

The
Silk Road



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Cover photo: Uppland runestone U 654, Varpsund, Övergrans sn., Sweden, raised by the sons of "Gunnleifr, their father, who was killed in the east with Ingvar...He could steer a cargo-ship well." Photo copyright © 2008 Daniel C. Waugh.

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From the Editor's Desktop

As always, I have learned a great deal by working with contributors whose range of expertise is as broad as the reach of the historic Silk Roads. I urge readers not to confine themselves to one or two articles closest to the subjects they know already, but rather to explore new territory.

It is a particular pleasure each issue to welcome authors who have not previously contributed to the journal in the hope that they and their colleagues may write for future issues as well. Here I would note an important first for us: contributions from Iran, where our readers can learn about the interesting collections of the generally little known Azerbaijan Museum in Tabriz and about the work of Iranian archaeologists on Parthian sites. Since so much of importance is happening in Iranian archaeology these days, I hope we will see many more reports from that rich field.

Another significant contribution here is Prof. Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens' article on the Brunei shipwreck. The "Silk Roads," of course, were not just about silk, nor did they encompass only land routes across Asia. We need to do much more to integrate the maritime routes into this history. As far as products of trade go, of course in some of the literature we read about the "Spice Route"; we might well imagine a "Porcelain Route" or a "Glass Route" (name your product), even if we are probably still going to use "silk" as a shorthand for much more.

Dr. Gunilla Larsson's article in this issue also opens up new perspectives for many who study the "Silk Roads." Western, and in particular northwestern Asia and the northern European connection are of substantial importance, as we have long known from the amount of Middle Eastern and Central Asian silver which made its way up along the waterways through today's Russia and Ukraine. The Caucasus has tended to remain little known; it is clear some of the routes there, which were important historically, still very much are in need of serious study.

Lastly, by way of information, I would mention the review section in this volume, which expands previous efforts in attempting to inform about a broad range of new publications. In writing most of the "review notices," as I call them, I make no particular claim to expertise on such a broad range of topics, even if I am willing to stick my neck out with critical comments. Real reviews, by real experts, are still very much a desideratum for this journal, as are, of course, contributions of original work in well illustrated articles that will interest our general readership.

As always, I am grateful to colleagues who have shared their expertise with me in answering editorial queries.

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P.S.: Do remember to check the online version of the journal (to be found at: <http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/newsletter/vol9/srjournal_v9.pdf>) if you are reading this in the print copy. Most of the illustrations in the online version are in color and thus display much better than in the grayscale reproductions which follow here in the hard copy.

The Brunei Shipwreck: A Witness to the International Trade in the China Sea around 1500

Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens

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About ten shipwrecks from the years 1480–1520 have been discovered in the last thirty years or so in the South China Sea, but few of them have at the same time been scientifically excavated, escaped illegal treasure hunters and been well published.¹ The Brunei shipwreck is an exception. It was undisturbed since it sank about 500 years ago, has been systematically excavated and its cargo scientifically published. It therefore constitutes documentation of great value.

The discovery and excavation

In May 1997, a wreck, indicated by the presence of ceramics, was discovered 22 nautical miles off Brunei Darussalam by Elf Petroleum Asia during a geophysical survey of the seabed to lay a pipeline [Fig. 1]. The sultanate of Brunei asked the French government to send archaeologists to make a survey of the shipwreck. The task was entrusted to the Department of archaeological sub-aquatic and submarine researches of the French Ministry of Culture, under the direction of Michel L'Hour. In October 1997, the cartography of the site was done during this survey, and, thanks to the retrieved ceramics, the shipwreck was dated between the end of 15th and the beginning of the 16th century (*La Mémoire* 2001, Cahier de fouille, pp. 25–41).

Following the survey report, a salvage excavation was scheduled. The operation lasted two months, from the end of May to the end of July 1998. It was one of the first shipwreck excavations in the region to have only scientific aims and which was not motivated by commercial purposes. The excavation was made very difficult at first by natural conditions. The shipwreck lay at a depth of 63 meters in a volatile mud constantly washed in a turbid sea, which created very poor conditions of visibility. The site is 24 m long and 18 m wide. Moreover the field work had to be conducted quickly first because the risk of looting is so high in the region, and also because of the pressure and conditions laid down by the sponsors of the project, in the first instance TotalFinaElf.



Fig. 1. Map showing locations mentioned in text.



After: *La Mémoire*, Cahier de fouille, p. 75 ; photo 1998: Frédéric Osada.

Fig. 2. A diver.

The team of archaeologists and divers operated from a barge 60 m long, with a control room in the center for two diving supervisors. Two teams of 15 divers each worked during the two months of the excavation. On the fore-part of the barge were the submarines, the crane and the space for sifting. The barge was helped by an auxiliary tug-boat and protected by the Bruneian navy. Like-

Photos 1998 M. Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens.



Fig. 3. Thai stoneware jar Bru 1865, before and after treatment.

wise a landing craft of the Bruneian navy came every night to transport the excavated material to the inland workshop. This workshop was a 1000 m² hangar, including two air-conditioned rooms for the persons in charge of processing and drawing the finds, the four ceramic specialists and the photographer's studio.

The archaeologists first laid out on the shipwreck a spatial reference frame of metal grids. Each grid measured 3 square meters and was subdivided into 4 small squares measuring 1.5 m each. It was therefore possible, as the excavation proceeded, to record the exact position of each recovered item and, thanks to data-processing, to record the localization of each object in its surroundings. A ROV (remotely operated vehicle) inspected the grids and made video coverage of the excavation (*La Mémoire* 2001, Cahier de fouille, ch. Journal de bord [M. L'Hour], pp. 43-131). The divers brought the objects up to the surface with the mud around them [Fig. 2].² The silt was then sieved on the barge. All the significant artifacts were thus collected.

Every evening, hundreds of pieces and tens of kilos of shards, excavated the same day, after cleaning and recording, reached the workshop. A team of eight restorers under the direction of Henri Bernard Maugiron controlled the storage and carried out the first conservation and resto-

ration treatments on the most important or fragile pieces. This included the careful removal of marine growths and a desalination process of the ceramics which consists in immersing them in regularly changed fresh water [Fig. 3]. Also in the workshop, every artifact was

catalogued in a computer database and photographed. The ceramics were described and studied, the most typical being drawn (more than 550 drawings were done).³ On the whole, more than 130 specialists participated in the excavation.

All the excavated material stayed in Brunei where it is kept in a special museum. An exhibition was first organized in Brunei with a small catalogue in English published in 2000 (*Catalogue* 2000). Another exhibition took place in Paris in 2001 and was accompanied by a more important catalogue in French.⁴ A documentary for TV was produced in two versions, French (in 1999) and English (2001).⁵

One goal of the excavation was to understand the construction and shape of the junk as well as the organization of the cargo. However, that aim was only partially achieved because no part of the vessel was discovered. This was probably due to the conjunction of currents around the wreck and a muddy seabed. Nevertheless some data were obtained. The hull had a not too sharp V shape. Rocks ballasted the bottom. The maximum width of the hull is estimated between 8 and 11 m for a length between 22 and 25 m (*La Mémoire* 2001, Précis scientifique, p. 145). Bulkheads divided it into several (at least six) storage compartments or holds (*Ibid.*, p. 152). Relying on 16th century Malaysian and Portuguese sources, we can imagine a junk of the kind often found in the Malay sphere, able to carry 350 to 500 tons of goods and a few hundred crew members and merchants (Pierre-Yves Manguin in *Ibid.*, p. 13).

The cargo

Some 13,500 artifacts have been registered, of which at least 70% are intact, making it one of the richest of the South China Sea for the period. The ceramics, with nearly 12,000 pieces, constitute 89% of the finds (*La Mémoire* 2001, Précis scientifique, p. 142). They consist mainly of stoneware, especially jars, and then porcelain.

The stoneware jars represent the largest collection of artifacts recovered from the Brunei shipwreck (Marie-France Dupoizat in *La Mémoire* 2001, Précis scientifique, pp. 85–107). Half of them come from Thailand, a majority from the kilns of Singburi, near Ayutthaya. These are



Photo 1998 M. Pirazzoli-Sersteuens

Fig. 4. Chinese stoneware jar Bru 3024.

large and heavy jars with glazes from black to dark chocolate brown [Fig. 3]. The second half comes from South China, medium-sized ovoid jars, thinly potted and decorated with an incised floral motif under a translucent brownish glaze [Fig. 4]. To these two groups, one must add some Vietnamese jars.

These large and small jars were used and reused for the transport of goods and for everyday life. Quite a lot of ceramics, for example, were exported in jars. Several cargoes show this, among them the Brunei cargo, where several large Thai jars were filled, some of them with Chinese blue and white jarlets, others with small Thai greenware bottles [Fig. 5], still others with Thai bowls

Fig. 5. Small Thai greenware bottles and their jar.



After: *La Mémoire*, Précis scientifique, p. 95; photo 1998: Philippe Sehirot.



Photo 1998 M. Pirazzoli-†Serstevens

Fig. 6. Burmese green-glazed dish Bru 2022.

(75 to 80 bowls in a jar). Jars served also for storing fresh water on board, for preserving and fermenting food like fish and vegetables. Finally, gold powder, saltpeter, indigo, camphor, sulfur, and copper were packaged in jars — that is to say, all the commercial products which circulated in that part of the world.

To these daily uses one must add, among some populations of Borneo, ritual functions. In these societies, the imported jars played a part in magical rites, in burial customs and ancestral worship. For that reason

they were treasured as precious heirlooms and transmitted through generations.⁶

We have just seen that, apart from jars, the Thai stoneware in the cargo included bowls, small bottles with celadon glaze. Small globular jars and dishes from the Si Satchanalai kilns were also included. All these pieces are ceramics for daily use. The same can be said of the Burmese green-glazed dishes recovered from the wreck [Fig. 6].⁷ After the Thai stoneware, the most important set in the cargo consists of Chinese porcelain, and above all blue and white porcelain. The major part of the blue and white in the cargo are dishes [Fig. 7], cups and bowls, jarlets (maximum dimension of the body between 7 and 10 cm) [Fig. 8] and some ewers [Fig. 9]. Shapes are limited and dimensions standardized.

Fig. 8. Two Chinese blue and white porcelain jarlets, Bru 1553 and 1645.



Photo 1998 M. Pirazzoli-†Serstevens

Fig. 7. Two Chinese blue and white porcelain dishes: left Bru 1351, right Bru 3190.



Photo 1998 M. Pirazzoli-†Serstevens



Fig. 9. Drawing of a Chinese blue and white porcelain kendi Bru 1945.

This is not the first quality porcelain made in official kilns, but an ordinary production made in private kilns (*minyao* 民窑) from Jiangxi province, Jingdezhen, but also maybe in several cases Linjiang 臨江 kilns (see *Kaogu xuebao* 1995/2, pp. 243–74, esp. Fig. 18/2, p. 269, similar to Bru 919). This production was for the domestic market as well as for export.⁸ The decoration is typically Chinese, with floral motifs, mythical animals such as qilins [Fig. 10], dragons, phoenix, and Buddhist symbols (such as Chinese lion-dogs playing with the pearl of wisdom). No motif is really intended for Muslim customers. Nevertheless, the cargo's blue and white porcelain is similar to that which litters the site of Kota Batu, the ancient capital of the Brunei Sultanate from 14th to 17th century, even if we also find at Kota Batu high quality pieces (Harrison 1970). I shall come back to the

After *La Mémoire*, Carnet de dessins, p. 10 (drawing by Marie-Noëlle Baudrand); photo 1998: Ph. Sebirot.



Fig. 10. Chinese blue and white porcelain with a decor of qilin, Bru 484.

blue and white when dealing with the dating.

The Chinese ceramics in the cargo included also about 1000 celadons or greenware, saucers and large dishes, some of them coming from Guangdong kilns, others from Longquan in Zhejiang. The quality is rather poor (Zhao Bing in *La Mémoire* 2001, *Précis scientifique*, pp. 65–83). Finally the cargo contained less than 200 pieces of white porcelain from Jiangxi province, several originally painted with enamels.

The date of production of the Chinese porcelain in the cargo is very coherent, except for two pieces, one blue and white box (Bru 5275, *La Mémoire*,



Précis scientifique, ill. 1.) and one qingbai double-gourd ewer (Bru 1943, *La Mémoire*, *Précis scientifique*, ill. 17) [Fig. 11] which could date from the 14th century. It

Fig. 11. Chinese qingbai double-gourd, 14th century, Bru 1943.

Photo 1998: M. Pirazzoli-†Serstevens.

Fig. 12. Vietnamese blue and white jar, Bru 6015.



Photo 1998: Ph. Sebirot.

is difficult to explain their presence here, maybe as old rubbishy goods from a warehouse. It is not the only case. Two 14th century ewers similar to the Brunei one were recovered from the Pandanan cargo (in the Philippines) which is dated ca. 1470 to 1487 (Brown 2009, p. 46).⁹

About ten pieces of Vietnamese blue and white were found in the cargo, mainly jars [Fig. 12], jarlets and boxes. This is a very small number of pieces compared with the Thai or Chinese ceramics and it means that the junk did not put into Vietnam on its way. At the same time it means that ceramics from different regional kilns participated in complex maritime movements including peddling (M.F. Dupoizat in *La Mémoire* 2001, Précis scientifique, p. 123).

The enormous quantity of ceramics on the Brunei shipwreck must not lead us to neglect the other products or artifacts found in the cargo.

Fig. 14. Two glass bracelets (left Bru 3246 and right Bru 3258) and a shell bead (BA 246) in the middle.



Photo 1998 : M. Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens.



Photos 1998: Ph. Sebirot.

Fig. 13. Malaysian tin ingot, Bru 166 P1.



Alter *La Mémoire*, Cahier de fouille, p. 103 (upper part). Photo 1998: Ph. Sebirot.

Fig. 15. Copper wires in a jar.



Fig. 16. Earthenware stove, Bru 198.

There are 128 tin ingots [Fig. 13] which are the Malaysian tin-currency of the 15th-16th century.¹⁰ There are numerous stone and glass beads, some of them still stored in their transport jars, glass bracelets [Fig. 14], lumps of raw glass, one shell bead [Fig. 14], brass rods, copper wires [Fig. 15] packaged in jars, elephant tusks, 7 bronze rifle bores (Michel Decker in *La Mémoire* 2001, Précis scientifique, pp. 152-53), about ten gongs, a metallic box and some forty Chinese coins. Finally, the finds include objects of daily use: earthenware stoves [Fig. 16], jar lids, braziers, incense burners,

kendis and cooking pots, and three grindstones. This type of ware, probably made in Thailand, was found consistently on all the shipwrecks in the gulf of Thailand. Some of these utensils are certainly part of the crew's kitchenware, even if they are distributed all over the site, with some found in each hold.

This brings us to the organization of the cargo. Most of the shipwrecks discovered in Southeast Asia, the Brunei wreck no exception, show the hull divided into compartments by partitions. On the trade junks which ploughed the China Sea, it was usual to hire out each compartment to merchants who settled down there with their personal belongings. So they slept and cooked close to or above their own cargo (*La Mémoire* 2001, *Précis scientifique*, p. 166). That would explain the distribution of daily utensils in different compartments of the Brunei ship.

In our case the merchants did not reach the harbour. The reasons for the wreck, on the high seas, are not known. The most plausible one is a storm on a too heavily laden ship, but an attack by pirates cannot be excluded.

When did the ship sink? No inscription giving a date was found in the cargo. There is no blue and white porcelain inscribed with a date or a reign mark, except two pieces marked on the base “Made in the great Ming Dynasty” (e.g., Bru 2807, *La Mémoire*, *Cahier de fouille*, p. 38), which, of course, does not bring a precise date, except that this mark appears on several non-official ceramics at the turn of the 16th century.

In fact, it is the Chinese blue and white porcelain, through stylistic comparisons, which allows us to date the cargo and so the wreck. We know that during the Ming dynasty, with very few exceptions, it was contemporary ceramic productions which were exported. Jars were different since, as I already said, they served as containers and could be reused for a rather long time. What makes dating not so easy is that the porcelain in the cargo consists of ordinary pieces, whereas high quality porcelain is usually well documented and therefore easy to date with precision.

Several Chinese blue and white porcelains from the Brunei cargo are similar to pieces in the Lena Shoal cargo, which was found in 1997 south of Mindoro island (Philippines) (Goddio et al. 2000; also Crick 2001). The Lena junk, whose cargo offers many similarities with the Brunei cargo, was

looted before the excavation. It still totalled over 5,000 items. The Chinese blue and white wares are of better quality than those of Brunei. Stylistic comparisons with pieces in the Topkapi Saray Museum in Istanbul and the Ardebil Shrine collections in Tehran, and with dated pieces in China, place the style of the ceramic cargo at the end of 15th century in the Hongzhi period (1488–1505). What is also interesting with the Lena cargo is that it contains the same range of non-porcelain artifacts as the Brunei cargo: the same tin ingots, copper wires, gongs, earthenware lids, stone disks, grindstones, and also elephant tusks.

Another site whose porcelain is still more similar to that of Brunei is Penny’s Bay (竹篙灣 Chok



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Photo 1998; Ph. Sebirot.

Fig. 17. Two Chinese blue and white dishes: on the left from Penny’s Bay 1990:88; on the right from Brunei Bru 8890.

Ko Wan in Cantonese) [Fig. 17]. The site discovered in 1975 at Lantau island, Hong Kong, was perhaps the port where the ceramics were brought from the kilns in mainland China and from which the privately owned ships sailed, that is to say the port of the smuggling trade (Lam 1986/88; 1989/92; 2001). The ceramics excavated there from 1986 to 2002 are considered as contemporaneous or within a very limited time span before and after 1500.¹¹

Apart from these two sites, and similar pieces in Istanbul [Fig. 18, next page] or Tehran, all of them attributed to the late 15th/early 16th century, all the comparisons are with blue and white porcelain discovered in the Philippines and dated from the end of the Hongzhi period or the beginning of the Zhengde reign (1506–21).

So a date around 1500 is the most probable. As Rita Tan has noted, the florid and dense designs



Top after: R. Krahl, *Chinese Ceramics in the Topkapi Saray Museum: A complete catalogue*, vol. 2, London, 1986, p. 554; bottom, photo 1998: Ph. Sebirot.

Fig. 18. Two Chinese blue and white large bowls: top, Topkapi Saray K 699, and bottom, Brunei 1985.

that fill up the entire surface of the vessel, echoing the foreign-inspired Yuan tradition, are a common feature of the group of wares from the end of the Hongzhi-beginning of the Zhengde period (Gotuaco et al. 1997, p. 89). It is also characteristic of many of the blue and white pieces from the Brunei cargo [Figs. 18, 19, 20].

However, some comparisons may indicate a slightly later date, still in the Zhengde reign. The main motif of a lotus on the body of a small blue and white jar, for instance, found in a tomb dated 1517 at Jingdezhen (*Jingdezhen* 1988, no. 85), is quite similar to the same motif on several small jars in Brunei [Fig. 21] (Bru 1494 and Bru 959, *La Mémoire* 2001, Précis scientifique ill. 12, p. 37, and ill. 7, p. 33). Moreover, the moulded monster heads on two Vietnamese blue and white jars (Bru 6015 [Fig. 12] and 6374) are a motif which



Photo 1998: Ph. Sebirot

Fig. 19 (left). Chinese blue and white large bowl Bru 1986.

Fig. 21 (right). Chinese blue and white small jar Bru 959 (with cover Bru 1128).



Photo 1998: M. Pirazzoli-‘Serstevens.

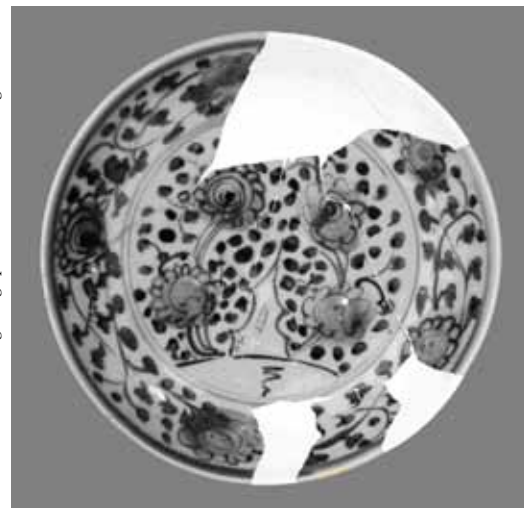


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Fig. 20. Two Chinese blue and white dishes: top Brunei 1691, bottom Penny’s Bay PB 1990:98.

apparently does not appear on this kind of jars before the 16th century. At the same time, some



Photo 1998: M. Pirazzoli-‘Serstevens.

