this argument, I introduce a contemporary counterpart to the Tang royal arts; a group of wall paintings at the site of Afrasiab in Samarkand, which was the main city in Sogdiana, the homeland of the Sogdians.³⁰¹ In 1965, a bulldozer on a construction site accidentally uncovered wall paintings that decorated the inside of an eleven-meter square room, now known as the “Hall of the Ambassadors.”³⁰² A long inscription on the western wall mentions the Samarkand king, Varkhuman. He is documented in Chinese chronicles, according to which he was in diplomatic contact with the Tang court between 650 and 655 and appointed ‘governor’ of Samarkand by the Tang Emperor Gaozong (r.650-83).³⁰³ On this account, the wall paintings are dating to around 660 CE. This painted Hall is generally considered a part of Varkhuman's private residence, rather than the royal palace.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Samarkand was the largest city in Central Asia in the seventh century. It prospered by controlling the Silk Road from Byzantium to China through both trade and diplomacy. For a history of Sogdians, see footnote 51.

³⁰² For an overview of the wall paintings, see Grenet 2007; Compareti 2011. The name “Hall of the Ambassadors” was suggested by Shishkin and Al'baum (1971) and generally accepted. The room is formally called Hall 1. For the identification of figures and clothing, I use drawings of the preserved murals (several versions have been made by scholars) and watercolour reproductions rather than photographs of the originals, which are not clear enough.

³⁰³ Grenet 2007, 9.

³⁰⁴ The royal palace stood on the citadel farther to the north.

Each of the four walls of the room shows an independent scene, though their subjects remain still controversial due to the fragmentary state of the paintings. On the opposite side to the doorway in the middle of the east wall, the principal west wall depicts some foreign representatives coming from different regions, including Tang China, at a celebratory event, generally agreed to be the New Year's festival.³⁰⁵ The upper band of the painting is destroyed by the bulldozer. In the preserved part, 42 figures are counted, according to the numbering by Mode 2006 (Fig. 3.41).³⁰⁶ For some of them, such as no. 7, 31, 33, and 34, the remaining parts of their bodies are too limited to make judgments about clothing. Except for them, the majority of figures are depicted in similar types of riding dress. In the middle of the painting, Tang envoys are identified by their clothing and headdress (no. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and possibly 13, 14; Fig. 42 and 43). Their costume of a belted round-necked robe and black bun knotted on top (*futou*) is an accurate portrayal of the standard Tang official's appearance.³⁰⁷ They have swords hanging from belts. The gifts they have are generally thought to be silk cocoons, threads and textiles.

Three figures on the left (no. 2,3 and 4; Fig. 3.44 and 3.45) are identified as Iranian gift-bearers from nearby kingdoms holding gifts, probably rolls of silk textile and necklaces. The two men among them could be ambassadors from Chach (the

³⁰⁵ Azarpay 2014, 49-50.

³⁰⁶ Numbering according to Al'baum. Drawing by Mode. Mode (2006).

³⁰⁷ There is another example of the depiction of Chinese on the mural in Panjikent, Sogdiana. This Chinese shows the same dress and headdress (Juliano and Lerner 2002, Fig. 1, p.232).

present Tashkent area) or Chaganian (a region between Samarkand and Termez), both of which are mentioned in the inscription on the wall. Each wears a round-necked robe and thin belt with weapons, probably a dagger and a sword. The robes share basic similarities with the Tang riding dress but are different in that they have typical Iranian textile patterns all over and trimmings at the hem with different textiles.³⁰⁸ Two of them (Nos. 2 and 3) wear white hairbands and the man on the right (No.4) wears a crown-like headdress. Two of them (Nos. 2 and 4) have thick beards.

There are many Turks, who are identified by their long, plaited hair. Some are standing in between groups of figures (for example, Nos. 5, 6, 18 and 19). (Figs. 3.42-3.45) Others sit cross-legged with their backs to the viewer (for example, no. 38-42). (Figs. 3.44; 3.45) Some scholars interpret the Türks as guards or attendants rather than envoys, against the background of the destruction of the Turkish empire in 658 CE by the Tang and the deep relationship between Sogdians and Türks.³⁰⁹ They wear riding dress similar to Tang riding dress. Some of the Türks (Nos. 5 and

³⁰⁸ Each of the three men has a different animal pattern on the fabric: a boar's head framed in pearl roundels for the man on the left, a bird holding a jewelled necklace in its beak for the man in the middle, and mythical *senmurv* for the man on the right.

³⁰⁹ According to Grenet, "Many Turks shown on the western wall are not representatives of a Turkish empire which in fact no longer exist. They are go-betweenes, commissioned by the Chinese emperor to supply his Western allies with military assistance and to accompany envoys who have to travel through territories until recently controlled by the Turkish qaghans" (2007, 17).

18; Fig. 3.46 and 3.48) wear robes with lapels open and right side over left (i.e. “the barbaric way”). Two Türks (Nos. 5 and 6; Fig. 3.46 and 3.47) wear robes with lapels that are made with patterned textiles, which suggests they might be higher in rank than other Türks, whose robes have no decoration. Many of them show items such as pochettes and weapons hanging from their belts.

While Chinese, Iranians and Türks are depicted in similar types of riding dress, five men on the far left wear distinctively different costumes (Fig. 3.48 and 3.49). Three of them (no. 21, 22 and 23) wear shorter robes and trousers tucked into socks. Based on the observations of their appearance and the gifts they are holding (probably yak tails and leopard skins), they are assumed to be Tibetans. Following the three Tibetans, two men (no. 24 and 25) are identified as Korean with their headdresses with feathers.³¹⁰

The aim of depicting these foreigners of different origins is not entirely clear, since the subject of the painting and the usage of the Hall of Ambassadors itself are still matters of discussion.³¹¹ There is no simple comparison between the depictions

³¹⁰ According to Kageyama (2002), the portrayal of Korean envoys seems to be derived from an iconographic formula borrowed from Chinese art, rather than the painters relying on personal observation.

³¹¹ A central figure at the top of the wall, toward which the delegates’ procession is directed, is now lost. Some scholars, for example, Compareti (2009), assume that the lost figure at the top should be Varkhuman, the king of Samarkand. Others, for example, Marshak, regard this wall as depicting a religious ceremony and assume that the central figure should be a deity

of foreigners at Afrasiab and those in the Tang royal arts in terms of political and religious meanings. However, if we confine our focus to the ways to depict differences and similarities between several groups of different origins, they share the basic principles, especially in terms of hairstyle and clothing.³¹² In the Afrasiab painting, as in the case of the art of the Tang, hairstyles serve to distinguish ethnic differences. Regarding clothing, except for a small number of figures (three Tibetans and two Koreans), the majority wear similar versions of riding dress that consists of a midcalf length robe, black boots, thin belt, and personal weapons hanging from the belt, even though differing in details such as whether lapels are open or closed, or whether patterned textiles used. This parallel between the arts in Tang and Samarkand allows us to infer with much more certainty that the riding dress commonly worn in the diplomatic scenes could be a sign of participating in the common court culture shared by a diplomatic circle, whose main actors were Chinese, Turks and Iranians.

The sharing of similar types of dress in the seventh century was neither a pure coincidence nor a result of spontaneous diffusion. The process of close interrelationships across Eurasia eventually promoted and supported the convergence of many cultural features among elites from culturally and ethnically

or a divine couple. Several versions of reconstruction are offered by, for example, Mode (2006) and Grenet (2007).

³¹² Physiognomies can serve as markers of ethnic difference as well, but this is beyond recognition because of the deteriorated state of the mural.

diverse regions of Eurasia. Conspicuous among these were shared interests in gold and silver ornaments and feasting vessels and the dress style, the centre of this discussion. In saying so, I am indebted to Mathew Canepa, who theorises the formation of international aristocratic common cultures among elites across late antique Eurasia,³¹³ that encompass emperors of Rome, Sasanian Persia and Sui Tang China, client kings, mercantile princes, and people in between them. Appealing to audiences from varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds at their courts, they eagerly and selectively incorporated aspects of another elite's visual and ritual material into their own culture and practices. This act of appropriation resulted in new hybrid tastes shared by Eurasian aristocratic elites. Adding to the examples Canepa discusses, ornamental motifs that were cross-culturally appropriated and activities (hunting, polo and chess) that moved from one culture to another, I situate the common use of riding dress in this perspective. How, though, did the sartorial convergence occur? I will focus on gift-giving as a concrete mechanism as the subject of the next chapter.

³¹³ Late antiquity is defined here as the period from the third through the eighth centuries.

Chapter 4

Creating interethnic political networking

4.1 Gift-giving in patron-client relationships

4.1.1. Patron-client bonding

In the previous chapter, I argued that Tang elites and foreign subjects were depicted commonly wearing riding dress. The display of the common use of riding dress in the royal arts served to create an effect of visual inclusiveness. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the common use of the dress was not only depicted in the visual representations but also practised at the Tang court, contributing to creating and reinforcing the interethnic political ties. To determine the motivation and the mechanism behind the common use of riding dress, I will focus on gift exchange in the political context. The key to understanding the significance of gift exchange between the Tang and its neighbouring regions is patron-client bonding, a uniform element in medieval Eurasian politics, arising out of traditions developed in the steppe.

It is generally accepted that pastoralist societies in Eurasian steppe were organised on the principle of patrimonial households, in which a ruler, as a father, was responsible for caring and feeding his subjects as members of his family, and, in return, subjects render services, usually military or administrative, to help maintain

their ruler's household and properties.³¹⁴ Large polities of militarised pastoralists, such as the Scythians, the Huns, the Xiongnu, the Tuürks, and the Mongols, evolved based on the principle.³¹⁵ A ruler was expected to provide his subordinates with food, drinks, and clothing, which enabled him to gain the loyalty of his subordinates and extend his power. Bilgä Qaghan (683-734), the fourth Qaghan of the Second Turkic Khaganate, depicted himself as such a provider for his people in Orkhon Inscriptions;³¹⁶ "In order to nourish the people, I, with great armies, went on campaign twelve times ... I furnished the naked people with clothes and I made the

³¹⁴ The concept of patrimonialism was formulated by Max Weber, a German sociologist of the early twentieth century. In Weber's formulation, patrimonialism is understood as the outgrowth of patriarchy, or the rule of the father within the family. The patrimonial regime is a top-down structure with the ruler at the top, enjoying absolute personal power. The exercise of power is arbitrary and under the direct control of the ruler. The ruler's authority is personal-familial and extra-legal. The concept of patrimonialism that was offered as an ideal type by Weber has been further explored by following generations of scholars through applications to real-world cases, both historical and contemporary, ranging, for example, from the ancient Near East and the Ottoman Empire to Romanov Russia and contemporary African nations. For an overview of the research on patrimonialism, see Charrad and Adams 2011.

³¹⁵ For the patrimonial nature of steppe polities, see Neumann and Wigen 2018, Chapter 1. Especially for the case of the Mongol empire, see Allsen 1986.

³¹⁶ The Orkhon inscriptions carry the oldest known form of Turkic script found in the Orkhon Valley in the central part of Mongolia. They were erected in honour of Bilge Qaghan (683-734) and his brother Kul Tegin (684-731), contemporary with the Tang dynasty. The inscriptions, in both Chinese and Old Turkic, record the history of the Türks as told by themselves: the legendary origins of the Türks, the golden age of their history, and their subjugation by the Tang dynasty.

poor people rich and the few people numerous.”³¹⁷ The relationship between rulers and subjects in patrimonialism is more specifically referred to as a patron-client relationship, highlighting its reciprocal and voluntary nature.³¹⁸ The relationship was hierarchical, but rights and obligations were mutual. The relationship was voluntary in the sense that it is generally not regulated by any law or contract. Pursuing self-interest, both patron and client act pragmatically.

The patron-client relationships were a major political pattern, widely observed in the politics and diplomacy in medieval Eurasia, including Tang China. The important aspect here is that patron-client relationships offered the basis for interethnic political networking that was quite common in the Tang empire and its neighbouring Turko-Mongol societies. As Skaff discusses, expectations of patron-client bonds were cross-culturally shared and patron-client relationships were ramified multidirectionally among Turko-Mongols in Inner Asia, Han rebels in north China, and Tang civil officials and military officers both at local and empire-wide levels.³¹⁹ In this context, Tang Emperors and Turko-Mongol qaghans can be regarded as the most powerful patrons at the apexes of political hierarchies. Those on lower levels of the hierarchies also cultivated clients.

³¹⁷ Tekin 1968, 268.

³¹⁸ For a general discussion of patron-client relationships, see Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980.

³¹⁹ Skaff discusses the patron-client relationships in Inner Asia and North China during the Tang period (2012, 75-104).

Many Turko-Mongols and other non-Han peoples were incorporated into the Tang empire as individuals or as entire tribes, typically serving as military officers, sub-commanders, retainers, and bodyguards in return for financial rewards, appointments, promotions, and symbolic gifts. An ideal example of the relationship is one between the Tang Emperor Taizong, a patron, and the Turkic general Qibi Heli, a client. After submitting to the Tang in 632 with his tribe, Heli served as a general in the imperial guard corps and also contributed to Tang expeditions, such as one against Kucha in 648. Heli worked for Taizong with unflinching loyalty throughout his life, and Taizong, in return, treated him benevolently.³²⁰ Another example of interethnic patronage is offered by the case of Li Linfu (d.753), a chancellor during Emperor Xuanzong's reign. Li, as a patron, was willing to grant key military commands to non-Han clients, one of whom was the Turko-Sogdian frontier general An Lushan, a step that was to lead to upheaval in the mid-eighth century.³²¹ In reverse, it was not unusual for a Han Chinese, as a client, to serve a non-Han patron. For example, Feng Changqing (d. 756), a Han Chinese commoner, became a personal retainer of Gao Xianzhi (d.756), a high-ranking officer of Koguryu descent,

³²⁰ JTS 109:3292; XTS 110: 4118. After his death, Qibi Heli was given the honour of an accompanied burial at Taizon's tomb.

³²¹ Li Linfu was unwilling to appoint native Chinese as generals for fear they would gain prestige that would enable them to rival his own position at court.

serving in the Anxi “Pacified West” Protectorate.³²² Later Feng was appointed as a military officer and gained rapid promotions in rank at Gao’s recommendations.³²³

While the pragmatic and informal nature of the patron-client relationship served as a basis for flexible political networking across different ethnic groups, it also induced factional rivalry and political fraud.³²⁴ Clients often competed fiercely against each other over the favour of their patron, which was the source of wealth, prestige, and power. A client’s loyalty to his patron could be fickle. An opportunistic client tended to betray his patron in seeking another powerful patron. An example of such an opportunistic attitude is that of the oasis kingdom of Gaochang. Before the Tang conquest in 640, Gaochang was engaged in diplomatic relations with the Western Turk Khanate, Tiele tribal union, and the Sui and Tang dynasties in parallel. While Gaochang dispatched envoys to the Sui and Tang courts as a client, it subjected to Tiele and Western Turk Kahanate.³²⁵

4.1.2. Political importance of gift-giving

³²² The Anxi “Pacified West” Protectorate(安西都護府) was an outpost established by the Tang Dynasty in 640 to control the Tarim Basin.

³²³ JTS 104:3207; XTS 135:4579-80. Skaff 2012, 88.

³²⁴ The formation of patron-client relationships and its corollary phenomena of political instability were the norm in politics of Inner Asia and the Tang empire, but especially notable during periods of civil disorder such as the civil war of the Sui-Tang transition (approximately 617-628), the An Lushan rebellion (755-763) and the succession struggles among Turkic empires (Skaff 2012, 75-6).

³²⁵ Skaff 2012, 149.

Given that bonding in a patron-client relationship was informal, personal, potentially fragile and often across ethnic differences, gifts from the patron were of great significance to retaining the loyalty of the client. The more resources a patron had to give out, the more powerful he could be, by attracting clients with diverse ethnic backgrounds. Along with personal charisma and military acumen, generosity was considered a key virtue of a good patron. How the generosity of a patron could directly affect his clients' loyalty is illustrated by the career of the Türgish Qaghan Sulu 蘇祿 (713-738): "Initially his subjects loved him and were fully at his service, because, after each war campaign that he had sent out, he distributed all of the booty, which had been gained, among his generals, warriors and the tribes. Later, however, when he was old [...] he kept all the booty (for himself) and distributed nothing. His subjects began to defect from him."³²⁶ Gifts could be given as rewards in various forms; appointments and promotions in office, direct redistribution of war booty, salary, allocation of land, banquets, military or economic protection and return for tribute from the client. Besides regular rewards, ad hoc rewards were also common to impress a patron's generosity to clients. Gifts could be not only financial or material rewards but also of symbolic value, such as honours and privileges.

Tang emperors bestowed gifts on subjects both domestic and foreign. In the context of patron-client networking, the emperors' gift-giving can be regarded as a kind of patrimonial technique that was of benefit to include multi-ethnic

³²⁶ JTS 5192; XTS 6068. Translations by Stark (2015, 473).

agglomerations of people into the empire.³²⁷ A great variety of gifts were bestowed by the emperors. Typical gifts were, for example, gold and silver objects and silks. Banquets were also a kind of gift, where food and music were served. They also offered status to those attending the banquets³²⁸ A prestigious reward was an accompanying burial in the vicinity of the imperial tombs, which was offered to subjects with remarkable achievements and unflinching loyalty. An example is Ashina She'er, a Turkic general who served in the Tang army and was buried alongside Taizong in Zhaoling.³²⁹ Emperors' generosity and benevolence were expressed also through caring for wounded generals and the children of fallen generals.³³⁰ As shown in some anecdotes, personalising gifts could help draw out even more loyalty from clients. In 626, Emperor Taizong bestowed a West Asian bottle that the emperor had used himself on a Han Chinese general.³³¹ In 668, Emperor Gaozong sent a Koguryu general serving in the Tang army, a gold bowl and a personally written imperial decree as tokens of appreciation for his assistance in the conquest of Koguryō.³³²

³²⁷ For an overview of gift-giving from the emperors, see Skaff2012, 95-98.

³²⁸ For example, Empress Wu gave a banquet in 700 in honour of two Khitan generals who had led armies to victory over their fellow tribesmen (JTS 89:2893; XTS 115:4213; ZZTJ 206:6547).

³²⁹ For the custom of accompanying burials during the Tang period, see footnote 102.

³³⁰ Skaff 2012, 95.

³³¹ JTS 62:2386-90; XTS 99:3910-2.

³³² XTS 110:4123-4.

Some examples of gift-giving in steppe politics are revealed in Chinese textual sources. In 627, Illig Qaghan, the last Qaghan of the Eastern Turkic Khaganate, sent gifts of silk brocade robes and livestock to his client, Yuan Junzhang, the borderland warlord in northern Shanxi.³³³ The Uighur Gele Qaghan received wedding gifts when he married a Tang princess in 758 and distributed all of the silks, multicoloured textiles, and garments to his retainers, chiefs, and others.³³⁴

4.2 Bestowing Robes

4.2.1. Tang court's bestowal of robes to its foreign clients

Among various goods, silk robes, a key component of riding dress,³³⁵ became a typical gift item in the political relationships of medieval Eastern Eurasia. Silk robes were not simply given as material rewards, but often served a more significant symbolic role by being bestowed as a part of investiture paraphernalia, as I will discuss below. Investiture was a practice of formalising bonds through patrons' investing clients with official titles and various paraphernalia. The paraphernalia not only represented personal bonds between patrons and clients but also served as

³³³ JTS 55:2255; XTS 92:3805.

³³⁴ JTS 145:5201.

