

Week 4: The Xiongnu

9/26 The Xiongnu Art and Culture

Xiongnu and Xiongnu Art

- Sima Qian (145-86 BC) and historiography:
 - Li Ling fought Shanyu: lost but fought bravely. Xiongnu surrounded Li Ling, Li Ling surrendered (Sima Qian record)
 - More of a historical source, start to have possibility for cross source corroboration
 - Military record: much more detailed
 - Li Ling had fewer than 5000, but faced tens of thousands enemy troops. They killed more than the number of troops in their army, enemy had no time to rescue dying, thus leaders (Shanyu) summoned Wise Kings of Right and Left and surrounded Li Ling's troops and anyone that could draw a bow → defeated
 - Anyone that could draw a bow = everyone. Although population is smaller, average nomadic resident is very able
 - His record is valuable because he's personally involved in this, what he writes down is very detailed and fairly accurate
- Zhang Qian (164-114):
 - Important because he's associated with the creation of the trans-eurasian network of exchange (Silk Road)
 - Attempted to establish diplomacy with Xiongnu, gets thrown in jail
 - First time we see continent tightly integrated
 - Brought back information about the West to China
 - Da-qin: Place often identified as Roman Empire
 - The incentive/mechanism through which the broader connection was discovered, all of these processes played out in the context of the conflict between the nomads and the sedentary state
- Wang Zhaojun (52-15 BC):
 - Ranked among the ladies in the emperor's harem
 - Started to feel estranged because Emperor was not interested
 - Story:
 - Shanyu dispatched envoys to participate in Han court's celebration, Emperor Yuan arranged for performers, musicians, ordered everyone in his harem to come out in fine makeup
 - During celebration Yuan asks what would make Chanyu happy: envoy lamented women are ugly, Emperor asks to present one woman to the Chanyu, Zhaojun volunteers
 - She moved to Xiongnu, Chanyu super happy. Zhaojun resented that Yuan failed to show favor, but she wasn't happy. Yearned for her homeland

- Had a son, Shiwei, succeeded the throne when Chanyu died. Marries his mother?????
- Zhaojun asks son, would you like to be Han or barbarian (would you like to follow Han tradition or barbarian), Shiwei says barbarian, Zhaojun swallows poison and kills herself
- Don't know how accurate this story it is
- Important because shows dynamic of gender between nomadic and sedentary
- Cross cultural marriage is quite common
- Cultural differences caused conflict
- Story reflects changing attitude towards women: what's the proper way for a woman to behave?
- Xiongnu Archaeology:
 - Graves found in Mongolian Steppe during Xiongnu period
 - Goods made in Han dynasty irreproducible in Xiongnu: found Han bronze mirrors in graves

9/24 The Xiongnu Empire

First nomadic empire (governmentally wise)

- Mostly north of yellow river, some south and taklamakan region desert area
- Great wall of china
 - Began by Ming dynasty in 14th century
 - Start construction because of Xiongnu vs sedentary peoples

Rise of xiongnu

- Warring states period (476 - 221 BCE)
 - Skirmishes with the northern states
- Qin Dynasty (221 - 207 BCE)
 - 215 BCE Meng Tian expelled Xiongnu beyond the Ordos region
 - Xiongnu unification was a reaction to Qing and Han Dynasty unification in the south
 - Terra cotta soldiers shows state that's obsessed with military power
 - Recently discovered gold camel
 - Full size statues really rare unless buddhism

Height of the Xiongnu Power

- Xiongu empire
 - Unification and bureaucratization under Motun (209-174 BCE)
 - Siege at Baideng (200 BCE)
 - Wars with Han during emperor Wudi (156-87 BCE)
 - Fought each other to standstill
- Han dynasty (202 BCE to 220 CE)

Fall of Xiongnu

- Wars
 - War of 5 Chanyu (60 BCE) > division between northern and southern Xiongnu
 - Hahanye chanyu (? - 31 BCE) submission of the southern Xiongnu
 - Dou Xian (?-92) defeat of the northern Xiongnu
 - Han went pretty deep into Xiongnu heartland (where king was)
- When han fell, Xiongu fell

Sima Qian (145 - 86 BC)

- Scholar, scribe, record keeper, "shi" (translates to historian)
- Working on calendar of the state
- Compiled everything
 - Devoted whole chapter to history of Xiongnu
- Personally played a role in the relationship between Xiongnu and Han

Reading

Sima Qian, Chapter on Xiongnu from *Records of the Grand Historian*, translated by Burton Watson, (Columbia University Press, 1961), 155–193.

1. **The Rise of the Hsiung-nu Empire and Political Unification:** The Hsiung-nu's emergence as a powerful nomadic empire marked a significant shift in the dynamics between China and its northern neighbors. Before the Han Dynasty, Chinese states could effectively manage and defeat nomadic incursions. However, during the Han period, the Hsiung-nu consolidated power under leaders like Modun, establishing a unified state that posed a formidable military threat to China. For example, Modun's legendary rise to power involved ruthless actions, such as training his soldiers to absolute loyalty by having them execute his orders without question, culminating in his father's assassination and his own ascension as ch'an-yü (supreme leader).
2. **Formation of a Bipolar World Order and Han Foreign Policy:** The unification of the Hsiung-nu created a bipolar power structure in East Asia, with China and the Hsiung-nu as two dominant forces. This led to the development of the Han dynasty's "ho-ch'in" or appeasement policy, where China paid tribute to the Hsiung-nu in the form of silk, bullion, and grains to maintain peace. This policy was a marked departure from previous aggressive stances, reflecting China's strategic shift to a defensive and diplomatic approach when confronted with the organized nomadic power.
3. **Economic and Social Factors in Nomadic State Formation:** The document examines how economic pressures and social crises contributed to the formation of nomadic states like the Hsiung-nu. For instance, environmental challenges, such as harsh winters or droughts, could devastate nomadic herds, pushing tribes toward militarization and unification under a charismatic leader who could offer protection and stability. This militarization often led to the establishment of hierarchical and centralized political structures that replaced traditional, more egalitarian tribal systems.
4. **Ethnic Origins and Identity of the Hsiung-nu:** The question of the Hsiung-nu's ethnic and linguistic origins has been a subject of long-standing debate among scholars. The Hsiung-nu were often seen as ancestors of later nomadic groups like the Turks,

Mongols, and even the Huns who invaded Europe. Linguistic theories have connected them to Turkic, Mongolic, and even Iranian-speaking groups, but no consensus exists. This ambiguity is reflected in the narrative around the Hsiung-nu, where they are portrayed as a diverse and mixed confederation rather than a homogenous ethnic group. This complexity adds to the broader understanding of how diverse groups could unify under a strong leader, creating powerful, multi-ethnic empires.

