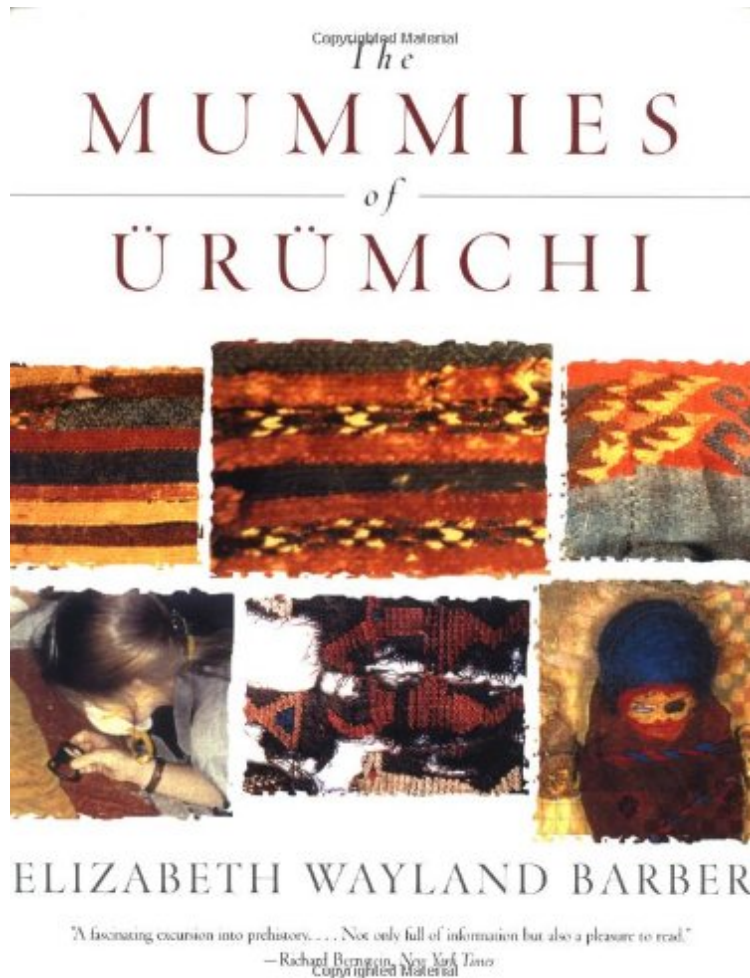


The Mummies of Urumchi

Elizabeth Wayland Barber

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#1011447 in Books Barber, Elizabeth Wayland 2000-04-17 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.30 x .70 x 7.00l, .97 #File Name: 0393320197256 pages | File size: 25.Mb

Elizabeth Wayland Barber : The Mummies of Urumchi before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mummies of Urumchi:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. History a stitch at a time. By Stone Dog
In Elizabeth Barber's "The Mummies of Urumchi", we get an analysis of the Tarim Basin caucasian mummies of western China. On the whole, the author does a good job of leading the reader through the "fabric" of the mystery of how the remains of these tall, fair-haired people ended up in China and where they perhaps came from. As an expert in textiles, Elizabeth Barber is able to look at the clothing and attire of the mummies and tie it in with other clothing made in similar styles. Early on, she and other experts were fortunate to have found remains that included fabric, preserved by the dry, salty desert of modern day western China. She begins the book by looking at the style of fabric (twill tartans) and moves on to tying that to other populations and migrations. The author does a very good job of explaining fabrics, how they are made or

woven and tying that to ancient populations. I think she does a fine job of introducing the reader to the various theories of where the proto Indo-Europeans came from, where the initial homeland could have been, languages and cultural traits tied to these mummies. The only problem I had with the book is that she sometimes, mainly toward the end of the book, tries to cover too many subjects too quickly and in succession. She goes from ancient languages to geography and ancient climate to use of hallucinogens - many of which have competing theories and have little hard evidence to go on. I kept wanting her sometimes to get back to the mummies and tell me more about them instead. I enjoyed this book most of the time and Elizabeth Barber is at her best when she's writing about the fabrics, their construction and history. For those wanting to read about the Tarim mummies, this is a good resource. I recommend this book with four stars. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. good if you are interested in textiles By Hortensia I enjoyed reading this book but did skip over some of the details of the textiles once I got the point. My textile-mad friend who is a spinner and knitter was more interested in this aspect. I enjoyed seeing how the scientists deduced the origin of these mummies, not just from textiles but from historical documents, the records in ancient cities in the area and carbon dating, paths of migration - they certainly have to know a lot in order to develop the understanding of these ancient people. For me, it is interesting that the ancestors of the Scots were also the ancestors of these mummies. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Dereckcycles A good read and a must for those interested in Prehistoric Textiles.

