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CHAPTER 1

Fashion in the Ancient World

Michael Scott

Introduction

‘Show me the clothes of a country and I can write its history¹’

Scholarship on the ancient world has been, in many ways, slow to embrace the value of the study of clothes, costume and fashion. Within research on the Greek and Roman worlds for example, the overwhelming focus, up until the second half of the twentieth century, on the male experience of ancient society at the expense of the female had meant that scholarship had been occupied chiefly with either a technical understanding of military clothing; a marvelling at the expense of the clothing of the Emperor; or a little more widely with the practicalities of how the toga (in the Roman world) or the *chiton* (in the Greek world) was worn. Moreover – especially in the Greek world – the prioritised male focus resulted in a keen and on-going interest in the absence of clothes entirely and on the socio-cultural importance of nudity in ancient Greek society (which has, ironically, enveloped the idea of nudity ‘as costume’ within ancient society).² It was not in fact until the 1990s that the study of clothing, dress and costume

¹ Anatole France, cited in Lloyd Llewellyn Jones (ed.), *Women’s Dress in the Ancient Greek World* (Swansea: Duckworth, 2002), vii.

² Emphasis on the (male) naked body: Liza Cleland, Mary Harlow, Lloyd Llewellyn Jones (eds.), *The Clothed Body in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), xii; Larissa Bonfante, ‘Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art’, *American Journal of Archaeology* 93/4

– of both men and women – as a key indicator of society's *mores* became a serious topic of scholarship.³

Since the 1990s, again within the wider ancient Mediterranean world, scholarship, beyond facilitating a greater understanding of what was worn in different cultures around the Mediterranean, has focused principally on how clothing was used for the negotiation of three key socio-cultural issues: gender, identity/ethnicity and social hierarchy/class.⁴ Yet this young

(1989), 543-570. Indeed the strong association of dress, clothing and fashion with the female meant that these topics were even often ignored in the first wave of writing, which sought to redress the gender imbalance and the sexist focus in scholarship on this period: clothing and fashion were, it seems, just too 'feminine', cf. Mireille Lee, *Body, Dress and Identity in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 19.

³ Indeed the study of the *impact* of the Greek and Roman periods on later fashion trends from the Renaissance onwards was an established scholarly field *before* the study of Greco-Roman clothing itself: Lloyd Llewellyn Jones (ed.), *Women's Dress in the Ancient Greek World* (Swansea: Duckworth 2002), ix. Key early works on the socio-cultural importance of clothing include Larissa Bonfante and Judith Lynn Sebesta (eds.), *The World of Roman Costume* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994); Georges Losfeld, *L'art grec et le vêtement* (Paris: De Boccard, 1994).

⁴ Gender: e.g. Lloyd Llewellyn Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Women of Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2002); Kelly Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman: Self Presentation and Society* (London: Routledge, 2008); and Kelly Olson, *Masculinity and Dress in Roman Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2017). On identity/ethnicity, see: Margaret Miller, *Athens and Persia: A Study in Cultural Receptivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

area of research has also begun to articulate more clearly the particular difficulties it faces compared to that of clothing from other eras. The ancient, sparse, and often fragmented nature of the evidence means that scholarship must embrace a particularly wide range of research specialists: from archaeologists and textile conservationists to ancient historians, art historians and literary scholars, as well as theatre costume designers and re-enactment enthusiasts. At the same time, it must be sensitive to the ways in which its insights reflect, and are governed by, the characteristic survival of particular kinds of evidence from different geographical locations (e.g. the survival of cloth in dry desert areas of Egypt and Asia Minor but not in Italy; the alluring prevalence of art and sculpture from ancient Greece).⁵ Perhaps most importantly, it must be careful to articulate what these particular kinds of evidence can be understood to reveal about day-to-day ancient style. Ancient sculptors, for example, enjoyed the interplay of light and shadow that folds of cloth afforded and so were keen to sculpt such items of clothing. Conversely they were not at all interested in depicting the very detailed work of jewellery, hairpins and the like.⁶

Press, 1997); François Chausson and Hervé Inglebert (eds.), *Costume et société dans l'antiquité et le haut moyen-âge* (Paris: Editions Picard, 2003). On social class/hierarchy see: Mireille Lee, *Body, Dress and Identity in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Florence Gherchanoc and Valerie Huet (eds.), *S habiller, se seshabiller dans les mondes anciens* (Paris: Editions de l'EHESS, 2008).

⁵ Liza Cleland, Mary Harlow and Lloyd Llewellyn Jones, 'Introduction', in Liza Cleland, Mary Harlow and Lloyd Llewellyn Jones (eds.), *The Clothed Body in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), xii.

⁶ Alexandra Croom, *Roman Clothing and Fashion* (Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, 2000), 13.

Scholars of the ancient world have, however, also been reticent to use the term 'fashion' (as exemplified by its absence from the book titles so far quoted in the footnotes) to describe their topic, preferring instead to refer to 'dress', 'clothing' or 'costume'. Such reticence seems to stem from a reading of the term 'fashion' as delineating a world in which everyone always willingly changes their clothing style in response simply to what is new ('change for change's sake'), at the expense of other (perhaps unchanging) signifying aspects of dress.⁷ Yet the ancient evidence makes clear that changing trends in clothing, motivated by a wide range of different factors, were a perceptible part of ancient society. The ancient Greek poet Sappho noted, for example, that purple headbands from Lydia, worn a generation earlier, were no longer in fashion in her time.⁸ The Roman writer Pliny postulated that the new Roman fashion for rougher textured materials in his day may have been influenced by the clothing of recently conquered 'Barbarian' groups.⁹ Instead of dispensing with the term 'fashion' in relation to ancient world, I would argue that instead we need to nuance our understanding of fashion to incorporate the conscious decision to change, as well as the conscious decision not to do so, by both individuals and communities as a whole, based on a wide array of stimuli and cultural customs.

⁷ Cf. Liza Cleland, Glenys Davies and Lloyd Llewellyn Jones, *Ancient Greek and Roman Dress from A to Z* (London: Routledge, 2007), 67.

