

Chapter 10: Ancient Artifacts and Common Heritage

Migrations, Turmoil and Starting Over

Why would nomads or semi-nomads like the Cimmerians in the eighth and seventh centuries BC, and the rest of the Black Sea Scythians later want to move west from the Caucasus and the Eurasian steppes? While the Cimmerians, as we stated in the previous chapter, were considered by the ancient Near East to be Scythians (as evidenced by the Behistun Rock inscriptions), it seems that they were forced west by the greater part of their tribal confederation due to some internal problem that had grave political consequences.

Under the Scythian system of justice, if an individual was ordered to be executed by a ruler for some offence, usually all the offender's male relatives were also killed to avoid igniting a continuing blood feud. However, if the offender's clan or tribe did not support the ruler's decision and sought to defend the offending family, the problem grew large very quickly. Besides the choice of fighting to the last man, the weaker group could choose to migrate elsewhere—quickly. Not too difficult a chore for a nomadic people. For those living on the Black Sea steppes the magnet of migration was to go west up the Danube Valley, or to follow upstream one of the other rivers that emptied into the Black Sea. This is what the Cimmerians did when they migrated to the region around the headwaters of the Danube in the late eighth to early seventh centuries BC.



Scythians Employ 'Scorched Earth'
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AtaculdeNoapte.jpg.png>

The main body of Black Sea Scythians, the Royal Scythians, were always affected by the endemic instability that was characteristic of the Eurasian steppes. If a nomadic tribe somewhere in central Asia was bumped from its home range by a stronger group this would cause reverberations all the way into Europe in a “Darwinian” sort of musical chairs with the various players squeezing and elbowing each other for living space. This sort of chain reaction turf war would usually proceed west along the Eurasian steppes all the way into Peninsula Europe.

In the late sixth century BC the Achaemenid Persian king Darius attempted to subjugate the Black Sea Scythians. Inferior in numbers to the invading Persian horde, the Royal Scythians used their superior mobility to keep their population beyond Persian hands, while limiting their defensive military counter-attacks to skirmishes and hit-and-run raids. To make things harder for the Persians, the Scythians waged a scorched earth campaign and laid their own countryside waste. Unable to run the Scythians down and concerned that his lengthening supply lines might be cut, Darius was forced to retreat. But, of course, the Persians could always invade again.

Evidently, after this experience many Scythians decided to go west as the archaeological record shows.

How many of this group of Royal Scythians migrated at that time we don't know, but their new western territories flourished. At the end of the fifth century BC or early in the fourth century BC a fresh round of tribal displacements started in central Asia and the Kazakhstan steppes. Consequently, at this same time from the late fifth to the mid-fourth century BC according to some scholars, or even into the third century BC according to others, the Black Sea Scythians came under great pressure from their eastern Sarmatian neighbors pushing at them all along the eastern border of Greater Scythia. Archaeological evidence confirms that a number of Scythian settlements on the lower Dnieper River were destroyed at this time in the struggle for survival. The Royal Scythian elite and its supporters eventually retreated westward and re-established centers of power in the Crimea Peninsula at Neopolis and in Scythia Minor, the region around the mouth of the Danube, at Dobruja, and into Thrace.¹

As displaced Scythian clans and tribes moved westward, Celtic Europe was thrown into turmoil as the new arrivals searched for living space between the late fifth through the third centuries BC. A new status quo in Celtic Europe seems to have been achieved about 200 BC.²

Archaeology notes that for about 150 years after 200 BC, Celtic Europe witnessed the widespread construction of *oppidum*—fortified positions that in character and purpose closely paralleled the previous Royal Scythian fortified settlements in the Black Sea region. These new Celtic forts usually incorporated into their defensive works natural features like rivers and cliffs as well as man-made, timber-reinforced earthen ramparts and wooden stockades.



Celtic and Bastarnae Fortified Settlements - Oppidum

<https://balkancelts.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/atop-bul-no-modified-modified7.jpg>

¹ “In 338 BC [a year after the Scythian king Ateas was killed in battle with Philip II of Macedonia in Thrace] Pseudo-Scylax reported ‘Symtatai’ west of the Don in territory formerly controlled by the Pontic Royal Scythys,” Sulimirski, p. 101; Cunliffe, p. 171; Rolle, p. 127.