³³⁵ I defined the term 'riding dress' as the robe, trousers, belt, and boots ensemble that derived from the practical needs of horse riding. See Section 1.1.

signals to identify clients' political affiliations and status, varying in designs and colours by rank.³³⁶

The richest written documentation on political gifting in medieval Eastern Eurasia is found in Chinese sources. They appear, for example in historical accounts or administrative documents, within extensive descriptions of gift exchanges, both domestic and diplomatic. The sources include the official historiography, namely the *Cefu yuangui* (Ancient documents to aid the dining of the past), the *Jiu Tang Shu* (Old Tang history) and the *Xin Tang Shu* (New Tang history), and the *Zi Zhi Tong Jian* (Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance). There are also other miscellaneous texts, in the forms of poetry, fiction, anecdotes, and letters, such as the *An Lushan Shi Ji* (The Story of An Lushan), the *Quan Tang Wen* (Completed prose of the Tang), the *Wenyuan yinghua* (Essential blossoms of the literary garden), and the *Qujiang ji* (The collected works of Qujiang).

While these Chinese sources provide valuable information about the types of gifts and the contexts in which gifts were exchanged, there are limitations. We should be mindful of that. Chinese texts were intended for an internal Chinese audience. Hence, the information is inevitably China-centric and does not represent all polities equally. As a corollary, regarding the exchanges of silk robes, the most well-documented are the cases of the Tang court's bestowal to its clients. Indeed, Tang

³³⁶ For a discussion of investiture rituals as a ubiquitous aspect of Eurasian diplomacy and investiture items including silk robes, see Skaff 2012, 155-168.

emperors were most certainly the greatest investors of silk robes as the most powerful patrons and the possessors of the largest capacity of silk production in the world at the time.³³⁷ But they were not the only source of silk robes. It is reasonable to assume silk robes were probably exchanged in many directions at various levels of patron-client hierarchies, even though the Chinese texts recorded relatively few of these cases.

I first look into the Tang court's bestowal of robes on its foreign clients.³³⁸ While the information can be gleaned from a variety of sources, I start with the *Cefu yuangui*, which offers a good compilation of the relevant cases.³³⁹ Among 31 categories listed in the volume, one named the *Waichen* 外臣 (Foreign Subjects) includes a section named the *Baoyi* 褒異 (Special Rewards) . This lists, in

³³⁷ Silk production was originally monopolised by China for a long time, but many centres of silk production emerged in Eurasia after the third century AD. By the seventh century, China was no longer a sole producer, though still the largest. I will discuss this subject in the next chapter.

³³⁸ For foreign clients, there were two types, according to Skaff, who uses the term "outer client" to refer to subjects on the periphery. "The Tang divided outer clients into two types: bridle district officials and vassals...Bridle rule, ... involved foreigners who "submitted" and were organized, like regular subjects into "bridle" counties, prefectures, and area commands. Indigenous elites became outer clients with hereditary appointments as Tang local government officials. Turko-Mongol bridle districts mainly were located on the outskirts of the borderland prefectures on the empire's northern frontier. The other category of outer clients was one in which the Sui and Tang emperors formally invested native rulers as vassals with their indigenous titles of rule, such as qaghan or king. Vassals were outer clients who tended to be more powerful or distant than bridle subjects" (Skaff. 2012, 107-8).

³³⁹ For an account of the *Cefu yuangui*, see p.47.

chronological order, the bestowals of gifts to foreign clients on the occasion of their visits to the Chinese court.³⁴⁰ The *Baoyi* lists many cases of the bestowal of silk robes to foreign clients during the Tang period. For example, when the king of Khotan visited the Tang court in 649, he was given the title of general, a gold belt, a silk brocade robe, six thousand bolts of silk textile and a place to live during his stay for a few months.³⁴¹ This investiture happened in accord with the change of Khotan's status in the previous year; Khotan came under the direct control of Tang, instead of under the Western Turk, becoming one of the Four Garrisons of the Pacified West (安西四鎮), together with three other oases in Tarim Basin, that is, Karasahr, Kucha, and Kashgar. Another example is the case of Kangguo (康国; modern-day Samarkand) and Shiguó (石国; modern-day Tashkent). In 755, the king of Kangguo and the vice-king of Shiguó together sent envoys to the Tang court. Each of them was given the title of a garrison commander, a purple robe, a gold belt, a fish pouch and the seven accoutrements.³⁴² This investiture, however, was more likely to have been nominal

³⁴⁰ The *Baoyi* deals with the following dynasties: Zhou (1046-256 BCE), Han (202 BCE-220 CE), Cao Wei (220-266), Liu Song (420-479), Southern Qi (479-502), Northern Wei (386-534), Northern Zhou (556-581), Sui (581-618), Tang (618-907) and the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907-960). The *Baoyi* ends with a record of an event in 959. The *Waichen* also has sections named the *Fengce* 封冊 (“Bestowal of title”) and the *Chaogong* 朝貢 (“Bringing tribute”). The events recorded in the *Baoyi* overlap with the *Fengce* and *Chaogong*.

³⁴¹ CFYG 974. The event is recorded in the *Jiu Tang Shu* and the *Xin Tang Shu* as well.

³⁴² CFYG 975. “Fish pouch and seven accoutrements” were items to be attached to belts and reserved for high-ranking Tang officials. According to Skaff, “The fish pouch was an innovation of 651. Made of silver or gold, it was attached to the belt to hold the fish-shaped

by comparison with the case of Khotan, given the Tang's decisive withdrawal from western Turkestan after the defeat at the Battle of Talas against the Abbasid Caliphate and its ally, the Tibetan empire, in 751.³⁴³

While various other gifts are also mentioned, such as drums and military flags, silk textiles, gold and silver vessels, houses to live in, and feasts, silk robes appear most frequently in the *Baoyi*. This underlines the popularity of silk robes as gifts to foreign vassals. In addition, the special importance of silk robes in association with investiture can be inferred from how the events were recorded in the *Baoyi*. In the *Baoyi*, a line typically, though not always, starts with a date, name(s) of outer vassal(s) with location, title(s) invested, and robe(s) and belt(s) bestowed, which are followed by other items bestowed, if any. An example is:

In August 737, the chieftain of Bohai Mohe, Tuomengu, visited the court. (The court) appointed him General of Left Awesome Guards,

identification credentials. The “seven accoutrements” were standard issue to high-ranking tang military officers to symbolize their prestige and authority. Five of the seven are known to be typical equipment of Eurasian warriors: a sword, dagger, whetstone, and pouch containing a flint and steel striker. Two of the seven items have not been identified because, significantly, they appear to be transliterations of non-Chinese words”(Skaff 2012, 165).

³⁴³ The Tang effectively controlled Western Turkestan during the seventh century. In 659, Sogdia, Ferghana, Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, Balkh, Herat, Kashmir, the Pamirs, Tokharistan, and Kabul submitted to the protectorate under Emperor Gaozong of the Tang.

bestowed a purple robe, gold belt and a hundred bolts of silk textile, and let him return home.

(開元二十五年) 八月戊申、渤海靺鞨大首領多蒙固來朝、授左武衛將軍、賜紫袍金帶及帛一百疋、放還蕃。³⁴⁴

The fact that title investiture and the bestowal of robes and belts are often recorded together allows us to assume a strong and regular association between them during the Tang period. Another feature to be noted is that a record of the bestowal of robes and belts during the Tang period usually contains information about the colour of the robe and the material of the belt.³⁴⁵ As shown in the lines quoted above, a robe and a belt were not just described as a robe and a belt (袍帶) but were detailed as a purple robe and a gold belt (紫袍金帶). Another example is the robes bestowed on Khitan in 718, which are recorded as a red robe and silver belt (緋袍銀帶).³⁴⁶ Those bestowed on Songmojun in 719 were a multicoloured brocade robe and shell-inlaid belt (錦袍鈿帶).³⁴⁷ Such additional information indicates the strong interest in

³⁴⁴ CFYG 975.

³⁴⁵ Regarding belts, more precisely, the material name is not for the whole belt but plaques of belts.

³⁴⁶ CFYG 974.

³⁴⁷ CFYG 974.

these items as investiture regalia, as the colours of the robes and the materials of belts were hierarchically correlated with the rank of the title bestowed.³⁴⁸

Below are the names of political organisations or groups³⁴⁹ that were given silk robes during the first half of the Tang period, gleaned from the *Baoyi*.³⁵⁰ I categorise them into six geographical regions for the sake of clarity. I start each line with the name of a political organisation (or group) in Chinese characters, as described in the *Baoyi*. This is followed by the name in the Latin alphabet (either a pinyin translation or an English name), and a supplemental explanation in brackets. The list shows that at least 40 political communities received silk robes from the Tang court during the period under study.³⁵¹

East Asia

新羅 Silla (a Korean kingdom located in the southern and central parts of the Korean Peninsula)

³⁴⁸ In the next section, I will discuss the dress codes that regulated colours of robes and materials of belts according to ranks.

³⁴⁹ The political organisations listed in the *Baoyi* include various types, such as states, empires, chieftains, tribe confederations, tribal groups, and administrative offices.

³⁵⁰ I should make it clear that I do not intend to present an exhaustive list. I do not include several names of political organisations appearing in the *Baoyi*, such as Tuobaguo (陁拔国) and Shemoguo (舍磨國) as I cannot fully identify their geographical locations and histories at this stage.

³⁵¹ In actuality, there must have been more cases than are recorded in the *Baoyi*. Other texts record cases that do not overlap with the *Baoyi*. For example, according to a diplomatic letter recorded in the *Wen Yuan Ying Hua* (文苑英華), a local king of Shini (識匿, a state in modern Tajikistan), was bestowed a silk robe, a gold belt and two hundred bolts of silk textiles (WYYH 471). This case is not found in the *Baoyi*.

靺鞨 Mohe (a Tungusic people who lived primarily in Northeast Asia)

渤海 Bohai (a multi-ethnic kingdom in Manchuria, the Korean Peninsula and the Russian Far East)

黑水靺鞨 Heishui Mohe/ 黑水部落 Heishui Buluo (a tribe of Mohe people in Outer Manchuria along the Amur River)

Mongolian plateau

突厥 The Turkic Khaganate (Referred to simply as Turks 突厥 in Baoyi, but it means The Eastern Turkic Khaganate)

鐵勒 Tiele (a tribal confederation of Turkic ethnic origins living to the north of China and in Central Asia)

回紇 Uyghur (a Turkic empire built by the most powerful tribe among the Jiuxin³⁵²)

瀚海 Hanhai (an office of area command established by the Tang to govern the Uyghur³⁵³)

托悉密 Baximi (a Tiele tribe, one of the Jiuxin)

勃戛固 Bozhuaigu (a Tiele tribe, one of the Jiuxin)

思結 Sijie (a Tiele tribe, one of the Jiuxin)

匍利羽 Fuliyu (a Tiele tribe)

契丹 Khitan (a Para-Mongolic people who inhabited modern Mongolia, Northeast China and the Russian Far East.)

松漠郡 Songmojun (an office of area command established by the Tang to govern Khitan)

奚 Xi (a Mongolic steppe people located in modern northeast China)

饒樂郡 Raoyuejun (an office of area command established by the Tang to govern Xi)

Tibetan plateau

吐蕃 Tubo (the Tibetan empire)

³⁵² 九姓 Jiuxin/ Toquz Oghuz in Old Turkic (a confederation of nine major Tiele tribes).

³⁵³ Through the system of “bridle prefectures” (jimi zhou 羈糜州).

Central Asia

西突厥 The Western Turkic Khaganate

胡禄屋 Heluwu (one of the tribes that comprised the Western Turkic Khaganate)

突騎施 The Türgish (a Turkic tribal confederation that once belonged to the Western Turkic Khaganate, then emerged as an independent power and established a khaganate in 699)

護密国 Humiguo (a kingdom located in the Pamirs)

吐火羅 Tuhuoluo (a kingdom located in modern Tajikistan and Uzbekistan)

解蘇国 Jiesuguo (a kingdom located in the north of the Amu Darya region in modern Tajikistan)

葛邏祿 Karluks (a Turkic tribal confederation residing in modern Xinjiang and Kazakhstan)

米国 Miguo (a Sogdian state located in Sogdiana, modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan)

康国 Kangguo (a Sogdian state located in modern Samarkand, Uzbekistan)

石国 Shiguo (a Sogdian state located in modern Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

悞怛 The Hephthalites (a people who were active in a wide area of Central Asia, even after the Hephthalite empire collapsed in the late sixth century)

寧遠國 Ningyuanguo

South Asia/ South East Asia

天竺 Tianzhu (India)

南天竺 Nantianzhu (South India)

尸利佛誓国 The empire of Srivijaya (a Buddhist empire based on the island of Sumatra)

勃律 Bolu (a state located in the north part of Kashmir)

小勃律 (a state located in Kashmir)

文单 Wendan/ The Chenla Kingdom (a kingdom located in modern Cambodia and Laos)

West Asia

Dashi 大食 (The Arabs)

Heiyi Daji 黑衣大食 (The Abbasid dynasty)

I highlight two features in the above list. The first is the wide geographical distribution of the political communities that were bestowed silk robes, dispersed throughout almost all of Eurasia except the Mediterranean regions and Europe. The second is the high frequency of the bestowal of silk robes during the period under study.³⁵⁴ The total number of bestowal cases during the first half of the Tang period recorded in the *Baoyi* amounts to about a hundred.³⁵⁵ A special high frequency is observed during the Kaiyuan period (713-755), the reign of Xuanzong. During this period, one to six bestowal events of silk robes are recorded almost every year. For example, silk robes and belts were bestowed six times in 728 on Humiguo in April, Khitan and Xi in August, The Eastern Turkic Kaghanate in September, and Bolu and Xi in October. Based on these observations on the wide geographical distribution

³⁵⁴ The *baoyi* recorded far fewer cases of the bestowal of robes both before and after the period under study.

³⁵⁵ Among about forty political communities listed above, some were bestowed silk robes twice or even more, while others are mentioned only once. For example, Silla was bestowed silk robes seven times and Bohai five times during the period under study. Silla in 709, 724, 727, 730, 733, 724 and 743; Bohai in 722, 725, 730, 737 and 739.

and the high frequency, I conclude that a silk robe together with a belt was a regular gift item whose value was commonly recognised in Eastern Eurasia.

Some episodes recorded both in the *Baoyi* and other texts give a further glimpse of how silk robes could be attached to a particular occasion. According to the *Baoyi*, Tiele and Uyghur leaders were surprised and humbled when they received crimson and yellow brocade silk robes with auspicious imagery from the hand of Emperor Taizong himself in 647.³⁵⁶ In this episode, Taizong used the robes as a tool to show special favour to his clients. Given that brocade was the most valuable type of silk and not usually given to officials, the luxuriousness of the robes surely impressed the leaders. In addition, they must have been amazed at Taizong's performance of personally bestowing the robes. Robes, together with belts, were indeed preferred by foreign vassals, as shown in another episode. Envoys from Zhongtianshu (Central India), who visited the court during the Kaiyuan period (713-741), especially requested robes and belts as a token of Emperor Xuanzong's favour. The request was accepted and they were given a brocade robe and a leather belt decorated with gold, together with a fish pouch and the seven accoutrements.³⁵⁷ In the case of a Tibetan ambassador who was at a banquet in the inner palace in 730, Emperor Xuanzong bestowed a purple robe, gold belt, and fish pouch. The

³⁵⁶ CFYG974. The episode is recorded also in other section of the *Cefu yuangui* (110), the *Tang Hui yao*, and the *Xin Tang shu*, though each version is slightly different.

³⁵⁷ XTS 20: 6239.

ambassador accepted the former two, but politely rejected the latter. The public excuse was that he was not worthy of an object as precious as the fish pouch. However, as Skaff infers, he probably recognised the fish tally as a symbol of full-fledged incorporation into Tang officialdom and wanted to avoid this.³⁵⁸

As I mentioned above, the Tang court was not the only bestower of silk robes. For example, Qapaghan Qaghan, the second Khaghan of the Second Turkic Khaganate, bestowed crimson robes on Khitan envoys in 697. It was also common for a client to receive robes from his patron and then redistribute them to his lower clients. In the 730s, Han Chinese general Wang Husi, serving as the Anxi Military Commissioner, was bestowed 20 red and 20 purple robes by Emperor Xuanzong. Then Wang, as a patron, gave the robes to soldiers who especially distinguished themselves in battle.³⁵⁹ While transferring silk robes could create and reinforce the relationship between a patron and a client, it could also reveal acute political tensions. When Qapaghan Qaghan invaded Hebei during the reign of Empress Wu, Qaghan captured a local prefect and his wife. In attempting to invest the husband with a gold lion belt and a purple robe, the Qaghan forced the prefect to choose either to surrender or die, holding aloft the belt and robe. The prefect and the wife firmly refused to surrender, emphasising their unshaken loyalty to the state, and were

³⁵⁸ Skaff 2021, 166.

³⁵⁹ QJJ 10:10b; QTW 286:3b; Skaff 2012, 96.

killed.³⁶⁰ These anecdotes suggest that the political significance of silk robes was commonly understood at all levels of patron-client hierarchies in Eastern Eurasia, regardless of ethnic differences. Bestowing or depriving on a patron's side and receiving or rejecting on a client's side all mattered as political action.

The widespread popularity of silk robes was also confirmed from a different perspective by an anecdote about An Lushan. While he had built a successful career as the governor of Fanyang Circuit and Pinglu in Emperor Xuanzong's favour, An Lushan, behind the scenes, privately produced a massive amount of silk robes together with belts and fish pouches, fashioned after Tang's official regalia items. He sold these goods at various locations in the empire with help from Sogdian merchants.³⁶¹ He did this for eight or nine long years to make money to raise a rebellion. In other words, silk robes in the Tang official style were privately and illegally manufactured and sold as a commodity outside the governmental authority. Even though the anecdote does not mention who were the buyers, at least it is clear that there was a great demand for fake Tang official regalia.

4.2.2. The practice of investiture before the Tang period

To look at the meaning of silk robes as a political gift in greater depth, I examine the practice of investiture before the Tang period with a special focus on

³⁶⁰ JTS 194a:5169; XTS 215a:6045-6; ZZTJ 206:6534.

³⁶¹ ALSJ 83. For An's strong connection with Sogdian merchants dealing with silk trade, see Moribe 2013, 44.

the Han period. In gift-giving from the Han court to subjects, seals (印 *yin*) played a central role in terms of both frequency and importance, instead of silk robes. On occasions of investiture by the Han courts, it was typical for an outer subject to be bestowed a seal that was engraved with the title he was granted. An actual example was found at Shikanoshima, northern Kyushu in Japan. The gold cube-shaped seal with sides measuring 2.4 centimetres, bears a five-character inscription in three lines, which is cut in intaglio: 漢委奴国王 (Han Wei Nuguo Wang), meaning “The King of Nuguo, [appointed by] Han.”(Fig. 4.1) This seal was bestowed upon the ruler of Nuguo by the Han court in 57.³⁶² As summarised by Wang Zhenping, “the gold seal and the five-word inscription were material testimony to and verbal manifestation of the possessor’s superior position at home and vassal status to China: “king” was a Chinese title that recognised him as the paramount ruler of the Nuguo and as an “outer subject” to the Son of Heaven, holding a position in China’s political hierarchy that entitled him to Chinese support when needed.”³⁶³

In addition to the inscription, the physical features also mattered. On top of the seal bestowed upon the Nuguo ruler, a handle in the shape of a coiled serpent is attached. The serpent has a hole for a tassel that is now lost. Seals could differ in

³⁶² The seal has been judged to be the one described in the *Hou Han shu* (Book of the Later Han), a Chinese chronicle of the history of the Eastern Han Dynasty. According to the chronicle, the Chinese Emperor Guangwu conferred the seal on a diplomatic official visiting from Japan.