Thai productions such as Sawankhalok underglaze black wares which appear around 1520 are absent from the Brunei cargo. We know also that Vietnamese ceramics disappear from regional trade from the end of the Zhengde reign onward.

Two other cargoes, the Santa Cruz junk (Philippines) dated around 1510 and the Ko Samui shipwreck (Thailand), attributed to the Zhengde reign, could help in the future to clarify the dating (on these, see Brown 2009, pp. 146–50, 174). The research on them is still difficult though, because of lack of access to publications which are hard to find. I would favor the period 1500–1510, which moreover coincides with the time (from 1488 to 1520) when there was a real flood of Chinese wares (mainly blue and white) abroad. After about 1520, a period of moderate shortage starts again until the Ming ban on sea trade is officially rescinded in 1567 (Ibid., p. 48).

If the Chinese blue and white porcelain is the best dating tool, other objects in the cargo, more modest in appearance, give information on the route followed by the ship, the areas of exchange and the customers for whom artifacts in the cargo were intended. The tin ingots [Fig. 13] are an example. Each of the 128 ingots weighs around 1.6 kilos, which corresponds to the ancient Perak “bidor” (ingot of 2½ katis). Tin from the Malay peninsula was not only exported as a product but served also as currency for all major transactions (Singh 1986).¹² These blocks were either mound-shaped or shaped into a four-sided pyramid with a flat top and a broad foot or plinth. We find the two types in the Brunei cargo. The large quantity of these ingots in the cargo shows the commercial supremacy of the Melaka (or Malaccan) Empire which was, when the Portuguese conquered it in 1511, the great emporium of the spice trade. Located at the cross-roads of the maritime networks between the Near East and China, it drew the merchant ships from all of Asia, from the Ryukyu islands to the Persian Gulf.

The analysis of the lading (more important on the west part, very probably the stern

of the ship) seems to indicate that the ship was on route to the East, that is to say to Brunei, when she met with disaster (*La Mémoire* 2001, Précis scientifique, p. 151). We can imagine that she came from the Melaka straits after having stopped over in Thailand.

Some goods in the cargo could have been intended for customers from the Borneo hinterlands. When strung together, the colored glass beads were used as elements in necklaces and bracelets but also as currency (Singh 1986, p. 584) and as a status symbol. Many bracelets made from copper wires, like the ones found in the cargo [Fig. 15], were excavated from tombs at the Sungai Lumut site in Brunei (Harrison and Shariffuddin 1969). Very popular also among the inland populations of Borneo were the disks cut up from shell opercula. They were ornaments sewn on fabrics or inlaid on wood [Fig. 22] (see, e.g., Hornbill 1989, fig. 88, p. 125; fig. 124b, p. 139; fig. 205b, p. 171; fig. 241a-b, p. 184; fig. 363, p. 222). The piece found in the shipwreck [Fig. 14] may indicate the presence on board of a member of the crew coming from inland Borneo.

In exchange for these fancy articles, and also for jars and iron utensils, Borneo’s hinterland populations bartered their natural resources, the products of their forests: first and above all the best quality camphor, but also, as far as Brunei is concerned, hardwoods, pepper, beeswax, and tortoise-shells.

The Malaysian sultanates on the coast, especially Brunei, derived a part of their riches from

Fig. 22. Borneo’s Ngaju shaman’s tunic with opercula sewn on. For the shell opercula in Brunei shipwreck, see Fig. 14.



After Hornbill, p. 171.



Photo 1998: M. Pirazzoli-*t*'Serstevens.

the part they took in this extremely profitable trade. The end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century constitute the golden age of the Brunei Empire, under the reign of the 5th sultan, Sultan Bolkiah (1485–1524). At that time, Brunei controlled a large commercial empire including the Southern Philippines. Many merchants from different countries had settled in the capital, Kota Batu, one of the most prosperous ports-of-trade east of Melaka. An important Chinese community, including craftsmen, was part of this cosmopolitan society. The tomb of Sultan Bolkiah shows that very clearly [Fig. 23]. Built and carved in stone in a style of decoration and with a technique which is typically Ming, it was certainly made by Chinese craftsmen [Fig. 24]. Kota Batu was built in tiers

Fig. 24. A detail of the stone carved decoration of Sultan Bolkiah's tomb.



Photo 1998: M. Pirazzoli-*t*'Serstevens.

Fig. 23. Brunei, Kota Batu, tomb of Sultan Bolkiah (1485–1524).

along the river, with the palace on the hilltop, the residential district halfway down the hill and ordinary people's houses further down, around the port [Fig. 25]. Lots of Chinese shards of the same style as those excavated from the shipwreck were found on the site, proof that the population of Kota Batu widely used Chinese ceramics.

Around 1500 the Chinese ceramics had been circulating illegally for more than sixty years,



Photo 1998: M. Pirazzoli-*t*'Serstevens.

Fig. 25. Kota Batu, view on the Brunei River and the mangrove swamp.

the Chinese emperors having banned private trade and stopped state trade (*gongbo* 貢舶) with foreign countries (Li 2010). Between 1434 and 1487, the ban was more or less operative, even if a lot of illicit trade went on through the Ryukyu islands. But the smuggling became more and more important over the years, and a lot of Chinese people migrated and settled in Southeast Asia, contributing to the trade and to the hybridization of naval technology (Pierre-Yves Manguin in *La Mémoire* 2001, Précis scientifique, pp. 10–17). At the time when our ship travelled, the Southeast Asian market was flooded with Chinese ceramics, mostly blue and white porcelain.

The ban also benefitted Thai ceramic production, as the Brunei shipwreck shows. Furthermore, we

can imagine that a lot of the small Thai bottles, as well as the Chinese jarlets, shipped empty, were intended to receive contents (aromatics, spices...) before being re-exported to other markets in Asia. Without solving all the problems, the Brunei shipwreck constitutes the only known maritime landmark from the heyday of Brunei commercial activity at the turn of the 16th century. It gives an idea of the very diversified freight dispatched to a sultanate which was the center of the south China Sea trade. It also throws light on the complexity, diversity and vitality of the global networks in that part of the world before the arrival of the Europeans who did no more than graft themselves onto these trading networks.

The French historian Denys Lombard was certainly right when he compared the East Indies sultanates of the 15th-16th centuries, Melaka and Brunei included, to the Italian or Flemish commercial centers of the Renaissance (*Asian Merchants* 2000, pp. 5, 113-20). In both cases, the commercial and the political were combined there in a coherent system.

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About the author

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the archaeological reports on Bahrain, Suhar and Julfar. Her publications on Han period include *The Han Dynasty* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), chapters in several books (some of them she edited) and many articles. Her books on 18th century art include *Giuseppe Castiglione 1688-1766: peintre et architecte à la cour de Chine* (Paris: Thalia, 2007). E-mail: <micheleps@noos.fr>.

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Notes

1. The best synthesis on 15th–16th century shipwrecks in the South China Sea is Brown 2009.
2. All the illustrations of Brunei objects come from the Brunei excavation. Dir.: Michel L'Hour (Drassm) and are reproduced here with permission.
3. Anne-Christine Nalin directed the inventory team, Marie-Noëlle Baudrand the drawing pool, Philippe Sebirot the photo studio. The four specialists on ceramics included, with the present author, Hélène Chollet, Marie-France Dupoizat and Zhao Bing. A selection of the drawings made during the excavation is published in *La Mémoire* 2001, Carnet de dessins.

4. The exhibition was held at La Conciergerie, from September 2001 to January 2002. For the catalogue, see *La Mémoire* 2001.

5. Marc Jampolsky, *Le trésor de la jonque engloutie, enquête archéologique au large de Brunei*, 1999 ; *Sultan's Lost Treasure*, Nova, 2001.

6. On the different functions of the jars, see Marie-France Dupoizat, in *La Mémoire* 2001, *Précis scientifique*, pp. 87–97.

7. First considered as Thai, these celadon dishes are now identified as Burmese, from a production site in the Twante area south of Rangoon. See Myo and Rooney 2001; also Brown 2009, pp. 21, 65.

8. The blue and white porcelains in the Brunei cargo are very similar to the ones found in the Daijitun 岱吉屯 tombs at Fuyu, Jilin province, wrongly attributed to the Yuan dynasty. See Zhang 1994 and *Wenwu* 1995. Several blue and white excavated from a paper-making mill at Gao'an 高安 in Jiangxi have their equivalent in the Brunei cargo. These pieces are attributed by

the Chinese archaeologists to the Jingdezhen production of the Zhengde reign. See *Kaogu* 2010, Figs. 30/3 and 31/1.

9. The two pieces are kept in the National Museum, Manila.

10. The identification of these ingots as currency was not understood when the cargo was studied after the excavation.

11. I am grateful to Prof. Peter Lam for having given me his publications on Penny's Bay and shared his great knowledge of the subject; I am also most grateful to Dr. Michael K.S. Tang for having shown me porcelains from Penny's Bay kept in the Antiquities and Monuments Office (古物古蹟辦事處), Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and for having sent me images.

12. I am grateful to François Thierry, Curator-in-Chief at the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, for having given me access to this book where tin ingots similar to the Brunei ones are identified and annotated. See also Shaw and Kassim 1970.

Zoroastrian Funerary Beliefs and Practices Known from the Sino-Sogdian Tombs in China

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Until a little more than 50 years ago our knowledge of Sogdians and other Central Asians living in China was limited to written sources. Since then, the identification and discovery in north and northwest China of their tombs and funerary furnishings have provided us with heretofore unknown information about these foreigners and their descendants who lived among the Chinese in the Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, Sui and early Tang periods (second half of the 6th to the mid-7th century). Specifically, the stone funerary beds and sarcophagi from their tombs offer us a unique and vivid glimpse into their lives – their appearance and dress, their mercantile and diplomatic pursuits, their pastimes (such as hunts and banquets),¹ and their religious beliefs. Among the most intriguing aspects of these depictions is that, although these tomb owners were buried in Chinese-style tombs on a Chinese-style stone bed or within a Chinese-style stone sarcophagus, each individual owner's choice of decoration for his bed or sarcophagus reveals his affiliation with at least some aspect of Central Asian culture and the religion that was prevalent there – Zoroastrianism or, more broadly, Mazdaism.

Even more intriguing is that the carved decoration on some of these beds and sarcophagi illustrates specific Zoroastrian funerary rites for which we have no visual documentation in Sogdiana itself, in other parts of Central Asia, or even in Iran, where some form of Mazdaism was practiced. These funerary rituals, known only from the Zoroastrian texts and the actual funerary practices of Zoroastrians and their Parsee co-religionists in India, along with beliefs associated with the soul of deceased entering Paradise, are the subject of this article – but first, a brief background on these beds and sarcophagi.

The use of beds and sarcophagi by Central Asians

Characteristic of Zoroastrian funerary practice is exposure of the corpse to birds of prey and other scavengers. The bones are then gathered and deposited in ossuaries, stone or ceramic containers that are often decorated with images of Zoroastrian deities or some aspect of Zoroastrian ceremony. This practice, though, was not universal; there is evidence in Sogdiana, as well as in Iran, of other means of treating the corpse. Not found in Sogdiana and Iran, however, and seemingly antithetical to Zoroastrian belief, is deep ground inhumation within a structure such as the Chinese tomb of this period – that is to say, a subterranean square chamber with domed roof, reached by a long and sloping narrow shaft or corridor, its walls embellished with paintings, and its inclusion of grave goods, such as personal belongings and funerary models (*mingqi*), as well as a stone funerary bed or sarcophagus to support or contain the deceased's remains.²

That foreigners living in China also used such stone funerary furniture became known when, in the 1950s, Gustina Scaglia recognized that the three carved stone panels shared by Boston and Paris and two gateposts in Cologne depict Central Asians and thus were made for a member of that community living in China. To date, we have evidence of nine examples of funerary beds and sarcophagi attributed to these foreigners: six stone beds and three stone sarcophagi. Some come from excavated contexts, which have also yielded other funerary furnishings, including in most cases the epitaph stone giving the name and biography of the deceased. Unfortunately, others were acquired on the art market, thereby depriving us of important information about the tomb owner, other than what can be inferred

from their decoration.³ Many more tombs of these Central Asians await discovery (in the old imperial capital of Xi'an alone, archaeologists have plotted at least 40 additional tombs waiting excavation in the areas that yielded the two stone beds and one stone sarcophagus mentioned here).⁴

Based on the visual evidence from the relief carvings on these beds and sarcophagi, as well as on the epitaphs that have survived, we know that at least seven of these men were elites in the foreign communities in different cities in China.⁵ The owners of the bed in the Kooros collection and of the sarcophagus found at Yidu (in Shandong) seem to have been highly-placed Han Chinese or of nomadic Xianbei origin. Like other elites (including some members of the different dynastic royal families ruling in this period) they had adopted some of the visual imagery of the Sogdians in their midst and apparently even followed some of their practices.⁶

Zoroastrian funerary practice and belief

With this knowledge of the tombs of Central Asians who lived in China, let us look at how their beds and sarcophagi depict their funerary rites and beliefs. As prescribed by the Avestan scriptural text, the *Vendidad*, the Zoroastrian funeral ritual consists of continuous prayers and ceremonies over the course of three full days and nights (divided into five "watches" or *gahs*), performed in the house of the deceased. On the fourth day the corpse is conveyed to the *dakhma*. This is the so-called "tower of silence," a brick- or stone-lined structure that keeps the corpse from coming into contact with the earth (and thereby defiling the earth), and allows its exposure as carrion (Russell 1989, p. 561).⁷ It is on this fourth day ("*chahārōm*") that the soul is believed to make its way across the Chinvat Bridge into paradise, but only after its life on earth has been judged worthy of this passage.

The Sagdīd Ceremony

Central to the funerary rite is the *sagdīd* ("the viewing by the dog"), which is done three times in the course of a funeral. The first *sagdīd* is performed immediately after the death. The dog, regarded as beneficent and righteous, is made to look at the deceased, since its gaze is believed to

drive away the evil and polluting spirit of dead matter (*nasā*) which tries to attack the dead body; it also is believed to discern better than a human that a person is dead (Modi 1922/1979, pp. 58-68). The second *sagdīd* is made in the course of the three-day watch over the corpse, after it has been washed and the ritual fire kindled, and just before it is removed to the *dakhma*. The third *sagdīd* occurs after the funeral procession has reached the *dakhma*: the dog gives a final glance at the corpse just before it is left.

The *sagdīd* is clearly depicted on the central panel of the funerary bed in the Miho Museum, which dates to the Northern Qi period (550-577 CE): in a rocky landscape, in the upper part of the composition, a long-robed Zoroastrian priest stands before a fire altar; the lower part of his face is covered by the *padām*, the white veil that prevents pollution of the sacred fire by human breath [Fig. 1]. Behind him are four men, two kneeling and two standing, holding knives to

Fig. 1. The central panel of the Miho Museum funerary bed depicting the *sagdīd* ceremony.

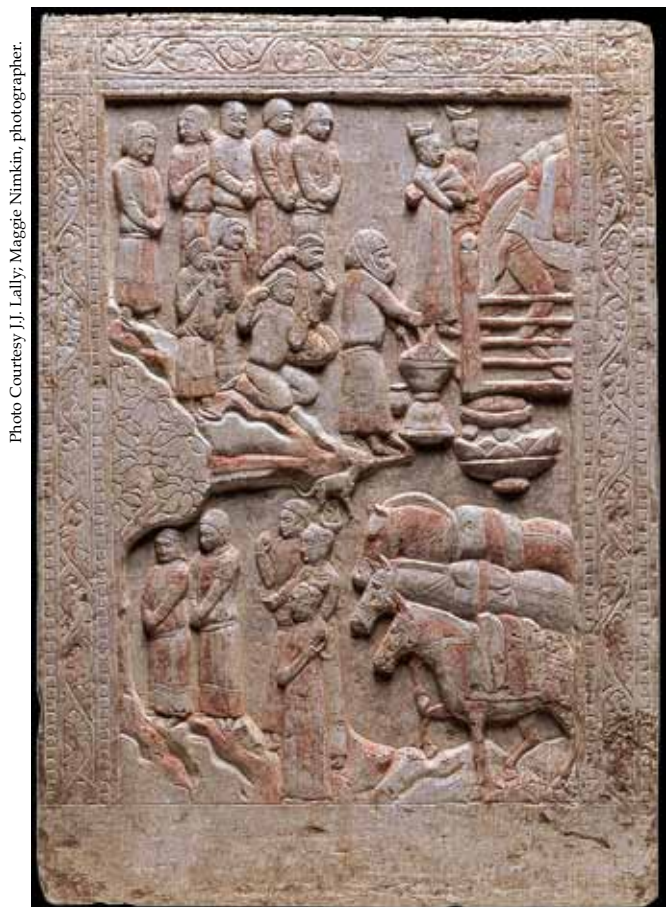


Photo Courtesy J.J. Lally, Maggie Nimkin, photographer.

their heads; five additional men appear behind them, standing with downcast eyes and clasped hands. On the other side of the fire, or to either side of it, are a pedestal dish that holds some type of food, a tripod stand filled with some other foodstuff or incense, and on the far side, between the priest and the brazier, a round-bellied vase. The priest is performing the *āfrīnagān*, the liturgical ceremony of blessing before the sacred fire in which offerings of flowers and such edibles as fruit, bread and wine, water, milk, and sorbet are shared by the worshippers (Modi 1979/1922, pp. 377 ff and esp. pp. 391–94). Beyond these objects, in the upper right, are two women, one of whom holds a folded cloth, and the hindquarters of three camels behind a portion of a railing. We shall return to this part of the composition later. In the lower half of the panel, a group of men and women stand in reverent poses before a tree, with three saddled horses behind them.

The standing and kneeling men who stab at their heads or cut their hair are mourners, exhibiting their grief in a manner that is antithetical to the Zoroastrian texts (Grenet 1984, pp. 40–41) but one that is known from painted scenes of grieving at Sogdian Panjikent in Tajikistan and at Kizil in the Kucha oasis in Chinese Turkestan (Lerner 1995, p. 184). That this is the mourning ritual of *sagdīd* is shown by the figure of a dog, just below that of the priest, in the precise center of the scene: the first *sagdīd* has been performed to ascertain that death has occurred; the fire has now been lit and the dog brought again to gaze on the corpse [Fig. 2]. Whether this is the second or final *sagdīd* is difficult to say. After the washing of the corpse the fire is lit and the dog brought again to gaze on the corpse, and indeed, the women in the

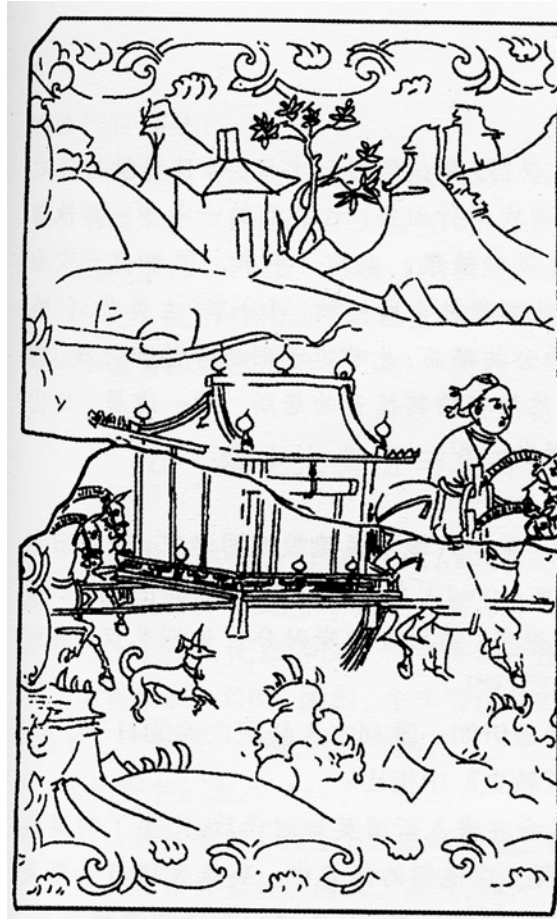


upper right, as will be discussed, appear to be participants in a ritual that occurs before removal of the corpse and the third *sagdīd*. But the rocky landscape and the railing and camels also

Fig. 2. Detail of the *sagdīd* ceremony on the Miho panel.

in the upper right may instead, as will also be discussed, indicate the events of the fourth day or *chahārōm*.