² Cunliffe, p. 155.

The typical size of a settlement protected by such defences was about 10 hectares (about 25 acres). But major settlements like the Manching *oppidum* in modern Bavaria on the Danube River and the Závist *oppidum* south of Prague were much larger than average, being respectively 380 hectares (about 950 acres) and 150 hectares (about 375 acres).

Like the *Kamenskoe gorodisce*, the Scythian “Pittsburgh” on the Dneiper River, these Celtic *oppidum* smelted iron, engaged in metalworking of all sorts including jewelry. Pottery manufacture and other cottage industries at the *oppidum* served Celtic household and agricultural needs as well as catering to those tastes peculiar to the barbarian lifestyle. It would seem that the Celts like the Scyths appreciated turning the skulls of defeated enemies into gold-mounted drinking cups.³



Stare Hradisko Oppidum - Amber Route
<https://www.zlate-mince.cz/amber-route-stare-hradisko>

Just like the prior Scythian *oppidum* on the steppes, these new Celtic *oppidum* were usually located near rich mining resources and important trade routes. The *oppidum* at Staré Hradisko in Moravia was built specifically to control the amber trade route.⁴

The establishment of such Celtic “Pittsburghs” fed a growing Celtic appetite for iron armaments in the third century BC. According to archaeologists, the average Celtic warrior at that time carried five times more metal weaponry than his predecessors of just two centuries earlier.⁵

Besides the marked increase in iron production in central Europe, agriculture was also revolutionized by imports from the southeast. The short-horned cattle of the Scythians, instead of the long-horned cattle of the Romans, became the principle breed kept by the northern tribes later labeled *Germani*. The introduction of the iron harrow, the iron ploughshare, and better fertilizing practices increased grain yields. The cultivation of wine grapes, cherries, plums, and peaches in the Rhine and Danube valleys was introduced from the southeast and south.⁶

³ Cunliffe, p. 210.

⁴ Cunliffe, pp. 225-225, 227,

⁵ Cunliffe, p. 105.

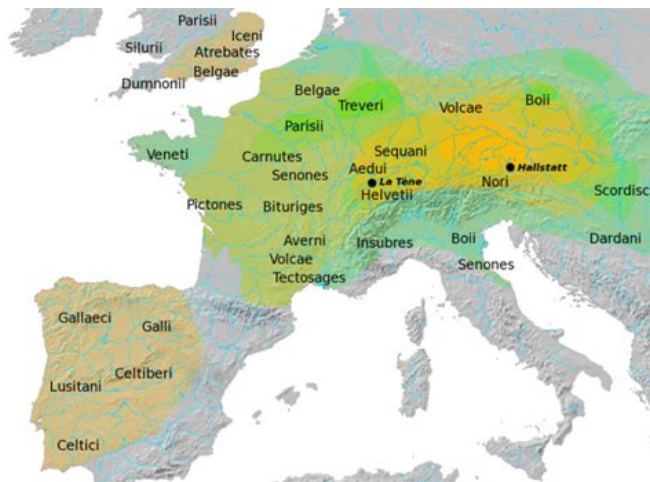
⁶ Diesner, p. 87.

Common Links Illustrated by Ancient Artifacts?

It is widely appreciated now that at different stages of their development the same Celtic-Scythic tribes had settlements or homelands in widely separated geographical locations. In their heyday the Scythians had related tribes ranging all over the Eurasian steppes and adjacent areas.

When Julius Caesar conquered Gaul in the middle of the first century BC, he discovered that some of the Celtic tribes on the continent had branch settlements across the channel in Britain, and that the two groups continued to maintain close contact. They even retained a unified tribal government having the same chieftain who periodically traveled back and forth between the two groups!