5. **Military Strategies and State Formation:** The Hsiung-nu's rise involved not only military prowess but also sophisticated political organization. The document details how the Hsiung-nu state was structured with a well-defined hierarchy of leaders and military commanders, such as the Left and Right Wise Kings, Generals, and Household Administrators. These positions were hereditary, often tied to specific clans that held long-standing prestige. This structured military and political system allowed the Hsiung-nu to efficiently mobilize large-scale military forces, making them formidable adversaries to the Chinese. For example, Modun's establishment of a highly loyal personal guard—who were trained to kill without hesitation—demonstrates the militaristic and authoritarian nature of early nomadic state-building.
6. **Economic Interdependence Between Nomads and Sedentary Societies:** Another critical theme is the economic interdependence between nomadic and sedentary societies, particularly how the nomadic empires like the Hsiung-nu depended on agricultural products from Chinese states. However, this dependence did not always lead to straightforward trade relations; it often resulted in conflict, raids, and the establishment of tributary systems. The nomads' need for agricultural products such as grains led them to either raid Chinese territories or negotiate for tributes. The document discusses how this economic interdependence was not just one-sided; Chinese states also relied on the nomads for horses, animal products, and strategic alliances, creating a complex web of economic and political relationships.
7. **Crisis and Militarization as Catalysts for State Formation:** The document underscores how crises, such as environmental hardships or external threats, played a crucial role in nomadic state formation. During these times, the need for organized military responses led to the militarization of society and the emergence of strong, centralized leadership. For instance, when the Hsiung-nu were driven from their pasturelands by Chinese military campaigns, they responded by consolidating power under leaders like Modun, who used the crisis as a catalyst to unify the tribes and create a more robust political and military structure. This centralization was a departure from the typical decentralized, kin-based organization of nomadic societies and marked the transformation of the Hsiung-nu into a formidable state.
8. **Interaction of Nomadic and Sedentary Political Systems:** The document also explores how nomadic and sedentary states influenced each other politically and administratively. The Hsiung-nu adopted elements of governance from Chinese traditions while maintaining distinct nomadic elements. This blend resulted in unique political structures where traditional tribal leadership coexisted with more formalized state apparatuses. For example, the Hsiung-nu had a system of aristocratic families and military councils that paralleled some aspects of Chinese imperial governance but retained a distinctly nomadic character. This interaction highlights the adaptive nature of

nomadic empires, which borrowed and integrated various cultural and administrative practices from their more sedentary neighbors.

Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its Enemies* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 161–205.

Heroism and Tragedy:

- Story of Li Ling: The narrative of Li Ling, a general who showed great bravery in battle but was later disgraced when he surrendered to the Xiongnu. His family's downfall and his execution by the Han court highlight the tragic side of heroism and the harsh consequences of failure in loyalty.

Conflict and Diplomacy between Han China and Xiongnu:

- Story of Modu Chanyu: The rise of Modu Chanyu, the leader of the Xiongnu, who unified various tribes and posed a constant threat to Han China. His cunning strategies, such as executing those who didn't obey his whistling arrows during military drills, illustrate the ongoing conflict and strategic diplomacy between the Han and Xiongnu.

Cultural Clashes and Stereotypes:

- Interactions between Han Envoys and Xiongnu Leaders: The book describes various instances where the Han and Xiongnu clashed culturally, particularly through the exchanges between envoys. The Han viewed the Xiongnu as barbaric, while the Xiongnu criticized the Han's complex customs, highlighting the tension between differing societal values.

Revenge and Power Struggles:

- Story of Mo-tun's Rise to Power: Mo-tun's violent rise, including executing his own father and stepmother, reveals the ruthless nature of power struggles within the Xiongnu. This narrative exemplifies the theme of revenge and the extreme measures taken to secure power.

War Tactics and Military Strategy:

- Battle Tactics of the Han Generals: Stories like Wei Qing and Huo Qubing's campaigns against the Xiongnu demonstrate the military strategies employed by the Han to subdue their enemies, including surprise attacks and large-scale ambushes.

Loyalty and Betrayal:

- The Betrayal of Chao Xin: A former Han general who defected to the Xiongnu and advised them on counter-strategies against Han invasions. His actions are a poignant example of loyalty turned betrayal and the consequences of divided allegiances.

Susan Whitfield, “A Pair of Steppe Earrings,” in *Silk, Slaves, and Stupas: Material Culture of the Silk Road*, 9–33.

The document explores the cultural, political, and artistic exchanges between the Xiongnu and Chinese empires through the lens of material culture, specifically focusing on a pair of gold and jade earrings discovered in a second-century BC burial. The earrings reflect the complex interactions along the Silk Road, showcasing influences from both nomadic steppe societies and settled Chinese cultures.