In the museums of Urumchi, the windswept regional capital of the Uyghur Autonomous Region (also known as Chinese Turkestan), a collection of ancient mummies lies at the center of an enormous mystery. Some of Urumchi's mummies date back as far as 4,000 years contemporary with the famous Egyptian mummies but even more beautifully preserved. Surprisingly, these prehistoric people are not Asian but Caucasoid tall, large-nosed and blond with thick beards and round eyes. What were these blond Caucasians doing in the heart of Asia? What language did they speak? Might they be related to a "lost tribe" known from later inscriptions? Few clues are offered by their pottery or tools, but their clothes woolens that rarely survive more than a few centuries have been preserved as brightly hued as the day they were woven. Elizabeth Wayland Barber describes these remarkable mummies and their clothing, and deduces their path to this remote, forbidding place. The result is a book like no other a fascinating unveiling of an ancient, exotic, nearly forgotten world. A finalist for the Kiriya Pacific Rim Book Prize. Illustrated

.com The 2000-year-old mummies of Urumchi, found in central Asia along the famed Silk Road trading route, are so well preserved as to show clearly that they seem to be of Caucasoid origin. Where did these people come from? Where did they go? You can find their pale-skinned, light-haired descendants among the people of the region, but the story of their presence in this forbidding land leaves more mysteries than it answers. Mass migrations during the Bronze Age scattered many peoples across Europe and Asia, and these startlingly lively-looking mummies may help answer some questions about this period of human history. Their intact, fantastically colored and patterned clothing captures much of author Elizabeth Wayland Barber's attention--she is an expert on prehistoric textiles. Her enthusiastic descriptions of the sewing skills of these migrant people, while focusing on details, lend an immediacy to this fascinating tale. Black-and-white as well as color photos, maps, and diagrams illustrate Barber's colorful tale of anthropology. -- Therese Littleton From Publishers Weekly In 1994, a most astonishing discovery was made in Western China. Incredibly well-preserved mummies dating back 2000 years were unearthed in this remote region? mummies with large, colorful wardrobes, mummies that were distinctively Caucasian. The mystery of what six-foot-tall, fair-haired people were doing in China at the time took Barber, an expert on ancient textiles at Occidental College in L.A., to the desert city of Urumchi in 1995, where archeologists at the site hoped that her expertise might help them understand what these unlikely people were doing there. She had excellent material to work with: the mummies were in such remarkable condition that they still had full heads of hair and beards, and their skin was only slightly weathered. Most had been buried with plenty of brightly colored clothes to wear (one man was buried with 10 hats, each a different style), which gave Barber a treasure-trove of textiles with which to work. Barber structures her tale as a mystery, revealing information piecemeal until she presents her conclusions about the origin of the mummies. In the process, she treats readers to a lively story about the ebb and flow of ancient cultures, a story largely deduced from the development of weaving, dyeing, embroidery and fashion. Barber's hypothesis about how Caucasian mummies wound up in Urumchi, which has something to do with the Silk Road, is so clear and logical that readers will be satisfied that all relevant possibilities have been thoroughly examined. The only thing lacking is information on how to pronounce Urumchi. 16 pages of color photos; 50 bw drawings. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s In an often fascinating glimpse of an exotic lost world, textile expert Barber (Occidental Coll.; Womens Work, The First 20,000 Years, 1994, etc.) unravels the mysteries of the beautifully preserved mummies of Urumchi, a city in western China. In 1994 the West learned of dazzlingly appareled ancient mummies, discovered buried in the deserts of China's remote Uyghur Autonomous Region. Astonishingly, these mummified remains, the most venerable of which were approximately 2,000 years old, evoked the specter of tall, blond Caucasian people, wearing magnificently colored clothing, including polychrome leggings and high-peaked "witches' hats." The following year, as part of a team of US

scholars, Barber was able to observe these finds in the museum of rmchi. Although the graves contained few artifacts besides garments, Barber gleans what she can of the origins, life, and culture of these people from their brightly hued textiles, preserved from decay by the dry desert climate. Afforded a rare glimpse of prehistoric fabrics, the author draws parallels with the weaving techniques of Japan and the Middle East, particularly Persiabut also, more provocatively, with those of the Celtic peoples of Ireland and Scotland. She speculates that these mysterious people were peripatetic herders and oasis-hoppers of Indo-European origin, possibly Turkic-speaking, and she establishes links between the Caucasian people of this remote Chinese region and the ancient Celts. Other evidence may link the mummies with the ancient Iranians. Barber attempts to visualize the primeval landscape: She concludes that todays desert was then lush and inviting, moisturized by runoffs of glacial rainwater. The trove of mummies points to a vital prehistoric culture, nourished by contacts with both European and Chinese societies, and shows an ancient commerce between East and West, the legacy of which lives on in the Caucasian features of Chinese-speaking modern inhabitants of the region. A haunting archaeological excursion. (16 pages color, 50 bw illustrations) -- Copyright 1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.