A famous Celtic tribe in Britain called the Brigantes existed concurrently with other tribal groups bearing the same name in continental Europe. There were the Brigantioi at Bregenz on Lake Constance, another group at Briançon in Savoy and still another branch tribe at Corunna in Spain. The most distinguished of these continental Brigantes lived in the neighborhood of modern Berlin. But their name was preserved in its Germanic translation as the Burgundians.⁷ This branch of the Brigantes-Burgundians migrated through Eastern Europe before eventually settling in eastern France. The Brigantes of Britain themselves may have been involved in the fifth century AD Celtic migration to Brittany (the Armorican Peninsula of France) due to pressure from the invading Anglo-Saxon tribal confederation. And so, perhaps, the majority of the Brigantes-Burgundians ended up settling in different regions of France.



Boii and Tectosages

Creative Commons

The Boii, a tribe found in northern Italy, are also frequently mentioned as inhabitants of the area which is now [occupied by the Czech and Slovak states]... It would seem that there were at least two branches of the Boii [who gave their name to Bohemia] or two tribes with the same name, as with the Tectosages, who were found at the same time in Asia Minor and in Gaul.⁸

The Romans and Greeks recognized that the Celtic Tectosages who settled in Asia Minor (Galatia) maintained communications with those members of their tribe who remained in southern France. A clear case can be made that these interrelated tribes scattered about maintained a sense of solidarity⁹ and shared traditions, which is illustrated by some of the most spectacular archaeological discoveries.

⁷ Chadwick, p. 155.

⁸ Ellis, pp. 86-87.

⁹ Ellis, p. 99.

Probably the most famous of these finds is the Gundestrup silver cauldron recovered from a Danish peat bog. While the artistic decoration is generally classified as “Celtic” it is recognized that it was probably produced in an eastern Scytho-Thracian workshop due to the nature of its silver-work and gilding. The Gundestrup cauldron portrays warrior infantry, cavalry and human sacrifice. In both pattern and symbolic imagery it is not typical La Tène Celtic style. Rather it shows strong Oriental (Scythic) influence with a flavour of archaic Greek.¹⁰ Somehow a craftsman living in southeast Europe produced a product that shows he was conversant with western Celtic symbolism. Some archaeologists have speculated that this cauldron was a diplomatic gift from one tribal elite to another. Perhaps it was a symbol of lasting friendship or, ethnographers have suggested, even joint rule between two tribes located in widely separated geographical locations? The reason it was found in a peat bog is that it was offered to the gods. A “Celtic” gift from “Thracian” sources found in Jutland, a home area of the Cimbri and Teutones?

A second discovery that ethnographers also consider a diplomatic gift is a massive silver-plated iron torc found in southwestern Germany at Trichtingen. The object’s iconography has two bulls or calves’ heads, each portrayed wearing a torc, on the artifact’s terminals. Torcs were a symbol of life, of being under divine protection as well as sovereignty. On the Gundestrup cauldron a seated deity is wearing a torc and holding another. The iconographic representation of bulls or calves is certainly more Scytho-Thracian than Celtic. The high quality of the silver plating also makes the technical case for a lower Danube origin. Archaeologists suggest the Trichtingen torc was “a diplomatic gift symbolizing a treaty of friendship between equal elites.”¹¹



Gundestrup Cauldron

<http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/Ca-Cr/Celtic-Mythology.html>

More examples of rich finds in western-central Europe having a potential diplomatic nature due to their plainly lower Danube point of origin: a silver-gilt disk with animal ornamentation from Helden, Netherlands, and a remarkable group of metal artifacts found on the island of Sark, in the English Channel. Other Scytho-Thracian surprises found in La Tène contexts, suggesting diplomatic connections, include ram-headed drinking horns from Schwarzenbach. Another drinking horn decorated with gold stamped sphinxes was found at Weiskirchen on the Saar. This one is believed to have made at a Black Sea workshop. Last of all, a golden arm ring with pairs of rams looking over their shoulders. This was found in Rodenbach and is believed to be of local manufacture. However, the artistic motif is purely Scythian.¹²

¹⁰ Myles Dillion & Nora K. Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1972, p. 17.

¹¹ Cunliffe, pp. 124-125.

¹² Cunliffe, p. 124.

The Origin of Celtic Art

According to many scholars, the origin of Celtic art—with its originality, its choice of motifs from the symbolic and the natural world, its delicacy of line, its refined imagination and impeccable artistic taste—is unknown! But are the origins of Celtic art really that mystifying?