Certainly relating to the third and last *sagdīd* is a scene on one of nine engraved stone slabs that formed an apparently house-shaped sarcophagus found at Yidu, Shandong, and which is dated by its associated epitaph stone (now lost) to 573 CE, during the Northern Qi [Fig. 3] (Lerner forthcoming). The slab shows a rider commanding



After: Zheng Yan, *Wei jin Nanbei chao bhinna nru yanjiu* (Beijing, 2002), p. 24, ill. 173.

Fig. 3: Panel from a sarcophagus found at Yidu, Shandong, 573 CE, showing a sarcophagus being transported (line drawing).

a team of four horses that bears a house-shaped sarcophagus with the same hip-and-gable roof as the sarcophagi that housed the remains of other Central Asians buried in excavated tombs, Yu Hong and Shi Jun.⁸ This surely represents the tomb owner's sarcophagus being brought to his tomb. The presence of the small dog – similar in breed to that on the Miho panel – running alongside refers to the final viewing of the corpse

that will take place when the procession has reached the tomb.

Perhaps also referring to the rites performed at the Chinvat Bridge are the two priests, each standing before a low fire bowl, one on each gatepost of the Anyang bed, both gateposts now in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne [Fig. 4]. Like the priest on the Miho panel, they plunge a long stick or rod into the fire, although the Miho priest holds two sticks to the flames. These are the *barsom*, the ritual twigs used in the typical fire ceremony,⁹ known as an “outer”

service. As noted by Frantz Grenet, this is in contrast with the “inner” service and does not need to take place on consecrated ground (Grenet 2007, pp. 470–71). Long sticks are held in a similar manner by the “priest-birds,” half-man and half-bird, who wear the *padam* over their mouths, and tend the sacred fire on the *sabao* Shi Jun’s sarcophagus, as well as by the pair of “priest-birds” who each hold the barsom over an offering table on the lunette above the door to the *sabao* An Qie’s tomb chamber (Grenet 2007, fig. 9).¹⁰ These hybrid creatures are affiliates of Sraosh, the god of obedience and cultic activity, who is associated with the passage of the soul into paradise. On an ossuary from Sivaz (southern Sogdiana) a priest holds similar sticks over an offering table in what Grenet interprets as the *chahārōm* ceremony (Grenet 1993, fig. 6 and p. 61).

Returning to the *sagdīd*, we have seen that the Miho couch and the Yidu sarcophagus illustrate a funerary ritual central to Zoroastrian belief, as yet not found in the indigenous art of Zoroastrians in Sogdiana. Even though on the evidence of these panels Zoroastrians in China do not seem to have actually exposed the corpse (indeed, it was forbidden) they apparently performed the *sagdīd*, with the third and final one presumably taking



Photo courtesy of the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne.

Fig. 4: Ends of the Anyang gateposts, each showing a priest holding the barsom.

place at the tomb instead of at a *dakhma*.¹¹

The Sedra

At the end of the last watch of the third day, the priest blesses a length of cloth that will serve as “a ‘spirit-garment’ for the soul in the hereafter.” This is the *sedra*, symbolic of the sacred shirt that every adult Zoroastrian wears (Boyce 1977, pp. 154–55). Frantz Grenet (2009) has identified as the *sedra* the cloth held by one of the women in the Miho *sagdīd* panel [Fig. 5]. This seems to be, so far, the only depiction of the *sedra* in the funeral rite.¹²

The Chinvat Bridge

At the dawn of the fourth day the soul of the deceased crosses the “Bridge of Judgment” (*Chinvat Pul*). Various rites are performed to facilitate this difficult passage: if the deceased’s good thoughts, words and deeds in life are deemed sufficient, the bridge widens and the soul is met by a beautiful maiden, the *dēn*, who helps it cross over to paradise (called by Zoroastrians the “House of Song”); however, if the soul has been judged wicked, the *dēn* appears as an ugly maiden, the bridge narrows like a razor blade, and the soul falls into hell. Determining the soul’s fate is the divine tribunal, consisting of the gods Mithra and Sraosh, along with Rashn, who weighs the good and the evil deeds of the soul with his spiritual balance (Taffazoli 1991).

The weighing of the soul decorates an ossuary from Afrasiab, in Sogdiana (Pugachenkova 1996, fig. 12),¹³ but for illustrations of the *entire* passage over the Chinvat Bridge, as described in the Zoroastrian texts, we again turn to the Sino-Sogdian monuments. Shi

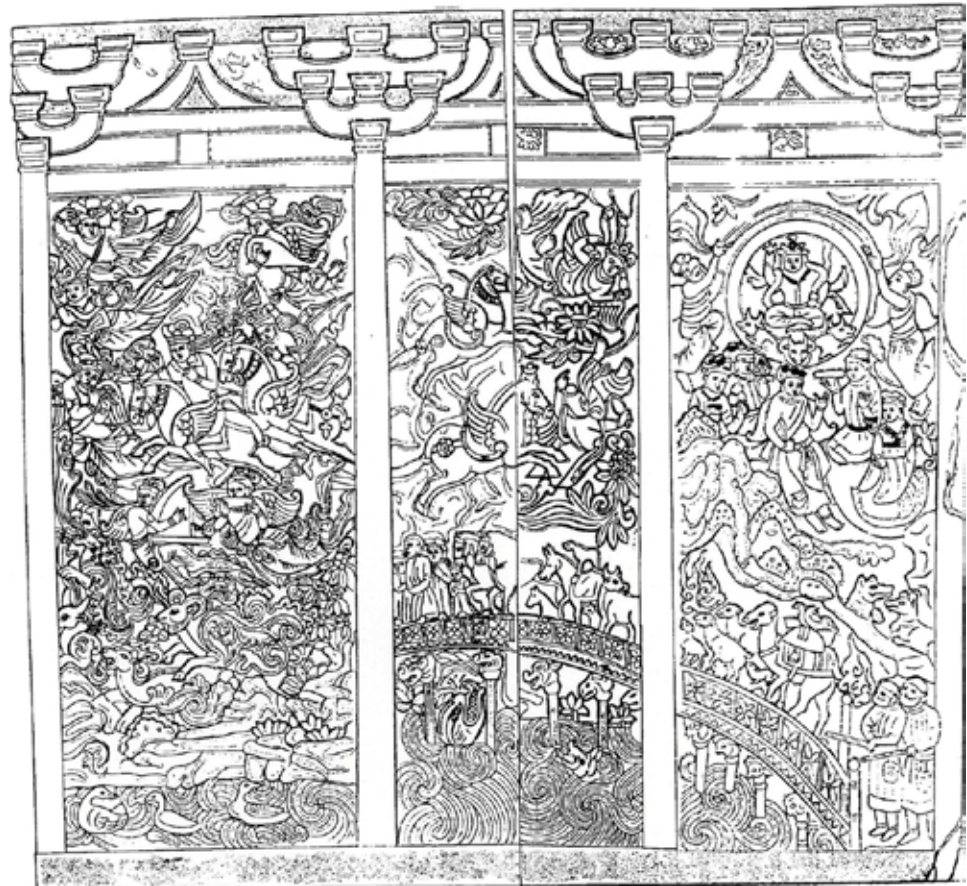
Jun’s sarcophagus provides us with a detailed illustration in the carvings on its eastern wall [Fig. 6, next page]. Following the description of Grenet, Pénélope Riboud, and Yang Junkai (2004,



Fig. 5. Woman holding the sedra, detail from the Miho panel.

Fig. 6. Drawing of the panels on the eastern wall of Shi Jun's sarcophagus, excavated in Xi'an, Shaanxi.

pp. 276–83), in the lower central and right panels we see the Chinvat Bridge, its supports topped by monstrous heads, arching over a churning sea from which other demonic heads emerge. In the lower right, two Zoroastrian priests stand at the entrance of the Bridge, each holding long *barsom* bundles in performance of the *chahārōm* service; shown above them (but probably intended to be standing to the side) are the two dogs that guard the Bridge. These and other details of the soul's journey after death are



After: Kaogu 7 [2004], 44, fig. 6

paralleled in the Zoroastrian texts (see Grenet 2007, pp. 492–93). Moving across the Bridge is a caravan with camels and other beneficent animal species deemed appropriate for paradise. This entourage is led by Shi Jun and his wife who have successfully reached the other end and have ascended to paradise. Above this scene is the next stage in Shi Jun's heavenly ascent, before the Sogdian god Vayu-Weshparkar and the welcoming figure of the *dēn*, pictured here as a winged maiden accompanied by two other women without wings who respectively hold a cup and flowers, attributes that in the texts are ascribed to the *dēn* herself (Grenet 2007, p. 494).

Based on this clear depiction of the soul's passage across the Chinvat Bridge, Yang Junkai has interpreted the upper right portion of the Miho panel with its camels placed behind a railing and the women with the *sedra* as another depiction of the Bridge (Grenet, Riboud and Yang 2004, p. 279). Militating against this identification is the single priest and lone dog; however, this small element at the edge of the panel may refer to the crossing of the Bridge as the next sequence of the funeral

ceremony, after the second *sagdīd* or perhaps the third and after the blessing of the *sedra*. Indeed, it may suggest that the panel actually represents the third *sagdīd* since its setting is a rocky landscape, which could fit with the location of a *dakhma* (see n. 6). Or the Miho panel preserves elements of the Zoroastrian funerary rite as the tomb owner wished it to be presented for eternity.

Conclusion: Zoroastrian imagery and Sino-Sogdian art

The Miho bed, the gateposts of the Anyang bed, and Shi Jun's and the Yidu sarcophagi illustrate specific Zoroastrian beliefs and practices associated with death that are not found in the art of Sogdiana; they are also unique among the other examples we have of funerary furniture from other foreigners' tombs in China. We must note, however, that the beds and sarcophagi of these foreigners – as well as the four examples highlighted here – are replete with other Zoroastrian subject matter: beribboned birds and hybrid creatures, such as the *Senmurv*, who are believed to protect humans from evil and malice;

half-man and half-bird beings in addition to those from Shi Jun's and An Qie's tombs; a depiction of paradise, replete with dancers and musicians (Lerner 1995; Grenet 2007). Most of these images have counterparts in Sogdiana itself, in contrast to the scenes discussed here of actual Zoroastrian funerary practices – rituals that we can observe only on these Sino-Sogdian beds and sarcophagi.

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Notes

1. The hunting scenes do not necessarily commemorate an activity pursued in life by the deceased (especially when a lion hunt is depicted) but more likely perpetuate a popular theme in Sasanian and Sogdian art. In contrast, the banquet scenes, also a major pictorial theme in Iran and Sogdiana, may well immortalize an actual pastime of the deceased and additionally refer to his well-being in paradise. It is noteworthy that both pictorial themes – the hunt and the banquet – are the *razm u basm* (fighting, hunting and feasting) that continue to be celebrated in Iranian poetry and painting of the Islamic period.

2. Yet the use of stone beds and sarcophagi need not be in conflict with Zoroastrian beliefs, as they prevent the body from coming into contact with the earth and thereby polluting it. Further, we cannot be sure that none of the corpses of Central Asians were exposed. While we have evidence from some of the excavated tombs for the interment of the complete body, we cannot be certain that the bodies were not exposed and their bones subsequently gathered and placed in an ossuary or other container upon the bed or within the sarcophagus. See Lerner 2005, pp. 8–12; and note 7 below.

3. Of the six funerary beds, three have been excavated (that found in Tianshui, in Gansu; those of An Qie and Kang Ye in Xi'an, Shaanxi, the Northern Zhou and Sui capital) and three others are in museums: Scaglia's bed, attributed to Anyang, Henan, near Ye, the Northern Qi capital, is divided among the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Musée Guimet, Paris, and the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne, and what most likely is its base is in the Freer Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the other two beds are in the Miho Museum, Shigaraki, Japan; and the Vahid

Kooros collection, Houston, TX. Of the three sarcophagi, two are scientifically excavated, and the third was salvaged from an irrigation ditch: that of Yu Hong, from near Taiyuan, Shanxi; that of Shi Jun (whose Sogdian name was Wirkak) from Xi'an; and that from Yidu, was found as slabs that originally formed the walls of a sarcophagus. References for all nine monuments through 2005 are in Lerner 2005.

4. That these areas were burial grounds not only for Sogdian and other Central Asian elites but for other exalted foreigners is suggested by the discovery in 2005 of the tomb of Li Dan (d. 564), who, according to his epitaph, was a Brahman émigré from Kashmir who in his lifetime was recognized officially for his noble blood, and was appointed Prefect of Hanzhou posthumously by the Emperor (Lerner 2005, p. 2, n. 2).

5. An Qie and Shi Jun, were *sabaos*, a Chinese title indicating the head of the local Sogdian community, in Tongzhou (Dali, northeast of Xi'an) and Liangzhou (Wuwei), respectively. These Sogdian communities (though they probably included other foreigners), consisted mainly of merchants residing in China, but also of others, such as craftsmen (for a discussion of the term, see Dien 2009 and references within). Yu Hong served as an emissary to various countries in Central and Western Asia as well as in India, while Kang Ye was posthumously awarded the provincial governorship of Ganzhou.

6. For example, the annals documenting the latter part of the Northern Wei dynasty (early 6th century) mention royalty and nobility following Zoroastrian precepts. See Liu 1976.

7. The place of exposure need not be an enclosed space built above ground, but can be an arid tract of land so that the corpse cannot contaminate water, earth, or vegetation (see Boyce and Grenet 1991, p. 130). Indeed, the artificially-constructed "tower" as a place of exposure is a development of the Islamic period.

8. The use of house-shaped sarcophagi in China is a development of the 5th century, one century prior to Sogdian use of the form. Wu Hung has noted that such sarcophagi "were favored by [the nomadic] Xianbei, Sogdian and other people of either Chinese or non-Chinese origins who moved to north China from the West" (Wu 2002,

p. 40). These people continue to use sarcophagi, as well as stone beds, into the 6th and early 7th centuries, the same time span as the Central Asian burials. For further discussion of house-shaped sarcophagi in China and house-shaped ossuaries in Sogdiana, see Lerner 2005, pp. 8 (with n. 13) and 11.

9. In ancient practice, the *barsom*, as shown in Sogdian and Sino-Sogdian depictions – as well as in Sasanian representations, such as the figures to either side of the fire altar on coin reverses – seems to have made of long sticks; in more recent times the *barsom* is a bundle of short twigs or metal. In contrast to the Sogdian and Sino-Sogdian images, those from Sasanian Iran – on coin reverses, rock reliefs and seals – show the *barsom* raised and never pointed into the fire.

10. A similar pair of bird-men holds what seems to be the *barsom* on a carved base that most likely supported the panels of the Miho bed. However, they do not actually tend the flames, as in place of the fire altar is a Chinese-style censer that appears above them (Juliano and Lerner 2001).

11. Of course, it is possible that the *sagdīd* was not actually practiced, but was an artistic convention, recalling this important funerary rite from the Sogdian homeland. Yet there *is* some evidence of excarnation in China into the early 8th century; and the outdoor setting on the Miho panel may support this. For additional references to exposure of the corpse in China – among Buddhists as well as Zoroastrians – and to evidence of members of the imperial family and the nobility following Zoroastrian precepts, see n. 6, above, and Lerner *forthcoming*, n. 43.

12. Grenet, however, identifies (2009, p. 107) the dressing of the already departed soul in the *sedra* in the decoration of two Sogdian ossuaries found at Sivaz, near Shahr-i Sabz, Uzbekistan, and dated to the 6th or 7th century. In the upper register the soul, naked except for a cap, is being wrapped in a cloth held by two deities, identified by Grenet as the *dēn*, the beautiful maiden who assists the soul in its entrance to paradise, and the god Wahman, the embodiment of Good Thought.

13. In this ossuary fragment, the railing of the Chinvat Bridge and the swirling waters appear below Rashn who holds the scales and Sraosh who stands nearby.

The Painted Vase of Merv in the Context of Central Asian Pre-Islamic Funerary Tradition

Matteo Compareti

Venice

Archaeological ceramic finds from Merv, the historical centre of the ancient region of Margiana, are among the best known of Central Asia. The scale of the corpus of the region's well documented finds has been the result of a long period of careful archaeological work conducted since mid-Soviet times. Until recently, attested Hellenistic and Parthian objects often received the lion's share of attention (Callieri 1996).

"The Painted Vase of Merv" – at present kept in the National Museum of History of Turkmenistan (Ashgabat) – is interesting for several reasons. First, its considerable size: it is about half meter high. Second, this ceramic vessel has unusual, possibly unique decoration [Fig. 1]. And third, its attribution to the 5th-6th century CE makes it post-Parthian. Following an initial analysis by Gennadii Koshelenko, Nicolò Manassero recently made a comprehensive study, and for this reason, many of that article's useful technical

findings will not be repeated here (Koshelenko 1966; Manassero 2003). However, one point is worth mentioning; namely, the archaeological context in which it was found. In fact, despite its painted scenes, identified as Mazdean rituals, the vase is reported to have been recovered during the excavations of a Buddhist *stupa* in a part of Merv called Gyaur Kala. The relevant Soviet scientific literature does not further clarify the context of this enigmatic find. It is surmised that the vase would have contained written documents, the nature of which was never specified. If any of them survived, their present location is unknown.

Painted pottery without any apparent vitrified glaze is well attested in pre-Islamic Central Asia. Fragments from Merv often have figurative decoration. Images of people are common and, at least in one case inscriptions

Fig. 1. Sketch of the four scenes of the painted vase of Merv.





Photo © Matteo Compareti.

Fig. 2. Fragmentary painted vase from Afrasyab/Samarkand.

in Aramaic have been identified (Lunina 1977); Pugačenkova and Usmanova 1995, Fig. 22). There is also a unique fragment from Afrasyab now in the Hermitage Museum [Fig. 2], which deserves some further consideration (Marshak, Raspopova et al. 2006, p. 49). Many things about the vase's decoration suggest it has clear Sogdian antecedents. Important characteristics include the composition's division into different levels of frieze with animals in the upper level (reminiscent of the procession of animals and beasts at Varakhsha) and then the possible representation of people under arches. Other distinctive decorative elements include pomegranates, pearls and indeed the colours themselves. It appears increasingly likely that this kind of painted pottery was well-known and popular in certain periods in pre-Islamic western Central Asia.

In his analysis, Manassero made many interesting observations about the painted scenes on the vase from Merv although some additional iconographic elements may be pointed out. Moreover, Manassero seemed to have accepted implicitly that the vase was of local origin; while Vladimir Lukonin (followed by Boris Marshak) gave it a Persian context, considering it to be a very rare specimen of Sasanian painting (Lukonin 1977, pp. 219–21; Marshak 2002, p. 12). More recently, Markus Mode has identified it as a

cultural artefact of Sogdiana (Mode 2009). These three hypotheses are very interesting and should be approached with the knowledge of two further points. Firstly, in an almost forty-year-old paper, Martha Carter made an attempt to associate the scenes on the vase with the celebration of the New Year festival (*Nawruz*), as is sometimes portrayed (in her opinion) on some Sasanian or Sasanian-related metalwork (Carter 1974, p. 188). Secondly, the scenes of the painted vase may now be compared with some recently-uncovered decorated funerary monuments erected to commemorate important Sogdians then resident in China. Other scholars have tried to show that, on at least three of these "Sino-Sogdian" funerary monuments, there are banquet scenes that should be identified as representing *Nawruz*.

The *Nawruz* hypothesis

In her very detailed paper, Carter discusses a number of pre-Islamic silver plates which undoubtedly share very similar iconographic or technical features. The banquet and funerary scenes also suggested to her an association with the Merv painted vase [Fig. 1]. She also referred to certain elements of later Islamic art (presumably she meant illustrated manuscripts) with clear parallels which also deserve further attention. Overall, her paper is a very good one, well supported by her iconographic analysis and evidence from literature. In particular, she noticed that the eye of the man who is lying on the funerary bed is open. This suggested for her that he should not perhaps be assumed to be dead, as have all other scholars. Carter, moreover, mentions a text by Qazvini (13th century), who describes what a king is supposed to see on the morning of *Nawruz*: a "handsome young man on a fine horse holding a falcon." She identified this description with the hunter on the vase of Merv which also depicts a big bird (Carter 1974, p. 193).

However, other elements suggest that such a precise identification is unjustified and, in fact, Frantz Grenet rejects a number of Carter's ideas (Grenet 1984, p. 197). This debate is discussed below. However, one observation about the parallel between banquet scenes (or better said, "court scenes"), and the celebration of *Nawruz* appears to offer further support to Carter's theories, despite some new discoveries in the field

of Iranian studies. Nonetheless, the lack of any incontrovertible element, such as an inscription on the objects that she assesses, makes caution the better part of valour.