1. Cultural and Artistic Exchange:
 - The earrings, made of gold and jade with intricate designs, symbolize the rich artistic and cultural dialogues between the Xiongnu and Chinese. They reflect shared aesthetics and the blending of steppe and settled artistic techniques.
2. Diplomacy, Trade, and Conflict:
 - The Xiongnu and Chinese had a multifaceted relationship characterized not only by conflict but also by diplomacy, trade, and intermarriages. The exchange of objects like the earrings highlights these complex interactions beyond warfare.
3. Material Culture as a Reflection of Power and Identity:
 - The presence of luxury items, such as the earrings and other grave goods, underscores the role of material culture in expressing elite status, power, and cultural identity within the steppe and Chinese societies.
4. The Role of Women in Steppe Societies:
 - The richly adorned female tomb where the earrings were found suggests a significant role for women in steppe societies, challenging traditional narratives that often emphasize male warriors.
5. Nomadic and Settled Societies' Interactions:
 - The earrings' design and craftsmanship reveal the fluid boundaries between the nomadic Xiongnu and the settled Chinese, with each society influencing the other in terms of trade, technology, and artistic expression.

Examples:

- The Xigoupan Tombs: The earrings were part of a larger burial complex in the Ordos region, which included a wealth of other artifacts such as gold ornaments, bronze weapons, and animal remains, reflecting the social complexity and wealth of the individuals buried there.
- Jade and Dragons: The jade components of the earrings feature dragon motifs, which are prevalent in both Xiongnu and Chinese art, illustrating the shared cultural symbols and artistic influences between these neighboring societies.



PLATE 1A. (top) A pair of steppe earrings (chapter 1).
Ordos Museum, China.

PLATE 1B. (bottom) A Hellenistic glass bowl (chapter 2).
National Museum of China, Beijing.

Week 3: The Scythians

9/19 Looking for the Scythians

Perspectives

- Etic: refers to objective or outsider accounts
- Emic: refers to subjective or insider accounts

Greek sources

- Herodotus: 'None who attacks them can escape, and none can catch them if they desire not to be found'
- Hippocrates: called them impotent from riding horses
- Vase made with person wearing scythian clothing carved in
- Maps indicate that scythians were more western nomads

Iranian sources

- Relief of Scythians wearing pointed caps and tribute frieze in the Persepolis
 - Pointed caps and tribute frieze were how they're recognized from etic perspective
- Behistun inscription:
 - Darius the King said that Scythians wear pointy hats
 - Same as greek sources (more legit historical evidence)
 - "Scythians who are beyond Sangiana"
 - Same as greek sources that say they are more western nomads

Chinese sources

- Hanshu: tribes split up and moved to other locations to form more states
- Statue discovered in western china with pointy hat

Scythian Art

- Textual sources are important but aren't the full picture and is biased
- Archaeologist dig up structures
 - Places of worship, golden combs, sculptures, weapons
- Kurgans (big burial sites)
 - In a circle underground
 - Buried people with lots of items and horses
 - Golden items like combs, belts, and clothes (status symbols)
 - Shows that these are leaders of states
 - Frozen tombs at Pazyryk
 - Around Altai Mountains
 - Burial chambers with wooden tomb and embalmed bodies
 - Area was cold, so lots of things frozen
 - Items made of wood and leather preserved
 - Complete chariots, horse headdresses, fancily sculpted clothing
 - HUGE felt carpets depicted horse riding
- Animal style art
 - **Most common theme in art:** horse riding and predator pounces on prey

- Examples: Fish sculpture, relief of person being bitten by fish, person on horse, people skinning sheep, people horse training
- Human body depicted in a very Greek style
 - Suggests there are trading with sedentary people, but also nomadic people are good at metallurgy so highly possible to create themselves
- These emic sources tell us how they saw themselves

9/17 From the Indo-Europeans to the Scythians

Animals

- Herded many animals: camels, cattle sheep, goats, horses
- Humans and pigs eat everything (so few pigs)
 - Pigs compete with humans for food
 - Does this have something to do with how certain religions don't eat pork?
- Cows
 - :(
 - need abundant water sources
 - Less mobile, slower and less adapted to difficult terrains
 - Cannot find own food in snow > have to be tended
 - :)
 - Self defense
 - Superb source for meat and milk
- Sheep
 - :(
 - More meek
 - Frolicking instinct
 - :)
 - Considered better quality meat
 - Graze at the bottom of plants (diff from goat)
- Goat
 - :(
 - Less good meat
 - :)
 - More agile
 - Stand on hind legs, eat top of plants
 - More independent
 - More productive, more adaptable to different types of plants as food
- Camels
 - Two types: Arabian camel, Bactrian camel
 - :(
 - Meat not considered good quality
 - Irritable, smelly, difficult to train
 - Matures late (5 years), longer reproductive cycles
 -
 - :)

- Drink water once every 4 days in summer and once a month in winter
- Load carry capacity
- Adaptable to different types of terrain
- Self defense
- Horses
 - :(
 - Meat not good quality
 - Not ruminant (single-chambered stomach)
 - Reproduction is slower
 - :)
 - Loyal, easy to organize (follows the head male)
 - Load carrying capacity
 - Adaptable to different types of terrain, very fast > useful for hunting
 - Milk
 - Self-defense
 - Symbolic value
- Dogs
 - :)
 - Omnivore (left over from human food so no compete)
 - Earliest domestication
 - Companionship to humans
 - Protection and organization of herds
 - Hunting
 - Symbolic value

Proto-indo europeans: first nomads?

- Language families
 - Languages used in different parts of eurasia is a part of the proto-indo-european language family
 - No written record
 - Very strong theory (no hard evidence)
- 2 main theories on origin
 1. Anatolian
 - a. 8000-9500 years ago
 - b. Farmers migrated out of the middle east, replacing or interbreeding with the resident hunter-gatherers
 2. Steppe
 - a. 5000-6000 years ago
 - b. Herders on the eurasian steppe expanded their range, propelled by the domestication of horses and invention of wheeled transport

Reading

Herodotus, Selections on the Scythians from Robert Strassler ed., *The Landmark Herodotus*, (Pantheon Books, 2007) 281-339 [4.1 to 4.144].

The text *Herodotus on the Scythians* provides a rich and detailed account of the Scythians, exploring their culture, customs, origins, and interactions with other nations. Herodotus paints a picture of the Scythians as a nomadic and warlike people, notable for their unique social practices, myths, and military strategies.