The Hallstatt period of Celtic cultural development is seen as being merely an extension of the common Eurasian international art of the day with its rows of wooden-looking horses and aquatic birds. But by the late eighth-early seventh centuries BC Hallstatt art underwent what is called an “Orientalizing period.” It became transformed by new, richer Eastern influences. When the La Tène phase of Celtic cultural development kicked in suddenly during the fifth century BC, it seemingly came out of nowhere:

The amazing thing about this new style of the La Tène period which succeeded to that of the Hallstatt is that **it has no obvious beginnings, no gradual evolution... It is a mature and finished product when it first appears. Some new and powerful external stimulus could alone account for it, introducing foreign motifs into Celtic ateliers, such as the animals of the desert, the vegetation of the tropics.** But how these Oriental elements came to the Northern Celts remains mysterious....

This period of the art which we define as specifically Celtic shows itself fully developed in fantastic combinations of animals and foliage, bizarre and unnatural images of natural objects, **the flora and fauna of the East, lotuses, palms, lions, and the wild beasts of the desert**, divorced from their realistic images and recombined in alien settings, sometimes wholly, sometimes only partially....

One of the most striking, and perhaps the most revolutionary, features of La Tène art is the introduction of polychrome. This came into Gaul *simultaneously* with other Oriental fashions. In the early polychrome phase the element of colour was chiefly introduced by coral inlay; but in the second phase coral gives place largely to red enamel, which is much more richly and profusely used. Its origin is unknown, but it was probably in Central Asia—perhaps Persia.¹³



Basse-Yutz Flagon - Enamel Inlay
<http://www.alaintruong.com/>

However, the historian Tamara Talbot Rice was not mystified. She considered that from about 500 BC onward the Scythian influence was pronounced in central Europe. Typical Scythic techniques like beading and hatching are widely used. Black Sea motifs of beasts walking in single file, circles, pyramids and even the image of the Great Goddess flanked by two heraldic animals is found. Celtic art using a bird or a heraldic pair of birds as artistic motifs, is very close to Eurasian, Scythic versions. One of the most famous Celtic works of art, the Basse-Yutz flagon found in Lorraine, France, shows a predatory animal training her young to stalk their prey, a duck in this instance. The evidence of Eastern artistic influence in both its animal style and the use of coral and enamel are undeniable.

¹³ Dillon & Chadwick, pp. 280-282

Yet while many scholars will agree that Celtic art shows unmistakable parallels to what is called either “Scythian, Thracian, Oriental, or Eastern” inspiration, they hesitate to conclude that this art accompanied successive waves of westward-migrating Eastern nomads who inspired, created, and used it as a means of personal expression common to a group of related but different tribes.

Are there any other clues to consider that might help resolve such doubts, that might help transform “unknown origins” to known roots? The answer is yes. But to find these clues we must turn our investigation to a place some 4,000 miles east of Peninsular Europe to what is sometimes called Chinese Turkestan. This place at the other end of the Eurasian steppes has some startling, most remarkable evidence bearing on the origins of the Celts.

Mummies Can Talk! But Are You Willing to Listen?

To most North Americans, Western Europeans and their various branch expansions spread around the globe, names like the Tien Shan Mountains, the Tarim Basin, Xinjiang, Lake Balkhash, Kazakhstan, Pazyryk and the Altai Mountains seem remote, mysterious. In the modern Western world these central Asian regions are more unknown to the general public than even extraterrestrial bodies like the Moon or Mars. This area of the world is indeed *terra incognita* to most of us. Yet, if you are a Caucasian, speaking in the general ethnic sense of the word, the *fact* is that you had either ancestors or relatives who once called these exotic places home.

Surprised? Most are. In the common Western perception this Asian region has always been inhabited by either Chinese, Mongol or Turkic peoples. Yet archaeological evidence has clearly shown that this widespread assumption is not true. Mummies, it seems, do talk! But you have to pay attention to understand the fascinating story they are telling. For the last 3 decades, a wealth of information revealed by the mummies excavated by Chinese archaeologists of the Xinjiang Institute and the Ürümchi museum, located in the remote Tarim Basin of the province of Xinjiang, has slowly been changing the way we understand the migrations of the human family.