I have recently proposed that the paintings on the western wall of the so-called Hall of the Ambassadors at Afrasyab (c. 660 CE) offer potentially a very good basis for comparison between court scenes on 6th century Sogdian funerary monuments and certain Islamic illustrated manuscripts (Compareti 2009, pp. 88–100). Even though that painted cycle at Afrasyab is probably a representation of local *Nawruz* traditions, it is impossible to give such a precise ascription to other court scenes. In fact, the composition of the Afrasyab cycle has the locals represented on the western and southern walls, while the Chinese are depicted on the northern wall, with the eastern wall dedicated to Indians and, probably, the Turks. It is specifically the comparison with the scene dedicated to China on the northern wall at Afrasyab that offers a strong indication of the nature of the scene on the western wall. Unfortunately, this cannot be done with other objects (the dishes, the Sogdian funerary monuments or the Merv painted vase) since the scenes that embellish them are always found individually to represent largely a single cultural tradition.

There is another argument against identifying the court scenes in Carter’s list with representations of the celebration of *Nawruz*. It is quite probable that the same scheme could have been a kind of generic “iconographic recycling,” adopted for life in local courts throughout pre-Islamic Central Asia and the wider Persian Empire. Therefore, the scenes may not necessarily exclusively be representations of the ceremonies of *Nawruz* (Compareti 2009, pp. 89–100). This is famously true for the pre-Islamic Sasanian courtly images represented on metalwork, or in illustrated manuscripts of the Islamic period. Here, pre-Islamic motifs and scenes were used extensively, without significant change, but employed to represent new ideas (Grabar 1989, pp. 13–32, 60–62, 108–18, 257, 262). Some of these banqueting/court scenes may well have been inspired by these standard representations, circulating throughout the Persian *oikoumene*, of the celebration of *Nawruz* – even at Afrasyab – and

not vice-versa. However, the identification of the western wall in the Hall of the Ambassadors as a representation of the specifically local *Nawruz* ceremonies strongly suggests the contrary.

Hunting scenes possibly had some significant association with *Nawruz*, because of the way the one at Afrasyab is presented, and, as pointed out by another scholar, on other enigmatic Sasanian monuments such as the Taq-i Bustan rock reliefs (Movassat 2005, p. 141). However, the only hunting scene at Afrasyab appears on the wall dedicated to China [Fig. 3], while Taq-i Bustan presents scholars with other problems not yet irrefutably solved, such as the identity of the (late) Sasanian king who commissioned its construction [Fig. 4].

Fig. 3 (above). Right part of the scene on the northern wall at Afrasyab.

Fig. 4 (below). Detail of the relief of the great boar hunt, Taq-i Bustan, Kermanshah. The relief is in a sad state of conservation today, damaged by water seepage and countless graffiti.



After: Al'baum 1975, fig. 16



Photo © Daniel C. Waugh 2010.



After: Trever and Lukonin 1987, pl. 19.

Fig. 5. *Strelka silver dish, Hermitage Museum, Inv. No. S-520.*

One interesting object is the so-called Strelka dish now in the Hermitage Museum [Fig. 5]. Carter mentioned the Strelka dish but without linking it directly with the scene on a piece of metalwork from the British Museum that was the object of her discussion about court scenes and *Nawruz* [Fig. 6]. In fact, both those dishes present a central scene divided into two parts, one above and one below. This does not seem to be a formula employed for metalwork produced for the central Sasanian court. While in the British Museum dish, the two sectors of the central part depict courtly scenes, the Strelka dish also includes a hunting scene in the lower part [Fig. 7]. The two



Photo © Daniel C. Waugh 2009.

Fig. 6. *Kushano-Sasanian silver dish, British Museum, B.M. 124093.*

dishes do not appear to be products attributable to a central Sasanian context – meaning they are probably not from Fars or Mesopotamia. They are more likely to be eastern Iranian. According to Prudence Harper and Boris Marshak, the British Museum dish should be attributed to the Kushano-Sasanians and the Strelka dish to the same region, though a different period – the 5th to 6th century CE.¹

Hunting scenes are a common theme in Sogdian paintings and on the funerary monuments of powerful Sogdians who died in China. Carter made very interesting observations about the British Museum dish and did mention the Strelka one, though without making much of its association with the Iranian New Year festival. This is understandable since the study of the Afrasyab paintings had not yet uncovered their iconographic significance when she was writing.



Photo © Daniel C. Waugh 2006.

Fig. 7. *Detail of the lower part of the Strelka dish.*

Comparison with the “Sino-Sogdian” funerary monuments

Hunts must have been among the most popular and prestigious activities for ancient Iranians and especially Sogdians, since these are the highest frequency scenes found in the Panjikent paintings and on the 6th century Sogdian funerary monuments found in the area of Xi’an. Hunting was also very important for Chinese elites. It is conceivable that sinicized Sogdians wanting to be considered important members of Chinese society could have designed their funerary monuments so as to represent something appreciated in both cultural milieus. As already observed, the hunting scenes usually appear together with banquet scenes, and at least three funerary monuments from Xi’an were embellished with courtly scenes identifiable with the celebration of the Sogdian *Nawruz* (Grenet and Riboud 2003, pp. 136–41; Lerner 2005, p. 24, figs. 10–12).

Before further considering these monuments, other written sources should be examined. The *Xifan ji* by Wei Jie is a 7th century text, the main passages of which have been preserved only in later Chinese sources. In one fragment there is a description of a shooting competition on horseback to be performed by the people of Samarkand one week after the *Nawruz* celebrations, in a forest in the eastern outskirts of the capital (Chavannes 1903, p. 133). There is not enough detail to say whether this competition was associated with a hunt or, better yet, with a New Year celebration hunt. However, the mention of a forest may suggest that, in all probability, the targets of this shooting competition were wild animals.

Among the reliefs of the 6th century sarcophagus belonged to the Sogdian Wirkak, recently found in Xi’an, there are other interesting scenes. Here, a man is represented kneeling and wearing headgear resembling the head of an animal with pointed ears. He is hunting a deer with a bow [Fig. 8]. Even though this is the only such figure



After: Xi'an shi 2005, fig. 27, left.

Fig. 8. Detail of the relief on the base of the Wirkak funerary monument.

depicted in the whole collection of Sogdian funerary monuments, it is worth observing that very similar headgear is shown on at least two painted caskets from the area around the Buddhist complex of Subashi (Kucha). It is worn by musicians and dancers together with animal masks [Fig. 9]. As has been proposed in the past, these scenes may thus be tentatively identified as

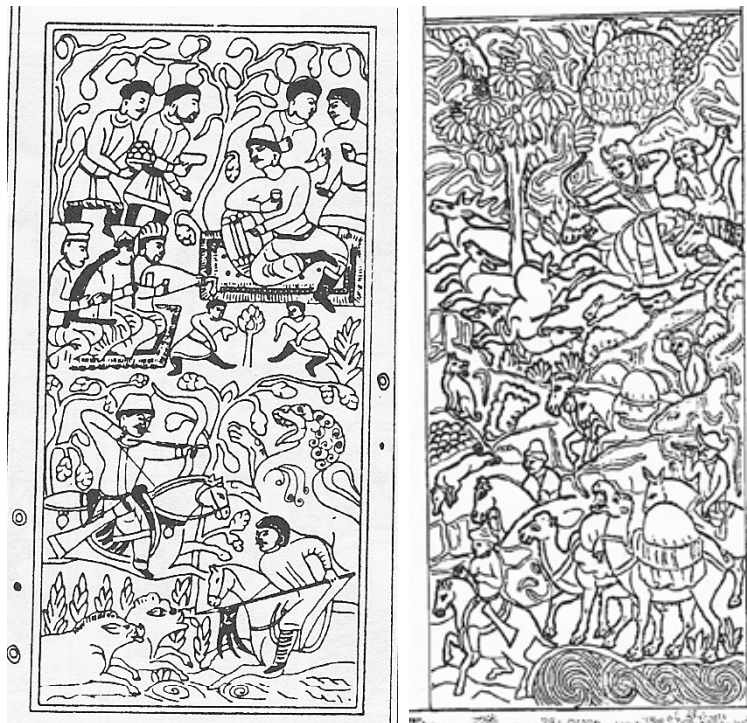


After: Sun 1996, fig. 28.

Fig. 9. Decoration of the Buddhist casket from Subashi, Kucha.

representations of a local festival connected with the New Year celebration (Gaulier 1973, pp. 168–70; Gaulier 1982, p. 338). The *Youyang zazu* (a text on things that were for the Chinese exotic, written in the 9th century) records that in the country of Yanqi (Agni) on the first day of the year and the eighth day of the second month, a local festival is celebrated called *Pomozhe* (Lévi 1933, pp. 12–13).

The ancient inhabitants of Agni were not Iranians but Tokharians, an enigmatic Western “Indo-European” population who embraced Buddhism and were turkicized after the coming of the Uighurs. According to Paul Pelliot, there were Tokharians also living in Turfan and Kucha who observed a *Pomozhe* festival, which was known in Chinese under other names, such as *Poluozhe* or *Sumozhe* (Pelliot 1934, p. 104; Liu 1969, pp. 10, 170). The latter name is definitely the most interesting term. In fact, *Sumozhe* (reconstructed by Pelliot according to the pronunciation of the Tang period as **samacha* or **somacha*) may have had some connection with the Indian god Soma (and his Iranian corresponding divinity Haoma). His festival involved the consumption of intoxicating



After: Rong 2003, fig. 1; Xi'an shi 2005, fig. 27, right.

Fig. 10. a. (left) Banquet and hunting scene of the An Qie funerary bed; b. (right) hunting scene of the Wirkak sarcophagus.

beverages during specific celebrations. This was a practice well-known among ancient Iranian groups and more generally among wider ancient "Indo-European" societies. The initiation of the young warriors may have been associated in some cases with the consumption of intoxicating beverages and linked to an annual festival commemorating a dragon-slayer hero.² This annual festival, observed by some Iranians and Tokharians, could have coincided with the New Year celebrations, a time when people played music and danced, while animal-masked actors performed as recorded in the Chinese texts. It may be possible to identify this in the Sogdian monument in question.³ It is likely some kind of hunt was performed, exactly as depicted on several Sogdian funerary monuments recovered

in China [Fig. 10] and in some of the paintings from Panjikent (Marshak and Raspopova 1994, p. 202, n. 80). This is of course merely a hypothesis advanced on the basis of the rather scant information obtained from indirect sources on Kucha and from archaeology.

Another painting from Panjikent does not represent a hunt but rather a procession of musicians wearing goat (?) skins [Fig. 11]. These figures are possibly celebrating an annual (?) festival, maybe associated with the hunting scene represented in the same room.⁴ Despite the great temporal distance, those scenes are reminiscent of 17th century Persian miniatures where some dancers and musicians are dressed in goat skins (Ettinghausen 1965, pls. III-V). It is not impossible that during the Safavid period, some ostensibly Islamized Persian festivities continued to resound with the influence of pre-Islamic rituals.

The report about the celebration of *pomozhe-sumozhe* does not mention any hunt, and no hunting scenes are found embellishing the Subashi reliquaries. However, the suggestion of actors dressed as animals or beasts calls to mind the images on the sarcophagus of Wirkak and also the descriptions in some Chinese sources dated to the Han period that recount the New Year festival and the processions of actors possibly dressed as dragons and other fantastic creatures.⁵

Again, the only pre-Islamic monument to be positively associated with the Iranian *Nawruz* is represented by the (enigmatic) painted cycle of Afrasyab. The only hypotheses about Persia relate to the Apadana of Persepolis (at present rejected by some scholars [Nylander 1974; Wiesehöfer 1996/2005, p. 25; Briant 1996, pp. 196-198; Imanpour 2006]) and the very enigmatic Taq-i Bustan reliefs. Other possible depictions of the celebration of *Nawruz* can be found in the Kushano-Sasanian



After: Marshak and Raspopova 2003, fig. 110.

Fig. 11. Detail of a painting representing people dancing and playing music dressed with goat skins, Panjikent.

silver dish in the British Museum studied by Carter, the Strelka dish and the 6th century Sogdian funerary monuments of Xi'an.

All 6th century funerary monuments belonging to important Sogdians resident in China show at least one panel embellished with reliefs representing a hunting scene. In the present list only two of them coming from controlled professional excavations have been reproduced. The panel in Fig. 10a embellished the An Qie funerary bed, which belonged to a man whose name clearly reveals his Sogdian origins and, even more remarkably, his precise origin – the region of Bukhara (in Chinese: *An*). The second panel comes from the Wirkak sarcophagus [Fig. 10b]. This is not the most archetypical of Sogdian funerary monuments, but it does display very clear Iranian elements. Some scholars have identified banquet scenes on other panels of the same monuments that may possibly be associated with the celebration

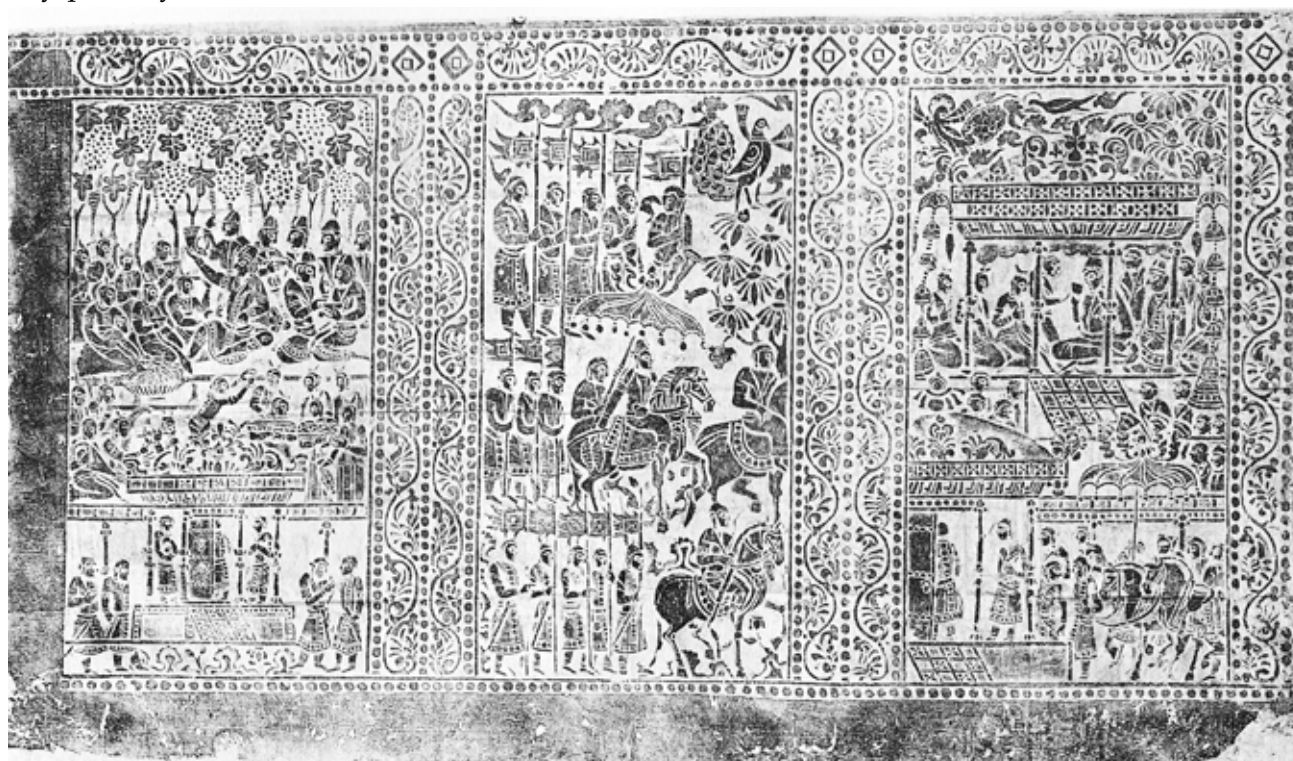


Fig. 12. Banquet scene of the Wirkak sarcophagus.

After: Xi'anshi 2005, fig. 50.

of *Nawruz* (Grenet and Riboud 2003, p. 136; Lerner 2005, p. 24). Actually the panel identified with the celebration of the *Nawruz* on the An Qie funerary bed is the one where the hunt also appears [Fig. 10a]. The two moments of the life of An Qie (?) divide the panel in two parts almost equal in term of space. They are separated by a frame of vegetal elements, most likely grapes. The main character of the two scenes appears to be always An Qie himself, for in both, he is wearing the same hat. The panels of the Wirkak sarcophagus include more complex decoration. Again, in the scene considered to be a representation of the *Nawruz* banquet, the grape vine occupies the whole of the upper portion [Fig. 12]. It is worth observing that Wirkak too

Fig. 13. Banquet scene of the Anyang funerary bed.



After: Shepherd 1966, fig. 148.

is represented wearing a hat very similar to the one An Qie sports. To be precise, the Anyang (or, better, Zhangdefu) funerary bed is the third of these monuments to depict a scene probably connected with the celebration of the *Nawruz*. In this case also, the grape vines are represented very realistically [Fig. 13]. No hunting scenes appear on the Anyang funerary bed, whose excavation was not reported and whose panels are at present dispersed among several important museums in Europe and America (Priewe 2009). It is not impossible that some panels of this funerary bed have been lost, and also one (or more?) of these possibly may have depicted the hunting scene.

Both funerary beds and sarcophagi reflect, and survived because of, very well known Chinese funerary practices which were not observed in Central Asia or Persia except in very rare cases. One of these rare cases where we have something surviving to go on is the painted vase of Merv. In China epitaphs represent a cultural convention and are to be found in the grave sometimes both in Chinese and the Sogdian language (as in the case of Wirkak), while in Iranian lands inscriptions were not common.

The banquet and hunting scenes also perfectly fit either an Iranian or Chinese sphere, because they have been strong elements of both cultures since ancient times and it seems likely, at least in the Persian world, had a connection with funerals. The same scenes appear also on the Merv vase, whose connection with death is evident. Even though Carter based some of her inferences about one of the four scenes of the painted vase on the open eye of the prone man, allowing her to conclude that it could represent the *Nawruz* celebration, as everyone knows the dead can have wide-open eyes. It could also be that the man was still alive in the very moment represented in the scene although was on the point of passing away. If the man with a cup in his left hand sitting just above the head of the dead/dying man is considered part of the mourning scene, then the blessing gesture he is making with two fingers of his right hand may have some meaning associated with death. This sign – which reminds one of an icon common in Christianity of the blessing Christ – is also repeated by Iranian divinities on Sogdian ossuaries (*astodan*) and on Kushan coins (Mithra). It can also be identified on the famous *rhyta* from

Nisa.⁶ As can be seen on one panel of the Anyang funerary bed [Fig. 13] and in some paintings from Panjikent, the use of a *rhyton* during the banquet (to be possibly identified with the *Nawruz*?) was common among Sogdians (Jäger, 2006).

The presence on the Merv vase of two women, who may be crying for the death of the open-eyed man, should also be noted. People crying for the dead or lacerating their faces with a knife are represented not only on some Central Asian ossuaries and in lamentation paintings, especially in Sogdiana and in the Tarim Basin, but are also reported in Chinese sources (Grenet 1984, pp. 259–64). Lastly, if the group on the left can be identified as pallbearers transporting a corpse, then it is evident that the main subject of the Merv vase is a funeral. The transportation of the corpse seems to be a significant moment in the life of the occupant of the Sogdian funerary monuments from Xi'an, since some panels are invariably dedicated to the image of an oxcart and a harnessed horse under an umbrella without a rider (Riboud 2003). These are clear references to the last journey of the wife and husband respectively and are in keeping with Chinese practices, although the presence of the horse (or, most likely, the horse sacrifice) had some importance in enacting the celebration of the Iranian *Nawruz* (Lerner 2005, pp. 17–18).

Also for this part of the decorative cycle of the Merv vase, a parallel with the scenes on the Sogdian funerary monuments may be proposed. One last element deserves to be considered in detail and this will be the focus of the following section of the present study.

A recurrent pattern

There is an interesting characteristic of the big bird represented in front of the hunter, also noted by Manassero – two circular elements above its head resembling ears or feathers like those of a peacock [Fig. 1]. Manassero did not say much on this point but, in a footnote, just observed that these circular elements could indicate a Simurgh (Pahl. *Senmuro*, Av. *Saena*). This would convey some sort of epic significance on the painted vase and connect it to Persian myth and literature (Manassero 2003, p. 142). The association that he made with the bird and a Simurgh is very

appropriate because this is exactly what is reproduced in illustrated books of the Islamic period.