Main Themes:

1. Scythian Military Conflicts and Geography:

- Herodotus describes the Scythians' conflicts with other nations, including their clashes with the Medes and the Persians, especially focusing on King Darius's campaign against them. The Scythians employed guerrilla tactics, retreating into their vast, difficult-to-navigate homeland, making it hard for enemies to defeat them.
- Scythia's geography is portrayed as vast and inhospitable, with harsh winters and largely flat lands, which plays a role in both their military tactics and lifestyle.

2. Cultural and Social Practices:

- Herodotus highlights some of the more peculiar customs of the Scythians, including their treatment of slaves, such as blinding them for agricultural purposes like milking. Their nomadic lifestyle is closely linked to the use of horses, and they have distinct rituals, such as the use of horsewhips in place of weapons to assert dominance over their former slaves.

3. Scythian Origins and Mythology:

- The text delves into Scythian mythology, including the origin story of their race, which involves divine ancestry from Zeus and a river deity. It also discusses the myth of golden objects falling from the sky, which played a crucial role in determining the Scythians' royal lineage.
- Herodotus also recounts various Greek myths connected to the Scythians, such as Herakles's encounter with a serpent-woman in Scythia, blending Greek mythology with Scythian traditions.

4. Relations with Neighboring Peoples:

- Herodotus frequently contrasts the Scythians with other peoples, like the Cimmerians and the Persians, and describes how their interactions shaped the region. He describes Scythian dominance and the eventual conflicts that arise from their territorial expansions and migrations.

Key Quotes:

1. On the harshness of Scythian geography:

- “*The entire land I am describing experiences such harsh winters that for eight months the frost is intolerable, and you could not create mud by pouring water on*

the ground unless you light a fire.”

This quote emphasizes the extreme climate of Scythia, which plays a significant role in the Scythians' military strategies and their way of life.

2. On the Scythian use of horsewhips:

- “*Let us stop using spears and arrows and take up instead our horsewhips... when they see us wielding whips instead of weapons, they will realize that they are our slaves.*”

This reflects the Scythians' approach to subduing their own rebellious slaves, relying on psychological domination rather than pure military force.

3. On the mythological origins of the Scythians:

- “*According to the Scythians, theirs is the youngest of all nations, and it came into existence in the following way. The first man born in this land... was named Targitaos, and to him were born three sons: Lipoxais, Arpoxais, and the youngest of them, Colaxais.*”

This passage outlines the mythical origins of the Scythians, connecting them to divine figures and setting up the royal lineage.

4. On the Scythian mode of ruling:

- “*The kings guard the sacred gold objects with great care... according to the Scythians, if the person tending the sacred gold at this festival should fall asleep at this time in the open air, he will not live out the year.*”

This highlights the reverence Scythians had for their sacred treasures and the belief in divine retribution for failing to properly safeguard them.

In summary, Herodotus presents the Scythians as a powerful and resilient people with unique customs, a deep connection to their land, and a rich mythological heritage that intertwined with both Greek and local traditions. Their military strategies, nomadic lifestyle, and spiritual beliefs played a crucial role in their ability to maintain dominance in their region for centuries.

Brent Shaw, “Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk: The Ancient Mediterranean Ideology of the Pastoral Nomad,” *Ancient Society*, 1982/83: 5–31.

The article "Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk: The Ancient Mediterranean Ideology of the Pastoral Nomad" by Brent D. Shaw examines how ancient Mediterranean societies, particularly Greek and Roman cultures, viewed and characterized nomadic peoples. The title reflects two key traits attributed to nomadic peoples: their consumption of meat and milk, in contrast to the agrarian societies' focus on farming and grain consumption.

Main Themes:

1. Polarization of Nomadic and Sedentary Societies:

- The article highlights how the ancient Greeks and Romans depicted nomadic societies as polar opposites of their own agricultural, sedentary civilizations. Nomads were viewed as uncivilized, barbaric, and fundamentally different from settled people who worked the land. This distinction reflected a broader

ideological framework, where pastoralists were seen as closer to nature and savagery, while agriculturalists were associated with culture and civilization.

2. The Ideology of Pastoral Nomadism:

- Shaw discusses the ideological underpinnings that shaped ancient perceptions of nomadic societies. Pastoral nomads were often described as violent, uncultured, and lazy because they did not engage in farming. These views persisted across ancient ethnographic, geographic, and historiographic accounts. The ideological structure reinforced the notion that nomads were an inherent threat to civilized society.

3. Herodotus and the Scythians:

- Herodotus is a central figure in the article, as Shaw examines his portrayal of nomadic Scythians. Herodotus emphasizes their pastoralist lifestyle, particularly their consumption of milk and meat. He separates nomads from agriculturalists, framing the nomadic Scythians as barbaric, violent, and distinct from the more "civilized" peoples of Greece and Persia. This binary framework influenced many subsequent depictions of nomadic peoples.

4. Moral and Economic Judgments:

- Aristotle's views on pastoralism are also discussed, as he placed nomadic lifestyles at the lower end of human economic development. For Aristotle, the lack of labor and agricultural engagement was a sign of moral and economic inferiority. He framed pastoralists as "lazy" and overly reliant on nature rather than exerting control over it, as farmers did.

Key Quotes:

1. Hostility Towards Nomads:

- *"The ideology of the pastoral nomad found in Greek and Roman ethnographers, geographers, and historians is so consistently hostile."*

This quote captures the widespread negative views held by settled societies towards nomads, reflecting a deep-seated cultural bias.

2. Separation Between Nomads and Farmers:

- *"The most inactive type is that engaged in by pastoral nomads since their means of subsistence is derived from domesticated animals and is gained without any labor and at their leisure."*

Aristotle's critique of nomadic lifestyles underscores the ancient Greek perspective that farming was morally superior to pastoralism, as it involved hard work and cultivation of the land.

3. The Nomad as a Barbarian:

- *"Since all Scythians were barbarians in Greek eyes, and since pastoralists were the quintessential 'barbarian type,' all Scythians came to share the stigma of barbarism associated with pastoralists."*

This quote explains how nomads like the Scythians were universally seen as barbaric by settled civilizations, reinforcing the stereotype that nomadism equated with savagery.