Generally, ancient textiles are rare finds in most archaeological excavations because normal soil conditions don't favour their preservation. But the Tarim Basin has become increasingly bone dry over the last 3,800 years. Consequently, ancient cemeteries that were located in infertile desert regions of the basin desiccated the interred, preserving both bodies and clothing. Due to grave robbing, both ancient and modern, relatively small amounts of other types of artifacts have been recovered; however, the ancient bodies and textiles tell a marvellous tale. Prof. Elizabeth Wayland Barber, who is one of the foremost experts on ancient textiles, was invited to Ürümchi to examine the mummies and their ancient clothing. We are indebted to her work for blowing the dust off these ancient clues to help us see more clearly some valuable pieces to our mystery's puzzle.

The various ancient cemeteries scattered about the Tarim Basin reveal different stages of occupation. But a commonality among all of them until the late second century BC, when the Han Chinese and Huns started reaching west, is that these ancient cemeteries consistently produce Caucasian mummies. The oldest of the mummies recovered come from the Loulan-Kroraina area of the basin. The "Beauty of Loulan," having fine Caucasian features and auburn hair, was found wearing plain wool clothing and crude ankle-high leather moccasins with the fur on the outside.

She finished off her headgear by sticking into it a large, straight feather, which together with her blanket wrap give her the air of an American child dressed up to play "Indians".... With the woman lay part of a small comb. Four of the coarse teeth of this comb remained... its form and coarseness closely resembled ancient combs found in the Near East, whose wear marks show they have been used over long periods of time to pack the weft in tightly during weaving.... Also found with her a winnowing tray to clean wheat and a neatly woven bag with some grains of wheat.¹⁴



Beauty of Loulan - Reconstruction

<https://baike.sogou.com>

The clothing recovered from the Loulan-Kroraina graves lacks sophistication. The clothing has no sleeves, pant legs, seams, or piping. The skill to dye large amounts of wool seems to be lacking. The abundant use at the Loulan cemetery of wooden posts deeply driven into the ground in the form of circles reveals that these people lived in the Tarim Basin at a time when it still had abundant forests and streams in the Tien Shan Mountains that frame the basin on the north.

With few artifacts to suggest a date, the Chinese archaeologists tried radiocarbon 14 testing. The first test came back giving a date of 4500 BC linking the find to the Stone Age. This shocked the archaeologists as being totally unreasonable. So they sent another sample to another

¹⁴ Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *The Mummies of Ürümchi*, W. W. Norton & Co., 1999, pp. 74-75.

university, which came up with the date of 1880 BC plus or minus 95 years. This would date the “Beauty of Loulan” to about the time of the Patriarch Abraham in the Near East, Ur of the Chaldees. While this still seemed early, it became the accepted date because there was no other way to cross check it. (See footnote on C14 cautions by Prof. Barber.¹⁵) Since both wool-bearing sheep and wheat were first domesticated in the Near East about 4000 BC, archaeologists now believe the Beauty of Loulan’s people, who were simple herder-cultivators, wandered from somewhere in the Fertile Crescent by way of what would later become Persia, oasis hopping until they came to the Tarim Basin.

What this means is that Caucasians or Europids began finding their way to the Tarim Basin and the Tien Shan Mountains from very early times. So it should not be considered outrageous that more culturally advanced Caucasian migrants should later go there as well. In fact, this is what seemed to happen. At a much later time another Caucasian people came into the Tarim Basin pushing the Loulan people towards the southern side of the basin, the less desirable areas, probably also subjugating them to tribute.



The next remarkable group of mummies to consider consisted of a man buried with three women and a baby with blue stones placed on his closed eyes. The adult male was nicknamed “Cherchen man”:

A two-inch beard covers his face, and his light brown hair has been twisted—plied from two strands, not braided from three—into two queues that hang halfway down his chest. Here and there white hairs glint among the yellow-brown, betraying his age—somewhere past fifty. He would have been an imposing figure in life, for he once stood six feet six inches tall [one of the women measured 6 feet].... Bright ocher-yellow face paint curls across his temple, sprouting short rays on its outer curve and reversing its curl as it meanders down to the flatland of his cheek before climbing across the great ridge of his nose—not a low-bridged Asian nose, but a veritable Sierra Nevada of a nose....

