

## **Much Ado about Trousers: Exploring Intercultural Contact through Artifacts**

### **Guided Questions**

Material objects are fascinating sources for investigating intercultural contact in the ancient world. Below is a list of guided questions that instructors can ask students as they examine images of a pair of ornamental trousers excavated from Xinjiang, China.

*Reveal the image to students. Instruct the students to look at the image. Ask:*

1. What do you think this object is?

*Zoom in on the top half of the image. Ask:*

2. Look at the top part of the image. What is represented? Who made this? How do you know?

*Zoom in on the bottom half of the image. Ask:*

3. Look at the bottom part of the object. Now who do you think made this? How do you know?

At this point, have students examine the different responses they came up with. Ask students to consider why they have come up with different responses. Ask them how their own assumptions affected what they saw.

*Explanation of images:*

1. The top image is of a centaur. The horn used by the centaur is called a salpinx, a war trumpet used by Persians.

(Optional: Show students a similar image of a centaur, found in mosaics in Italy, in Greco-Roman artistic style.)

2. The bottom image shows a warrior's face in  $\frac{3}{4}$  profile, with full cheeks, a double chin, and four-petal mouth. Explain to students that similar features are found in portraits featured in Greco-Roman mosaics.

3. Note that the dress of the warrior is NOT Greek at all. The dress is called a kaftan, which is long-sleeved and belted at the waist. It was common among people of the Northern Eurasian steppe throughout the first millennium BC.

4. The warrior's face, however, has some noticeably Caucasian features.

5. This artifact is a wall tapestry. See "The ornamental trousers from Sampula (Xinjiang, China): their origins and biography" (article listed in the Resources section of this handout) for more details.

## Resources

Hansen, Valerie. *The Silk Road: A New History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Wagner, Mayak, et al. "The ornamental trousers from Sampula (Xinjiang, China): their origins and biography." *Antiquity*, Volume 83, No. 322 (2009): 1065-1075.