

## Editors' Note

---

The December 2021 issue of *Acta Via Serica* contains articles from leading and emerging scholars in the fields of anthropology, history, the arts, literature, and politics/international relations of Central Asia, as well as distant lands of trade and cultural exchange impacting Central Asia. It would be important to recognize that “via serica” refers to far more than a few trade routes across Asia, but incorporates at least 2,5000 years of communities and cultures for those residing in areas contributing to trade from the edge of the Pacific to the Mediterranean, Caspian, Red and Black Seas, including both land and sea routes. Thus, lands as diverse as India, Egypt, Tibet, Indonesia, Rome, and Korea are all specifically mentioned in this edition, along with China and Iran.

This issue features a select few of the papers presented at the 2021 Keimyung International Conference on the Silk Road and Central Asia, under the theme “Textiles from the Silk Road: Origin, Transmission, and Exchange.” Each year the *Academia Via Serica* provides a forum for scholars across the globe to present their studies, and each year this journal has the opportunity to share the best of the best.

Here we are pleased to share scholarly insights in the exchange and adoption of clothing and textiles between societies, as Youngsoo Chang, Eiren Shea, and Mariachiara Gasparini do in their respective articles on clothing represented in the Taq-i Bustan reliefs and Khitan Liao women’s clothing, and in a panel from the tents found in the Qinghai-Sichanese area. These contributions are complemented by Matteo Compareti's examination of international sources for the motifs at the Taq-i Bustan, Duraiswamy Dayalan's review of fabric trade from the Indian sub-continent, and Berit Hildebrandt's study of the terms referring to silk-related fabrics in classic Mediterranean literature and records.

The Taq-I Bustan reliefs at the west of contemporary Iran are the subject of two papers. Youngsoo Chang examines the imagery to analyze the weights, styles, and influences of the costumes depicted in the reliefs, finding foreign cultural influences in tunic, trousers, and clasps from Greek-Roman and Central Asian communities. Matteo Compareti, on the other hand, challenges the prevailing acceptance of these textile motifs in the Taq-I Bustan as Sassanian, instead observing that many of the symbols could actually be importations from Central Asia, where textiles embellished with those motifs were very popular.

Eiren Shea brings the question of clothing into the elite families of the Khitan Liao societies in northern China, where, according to funerary art, men retained traditional Liao costumes but some elite women adopted Central Asian styles. In a similar approach of cultural adoption, Mariachiara Gasparini considers textile panels apparently related to Tibetan nomadic tents which incorporate features from other Central Asian cultures. From these studies it becomes clear that fabric was complemented by fashion along the trade routes.

The production and exchange of both silk and cotton from India are reviewed by Duraiswamy Dayalan, noting the origins, seaborne trade, and impacts of Indian cotton and silks across south, southeast, and western Asia. Berit Hildebrandt then analyzes descriptions of silks and textiles in Greek and Latin texts, with particular attention to the terminology, products, origins, and qualities of silk. These findings support each other, and strengthen the argument that various types of silks, along with other fabrics, had numerous sources and were identified separately.

In addition to these detailed studies, reviews of recent scholarly treatises well-evidence the global interest in our coverage of “the silk routes,” with Almas Dissyukov, Aziza Shanazarova, Irena Vladimirsky, Katarzyna Golik, Kristóf Szitár, and Niginakhon Uralova offering their critiques on recent publications from Anastasia Koulouri and Nikolai Mouraviev, Nazanin Shahrokni, Felippo Menga, Fatemeh Farnaz Arefian and Seyed Hossein Iradj Moeini, Kia Mana, and Mohd. Aslam Bhat, respectively.

We owe a debt of gratitude to all of the contributors to this issue, the anonymous peer reviewers, and the members of our editorial board, without whom this issue would not have been possible. In particular, we would express our thanks to Prof. Robert J. Dickey, who was able to both moderate the discussion panel at the conference and guest-edit this issue at late notice. We hope that our readers find this issue to be of value in their ongoing research as we ready ourselves for publication of the next issue of *Acta Via Serica* in June of 2022. As always, we welcome your own original submissions, comments, and offers of support.

*Acta Via Serica* Editorial Committee