³⁶³ Wang 2005, 17.

material (jade, gold, silver etc.), the colours of tassels (multicoloured, yellow, purple, blue, black etc.) and the shapes of the handle (fish, serpent, tiger, dragon, turtle, horse etc.), communicating the ranks of subjects. Another example is a seal, unearthed at Shangsunjiashai, Datong, Qinghai Province, 1979 (Fig. 4.2). It was conferred by the Eastern Han government on a Xiongnu chief, as shown by the eight-character inscription; 漢匈奴歸義親漢長 (Han Xiongnu guiyi Qin Han zhang), meaning “The Chief of the Han Xiongnu who have returned to righteousness and embraced the Han.”³⁶⁴ The seal is made of bronze and topped with a camel handle.

Documentary sources also reveal many cases of the bestowal of seals. For example, when Huhanye, the Chanyu of the Xiongnu, submitted to the Han and visited the Han court in 51 BC, he was granted a gold seal together with a set of clothes for Han officials, various weapons, a carriage, horses, gold, coins and clothes.³⁶⁵ According to the *Han Shu*, this seal given to Huhanye is described as *xi* 璽, which was a type of seal exclusive to Chinese emperors. Given that seals for subjects were usually called *in* 印 or *zhang* 章, bestowing a *xi* upon Huhanye must have been exceptional treatment, reflecting the political importance of the Xiongnu. Another example is the bestowal upon Xian 賢, who was the king of Shache 莎車, an oasis state in the Tarim Basin. On the occasion of his investiture as the Protector General

³⁶⁴ Psarras 2015, 32.

³⁶⁵ HS94; CFYG 974; Uchida et al. 1971-73, Vol.1, 103.

of the Western Regions (西域都護), Xian was bestowed with a gold seal, carriage, military flag, gold, and luxury silk textiles.³⁶⁶

As these examples show, seals were usually given together with other various items, but it is reasonable to assume that seals were the most important in terms of their role to manifest and adjust political relations. An anecdote about Wang Mang provides evidence for this.³⁶⁷ Wang Mang, who was originally an official of the Han Dynasty, overthrew the Han dynasty and founded the short-lived Xin dynasty in 9 AD. As mentioned before, the leaders, the Chanyu of the Xiongnu, had been bestowed special seals called *xi*, which manifested the higher position of the Xiongnu than other vassals. Wang Mang, however, hated this special favour given to the Xiongnu by the Han Dynasty. So he delivered a new seal to the subsequent Chanyu, Zhi, in 9CE, in the form of a *zhang*, instead of a *xi*. The Chanyu soon filed an official complaint about the demotion, but it was only after Wang Mang's death in 24 CE that the Chanyu was again bestowed a *xi*-seal by the restored Han dynasty. This anecdote shows that the importance of seals was shared both by the Han dynasty side and the Xiongnu side. Seals, rather than other items, were at the centre of such political communications and negotiations between the Han dynasty and its clients. The custom of bestowing seals did not disappear in the subsequent periods, even though it was used less frequently than in the Han period. For example, several seals

³⁶⁶ CFYG 974.

³⁶⁷ HS 99.

were bestowed by the emperors of the Cao Wei state in the Three Kingdoms period (220-265).³⁶⁸

Next to seals, military banners also played a significant role in the communication between China and its outer vassals during the Han period and the following centuries. Wang Zhenping summarises that “in the shape of a tube hanging from a pole, the banner was usually granted only to a Chinese general in chief (Dajiang). When special circumstances justified a foreign holder, the banner signified his own might as well as Chinese military backing, thus effecting a psychological impact on his enemy.”³⁶⁹ Wang Zhenping mentions two examples. Queen Himiko in Yamatai-koku in Japan dispatched four messengers to the Cao Wei court in a short span between 240 and 247. In addition to a gold seal, she was granted military banners, bronze mirrors, and swords according to her special requests. Considering Himiko’s intense interest, Wang Zhenping assumes that military banners, among other things, helped put Himiko a step ahead of her competitors, even though Chinese military support could only have been nominal given the geographic distance.³⁷⁰ In another case, the banners might have had a more substantial effect. The Sui court once bestowed military drums and banners on the Chuluo Qaghan, chieftain of the Eastern Türks, in 587. In a battle against the

³⁶⁸ Uchida et al. 1971-73.

³⁶⁹ Wang 2005, 19.

³⁷⁰ Wang 2005, 19.

Western Türks, Chuluo ordered the display of these banners, which made the Western Türks believe he was backed by the Sui army. Chuluo, indeed, achieved a major victory.³⁷¹ Placing prime importance on seals and banners seems to have continued until the Tang period at least conceptually, as explained by the Tang court, “Rulers of the remote areas cannot establish their countries without receiving seals and banners from Tang.”³⁷² However, at the level of practice, recorded cases of the bestowal of seals and banners during the Tang period are much less frequent than those during the preceding centuries.³⁷³

Instead of seals and banners, silk robes rapidly enhanced a sense of presence in the Tang period. Even before the Tang period, dress was a common gift item to foreign clients, but the bestowal of dress before the Tang period was qualitatively different from that in the Tang period. In contrast with the Tang period, when the combination of robes and belts (袍帶) was a regularised bestowal item, dress bestowed to foreign clients before the Tang period was not so regularised and generally not combined with belts.³⁷⁴ For example, a set of formal dress for Han officials (冠帶衣裝 *guandai yizhuang*) was bestowed on Huhanye, when he visited

³⁷¹ Wang 2005, 19.

³⁷² XTS. Translation by Wang 2005, 20.

³⁷³Skaff discusses “After the reign of Taizong, only one additional instance of Tang battle standard investiture is known (CFYG 964:19b; Chavannes [1904] 1969, 62)” (2012, 163).

³⁷⁴ One of rare cases of bestowing a belt during the Han period is found in the *Shiji*. A gold belt was included in the gift items bestowed by Emperor Wen of the Han (203-157BCE) on the Chanyu of the Xiongnu in 176 BCE (Uchida et al. 1971-73, Vol1, 20).

the Han court in 51 BCE, as mentioned above.³⁷⁵ The set was a traditional Han-style dress, generally consisting of a wide-sleeved gown, headdress and sash, and different from the tight-sleeved robes (袍 *bao*).³⁷⁶ Besides a set of formal dress for Han officials, we find many cases of bestowing clothes, recorded with the character *yi* 衣. *Yi* 衣 (or 衣被 or 衣服) means just clothing in general or upper garments in more specified usage. Examples include a hundred and ten pieces of clothing (衣 *yi*) bestowed on Huhanye by the Han court in 49 BCE³⁷⁷ and 370 pieces of clothing (衣 *yi*) bestowed on Wuzhuliu by the Han court in 1 BC.³⁷⁸ A rare case is a bestowal of a pair of riding pants (袴褶 *kuzhe*) on Afuzhiluo 阿伏至羅, the King of Gaoche, by Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei in 490.³⁷⁹ The set of formal dress for a Han official (冠帶衣裝) bestowed on Huhanye in 51 BCE could probably be associated with investiture, as a symbol of incorporation into Chinese officialdom. However, bestowing was occasional and not so regularised. Also, the records do not contain any detailed information relating to ranks. The cases of bestowing clothing (衣 *yi*) or riding pants (袴褶 *kuzhe*) do not show obvious association with investiture. In sum, dress did not occupy a central position as investiture regalia before the Tang period.

³⁷⁵ See p.151.

³⁷⁶ For an overview of the formal dress for officials and aristocrats during the Han period, see Sugimoto 1979, 157-208.

³⁷⁷ HS 94; Uchida et al. 1971-73, vol.1, 105.

³⁷⁸ HS 94; Uchida et al. 1971-73, vol.1, 127.

³⁷⁹ WS 103; Uchida et al. 1971-73, vol.1, 277.

I have here suggested that the emphasis on the investiture of foreign clients shifted from seals and banners to silk robes with belts between the Han and Tang periods. For a better interpretation of this shift, I point out two things. The first is that this shift can be rephrased as the change of preference from a China-oriented item to an item that was more culturally universal. While a seal with a Chinese inscription was derived from Chinese political tradition, a robe with a belt suitable for riding was derived from the steppe.³⁸⁰ This change was consistent with the much-expanded multi-ethnic and multi-polar interstate relationships in Eastern Eurasia in the seventh and eighth centuries. Silk robes as investiture paraphernalia were not only bestowed by Tang China but also exchanged multi-directionally in the patron-client hierarchies, as I discussed above. Another aspect of this shift is the change of preference from a valuable, but small item, to a more visible and easily identifiable item. This change was consistent with the rise in the importance of court activity in Tang diplomacy, where foreign clients saw each other and competitively exhibited items bestowed.

4.3 Visualising status ranking

4.3.1. The status ranking at the Tang court

To further underline the political role of silk robes, I focus on the system of status ranking at the Tang court. Along with and in connection with gift-giving, the

³⁸⁰ For the steppe origin of the robe and belt, see Section 1.1.

status ranking was generally one of the essential factors in patron-client relationships. A patron ranked his clients by bestowing titles. In doing so, he positioned his clients in a power hierarchy and defined the relationships between the clients. Status ranking at court had been common since early times in Eurasia.³⁸¹ However, in the competitive and entangled relationships between the Tang and its neighbours, the system of status ranking at the Tang court was particularly important, serving as a mechanism, through which elites from varied geo-cultural backgrounds were incorporated and organised. It was also an arena of competition and negotiation between the Tang court and foreign elites, and among foreign elites. Silk robes played an essential role in the system of status ranking by making it visual.

During the Tang period, civil officials and military officers serving the court were classified according to the hierarchy of nine ranks (*bin* 品).³⁸² Once a foreigner submitted to the Tang and received an appointment as a Tang official, he had the same privileges as any other Tang official of the same rank. Temporary visitors, such as couriers and diplomats, who lacked a Tang official rank, since their polities were not engaged in bridge relationships with the Tang, were classified according to a five-grade system named *fanwang* (蕃望). The five grades (*deng* 等) in *fanwang* were

³⁸¹ Skaff 2012, 158.

³⁸² The first, second and third ranks had two classes each. Each of the ranks from the fourth through the nine also had two classes, but each class was further divided into two sub-classes. Thus the nine ranks were divided into thirty classes in total.

correlated with the nine ranks of the Tang court officials.³⁸³ The first and second grades were conferred on kings and princes, who were ranked higher than Tang officials. The third grade in *fanwang* corresponded with the first, second and third ranks of the internal Tang system, the fourth grade with the fourth and fifth ranks, and the fifth grade with the sixth through ninth ranks. A foreigner's grade in *fanwang* was determined by consideration of various factors, such as chronological precedence in acknowledging Tang rule, the extent of its acceptance of Chinese civilisation, his rank in his own polity and strategic concerns.³⁸⁴ The case of Türgish illustrates that the decisions of ranks were also affected by the consideration of other related polities, in this case, Khitan. The Türgish and Khitan early in the reign of Xuanzong (r.712-56) were both medium-sized nomadic powers with strategic importance to the Tang. However, the former rated lower than the latter. This decision was probably made in the light of Khitan military cooperation with the Tang against a major enemy, the Turks, while the Türgish and Tang had reached a truce after a period of hostility.³⁸⁵

Ranks and grades determined everything about how foreigners were treated at the Tang court, for example, the privileges and rewards they enjoyed, such as meals at state banquets, seating arrangements for court gatherings, types and scales

³⁸³ For *fanwang*, see Wang 2005, 117; Iwami 2009, 66.

³⁸⁴ Wang 2005, 117; Iwami 2009, 66; Skaff 2012, 136-7.

³⁸⁵ CFYG 974:20b; JTS 199b:5351; XTS 219:6170; ZZTJ 211:6720; Skaff 2012, 138.

of transportation methods, the number of attendants they could bring when visiting the court, and the qualities of gifts, including robes.³⁸⁶ Ranking was of paramount concern to foreigners, which is vividly highlighted by the anecdotes about serious disputes over seating arrangements at court among foreign participants.³⁸⁷ For example, on the occasion of a court banquet for the Türgish ambassador hosted by Emperor Xuanzong in 730, a Türk envoy complained about the Türgish occupying the most distinguished seat, because the Türgish were a small country and were

³⁸⁶ The reception of foreign guests was coordinated according to the prescriptions of the “Guest Rites” (*binli* 賓禮) in the Kaiyuan ritual code. For more detail about the reception of foreign guests, see Wang 2005, 120-35.

³⁸⁷ The Chinese sources refer to such disputes as “fighting for precedence” (*zhengzhang* 爭長). Depending on circumstances, lower than expected seating rank could be considered an insult to personal pride and the honour of a country. Even at domestic feasts, Tang officials were known to have argued with each other over their places at the table (Skaff 2012, 154). Wang Zengpin describes the principle of standing positions at a court audience in detail: “At a court audience, during which all foreign participants had to stand in their proper order, the term “grade” determined the position that a visitor took in the palace courtyard. More specifically, visitors of the third, fourth, and fifth grades took their positions behind Chinese military officers of the third, fifth, and sixth ranks, respectively. Guests of the first and second grades would follow the Chinese prefectural delegates coming from the same direction that they themselves had. A Japanese ambassador, for instance, was to stand behind the delegates from prefectures in eastern China. The standing positions for diplomats of the same grade were in two lines, and the positions decreased progressively in a sequence showing their relative status. The place of honor was in the north since it was the nearest to the Tang emperor. Foreigners who were already “outer subjects” of China stood with Chinese officials of the same rank, and they probably took up the least prestigious places in the south. The standing order and the specific position for a foreign ambassador during a court audience thus became a graphic display of the status of his country relative to that of other countries” (2005, 117-8).

originally the vassals of the Türks. On the other hand, the Türgish ambassador refused to give up the seat and take an inferior position to the Türk, insisting that the banquet was being held in his honour. Tang officials, offering a compromise, set up separate east and west tents so each ambassador could occupy his own seat of distinction.³⁸⁸ Another example is a case between Japan and Silla. At the Chinese New Year's Day gathering at court in 725, Japan was first designated the second standing position, which was west of the throne and next to that of the Tibetan ambassador. Otomo no Furumaro, the Japanese vice ambassador made a vigorous protest, when finding that the ambassador from Silla enjoyed the first position, which was east of the throne and ahead of the position for the ambassador from the Caliphate. This was because Japan had always treated Silla as its own vassal and tribute-paying state, and could not accept a position inferior to Silla. Responding to the protest, a Tang official decided to swap the positions for Japan and Silla.³⁸⁹

4.3.2. The codes of clothing at the Tang court

The codes of clothing were an integral part of the ranking system at the Tang court. The codes specified the items and types of attire according to ranks and

³⁸⁸ JTS 194b:5191-2; XTS 215b:6067; CFYG 975:9b; Skaff 2012, 154.

³⁸⁹ For the dispute between Japan and Silla, see Wang 2005, 131. In addition to the two cases discussed here, Iwami mentions the argument about seating arrangements between the Uyghur and the Abbasid Caliphate in 758 (2009, 67). As shown by these examples, the seating arrangements were open to negotiation. Wang explained this point as the dual characteristics of the guest protocol: rigidity and flexibility (2005, 134).

occasions for all the members in the court hierarchy that included emperors and empresses, royal princes and princesses, officials, courtiers and women of the court.³⁹⁰ Bridle officials and diplomats were also subject to the codes, being bestowed with dress as investiture regalia or political gifts appropriate to their ranks. The codes of clothing of the Tang were first defined comprehensively by the statute, known as the Wude ling 武德令 in 624, during the early reign of the dynasty's founding emperor Gaozu (r.618-626).³⁹¹ The Wude ling included the guidelines for everyday dress (*changfu* 常服), referring to the Tang riding dress, for officials according to nine ranks: "officials of the third rank and above dress in purple (robes) made of the highest-grade twill damask silk and gauze with jade belt ornaments. Those of the fourth and fifth ranks dress in vermilion red made of lower-grade twill damask silk and gauze with gold belt ornaments. Those of the sixth rank and below dress in yellow made of plain silk and ordinary twill silk. Those of the sixth and seventh ranks wear silver belt ornaments. Those of the eighth and ninth ranks wear brass belt ornaments.

³⁹⁰ The "Treatise on Carriages and Dress" compiled by the official editors of the dynastic annals serves as the official narrative of the clothing codes, providing the basic lexicon for studies on a dynasty's dress. Two versions of the treatise for the Tang dynasty exist, one in the *Jiu Tang Shu* 舊唐書 and one in the *Xin Tang Shu* 新唐書. Detailed regulatory ordinances governing colours, cuts, and fabrics issued during the successive reigns of the emperors were primarily collected in the *Tang Hui yao* 唐會要, the *Tang da zhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集, the *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文, the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, and the *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜. For more details on Tang clothing codes, see Harada 1970, Liu 1996, Sun 2001, Chen 2003.

³⁹¹ Before the Wude ling, the first clothing code was defined in 621.

Officials without rank and commoners dress in yellow garments made of ordinary fabric with copper and iron belt ornaments.”³⁹²

While the basic framework of the clothing codes in the Wude ling remained throughout the Tang period, the details were amended several times during the first half of the Tang period.³⁹³ An example is the amendment in 674 issued by Empress Wu Zetian, which redefined the colours of robes assigned to the nine ranks. While only three colours (purple, red and yellow) were designated in the Wude ling, the new codes in 674 assigned seven colours; purple for the third rank and above, dark red for the fourth rank, pale red for the fifth rank, dark green for the sixth rank, pale green for the seventh rank, dark blue for the eighth rank and pale blue for the ninth rank.³⁹⁴ In addition to the material, the rule on the number of belt ornaments was also added in the new codes in 674; 13 ornaments for third rank and above, 11 ornaments for fourth rank, ten ornaments for fifth rank, and nine ornaments for sixth rank and below. Even with several other amendments in detail, the colours of robes and belt ornaments were consistently of the first importance as signs of official rank

³⁹² JTS 6:45.1952. “三品以上，大科紬綾及羅，其色紫，飾用玉。五品以上，小科紬綾及羅，其色朱，飾用金。六品以上(下)，服絲布，雜小綾，交梭，雙紉，其色黃。六品七品飾銀。八品九品鑰石。”

³⁹³ Yoshimura (1976) overviews the revisions of the clothing codes from the early years of the Tang to the Kaiyuan period (712-741) with a special focus on robes and belts for officials.

³⁹⁴ THY31. “一品以下文官，並帶手巾、算袋、刀子、磨石。其武官，欲帶者亦聽。文武三品以上服紫金玉帶十三銖。四品服深緋金帶十一銖。五品服淺緋金帶十銖。六品服深綠，七品服淺綠，並銀帶九銖。八品服深青，九品服淺青，並鑰石帶九銖。庶人服黃銅鐵帶七銖。”

throughout the first half of the Tang period. When the emperor held a court audience, the participants, including foreign envoys, Chinese officials and bridle officers, were supposed to wear robes and belts prescribed according to their ranks and be arrayed in the palace courtyard with standing positions determined by their ranks. The array must have created a visually impressive display of colour order that symbolically represented a China-centred world order with the Tang emperors at the top.

Considering that dress and belts were used as gifts and seating arrangements were of major concern to foreigners as discussed above, the system of status ranking at the Tang court worked successfully at least to some extent involving not only Chinese officials but also foreigners. For a motivation of foreigners to follow the status ranking system and be a part of the Tang political hierarchy, I want to again emphasise the universal nature of the combination of robes and belts as a tool for visualising the status ranking. The incorporation of robes and belts which originated in the riding habit of the steppe into the clothing codes was a Tang innovation.