⁸ Sappho Fragment 98.

⁹ Pliny *Natural History* 8.73. Equally, the ancient Greek writer Thucydides comments that while archaic Athenians wore elaborately decorated and colourful clothes based on Eastern styles, by the 5th century BCE these fell out of favour to be replaced by a more austere look reflecting the politics of democracy and equality in Athenian society: Thucydides 1.6.

In this chapter, I thus seek to do two things. First, to embrace a wider definition of the ancient world than has been covered so far in this brief review of scholarship, by engaging with case-studies both from within the Mediterranean and from across Eurasia, and particularly issues of fashion choice arising from the connections between cultures, which lay across this wider geographical expanse. Second, to embrace an understanding of fashion as not only the adoption of the new (thanks to new trade links, the arrival of new materials and technologies, the desire to imitate – or indeed influence – foreign cultures), but also as the refusal of the new and the self-conscious continuity of existing traditions, as well as a mix of the two (e.g. the incorporation of some new elements of clothing as expressions of unchanging social *mores*). In so doing, I argue that fashion in the ancient world is not only an important topic for the better understanding of individual ancient cultures, but one which also actively undermines the still strongly guarded boundaries between [the study of] different ancient communities, precisely because it reveals the complex and nuanced ways in which these cultures were, in reality, regularly affected by one another.

Silk and the Roman Empire

There is perhaps no more famous example in the ancient world of the impact of connections between ancient communities on clothing fashion than the spread of silk from China through to the Mediterranean along the emergent Silk Roads (Map 1.1). While the Mediterranean world had its own sources of silk (in particular Coan Silk, coming from the island of Cos) that had been noted since the time of Aristotle, its fibres were shorter and more prone to breaking and tangling, than those of the imported silk coming from the East (from the *bombyx mori*

silkworm).¹⁰ Silk originating in China was traded across the Silk Roads often in a thick weave, although also on occasion as unwoven silk thread.¹¹ In Mediterranean hands, according to the surviving literary sources, the thicker silk weave seems to have been unpicked and spun in workshops in the Eastern half of the Roman empire, particularly in cities like Alexandria and Tyre, resulting in the creation of lightweight and even transparent silk weaves.¹²

INSERT HERE MAP 1.1

¹⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 5.9. Coan silk was a wild silk, its fibres extracted from the broken cocoons of moths, ~~thus shorter, more prone to breakage and tangling, and requiring~~ spinning to produce longer and smoother threads for making textiles. Silk from the *bombyx mori* could be extracted from unbroken cocoons, producing longer and thinner fibres, without the need for spinning to create a smoother weave.

¹¹ Richard McLaughlin, *Rome and the Distant East: Trade Routes to the Ancient Lands of Arabia, India and China* (London: Continuum, 2010), 148 and 162; John Thorley, 'The Development of Trade between the Roman Empire and the East', *Greece and Rome* 16 (1969), 209-223.

¹² Cf. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 10.169-71, who imagines what Cleopatra's breasts looked ~~like~~, 'splendidly visible through the fabric, produced as close-textured weave by the skill of the Seres, but which the needle of the Nile worker has separated and loosened by stretching out the web'. The Chinese also on occasion created transparent silk gauze (see the surviving plain gauze gown from the Han Dynasty unearthed in Han Tomb No.1 at Mawangdui, Changsha City, currently on display at the Hunan Museum).

According to surviving literary sources, it was this transparent quality (of both cheaper Coan silk and re-spun Chinese silk), that, in the decades following the arrival of imported Chinese silk, made silk such a fashionable luxury product in the late first century BCE and first century CE (initially for the 'disreputable' elements of Roman society, and subsequently for Roman female elites), as well as the object of significant moral objection.¹³ The dramatist and philosopher Seneca, writing in the middle of the first century CE, summed up the problem as follows:

I see silk clothing – but how can this be called clothing when it offers nothing that could possibly afford protection to the body or provide any modesty? When a woman wears these silks she can scarcely say with a clear conscience that she is not naked. These silks are imported at vast expense from nations unknown to us even through trade. Silk is imported so that our married women can show as much of their bodies to people in the street as they display to their lovers in the bedroom.¹⁴

The writer and moral critic Pliny the Elder, writing at the same time as Seneca in the first half and middle of the first century CE, had the same concerns:

¹³ Cf. Horace, *Satires* 1.2.101-3 (about a prostitute apparently appearing naked while wearing Coan silk); Petronius, *Satyricon* 55 (brides wearing silk 'as transparent as air'). On the mix of Coan and foreign silk inspiring these reactions see Rebecca Woodward Wendekelin, 'Wefts and Worms: The Spread of Sericulture and Silk Weaving in the West before 1300', in Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (eds.) *Medieval Clothing and Textiles 10* (New York, Boydell and Brewer, 2014), 59-78.

¹⁴ Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 7.9.

To the females of our part of the world the Seres [the Chinese] give the twofold task of unravelling their textures and of weaving the threads afresh. Great is the labour and distant are the regions that are exploited to supply a dress through which our Roman ladies may expose their bodies to the public.¹⁵

By the smallest computation, India, the Seres and the Arabian Peninsula take 100 million sesterces from our empire every year – so much do our luxuries and our women cost us.¹⁶

Roman men also quickly developed a taste for wearing equally finely woven, but coloured and thus opaque, silk to brighten up their togas and tunics, and by extension to show their wealth and cosmopolitan status. By 16 CE, the Roman Senate enacted a sumptuary law restricting the

¹⁵ Pliny, *Natural History* 6.20. Rome's engagement with the [luxury goods of the] outside world was often seen as the source of Rome's ills: Livy, 39.6-7; Polybius, 31.25; John Sekora, *Luxury: the Concept in Western Thought* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1977), 68-75; Andrew Dalby, *Empires of Pleasure: Luxury and Indulgence in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁶ Pliny, *Natural History* 12.41. Yet Pliny also seems proud that Romans traded with those so far away: 'We should be struck with wonder and admiration that, coming from a primitive state, we are now... reaching the Seres to obtain our clothing', *Natural History* 12.1. There has been much debate over the soundness of Pliny's economic calculations cf. Stephen Sidebotham, *Roman Economic Policy in the Erythra Thalassa 30 BC- AD 217* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 36-44.

