



## HISTORY OF WEAVING IN NORTHEAST AREAS OF THE CENTRAL ASIA (ANTIQUITY AND MIDDLE AGES)

Matbabayev Bakijon

Institute of Archeology Academy of Sciences  
Republic of Uzbekistan

Article history:	Abstract:
<b>Received:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> April 2022 <b>Accepted:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 <b>Published:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> June 2022	Article is about of the results of the study of tissues in the territory of Ferghana Valley. It is with the ancient temporal presence of weaving sites in Central Asia. According to archaeological data, the history of weaving the valley has more than 3,000 years. Of course, the development of the textile itself has not reached us, but there are serious concerns about the development of weaving in Fergana.
<b>Keywords:</b> Ferghana Valley, Karabulak, Munchaktepa, Loom, weaving, silk, printed on pottery	

The Ferghana Valley since ancient times was a large centre of weaving in Central Asia. According to archaeological data the weaving in the valley lasts more than 3000 years. For sure, we have no such old samples of weaving, however, there are direct evidences of weaving development in the Ferghana Valley (Abdulgazieva B., 2004, pp. 44-48). Prints of fabric inside pottery of tribes of Chust agricultural culture (XII-VII centuries BCE) were revealed (Zadneprovskiy Yu. A., 1962, table XVI; Korobkova G.F., 1962, pp. 231-234). Initially the earthenware was hand-formed and mould of pottery was made with bag or fabric filled up with sand or soil and coated with clay bands. In this way a potter being not in the know of it prolonged life of fabric printed on pottery body (fig.3). From the point of view of specialists the main part of fabric was linen and rep weave and twill weave was less in number. However, it is hard to identify to which type this or that fabric is related to, because fibre was taken from silk cocoons, cotton and fibre crops (flax, kenaf). Other material objects to study weaving can be bone combs, shuttles, spindle whorls made of different materials and samples of fabrics. Structure and complicity of weaving of old fabrics indicate that they were produced on looms. Researchers assume that looms were vertical. Shuttle and combs made of bone from the Bronze Aged loom were found (fig.2) (Zadneprovskiy Yu. A., 1962, table XXIII, 1-8, 10-12, 21-24). Loom weights made of pieces of broken pottery were used to draw threads. Numerous ceramic spindle whorls from excavations are evidence of development of weaving. Researcher of Chust culture Yu.A. Zadneprovskiy identified three types of such products: lenticular, conical and biconical (Zadneprovskiy Yu.A., 1962, p. 83).

Till recently it was considered that the basic material for weaving in the Ferghana valley in ancient times was cotton fibre. Indeed, threads made of cotton and cotton seeds were disclosed at Ferghana archaeological sites of early millennium CE (Saltovskaya E.D., 1971, p. 18). And there were almost no data on production of silk cloth in ancient period. The archaeological material was not discovered and data on it were absent in the written sources. The only early sample of silk in Central Asia as disclosed at Sapallitepa site (XVII-XIV centuries B.C) in Surkhandarya province (Askarov A., 1973, pp. 173-174; Askarov A., 1977, pp. 101-126). However, recently new finds of silk were obtained and they give us possibility to have a new concept on origin of silk weaving in the Ferghana valley. Still the earliest finds of silk took place in Karabulak burial ground in Southern Ferghana dated back to last centuries BCE and I-II centuries CE (Baruzdin Yu.D., 1961, pp. 43-82; Litvinsky B.A., 1972, pp. 133-136). In this burial ground two thirds of all fabrics is silk cloth (fig.4,5). They are different in type: smooth cloth, damask, polychromatic and embroidery (Lubo-Lesnichenko E.I., 1982, pp. 48-53). Fragments with depicted semi-naked women with mythical dragons in hands are very interesting. Female deities with serpentine creatures in hands were widely spread in mythology in the ancient world. Some patterns on silk cloths from Karabulak are originated from ornamental art of South-East Asia (fig. 4). Face veils, so-called kerchiefs, eye-flaps, so-called spectacles, votive flasks and clothes are prominent among Karabulak collection of silk goods. The burial ceremony with face veils and eye-flaps is interesting. Its wide spread is proved by excavations at Munchaktepa burial ground (fig.1), where similar elements of burial ceremony being very important for study of religious concept of people in the Ferghana valley were disclosed. As we mentioned above the adults were buried in cane coffins, and children in woven baskets. They both were placed in special underground vaults. The grave goods were placed both inside and outside of coffin. It was included clothes made of wool, silk, cotton fabric, footwear made of leather and such instruments as knives, wooden boot-trees, musical instruments, arms (poniards, bows, arrows), different adornments and household goods (earthen and wooden ware). Fruit stones (peach, nut, cherry, almond) and bones of animals, birds were also found inside some pottery. Occasionally, special instruments of labour reflecting a profession of the dead were placed inside cane coffins. According to found materials