Passing from the face, one’s eye jumps between the violently colored leggings and the purple-red-brown two-piece suit that covers most of the man’s body. Originally the man wore soft white deerskin boots to above his knees—the left one is still there . But the right one has torn away, revealing horizontal stripes of gaudy red, yellow, and blue that put Ronald McDonald in the shade.¹⁶

Found with Cherchen man were ten hats of different styles. One was like a beret or tam-o’-shanter made of dark brown wool using the Scandinavian *nalbinding* technique. Another hat made of wool felt had a high, soft-point

¹⁵ “Unfortunately we are now learning that the amount of radiocarbon in the atmosphere has not been entirely steady over the millennia. Scientists are gradually charting these vicissitudes by calibrating samples against datable tree rings. Then too the problems of counting minuscule amounts of radioactive decay have been difficult to solve. But the technology of doing so is vastly improved. Today the sticking point is not so much equipment as the amount of money one has to spend on counting. The longer you count, the more accurate. Since the process is statistical rather than absolute, it will always be expressed as a number plus or minus another number.... The C14 method must be used judiciously,” Barber, pp. 99-100.

¹⁶ Barber, pp. 23-25.

like something out of a Robin Hood movie wardrobe. At one time several feathers had been attached to it part way down. This hat reminded Prof. Barber of those worn by the Phrygians, an Indo-European group of steppe nomads who had occupied north-central Anatolia (modern Turkey) in the eighth century BC. According to history, **the Phrygian kingdom was weakened by a series of Scythian and Cimmerian raids. The Cimmerians destroyed the Phrygian capital city, Gordion, about 675 BC.**¹⁷

According to the descriptions furnished by ancient authors, standard Scythian dress included pants, high, soft leather boots and soft-round or pointed caps.¹⁸ The Persians labeled some of the Eastern Scythian tribes *Saka tigraxauda*, the Saka of the pointed caps or helmets.¹⁹

Is the similarity between the pants, boots, and headgear of Cherchen man and Scythians evidence of a shared cultural inheritance? Even the use of feathers on headgear has interesting Scythian correspondents. From the tomb of a noble Saka youth excavated in the Semirece region south of Lake Balkhash (just north of the Tarim Basin), archaeologists discovered a heavy gold signet ring portraying a human head wearing a feathered hat or crown. This tomb was dated to the fifth century BC.²⁰

Now the fact that the “Robin Hood” hat was made of wool felt is an important point. Wool felt was a nomadic invention. While setting up a loom to weave a piece of cloth required a set location for at least several months at a time, the process for making wool felt was best done literally on horseback!

To make felt as a nomad does, you scatter cleaned and fluffed-up wool all over a mat in an even layer, sprinkle the wool with whey or hot water, roll up the mat with the damp wool in it, and tie the bundle to the back of your horse so as to mash and knead it as you ride all day. At night you unroll it, sprinkle it down again, reroll it the other way, and tie it to the horse for another day’s punishment. Soon the wool has matted as thoroughly as you please.... Sheep’s wool is virtually the only natural fiber that will tangle so inextricable. Nomads use felt not just for its convenience of manufacture. More important, it can be made so dense as to be nearly impervious to wind and water, yet it is far lighter than other waterproof materials like wood and metal.²¹

The Scythians emphasized sheep over cattle in their herds for practical reasons. The use of wool felt was an essential element to their nomadic lifestyle, as was the use of the horse. Should we be surprised then that archaeologists found a leather saddle, head and front hoof of a horse (a horse sacrifice) in Cherchen man’s tomb?

The dress of Cherchen man’s women, who were all Caucasians, included knee-high boots of soft deer leather, padded inside with yellowish and blue felt, a calf-length dark red dress with wrist-length sleeves, woven in long-hop twill. Partially covering one of the women was a big cloth

¹⁷ Cunliffe, p. 172.