wearing of silk among the male nobility, on the basis both of the cost of such extravagance and on its 'feminizing' influence on men.¹⁷ Such laws failed, not least because later Emperors like Caligula ignored the prohibition and wore silk in public.¹⁸ Pliny felt that when men chose to wear the lightweight silk in place of heavier traditional materials like wool, something of the upstanding and masculine male character – the male *virtus* – was being lost:

Now even men will wear silk clothing in the summer because of its lightness and they do not feel ashamed. Once we used to wear leather cuirasses, but our fashions have become so bizarre that even a toga is now considered to be unnecessarily heavy.¹⁹

The use of silk continued for both men and women despite objection and official censure. A famous silk market was established in Rome at the Vicus Tuscus, and fine transparent and coloured silk was available not only for clothes, but also for brightly coloured silk parasols. Nor was its use confined to the metropolis. It was used for example, in outposts like Roman Britain, for Roman military banners.²⁰

¹⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.33. The Emperor Tiberius forbade any man to wear silk clothing: Cassius Dio, 57.15.

¹⁸ Suetonius, *Caligula* 52.

¹⁹ Pliny, *Natural History* 11.27. Cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.17.

²⁰ Cf. Martial, *Epigrams* 11.27, 14.28; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.209; Juvenal, *Satires* 9.50. Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 4.31. Military banners: a Palmyrene merchant called Barates was buried at Corbridge in Northumberland (possibly late second century CE), having been based in Roman Britain supplying silk banners to frontier military units: Peter Salway, *The Frontier of Roman Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 25, 60-62, 228, 256.

Silk imports into the Roman empire only increased over the course of the second century CE as the use of silk spread more widely (although always with an urban rather than rural focus).²¹ The Roman state happily taxed its import, alongside numerous other luxury goods coming from Eurasia.²² Its cost remained high: the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, reigning 160s-180s CE was able to raise enough money for war by selling 'his wife's silk and gold clothes. wearing Yet ²³ excessive amounts of silk was still not without censure – even (and perhaps especially) for the Emperor. The famously extravagant, and disliked, Roman Emperor Elagabalus (r. 218-222 CE), was censured in surviving literary sources for being the first emperor to wear a garment made entirely of silk, alongside tunics made wholly from cloth of gold, and bejewelled shoes.²⁴

Yet during this period we get a different picture from the east of the Empire. At Palmyra a number of different silk textiles have been found in graves dating securely from 40 CE through to the 220s CE. These silks are far from the re-woven transparent garments of Rome. Some are typical weaves of Han dynasty (206 BCE- CE 200) China, namely warp-faced tabby with warp floats and warp-faced compound tabbies (complex weaves not found elsewhere at this time),

²¹ Cf. Berit Hildebrandt, 'Silk production and trade in the Roman Empire', in Berit Hildebrandt and Carole Gillis (eds.), *Silk: Trade and Exchange Along the Silk Roads between Rome and China in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2017), 34-50.

²² The Alexandrian Tariff lists 56 imports into the Roman world coming through Alexandria, which were subject to tax including 'raw silk, silk or part-silk clothing, silk thread': *Justinian Digest* 39.4.16.7. Cf. Gary Young, *Rome's Eastern Trade* (London: Routledge, 2001), 209.

²³ *Historia Augusta, Life of Marcus Aurelius* 17.4

²⁴ *Historia Augusta, Life of Elagabalus* 23.3-4; 26.1.

most likely produced in Han government-run workshops for redistribution as prestige items.²⁵ Thirty surviving pieces are woven with Chinese characters, and a number incorporate patterns and emblems (such as dragons, tigers, concentric circles, and zigzag lozenges) similar to Han dynasty silks found in the kingdoms of the Tarim Basin.²⁶ At the same time, one surviving fabric of uncertain date from Tomb 65 at Palmyra, reveals a scene – of camels, and men harvesting grapes – that is rare in Han China (Figures 1.1a and 1.1b). As such, this is potentially an example of a motif made in Han China for direct export to appeal to a central Asian/western Asian market.²⁷ Silk of different qualities and costs was also being imported from multiple points of origin: threads of wild cocoon silk made from the *Antheraea* species commonly used

²⁵ Lothar Von Falkenhausen, ‘Inconsequential Incomprehensions: Some Instances of Chinese Writing in Alien Contexts’, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 35 (1999), 42-69.

²⁶ Chinese characters: e.g. Fragment K10, Tower Tomb of Kitot, early 3rd century CE. Chinese designs: e.g. Kat 449 (from Tomb 13, dated to 103 CE) with tigers, concentric circles etc. Both in Andreas Schmidt-Colinet, Anne-Marie Stauffer and Khaled Al-Asad (eds.), *Die Textilien aus Palmyra: Neue und Alte Funde* (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 2000). Kat 449 also discussed as S9 in Otto Maenchen-Helfen, ‘From China to Palmyra’, *Art Bulletin* 25 (1943), 358-62.