The Tang clothing codes were based on Confucian ideology, that is, the concern for the distinction and proper display of status.³⁹⁵ The introduction of the “Treatise on Carriages and Dress” in the *Jiu Tang Shu* mentions the rules about dress

³⁹⁵ Francesca Bray argues that clothing served to mark civilisation in the Confucian worldview: “Not only does it [clothing] distinguish ranks and provide ornament, it is linked to the reproduction of human society through descent, the care of the old, the raising of children, and the proper distinction and complementarity between the sexes” (1997, 190).

in the earlier dynasties, that is, the Zhou, Qin and Han, as its predecessors, when the strong association between clothing codes and the Confucian ideology was established through some codifications, such as the first “Treatise of Carriages and Dress” edited in the later Han.³⁹⁶ On the other hand, the clothing codes of the Tang regulated the combination of robes and belts of Eurasian origin as everyday dress (*changfu* 常服) for officials and prescribed colours and materials according to ranks as discussed above.³⁹⁷ While the incorporation of riding dress into imperial ceremonies provoked criticism from literati Confucians, it must have facilitated the inclusion of foreigners, who were familiar with riding garb in Tang officialdom.³⁹⁸

The inclusion of foreigners is observed in not only the clothing codes themselves but also in their operation. Occasionally, when foreigners were appointed as bridge officials, the items they were bestowed with were somewhat different from those bestowed upon regular Tang officials of the same rank. A typical example is the sumptuous polychrome brocade robes, which were not prescribed to regular Tang officials but were sometimes bestowed on foreigners as an exception to the rules. For example, in 720, the Khitan king received a brocade silk robe, together

³⁹⁶ Sugimoto 1979, 140.

³⁹⁷ In the Sui period in 610, the robe and belt that originated in foreign garb were first incorporated into the clothing codes as everyday dress, but detailed rules about colours and ornaments were established during the Tang period, with a strong association with ranks. See Kobayashi 2009, 242.

³⁹⁸ Skaff 2012, 163-164.

with a jade belt inlaid with gold and jewels of officials of the third rank and above.³⁹⁹ Considering that regular Tang officials of equivalent ranks were assigned the same jade and gold belts, but allotted the solid purple robe, giving the non-standard polychrome robe to the Khitan king seems to have placed him above them. A brocade robe served as a gesture of special favour, not only because of its luxuriousness and rarity but also probably because it matched foreigners' preferences.⁴⁰⁰ In other words, the clothing codes were not just to bring foreigners to heel without condition but could be flexible and act as a communication tool with foreigners.⁴⁰¹

An eyewitness account by Xuanzang, a Chinese Buddhist monk (602-664), gives a glimpse of the court of the Western Türks, where there was also an elaborate display of rank through physical position and dress. When Xuanzang first encountered the Western Türk Qaghan Ton Yabghu, the Qaghan was departing for a hunt in a green silk robe. His hair was unbound and a three-meter-long silken cord was tied around his head and hung down his back. He was surrounded by over two hundred officials, who were dressed in polychrome silk robes and tied their hair into braids. On the right and left he was attended by troops, who were clothed in garments

³⁹⁹ CFYG 974:20b.

⁴⁰⁰ As shown in visual material, elites of Sogdians, Turks, and other Central Asians were often depicted wearing beautifully patterned robes, which probably suggested their preferences. Some of administrative documents of the Tang indicate that the production of brocade robes especially for foreign guests was regularly administered. I will come back to this point in the next chapter.

⁴⁰¹ Here again we see "rigidity and flexibility." See footnote 389.

of fine fur and spun animal hair. Three days later, an audience was held for Xuanzang and ambassadors from the Tang Dynasty and the Gaochang Kingdom. The officials sat in two rows on long carpets, wearing polychrome silk clothing. An honour guard stood behind them.⁴⁰² Although the details of the clothing codes of the Western Türks were not recorded, it is evident that the colour and material of dress, hairstyle, and spatial arrangements were determined by rank. The significance of dress together with spatial arrangements in denoting rank was universally shared among the Tang and steppe polities and throughout Eurasia.

⁴⁰² DCES 1:21.

Chapter 5

Material of the robes: hybridity and luxuriousness

5.1 What was the material for robes?

5.1.1. From wool to silk

In the previous chapters, I argued that riding dress was commonly accepted as an important political regalia in the wide area of Eurasia. This chapter explores the physical qualities of the dress with the question of what qualities enabled it to become so popular and even universally desired by medieval Eurasian aristocrats from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In its origin in the first millennium BCE, riding dress was a local style in the Eurasian steppe, developed from the need for horse riding. A typical example is a Scythian man stringing his reflex bow on a gold drinking vessel from a burial at Kul'-Oba, Kerch, on the Crimean Peninsula, dating to the fourth century BCE (Fig. 5.1). After many centuries, by the seventh century CE, the local steppe style developed into the riding dress universally worn and exhibited at various places in Eurasia, including the Tang court. The examples include a Turkic client in the Zhaoling Mausoleum (Fig. 5.2), a Tibetan envoy received by Emperor Taizong (Fig. 5.3), a Sassanid king in the relief of Taq-I Buston (Fig. 5.4), and Sogdian aristocrats in a mural at Penjikent (Fig. 5.5). What are the essential differences in physical qualities that distinguish the medieval examples

from the Scythian man? In my opinion, a major development is the widespread adoption of high-quality silk fabrics, which added luxuriousness and a taste of cultural hybridisation to medieval robes. Drawing mainly on archaeological finds, this chapter presents the characteristics of silk fabrics during the seventh and eighth centuries in light of the long history of silk production dating back to Neolithic China. I will discuss the significance of applying silk fabrics to these robes.

The major materials for robes of riding dress in its early stages in the steppe had almost certainly been wool and leather.⁴⁰³ Wool and leather not only gave robes warmth and durability but were also easily obtained, given that animals such as sheep, goats, yaks and camels were essential components of the typical lifestyle in the steppe. Animal furs were also often used for lining and trimming steppe dress, adding more warmth and decorative effect. Due to the perishability of organic fibres, archaeological remains of the steppe dress are usually scarce. Some tombs, though, have yielded abundant remains of dress, which were preserved in the frozen ground. One relatively well-preserved example is a male robe made of wool felt, found at kurgan 3 at Pazyryk, south Siberia, dating to the fourth to third century BCE (Fig.

⁴⁰³ Sakamoto suggests that there were three cultural zones in Eurasia before the third century CE, based on division according to the types of natural fibre people mainly used: silk, wool or cotton. The wool zone covered a wide area including the steppe and Europe, the Mediterranean, West Asia, and Central Asia (Sakamoto 2012, p. 6-10). I will mention the three zones again in the next section.

5.6 and 5.7).⁴⁰⁴ The length of the robe is about 100 centimetres. Four strings are attached in front so that the robe is fastened with the right panel over the left. An example that shows an effective use of fur and leather is a child's coat found at grave 4, dating to the third century CE, in the Oglakhty Mountains, north of Minusinsk, Russia (Fig. 5.8).⁴⁰⁵ It is made of sheepskin, edged with dog or wolf fur.

I shall argue it is highly probable that the riding dress commonly worn by Eurasian elites at courts around the seventh and eighth centuries was made of silk,⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ For a detailed description and observation on the robe, see Kato (2002, 74-44). The burial mounds at Pazyryk yielded surprisingly well-preserved textile products. They include items related to the steppe lifestyle such as saddle blankets, felt hangings and carpets, fabric and leather containers, long stockings, robes, trousers and boots. They are made of either local fabrics or imported ones. Locally-made fabrics consisted of felts and plain woven wool and vegetable fibres. For imported textiles, there are two dominant categories: one is Chinese silks and the other is woollen fabrics, some of which show more advanced techniques than locally-made plain wool textiles. In the next section, I will refer to a saddle cushion made of Chinese embroidered silk textile. For an overview of the archaeological finds from Pazyryk, see Rudenko (1970). Especially for textile finds, see Rubinson (1990).

⁴⁰⁵ Oglakhty burial ground is a key site of the Tashtyk culture, which flourished in the Yenisei valley in Siberia from the first to the fourth century CE. For an overview of the Oglakhty burial ground and archaeological finds including the child's fur coat, see British Museum (1978, 94-100). See Zaitseva et al. (2009) for the results of radiocarbon dating, which limit the date of Tomb 4 at Oglakhty to the range of the third and fourth centuries CE instead of the first century BCE as previously believed.

⁴⁰⁶ Actually, it is not self-evident that silk was the perennial choice for robes of medieval Eurasian elites because available evidence is limited. Actual robe examples are exceedingly rare. Among them are two robes in Shōsō-in and at Moshchevaja Balka, which I will discuss below. Visual depiction of robes can give us information about styles and patterns but cannot provide conclusive information about materials. Textual sources are not always sufficient. Sometimes robes are mentioned as "silk robes" or "wool robes," but sometimes just as "robes"

while wool and leather were continuously worn by commoners and occasionally by elites in the areas including the steppe, which had a long tradition of using wool. Silk was a highly valued material because of its aesthetic qualities and rarity. The application of silk fabric to riding dress was significant in that this could mean the elevation of the status of the dress in interactions among the medieval Eurasian elites. However, the application of silk fabrics did not just add luxuriousness to riding dress robes. If we look into the types of silk fabrics produced and used during the seventh and eighth centuries, they represent many traces of hybridity in terms of blending various elements such as weaving techniques, the ways of twisting threads, and motifs taken both from the Chinese and from other Eurasian traditions. Such an aspect of hybridity in silk textiles was a result of the cultural exchanges over the preceding centuries and eventually promoted the common use of robes by medieval Eurasian aristocrats from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

I will start by comparing two groups of silk robes belonging to different periods. The robes belonging to the first group date to the period roughly corresponding to the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE). The ones belonging to the second group date to the period corresponding to the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE).

without any information about materials. By combining various types of evidence in this chapter, we can say that silk was the main material for the robes of medieval elites in Eurasia.

5.1.2. Group 1: The robes from Non-ula and Niya

As I mentioned, the major material for robes in the steppe was originally wool and leather. By the latter half of the first millennium BCE at the latest, though, elites in the steppe obtained silk textiles from China and applied them to a variety of uses, as shown by archaeological silk finds from many sites.⁴⁰⁷ One of them is the Noin-Ula burial site in northern Mongolia, which consisted of more than 200 large burial mounds. The mounds were the tombs of the aristocracy of the Xiongnu and date to the first century CE.⁴⁰⁸ Among the textile finds is a robe made of silk, found in Tomb 6 (Figs. 5.9 and 5.10). The robe is 117 cm long and made of plain sandy-coloured Chinese silk, originally red-coloured, but now much faded. Kato, who meticulously examined it at the Hermitage Museum in 1979 and 1980, observed the remains of the trimmings of black ermine fur at the front opening, the hem, both sleeve edges, the upper arms, and the upper back (Fig. 5.11).⁴⁰⁹ Another silk robe from Tomb 6 is made of Chinese plain silk. Instead of fur trimmings, this one has fragmentary remains of felt on the back, which Kato takes as evidence that the robe was originally

⁴⁰⁷ Besides robes, many items were made of silk fabric, such as caps, pochettes, saddle covers, boots and trousers. For the silk finds in Eurasia in pre-Han to early Han times, see Good (1995); Good (2002).

⁴⁰⁸ For an overview of the archaeological finds from Non-ula, see Rudenko (1962); Umehara (1960). Especially for clothing materials excavated at Noin-ula, see Kato (2002, 101-166).

⁴⁰⁹ By examining the density and types of threads (no twisting), Kato concludes that the silk fabric was a product of China, confirming Rudenko's (1962) and Umehara's (1960) views. For the details of the fur trimmings and a reconstruction, see Kato (2002, 112-115).

lined with felt.⁴¹⁰ These two robes exemplify the application of imported Chinese silk to robes in combination with the steppe techniques of fur trimming and felt lining.

Another site I must mention is Niya, an oasis city located on the southern edge of the Tarim Basin in modern-day Xinjiang, China. The Tarim Basin was a place of great strategic importance for the Han dynasty for both economic and military reasons, as it is located between central China, the Xiongnu territories and Western Asia. China regularly struggled with the Xiongnu for dominance over the Tarim Basin.⁴¹¹ Reflecting such a situation, the materials excavated from elite burials at Niya, which are roughly dated between the second and fourth centuries CE,⁴¹² show not only the prosperity at its apogee as a commercial centre, but also the diversity of cultures. This diversity of cultures is exemplified by the combined use of three different fabrics originating in different traditions such as silk, wool and cotton⁴¹³ in

⁴¹⁰ Kato 2002, 115-124.

⁴¹¹ For the history of Niya during the first half of the first millennia CE in terms of the cultural exchanges along the Silk Roads, see Hansen (2012, 25-55).

⁴¹² The extreme dryness of the area allowed organic materials to be preserved in an excellent condition. Regarding the dating of the materials from Niya, “most analysts concur that the material evidence from the Niya, Yingpan, and Loulan sites dates to somewhere between the second and fourth centuries CE but are not sure exactly when. (Hansen 2012, 42).”

⁴¹³ Wool had been a major fibre material at Niya. The production of silk originated in China in the Neolithic, and after that China was the sole producer of fine silk at least through the third century CE. The use of cotton developed in the Indus River Valley in modern-day Pakistan in the 3000 years BCE. Cotton is thought to have been introduced in the southwest part of the Xinjiang region by the first century CE and spread to the whole of Xinjiang by the fifth century CE (Sakamoto 2012, 9).

a set of clothes of a male occupant of Tomb 8 (Fig. 5.12).⁴¹⁴ The sleeved robe and trousers he wears are a kind of riding dress.⁴¹⁵ The robe is made of wool but lavishly decorated with red-grounded silk at its opening, sleeves and lower hem. The cotton trousers are edged with blue-ground silk. The silk fabrics are multicoloured brocades with auspicious creatures among swirling clouds and propitious inscriptions of Chinese characters (Fig. 5.13).⁴¹⁶ Because of their stylistic features and the quality of the weaving, the silk fabrics are accepted as Chinese products.⁴¹⁷

5.1.3. Group 2: The robes from the Shōsō-in and Moshchevaja Balka

⁴¹⁴ For an excavation report of Tomb 8 in 1995, see Wenwu 2000,1, pp.4-40. For the silk fabrics from Niya including the robe, see Tseng (2017).

⁴¹⁵ Niya was an oasis city in the desert and people had developed a lifestyle different from that in the grasslands in the steppe, but riding dress had probably been adopted from the steppe much earlier, as shown by archaeological findings from Cherchen, near Niya, which include a set of sleeved robes and trousers made of wool dating to the sixth century BCE. This set of clothing belonged to a male mummy, the so-called “Cherchen man.” For a detailed discussion of the clothing of Cherchen man and the possible steppe impact on it, see Barber (1999, 23-45).

⁴¹⁶ I will discuss this type of brocade in the next section.

⁴¹⁷ It is highly probable that the cities in the Tarim Basin started to rear silkworms and produce silk textiles at some point after the third century CE. So did Niya, but silks locally produced at Niya, if any, must have been no match for Chinese silk textiles. According to Hansen, “The Niya site also produced cocoons and seeds from mulberry trees, the main foodstuff of silkworms. The residents knew how to spin silk thread and how to make a simple tabby weave···, but they did not have the sophisticated looms required to make the elaborate silk brocades found in the coffin” (2012, 39).

Two examples of silk robes in good condition date to the Tang period. One is a round-necked robe preserved in the Shōsō-in in Japan, dating to the mid-eighth century. The Shōsō-in is the imperial treasure house of the Tōdai-ji Temple in Nara, Japan.⁴¹⁸ Since its establishment in 756, the Shōsō-in has preserved valuable objects, including textiles, for over 1200 years in excellent condition with continuous care. The robe is made of green damask silk⁴¹⁹ with a pattern of confronted dragons in pearl roundels, lined with plain white silk (Fig. 5.14). On the back of the front opening is an inscription that tells us the robe was used at a musical performance at the opening ceremony of the sacred space of Tōdai-ji Temple on 9 April 752.⁴²⁰ Japan regularly sent missions to China from the seventh to the ninth centuries to learn from

⁴¹⁸ The collection of the repository first took shape in the mid-eighth century, when Empress Komyo dedicated over 600 items to the Great Buddha at Tōdai-ji to express her love for her lost husband, Emperor Shōmu (r.724-749). Objects were added sequentially after that. The thousands of items preserved in the Shōsō-in include manuscripts, musical instruments, textiles, shoes, banners, ceramics and glass, metalwork, and lacquerware, many of which date to around the eighth century CE. These objects include both items made in Japan and those of foreign origins, such as China, Korea, Persia, and the Mediterranean. They show the high level of craftsmanship and the complex techniques available to the imperial household during this early period, some of which are now lost in their original contexts. For an overview of textiles in Shōsō-in, see Matsumoto 1974.

⁴¹⁹ Damask, or more precisely twill damask (*ling* 綾), is a type of pattern weaving. The Tang was famous for its high-quality silk damask textiles. In the Tang, damask textiles were usually woven in a single colour, with a shiny satin pattern on a duller background. I will refer to the Tang damask again later in Subsection 5.3.2.

⁴²⁰ The inscription says, “Robe for the musical performance at Todai-ji temple, on 9 April 752 [東大寺大歌袍天平勝宝四年四月九日].” Though a few other similar robes are preserved in Shōsō-in, this robe is the only one that is securely dated.

Chinese culture and civilisation.⁴²¹ Given that the first half of the eighth century was the high point of China's cultural impact on Japan, the Shōsō-in robe can be useful as a reference for the riding dress exchanged and exhibited at the Tang court.⁴²²

The point of focus here is the silk textile (Fig. 5.15). In contrast to the typical Chinese-style silk used for the robe from Niya mentioned above, the silk textile of the Shōsō-in robe shows an eclectic mix of motifs of different cultural origins. A pair of dragons of Chinese origin are confronted in a pearl roundel, which ultimately derived from Sasanian Iran. The tree of life between the dragons is stylised and decorated with what are probably lotuses. The areas outside the roundels are embellished with palmettes, which originated in ancient Egypt. What makes the silk fabric of the Shōsō-in robe even more interesting is the fact that numerous textiles with similar designs have been discovered in various places. An example is a piece of

⁴²¹ Between 607 and 838, Japan sent 19 missions to China. Japanese people of various occupations, such as scholars, students, monks, craftsmen, and diplomats, travelled to Tang China. Some of them returned to Japan with skills and knowledge about, for example, Buddhist teachings, Chinese customs and culture, bureaucracy, architecture and city planning, but others remained in China and never returned, for example, Abe no Nakamaro (c.699-c.770), who established a successful career as an official in Tang employment.

⁴²² Japanese diplomats on the missions visited the Tang court and sent gifts to the Tang emperors. They attended court ceremonies and received gifts from emperors in return. The Tang regarded Japan as one of its tributary countries, but on Japan's side, the relationship with the Tang was reciprocal and equal, at least in principle. In fact, officially, Japan had never been a vassal of the Tang, i.e. Japan had never received titles from the Tang. Thus, the Shōsō-in robe was not an item bestowed by the Tang court as investiture regalia, but it could be a gift from the Tang government, or just a part of trade goods if the robe were imported from China.

yellow silk damask excavated from Tomb 221 in Astana, in Turfan (Fig. 5.16), which is different in colour but strikingly similar in pattern to the Shōsō-in robe.⁴²³ Besides Turfan, similar textiles are found at Dulan in Qinghai, a Sogdian castle on the Mugh mountain near Samarkand, Argalikta in Tuva, Katanda in Altai, and Nainte-sume in northern Mongolia.⁴²⁴ Sakamoto dates all these textiles roughly to the same period, from the end of the seventh century to the first half of the eighth century. Based on the observation that the textiles are similar not only in pattern but also in the thickness of threads, the weaving techniques, and the thread densities, Sakamoto convincingly discusses the possibility that they were all produced in the same place, probably Shu (蜀) province, present-day Sichuan province.⁴²⁵

Another example is a green fur-lined silk robe with a senmurv pattern excavated from a tomb at Moshchevaya Balka, dating to the early ninth century (Fig. 5.17). Lying high in the mountains of the Northwest Caucasus, Moshchevaya Balka was located on trade routes that linked Central Asia, the Near East, southern Russia and the Black Sea. Reflecting such a geographical location, and due to the cold, arid climate suitable for the good preservation of organic materials, Moshchevaya Balka

⁴²³ For an account of the textile from Turfan, see Watt(2004, 341-2).