Stylistically, the Simurgh has been represented in Persian art since the Ilkhanid period as a Chinese phoenix or, in some book illustrations from the 1330s and 1340s, as a big bird with long feathers on its head resembling an owl or a parrot [Fig. 14]

(Swietochowski and Carboni 1994, pp. 18-19; cat. nos. 3 e-h, 7 a-b, 8; figs. 17, 25). There is also a good argument to be made that during the pre-Islamic period the Simurgh was a fantastic bird and not the composite monster identified many years ago by Kamilla Trever. That monster (what we could call the "pseudo-Simurgh") appeared quite late in Sasanian art as, for example, at Taq-i Bustan [Fig. 4], and, as proposed by Alessandro Bausani and Boris Marshak, it should be considered a representation of the royal glory of the Sasanians. I suggested recently that the Simurgh be identified with the big bird with ears that is shown flying with a female figure in its claws on a Sasanian silver dish kept in the Hermitage Museum [Fig. 15]. The iconography is likely to have been based on the Indian Garuda (which explains the presence of a woman and not the usual young Zal of Islamic art [Azarpay 1995]). But the scene would have been understood by an Iranian audience too, since in Sogdian Buddhist literature the name *synmry* (that is to say, Simurgh) can be found in place of Garuda (Compareti 2006, n. 24; Compareti 2009-2010; Compareti 2010, pp. 99-104).

The only point of disagreement with Manassero's insightful observation is that he, and all other scholars who have studied the painted vase of Merv



Fig. 14. Representations of the Simurgh in Islamic book illustration.

before him, considered the bird to be the target of the hunter because the rider is advancing in the direction of the bird.⁷ However, as Manassero himself already noted, there are several problematic points in the four scenes decorating the painted vase of Merv, and so it is difficult to identify whether one element or person belongs to one scene or the next one.

In this writer's opinion, the gazelle behind the hunter is the real target and not the bird. In fact, if the bird is considered the target, the presence of the gazelle would be completely redundant. We should also observe that in the whole attested artistic production of the pre-Islamic Iranian peoples (especially Sogdian painting and Sasanian metalwork) there is not a single example of a hunter killing a bird. The usual prey is a lion, wild boar, stag, gazelle or another animal of this kind.⁸ Also, in all the Sogdian funerary monuments recovered in China, hunters are always represented in the act of killing many



Fig. 15. A fantastic giant bird with a woman in its claws on a Sasanian silver dish, State Hermitage Museum Inv. No. S-217

animals but not birds. However, it is hard to believe there was no bird hunting at all in ancient Iranian lands. The reason for this absence may be intentional on the part of Iranian artists who did not want to create confusion between birds; or, fowling may simply not have been considered a prestigious enough activity to be thought worthy of reproducing on objects of art and craft.

If the bird is not considered to be an element of the hunting scene, it is obvious that the only other scene it could fit is the banquet scene just below. Fantastic birds can be observed often in funerary Sogdian monuments from Xi'an hovering around banqueting scenes. Judith Lerner has already attracted the attention of students of Iranian arts to this detail (Lerner 2005, p. 25). In particular, in the Anyang panels at least two fantastic haloed birds appear above the building where the two foreigners and their attendants are drinking exactly as in the banquet scene on the vase from Merv [Fig. 13].

Since there is more than one bird, it becomes more difficult to consider them to be multiple representations of a Simugh. These possibly all represent the divine glory (Pahl. *Xwarrah*, Sog. *Farn*). Divine protection/benevolence may also sometimes be represented as a bird with ribbons or a halo, or a ring in its beak. The interchangeable bird as representation of divine manifestation or protection has been noted already in the Avesta and indeed as a recurring motif in Persian arts since the pre-Sasanian period.⁹

Lerner noted that beribboned or haloed birds appear mostly on banquet scenes which are not to be connected with the *Nawruz* celebration. In fact, they can be observed in the scenes where the important couple (possibly the occupants of the grave) engages in the act of drinking. If the birds are identified as a symbol of divine protection or benevolence, then these banquet scenes may be understood as an important moment in the life of the occupants of the grave, most likely a marriage, although funerary banquets were also an important subject that was given artistic expression by many ancient peoples.¹⁰ This is possibly also the meaning of the banqueting scene on the vase from Merv: a wedding banquet where the man (who is also represented in the other scenes) is holding in his hands an unidentifiable

object that is identical to the one in the hand of his wife (a bunch of flowers?).¹¹ He also holds a cup full of fruits, most likely individual grapes. One can imagine that, between the two fingers, where unfortunately the paint has faded, the woman was holding one of those grapes.

Conclusion

The 6th century funerary monuments which belonged to important Sogdians recently found in the area of Xi'an appeared to be the perfect yardstick with which to compare the scenes on the painted vase from Merv in the hope of arriving at an improved understanding, or at least a more insightful interpretation of it. This comparison has helped make clear that the context of that vase is very likely a funerary one. Thus, scholars (such as Frantz Grenet) who identified the vase as a local variant of an ossuary were in all probability correct.

Since the funerary monuments in China are all dated to the 6th century CE, a better chronology may be proposed for the vase itself, which should date it no later than the 6th century. Prudence would suggest we should say 5th-6th century.

The four scenes of the vase appear to have the same main character – the bearded man – represented at different moments of his life: marriage, hunting, in death and being transported to the grave/cemetery. The way he is dressed, his flowering crown and his makeup are probably to be connected to an important event, although some literary and archaeological sources have recorded that both male and female Central Asians made frequent use of cosmetics since at least Parthian times (Invernizzi 1990; Kaim 2010, p. 328).

The presence of the fantastical bird is a key element for the correct interpretation of the whole painted cycle on the vase. It should not be identified as the target of the hunter or a falcon used to hunt but rather as the manifestation of divine protection/benevolence, a totem that can also often be found on the Sogdian funerary monuments from Xi'an in banqueting scenes.

Many other details in the scenes of the painted vase from Merv still await identification. For example, there is no persuasive theory for the

presence of the letter-like decoration on the garments of some of the figures. These can perhaps be identified with *tamgas*, although it is unclear why they are different and are associated only with some people and not with others. In the absence of almost any other archaeological evidence, many details of the vase from Merv may be destined to remain subject to unverifiable hypotheses for some time to come.

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Notes

1. Harper and Meyers 1981, pp. 108–10; Marshak 1986, figs. 96. See also B. Marshak in *Splendeur* 1993, cat. no. 61; *Perses sassanides*, 2006, cat. no. 34. For the British Museum dish, see also B. Overlaet in *Splendeur* 1993, cat. no. 62.

2. Widengren 1959, pp. 252–53; Widengren 1965, pp. 41–99; Ustinova 2002, pp. 105–15; Russell 2004. These practices were common also among other so-called "Indo-European" societies such as, for example, the Celts and the Germans when the warrior was ritually transformed into a totemic animal (generally a wolf) (Speidel 2002). It is worth remembering that the Sogdians were celebrated in Chinese sources as very fond of music, dance and wine: Chavannes 1903, p. 134. *Sumozhe* is very similar to the Japanese *Somakusa*,

a festival which was introduced from the "West" through China into Japan to be celebrated by musicians and dancers wearing animal and monstrous masks (Eckardt 1953).

3. On the representations of plays in Sogdiana when actors worn special costumes, see Marshak and Raspopova 1994, p. 200; Compareti 2009, pp. 163–67.

4. At least one other scene of dancing people can be observed at Panjikent (XXI/2) (Belenizkij 1980, p. 119). Customs appear in other Sogdian paintings such as in temple II at Panjikent where some actors are dressed as local divinities (Marshak and Raspopova 1994). These customs are described in Sogdian Buddhist literature too (Tremblay 2007, p. 95).

5. It is worth observing that, even today, people dressed in a dragon costume dance in the street during the traditional Chinese New Year celebrations (Bodde 1975, pp. 159–60). Not every scholar was convinced by Bodde's ideas about the connection between the Chinese New Year and the monsters (cf. Knechtges 1982, pp. 230–33). However, such ideas seem to be supported by studies of Han funerary art (Bulling 1966–1967; James 1985, p. 284; Berger 1998, p. 50–52).

6. On the Sogdian *astodan*, see Grenet 1986, figs. 39, 45; Grenet 2002, fig. 222, pl. 231. On Kushan coins, see Grenet 2006, fig. 2. I owe the information about the *rhyta* from Nisa to E. Pappalardo who presented an interesting paper on the occasion of a conference at the Hermitage Museum: *The Sogdians at Home and in the Colonies. Papers Presented on the Occasion of the 75th Birthday of Boris Il'ich Marshak*, 13th–14th November 2008, Sankt-Peterburg. On the gesture on the *rhyta* from Nisa, see Masson and Pugačenkova 1982, p. 79, pl. 81.1. On this gesture see also Choksy 1987, pp. 204–05.

7. Carter proposed (cautiously) the identification of that scene as hunting with a falcon (Carter 1974, p. 193), but this idea is not supported by pre-Islamic Iranian culture and art where there are no representations of falconry. Moreover, if the hunter is hunting with the falcon, why he is also using a bow? Further, how he could expect to hunt a gazelle with a falcon? To my knowledge, only Chiara Silvi Antonini observed that the real target of the hunter was not the bird but

the gazelle: Silvi Antonini 2003, p. 103.

8. There is only one piece of metalwork (possibly not a central Sasanian one) recovered in China and now part of a Japanese private collection that is embellished with a hunting king shooting at ostriches that, in any case, are non-flying birds (Sun 1999).

9. Compareti 2006, figs. 7–8. It is worth noting that, in the Strelka dish (Fig. 7) a bird is represented on the left part of the hunting scene. It is definitely not the target of the hunting king because, most likely, this is a manifestation of divine protection. Something similar can be observed very often in Sasanian art and in Sogdian paintings (Azarpay 1975).

10. Funerary banquets can be observed in Greco-Roman art during the pagan and Christian

periods such as in the Iranian world, also during the Islamic period (Silvi Antonini 1996).

11. In one silver dish kept in the National Library in Paris that Marshak considered to be a product of 6th century Tokharistan, eight women appear around a central goddess sitting on a dragon [Fig. 16] (Marshak 1986, fig. 187). The scene is not clear but the presence of the dragon and two crescents containing a (male?) bust seem to point at the divine nature of the representation. The only lady with a bird in her left hand who looks like dancing is also holding a bunch of flowers or a vegetal element in her right hand. Once more, it is a completely enigmatic scene but it is worth noting the objects in her hands, the crown and the short hair that are very similar to the attributes of the bearded man in the Merv vase.



Albert Ja. I. Semirnov, ed. *Vostochnoe
senstvo* (S.-Peterburg, 1909), No. 40.

Fig. 16. The silver dish in the Bibliothèque nationale, found prior to 1843, probably in the Urals.

New Evidence on Cultural Relations in Northeastern Iran in the Parthian Period: Results of Archaeological Excavations at Dibaj Damghan

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Archaeological research in Iran has devoted less attention to the northeastern part of the country than to other regions. However, northeastern Iran has been the location of important developments in human settlement from pre-history to the present. Although the Damghan region [Fig. 1] has been the location of significant historical events, in particular for the Parthian era we have lacked adequate data. Thus the results of research in the Dibaj Damghan area can help clarify issues regarding the material culture and the wider interactions of the region.

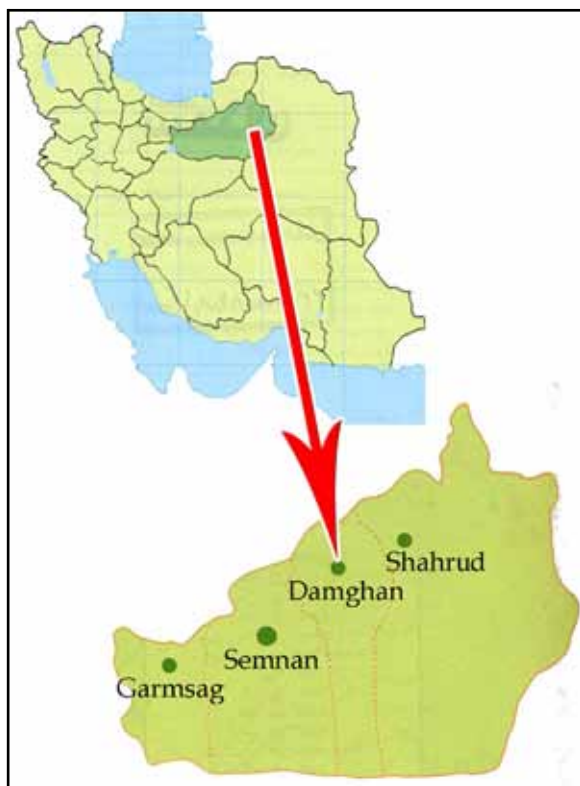


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of Damghan.

The Parthians were one of the tribes of the Dahi union who nomadized in the desert between the lower Oxus River (Amudarya) and the Caspian Sea. The Dahi interacted with the Massagets and other tribes which were immigrant or residing in villages of Central Asia (D'iakonov 1961/2001, p. 202; Schippmann 1980/2005, pp. 19–20). The word *Parth* has been confirmed in inscriptions of the early Sasanian dynasty. Local people used the Parthian language until the middle of the 4th century CE in southern Turkmenistan (including Margiana) and northeastern Iran (Media, Khorasan and Sistan) (Koshelenko et al. 1995, p. 55). Parthian expansion under Mithradates (Mehrddad) I (171–139 BCE) restored the ancient Achaemenid empire thus making the Parthians, as Ghirshman suggested, the connecting link between the Sasanian and Achaemenid dynasties (Clark 2007, pp. 439–46).

There is as yet no thorough archaeological investigation of the Parthian period of Iran's history (ca. 238 BCE to 226 CE). To date, the region to be discussed here, Dibaj Damghan, has seen limited excavations and archaeological survey which could contribute to a better understanding of the history of northeastern Iran. Not the least of the accomplishments of such work would be to illuminate the various artistic influences which shaped the material culture of the region. In excavations during 2008 and 2009, the author has added significantly to our knowledge of Parthian era settlements and clarified the cultural sequences in their development. She places this material in a comparative framework for adjacent areas of northeastern Iran, thus illustrating their interconnection with developments in Dibaj Damghan. It is significant that Dibaj Tepe (hill) is



Fig. 2. Dibaj Damghan Tepe as seen from the north.

located near Hecatompylos (Shahr-i Qumis), thus suggesting its special importance in the history of the "Silk Road."

Geographical position of the region

Dibaj Tepe [Figs. 2, 3] is located 53 km to the north of Damghan in a mountainous region with the geographical coordinates of N: 4041817 and E: 40 S 0249920. The Neyshabur (Nishapur) and Damghan plains form part of an East-West route extending from Afghanistan to Shahrud, sometimes known as the "Great Khorasan Road." Damghan itself is on the northern edge of the desert. That this route has been of great importance from about 4000 BCE down to the Sasanian period is demonstrated by artifacts made of lapis lazuli, white marble and turquoise discovered at various historical sites (Hiebert and Dyson 2002, p. 116). The terrain of Iran generally is marked by mountainous borders and barriers interspersed with valleys and by broad expanses of desert (Cambridge History 1968, Vol. 1, p. 15). Khorasan is bordered on its northwest by the Gorgan and Atrek Rivers and in the north and northeast by the Kopet Dag

Fig. 4. Map showing the topography of North-eastern Iran.

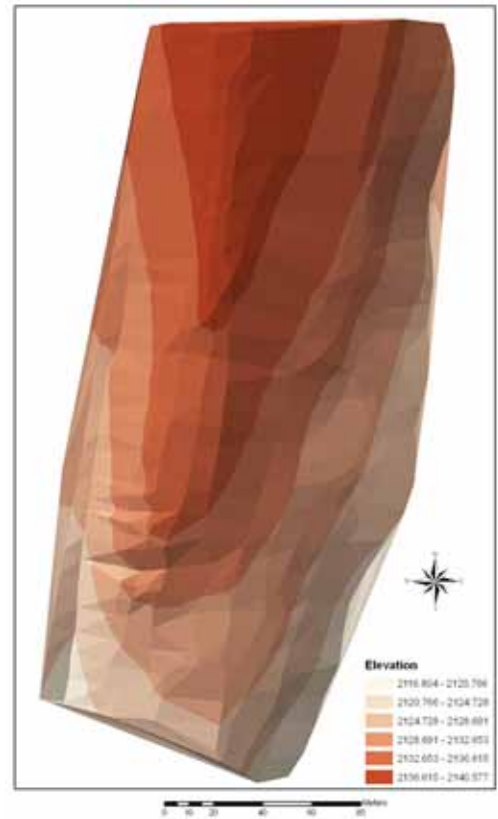


Fig. 3. Topographic map of Dibaj Tepe.

mountains and their subsidiary ranges [Fig. 4]. The Mashhad plain in the northeast is bordered on the north by the Kuh-e Hazar Masjid (Kopet Dag) range, whose highest peak rises to over 3000 m., and on the south by the Kuh-e Binalud and Kuh-e Shah Jahan mountains (Hiebert and Dyson 2002, p. 115; Eduljee 2007, p. 9).

Most ancient settlements were situated along the northern or southern borders of the mountains or were located in the mountain valleys, where there was a predictable supply of water and

Map source: Operational Navigation Chart ONC-G5 <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/txu-pclmaps-oclc-8322829_g_5.jpg>.

sufficient rainfall for agriculture. Beyond was uninhabitable desert.

Archaeological evidence and the history of the region in the Parthian era

Archaeological excavations have been undertaken at Shahr-i Qumis, very probably the historic Hecatompylos, located on the “Great Khorasan Road” in the region of Damghan. The excavations uncovered hundreds of clay pots that can be dated from the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE on through the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian periods (Hansman and Stronach 1970a, p. 30). Information recorded in China probably some time in the 2nd century CE includes this description of Parthia: “The main centre of the Kingdom of Anxi [Parthia] is the town of Hedu [Hecatompylos]... [Parthia] is several thousand *li* across. There are several hundred small towns” (Hill 2009, p. 23). Political consolidation of Parthia by Mithradates (Mehrddad) I (171–139 BCE) was accompanied by the expansion of Parthian territory to incorporate major cities such as Seleucia on the Tigris, Dura Europos and Susa.

Various finds at Shahr-i Qumis help establish its chronology. Seven coins attributed Orodes I (ca. 80–77 BCE) or his immediate predecessor were found in its Area VII. Ostraca (sherds) with Parthian inscriptions were also found in this building (Bivar 1981, pp. 81–2). They seem to relate to monetary donations, as do Parthian inscriptions found at Ak-depe and other sites in southern Turkmenistan (Livshits 1993, p. 75). Sixteen significant seals were discovered in Area V at Shahr-i Qumis (Bivar 1982, p.161).