4. The Consumption of Flesh and Milk:

- “*The Scythian nomad is characterized by Herodotus as an ‘eater of meat’ and a ‘drinker of milk’.*”

This encapsulates the dietary habits of nomadic peoples as a distinguishing feature, used by settled agriculturalists to mark them as culturally distinct and inferior.

In summary, Shaw's article explores how the ancient Mediterranean ideology categorized and vilified pastoral nomads. By focusing on nomads' diet, lifestyle, and supposed moral failings, this ideology justified a cultural and moral superiority of agricultural societies over nomadic ones.

Margarita Gleba, “You Are What You Wear: Scythian Costume as Identity,” in Margarita Gleba, Cherine Munkholt, and Marie-Louise Nosch eds., *Dressing the Past*, Oxbow Books, 2008, 13-28.

The text "You Are What You Wear: Scythian Costume as Identity" by Margarita Gleba discusses how the clothing of the Scythians, a group of nomadic peoples from the Eurasian steppes, played a significant role in expressing their identity. The chapter examines various sources, including literary accounts, iconographic material, and archaeological findings, to reconstruct Scythian dress and understand its cultural significance.

Main Themes:

1. **Costume as Cultural Identity:** Gleba argues that Scythian clothing was more than functional; it was a marker of identity, distinguishing them from other groups such as Greeks and Persians. The materials, styles, and decorations used in Scythian dress were indicative of their nomadic lifestyle and cultural values.
2. **Sources of Knowledge on Scythian Dress:** The chapter discusses the challenges in reconstructing ancient dress due to limited surviving evidence. Written descriptions from Greek and Persian sources, like Herodotus, often describe Scythian clothing, but these are sometimes vague or biased. Archaeological finds, particularly from Scythian burial mounds, provide more tangible evidence, including actual clothing fragments and depictions on artifacts.
3. **The Role of Iconography:** Greek vase-painting and Persian bas-reliefs offer visual representations of Scythians, often portraying them with specific ethnic markers like the pointed hat. However, these depictions can blur the line between reality and artistic convention, making it difficult to distinguish fact from symbolic representation.
4. **Gender Differences in Costume:** While much of the discussion focuses on male Scythian attire, there is some evidence of female dress, particularly in burial artifacts. Women's clothing was similarly elaborate, involving long dresses, headdresses, and decorative elements that reflected social status.

Key Quotes:

1. **Clothing as Language:**

- "Dress reflects the identity of an individual or a group of peoples more than most other aspects of material culture since it combines both technological achievements and aesthetic values of society."
- This highlights the idea that clothing is a form of non-verbal communication, conveying social, ethnic, and cultural identity.

2. Greek Descriptions of Scythian Costume:

- "The Sacae, who are Scythians, had on their tall caps, erect and stiff and tapering to a point; they wore breeches, and carried their native bows, and daggers, and axes withal, which they call 'sagaris'."
- Herodotus' description provides one of the earliest literary accounts of Scythian attire, emphasizing specific garments like the pointed hat, which became a key symbol of their identity.

3. Challenges of Archaeological Reconstruction:

- "Textiles and other materials from which garments were made are seldom preserved. Even when they survive, the corpus of finds is in itself biased since the vast majority of ancient clothing is found in burials, usually wealthy burials."
- This points to the limitations in reconstructing ancient dress, as the surviving evidence often comes from elite burials, potentially skewing our understanding of everyday attire.

4. Scythian Female Costume:

- "The women of the upper social levels probably wore long dresses, and over these long richly ornamented coats. On their heads they wore magnificent headdresses of various forms frequently covered with veils."
- This description of women's clothing, though based on limited evidence, suggests that female attire was as important as male costume in conveying status and identity.

In summary, Scythian costume served as a key marker of identity, and though reconstructing their clothing is challenging due to fragmentary evidence, combining literary, iconographic, and archaeological sources helps piece together a more comprehensive picture of their cultural significance.

Week 2: The Rise of Nomadism in Eurasia

9/12 Heartland of Eurasia

Modern nomads

- Trucks (but would've been on camel if not)
- Tents scaffolding
 - Traded for wood
- Cameras and current tech
 - Nomads can't out maneuver their enemies because drones can just follow
 - Their speed isn't as fast now
- Spring location is in a national park

Factors affecting migration patterns

- Weather patterns
- Epidemic among animals
 - Protect animals against human/natural predators
 - Diversity in animals: dogs, camels, eagles, cows...
- Availability of water and plants
 - “Chasing water and grass” - Sima Qian on the Xiongnu
- Geographical terrain (rivers, plateaus, mountains...)

Livelihood among nomads

- Pastoralism
- Food production: milking, cheese making, meat preservation, cooking
- Hunting
 - Eagles hunt small animals like rabbits and foxes
- Tending to animals
 - Herding animals to get them food, taking care of them when they're sick
 - Fall: animals are fat, healthy and strong → nomadic attack sedentary people
 - Productions: skin, hair, carpet, metal tools
- Building
- No pure nomads
 - Had connections to agricultural people for trade
 - Or sometimes they just raided them
 - Military actions
- Dispersed labor distribution
 - Many jobs to maintain housing, animals, hunting...
 - Sparse distribution of people for all this work
 - Family important as not many people travel together
 - Travel long distances to ask for help
- Tent: a basic social unit > camp, lineage, tribe, and state
 - Nuclear family
 - Adult children > new tents
 - Easily divisible property > female property ownership
 - Men out hunting/gathering, women in charge of the tent
 - Female leaders just as important as male counterparts
 - Primogeniture vs ultimogeniture
 - Firstborn vs last born receives inheritance
 - Nomadic society do ultimogeniture, since last children stay in tent to take care of parents last
 - Group of huns that succeeded after Chinggis Khan was the family of the youngest son

9/10 What is Pastoral Nomadism?