⁴²⁴ Lubo-Lesnitchenko and Sakamoto(1987) provide an overview of this group of textiles, sharing similarities in design and techniques. I will mention the ones from Mt. Mugh again later. See pp.211-212.

⁴²⁵ Sakamoto2012, 61-64.

yielded many textiles of varied provenances and value.⁴²⁶ Among them, the most striking is the *senmurv* robe, which is thought to have belonged to the chief of a tribe. The robe is made of green brocade silk with a greenish-yellow pattern of *senmurv* enclosed in a pearl roundel (Fig. 5.18).⁴²⁷ The *senmurv* is a mythical creature, half bird, half beast, from Persian mythology. Depictions of *senmurv* are found, for example, on the belted robe worn by the Sasanian king Kosrow II (d. 628) in the stone relief at Taq-i Bustan (Fig. 5.4). Ierusalimskaya infers that the *senmurv* silk was a product of Syria. Particularly interesting is that three different silks, besides the *senmurv* silk, are used to make this robe. Ierusalimskaya mentions three different places of production, Byzantine, Sogdiana and China, for the attached fragments: “Of interest is the range of different silks – worn or fragmentary – that seem to have been reused in the making of the kaftan. They include a fragment of Byzantine silk with Bahram Gur loosing his arrow beneath the flap: a worn Sogdian silk in the band reinforcing the flaps and hem on the inside: a Chinese silk used for bands on the

⁴²⁶ For an overview of the archaeological finds from the tombs of Moschhevaya Balka, see Ierusalimskaja 1996. Especially for the robe with a *senmurv* pattern, see Ierusalimskaja 1978; Knauer 2001; Hermitage Amsterdam (2014, 242).

⁴²⁷ Two pieces of silk textiles are similar to the *senmurv* textile of the robe of Moschhevaya Balka. The two pieces are thought to have originally been parts of the same piece of cloth and are associated with the relics of St Helena at St Leu in Paris. Now they are separately stored in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

loops. Thus they reflect the range of peoples passing along this trading route through the North Caucasus, bypassing Iran.”⁴²⁸

The important point the senmurv robe shows is that silk textiles of good quality were produced not only in China but also in other places such as Syria, Byzantine and Sogdiana, and silk textiles of different provenances were widely distributed.

5.1.4. The comparison and a possible interpretation

The silk textiles used for the robes from Niya and Noin-ula are products of China. The silk of the robe from Niya shows a pattern, which consists of typical Chinese motifs of dragons, swirling clouds and inscriptions in Chinese characters wishing longevity. In contrast, the silk textiles used for the robes of Group 2 show more hybrid natures. The pattern of the Shōsō-in robe is a mosaic of motifs of different cultural origins. The Moshchevaya Balka robe also shows a mosaic, not of motifs but of silk textiles themselves that came from different production places, not only China but probably also Syria, Byzantium, and Sogdiana. In both groups, the silk robes must have represented the elite statuses of the wearers. However, the meanings of the silk textiles seem different. The silk textiles in Group 1 in Noin-ula and Niya must have had a strong association with China, which was probably shared

⁴²⁸ Hermitage Amsterdam 2014, 242. Ierusalimskaya uses the term “kaftan” instead of “robe.” Yokohari takes the same view about the production places of these silk textiles (2001, 212).

in the communities. Even the association with China could probably drive up the values of the robes, given the close relationships between the Xiongnu and China, and between Niya and China. The silk textiles in Group 2 still show a kind of association with a specific cultural tradition; Chinese-style dragons and senmurv originated in the Sassanid empire, but they have acquired a new character, an exotic hybrid combining various cultural elements. This idea will be elaborated on in the next section through a discussion of the history of silk with a special focus on the technological exchanges from the third through the eighth centuries.

5.2. History of silk

5.2.1. Origin and development of silks in China by the third century CE

Since it started to develop silk production in the Neolithic period, China had been the sole producer of fine silks in the world. In the conventional historiography, Emperor Wu in the Western Han dynasty sent an envoy, Zhang Qian, to seek alliances with Central Asian states in the second century BCE, an event that changed the full-fledged silk export from China towards the west. However, in my opinion, the third century CE is even more epoch-making, as silk exchange across Eurasia entered a new stage of technological interaction instead of mere object exchange.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁹ Wu Min, a Chinese textile researcher, and Kazuko Sakamoto, a Japanese textile researcher, both point out that the technological exchanges between the silk weaving in China and the wool weaving in Central and western Asian started from the third century CE. See Wi 2006;

Silks dated before the third century CE, whether discovered in China or outside China, have been identified principally as Chinese products on account of the coherence of techniques and designs. In contrast, silks dated after the third century CE, found at various places in Eurasia, show the variety of mixed combinations of different cultural traditions, in terms of weaving techniques, the ways of twisting threads, and motifs, as a result of the technological diffusion from China and the rise of new production centres outside China, including the Central Asian states, Persia, Sogdiana, India, and Byzantium.⁴³⁰ These mixtures of weaving traditions of China and western areas, through experimental processes of a few centuries, culminated in the seventh and eighth centuries, creating various eclectic styles and advanced weaving techniques.

Silk textiles have been highly prized for their aesthetic and tactile qualities. Silk is an excellent material for clothing because it is thin and soft, lustrous and elastic, well-ventilated and absorbent.⁴³¹ It is the quality of threads that principally determines the quality of silk fabrics. To get long, smooth, strong threads, mastery of the two early processes in silk making, sericulture and reeling, requires special

Sakamoto 2012. I take their point, and here I will develop it into a full view, highlighting the historical significance of the fact.

⁴³⁰ Xinru Liu, in the introduction of her book “Silk and Religion,” summarises the change in the international silk market during the third to seventh centuries from China’s monopoly to a more complex transaction among multiple producers, though the focus of the book is the period between the seventh and twelfth centuries (1996, 14-22).

⁴³¹ Kozłowski 2012a, 146-7.

knowledge, and proficiency is crucial.⁴³² Silk is a natural protein fibre that consists of fibroins gummed together by sericin. It is exuded by the larva of the silk moth as a continuous filament of uniform thickness to make a cocoon (Fig. 5.19).⁴³³ Sericulture, in other words, rearing silkworms, needs considerable care, such as preparing proper foods and controlling temperature and moisture. Reeling is the process by which the silk filament is unravelled and wound as thread on a rotary device. Before reeling, the cocoon is boiled to dissolve the soluble protein sericin that sticks the cocoon filaments together. As each filament is thin, delicate and by itself not suitable for weaving, filaments on several cocoons are reeled together to get a firm, strong yarn (Fig. 5.20).⁴³⁴

⁴³² Descriptions of the rearing of silk moths and the process of reeling are offered, for example, by Shekar and Hardingham (1995). They explain contemporary sericulture, but the principles remain the same as in the past. As for the implementation in pre-modern times, Kuhn (1988, 285-433) provides a good collection of the textual and visual materials about sericulture and silk-reeling.

⁴³³ Though many of insects and spiders produce silk-like fibre, only the filament produced by the mulberry silk moth, known as the cultivated silk moth or *Bombyx mori*, has been used in the silk industry. The cultivation of *Bombyx mori* is thought to have started 5500 years ago in China at the latest. As a result of the long history of controlled rearing and breeding, the silk moth is now entirely dependent on human care for its survival and is even unable to fly. There are a few other silk moths, the so-called non-mulberry or wild silk moths. They are different from the cultivated silk moth in colour, size and texture. According to Kazlowski (2012b, 1-12), about 80 species are now commercially exploited in Asia and Africa, but on a smaller scale than the cultivated silk moth.

⁴³⁴ If cocoons are torn and filaments become unreelable, they can be spun with stronger twists into a thread. A spun silk thread normally has a non-uniform thickness and may be regarded as lower quality than a reeled silk thread.

When and how the idea of sericulture and silk reeling was invented is still an enigma, but it is agreed that the area later called China was among the first to develop and establish silk production. Ancient Chinese mythology credits the important discovery of sericulture to Leizu, wife of the Yellow Emperor, the prehistoric legendary first emperor of China in the mid-third millennium BC.⁴³⁵ Archaeological evidence, however, places the date for the start of sericulture much earlier. The earliest surviving group of silk fragments dates to 3500 BCE, from a Yangshao culture site in Qintaicun, located in Xingyang, Henan province (Fig. 5.21).⁴³⁶ Another group of silk fragments comes from Qianshanyang in Wuxing country, Zhejiang, dating to around 2500 BC (Fig. 5.22).⁴³⁷ The examination of fibres from these two groups shows that they derived from domesticated silkworms, based on the observation of the triangular shape of their cross-section⁴³⁸. This confirms that the domestication of silkworms and silk weaving had developed to a certain level during the fourth and third millennia BC, at least in Henan and Zhejiang provinces. The various pieces of

⁴³⁵ Kuhn (1988, 247-284) discussed the variations and sources of the legend. The most picturesque version is the story saying that a cocoon, falling out of a tree, landed in princess's cup of tea by accident, whereupon she saw that the hot water was dissolving the hardened gum (the sericin) and came up with the idea of unwinding the thread unbroken (Barber 1991, 31).

⁴³⁶ Zhang and Gao (1999) offered an analysis of the textile material, both silk and flax, and the implements such as spindle whorls excavated from Qingtaicun during 1981 and 1987.

⁴³⁷ Zhejiang (1960) offered the data and pictures of the silk fragments in the report of the excavation of Qianshanyang between 1956 and 1958.

⁴³⁸ Zhang and Gao 1999, 11; Zhejiang 1960, 89.

indirect evidence, such as depictions of silkworms (Fig. 5.23) and reeling implements, indicate the possibility of the earlier and wider existence of silk-related activities⁴³⁹.

In this earliest developmental stage of silk production in the Neolithic, such fragmentary evidence is unfortunately not sufficient to reveal the social context of silk use. However, by the Zhou dynasty period, which is divided into the Western Zhou period (1045-771 BCE) and the Eastern Zhou period (770-256 BCE), considerable development had occurred in the silk industry both technically and socially, as various types of evidence indicate. Bronze inscriptions, which increased in number in the Western Zhou period, reveal the distribution of silk in the form of gift exchange among the aristocracy.⁴⁴⁰ Sericulture was widely executed in rural areas to a high standard, as reported in contemporary documents such as the *Shi jing* 詩經 compiled in the Eastern Zhou.⁴⁴¹ The materials excavated from tombs of the Eastern

⁴³⁹ The caterpillars depicted on the ivory basin from Hemudu (Fig. 5.23) are regarded as the representation of silkworms because they show the same number of rings as the worm (Chen 1992, 15). In addition, the site yielded a small broom that may have been used for brushing the cocoon when reeling the silk (Kuhn 2012, 73). Combining these discoveries, it is assumed that some silk-related activities had already started seven thousand years ago, even though we do not know whether they used domesticated silkworms or wild silkworms.

⁴⁴⁰ According to Sato's interpretation of bronze inscriptions from the late Western Zhou, kings often bestowed ceremonial silk robes on subjects when issuing an appointment letter, and subjects offered silk textiles to kings as tribute in reverse (1977-78, 190-195).

⁴⁴¹ The *Shi jing* 詩經, the Book of Odes, consists of 305 selected poems, including many dealing with silk use, silkworm rearing and weaving activity. For example, "The seven months", which is a part of a long poem for the activities of the agricultural calendar, shows the description of sericulture and mulberry cultivation. This suggests that such activities commonly took place in rural villages (Sato 1977-78, 125-147).

Zhou period demonstrate high achievement in technical complexity and design intricacy. The most notable progress is the enhancement of patterning ability as a result of the development of warp-faced compound tabby weave, one type of brocade or so-called *jīn* 錦 in traditional Chinese terminology (Fig. 5.24),⁴⁴² and the improvement of embroidery techniques (Fig. 5.25).

The establishment of unified empires under the Qin (221-206 BCE) and the Han (202 BCE-9 CE; 25-220 CE) pushed up silk production and consumption both officially and privately. By then, the consumption and distribution of silk had been domestically institutionalised through ritual systems, gift exchanges, tax collections, and dress codes. During the Han period, a variety of techniques developed and appeared, such as looped warp-faced compound tabby, damask, gauze, and printing.⁴⁴³ The most spectacular achievement was the so-called animal and cloud pattern *jīn*, which has been found in tombs dating to the later Han, Wei and Jin (Fig. 5.26). The pattern mainly consists of mythical beasts and floating clouds with occasional Chinese inscriptions of auspicious messages related to contemporary

⁴⁴² Warp-faced compound tabby weave first appeared in the Western Zhou and became popular during the Warring States and Qin, Han period (Zhao 1999, 340). The term *jīn* 錦 originally meant warp-faced compound tabby weave, but it was used throughout Chinese imperial times and came to refer to a wide variety of polychrome silk fabrics. For a detailed explanation of *jīn*, see Kuhn 2012, 523. A further explanation will be given later in this section.

⁴⁴³ For the description of the new techniques, see Kuhn 2012, 120-142.

beliefs about immortality.⁴⁴⁴ The *jìn* technique (the warp-face compound tabby weave) had already appeared in the Western Zhou period, but the use of up to five colours and the curved linear depiction of clouds and animals show considerable development during the Han period.⁴⁴⁵ In conclusion, at the beginning of the third century CE, Chinese silk already had several millennia of history as a special prestigious good with mature technology.

5.2.2. Silk outside China by the third century CE

Turning our attention outside China, many silk textiles dating to before the third century CE have been found in archaeological sites across Eurasia.⁴⁴⁶ Areas such as Xinjiang, south Siberia, Mongolia, and the Mediterranean have yielded silks. Most of them have been identified as Chinese products on account of the coherence of styles and techniques.

Some examples predate the Han period. For example, the embroidered silk on the saddle cushion from Pazyryk (Figs. 5.27 and 5.28), which date to the fourth century BCE, shows a stylistic resemblance to a silk textile from Mashan (Fig. 5.24). However, the major body of silk finds outside China dates around the Han. The Han empire was consciously aware of the value of silk in interstate relations, trade,

⁴⁴⁴ For the classifications of this type of design, see Kuhn 2012, 142-154.

⁴⁴⁵ For the technical explanation of five-colour *jìn*, see Kuhn 2012, 122-3.

⁴⁴⁶ Good (1995) reviews the silks outside China from pre-Han to early Han times. Sakamoto (2012, 10-11) also offers a description of the sites and the silks found there.

diplomacy or wars, in the context of the increasing military tension with the Xiongnu and active contacts with western regions.⁴⁴⁷ Many examples of animal and cloud pattern *jīn* and other types of silks have been found in various places in Eurasia, such as Niya (Fig. 5.12) and Loulan in Xinjiang, Oglakty in south Siberia, Noin-Ula in Mongolia (Fig. 5.29), Palmyra in Syria (Fig. 5.30), and Kerch in the Crimea.⁴⁴⁸

Silk textiles may have been produced outside China before the third century CE. One issue is the use of wild silkworms. The thread fragments found at Harappa and Chanhu-daro, two important Indus sites in Pakistan, were reported as silk, based on microscopic analysis.⁴⁴⁹ The analysis reveals that the silks, dating to c.2450-2000 BC, may be derived from an indigenous wild silk moth species rather than from the Chinese *Bombyx mori*. The condition of the threads indicates that they may have been reeled rather than spun, contrary to the general assumption that cocoons of wild silkworms are not suitable for reeling. Good et al. conclude that this suggests the possibility of sericulture in South Asia using species different from *Bombyx mori*. Another wild silk moth case is a cocoon from the settlement at Akrotiri on the Aegean

⁴⁴⁷ Chinese documents recorded how much silk was sent to the Xiongnu as tribute (Yokohari 2001, 50).

⁴⁴⁸ For the political aim of exporting the animal cloud pattern *jīn*, Li states that “the court of the Eastern Han, and the following Wei and Jin probably gave presents to the rulers of western regions and northern nomads as tribute and used inscriptions of auspicious sayings to convey goodwill or employed slogans to display the power and authority of the Chinese state” (2012a, 125).

⁴⁴⁹ Good et al. 2009.

island of Santorini in the mid-second millennium BC.⁴⁵⁰ The cocoon has been identified as a wild silk moth. The use of wild silk moths suggests that silks were locally produced outside of China. Documentary evidence also offers information about silk production in Rome and Japan. The Roman author Pliny (23-79 CE) wrote that imported Chinese silk textiles were unwound and rewoven.⁴⁵¹ A Chinese source also mentions this remaking of Chinese silk in the Roman Empire.⁴⁵² Japan is thought to have started silk production between the first and third centuries CE, learning the technology from China.⁴⁵³ It is obvious, however, that these production activities, the use of wild silk moths in India and Greece, the remaking of Chinese silk in Rome, and the fledgling silk industry in Japan, were no match for China in terms of the quality, the scale of production and the impact on international silk circulation.

To sum up, the archaeological and documentary evidence discussed above confirms the dominance of China as a supplier of fine silk at the beginning of the third century CE. The distribution of silk until the third century CE was principally a one-way flow from China.

5.2.3. Two different traditions by the third century CE: silk and wool

⁴⁵⁰ Panagiotakopulu et al. 1997.

⁴⁵¹ According to Pliny, Chinese people ‘supply our women with the double task of unravelling the threads and weaving them together again’ (1989, 379).

⁴⁵² Sakamoto 2012, 11.

⁴⁵³ Sakamoto 2012, 8.

While China had a long tradition of silk production, what about the other regions of Eurasia? I introduce a map presented by Sakamoto, who designates three zones in Eurasia before the third century CE according to what kind of natural fibre characterises its material culture: silk, wool or cotton (Fig. 4.31).⁴⁵⁴ While the silk zone includes China, Japan and a part of India, the wool zone covers a wide area including the steppe, Europe, the Mediterranean, Western Asia, and Central Asia. The cotton zone includes most of India. According to Sakamoto, the zones had been formed principally along environmental lines on fauna and flora, which determined the availabilities of fibre materials. She states that the interactions among the three zones had not been sufficiently activated to cause serious technological interactions among them by the third century CE, even though goods were exchanged. My focus here is the wool and silk zones. I will briefly discuss the development of wool production by the third century CE and then how the two zones interacted with each other from the third century CE onward.

The domestication of sheep probably started in the ninth millennium BC.⁴⁵⁵ Then people might use wool for spinning, weaving, and felting. The earliest remains of wool textiles are from Çatal Höyük in Turkey around 6000 BC.⁴⁵⁶ In addition to sheep, other hairy animals, such as goats and camels, were used. Wool weaving

⁴⁵⁴ Sakamoto states that she does not set cultural zones for flax and hemp because they were widely used all over Eurasia (Sakamoto 2012, 10).

⁴⁵⁵ Barber 1991, 22.

⁴⁵⁶ Barber 1991, 25.

developed differently from the silk tradition in terms of weaving techniques. I introduce four different weaving techniques to highlight the technical excellence in expressing patterns; that is, twill, knotted pile, tapestry, and weft-faced compound tabby.⁴⁵⁷ An example of wool twill textile was found in the salt mines at Hallstatt in Austria. It is olive-green with brown plaid stripes, dating to the early first millennium BC (Fig. 5.32). A carpet found at Pazyryk dating to the fourth to third centuries BCE is one of the oldest surviving knotted pile rugs (Fig. 5.33).⁴⁵⁸ The rug has square geometric patterns in the centre and deer and riders on horseback along its borders. A wool textile that used to be a trouser leg, found at the Shanpula outside Khotan, Xinjiang, is woven with the tapestry technique (Fig. 5.34). It dates to the first to third centuries CE. It depicts a classical Greek centaur with a warrior below. The last technique I introduce is the weft-faced compound tabby, which is exemplified by a wool fragment dating to the first half of the second century CE, from Mons

⁴⁵⁷ For the definitions of four techniques, see Burnham 1981. According to Han Chinese literature, patterned wool textiles were brought from non-Han ethnic peoples and highly prized (Yokohari 2001, 111-113; Wu Min 2006, 212-3).