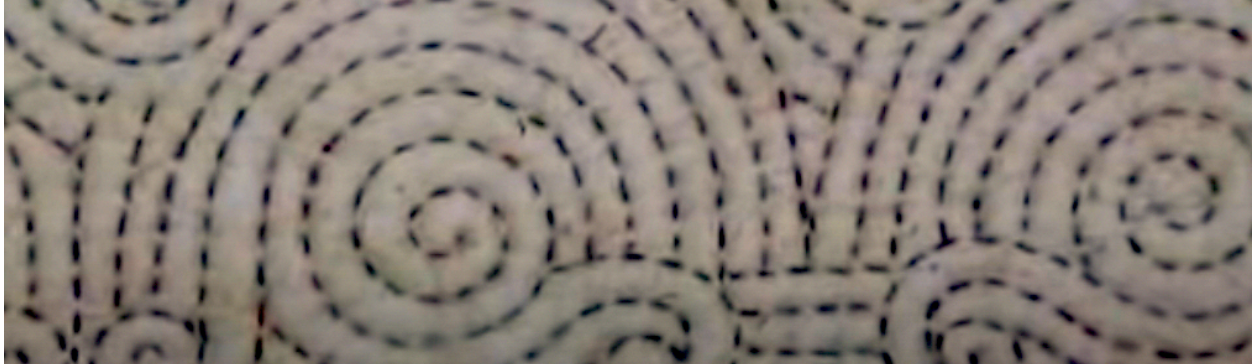
¹⁸ Sulimirski, p. 27.

¹⁹ Rolle, p. 47.

²⁰ Rolle, p. 47

²¹ Barber, p. 37

decorated by dramatic red and white interlocking swirls that were *painted* onto the woven wool. Such spiral patterns were inspired by the decoration of nomadic felt-work. Nomadic seamstresses sewing wool felt used interlocking circles and spirals to avoid the “sewing-a-straight-line-in-a-wet-paper-towel” shearing effect.



Wool Felt Patterns

Christine Martens <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1H2LepsF4I>

It turns out this decoration of red and white interlocking swirls from Cherchen man’s burial bore a strong resemblance to the appliqué felt ornamentation on a felt boot found in a Scythian permafrost burial (c. 500 BC) at Pazyryk in the Altai Mountains, located 500 miles directly north of the Tarim Basin.²² But, problematically, a Chinese university had C14-dated Cherchen man’s tomb to roughly 1000 BC.

Further doubts on the accuracy of the C14 dating of Cherchen man’s tomb arise from another burial at Cherchen that yielded three pieces of tapestry. This find startled Prof. Barber because **the technique of weaving of tapestry was only mastered by the Egyptians around 1500 BC after capturing both double-barred tapestry looms and weavers in Syria.** If the Cherchen cemetery was dated to 1000 BC, how then could such advanced technology have moved so fast to a remote area like the Tarim Basin? From the internal evidence of the tapestry, Prof. Barber concluded that a date of about 500 BC for the Cherchen finds was more likely. She was also persuaded of this later date because one of the Cherchen tapestries paralleled tapestry discoveries in the Scythian Pazyryk tombs.

So great are the similarities, not just of the tapestries but also of sewing them to strips of plain twill, that one has to believe the two textiles belong to the same date as well as to the same tradition. Tree rings show that the five great kurgans of Pazyryk were built within fifty years of each other, probably between about 480 and 430 BC. That suggests a similar date for the scrolled tapestry and the grave it came from at Cherchen. But exactly where these scroll-patterned tapestries originate is not yet known.²³

²² Barber, in fig. 3.2 and plate 3B, p. 51.

²³ Barber, p. 67.

Hami and Hallstatt

Working on a tip, in 1979 Chinese archaeologists went to a place called Qizilchoqu (meaning Red Rock), which is located some 300 miles northeast of Loulan, near Hami in the northeastern corner of the greater Turfan Basin between the much larger Tarim Basin to the southwest and the huge Gobi Desert to the northeast. There they found another ancient cemetery approximately contemporary with the Cherchen group (“If we may believe the present [C14] dating,” qualifies Barber²⁴). While the bodies haven’t survived as well as the Cherchen group there is no mistaking their appearance: Caucasoid facial features, light brown or blonde hair, the women wear long braids and one was tattooed on her wrists. Their clothing, however, is well preserved.