While Shahr-i Qumis may have been a major political and military center, it was only one of a number of strategically located Parthian fortresses in northeastern Iran (Trinkaus 1981, p.35). Important archaeological discoveries in part dating from the Parthian period have been made along the Gorgon Wall and the defensive castles in the Gorgon Plain (Kiani 1982b, p. 9), the latter being an area which had previously been significant for the Achaemenids and then would continue to be of importance under the Sasanians. Construction in this region was especially impressive under the

Arsacid and Sasanian rulers (Kiani 1982a, p. 78). Archaeological investigations in 2007 based on the satellite images led to the discovery of sites along both the northern and southern sides of the wall. Pottery and other objects dated these to the Sasanian and the Parthian eras (Rekavandi et al. 2008, p. 153). Another of the locations of a significant Parthian presence in the northeast is Tureng Tepe, which was excavated between 1960 and 1975 (Boucharlat and Lecomte 1987, p.1). Parthian sites are also found in the valley of the Atrek River (Ricciardi 1980, p. 62–4). Just north of the present borders of Iran in Turkmenistan are

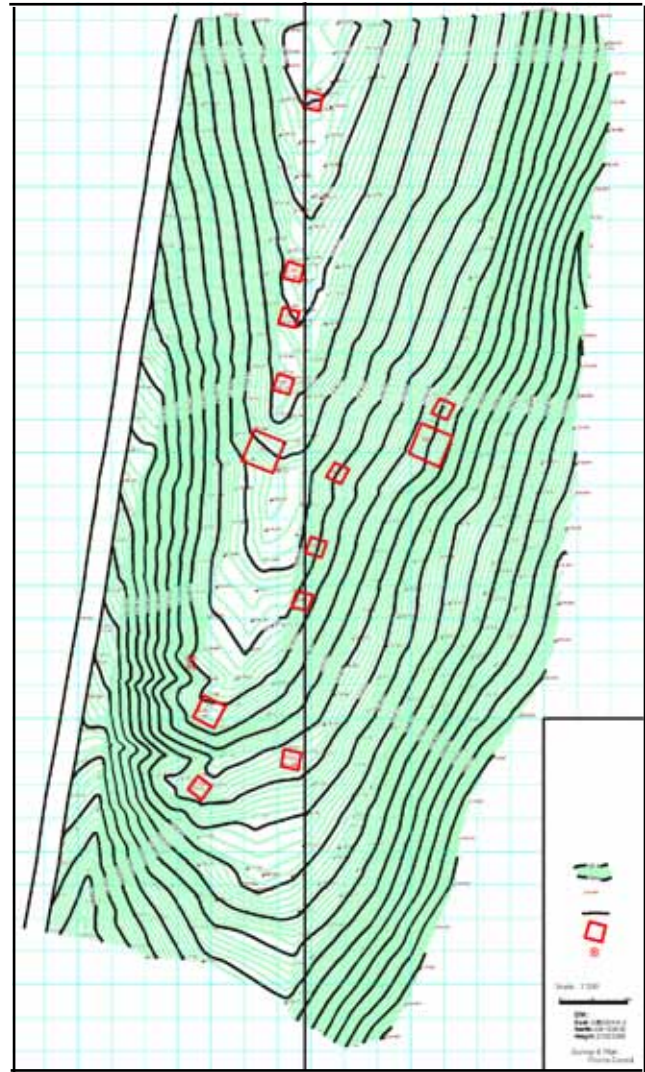


Fig. 5. Excavation plan for the entire site, plotted on a topographic map. The rectangular areas (red in the online version of this journal) are the excavation trenches. Readers should note that the original drawing includes very careful elevation measurements taken throughout the site, the details not visible here.

the important Parthian sites of Merv and Nisa. The density of settlement around Merv makes it very important for establishing a full chronology of the early history (Herrmann et al. 1996, p. 2). Nisa, excavated in the 1930s, was the first Parthian capital (Mongait 1959, p. 269; Pilipko 2008, p. 33; Curtis 2001, p. 299). Yet another Parthian settlement in southern Turkmenistan was in the Serakhs Oasis next to the Tajan River (Kaim 2008, pp. 128-9).

Architectural discoveries at Dibaj Tepe

After the surveying and gridding operations at this site, thirteen trenches of different dimensions were dug [Fig. 5]. In what follows, for three of

these trenches we will describe the architectural data, then the pottery and, finally, discuss their historical influences. A feature system of numbering has been used for reference.

Trench II

A trench was excavated with the dimension of 5 x 5 m oriented north-south on the top of the hill [Figs. 6, 7]. Judging from the buried remains, three graves found in the upper layers of this trench belong to the early Islamic era. The graves were placed on one level and in the west-east direction. The lower layers of the site were found to be related to the Parthian era.

Feature 1001. This structure includes a rubble wall with binding mud and has three rows in three columns extending from north to south.

Feature 1002. It is a round stove made of terra-cotta at a depth of 100 cm. The diameter of the stove's opening is 45 cm and its height is 15 cm.

Feature 1003. This structure also is a round stove made of terra-cotta and is located almost opposite Feature 1002 at a depth of 100 cm [Fig. 8]. The diameter of the stove's opening is 50 cm and its height is 18 cm.

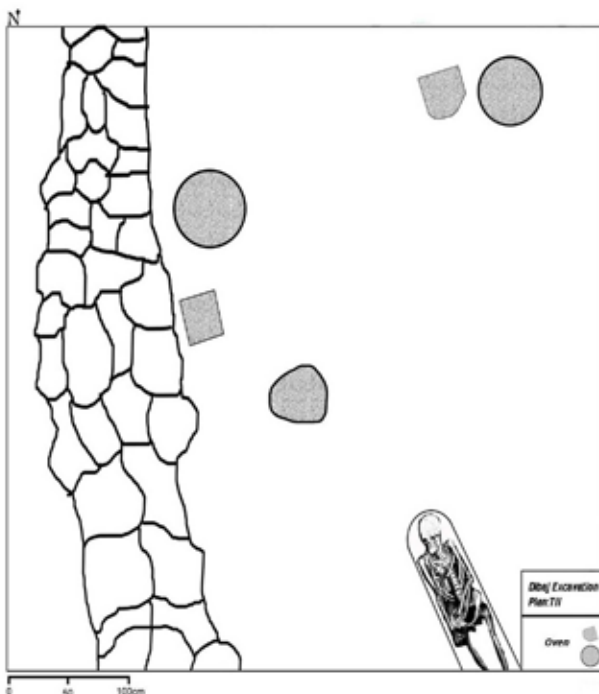


Fig. 6 (upper left). View of Trench II from the south.

Fig. 7 (lower left). Plan of Trench II.

Fig. 8 (below). The stove/oven of Feature 1003 in Trench II, seen from the south.





Fig. 9 (above). View of Trench VI from the northwest.

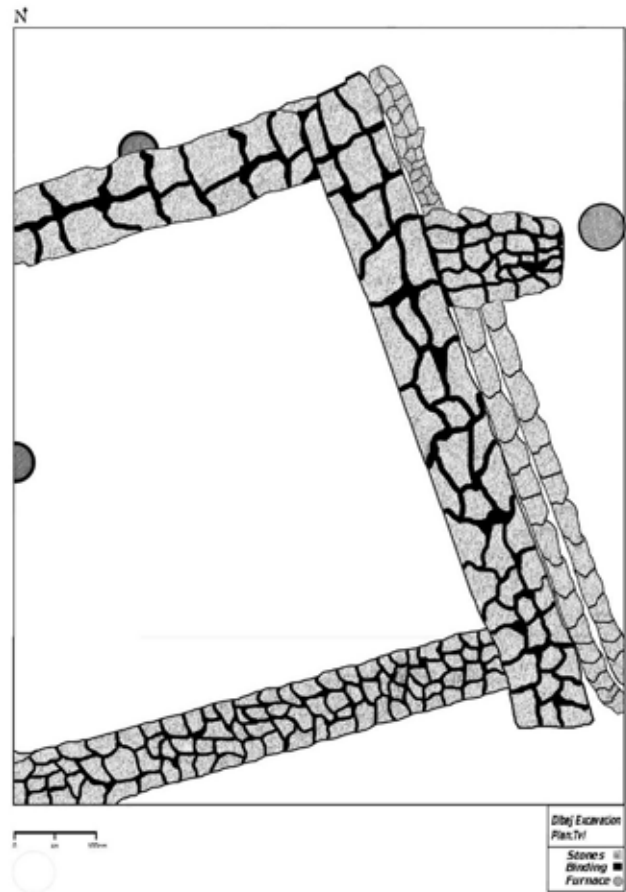


Fig. 10 (right). Plan of Trench VI.

Feature 1004. This structure, a stove or an oven with an irregular form, is at a depth of 100 cm. The diameter of its opening is 38 cm and its height is 10 cm.

Trench VI

Trench VI was made in a north-south orientation on the south side of the hill and on a gentle slope [Figs. 9, 10]. Its dimensions were initially 5 x 5 m and then were extended to 7 x 7 m during excavation.

Feature 1001. This structure includes a rubble wall with binding mud extending from north of the trench to the south. The wall was constructed of stone rubble and river stones used in three rows and three columns. The wall is 550 cm long, 100 cm wide and 110 cm high.

Feature 1002. This structure is a rubble wall extending towards the west and attached to Feature 1001 from its beginning. This structure was made of river-stone rubble with binding mud in two rows and one column.

Feature 1003. This structure, at a depth of 95 cm, includes two rubble rows parallel to each other in the same direction [Fig. 11]. It is located to the right of Feature 1001 and has a regular shape. The distance between two rubble rows is 30 cm, and the space between



Fig. 11. Feature 1003 in Trench VI.



Fig. 12. Feature 1004 in Trench VI.

them has been filled with brick and flagstone. The wall has a length of 340 cm and a width of 30 cm.

Feature 1004. This structure includes a row of stones like a platform attached to Feature 1001 [Fig. 12]. This structure is also attached to Features 1002 and 1003.

Feature 1005. This structure is at a depth of 135 cm in a layer lower than Feature 1003 but like it and parallel to Feature 1003. The length is 340 cm and width 30 cm. This feature was constructed of parallel rows of flagstones oriented in the same direction and lying 30 cm apart.

Feature 1006. At a depth of 75 cm we found the remains of an oven. Part of this oven is inside the eastern edge of the trench. The diameter of this oven is 60 cm and its distance from the northern wall is 108 cm.

Feature 1007. At 85 cm depth next to Feature 1002 are the remains of a trench, inside which was very soft soil. The depth of this trench was 109 cm and its length was 47 cm.

Feature 1008. This structure is a stove. The diameter of its opening is 63 cm and its depth is 202 cm. A hole with a diameter of 10 cm was found in the wall of this stove, and its continuation with a diameter of 10 cm was found at a 10 cm distance from the opening of the stove on the floor of the trench. The soil inside this stove was very soft, mixed with some charcoal and fragmentary bones of a child. In addition, a completely corroded and broken iron knife was found on the floor of this stove.

All these structures together make a space like a room divided into rectangular areas by platforms, the result forming the most complete architectural space of this trench.

Trench IX

Trench IX is located on the west side of Dibaj Hill on a gentle slope.

Feature 1001. This structure is a wall found at a depth of 68 cm. It is constructed of rubble and flagstones in two rows and two columns. The length of this feature is 860 cm, its width is 65 cm and its height is 70 cm. A major part of the cultural objects were found at this depth, including pottery scattered all over the layer in this square.

Feature 1002. This structure is located at a depth of 120 cm on the eastern side of the trench. This feature is attached to the end of Feature 1001 at a right angle and is made of river rubble in three rows and two columns.

Feature 1003. This is a round oven found at a depth of 130 cm. The diameter of its opening is 20 cm and its height is 14 cm.

Feature 1004. This is a stove located next to Feature 1001 at a depth of 170 cm. Its height is 60 cm.

Excavation was done in this trench down to the depth of 180 cm and stopped there, when no cultural objects were found.

In this excavation, the most complete – and indeed very considerable – architectural space was discovered in Trench VI. In general though, the limited architectural structures so far uncovered at the site indicate temporary and single-period residence.

The cultural objects found in the excavation

Pottery, which tends to be abundant, is usually the best evidence for establishing the chronology of ancient sites (Dark 1995/2000, p. 45). Study of the pottery, examining both its fabric and artistic style, not only can help determine the date of a settlement or stratum, but also can help in establishing some aspects of social conditions, historical changes and the nature of trading contacts (Orton et al. 1993, p. 23). Study

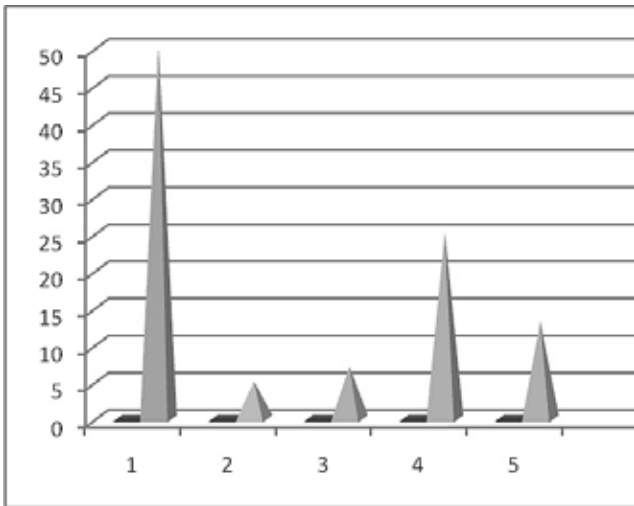


Fig. 13. Percentages of finds at Dibaj Tepe grouped by artifact type: 1. Ceramics. 2. Iron. 3. Glass objects. 4. Decorative beads. 5. Clay spindle weights.

of Parthian pottery of northeastern Iran may indicate influence on it by the pottery styles of neighboring regions in Central Asia. Insofar as there are similarities between the Parthian wares we have discovered and those of adjacent regions, we may be able to discuss the economic transactions and social interactions of different cultural zones.

A wide range of objects has been excavated at Dibaj Tepe [Fig. 13]. The Parthian ceramics include ordinary objects and kitchenware, dishes for food storage, and glazed dishes in red color. They are made of fine gravel, aggregate and sometimes lime.

In Trench V at a depth of 30 cm we found a broken brown agate signet ring with a scorpion image [Fig. 14]. The ring is 7 mm thick with a flat 2.3×1 cm oval-shaped surface cut on one side where the image was carved. Also discovered in this trench was a shell cap of a glass scent bottle, a glass bead and a clay spindle weight.

Trench VI yielded a bronze bracelet, an earring, ornamental beads, and clay spindle weights and earrings.

Several objects were discovered in Trench IX:

1. A seriously damaged bronze bowl with external diameter 5.5 cm, internal diameter 3.5 cm, and height 4.3 cm [Fig. 15].

2. At a depth of 95 cm, an intact crock. It is brown in color, has a thick clay coating, and on its shoulder has a small handle. Its dimensions are: height 81 cm, body diameter 185 cm, and diameter of the opening 19 cm [Fig. 16].

3. Next to this crock was another one used for storing grain [Fig. 17]. Its measurements are: height 91 cm, body diameter 79 cm, opening diameter 19 cm, bottom diameter 14 cm. Unlike

Fig. 14 (upper left). The signet ring with scorpion image from Trench V.

Fig. 15 (lower left). The broken bronze bowl from Trench IX.

Fig. 16 (middle). Ceramic crock with handle from Trench IX.

Fig. 17 (right). Ceramic crock from Trench IX.





Top to bottom:
 Fig. 18. Decorated ceramic vessel from Trench IX.
 Fig. 19. Small ceramic crock from Trench IX.
 Fig. 20. Beige ceramic crock from Trench IX.

the other crock, this one has no handle. There were two husks inside on the bottom.

4. There was a red-orange clay vessel (height 23 cm; body diameter 82 cm; bottom diameter 16 cm) with two small handles and rhombic decorative motifs carved in a horizontal band on its shoulder [Fig. 18].

5. A brown clay crock whose edge and handle have been damaged [Fig. 19]. Its height is 40 cm, body diameter 18 cm, bottom diameter 11 cm and opening diameter 6 cm.

6. A largely intact beige clay jug [Fig. 20]. It is 40 cm high, with an opening 20 cm. in diameter and body diameter 30 cm. A horizontal band of design has been carved on its shoulder.

7. At a depth of 110 cm in Trench XI, a glass scent bottle [Fig. 21].



Fig. 21. Glass scent bottle from Trench IX.

More than 1000 pottery sherds dating from the Parthian era have also been discovered in excavations at this site [Figs. 22-25, next page]. The pottery is grey, beige, orange, red or brown and is made of temper, gravel and lime, with glazed surfaces. 22% of this pottery is brown, 13% grey, 20% beige, 13% orange and 32% red. The decoration consists of horizontal lines carved on the shoulders of the vessels. The vessels are pots, crocks, small and medium-size jars and bowls. 40% of the dishes discovered at Dibaj have no opening and 60% of them have an opening. Furthermore, the edge of most of the dishes slopes outward.

The pottery of this region is comparable with that from other regions of northeastern Iran in the historical era, which suggests that the wares are indigenous and that there was cultural homogeneity across regions.



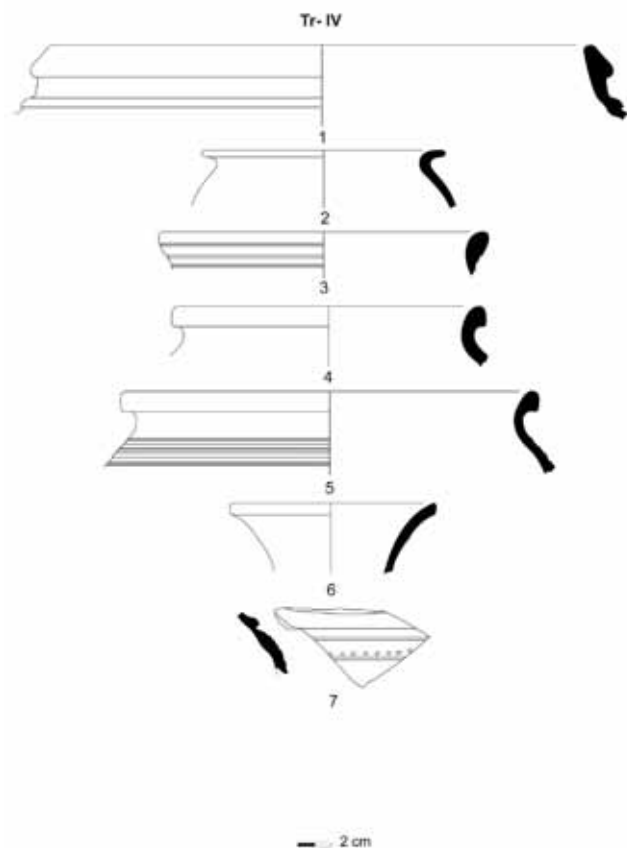
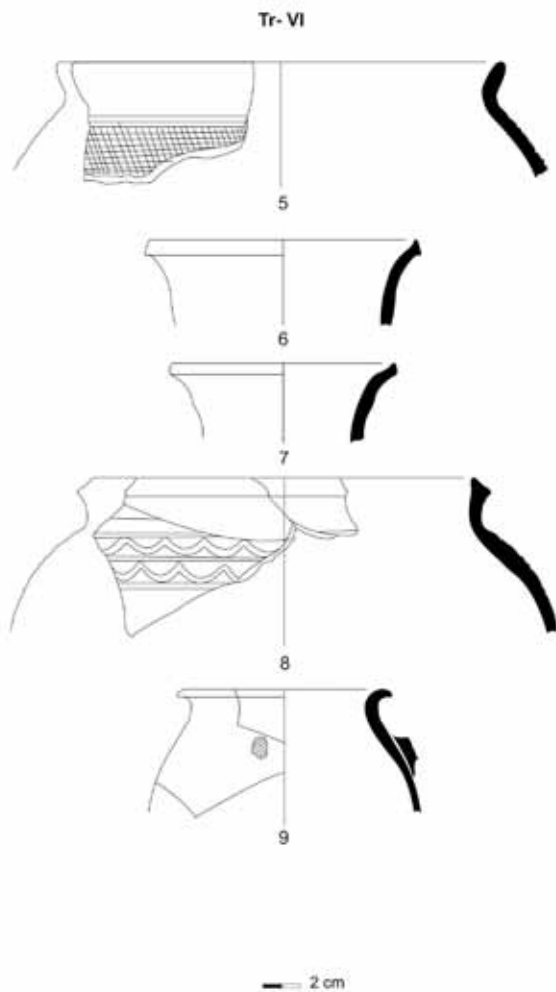


Fig. 22 (top left). Pot sherds from Trench VI.

Fig. 23 (bottom left). Drawing of pot sherds from Trench VI.

Fig. 24 (top right). Pot sherds from Trench IV.

Fig. 25 (bottom right). Drawing of pot sherds from Trench IV.

Conclusion

The excavation described here is a contribution to our better understanding of historical developments in northeastern Iran and the connection of that region with adjoining ones. The focus on the Parthian era is significant, since that dynasty ruled over a wide territory for several centuries and presided over one of the most important periods of Iranian history. It is impossible to understand the substantial achievements of their successors, the Sasanians, without looking closely at the Parthian period.

While excavations of Parthian sites to date have focused largely on major centers, there is a great deal to be learned by studying thoroughly a smaller site such as Dibaj Tepe. We feel that its artifacts improve our understanding of non-elite populations in the Parthian era. The architecture of the site suggests that it was used as a temporary and seasonal accommodation. The typology of the excavated potteries suggests that it might have been a shepherd's settlement. Most of the pottery has an open shape which is best suited to pastoral life. To establish the chronology, we have compared this pottery with that found at several other Parthian sites where the cultural objects are similar: Tureng Tepe in Gorgan (Boucharlet and Lecomte 1987), the Damghan Plain (Trinkaus 1981), the defensive wall in Gorgan (Rekavandi et al. 2008; Kiani 1982a, 1982b), the Atrek Valley in Khorasan (Ricciardi 1982) and Shahr-i Qumis in Damghan (Hansman and Stronach 1970a). This comparison suggests that the small shepherd community in Dibaj, even though it may have experienced inter-regional migration, never had significant interaction beyond the borders of this region of northeastern Iran. Additional proof of this can be seen by comparison and contrast with objects found in recent archaeological excavations focusing on sites connected with an immigrant tribe of Semnan.