⁴⁵⁸ The origin of the carpet was discussed as Achaemenid Persia or Central Asia.

Claudianus in Egypt (Figs. 5.35 and 5.36).⁴⁵⁹ In addition to twill, which also appeared in China, three other techniques originated from the wool tradition.⁴⁶⁰

To highlight the differences between the two weaving traditions, I give special attention to two elements: the methods of twisting threads and the ways of multicoloured compound weaving. Natural fibres must be made into a thread to be used for weaving. Wool fibres are relatively short, about 4 to 7.5 centimetres long on average, so they need strong twists to form a long thread. In contrast, silk fibres are long, occasionally more than 1000m, so they technically need no or only slight twists. In terms of an aesthetic effect, less twisting is preferred to make the finished silk textile shinier and smoother. The thread can be spun in two directions, to the left or the right, “S” or “Z”. Interestingly, for some unaccountable reason, wool and silk were originally twisted in accord with different preferences. While the Z-twist was

⁴⁵⁹ This is one of six examples of weft-faced compound tabby weave found at Mons Claudianus. Cizuk (2000) concludes that they date to the first half of the second century CE. Weft-faced compound tabby or “taqtés” is a kind of polychrome compound weaving. This example of Mons Claudianus is the earliest of this technique and shows that the technique was still in its infancy. I will give a more detailed discussion about weft-faced compound weaving in comparison with warp-faced compound weaving in China below.

⁴⁶⁰ According to Zhao Feng (1999, 337-340), the tapestry weave was adapted to silk in China in the Tang dynasty first and became popular in the Song dynasty. The weft-faced compound tabby weave technique is thought to have come to China between the third and fifth centuries and subsequently been applied to silk. I will come back to this point later in this section. Knotted pile carpets were made not only of wool but later of silk in the Islamic world.

dominant in the wool zone, the twist was made in the S direction whenever silk threads were twisted.⁴⁶¹

The multicoloured compound weave is a type of patterned weaving, which was popular but a most complicated technology with high aesthetic value. The multicoloured compound weaving appeared both in the silk tradition and the wool tradition, as exemplified by the many animal-cloud pattern *jīn* textiles (warp-faced compound tabby) produced in China and the wool textile woven with the technique of weft-faced compound tabby weave found at Mons Claudianus (Figs. 5.35 and 5.36). The two contrasting types are warp-faced and weft-faced; the former was the norm in the silk tradition and the latter in the wool tradition.⁴⁶²

Warp and weft are the two essential sets of threads that interlace and bind together to make a woven cloth. The warp is the threads that are normally fixed in place on the loom, vertical to a weaver. The weft is the threads that are conveyed by

⁴⁶¹ Sakamoto 2012, 8. According to Barber (1991, 66), the regions that used mostly wool spun them consistently in the Z direction, though there is an exceptional case in northern Europe where wool is occasionally spun in the S direction.

⁴⁶² In addition to the distinction between warp-faced and weft-faced, multicoloured compound weave techniques are under another categorisation, which is tabby or twill for the binding system. So, as formal terminology, there are four types of compound weave: *warp*-faced compound *tabby* weave, *warp*-faced compound *twill* weave, *weft*-faced compound *tabby* weave and *weft*-faced compound *twill* weave. Historically, warp-faced compound tabby weave came first in the silk zone. Then weft-faced polychrome compound tabby weave came in the wool zone. Their respective twill versions appeared later.

a weaver horizontally to pass under and over the warp threads.⁴⁶³ The distinction between warp-faced and weft-faced means which set of threads dominantly covers the surface of a textile, warp or weft. These terms do not apply, for example, to tabby weave and simple twill weave, because both warp and weft equally appear visible on the surface. Instead, these terms make sense when applied to, for example, satin, tapestry and compound weave. Using warp-faced technology in compound weaving means that warp threads are shown on the surface as carriers of colours for a designed pattern (Fig. 5.37). Each colour of warp threads is sometimes on the surface and at other times hidden as an inner warp, according to the design scheme. While warp threads are dominantly seen on the surface, weft threads are not conspicuous at a glance but function in two ways, to control colour changes and bind the warp ends. The ground and pattern are formed simultaneously, and the entire surface is covered by warp floats that hide the weft. In weft-faced technology, the roles of the warp and weft are interchanged (Fig. 5.38).

They are quite different in the actual weaving process. In warp-faced weaving, colour threads are set on the loom as warp at the beginning of weaving. On the other hand, in weft-faced weaving, colour weft threads are conveyed across the warp along with the ongoing process of weaving. However, as seen from the comparison of the

⁴⁶³ When the weft goes alternately over and under the single stems of the warp, it makes the simplest of all weaves, plain or tabby weave. If the combinations of how weft goes over and under warp are varied, other more complex weaving structures are possible, for example, twill, satin, gauze, crepe, damask, and compound weave.

diagrams of the two weaving structures, they appear similar if one of them is rotated 90 degrees (Figs. 5.37 and 5.38). Why did these two distinctively different patterning methods arise? Scholars have explained that the difference between the two ideas of patterning is rooted in the nature of fibre materials. Silk fibre is long, fine and elastic with a smooth surface. These properties allowed weavers to set silk threads densely as warp on the loom. In ancient China, patterns were always shown in warp from the beginning of silk weaving. On the other hand, wool fibre is short and has a scaly surface. It must be strongly twisted and spun to make a long thread. Twisted wool threads are fluffy and can easily shrink and curl. Thus the warp needed to be dressed rather sparsely on the loom to prevent it from becoming tangled. Instead, the weft was beaten tightly into warps to cover them up. This made weft-faced technology typical in wool weaving.⁴⁶⁴ In sum, the different characteristics of the natural fibres resulted in different ideas of patterning.

5.2.4. The period of technological exchanges from the third century onward

One example from Dura-Europos in Syria marks the start of the new period (Fig. 5.39). It is a silk fragment dating to the early third century CE and is considered the earliest silk woven in a weft-faced compound tabby weave. The threads, both warp and weft, are strongly twisted in the Z direction. The textile is coarse and bulky.

⁴⁶⁴ The tapestry technique that developed in the wool tradition was also a kind of weft-faced weaving.

Pfister and Bellinger examined this piece and, in their final report in 1945, concluded that its pattern was produced by weft, even though no selvage had been preserved.⁴⁶⁵ They emphasise its features by comparison with Chinese silks excavated from Palmyra in Syria, of which Pfister had previously made a careful examination⁴⁶⁶. One of the Palmyra silks belongs to the typical Han-style *jīn*, showing the warp-faced weaving and the high technical achievement that made the execution of a complicated design possible (Fig. 5.30). On the other hand, according to Pfister, the fibre of the silk from Dura-Europos is fine, possibly taken from domesticated silkworms, but the strong Z-twist spinning is not Chinese and the geometric angular ornamentation is much simpler. Pfister and Bellinger hypothesise that this weft-faced silk piece from Dura-Europos may have been produced experimentally in Syria or Persia under the stimulus of the excellence of Chinese polychrome silk. The hypothesis has been generally accepted. Thus the silk from Dura-Europos indicates a high probability of the start of silk production outside China by the third century CE, by adapting the technologies derived from the wool tradition to silk.

In the third century, two contrasting types of compound weaving silk coexisted, apparently belonging to different cultural traditions. One is Han-style polychrome silk woven in warp-faced compound tabby weave with unspun threads, and the other is weft-faced tabby woven silk with Z-twisted threads in Dura-Europos.

⁴⁶⁵ Pfister and Bellinger 1945, 3.

⁴⁶⁶ Pfister 1940.

Their designs are also in line with their cultural backgrounds. This coexistence indicates the beginning of the interaction between two traditions. Numerous subsequent examples demonstrate even more complicated entanglements and suggest that the distinction between the two traditions became blurred. I will introduce some selected silk examples that show different types of entanglements.

Example 1

The first example is an animal motif-textile from Yingpan, Xinjiang, dating to around the fourth century CE (Fig. 5.40).⁴⁶⁷ It was used on the front lapel of the white cotton robe worn by the man buried in the tomb. It is woven in weft-faced compound tabby, with Z-twisted threads. Technically it belongs to the wool tradition and shares similarities with the silk from Dura-Europos (Fig. 5.39) mentioned above, but the design is characteristic. It imitated the cloud and animal pattern of Han-style *jin*. Even though the cloud shapes are simplified and fewer colours are used, the composition and elements are similar. Some small diagrams between clouds and animals almost look like Chinese inscriptions. They might have been made by someone not literate in the language. Many examples of this type of silk imitating

⁴⁶⁷ For the description of the piece, see Li 2012, 174-177.

animal-cloud patterns in the weft-faced technique⁴⁶⁸ have been mainly excavated from Xinjiang, dating to around the fourth to sixth centuries⁴⁶⁹.

As early as 1975, Krishna Riboud pointed out the unusualness of this type of silk, that is, the combination of Chinese and western techniques.⁴⁷⁰ Then Jia Yinyi, in his article in 1985, took the analysis one step further and correlated the technical feature with places of production.⁴⁷¹ Jia examined the group of silks woven with strongly Z-twisted threads from Xinjiang, which includes not only animal-cloud patterns, but also other patterns, and concludes that they were made in Xinjiang and not central China. He concludes that this type of silk matches the descriptions in literary evidence that tell us people wove silk textiles by themselves in Xinjiang and that the custom of twisting threads from broken cocoons persisted because they avoided killing the silk moths due to their Buddhist religion. Jia's view has been generally accepted.⁴⁷²

Example 2

⁴⁶⁸ For example, a silk fabric found at Astana Tomb 313, Turfan, Xinjiang (Kuhn 2012, 41 pl.1.19a).

⁴⁶⁹ Li 2012, 174; Yokohari 2001, 113-6.

⁴⁷⁰ Riboud 1975.

⁴⁷¹ Jia 1985.

⁴⁷² Li (2012, 174), Sakamoto (2012, 36-38) and Yokohari (2001, 113-116) followed Jia's view.

The next example is a silk textile from Astana in Xinjiang, dating to the late sixth century (Fig. 5.41).⁴⁷³ The pattern is executed by warp-faced weaving, in a Chinese traditional way, but the design is not Chinese. The men facing each other are depicted as possibly Central Asian, with high-bridged noses, in a kind of riding dress and in postures of toasting holding rhytons, a Central Asian vessel. The pearl roundel suggests Sasanian influence, even though it was already widely used in Eurasia by the sixth century. This combination of Chinese warp-faced compound tabby weave and non-Chinese designs is found in many examples. A silk textile with non-Chinese men leading camels has Chinese inscriptions *huwang* 胡王 (barbarian king) (Fig. 5.42).⁴⁷⁴

Kuhn suggests that these examples were produced by Chinese weavers who translated newly imported designs into their traditional warp-faced compound tabby weaving.⁴⁷⁵ Zhao interprets them in the context of exoticism in China, by mentioning that the motifs, such as camels and foreign merchants, are also found on contemporary wall paintings, brick carvings, and *sancai* tri-coloured ceramic wares.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ For the description of the piece, see Li 2012b, 196-197 and Zhao 1999, 106.

⁴⁷⁴ For the description of the piece, see Kuhn 2012, 39, Zhao 2012, 211-212 and Zhao 1999, 104.

⁴⁷⁵ Kuhn 2012, 32-39.

⁴⁷⁶ Zhao 1999, 104, 106.

Example 3

The third example is the weft-faced polychrome silk excavated from Astana, Turfan (Fig. 5.43). The motif is a single deer within a pearl roundel. The arrangement in pearl roundels is of an animal that had originally had deep associations with Sasanian tradition in iconography and legends. Thus the design and weaving technique of the example belongs to the wool tradition. However, its weft threads are untwisted. Only its warp threads are Z-twisted. Such a design, a single animal in profile within a pearl roundel, was popular in the seventh and eighth centuries. Other examples were found in Astana, Turfan (Figs. 5.44 and 5.45).⁴⁷⁷ They share the same characteristics in terms of weaving and the way of twisting threads. Many of them were found as masks to cover the dead.

The determination of the provenance of this group from Turfan remains controversial as to whether they were produced in Sasanian Persia, Sogdiana⁴⁷⁸, Turfan, or central China. Sakamoto concludes that they were produced in an Iranian area, Sasanian Persia or Sogdiana, on account of the technical similarities (weft-faced compound weave with Z-twisted warp and non-twisted weft) with the silks

⁴⁷⁷ Zhao 2012, 214

⁴⁷⁸ Both literary and archaeological evidence suggests that the Sogdians produced silk textiles themselves, but it is difficult to distinguish their products, especially from Sasanian silk, due to their cultural affinity.

which have been already approved as Persian or Sogdian production.⁴⁷⁹ Zhao simply defines the group as Sogdian products due to the stylistic affinity with wall paintings of the Sogdian period in Penjikent in Uzbekistan.⁴⁸⁰ Kageyama divides the group into two categories according to technical proficiency concerning the silks with higher quality as Sasanian products and with lower quality as Sogdian products.⁴⁸¹ Wu considers them as warp-faced compound twill weaving, contrary to the accepted view,⁴⁸² and assumes that they were produced in central China or Turfan under the cultural influence of China.⁴⁸³ Shen also regards them as warp-faced compound twill weaving, following Wu, and hypothesises that they were woven by Sogdian craftsmen who immigrated to Turfan and learned the Chinese warp-faced weaving method.⁴⁸⁴

Example 4

The last example is a weft-faced compound twill silk dating to the seventh or eighth century (Fig. 5.46).⁴⁸⁵ It is preserved in the Buddhist Horyu-ji temple in Japan

⁴⁷⁹ Sakamoto 2012, 39-59. Sakamoto suggests that non-twisted threads had started to be used outside of China before the seventh century.

⁴⁸⁰ Zhao 1999, 97.

⁴⁸¹ Kageyama 2002.

⁴⁸² I take the stance that they are weft-faced weaving, relying on Sakamoto's counterargument against Wu and Sheng (2012, 43-48).

⁴⁸³ Wu, in her first report on the silks from Astana in 1962, stated that they are warp-faced weaving. She reconfirmed the view in a paper in 2006 (239-242).

⁴⁸⁴ Sheng 1998, 149-155.

⁴⁸⁵ The piece is described by Kuhn (2012, 46) and Yokohari (2006). According to Yokohari (2006, 155), the textile may have been given to the emperor as an offering after 711.

as the private collection of Emperor Shomu (701-56). Its pattern of bearded horsemen in the pose of the “Parthian shot” placed in the pearl roundel medallions shows Iranian characteristics. On the rump of each horse is a Chinese character, either *shan* (山, mountain) or *ji* (吉, auspicious) (Fig. 5.47). Also, the twist of the threads shows Chinese characteristics; the warp threads are twisted slightly in the S direction, and the wefts have no appreciable twist.⁴⁸⁶ Such combinations of auspicious Chinese characters and typically Sasanian motifs might have been highly valued.⁴⁸⁷

Yokohari compares the Horyuji silk with a fragment excavated from Antinoe in Egypt (Fig. 5.48). It shows a winged horse adorned with flying ribbons in the Sasanian style, enclosed within a pearl medallion, and is generally regarded as a Sasanian product. Yokohari suggested the deep influence of Sasanian Persia on the Horyuji silk in terms of iconography and technique by, for example, pointing out that both textiles used the berclé technique, unique to Sasanian Persia.⁴⁸⁸ On the other hand, however, she focused on the difference between them in the representations

⁴⁸⁶ Yokohari 2006, 155-7.

⁴⁸⁷ Kuhn 2012, 33.

⁴⁸⁸ According to Yokohari (2006, 160), the berclé technique gives a hatching effect, produced by shuttling alternately between a blue weft pick and a white pick. The technique is evident on the rump of the Antinoe horse (Fig. 41) and the muzzle and chest of the Horyuji horses (Fig. 40). This technique was unique to the Sasanians and disappeared after the Arab conquest of their empire in the middle of the seventh century, so Yokohari assumes that Sasanian weavers were producing this type of silk in Chinese weaving workshops or that Chinese weavers had adopted this technique from their Sasanian colleagues.

of the feathers on the wing shoulder. While on the Antinoe silk, the feathers are rendered naturalistically, those of the Horyuji silk are more stylised in a tortoiseshell (hexagonal) pattern. Yokohari concludes that the Horyoji silk was made by Chinese weavers, who were well informed about Sasanian designs but adopted them in their own way. She also suggests that quite a few legitimate Sasanian craftsmen may have joined in the production.⁴⁸⁹ Many weft-faced twill silks with similar hunting scenes are preserved as ecclesiastical relics in European churches (Fig. 5.49), though they all do not seem to predate the Horyuji silk.⁴⁹⁰

5.2.5. Historical background of the interaction

The mixtures demonstrate the encounter and entanglement of the wool and silk traditions. The general historical background of this process can be summarised as follows. In the wake of the active foreign policy of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty, large quantities of Chinese silks were sent westward as gifts to local leaders or as highly desirable commodities. The growing demand for silk outside China inevitably led to the outflow of silk-producing technology from China despite China's strict control to maintain its monopoly. From around the third century CE onward silk industries developed in various regions, such as the Central Asian states, Persia, and

⁴⁸⁹ After the Sasanian empire was conquered by the Arabs, many artisans fled abroad.

⁴⁹⁰ Yokohari 2006, 161.

Byzantium⁴⁹¹. The rise of new production centres put an end to China's monopolistic position in silk production in the ancient world, though China remained the biggest producer. Silks made in western areas were different from Chinese silks in terms of techniques and patterns reflecting their local cultural backgrounds. The various types of silk circulated and influenced each other. Consequently, mixtures became the norm of the period.

These mixtures of techniques were not an irregular coexistence of random combinations. As a whole, they can be regarded as a process of technological development towards the dominance of weft-faced twill weaving. The Chinese traditional warp-faced patterning in polychrome compound weaving was finally replaced by weft-faced twill weaving and almost disappeared from the history of textiles in the eighth or ninth centuries probably due to its lower ability to weave a wider range of designs and colours.⁴⁹² In terms of designs, widely shared motifs

⁴⁹¹ At Turfan, silk production was established by the fifth century CE, according to Sheng (1998, 132). For the silk industry in the Roman Empire, described by Canepa, "according to legend, in 553/4 Syrian monks smuggled the silk worm cocoons into the Roman Empire and sold them to the court of the emperor Justinian. This established a local Roman silk industry, although the empire still imported a large amount of silk from Persia. The center of the Roman silk industry was in late antiquity in Constantinople and silk was spun and woven in large imperial factories and small private workshops (2014, 2)." For the silk industry in Persia, according to Canepa, "the Persians imported their raw silk from China and did not establish a native silk industry until the 6th century CE" (2014, 2).

⁴⁹² According to Yokohari (2001, 119-129), the earliest weft-faced compound twill weave silks appeared in the fourth century, probably produced in the eastern Mediterranean and West Asia. On the other hand, warp-faced compound weave also seems to have experienced

across regions appeared besides regional varieties. The most prevalent and representative one was the pearl roundel with an animal motif, which is assumed to have originated in Sasanian Iran. The pearl roundel prevailed during the sixth and eighth centuries across Eurasia, produced in numerous varieties. The use of untwisted silk threads became more common outside China as well.