²⁷ Tomb 65: Kat. 260 (Taf. 96-97; Fig. 105) in Andreas Schmidt-Colinet, Anne-Marie Stauffer and Khaled Al-Asad (eds.), *Die Textilien aus Palmyra: Neue und Alte Funde* (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 2000), 145; Marta Zuchowska, ‘Palmyra and the Chinese Silk Trade’ in Christian Meyer, Elvind Seland and Nils Anfinset (eds.), *Palmyra: City, Hinterland and Caravan Trade between Orient and Occident* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016), 29-38. Grape ornaments on silk produced in China from 3rd century CE: Marta Zuchowska, ‘“Grape Picking” Silk from Palmyra. A Han Dynasty Chinese Textile with Hellenistic Decoration Motif’, *Światowit: Annual of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Warsaw* 12.53 (2014), 143-162.

in India (and in southern China) have also been found in the surviving textiles at Palmyra.²⁸ And the style of these international silk garments was simultaneously being imitated in other materials: we also see examples at Palmyra of local manufacturers of woollen cloth striving consciously to imitate the appearance, decoration and even woven structure of Chinese textiles.²⁹

INSERT HERE FIGURE 1.1a AND 1.1b

The cost of silk remained very high: in the third century CE, pure silk was literally worth its weight in gold.³⁰ Diocletian's price edict at the end of the third century CE fixed one pound of silk dyed purple (the most expensive colour in the Roman world) and spun into fine threads at

²⁸ Andreas Schmidt-Colinet, Anne-Marie Stauffer and Khaled Al-Asad (eds.), *Die Textilien aus Palmyra: Neue und Alte Funde* (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 2000), 12-13. Cf. Irene Good, Mark Kenoyer and Richard Meadow, 'New Evidence for Early Silk in the Indus Civilization', *Archaeometry* 51,3 (2009), 457-466.

²⁹ Lothar Von Falkenhausen, 'Inconsequential Incomprehensions: Some Instances of Chinese Writing in Alien Contexts', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 35 (1999), 42-69. For discussion of cloth fragments found at other border trading settlements: Thelma K. Thomas 'Perspectives on the Wide World of Luxury in Later Antiquity: Silk and Other Exotic Textiles Found in Syria and Egypt', in Berit Hildebrandt and Carole Gillis (eds.), *Silk: Trade and Exchange Along the Silk Roads between Rome and China in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2017), 51-81.

³⁰ *Historia Augusta, Life of Aurelian* 45.5.

125 aurei (nearly three pounds of gold).³¹ Yet it was in the following century that the wearing of imported silk stopped being a matter of censure even for the Emperor, replaced instead by approval of conspicuous status display coupled with an interest in the use of pattern and decoration from further east. The owning and wearing of such garments was now understood as a symbol of the Emperor's global power and reach (as well as his separation from the world of merely mortal men). When the Emperor Honorius was made consul (for the fourth time) in 398 CE, the writer Claudian praised how 'Tyre lent her dyes, China her silks and Hydaspes her jewels 'to make Honorius 'outfit fitting for the occasion.'³²

Trousers and Belt Plaques across Eurasia

In this section I will focus on a number of different clothing and ornamental fashions that were particular to Asia in the first century CE (incorporating the Parthian empire, the Kushan empire and the wider world of pastoralist steppe cultures and empires). Across this vast expanse, fashions were, on the one hand, being dictated by many of the same triggers we saw within the Roman empire: first and foremost the growing number of non-heavy luxury goods being transported, bought and sold across the trading and political network of the Silk Roads bringing hitherto unavailable items to new markets, and the desire among elites to wear rare items coming from far afield as a marker of status.

³¹ *Edict on Maximum Prices* 23.1-2, 24.1-1a; Kenneth Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy 300 BC-AD 700* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1996), 300.

³² Claudian, *Honorius* 599-600. For further discussion of the power of textiles into the Mediterranean period of 'Late Antiquity' see Thelma K. Thomas (ed.), *Designing Identity: The Power of Textiles in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

On the other hand, what distinguished the complex ways in which fashions spread and metamorphosed across Asia in this period, compared with the Mediterranean Roman empire, was the constant movement and interaction of communities themselves. On occasion some of these pastoralist communities, like the Yuezhi in the mid second century BCE, were tipped into mass migration out of the Steppe and into central Asia, conquering and subsuming local communities in the region before morphing into a sedentary community and establishing an empire of their own (the Kushan Empire).³³ Accompanying this was the regular expansion, contraction, and complete change-over of empires across Asia. As a result, particular regions of central/south Asia (for example that of Bactria/Hindu Kush/Gandhara) saw, over the last centuries BCE and first centuries CE (whether through direct conquest, the subsequent splitting of empires, the growth of new local power centres, or the arrival of new migrants) a kaleidoscopic series of different cultural fashions, ideologies, goods and technological possibilities layered on top of one another, that, collectively, became part of the cultural landscape of whichever community next came to occupy the region.³⁴

Starting again with Palmyra, at the eastern edge of the Roman world, we can begin to see something of the impact on fashion of the greater movement of people across political

³³ Cf. Kazim Abdullaev, 'Nomad migration in Central Asia', in Georgina Herrmann and Joe Cribb (eds.), *After Alexander: Central Asia before Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 73-98; Craig Benjamin, *Empires of Ancient Eurasia: The First Silk Roads Era 100 BCE-250CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 36-40.

³⁴ Cf. Christoph Baumer, *The History of Central Asia: The Age of the Silk Roads (vol. 2)* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

boundaries. Palmyrene residents were specialised in the movement of goods across the Romano-Parthian border.³⁵ Palmyrene culture was, as a result, a mix of Roman and Parthian and this applied also to the local fashions. Wealthy inhabitants of Palmyra seem to have adopted a particular type of costume, the trouser-suit, which, while it had originally had been the preferred dress of those involved in over-land trade due to its practicality, was from the first century CE fashionable for Parthian kings and their entourage.³⁶ We see this not only in the survival of textile fragments from the graves at Palmyra, but also, perhaps more importantly, in surviving funerary portraiture (Figure 1.2).³⁷ The number of figures wearing Parthian dress in Palmyrene funerary banquet scenes (for which the practicality of a trouser-suit was not required) rises from 37 percent in the period 50-100 CE, to 49 percent in the period

³⁵ Cf. Peter Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia: The Middle Euphrates, Mesopotamia and Palmyra under Roman Control* (London: Routledge, 2008).

³⁶ Cf. the mural (mid 3rd century CE) from Dura-Europos, another community on the Roman border, of Persian King Mordecai, dressed in caftan and trousers, compared with four onlookers in western toga-style dress: Anna Hedeager King, 'The Caftan: Fashion across the Silk Road' in Susan Whitfield (ed.), *Silk Roads: Peoples, Cultures, Landscapes* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2019), 112-117.