Lived a nomadic style of life by herding animals

- For areas too cold, too dry, too elevated, or too steep
- Specialized offshoot of agriculture that developed along the dry margins of rainfall cultivation
- Domesticated animals is necessity for pastoral nomadism, needed agriculture to domestic animals for pastoral nomadism to happen

Population

- Places around mongolia (siberia, central asia, caucasus, west of Urals) have exponentially grown in population, Mongolia hasn't

How and why do nomads move?

- Valleys are warmer, lush vegetation (spend winter here)
- Mountains/highlands are cooler, less vegetation (spend summer here)
- Plan ahead
 - Weather changes
 - Need large lands since grass is easily consumable
 - Gotta pre-move and plan ahead for livestock
- Idealized pattern (diff by group and year by year)
 - Winter and summer camps (4 months each), migration period (2 months)
 - Late march leave winter camp > migration to summer camp
 - Poor resources
 - spring snow threat
 - starved animals and birth of new animals
 - animals can't eat through snow
 - May to September > summer camp
 - Most leisurely time, plenty of resources, growth of herd
 - September to November > migration to winter camp
 - Accumulation of fat and protein in animals
 - accumulations of other resources like hay
 - Winter months > limited pastoralism

Reading

Rudi Lindner, "What was a Nomadic Tribe?" Comparative Studies in Society and History 24.4 (1982), 689-711.

1. Historians and sedentary societies have historically disfavored nomads, often describing them in pejorative terms.
 - a. Emphasized raiding practices and painted as negative. This bias stems from the lack of direct documentation from the nomads themselves, as their mobile lifestyles left no archives.
 - b. Physical mobility on horses and light travel restricted their ability to maintain written records, contributing to the scarcity of their historical narrative.
 - i. mounted nomadic warriors, such as the Huns, didn't preserve documents because carrying paper would have limited their military efficiency
2. Challenges in lacking direct archaeological and written evidence

- a. highlight the destructive raids of nomads on sedentary settlements, reinforcing their portrayal as plunderers.
 - i. ashes found in settled areas demonstrate the nomadic raids
 - b. The archaeological record does reveal little and elite aspects of nomadic life, like the graves of wealthy horsemen in Central and Eastern Europe
3. Anthropological Models have a limited understanding of historical nomadic tribes
- a. Modern fieldwork fail to account for the significant political and military strength of historical nomads
 - b. Studies are affected by modern conditions. For example, nomads today live under state control, which minimizes their historical reliance on mobility and political autonomy. In contrast, medieval nomadic tribes like the Mongols or the Huns maintained their independence for centuries, often through military means.
4. Kinship structures (conical clan or segmentary lineage models) diff for nomads
- a. Power in tribe based more on political and military success than kinship
 - b. Huns were meritocracy, not primogeniture (the eldest son's automatic inheritance)
5. cohesion of nomadic tribes created by military threats and environmental conditions
- o External military threat, like the Han Dynasty's growing power in China, led to the rise of nomadic groups like the Hsiung-nu (precursors to the Huns).
 - o Rise of Huns partially driven by pressure from the Roman Empire
 - The Huns took advantage of Rome's wealth with raids and extortion. For example, the Roman Empire paid tribute to Attila and his tribe, which facilitated their survival and expansion.
 - o Ottomans felt pressure from Mongols in the east and the weakened Byzantine Empire in the west. These pressures forced frontier populations to coalesce into tribal structures, with leaders like Osman uniting nomads and settled populations under a single political and military leadership.
6. Success of tribes determined by strong leader
- a. Attila the Hun secured large amounts of tribute from Rome—through negotiation and threats—expanded the Hunnic tribe significantly. But his death and succession disputes led to the tribe's rapid dissolution.
 - b. The Ottomans under Osman protected both nomads and sedentary populations from external threats, while offering economic and political stability.. Osman's leadership was key to the early Ottoman successes against both Byzantium and rival Turkish emirates.
7. Nomadic tribes were opportunistic rather than being static kinship-based societies
- a. Tribes were people who shared political and economical interests (not blood)
 - i. Mongols conscripted entire conquered populations into their tribe, while the Huns accepted members from various ethnic backgrounds
 - ii. The Ottomans similarly grew by incorporating Greeks, Christians, Muslims, and Turks into their tribe. Osman provided leadership and security to this diverse group of nomads and settled populations.
8. Hun lifestyle
- a. transitioned from pastoralism to predation as they moved into Europe

- b. Start with herding, ended up raiding Roman Empire with Attila
 - c. Military weakened as they included more sedentary people
 - d. Hunnic dissolved after Attila's death due to internal strife
9. Ottoman lifestyle
- a. Small tribe on the Byzantine frontier, benefiting from the weaknesses of both the Mongols and the Byzantines
 - b. Under Osman, the Ottomans went from nomadic pastoralism to a more settled existence, with both military and government

Nicola Di Cosmo, "State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History," *Journal of World History* 10:1 (Spring 1999): 1-40.

1. Nomads have traditionally been **portrayed as barbaric invaders** who disrupt the development of sedentary civilizations like China, India, and Europe.
 - a. Di Cosmo criticizes historians like Fernand Braudel, who depicted nomads as a recurring "natural catastrophe," likening nomadic invasions to biblical plagues that caused devastation but did not contribute to historical progress.
 - b. Nomads such as the Huns and Mongols were often portrayed as apocalyptic forces, with figures like Attila the Hun described as the "Scourge of God." These representations reduce nomadic societies to violent, unchanging entities, ignoring their complex internal political and social structures.
2. The relationship between nomadic and sedentary states was critical in shaping the political development of nomadic empires. **Nomads were not isolated**; they engaged in complex trade, warfare, and diplomacy with sedentary states.
 - a. Steppe empires, such as the Xiongnu and later the Mongols, arose partly in response to the pressures and opportunities presented by their sedentary neighbors.
 - i. The Xiongnu, for instance, engaged in regular diplomatic and military interactions with the Han Dynasty of China, leading to the development of more centralized and cohesive political structures to manage these interactions.
 - ii. Trade was a critical aspect of this relationship. Nomads often depended on agricultural products from sedentary civilizations, which could lead to peaceful trade or conflict. The Mongol Empire, for example, promoted extensive trade routes linking Europe and China during its height in the 13th century.
3. Nomadic state **formation often occurred during times of crisis**, which led to the militarization and centralization of power under charismatic leaders.
 - a. The Xiongnu Empire formed after the Qin Dynasty invaded the nomadic homeland, and their leader, Maodun, unified various tribes by capitalizing on this external threat. Maodun's success was based on his ability to militarize the society and create a cohesive political entity.
 - b. The Mongol Empire is another example. Genghis Khan rose to power during a time of internal tribal conflict, and he unified the Mongol tribes by establishing a

highly centralized military structure. Every adult male was drafted into the army, creating a disciplined society capable of large-scale conquests.