I have demonstrated the technological interactions from the third to eighth centuries by examining archaeological textiles. Evidence is insufficient to reveal how these interactions happened in detail. However, some episodes recorded in textual materials can give us glimpses. For example, the seventh-century pilgrim Xuanzang reported a legend of an ancient Chinese princess smuggling mulberry seeds and eggs of the silk moth to Khotan, hiding them in her headdress.⁴⁹³ This legend gives us an idea about a possible way that silk manufacturing was introduced to Khotan. More related to the concern of this thesis is an episode about a man named He Chou 何稠, recorded in the *Sui Shu* 隋書 (The History of the Sui Dynasty). He Chou was a third-generation Sogdian immigrant from a family of merchants and artisans. He was an expert in silk weaving and he was chosen by Sui emperors to serve at the imperial workshop from the 580s to the 610s. When Persian envoys brought a robe made of

the transfer from tabby to twill. According to Kuhn, weft-faced weaving started to diffuse in China, probably in the sixth century, and totally replaced warp-faced weaving in the eighth and ninth centuries (Kuhn 2012, 27-30).

⁴⁹³ DTXJ (1985, 12:1001-1005, 1021-1022). The legendary story is depicted on a rectangular wood panel. The panel was found by Aurel Stein at Dandan-oilik, near Khotan, and is now stored in British Museum. For the legend and the wood panel, see Zhao Feng 2012, 207-8.

gold-threaded silk brocade as a tribute, the emperor was impressed at the quality of the weaving of the brocade and ordered He Chou to reproduce it. He succeeded in this mission by producing a fine execution even better than the original one from Persia.⁴⁹⁴ The episode is significant because it suggests the possible roles of Sogdian immigrants as agents of technological transfer from the west to China. It also suggests that Persia was capable of producing silks of excellent qualities comparable to Chinese ones around 700 CE. Even more interesting is that the item the Persian envoys brought was a robe. This episode suggests that, when a robe was given as a gift in elite communications, the silk textile of the robe itself could be of concern.

5.3. Silk as a common elite material

5.3.1. Silk as an important medium of political communications

Silk production in the Eurasian continent entered a new stage by the seventh century, reaching an unprecedented level of quantity of production, variety of styles and techniques, technological abilities, and artistic achievement. China was still the biggest producer but not the only one any more. In this new situation, the nature of silk had changed from a special product exclusively associated with China to a common elite material, which Eurasian aristocrats customised to their liking, enjoying hybridity in designs. In defining the value of silk, Xinru Liu is quite right in

⁴⁹⁴“ 稠博覽古圖，多識舊物，波斯嘗獻金繇錦袍，組織殊麗，上命稠為之。稠錦既成，逾所獻者，上甚悅”(SS 68: 1596).

saying that “silk was not inherently a rare material. Silk, unlike diamonds, for example, did not have an intrinsic value. Its value is derived from the intensive labour and technology in its production. Therefore, its demand and price mostly fluctuated in a different historical context.”⁴⁹⁵ The rise of many production places in Eurasia boosted the total amount of silk in circulation. Silk was still rare but not too rare for aristocrats in various places of medieval Eurasia. Elite consumers became more and more concerned about the qualities of silk weavings, colours and ornamental motifs.

In terms of motifs, I discussed two major features in the previous section: the blending of different cultural traditions and the prevailing impact of the Sassanian ornaments such as geometrical or vegetal motifs, and animals (birds, boars, rams, winged horses, or *senmurv*) often set within pearl roundels. Elites in the Mediterranean, Central Asia, and China integrated these Sasanian motifs into their textile traditions and created varieties of new hybrid designs. These features should not be reduced to local exoticism. Canepa theorises the political importance and the motivation of adopting foreign ornaments on textiles, especially in the context of the shared aristocratic cultures across late antique Eurasian elites; “Alongside its formal functions like framing, filling, linking or just pleurably embellishing, ornament could communicate political messages and define identities, which was one of its most important vocations within the context of elite taste and fashion. Aristocrats and sovereigns interacted with foreign ornamental material to situate themselves

⁴⁹⁵ Liu 1996, 9.

concerning larger aristocratic common cultures that were developing across Eurasia...The practice of displaying another culture's ornamental material or even incorporating it into a new context was a tool by which elites could define their identity within their society or the wider, global visual culture of power."⁴⁹⁶

To sum up, silk textiles, as conveyors of ornamental motifs, had become an important medium of political communications among Eurasian elites by the seventh century. High-quality textiles were used in a variety of ways, for example, interior decorations (blankets, wall hangings, pillows etc.), religious items (banners and relics), and currency. There is no doubt, however, that clothing, especially a robe, was the most important use of silk textiles, through which wearers could articulate and negotiate their identities, statuses and ranks when they attended the courts of Eurasia.

5.3.2. Two luxurious types of silk textiles: brocade and damask

What kinds of silk textiles were used for robes? Two robes I mentioned in the first section, one from Moshchevaja Balka (Fig. 5.17) and the other from the Shōsō-in (Fig. 5.14), can serve as examples. The patterns of these two robes, *senmurv* in

⁴⁹⁶ Canepa 2014, 9. Canepa discusses not only the motifs on textiles but also those on other media: "Prestigious ornamental motifs could often migrate from silk to other types of textiles or even into architectural settings. Ornamental motifs, in the margins of sacred architecture, luxury objects, palaces, tombs and court-costumes, offered a subtle means to comment on a royal or aristocratic patron's identity and manage the economy of courtly hierarchy" (Canepa 2014, 11).

pearl roundel and a pair of dragons in pearl roundel, represent the typical features of the common aristocratic tastes, that is, the Sasanian influence and the hybridity. In addition to the patterns, the brocade and damask types of weaving also represent the technological development of the time and the typical choices for elite robes. The Moshchevaja Balka robe is made of brocade silk textile. Brocade or *jin* 錦 refers to polychrome compound weaving. It first developed as warp-faced compound weaving in China during the Han period. Then, after weft-faced compound weaving appeared in the third century CE, the patterning ability was greatly enhanced especially in terms of the width of the pattern repeat, which allowed weavers to weave larger medallions, reaching 40cm in diameter or even more.⁴⁹⁷ The Shōsō-in robe is made of damask silk textile. Damask, more precisely, twill damask or *ling* 綾, is a kind of technique for pattern weaving, which developed considerably in Tang China and became widely popular, especially among the Tang elites. In the Tang, damask textiles were usually woven in a single colour, with a shiny satin pattern on a duller background. Besides the Shōsō-in robe, there are many examples of damask, such as the silk fragment with a persimmon-calyx pattern from Dulan, Qinhai (Fig. 5.50).⁴⁹⁸ Damask textiles have a special visual effect. Up close, a damask silk textile shows a pattern but from a distance, the pattern may be less conspicuous, and, instead, the

⁴⁹⁷ As exemplified by the Horyu-ji textile (Fig.5.46).

⁴⁹⁸ A number of literary sources from the Tang recorded bi-colour damask (erse ling 二色綾), but it was rare and the production was strictly limited. An Lushan shiji reports that Emperor Xuanzong presented An Lushan eight pieces of bi-colour damask coverlets (Zhao 2012, 233-234).

colour and shiny texture of the textile stand out. Damask required a tremendous amount of labour to produce compared with brocade. When a contemporary Tang poet Yuan Zhen (779-831) mentioned *Liao* damask, the most highly-esteemed damask at the time, he wrote that it required ten times more labour to be produced than ordinary fine silks.⁴⁹⁹

5.3.3. Robes at the courts in Eurasia: the preference for brocade

I will here further explore the use of silk textiles for robes at the courts of various places in Eurasia by gleaning and combining different types of evidence. I examine cases of the Hephthalite, the Turks, the Sogdians and the Tang. Song Yun 宋雲, an early-sixth-century Chinese Buddhist monk, recorded his visit to the court of the Hephthalites in 518 on his way to India.⁵⁰⁰ He described the splendour of the court, where more than 40 neighbouring states came to pay tribute. The king wore a dress made of silk brocade, sitting on a gold throne.⁵⁰¹ The murals in Balayk-tepe in Bactria (Fig. 5.51), dating to the end of the sixth century or the beginning of the

⁴⁹⁹ Zhao Feng 2012, 230. For the fame of *liao* damask, Bai Juyi (772-846)'s poem is well known.

⁵⁰⁰ Song Yun travelled to India and Central Asia to search for Buddhist texts. He was sent by the devout Buddhist Empress Hu of the Northern Wei. He left the Wei capital Luoyang in 518 and returned in the winter of 522 with 170 Mahayana Buddhist texts.

⁵⁰¹ “受諸國貢獻南至牒羅北盡敕勒東被于闐西及波斯四十餘國皆來朝賀王張大氊帳方四十步周回以氍毹為壁王著錦衣坐金牀以四金鳳皇為牀腳見”(LQJ 2010, 181-182).

seventh century, offer depictions of Hephthalites aristocrats in banquet scenes.⁵⁰² The robe worn by a nobleman has a pattern of a boar's head in a pearl roundel. This pattern is similar to an actual silk fragment found at Astana, dating to the seventh century (Fig. 5.44).

As for the Türk, Xuanzang, a Chinese monk, who visited the court of the Western Türks in the early seventh century, recorded that the Qaghan wore a robe made of green damask silk and 200 officers surrounding the Qaghan wore robes made of brocade silk.⁵⁰³ I have already mentioned the visual depictions of Turkic nobles at the Tang court in the stone statues at Zhaoling and Qianling. The representations by the Türks themselves are also found in Mongolia. One of them is a stone statue of a seated man, wearing a belted robe, dating to the sixth to eighth centuries (Fig. 5.52).⁵⁰⁴ We can observe similarities between the large floral pattern on the robe of the stone statue and the so-called treasure-flower medallion pattern (baohua wen 宝華文), which was popular in the early to mid-Tang period. According to Zhao Feng, the treasure-flower medallion pattern was “originally a small, simple floral design that appeared in warp-faced polychrome *jìn* fabrics.”⁵⁰⁵ But once weft-faced polychrome weaving was introduced and became dominant in China, the

⁵⁰² For an overview of visual evidence of Hephthalites' dress and adornments, see Il'yasov 2001.

⁵⁰³ CFYG 974:20b.

⁵⁰⁴ For visual materials of Turkic male costume during the sixth to the ninth centuries, see Yatsenko 2009 and Yatsenko 2013.

⁵⁰⁵ Zhao 2012, 220-221.

design evolved with the flowers being bigger and more complex. The design reached its full form in the eighth century, as exemplified by a brocade fragment found at Dulan, Qinhai (Fig. 5.53).

For the Sogdians, the *Sui Shu* 隋書 records that the king of Samarkand wore clothes of several kinds of silk textiles, including damask, thin silk, brocade and embroidered silk, and retainers wore brocade robes.⁵⁰⁶ Visual depictions of the use of robes by Sogdian aristocrats are offered by wall paintings, such as the Afrasiab murals dating to the mid-seventh century and the Pajikent murals continuously produced during the fifth and the early eighth centuries. For example, on the west wall mural of the Hall of Ambassadors at Afrasiab, there are three men in line, probably Iranian gift-bearers, all of whom wear robes made of beautifully patterned textiles (Fig. 5.54). The robe of the man at the head has a pattern of semurv situated in interlocking waves, which is probably a variation of the pearl roundel. The textile is similar to that of the Moshchevaja Balka robe. The man in the middle wears a robe with a pattern of a bird holding a ribbon in its beak. The bird pattern is frequently observed in silk textiles of around the seventh century found in Central Asia. An example is the silk textile found at Astana (Fig. 5.55). The robe of the man on the left has a pattern of a boar's head in pearl roundel, which is similar to the silk textile found at Astana (Fig. 5.44) and also the pattern depicted on the robe of a Hephthalite nobleman in the Balalyk-tepe mural (Fig. 5.51). While the textiles of these three men

⁵⁰⁶ “其王索髮,冠七寶金花,衣綾羅錦繡白疊。其妻有髻,幪以皂巾。丈夫翦髮錦袍。”(SS 83; 33).

in Afrasiab show some traces of Sasanian influence, some textiles of the robes depicted in the Penjikent murals appear to be made of damask silks, which were probably Chinese products. Two men are sitting in the banquet scene in a mural dating to the early eighth century (Fig. 5.5). The main part of the robe of the man on the left seems to be made of yellow monochrome damask with a pattern of pearl roundels, though the detail of the pattern is not detectable. The robe of the man on the right is similar, but with green colour. Kageyama persuasively argues that the depicted textiles are Chinese damask silks.⁵⁰⁷ Her assumption is supported by the observation of silk textiles, 44 in total, excavated at Mount Mugh near Penjikent, dating to before 722.⁵⁰⁸ Out of 44, 24 are fragments of Chinese damask silks. They include two silk fragments of damask, which show a part of the pattern of paired dragons in a pearl roundel (Fig. 5.56). They are grouped with the Shōsō-in robe (Fig. 5.14) and the yellow damask found at Astana (Fig. 5.16) based on the similarities in the design and weaving techniques.⁵⁰⁹

5.3.4. Robes of the Tang elite: the preference for damask

⁵⁰⁷ Kageyama 2002, 40-43.

⁵⁰⁸ The fragment of Chinese brocade and the pouch sewn from Chinese damask silks, both from Mount Mugh, are published in *The State Hermitage, Masterpieces from the Museum's Collection 1*, 1994, London, Nos. 425 and 426. For the Mugh documents, see Grenet and De la Vaissière 2002.

⁵⁰⁹ Lubo-Lesnitchenko and Sakamoto 1987.

In the end, I discuss the kinds of silks that were used for the robes of the Tang elites. In the visual depictions, both in the form of paintings and figurines, when Tang officials wear riding dress, their robes are almost invariably single-coloured and unpatterned, as seen in the group of officials in the murals in the tomb of Li Xian (Fig. 5.57). Their robes stand in stark contrast to those with beautiful multicoloured patterns worn by the Hephthalites, the Turks, the Sogdians, and other Eurasian aristocrats. The single-coloured and unpatterned robes in visual depictions do not express a lack of interest in the qualities of silk textiles but rather their preferences. Textual evidence suggests that the Tang elite wore damask silks regularly.⁵¹⁰

The guidelines for everyday dress (*changfu* 常服) in the Wude ling 武德令 in 624 regulated not only the colours of robes but also the choices of textile of robes for officials according to nine ranks: “Officials of the third rank and above dress in purple (robes) made of the highest-grade twill damask silk and gauze with jade belt ornaments. Those of the fourth and fifth ranks dress in vermilion red made of lower-grade twill damask silk and gauze with gold belt ornaments. Those of the sixth rank and below dress in yellow made of plain silk and ordinary twill silk. Those of the sixth and seventh ranks wear silver belt ornaments. Those of the eighth and ninth ranks wear brass belt ornaments. Officials without rank and commoners dress in yellow garments made of ordinary fabric with copper and iron belt ornaments.”⁵¹¹

⁵¹⁰ Zhao 2012, 230.

⁵¹¹ JTS 6:45.1952. For the quotation from JTS, see footnote 394.

This guideline suggests that damask silk textiles were a standard choice for the everyday clothing of elite members of the empire, though their use was restricted for commoners.⁵¹² The guideline in the *Wude ling* does not mention the patterns of the damasks, but a regulation in a later period during the reign of Emperor Wenzong (r. 827-840) includes the rule on the patterns of damask silk textiles for officials' robes:

The system of patterns for robes and jackets is: Third rank and above are permitted to wear damasks with designs of hawks holding auspicious plants in their beaks, geese holding ribbons in their beaks, and paired peacocks. Fourth and fifth rank are allowed to wear damasks with designs of crossed branches of foxglove. Sixth rank and below are allowed to wear damask with either small medallions or no pattern, in tapestry weave structures or single weave.⁵¹³

While the Tang elites' standard choice for their robes was single-coloured ling damask textiles,⁵¹⁴ elites in other places in Eurasia, such as the Hephthalites, the

⁵¹² Zhao points out that the preference for damask had already begun in the Sui period (2012, 230).

⁵¹³ XTS 24; 531. “袍襖之制、三品以上服綾，以鵠銜瑞草，鴈銜綬帶及雙孔雀。四品、五品服綾，以地黃交枝。六品以下服綾，小窠無文及隔織、獨織” The translation is quoted from Zhao 2012, 232.

⁵¹⁴ It was not customary for Han Chinese to wear clothing made of multicoloured brocade silks. According to Zhao Feng, “most polychrome *jīn* fabrics were used to make indoor decorations, such as wall hangings, screens, or bedding, or for practical outdoor items, such as protective horse blankets or parasols for chariots. Aside from items such as shoes, small bags, and clothing trims, the only larger piece of clothing requiring polychrome *jīn* was a

Turks, and the Sogdians, seem to have preferred robes of multicoloured brocade textiles. The difference in their preferences was recognised by the Tang elites. Some visual depictions seem to associate the robes made of brocade textiles with foreigners or foreign fashion. In the scene of Emperor Taizong receiving a Tibetan envoy in the hand scroll entitled “Imperial sedan chair,” there are four men, one of whom is Taizong on the sedan chair. There are also the Tibetan envoy and two officials (or interpreters) flanking the Tibetan envoy (Fig. 5.3). While Taizong and two officials wear single-coloured and unpatterned robes, only the Tibetan envoy wears a robe made of a textile with a pattern all over, which is probably bird in pearl roundel. Another example is a female attendant wearing a man’s riding dress found at the tomb of Zheng Rentai, Liqian, Shanxi Province, dating to 664 (Fig. 5.58). The robe has a trimming in front with a multicoloured textile of floral pattern. Such decorations are often observed in female figures wearing robes of riding dress for men.⁵¹⁵ Given that it was a fad for court women to be clad in the western fashion,

type of short tunic with half sleeves...Not until the end of the Five Dynasties period did the Han Chinese come to adopt the practice of the outsiders, and wear robes and other articles of clothing made of polychrome *jīn* fabrics” (2012, 210).

⁵¹⁵ While she wears a man’s robe with a man’s hairstyle, her legs and feet are covered with feminine, red-bordered trousers and blue shoes. Watt notes “many Tang figures of pottery and in painting are shown in men’s clothing, though it is still not clear whether women dressed in this manner for pleasure or to fulfil a specific function. Only the shoes peeking out at the bottom or a stray hair escaping from under the putout belie the apparent gender. Female figures dressed entirely in men’s clothing can also be recognized by their feminine gestures and posture” (2004, 294).

such trimming decoration with multicoloured textiles served as a signal of a foreign style. They are not just wearing men's clothing, but *western* men's clothing.

The Tang government well recognised the foreigners' strong preference for brocade robes and strategically made use of it. According to *Tong Dian*, 50 brocade robes for foreign guests (蕃客錦袍五十領) are included in the list of the tributary items that the Guangling region (廣陵郡) in Yangzhou (揚州) paid to the central government every year.⁵¹⁶ Such robes were probably bestowed upon foreign vassals and dignitaries at the court as a token of special favour as I described in the previous chapter.⁵¹⁷

The technological diffusions and interactions after the third century CE onward greatly advanced the production of silk both in quantity and quality. As a result, varieties of luxurious silk textiles abundantly circulated and satisfied the demand and preferences of Eurasian aristocrats during the seventh and eighth centuries. Silk robes became a popular item universally desired by medieval Eurasian aristocrats from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Political communications through robes were facilitated and elaborated by silk textiles. The physical qualities

⁵¹⁶ Iwani 2011, 84. Yangzhou was one of the main silk production regions. The administration determined the types and quantities of silk textiles that each local weaving centre produced for tribute to the court. For more information about the local silk productions and the tribute to the court during the Tang period, see Chen 2013, 126-144.

⁵¹⁷ See pp. 147 and 165.

of the silk textiles, their patterns, colours, textures and types of weaving, took an essential role in expressing identity, status and rank.