The seal excavated at Dibaj Tepe would seem to have come from some regional center, but what it tells us about political and economic interactions of this particular settlement is unclear. While there are some other artifacts which likely were obtained from elsewhere in the region – the polished dishes with carved decoration, a bronze dish and some glass vessels – their number and quality suggests limited financial resources in this local community. The locally produced decorative objects are quite modest; spindle weights suggest that weaving was practiced. However, further study of this evidence and the accumulation of more material from additional excavation at the site may help clarify the nature of this local community and provide a better picture than we now have regarding regional and inter-regional interactions in northeastern Iran in the Parthian era.

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The Northern Pagoda in Chaoyang, Liaoning Province, northern China, is one of the important monuments of the period of the Liao Dynasty. The Liao reconstruction and rededication (in 1043–1044) was probably a project of the Empress Dowager Qin'ai. Its foundations date from the late 5th century (Northern Wei period); after a fire it was re-built in the Sui and Tang periods. The exterior structure as we see it today dates from the middle of the 11th century, with some later modern restorations and changes. One of a pair of Liao-period pagodas currently remaining in the city, the northern one still preserves a substantial amount of its original relief decoration. During the restorations of 1984–92, its untouched relic chamber inside the twelfth eave was opened, revealing a treasure

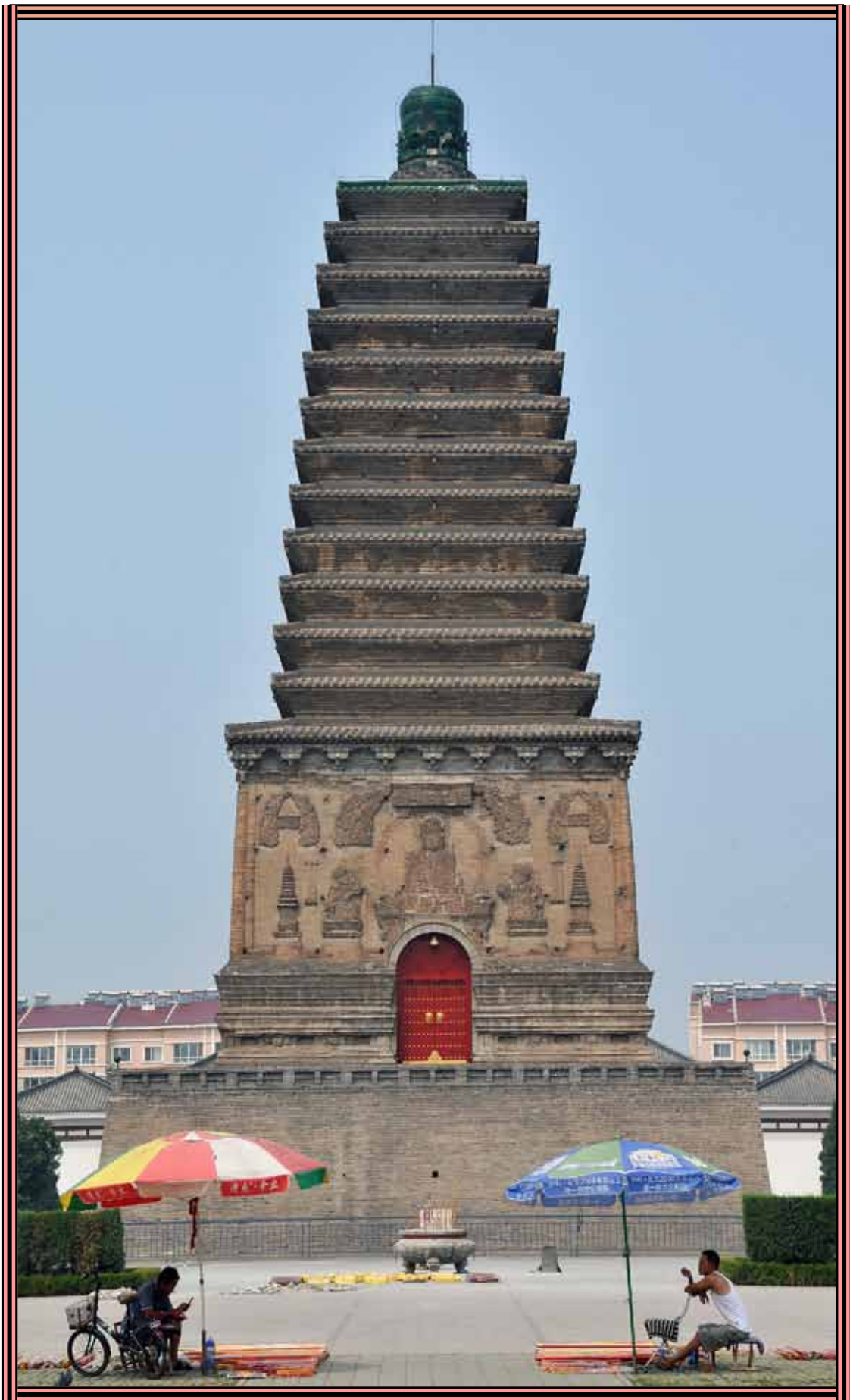
trove of objects, now displayed in a new museum at the site. The complexity of the textual and decorative elements of the structure, the richness of the enshrined relics, and their association with liturgical practice are especially noteworthy, as Youn-mi Kim has demonstrated in her dissertation, which should soon be forthcoming as a book. With the exception of one photograph which she has supplied, the images here (best viewed in color in the on-line version of this journal) were taken by me during a visit to Chaoyang in 2009 as a member of a “northern borderlands” study tour organized by the Silkroad Foundation and Beijing University. While the objects in the museum are well displayed, the nature of the lighting does not always permit good photography of some of the most interesting pieces. Captioning is minimal, based primarily on the museum’s published guide.

— Daniel C. Waugh

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Youn-mi Kim. “Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos: The Chaoyang North Pagoda (1043-1044).” Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2010. I am grateful to the author for sharing with me a paper she gave on the pagoda during our visit to Chaoyang, for her several corrections to my annotations here, and for her photograph of the silver relic casket. She is now an Assistant Professor in Art History at The Ohio State University.

Chaoyang City Northern Tower Museum. *Chaoyang Northern Tower*. Ed. Du Bin. Jilin Photographic Press, 2006. ISBN 7-80606-530-X. In Chinese and English, well illustrated.



Facing page: The pagoda from the south.

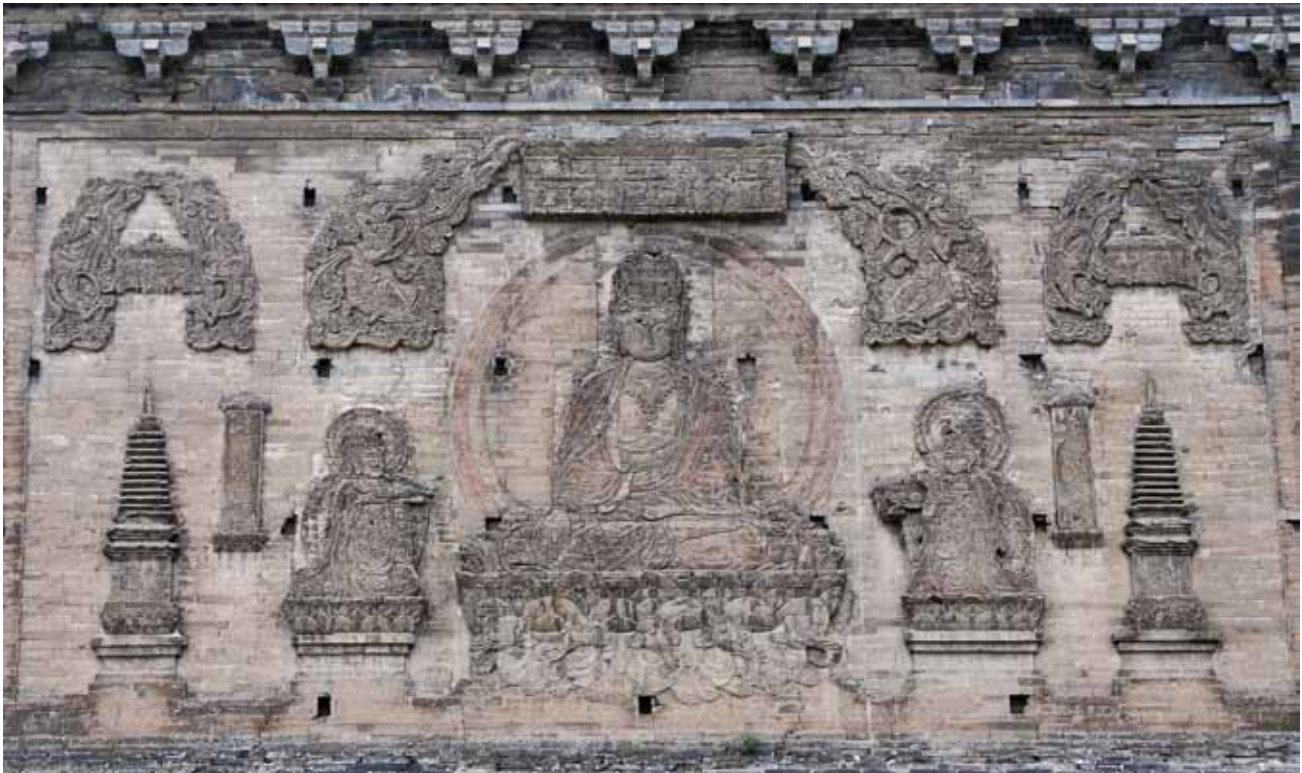
Right: The pagoda from the southwest.

Below: closeup of the south face. The central figures on the four faces are the Dhyani Buddhas of the four directions, here Ratnasambhava. The fifth Dhyani Buddha, Vairocana, is represented by the pagoda itself, which thus stands at the center of a cosmic mandala.





The west face (above) with Amitabha Buddha and east face (below) with Aksobhya Buddha. The flanking pagodas mark the eight most important Buddhist sites in India but also are images of the chaoyang North Pagoda itself.





Around the outside of the pagoda at the level of the path for circumambulation is a sculpted frieze with images of dancers and musicians flanking various other auspicious symbols.



At each corner are coiled dragons.





Above is a detail of a relief showing a bodhisattva. Right and below: In the centers of three of the sides are symbolic doors, flanked by guardian figures.





Models in the museum reconstruct the pagoda as it might have looked when first built under the Northern Wei and later in its urban setting in the period of the Qing Dynasty.





At the center of the base of the pagoda is a four-story dharani pillar carved with sutras and images, including the Eight Great Bodhisattvas (first story base), the Seven Buddhas of the Past (second story base), and the eight Kings dividing the Buddha's relics (fourth story base).



Photo copyright 2009 Youn-Mi Kim

Facing page, top: Photographs taken of the relic crypt located inside the twelfth eave of the pagoda, when it was uncovered during the restoration work of the 1980s.

Various forms of relic containers were found including a box faced with repoussé silver sheets. On one end of it the royal couple of Liao are depicted worshipping the Buddha Sakyamuni, whose parinirvana is on another side of the box. A round miniature stupa for dharma relics contained rolled silver sheets inscribed *Usnisa Vijaya Dharani*.







In the relic crypt were various ceramic and carved vessels. A porcelain pot (above) contained a second pot, in which had been placed herbs which may have been connected with the homa rituals. The vessel shown on the lower right is from the Jin Dynasty, presumably added later in the lower relic chamber..

Arguably the most impressive object found in the relic chamber was the jewel-net stupa, constructed by stringing pearls and other precious stones around a frame. It had fallen apart over the centuries and was reconstructed as shown here on the facing page.





Among the most exquisite objects are this agate calyx and an agate relic container with gold lid.





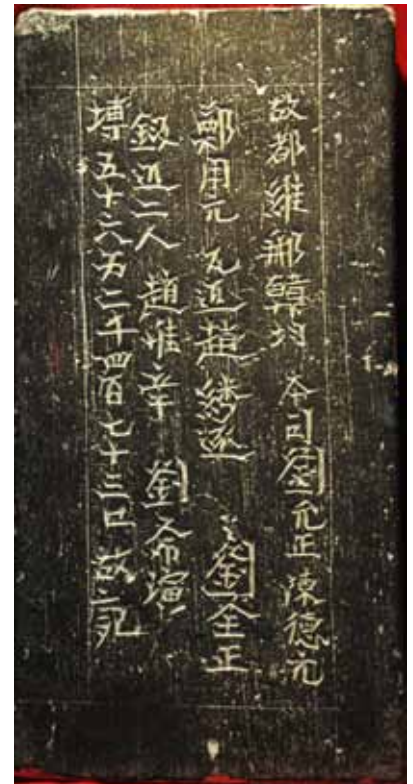
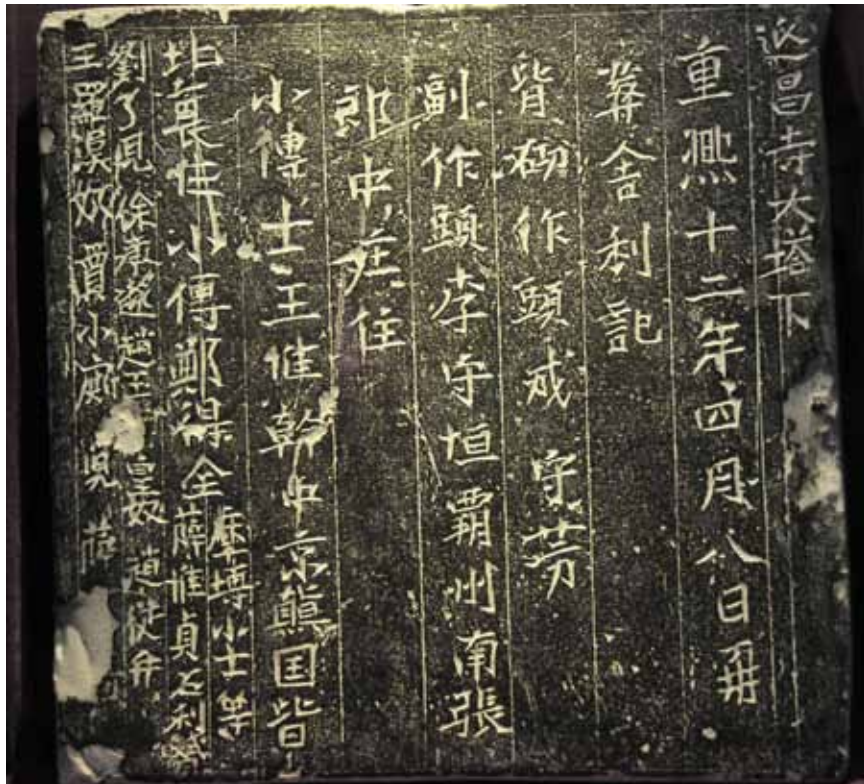
The small objects, some best seen through a magnifying glass, include the lion and chopper (agate), the rabbits and bears (crystal), the apsara and dragon (jade). The beads are glass, and the bodhi trees (whose form is exactly that shown on the silver-clad relic box), are silver.





The relic crypt also contains evidence of long-distance trade along the "Silk Road." Western glass had been much treasured in China at least as early as the Han Dynasty. Here are fragmentary remains of a glass bowl and an extraordinary intact Persian glass pitcher, into which a miniature ewer had been inserted.

Inscribed bricks help us to write the history of the pagoda.





What are considered to be true relics of the body of the Buddha Sakyamuni (one of which is believed to be a relic made of blood of the Buddha by the populace) were probably donated to the pagoda by Emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty. The new museum complex includes a worship hall resplendent with gilt and colored lighting. Its centerpiece is a gilded miniature stupa containing the Buddha's blood, which, guides will insist, emits of itself a kaleidoscope of changing colors



The Azerbaijan Museum in Tabriz

Gholamreza Yazdani

Mina Ranjbar

Abdalreza Hashtroudilar

Photographs by Asgar Mahdoudi¹

Azerbaijan Museum, Tabriz

The plan of establishing the Azerbaijan Museum dates back to 1927. Construction of the present building began in 1958, and in 1962 it opened. Located next to the Blue Mosque on Emam Khomeini Avenue, the museum was designed by André Godard, the Director of the National Museum in Tehran, and constructed by Ismail Dibaj [Fig. 1].

The Azerbaijan Museum is one of the most important in Iran. It is the first and oldest museum in the northwestern part of the country and is considered the second archaeological museum in Iran. The exhibits include objects from different archaeological sites throughout the country and cover the full chronological span of its history, thus making the museum truly a national one. This essay provides an overview of the collection and places the objects in their historical context.

The pre-historic and early historic periods in the collection

On entering the Azerbaijan Museum, visitors first see ceramics dating from the 5th millennium



BCE (the Neolithic age), discovered at Ismailabad near Tehran. The skilled artists of the Neolithic age decorated their pottery with black lines or abstract patterns [Fig. 2].

At the start of the Neolithic age in Iran, some 9000 years ago, some people adopted a settled lifestyle instead of moving regularly from one place to another. These people began producing food and making stone tools such as lances, scrapers, chisels, and perforators. According to anthropological and archaeological studies, the Neolithic age in Iran witnessed several stages of development: a) gathering food; b) gathering and storing food; c) producing and settling in rural areas (Madad 2008, p. 3). These developments continued in the 5th and 4th millennia BCE.



Fig. 1 (left). Tabriz and the Azerbaijan Museum.

Fig. 2 (above). Bowl from Ismailabad, 5th millennium BCE.

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Some of the objects on display in the Azerbaijan Museum from this period were discovered at Shahdad and Shahr-e soukhte. The ancient site of Shahdad is located on the western border of



Figs. 3, 4. Jar and beaker from Shar-e Soukhte, 4th millennium BCE.



the Lut plain. It covers an area of 60 km². Its oldest remains date back to 5th millennium BCE and the artifacts found on the site, especially the figurines, are comparable with those of equivalent date from southern Mesopotamia. This evidence proves the close relationship between this region and its western neighbors. It seems this region was the capital of "Arat" (Madad 2008, p. 11). Shahr-e soukhte, located about 57 km along the road from Zabol to Zahedan, is one of the largest Bronze Age sites in the east of Iran. The most famous ceramics of Shahr-e Soukhte are a kind of ware known as "Turkmen" or "Kovite" that is similar to the pottery from Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. The common wares are plain beakers, flasks, and bowls [Figs. 3, 4] (Madad 2008, p. 11).

The collection also includes from the 3rd millennium BCE several stones in the shape of handbags or weights, decorated with animals or plant patterns and used in ritual ceremonies [Fig. 5]. Made of serpentine, these stones come from the important site of Jiroft (Kerman). Other Bronze Age objects include wares dating to the 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE discovered by archaeologists on the southern bank of the Araxes River, the border between Iran and Azerbaijan. While made for ordinary use, these wares are impressive evidence of the skill of the potters.

Among the most important anthropomorphic sculptures in the museum is a figurine of a woman, undoubtedly representing a goddess

Fig. 5. Ritual object from Jiroft, 3rd millennium BCE.



connected with fertility [Fig. 6]. It was found at Rostamabad in the north of Iran and dates from the 1st millennium BCE. The most interesting and important showcase in the museum highlights another discovery dating back to the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE. It shows the skeletons belonging to a young couple, laid out in the position of their burial with their grave goods as they were discovered in 1999-2003 near the Blue Mosque in Tabriz [Fig. 7].

Next to a showcase featuring bronze tools made in Lorestan in the 2nd millennium BCE is a display of gold ornaments which were probably made by artists of Manna or Media [Figs. 8, 9, next page]. The kingdom of Manna ruled in the region of Media (the present Azerbaijan) from the beginning of the 1st millennium to the early 7th century BCE. Manna was the economic and cultural center of Media. Agriculture flourished in the region; the people of Manna were skilled in art,



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Fig. 6. Image of a goddess from Rostamabad in northern Iran, 1st millennium BCE.

architecture, metal work, and pottery. Their gold work is especially noteworthy; valuable examples have been discovered through the surveys in Zivie, Hasanlu, and Qelaichi (Madad 2008, p. 26).