Cherchen Woman (reconstruction)

M.A. Ludwig <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBOl2NdGOpk>

The clothing at Loulan was plain weave, while that of Cherchen was both plain weave and an unusual long-hop twill. The dominant weave at Hami, however, was a normal diagonal twill. The typical decorative pattern was plaid with wide and narrow stripes in both their warp and weft, resembling the cloth of a modern Scottish kilt. The Hami plaids tended to have darker backgrounds enlivened by up to six colors. This relatively generous use of colored threads is also like the modern Scottish plaids. Pure coincidence?

The preservation of ancient textiles is a rare phenomenon worldwide. This is especially true in Europe with its wet, temperate climate. Nevertheless, there are two major sources of ancient European cloth. One is the peat bogs of Sweden and Denmark that preserve both bodies and wool clothing well. Thus we know that the ancients living in Sweden also wore plaid twills. But sadly, peat bogs ruin the coloration of whatever is consigned to them, turning everything into a sort of peaty brown hue. There

is, however, one European source for ancient textiles that preserves both the fibres and the original colours—the salt mines of Hallstatt and Hallein in upper Austria above Salzburg.

The “Germanic” names Hallstatt and Hallein derive their names and fame from the Celtic word *hal(l)*, meaning “salt.” When the Hallstatt Celts came into this region searching for metal ores they found something equally precious—great salt domes. Salt, of course, is a *great preservative*. It made a lucrative trade in salted meat and hides possible between the Celtic-Germanic north and Mediterranean cultures to the south.

²⁴ Barber, pp. 128-129.

For a long time the Hallstatt Celts would simply tunnel into these salt domes with their picks and load up chunks of salt in cloth bags that would be hauled to the surface. Like miners everywhere, due to accidents and discards, the Hallstatt Celtic miners, left behind bodies, tools, equipment and clothing in the mines. Over the centuries the ancient Celtic shafts refilled with recrystallized salt, thus preserving not only textile discards but also their original colors. Modern salt miners have recovered 117 pieces of ancient Hallstatt Celtic cloth. About 75 percent of these textiles are in twills while the rest are plain weave. Much of this cloth, both twill and plain weaves, was done in plaids.



23. Plaid woolen twill from a burial at Qizilchoqa, near Hami, dating to sometime between 1200 and 700 BC; woven in light brown with light blue and white stripes. (Photo I. Good.)

Like the Scottish tartans and the Hami twills, the Hallstatt plaids contain a rhythmic mixture of wide and very narrow stripes.... The favorite colors included dark brown, yellow, and pea green, with occasional deep blue, copper red, and white.... The overall similarities between Hallstatt plaid twills and recent Scottish ones, right down to the typical weight of the cloth, strongly indicated continuity of traditions.²⁵

One of the twill plaids from Hami in the far eastern reaches of the Eurasian steppes had a milk-chocolate background with narrow stripes of light blue and white. This attractive Hami cloth also has the same weight, thickness and feel as modern Scottish material and the ancient central European Hallstatt plaids. A bizarre coincidence?



24. Reproduction of 6-color plaid twill in garment from Qizilchoqa, near Hami (ca. 1200-700 BC). The garment was stitched together in light blue and fastened with a button also covered with light blue yarn. (Woven by R. Ashenden, after Wang L.)

It is true that another class of plaids discovered at Hami are quite different from the modern Scottish ones. These different Hami textiles are made of wool woven in plain weave. They have white backgrounds with red and blue stripes to make the plaid. Surprisingly, at Hallein, one valley over from Hallstatt, modern miners have found several ancient wool cloths woven in plain weave with white backgrounds and pinstripes of red and blue! **Not**

only are the weave styles and colors of the Hallein and Hami cloths the same, their colored bands are both arranged with a kind of regularity that varies similarly from the twill plaids with the dark backgrounds. A coincidence? Not on your life according to Prof. Barber:

The peculiar similarity of the white-ground cloths, added to all the likenesses in the dark-ground plaid twills and the similarity in dating, moves us so far from chance that I have to conclude the Hami and Hallstatt traditions are directly related.²⁶

But this isn't all the clues to consider from this remote region of Chinese Turkestan. There are more linking the eastern Scythians and western Celts!

²⁵ Barber, p. 138.

²⁶ Barber, p. 141.