- i. The Secret History of the Mongols describes how Genghis Khan's family was abandoned by their tribe, plunging them into poverty. This crisis gave rise to new forms of leadership, as Genghis Khan proved himself through military and strategic prowess, eventually uniting the Mongol tribes under his rule.
 - c. Similar patterns are seen in other nomadic empires. The rebellion of the Jurchen against the Khitan and the rise of the Turks against their Rouran overlords are examples of how ethnic and social tensions could lead to crises that ultimately resulted in the formation of new political entities.
4. **Charismatic leaders** with military and strategic skill legitimize their rule
- a. Genghis Khan, who demonstrated extraordinary military abilities and personal charisma, attracting a loyal following. These leaders often rose from within the tribal aristocracy but gained authority through merit, rather than birth alone.
 - b. Sacral investiture played a role in legitimizing the authority of these leaders. For example, the Mongol khuriltai (a council of tribal leaders) would formally invest a new khan with divine charisma, linking the leader's authority to a higher, spiritual power. This sacral authority elevated the leader above the traditional tribal elite, enabling them to command loyalty from multiple tribes.
 - c. The Xiongnu leader Maodun, who killed his own father to seize power, exemplifies the disregard for traditional rules of succession in favor of merit and strategic ability. His rise to power was followed by the creation of a highly centralized political structure that allowed the Xiongnu to dominate other nomadic and sedentary groups.
5. Economic pressures, particularly the need for agricultural goods, forced nomadic societies to create larger political structures to compete with sedentary states.
- a. **Nomads often relied on trade with sedentary states for essential goods** such as grain. When this trade was disrupted, nomads had to turn to raiding or conquest, which required the development of larger, more organized political entities.
 - b. The "**trade or raid**" theory suggests that nomadic states formed in response to the need for resources. For example, the Mongols, who initially relied on herding, turned to conquest when peaceful trade with China and other neighbors became difficult. Their highly militarized society allowed them to control vast territories and trade networks.
 - c. The rise of nomadic empires is often linked to their ability to extract tribute from sedentary states. The Xiongnu, for example, established a **tributary system** with China, where the Han Dynasty paid them in silk, grain, and other goods in exchange for peace along the frontier.
6. Crises and economic pressures led to the **militarization of nomadic societies**, which in turn transformed their social and political structures.

- a. nomadic societies were always somewhat militarized, full-scale militarization often occurred during times of crisis. In these situations, every male capable of fighting was drafted into a centralized army.
 - o Genghis Khan's rise to power militarized Mongol society. By 1206, the Mongol army was estimated to have between 50,000 and 100,000 soldiers, representing nearly the entire adult male population.
 - o Military aristocracy emerged, with commanders and officers claiming privileges that separated them from the rest of society. This shift deepened social stratification and contributed to the consolidation of centralized political power.
7. Periodization and Nomadic Influence on World History
- a. Usually focus on nomadic empires being destructive instead of their lasting influence, like the Mongols facilitating long-distance trade, the spread of religions, and cultural exchanges across Eurasia.
 - b. Historians like Janet Abu-Lughod have recognized the importance of the Mongol Empire in creating a global trading network that linked Europe and China.

Lois Beck, *Nomad: A Year In the Life of a Qashqa'i Tribesman in Iran* (University of California Press, 1991), 1-73.

1. The Role of Leadership and Tribal Headmen
 - a. The central figure of the narrative is Borzu Qermezi, a headman of the Qashqa'i tribe in southwestern Iran. His leadership is shaped by his ability to mediate between his tribe and external authorities, including Qashqa'i khans and Iranian government officials. However, Borzu's authority is increasingly challenged by changing political and economic conditions in Iran during the 1970s, particularly the expansion of state control over tribal lands and migration routes.
 - b. Borzu's leadership is portrayed as being tied to the traditional practice of seasonal migration, and his influence diminishes as the economic viability of nomadic pastoralism is threatened by drought, government interference, and encroachment by non-tribal agriculturalists.
2. The Iranian government's involvement in tribal affairs significantly impacts the Qashqa'i tribe's way of life, autonomy, and economy.
 - a. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Iranian state implemented policies that eroded the autonomy of nomadic tribes like the Qashqa'i. These policies included nationalizing pastures, regulating migration schedules, and interfering with tribal leadership structures.
 - b. The land reforms initiated by the Shah led to the confiscation of tribal lands, forcing Qashqa'i nomads to compete with non-tribal livestock investors and agriculturalists for resources. The state's interference is also seen in the militarization of migration routes and the surveillance and intimidation by government agents, including the secret police (SAVAK).
3. Seasonal migration is central to the nomadic lifestyle, shaping social, economic, and cultural practices within the tribe.