³⁷ Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, 'The Parthian Haute-Couture at Palmyra' in Andreas Kropp and Rubina Raja (eds.), *The World of Palmyra* (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2016), 52-67. For surviving textile fragments: Andreas Schmidt-Colinet, Anne-Marie Stauffer and Khaled Al-Asad (eds.) *Die Textilien aus Palmyra: Neue und Alte Funde* (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 2000), 33-35.

200-273 CE.³⁸ As such it seems that the trouser suit, particularly after its adoption by Parthian kings, became an increasingly attractive symbol of wealth and prestige in Palmyra worn particularly at luxury events. While some of these examples were no doubt worn/set up by Parthians living in Palmyra, many must have been by Palmyrenes importing/copying Parthian high fashion, and doing so while other members of the Palmyrene community continued to wear Roman fashion (not to mention all those also wearing imported silk clothing as we have already seen). Clothing fashion in Palmyra perhaps became a marker of cultural and economic allegiance within a community based on a culturally diffused (but militarily contested) geopolitical border.

INSERT HERE FIGURE 1.2

As has often been pointed out, however, the wearing of trousers accompanied by a short jacket was by no means simply a Parthian fashion. It was, in fact, a costume (not least due to its practicality for horse-riding and long-distance travel) spread widely across the Silk Roads and its constituent communities.³⁹ Perhaps the most famous pair of trousers from this period comes from a grave at Sampula, Lop, in the Tarim Basin, dating to the first century BCE (Figure 1.3). These wool trousers (they were found with human leg bones still inside them) had been fashioned from a wall-hanging created as early as the third or second century BCE, bearing a

³⁸ Tracey Long, 'The Use of Parthian Costume in Funerary Portraiture in Palmyra' in Andreas Kropp and Rubina Raja (eds.), *The World of Palmyra* (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2016), 68-83.

³⁹ Anna Hedeager King, 'The Caftan: Fashion across the Silk Road' in Susan Whitfield (ed.), *Silk Roads: Peoples, Cultures, Landscapes* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2019), 112-117.

depiction of a Hellenistic-esque warrior with a spear (as well as a decorative pattern that included the image of a centaur with a cloak) and possibly created in central Asia/Bactria.⁴⁰ Yet one place where trousers were much slower to be adopted was China. Their adoption for military commanders and staff accompanied the introduction of cavalry and the importing of foreign horses into China, for more effective defence against nomadic communities, during the last centuries BCE, and then slowly spread as an identifiable 'foreigner's dress' in the first centuries CE. The adoption of trousers at elite, and particular formal, occasions, had to wait for the establishment of an elite equestrian culture within China in the late sixth century CE and later (not least also following numerous nomadic invasions of China and the resulting cultural influence).⁴¹

INSERT HERE FIGURE 1.3

Alongside the prevalent use of trousers, another example of a wide-spread fashion item during this period was the belt plaque. Worn as an elite decorative piece on the belt, the fashion of large belt plaques can be found throughout the Steppe by the first century BCE. Belt plaques,

⁴⁰ Zhao Feng, 'Wall Hanging with Centaur and Warrior' in James Watt (ed.), *China: Dawn of a Golden Age 200-750 AD* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), Cat No. 101; Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 201; Mayke Wagner et al., 'The Ornamental Trousers from Sampula (Xinjiang, China): Their Origins and Biography', *Antiquity*, 83 (2009), 1065-1075.

⁴¹ Xinru Liu, 'Migration and Settlement of the Yuezhi-Kushan: Interaction and Interdependence of Nomadic and Sedentary Societies', *Journal of World History* 12.2 (2001), 261-292. See also Susan Whitfield's chapter in this volume.

as well as having a practical use, were widely used as an indicator of social and spiritual status, power, wealth and rank, as indicated by the material used for their creation and the imagery they incorporated. But there were also favoured fashionable images within particular regions, as well as imagery that seems to have spread widely as a fashion choice across communities. The image of two confronting bulls, for example, is found exclusively in the Minusinsk Basin, north of the point today where Russia, China, Mongolia and Kazakhstan come together. In contrast, scenes of dragon-like creatures, originating in China, are also found in the Black Sea Steppe region, as are those of camels, perhaps coming from central Asia. On occasion however, these similar images seem to have been adopted by very different sections of different communities. Animal combat scenes, for example, were popular on the western end of the Steppe and amongst the Xiongnu communities of the eastern Steppe: yet in the west they seem to have been mostly worn by men and in the east they have been found mostly in the graves of women.⁴²

What makes the example of belt plaques particularly interesting is their manufacture and use in China, a place where, as we have seen above, the wearing of trousers was much slower to be adopted, and where the traditional Chinese long gown was not traditionally worn with a belt. We have already noted above the adoption of Chinese imagery (dragons) on belt plaques across the Steppe, and belt plaques have equally been found in the graves of rulers in China. For instance, the grave of the king of the Chu state in eastern China, Liu Wu (who ruled in the second century BCE), contained gold belt plaques with Chinese characters inscribed on the

⁴² Ursula Brossder, 'Belts, Daggers and Earrings of Gold: Steppe Luxuries', in Susan Whitfield (ed.), *Silk Roads: Peoples, Cultures, Landscapes* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2019), 105-111.

back, giving their weight and details of the subject matter depicted on the plaque, indicating that they were made in Chinese workshops or at least by Chinese craftsmen.⁴³ A series of glass plaques with gilt bronze frames have been found in the tomb of Zhao Mo, ruler of Nan Yue in southern China in the late second century BCE. From their size, shape and position in the grave around the middle of the body, they seem to have been intended as belt plaques.⁴⁴ Zhao's family originated from northern China on the border of the Steppe world, which scholars have indicated may explain why he had an interest in such 'foreign' Steppe items at a time when the clothing which required them had not been embraced within China outside of military use.⁴⁵

More intriguing is the find of another gold belt plaque, in grave M2 at Xigoupan, also dating to the second century BCE when the region was under the control of the Xiongnu nomadic confederacy.⁴⁶ This gold belt plaque, inscribed with a Steppe-wide popular scene of animals attacking one another (in this case a tiger attacking a boar), also has Chinese characters on the back indicating weight and subject matter, and seems to have been manufactured using the

⁴³ Susan Whitfield, *Silk, Slaves and Stupas: Material Culture of the Silk Road* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 21-23; Emma Bunker, 'Lost Wax and Lost Textile: An Unusual Ancient Technique for Casting Gold Plaques', in Robert Maddin (ed.), *The Beginning of the Use of Metals and Alloys* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 222-227.

