

Abstract #: 2121

**WHO WAS THE HU? CHINESE SILKS WITH INTERWOVEN "HU WANG"  
(‘BARBARIAN KING’) INSCRIPTION AND THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXT.**

Marta Zuchowska<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Faculty of Archaeology, University of Warsaw*

During the period of the Southern and Northern dynasties (420-589) the north and west of China was ruled by the non-Chinese dynasties. This situation created an unprecedented opportunity for the cross-cultural contacts and a lot of western influences were adopted in the Chinese art and craft. In the Chinese weaving art of this period, we can observe as well the new trends, both in technology and in design. Especially interesting evidence of these transformations are two pieces of silk found in two graves in Astana (the area of Turpan, Xinjiang, PRCh), dated respectively to the mid and late VI century AD. Both fabrics are decorated with medallions representing a man leading camel and inscription “hu wang” (‘barbarian king’). While the weaving technique is a traditional Chinese jin (warp-faced compound tabby), the decoration is visibly inspired by the cultural contacts with the west. Both, the iconographic representation and the character of inscription are uncommon in the Chinese art of this period. The present paper discusses the cultural context of these two pieces of silk, raising the questions of the meaning and interpretation of their decoration as well as the purpose of such production.

**Keywords**

Chinese silk, Chinese weaving art, Silks with inscriptions, China and the west

**Note/comment**