Conclusion

This thesis has tackled the reasons the Tang elite chose to wear riding dress as ordinary attire from several perspectives. One answer to the question is the background and lifestyle of the Tang elite, who had their origins in the steppe and enjoyed equestrian activities. In the period of the foundation of the empire, horses were at the centre of political and militaristic concerns against the background of the effort to improve cavalry armies and the struggles to achieve dominance over the neighbouring steppe peoples, especially the Türks. Given this, it is no wonder that the Tang elite had already worn riding dress in the early years of the empire. Together with horses and the horse-riding habit, riding dress constituted an essential part of their life, signalling the long and deep interaction with the steppe.

However, this is only one aspect. The political roles and significance of the dress developed by stages. While the use of the dress had already started in the early seventh century, it was in the early-to-mid-seventh century that riding dress was defined as everyday dress for the officials and correlated with ranks in the codes of clothing.⁵¹⁸ Through the official codification, the political roles of riding dress were shaped and clarified, serving the role of making the political hierarchy of the court

⁵¹⁸ See Subsection 2.3.4.

visible. Riding dress signalled not just familiarity with the steppe and horses but also membership in the Tang court.

These roles of riding dress, making ranking at the court visible and signalling membership of the Tang, were even more enlarged when riding dress robes were bestowed on foreign clients together with Chinese titles. My research on textual materials has shown that the bestowals of robes were especially frequently observed during the Kaiyuan period (713-755).⁵¹⁹ Through bestowals to foreigners, riding dress played a part in the incorporation of foreigners into the political hierarchy of the Tang court. When worn and displayed at the court, riding dress provided a visual version of the geopolitical relations at feasts and ceremonies.

The Tang elite embraced people of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In considering the reasons for the wide acceptance of riding dress as political regalia by the Tang elite, we must remember that the dress, together with the horse culture, was a part of the aristocratic culture shared by Eurasian elites. Also, the adoption of luxury silks with hybrid designs was an essential factor that contributed to elevating the status of riding dress from a local steppe dress to a dress that suited the aristocrats' tastes.

⁵¹⁹ See Subsection 4.2.1.

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Tables

No.	type of torso	Description quoted from Zhou (2009, 86-87)	clothing	hairstyle	physiognomy	deportment	Figures
No.1	full torso	A 1.30-m. high fragmentary statue wears a tight-sleeved long robe, carries a knife and sheath at his waist, and has five thick braids hanging to reach his waist. The braids are of 0.56 m long and 0.23 m wide, and the lower part of the braids are clipped with hair ornaments.	the Tang riding dress	foreign		pose of reverence	Fig. 11-a and b
No.2	full torso	The other one is short of stature and wears a robe with right shoulder exposed and sash covering the shoulder. At his waist, there is a twisted cotton belt. Based on the stylistic garments suitable for warm climate, he could be either Ananshun from South Asia or Fan Touli from Southeast Asia.	foreign				Fig. 12
No.3	upper torso	The fragmentary statue found in 1982 is 1.20 m high and 0.49 m wide across the shoulders and 0.003 m thick. He wears a tight-sleeved long robe with a belt. He is in a standing position with two thin braids, measuring 0.69 m, hanging down to his belly.	probably the Tang riding dress	foreign			
No.4	upper torso	A fragmentary torso, 1.10–1.30 m high, is depicted with round-collared, and tight-sleeved robe with belt. His two arms are folded into the sleeves at the belly. He has seven thick braids, measuring 0.58 m long and 0.24 m wide and hanging over his waist.	probably the Tang riding dress	foreign		pose of reverence	Fig. 13
No.5	upper torso	The bust, currently on exhibit in the Zhaoling Museum, is restored from a large fragmentary torso and head fragments found in 1982. His hair is knotted and hanging, touching both shoulders. He has an up-curved mustache and an outfit with large collars across each other and wide open. His two arms are folded and hands are inside the sleeves.	probably foreign	foreign	foreign	pose of reverence	

Table 1 Ten torsos at the Zhaoling

No.6	lower torso	Originally depicting a figure standing on a board, the fragment shows a three-layered robe and the tips of a pair of small feet. It is ascertained that the fragment belongs to the statue of Jin Zhende, King of Lelang, Silla.	foreign, probably Silla				
No.7	lower torso	A fragment, measuring 0.78 m high, shows the bottom part of a figure. He wears a belt with a knife hanging at the belly and a sheath in the waist. The skirt has a thick hem and leng 棱 (crest line)	not clear whether foreign of Han				
No.8	lower torso	A fragment, 0.93 m high, is the bottom of a torso. At the waist of the skirt hang belt, hooks, pendant and yufudai 魚符袋 (fish-shaped tally bags).	not clear whether foreign of Han				
No.9	lower torso	A fragmentary lower torso carries a knife at the belly, and wears a sheath at the left and a fish-shaped bag at the right of the waist.	not clear whether foreign of Han				
No.10	lower torso	A fragmentary bottom torso is measured 0.98 m high. He wears a belt, crescent-shaped knife, decorative pendant on the right side, fish-shaped tally bags 魚符袋 on the left side, skirt and boots.	not clear whether foreign of Han				

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Fig. 3.49 Turkish officials, interpreter, three Tibetans (?), two Koreans on the western wall of Afrasiab. (Grenet 2007, Fig. 8)

Fig. 4.1 The gold seal bearing the inscription, “Han Wei Nu guowang (漢委奴国王)” with the serpent handle.

Fig. 4.2 The bronze seal bearing the inscription, “Han Xiongnu guiyi qin Han zhang (漢匈奴歸義親漢長)” with the camel handle.

Fig. 5.1 Gold drinking vessel from a burial at Kul’-Oba, Kerch, on the Crimian peninsula, fourth century BCE. The vessel of Greek workmanship, depicts scenes from nomadic life and provides vivid detail of nomadic dress. (Cunliffe 2015, p.228, Fig. 6.13)

Fig. 5.2 Full torso wearing the Tang riding dress. From Zhaoling mausoleum, Liquan, Shaanxi Province, dated to c.650. (Kashihara 2010, Cat. 1).

Fig. 5.3 Detail of the Imperial Sedan Chair. Attributed to Yan Liben. Handscroll, ink and color on silk, possibly a Song-dynasty copy. Palace Museum, Beijing. (Barnhart 2002, Fig.51)

Fig. 5.4 Relief of Kosrow II. ca. early 7th century. Great Ayvan, Taq-i-Bustan, Iran

Fig. 5.5 Detail of a Sogdian mural depicting a frieze of banqueters. (Azarpay 1981, plate 29)

Fig. 5.6 Felt robe for male from kurgan 3 at Pazyryk, south Siberia, dated to the fourth to third century BCE. (Kato 2002, p. 75, Fig. 1.3.14)

Fig. 5.7 Diagrams of the felt robe from kurgan 3 at Pazyryk (a. front, b. back, c&d. front opening). (Kato 2002, p.77, Fig. 1.3.15)

Fig. 5.8 Child's fur coat from Oglakhty Mountains. Front length 43 cm; sleeve 23 cm. (Frozen tombs 1978, cat 128)

Fig. 5.9 Silk robe from Tomb 6 at Noin-ula. (Kato 2002, Fig. II.1.7)

Fig. 5.10 Diagram of the silk robe from Tomb 6 at Noin-ula. (Kato 2002, Fig. II.1.18)

Fig. 5.11 Reconstruction of the silk robe from Tomb 6 at Noin-ula. (Kato 2002, Fig. II.1.32)

Fig. 5.12 Male tomb occupant of Tomb 8 at Niya, Xinjiang. (Tseng 2017, Fig.6.5.)

Fig. 5.13 Inscribed silk, detail of Fig 12. (Tseng 2017, Fig. 6.7)

Fig. 5.14 Dress for musical performance. Silk. Stored in Shōsō-in, Nara, Japan. Dated to the middle of the eighth century. (Tanaka 2009, Fig. 3)

Fig. 5.15 Detail of Fig. 14.

Fig. 5.16 Yellow textile with confronted dragons in pearl roundels. Woven silk (damask of twill and tabby). From Tomb 221, Astana, Turfan. Early eighth century. (Watt 2004, Fig. 240)

Fig. 5.17 Robe with senmurv pattern from Moshchevaya Balka. (Amsterdam 2014, cat. 195)

Fig. 5.18 Detail of the robe with senmurv pattern.

Fig. 5.19 Silkworms making cocoons.

Fig. 5.20 Illustration of silk-reeling in Japan, early 19th century. (Kuhn 1988, 351, Fig.220)

Fig. 5.21 Silk textile fragment. ca.3500 BC. From Qintai village, Henan.(Peng 2012, 72, pl.2.11)

Fig. 5.22 Silk textile fragment. ca.2500 BC. From Qianshanyang, Zhejiang.(Peng 2012, 72, pl.2.10)

Fig. 5.23 The earliest example of the depiction of four silkworms curved on the side of an ivory basin. Ca.4900BC. From the Hemudu site in Yuyao, Zhejiang. (Chen 1992, 15, Fig.1-2-7)

Fig. 5.24 Brocade (jin 錦) Silk fabric. Warp-faced compound tabby weave. Warring States period, 340-278BC. From Mashan tomb 1 in Jiangling, Hubei. (Peng 2012, 94, pl.2.33a)

Fig. 5.25 Embroidered plain silk with designs of facing dragons and phoenixes. Warring States period, 340-278BC. From Mashan tomb 1 in Jiangling, Hubei. (Peng 2012, 104, pl.2.43a)

Fig. 5.26 Example of animal-cloud type. Silk fabric of warp-faced compound tabby. Han- Jin dynasty. (Li 2012 a, 152, pl.3.40)

Fig. 5.27 Saddle Cushion, from Pazyryk, Russia, 4th century BCE. (Zavitukhina 1978, pl.39)

Fig. 5.28 Drawing of the embroidery of saddle cushion from Pazyryk. (Peng 2012, 112, pl.2.53)

Fig. 5.29 Silk fabric of warp-faced compound tabby. Eastern Han dynasty. From Noin-Ula, Mongolia. (Li 2012a, 151, pl.3.36)

Fig. 5.30 Fragments of Han-style jin, warp-faced compound tabby. From Palmyra in Syria, 1st century BC-3rd century AD. With Chinese inscriptions. ‘萌’ (meng) is readable at the lower left. (Pfister 1940, pl.16a (S44))

Fig. 5.31 Fiber zones at the third century AD (blue - Silk, pink - Wool, yellow - Cotton). (Sakamoto 2012, 297, map1)

Fig. 5.32 Woolen twills from the salt mines at Hallstatt, Austria. Olive-green with brown plaid stripes. Early 1st millennium BC. (Barber 1999, pl.12B)

Fig. 5.33 Knotted pile rug from the Kurgan 5 at Pazyryk, in the Altai mountains. Mid-1st millennium BC.

Fig. 5.34 Part of wool tapestry with warrior and Centaur. Excavated from Shanpula, Xinjiang. The 1st to 3rd century AD. (Hanse 2012, pl.13)

Fig. 5.35 Wool fragment of weft-faced compound tabby. From Mons Claudianus, Egypt. The first half of the 2nd century AD. (Ciszuk 2000, 274, Fig.13a)

Fig. 5.36 Reconstruction of the wool (Fig.35). (Ciszuk 2000, 278, Fig.19)

Fig. 5.37 Structure of warp-faced compound tabby. (Sakamoto 2012, 243)

Fig. 5.38 Structure of weft-faced compound tabby. (Sakamoto 2012, 248)

Fig. 5.39 Silk fragment of weft-faced compound tabby, at Dura-Europos in Syria, early 3rd century AD. Dimension: 17.5×8.0 cm. (Pfister and Bellinger 1945, X X V I , pl.263)

Fig. 5.40 Silk fabric of weft-faced compound tabby with designs of dragons and horsemen with bows drawn. Sixteen kingdoms period, 304-439AD. Excavated in 1999 from tomb 8 at Yingpan, Yuli, Xinjiang. Dimensions (top) 16×5.5cm, (middle)17.5×6.2cm, (bottom) 10.9×6.5cm. (Li 2012, 174, pl.4.3)

Fig. 5.41 Silk fabric of warp-faced compound tabby with two facing men toasting each other within a pearl roundel, Sui dynasty, late sixth century AD. Excavated from Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang. Dimension: 12.5×12.0cm. (Kuhn 2012, 36)

Fig. 5.42 Silk fabric of warp-faced compound tabby. Sui dynasty, 589 AD. Excavated from tomb 18 at Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang. Dimension: 19.5×16cm.(Kuhn 2012, 40, pl. 1.18)

Fig. 5.43 Silk fragment of weft-faced compound twill. Pearl roundel enclosing a stag. The seventh century. Excavated from tomb 55 at Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang. (Zhao 2006, 194 pl.136)

Fig. 5.44 Example of a single animal within pearl roundel from Astana, Turfan. Boar's head. (Sakamoto 2012, 255, pl.12)

Fig. 5.45 Example of a single animal within pearl roundel from Astana, Turfan. Bird holding a ribbon in its beak. (Sakamoto 2012, 254, pl.9)

Fig. 5.46 Silk of weft-faced compound twill with lion-hunting scene, at Horyuji, Nara, 7th-8th century. The size of each medallion is in width 43cm. (Kuhn 2012, 49, pl.1.29)

Fig. 5.47 Detail of the Horyuji-silk. On the rump of each upper horse is the Chinese character shan (山) and on the rump of each lower horse ji (吉). (Yokohari 2006, 157 pl. 106)

Fig. 5.48 Winged-horse silk. Weft-faced compound twill. From Antinoe. (Yokohari 2006, 159, Fig.108)

Fig. 5.49 Silk textile of weft-faced compound twill. Cologne, St Kunibert. (Yokohari 2006, 161, Fig. 110)

Fig. 5.50 Detail of ling damask fragment with persimmon-calyx pattern, Tang dynasty, 27cm long, 23cm wide. Excavated in 1983 from the Reishu River gravesite, Dulan, Qinhai. (Zhao Feng 2012, 231, Fig.5.32.)

Fig. 5.51 Detail of banquet scene in mural of Balalyk-tepe. (Al'baum 1960, Fig. 109)

Fig. 5.52 Stone statue of seated Turkic grandee in belted patterned robe, Mongolia, 6th-8th century CE. (Knauer 2001, Fig. 19)

Fig. 5.53 Polychrome *jin* fragment with pattern of treasure flower on yellow ground, Tang dynasty, 41cm long, 17 cm wide; weft-faced compound twill weave. Excavated from Dulan, Qinhai. (Zhao Feng 2012, 221)

Fig. 5.54 Detail of a mural of the western wall of the "Hall of Ambassadors". Mid-seventh century. Afrasiab, Samarkand. (Azarpay 2014, Fig.4)

Fig. 5.55 Polychrome *jin* fragment of two pieces sewn together with pattern of standing hoopoe bird in pearl roundel, 19 cm long, 22 cm wide; weft-faced compound twill weave. From tomb 332 at Astana, Turfan. Tang dynasty. (Kuhn 2012, Fig. 5.10.)

Fig. 5.56 Damask fragments with pattern of pearl roundel, from Mount Mugh. Before 722. (Lubo-Lesnitchenko and Sakamoto 1987 Fig.2)

Fig. 5.57 Civil officials. Mural from the west wall of the entry corridor, tomb of Prince Yide (d.701), in Qian country Shaanxi province, first decade of the eighth century. (Su1989, Figure 112)

Fig. 5.58 Figurine of female attendant. Height 31 cm. From the tomb (dated 664) of Zheng Rentai, Liquan, Shaanxi Province. (Watt 2004, cat. 185)

Figures

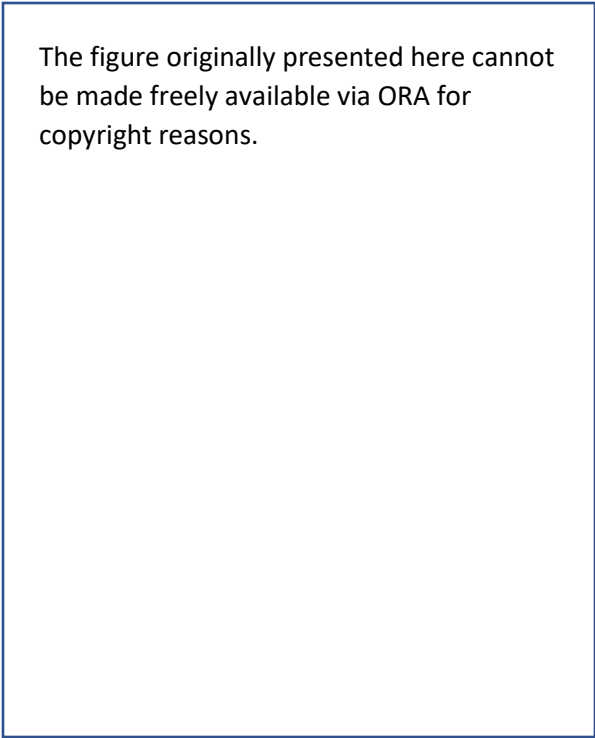


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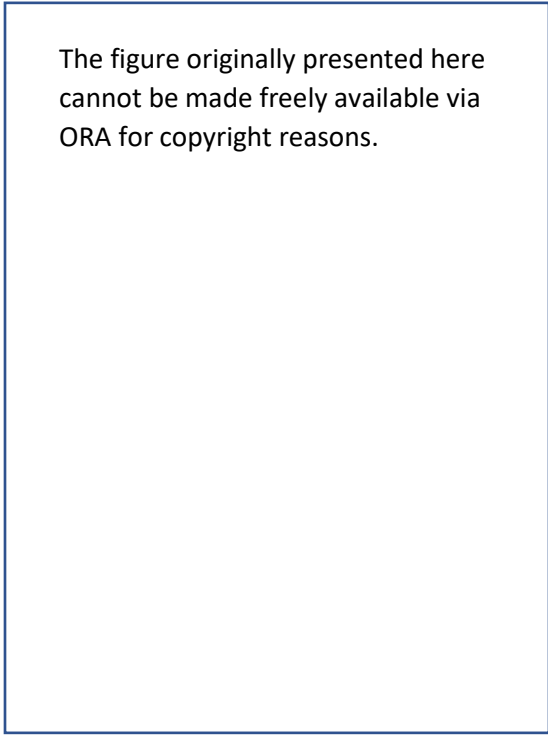


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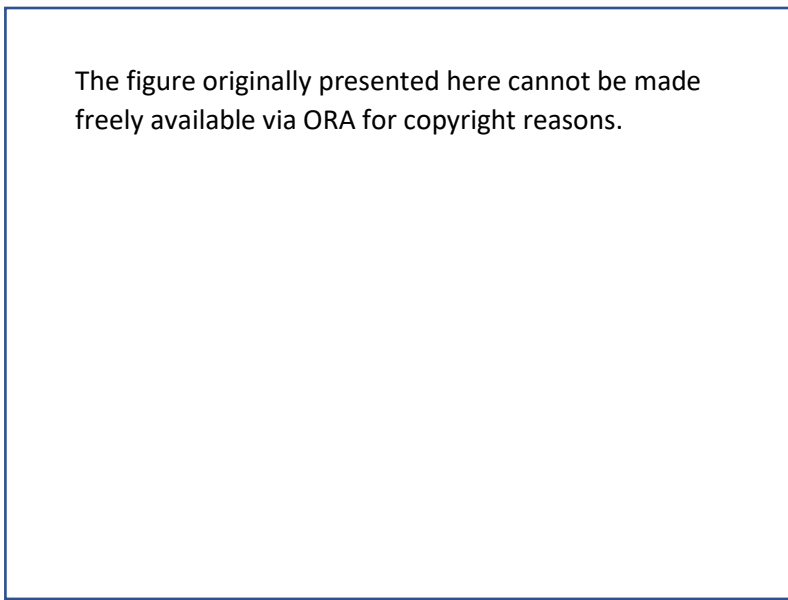


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