⁴⁴ Susan Whitfield, *Silk, Slaves and Stupas: Material Culture of the Silk Road* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 48-49.

⁴⁵ Lukas Nickel, 'The Nanyue Silver Box', *Arts of Asia* 42.3 (2012), 98-107.

⁴⁶ Ursula Brossder, 'Belts, Daggers and Earrings of Gold: Steppe Luxuries' in Susan Whitfield (ed.), *Silk Roads: Peoples, Cultures, Landscapes* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2019), 105-111.

Chinese 'lost-wax lost-textile' technique. As a result, it has been argued that this too was a belt plaque manufactured in China, probably explicitly for the foreign Steppe market.⁴⁷ It may have come to the Xiongnu warrior it was buried with through trade, or through more formal diplomatic and gift exchange, and as such it marks the beginning of Xiongnu elite distinction not merely through military leadership, but also through the power derived from their foreign connections and involvement in trade.⁴⁸

Fashion to Achieve Cultural Change

Having seen how fashions can be introduced to social applause and simultaneous censure in the Mediterranean, as well as how fashions can have enormous and simultaneously very specific geographical spreads across Central and Southern Asia, we now turn to focus on East Asia and to an example of the varied impacts on fashion and community culture of clothing and materials initially sent as part of an official elite gift-exchange between rulers.

⁴⁷ Katheryn Linduff, 'Production of Signature Artefacts for the Nomad Market in the State of Qin during the Late Warring State Period in China (4th-3rd century BCE)', in Jianjun Mei and Thilo Rehren (eds.), *Metallurgy and Civilisation: Eurasia and Beyond* (London: Archetype, 2009), 90-96.

⁴⁸ Nicola di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85; Nicola di Cosmo, 'Aristocratic Elites in the Xiongnu Empire as Seen from Historical and Archaeological Evidence', in Jurgen Paul (ed.), *Nomad Aristocrats in a World of Empires* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013), 23-53.

Roughly contemporaneous with the arrival of the Han dynasty at the end of the third century BCE was a new nomadic phenomenon on the Steppe: one nomadic tribe, the Xiongnu, became the head of a larger nomadic imperial confederacy. The Xiongnu's survival and stability depended, like any individual nomadic tribe, on raiding neighbours as well as gifts, trade and tribute extracted from them in addition to their own pastoral production (we have seen above in the Han manufactured belt plaque an example of this early trade/gift exchange).⁴⁹ The Xiongnu raided with formidable force, almost capturing the Han emperor himself in his first years as ruler.⁵⁰

In the first decade of the (Western) Former Han, in the early second century BCE, there emerged the *heqin* 'peace and friendship system' between the Han and the Xiongnu.⁵¹ Its goal was first and foremost to secure a limit to hostilities across China's borders by exchanging goods (principally silk [as clothing material as well as a form of currency], but also food stuffs)

⁴⁹ Cf. Thomas Barfield, 'The Xiongnu Imperial Confederacy: Organisation and Foreign Policy', *Journal of Asian Studies* 41 (1981), 45-61.

⁵⁰ Sima Qian, *Shiji* 110

⁵¹ Peter Golden, *Central Asia in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 27-28; Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 36-51; Sophia-Karin Psarras, 'Han and Xiongnu: A Re-examination of Cultural and Political Relations I', *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003), 55-236; Sophia-Karin Psarras 'Han and Xiongnu: A Re-examination of Cultural and Political Relations II', *Monumenta Serica* 52 (2004), 37-93.

for a mutual promise of non-aggression.⁵² This was by no means the first, or indeed the only, way in which the nomadic communities came into contact with silk. Silk had, during the Qin era, been exchanged for goods much desired by the Chinese, in particular the strong Steppe horse.⁵³ More widely, frontier trade between nomads and the Chinese had been ongoing for centuries. By the time of the fourth-third centuries BCE, there was already enough silk circulating in nomadic communities for it to be a dominant feature of their tombs as for instance at Pazyryk.⁵⁴ Yet this moment did mark the beginning of the use of silk as an object of formal gift exchange between rulers.

The *heqin* gift-exchange was portrayed in Chinese sources as the exchange of gifts between equal rulers as part of a marriage alliance (the Han Emperor had sent a princess from the imperial court to marry the Xiongnu leader at the outset of the agreement).⁵⁵ At times, the exchange is recorded between the Han and Xiongnu rulers as being extremely personal, with

⁵² For a wider range of possible motives: Nicola di Cosmo, 'The Relations Between China and the Steppe: from the Xiongnu to the Türk Empire', in Nicola di Cosmo and Michael Maas (eds.), *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 35-53.

⁵³ Sima Qian, *Shiji* 129.

⁵⁴ Cf. Manfred Rasche, 'New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römische Welt* 9.2 (1978), 604-1378; Xinru Liu and Linda Shaffer, *Connections Across Eurasia: Transportation, Communication and Cultural Exchange on the Silk Roads* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 21. Pazyryk: Barry Cunliffe, *By Steppe, Desert and Ocean: The Birth of Eurasia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 236-243.