- a. The Qashqa'i's yearly cycle of migration between summer and winter pastures defines much of their daily life and social organization. The narrative follows Borzu and his tribe through the autumn migration, where they travel over 400 kilometers, facing logistical challenges, scarcity of grazing land, and conflicts with agriculturalists over resources.
 - b. The autumn migration is marked by tensions with settled agricultural communities, as the nomads rely on harvested fields for their livestock to graze on stubble. This migration is not just a movement of people and animals, but also a test of leadership and strategy, as leaders like Borzu must make quick decisions about camp locations and water sources.
4. Social life among the Qashqa'i is structured around family units and extended kinship networks, with marriage and lineage playing key roles in community cohesion.
 - a. The Qashqa'i tribe is organized into subtribes and patrilineages, with family relationships forming the backbone of social interactions. Marriage within the tribe, especially between cousins, is common and helps reinforce social ties.
 - b. Borzu's family, including his wife Falak and their six children, is central to the narrative. The book highlights the dynamics within the family, the roles of women in domestic and pastoral tasks, and how the family unit is intertwined with broader tribal responsibilities, such as hospitality and alliances through marriage.
5. **Despite external pressures, the Qashqa'i tribe maintains a strong sense of cultural identity and solidarity, rooted in their nomadic lifestyle, language, and traditions.**
 - a. The Qashqa'i people take pride in their Turkish identity and language, which distinguish them from other ethnic groups in the region, such as Persians and Lurs. This identity is reinforced through shared practices like nomadic pastoralism and seasonal migration, which bind the community together.
 - b. Although the tribe faces challenges from the Iranian government's attempts to modernize and assimilate them, the Qashqa'i retain their distinct way of life. Even those who settle in villages continue to identify strongly with their tribal roots.
6. The Qashqa'i face significant economic and ecological challenges that threaten the sustainability of their nomadic lifestyle.
 - a. The book describes how drought and unfavorable economic conditions in 1970 and 1971 made it difficult for the Qashqa'i to maintain their pastoral economy. Many were forced to take on debts to urban merchants and moneylenders, and the rising prices of pastoral products further exacerbated their struggles.
 - b. Borzu's group experiences the effects of a severe drought, which reduces the availability of grazing land and water. This forces the tribe to make difficult decisions about whether to continue with nomadism or settle permanently, with some members of the tribe choosing to abandon the nomadic way of life.
7. Tensions between maintaining traditional nomadic practices and adapting to modern political and economic realities
 - a. As the Iranian government pushes for modernization, many of the traditional roles and responsibilities of tribal leaders like Borzu become obsolete. Borzu's leadership style, which often involves aggressive and belligerent posturing, is

rooted in the era when the Qashqa'i enjoyed greater autonomy and resisted state control. However, in the face of the Shah's government, his authority is increasingly undermined, and he is forced to adapt to a new reality where he has less power.

Week 1: Introduction

9/5 The Geography of the Eurasian Continent

- Central arid stripe changes landscape
- Steppes around the central arid area
 - Steppe: lots of inedible grass, animals
 - People's relationship with the land is different, can't eat the plants ourselves so get them through animals
 - Most populous area for nomads
 - Less rainfall, colder
 - Steppe highway: easier for nomads to travel by horses along the steppe parallel than through the desert
- Deserts were buffer to sedentary people in the south
- Great Wall of China
 - Ming Dynasty
 - Separated the sedentary and the nomadic
- Central Eurasia / Inner Asia / Central Asia
 - Central eurasia: vast heartland of Europe and Asia extending from Northern Europe to East Asia and from Lapland and Siberia to the Persian Gulf and the Himalayas (basically everything)
 - Everything we study fit here
 - Inner asia: areas between China, russia, and parts of western asia
 - Smaller than central eurasia (no europe)
 - Central asia: former lands of USSR
 - But not everyone use term in same way
- Major regions of "Nomadland" (memorize map)
 - Hungarian Plain
 - Carpathian Mountains
 - Black Sea
 - Ponto Caspian Steppe
 - Caucasus mountains
 - Kazakh Steppe
 - Mongolian Plateau
 - Manchuria

9/3 introduction

How do these separated tents miles away from their neighbors create one of the largest states in history?

Topics

- The Rise of Nomadism
- Domesticating animals
- Nomads and sedentary conquer each other
- Recorded history/media (barely wrote abt themselves)
- Gender dynamics (women do more than in sedentary lifestyles)
- Religion and beliefs
- Nomads in the modern world

Features of nomadic history

- Broad scale in space and time
- Few indigenous voices
 - only transcriptions of their spoken language in chinese
 - External records kept by their enemies
- Importance of artistic representations

Goal of this course: view history of people that aren't defined by current state borders

Reading



1. Inner Asia is very diverse geographically

- Inner Asia covers 8+ million square miles (1/7 of world)
- Diversity in geographic zone examples all contribute in own way
 - fertile oases of the Tarim Basin
 - arid deserts like the Taklamakan
 - grassy steppes
 - extensive taiga forests

2. Region's climate impacted by continentality

- Inner Asia has the highest degree of continentality on earth, leading to extreme differences between summer and winter temperatures
- Factors: distance from oceans, mountain barriers,
 - restrict flow of maritime air masses
- Effects: widespread moisture deficits and arid climates

- areas south of the forest zone

3. Harsh conditions led to changes in transportation

- More reliant on overland routes with absence of navigable rivers over large portions of Inner Asia's arid and semi-arid zones
 - Few rivers are navigable but are frozen for most of the year and flow poorly
 - Silk Road played a critical role in the movement of peoples, cultural innovations, and goods

4. Natural Resource Utilization different depending on geography

- pastoral nomadism and extensive agriculture > sedentary agriculture b/c geography
 - rich grasslands support pastoral nomadism and reindeer herding
 - Extensive agricultural activities are also practiced in suitable areas, but really intensive crop farming is limited
 - No sedentary agriculture b/c inadequate water supplies, soil salinity, and extreme climates
 - deserts and most steppes are unsuitable for rain-fed farming, and the expansion of irrigation is often impractical

5. Human activities have modified the natural landscapes

- Clearing forests and agricultural oases have altered natural landscapes
 - more modest compared to other parts of the world
 - large areas of tundra, forest, grassland, and desert retaining their original characteristics
 - historical encroachment of sedentary civilizations and the transformation of grasslands into croplands, reflecting the complex interaction between human societies and their environment