a coffin of "musician", "shoemaker", "weaver" and "hunter" was identified. As grave goods the musical instruments (kushnay and surnay), boot-tree, knives, bows, arrows, spindle whorl and also silk cloth were put in these coffins. According to specialists' point of view basically silk of local production was used for Munchaktepa necropolis. This silk is medium class and weaved of unevenly spun threads. Polychrome silk of summit type ornamented with vegetation patterns was used as embroidery. In one case the Chinese damask silk with geometrical ornamentation was used in design of plated collar. Munchaktepa collection is included several intact shirt, woman's robe and children's clothes. Remains of two and more dresses worn on one another were found in cane coffins E-4 (Д-4), E-5 (Д-5), E-7 (Д-7) and E-10 (Д-10). In general, underground vaults of Munchaktepa are important treasury to study burial ceremony of not only in the Ferghana valley, but also entire Central Asia. Some faces of buried people in Karabulak and Munchaktepa were coated with quadrangular veils made of thin silk of high quality. Custom using face veil and eye-fades is one of rituals in burial practice known in some sites in the Ferghana Valley (burial grounds of Karabulak, Borkorbaz) and Xinjiang (burial grounds of Kara Khodja, Astana, Yar-Khoto). Summarizing face veils from Xinjiang sinologist E.I. Lubo-Lesnichenko rightly considered them to be Central Asian by origin. However, in Xinjiang (Astana burial ground) and Southern Ferghana (Karabulak burial ground) face veils opposing to Munchaktepa were disclosed together with eye-flaps. In Karabulak small "pillows" made of silk were placed instead of eye-flaps. In burial grounds of Astana and Karabulak face veils are peculiar: their middle part was made of polychrome silk and fringes were weaved of simple monochrome cloth. And in some face veils from Xinjiang there were smooth silk-lined. Chronological comparing ceremony using face veils and eye-fades with other sites it was revealed that initially this rite was originated in Karabulak and then in Munchaktepa and sites of Xinjiang. It is assumed that face veils and eye-fades had two functions: ritual and social. As for ritual it was aimed to close eyes and face as if "blind" the dead for them not to find way back to the world. According to ethnographers' data many peoples still preserve rite to close face and eyes of the dead with fabric. This ritual is deeply rooted in history. The social function reflected position of the dead in society. In this case face veils and eye-fades were functionally identical to burial mask made of precious metals. Generally, silk cloth was highly valued in the Ferghana valley. On this point it is needed to mention Russian traveler Filipp Nazarov's memoirs. He visited Kokand khanate in early XIX century and writing about Margilan he quoted one legend: "A building as an open temple is towering in the middle of the town, inside which there is a red silk banner. People of Margilan regard it as the sacred and have a legend that it was belonged to Iskander" (Nazarov. F., 1968, p. 48).

Thus, contemporary centres of silk production in the Ferghana valley (Andijan, Namangan and Margilan) (fig.1) appeared not on an empty place. Disclosed big collections of silk cloth in Munchaktepa burial ground indicate that Ferghana population basing on local silk and using Chinese technology produced their own silk cloth deep rooted in history. So as the Ferghana valley is the closest area to the motherland of silk – China, then, obviously, tradition of silk weaving appeared in the valley much earlier than in other areas. Silk was spread all over Central Asia through Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan) since the mid-II millennium BCE. As a result silk was imported for Central Asian markets as an article of trade. According to the written sources the markets were full of Chinese goods in late II century BCE (Lubo-Lesnichenko E.I., 1995, p. 54). However, technology of silk production in China was kept in secret for a long time without spread. Taking into account this fact it is possible to assume that ***silk production in the Ferghana Valley was developed under direct influence of the great neighbour – China at the begging of Common Era. Consequently, the Ferghana Valley along with Sogd, probably, even earlier – already in III-IV centuries became the centre of silk weaving.*** Silk weaving was formed on the base of ancient traditions and experience of many generations of local weavers. All given above is evidence of existence of weaving of high quality in ancient Ferghana valley.

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