⁵⁵ Sima Qian, *Shiji* 110; Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 94.

the Han Emperor, in the early 170s BCE, claimed to be sending clothes from his own wardrobe for the Xiongnu ruler Maodun:

We therefore send you from our own wardrobe an embroidered robe lined with patterned damask, an embroidered and lined underrobe, and a brocaded coat, one each: one comb; one sash with gold ornaments, one gold-ornamented leather belt; ten rolls of embroidery; thirty rolls of brocade; and forty rolls each of heavy red silk and light green silk.⁵⁶

Despite this seemingly happy fashion exchange, there were those in China who saw the exchange, of silk and other goods, for peace as belittling of the state – especially as nomadic demands for increased gifts continued unabated year after year (and their raiding was, according to the historian Sima Qian, only ‘less often than before’, rather than a complete cessation).⁵⁷ As it was described by one observer at the court of Emperor Wen (the same Emperor who had sent his own clothes to the Xiongnu ruler):

Now the Xiongnu are arrogant and insolent on the one hand, and invade and plunder us on the other hand, which must be considered an act of extreme disrespect towards us.

⁵⁶ Sima Qian, *Shiji* 110. The Han Emperors and court were themselves in the process of codifying their own use of ritual clothes at this time, a process not complete until rule of Emperor Ming (58-75 CE): Xinru Liu, ‘Silk Robes and Relations between the Early Chinese Dynasties and Nomads Beyond the Great Wall’, in Stewart Gordon (ed.), *Robes and Honour: The Medieval World of Investiture* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 23-34.

⁵⁷ Sima Qian, *Shiji* 110.

And the harm they have been doing to the empire is extremely boundless. Yet each year Han provides them with money, silk floss and fabrics.⁵⁸

Yet there was simultaneously a view that this exchange could in the long term help the Han overcome the Xiongnu threat, not simply by lessening the degree to which they raided Han China, but also by changing their nature (and particularly that of the Xiongnu ruler) to become more like the Han (and thus more amenable), through the provision of Han goods and fashions.⁵⁹ Sima Qian comments that by the time of Emperor Wen, the Xiongnu already ‘had a liking for Han silks and food stuffs.’ He goes on to quote a Han envoy to the Xiongnu, who later turned traitor and became a much-admired Xiongnu advisor, warning the Xiongnu of the slippery slope they were on:

⁵⁸ Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 48: 6a-b; Cf. Thomas Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China 221BCE-AD 1757* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 53-57.

⁵⁹ This view was also summed up by Jia Yi in the theory of the ‘5 baits’: ‘to give them elaborate clothes and carriages in order to corrupt their eyes; to give them fine food in order to corrupt their mouths; to give them music and women in order to corrupt their ears; to provide them with lofty buildings, granaries and slaves in order to corrupt their stomachs; and for those who surrender, an imperial reception party to corrupt their minds. These are what may be called the five baits’. Yen Shih-ku, *Commentary to the Hanshu*, 48.13a. This idea – of clothing as cultural symbol and its adoption as potentially making foreign ‘barbarian’ cultures more like the Chinese – has been identified in multiple periods of Chinese history: cf. Dorothy Ko, ‘The Body as Attire: The Shifting Meanings of Footbinding in Seventeenth-Century China’, *Journal of Women’s History* 8/4 (1997), 8-27.

The *Shanyu* [Xiongnu leader] has this fondness for Chinese things and is trying to change the Xiongnu customs. Thus, although the Han sends no more than a fifth of its goods here, it will in the end succeed in winning over the whole Xiongnu nation. From now on when you get any of the Han silks, put them on and try riding around on your horses through the bush and brambles! In no time your robes and leggings will be torn to shreds and everyone will be able to see that silks are no match for the utility and excellence of felt or leather!⁶⁰

This Han outlook, that adopting fashions in clothing could lead to deeper cultural change, had long been a part of Chinese culture and outlook. Indeed, in the fourth century BCE, during the Warring States Period, concern had been expressed in the state of Zhao, which bordered the nomadic communities, about the ways in which King Wuling had instructed his army to adopt the methods (and thus clothing) of the Xiongnu armies in order to retaliate more effectively:

Now your majesty is giving up our high standards to follow the clothing styles of outsiders, thereby changing the teachings of our ancestors and the ancient ways. This will upset your people and make scholars angry, as it deviates from the values of the Middle Kingdom.⁶¹

Such concerns only abated once the effectiveness of the military reforms had been demonstrated.

⁶⁰ Sima Qian, *Shiji* 110

⁶¹ Sima Qian, *Shiji* 43.

The Han traitor to the Xiongnu, in the time of Emperor Wen in the second century BCE, echoed the criticisms that had been levelled at the King of Zhao, by summing up the Xiongnu's strength as lying:

in the very fact that their food and clothing are different from those of the Chinese, and they are therefore not dependent upon the Han for anything.⁶²

Despite these warnings, over the course of the following decades, the *heqin* relationship was renewed with each subsequent Xiongnu and Han Emperor.⁶³ The successor to Emperor Wen, Emperor Jing, added to the peace alliance the right for the Xiongnu to buy/exchange goods in the markets along the Han border, and this was continued by his successor Emperor Wu.⁶⁴ Such trade was, it seems, meant to quicken the process of Xiongnu desire for, and adaptation to, Chinese culture and way of life:

⁶² Sima Qian, *Shiji* 110. Cf. the description by the Emperor Wen of the Xiongnu as those 'who wield the bow and arrow', and the Han 'who inhabitants dwell in houses and wear hats and girdles' Sima Qian, *Shiji* 110.

⁶³ Peter Golden, *Central Asia in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 29-30.

⁶⁴ Sima Qian, *Shiji* 110; Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 94B.

every larger border market we establish must be fitted with shops... And all shops must be large enough to serve between 100-200 people. The Xiongnu will then develop a craving for our products and this will be their fatal weakness.⁶⁵

The exchange was later recorded not only as simply hoping to continue the process of changing Xiongnu tastes and thus culture, but also to reduce their financial resources.⁶⁶ The first century BCE text 'Discourses of Salt and Iron', in discussing the trade exchange taking place in the

⁶⁵ Jia Yi even indicates that the Xiongnu displayed extreme keenness to have access to these markets: 'The Xiongnu need the border markets and they have sought desperately to obtain them from us, even resorting to force' Jia Yi, *Hsinshu* 4.41. Cf. Denis Sinor (ed.), *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 119. Although such encouragement of border markets, and of Han people acting as traders, was also in tension with Han Confucianist beliefs in the primacy of agriculture and self-sufficiency over the 'secondary' occupations of crafts and commerce. The same minister who encouraged the markets (Jia Yi), also argued that 'those who eat [without cultivating] are [proportionally] large in number – this is a great outrage upon the empire!' He goes on to argue that the Empire is like a boat, which, if too top heavy with secondary occupations, will capsize: Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 24A.8b-10a. Cf. Thomas Barfield, 'Steppe Empires, China and The Silk Route: Nomads as a Force in International Trade and Politics', in Anatoly Khazanov and André Wink (eds.), *Nomads in the Sedentary World* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 234-249.

⁶⁶ For the Xiongnu's, as well as other nomadic tribes', desire to use the border markets for trade: Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 92-132.

border markets, remarks that ‘a piece of Chinese plain silk can be exchanged with the Xiongnu for articles worth several pieces of gold and thereby reduce the resources of our enemy.’⁶⁷

Over the rest of the second and first centuries BCE, the amount of luxury goods exchanged as part of the *heqin* relationship continued to increase (not to mention the unknown amounts traded and bought-in border markets). In 89 BCE, the Han sent to the Xiongnu 10,000 pi of silk cloth (approximately 92,000m of silk).⁶⁸ By 51 BCE, the Han were sending to the Southern Xiongnu (the Xiongnu by this time had split into two competing groups) 6,000 catties of silk floss and 8,000 bolts of silk fabric, alongside 20 catties of gold, 200,000 bronze coins, 77 sets of clothes and an ‘enormous quantity of rice. had items most of amount the BCE 1 By ⁶⁹ increased again fivefold.’⁷⁰ The archaeological evidence for silk in Xiongnu communities by the early first century CE is overwhelming: more silk has been found at Xiongnu sites than in any other period in Siberian or Central Asian history.⁷¹ In the burials at Noin Ula for instance, dating to c. 13 CE, silk is used to cover every possible surface: under the body, on the body,

⁶⁷ Huan Kuan, *Yan Tie Lun* 2.14.

⁶⁸ Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 94A: 12b.

⁶⁹ Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 94B: 6b-8a.

⁷⁰ Cf. Xinru Liu, ‘Silk Robes and Relations between the Early Chinese Dynasties and Nomads Beyond the Great Wall’, in Gordon (ed.), *Robes and Honour*, 23-34.

⁷¹ Cf. Manfred Rasche, ‘New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East’, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romische Welt* 9/2 (1978), 604-1378.

glued to the exterior of the coffin and nailed to walls and beams of grave chambers, and it was often torn into strips irrespective of the pattern (Figure 1.4).⁷²

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The Chinese willingness to offer ever greater quantities of clothing and materials as part of the ruler gift exchange tell us much more about their own strong attachment to the idea that clothing choice represented a cultural boundary (and thus the potential take-up of clothing to effect cultural change amongst their enemies) than it does about whether the policy was demonstrably successful. Indeed, as we have seen, Xiongnu aggression only abated, rather than stopped altogether in this period. Moreover, the *heqin* gift exchange may, in reality, have actually strengthened the position of the *Shanyu* ruler of the Xiongnu within his own community. The *Shanyu* was the primary receiver of the *heqin* exchange. But they were obligated in turn, by Steppe values and protocols, to redistribute this wealth to valued members of their retinue so that they too could share in the chief's display of power and prestige.⁷³ The key outcome of this liberal sharing was to ensure the on-going loyalty of their retinue. The possession of Chinese silk amongst the nomad community thus helped nomad chieftains – eventually at all levels - maintain and indeed strengthen their alliances and power bases. Yet it is not impossible to see certain moments when the Chinese attempt to achieve cultural change through fashion exchange does seem to have taken hold, at least when part of formal regalia to

⁷² Sergei Rudenko, *Die Kultur der Hsiung-nu und die Hugelgraber von Noin Ulas* (Bonn: Habelt, 1969).

⁷³ Cf. Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4. The worst insult it was said that could be thrown at a Xiongnu leader was that they were stingy!

be worn at particular times. During the period of the Eastern (Later) Han, we hear of one nomadic group, the Fuyu, whose leader wore white linen at home (as per his tribe's custom), but put on his fine embroidered silks and woollens when meeting with the Han (to celebrate the formal alliance between them).⁷⁴

Conclusion

Across this vast geographical expanse in antiquity from the Mediterranean to China, we have seen changing fashions motivated by a range of factors: the arrival of new raw materials into a particular community; the desire to own objects coming from afar as a symbol of prestige and status; the desire to copy the fashions of foreign elites to symbolise cultural loyalties; the movement of peoples and communities as well as traders across vast distances; the adoption of new military tactics requiring new clothing; the establishment of exchange alliances and the desire to effect deep cultural change in an enemy through the adoption of different fashions.

At the same time we have seen how each community was not merely a passive receiver of those fashions, but were themselves also contributors to and shapers of those fashions, making them their own: the Romans who re-wove Chinese silk to make the transparent cloth so popular with Roman women; the individual Palmyrenes who decided whether to copy Parthian or Roman dress or wear Han silk garments (or a mix of all of them); the different Steppe communities who used the same kind of belt plaque design but for different sections of their community; the Kings of Chinese Warring states who had belt plaques made for and buried with them when they had little use for belt plaques at a time when the clothing etiquette of the

⁷⁴ Chen Shou, *Sanguo Zhi* 30; Liu, 'Silk Robes', 23-34.

Han elite was only slowly being formalised. We have also seen how, in the case of the *heqin* exchange between the Xiongnu and Han, clothing and fabrics could be sent with at least the strong hope (by the sender) and fear (by the receiver) that their adoption would bring about cultural change in the receiver's society, even if in reality those clothes and materials were actively adapted more to fit the receiving culture's own customs than change them.

Perhaps most importantly, this chapter has underlined, through its focus on fashion, the interconnectedness of communities across vast distances in the ancient world. As such, I hope that it serves to strengthen further the drive to study the ancient world as a connected whole rather than as a series of isolated civilisations.