The Golden Age of Iran began in 550 BCE with the establishment of the Achaemenid Empire by Cyrus. Many consider that Achaemenid Iran was the center of civilization and culture in Asia and the ancient world, with prosperous agriculture and commerce and the development of scientific and geographical knowledge. Cyrus's decree at the time he conquered Babylon is considered to be the first declaration of respect

for Human Rights. The invasion of Alexander of Macedonia brought to an end the 230 years of Achaemenid rule; his successors established the Seleucid state. With the rise of the Parthians in



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northeastern Iran around 250 BCE, the Seleucids were gradually driven out. The Sasanian dynasty eventually replaced the Parthians and ruled for more than four centuries until the time of Yazdegerd III and the Arab

Fig. 7. Burial of a couple, 1st millennium BCE, excavated near the Blue Mosque in Tabriz.



Figs. 8, 9. Necklaces probably made by Manna or Median artisans, early 1st millennium BCE.



Photo (right) copyright © 2010 Daniel C. Waugh

invasions which established Islamic rule (Madad 2008, p. 32). Some of the most significant items in the collection of the Azerbaijan Museum illustrate these long and important chapters in the history of Iran.

Among the best known of Achaemenid artifacts are gold or silver rhytons, drinking vessels used for wine in ritual ceremonies [Fig. 10].

Characteristically shaped to include an animal protome, a rhyton was perceived as a symbol of nature and a means of obtaining power from

Figs. 10 (left). Achaemenid silver rhyton.

Fig. 11 (below). Ceramic Parthian rhyton with the protome of a goat.



Figs. 10, 11, photos copyright © 2011 Daniel C. Waugh.



Figs. 12a, b. Parthian stucco reliefs from the Zahak fortress in Hashtroud.

follows the techniques of previous eras, the ceramics often decorated with complex or simple lines, triangles, and circles (Kiyani 2008, pp. 29–31). Two of the noteworthy objects in the museum from the Parthian period are stuccos from Zahak fortress in Hashtroud (a county in eastern Azerbaijan) [Fig. 12].

The Sasanian rulers sponsored major architectural projects, proclaimed their rule in monumental sculpture, and presided over a flourishing production of luxury goods. Sasanian ceramicists improved on previous techniques [Fig. 13]; their wares were commonly greenish or bluish and often decorated with stamps or carving, the patterns imitating those on stucco work and cloth (Tiwhidi 2007, p. 31). Sasanian glass was prized even as far away as China and Korea [Fig. 14, next page]. Vast quantities of silver coinage were minted, the coins being one of the standard currencies of the age. Silver was also widely used for making dishes and jars. The most important and best known Sasanian metal objects are the gilded silver ones depicting



Fig. 13. Sasanian ceramics.

natural forces. It is believed that such vessels, originally called *takouk*, originated in Iran; when they were brought to Greece they came to be termed rhytons. Rhytons also were produced in ceramic, the wares of the Achaemenid period having blue, green, creamy or white, black, orange, and brown slip.

Parthian rhytons are also part of the museum's collection [Fig. 11]. Parthian pottery largely

Figs. 12a,b; 13 photo copyright © 2010 Daniel C. Waugh





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Fig. 14. Sasanian glass flask.

hunting, festivals, and fighting scenes [Figs. 15, 16]. These wares are engraved and embossed; some of them bear Pahlavi inscriptions (Tiwhidi 2007, p. 33). Sasanian dishes depicting the Royal Hunt have been found in the fur-producing forests far to the north in the Ural Mountains of Russia, where

they provide evidence of early medieval trade connections with Iran. The interesting examples in the Tabriz Museum, some of which do not have exact parallels in authenticated Sasanian silver dishes, still require technical analysis to confirm their provenance and dates.

Exhibits from the Islamic period

While the museum’s Islamic collection is displayed on the second floor, an exception

Figs. 15, 16. Gilded silver dishes, purportedly from the Sasanian period.



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is one of its prize exhibits, to be seen near the entrance on the ground floor: a slab of marble known as the “Besem Allah Stone” belonging to the late Islamic period [Fig. 17]. It is the work of an Iranian artist, Muhammad Ali Quchani in 19th century. The Ottoman government commissioned him to make it as a grave stone for the Prophet Muhammad. However, after trying unsuccessfully for eight years to receive his payment, the sculptor transported the three-ton slab from Istanbul via Georgia, Armenia and Nakhjivan to Tabriz, where he died before he could take it on to Mashhad. The stone was placed on his own grave but recently was transferred to the museum for conservation. On the stone are inscribed poems appreciating the Prophet Muhammad in three languages, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish.

After the fall of the Sasanian empire, some parts of Iran, especially near the coast of the Caspian Sea, continued to be influenced by the previous artistic styles and techniques, especially in metal work and ceramics. Dramatic changes in Islamic ceramics developed in many other centers, as has been demonstrated from archaeological research in Nishabur, Raay, Gorgan, Siraf, Estakhr, Takht-e Soleiman, Soltaniya, Fesa, and Susa. The Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad (749-1258 CE) promoted important cultural projects, but it was often under the regional dynasties in Iran such as the Samanid (892-998), Ghaznavid (997-1186),



Fig. 17. The “Besem Allah Stone,” carved by Muhammad Ali Quchani, 19th century.

and Al-e Bouie (932-1055) that we see some of the most important innovations in design (Tiwhidi 2007, pp. 144-46). The museum’s exhibits illustrate very effectively the originality and achievements of Iranian ceramicists (Karimi 1985, p. 9).

In the first three Islamic centuries, slipped or plain ceramics often were decorated simply but elegantly with Kufic inscriptions [Fig. 18a]. Generally, the decoration had been on the inner edge and very center of the wares. One characteristic of this style was to leave a substantial area empty around the design. The inscriptions are prayers, proverbs, and sentences attributed to Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali or literary men (Karimi 1985, p.

Fig. 18a-18d. 10th-century bowls made in northeastern Iran.



Fig. 18a photo copyright © 2010 Daniel C. Waugh



16). In the 3rd and 4th centuries AH the use of slip, either colored or white and creamy, became common especially in the northeast of Iran (Neyshabur, Samarqand, Gorgan, and Lashkari bazaar) [Figs. 18b-d]. Some of the ceramics made in Neyshabur were slipped and decorated with black or dark brown, the decoration commonly being birds, stylized flowers and, above all, Kufic inscriptions.

The Seljuk period (1040–1157) was one of the bright eras for the Islamic arts: architecture, metal work [Fig. 19], weaving, brick work, stucco, etc. all flourished. The ceramicists of the late Seljuk period were inspired in part by the ceramics of Song China. Making the body of the ceramics out of a composite of quartz, clay and glass produced a result that rivaled the Chinese kaolin-based porcelains. Visual effects were produced by the use of lapis lazuli, colored glazes, and stamped and stylized patterns ranging from geometrical designs and Kufic inscriptions to fauna and flora. The range of colors was very broad: blue, black, brown, yellow, lapis lazuli, green, turquoise ... (Kiyani 2001, p. 34). Some of the most striking new designs were on what we call Mina'i ware [Fig. 20]. The overglaze multi-colored paintings on Mina'i ceramics include different miniature scenes. The Seljuk designs are not in the style of

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Fig. 20. Mina'i-ware dish.

the school of Baghdad but rather follow the style of Iranian painting and include scenes from the *Khamse* of Nizami, from the *Shahname*, and so on. (Tiwhidi, 1999, p 279).

Lustre-glazed ceramic wares became widespread in the Seljuk, Khwarazmian, and Ilkhanid periods (11th – 14th centuries CE). Only a few centers mastered the complex technique for producing lustre wares (Tiwhidi 1999, pp. 274–

79). Caiger-Smith has described the production of glazed wares as follows: To make lustre-glazed ceramics, it is necessary to add flux material and flint to the clay. Developed probably in Egypt in the Fatimid Period, this technique was welcomed in Rakka (Syria) in the 12th century CE. It was then improved in the late 13th century in Raay and further developed in Kashan, both of which were centers for innovation. The potters there covered wares with white tin slip and fired them and then painted them with metal oxide. In the last stage, they used smoke

Fig. 19b. Candlestick, Seljuk period.



Fig. 19a photo copyright © 2010 Daniel C. Waugh



Fig. 19a. Incense burner, 11th century. Analogous to example in Los Angeles County Museum of Art Inv. No. M.81.241.1<http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=image;hex=M81_241_1.JPG>.

in the kiln to turn the brown painting green or golden in color (Caiger-Smith 1973, pp. 128–30).

Lustre-glazed ceramics were produced in three phases: the first belong to the 9th – 10th centuries CE, the second phase to the 11th – 15th centuries, and the last phase to the 16th – 18th centuries. Researchers believe that the first period of making these wares coincided with that for producing colorful slipped ceramics in the 9th – 10th centuries CE. Pope thought that the production center of these ceramics was Raay and classified them as a kind of colorful slipped ceramics. Ernst Kühnel considered them colorful glazed ceramics whose production antedated that of other kinds of ceramics. The first glazed ceramics were decorated with a complex colorful slip, which became bright and glazed after firing. Bowls were the common wares and their decoration mostly is flowers and Kufic inscriptions. The earlier wares differ from the later ones in patterns, style of writing, and colors. In this second phase the calligraphy is in Naskh script, there is figural

imagery, and gold is the common color [Figs. 21a-d]. The third phase of producing lustre-glazed ceramics happened after the Ilkhanid period. At this time, ceramics – for example high necked jars – were brownish or reddish and the forms often more decorative than functional (Tiwhidi 1999, pp. 263, 274, 277).

The Mongol invasion of Iran caused widespread destruction; many cities such as Neyshabur, Raay, and Gorgan were left in ruins. Gradually, the Mongol Ilkhanid rulers came to appreciate Iranian culture. They chose Maragheh, Tabriz, and Soltaniya as their capitals and developed them as commercial and artistic centers. As peace returned, potters resumed making ceramics following the previous styles. The techniques of manufacture were like those of the Seljuk period

Fig. 22a-d. 13th-century lustre-ware bowls.



Fig. 21c photo copyright © 2010 Daniel C. Vaughn



Fig. 22. Tile from Gorgan, 13th century (Ilkhanid period).

but the designs now were different. Ilkhanid patterns were often complex, including lotuses, dragons, phoenixes, clouds, rabbits..., much of this displaying the influence of Chinese art. The colors on the ceramic wares included gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, and ochre. The use of glazed tile on buildings became common, although the color palette was less varied. Surfaces were often covered with mosaics made up of star-shaped tiles fitted together with those having a cross shape, called Chalipa or Shamse [Fig. 22] (Kiyani 2008, pp. 48–50).

Gold-decorated tiles were not commonly used in the early Islamic period. They became more common for architectural decoration in the late

Figs. 24 a, b. Safavid blue-and-white wares, 17th century.



Seljuk and Khwarazmian periods, and their use became widespread under the Ilkhanids. The patterns on the tiles are fauna and flora, geometrical designs, poetry, proverbs, etc. (Kiyani 1997, p. 136).

By unifying the country, the powerful Safavid rulers in the 16th and 17th centuries CE created conditions for a great flowering of the visual arts, especially under the patronage of Shah Abbas I (r 1587–1629). There were important centers of ceramic production in many regions. In many ways, Safavid ceramics of the 16th through early 18th centuries CE are the epitome of Iranian ceramic art. Their technical quality was very high, and there was a great deal of stylistic innovation. This period is probably best known for the exchange between Iranian and Chinese techniques and designs. Shah Abbas I thought that Europeans should not have to buy porcelain from China but could get its equivalent from Iran. To compete with the Chinese wares, he brought in 300 Chinese potters and settled them in Iran. A result of this collaboration was the production of white ceramics decorated with cobalt blue [Figs. 24a, b], in imitation of the Chinese blue-and-white porcelain which was exported in such large quantities from the Ming Empire. The Chinese porcelains continued to be much sought after by rulers in Central and Western Asia. Shah Abbas accumulated one of the most famous collections, which he then donated in 1611 to the Safavid family mausoleum in Ardabil (Savory 1980, pp. 125–29). The collection included more than 1200 items, a small sampling of which can now be viewed in the Azerbaijan Museum [Figs. 25–28]. Some 19 of these Chinese porcelains,



Chinese porcelain from the collection donated to the Ardabil shrine by Shah Abbas I.

Fig. 25a (left). Mei-p'ing vase. Early 15th century (Ming Dynasty). Fig. 25b (above), Shah Abbas's seal, added in 17th century.



Fig. 26 (right). Ewer. Ming Dynasty.



Figs 27a, b (left and right). Bowl, Ming Dynasty, mid-16th century.



Figs. 28a, b (below). So-called "Kraak porcelain" dish, late 16th-early 17th century (Ming Dynasty, Wanli period).





including some of the finest examples, were transferred to the museum from Tehran in 1966.² Other examples are displayed at Ardabil (a day's drive from Tabriz), with the main collection in the national museums in Tehran.

Safavid potters also imitated the monochrome Chinese wares known as celadon [Fig. 29]. Their clay was a kind of kaolin and their slip was bright brown, blue, and especially olive. This kind of pottery has stamped patterns in the inner flat surface and edges (Tiwhidi 2007, pp. 274–79).

Ceramic innovation in Iran continued in the Qajar period in the 19th century CE, where we see examples using lapis lazuli color in the background and stylized decoration with bright slip [Fig. 30] (Kiyani 2008, p. 68).

Fig. 30. Porcelain dish, Qajar period.



Fig. 29. Chinese celadon dish. Early Ming period.

The numismatic collection

The Azerbaijan Museum has an important numismatic collection, containing seals and coins from various periods of Iran's history [Fig. 31]. Some of the coins, while minted in adjoining regions, moved along the trade routes through Iran. Thus there are examples of Roman, Graeco-Bactrian and Kushan coins. Coinage may offer valuable information about national customs and beliefs. Ruler images may tell us about dress; Sasanian coins, for example, show a distinctive crown or headdress for each member of the ruling dynasty. Coins can reveal a great deal about religious belief. Following the conquests of Alexander the Great, it was common to depict Hellenistic deities: for example, Athena and Nike

Fig. 31a. Coin of King Menander I of Bactria, 155–30 BCE. Obverse: head of Athena in a helmet; reverse: Nike holding a wreath. The inscription on the obverse is in Greek (not legible here); on the reverse (somewhat better visible) is in Bactrian.

Fig. 31b. Tetradrachm of Kushan King Kujula Kadphises (ca. 30–80 CE). Obverse: Bust, imitative of Hermaeus, Greek legend; reverse: Hercules, holding club and lion skin, Kharosthi legend.

Fig. 31c. Coin of Kushan king Vasudeva I (190–230 CE), shown standing on obverse; reverse: Wesho (Shiva) standing with a bull.

Fig. 31d. Coin of Roman Emperor Diocletian, Cyzicus mint, 295–99 CE. Reverse shows emperor receiving Victory on a globe from Jupiter.

Fig. 31e, f. Achaemenid period coins of satraps Zelun and Maze.

Fig. 31g. Silver tetradrachm of Parthian king Phraates I (r. 176–71 BCE).

Fig. 31h. Silver drachm depicting Sasanian King Bahram II (r. 276–93 CE), his queen and his son.

Fig. 31i. A coin issued in the name of Sasanian Queen Buran (629–31 CE).

Fig. 31j. Silver drachm of Sasanian King Yazdegerd III (r. 632–51 CE).

Fig. 31k. Arab-Sasanian coin issued by 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad, ca. 680 CE.

Fig. 31l. Dirham of Sati Beg, a woman, who briefly was enthroned as the Ilkhanid ruler in 1338–39 CE.



31a <



31b <

31h >



31c <

31i >



31d <

31j >



31e <

31k >



31f <

31l >





Fig. 31m. Coin of Qajar King Nasr al-Din Shah (r. 1848–96).

on a 2nd-century BCE Bactrian coin [Fig. 31a]; Hercules on a 1st-century CE Kushan coin [Fig. 31b]. Roman coins which circulated in the Middle East might depict Jupiter [Fig. 31d]. Sasanian coins generally showed a fire altar on the reverse, reflecting the fact that Zoroastrianism was the official religion [Figs. 31h, 31j]. With the advent of Islam, human images were replaced with Arabic script invoking the Prophet Muhammad and quoting from the Quran.

The inauguration of an Iranian coinage is generally considered to have been the work of Darius I (r. 522–486 BCE); Iranian imperial issues continued down through the reign of the last Achaemenid king Darius III (r. 336–30 BCE) [Figs. 31e, 31f]. The gold coins are generally known as darics or *dareikoi* (the term the Greeks used for them), that is, coins of Darius. Silver coins were called *siglos*, “shekel.” The coins generally depict the bust of the ruler on the obverse and a seated figure representing the ruler and holding a bow on the reverse (Pope 1930, Vol. 6, p. 2673).

While there are no known gold coins in the Parthian era, all the silver ones, without exception, follow the Attic Standard adopted by the Seleucid rulers of Syria. According to Percy Gardner (1981, p. 3), “The coins of Tiridates, and even Mithradates, are of tolerably pure silver; those of the later kings of a very debased mixture.” All the drachms issued by the Arsacids, from first to last, as well as the earlier tetradrachms, are of a uniform type, with the bust of the ruler on the obverse and on the reverse an image of Arsaces, the great founder of the empire, seated and holding in his hand a strung bow [Fig. 31g].

When Ardashir I (r. 224–41 CE) overthrew the last Parthian “great king,” he began to issue an imperial coinage that departed from the Hellenized Parthian models. The portraits on the Sasanian coins are distinctly Iranian, each

ruler having his own style of crown; the reverse normally depicts a Zoroastrian fire altar [Fig. 31j]. It is remarkable that Sasanian rulers did not commemorate any historical events on their coins, even though they did so in various rock reliefs. The nearest approach to medallionic pieces is the occasional commemoration of a son on the coins, and in the case of Bahram II (r. 276–93 CE), his queen as well [Fig. 31h]. The bust of the king with his wonderful headdress and the elaborate treatment of hair and beard gave the artist ample material; the reverse shows the altar and its attendant priests (Pope 1930, Vol. 2, pp. 816–17). The inclusion of the queen is an indication of the high respect for women in the Sasanian empire; there are even coins issued by a Queen Buran (r. 629–31 CE) in her own name [Fig. 31i].

In the first decades after the Arab conquest, coins of the new Islamic rulers adapted existing models with their human imagery. Thus we have “Arab-Sasanian” coins depicting Yazdegerd III but with a Kufic inscription added on the edge [Fig. 31k]. With rare exceptions, the monetary reforms of Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan in the 690s CE resulted in the replacement of all figurative imagery with Arabic inscriptions. The example shown here from the Ilkhanid period is of particular interest in that it is issued for another female ruler, Sati Beg [Fig. 31l]. In Iran, this proscription of imagery then lasted until the 19th century, when beginning with Qajar King Fath Ali Shah (r. 1797–1834) the practice of depicting the ruler on coins resumed [Fig. 31m].

Sculpture and epigraphy in the collection

The courtyard of the museum displays a range of sculpture and epigraphy from different periods of Iranian history [Figs. 32–35]. While not illustrated here, petroglyphs are to be found in many places in Iran going back to remote antiquity. They have pictograms, ideograms, linear or proto-Elamite script, or Pahlavi, Arabic and Farsi inscriptions. The images of animals are among those with a religious or ritual significance, antelopes, mountain goats and rams being of particular importance. (Nasiri’fard 2009).



Fig. 32 (upper left). General view of courtyard.

Fig. 33 (left). Anthropomorphic sculptures, ca. 1st millennium BCE, Ahar.

Fig. 34 (lower left). Ilkhanid gravestone, Eastern Azerbaijan.

Fig. 35 (above). Ilkhanid architectural decoration from Ali Shah Mosque, Tabriz.

Fig. 36 (below). A sandstone grave marker carved in the shape of a ram, from Khwaje, near Tabriz.

young people who were martyred in war. In the grave statuary, the size of the horns (the number of circles) correlates with the age of the dead person) (Fathi 2010, pp. 9-12).

The horns of the ram connect it to the sun. Therefore it embraced a wide range of important connotations: power, bravery, modesty, and fertility. The ram is the symbol of the beginning of the year, and by extension the development of new ideas or the sunrise of a new period. Rams also embodied the spirit of ancestors. In Azerbaijan in particular, it was common to apply the epithet of the ram to heroes. Moreover, it was common there in early times to place ram [Fig. 36] or lion statues on graves of heroes or



* * *

Tabriz, in the heart of northwestern Iran, was one of the most important cities in the long history of the Silk Roads. At various times it was a political capital, a flourishing commercial emporium, and the center of significant cultural endeavors whose impact spread far beyond the Middle East. To visit the Azerbaijan Museum is to open doors into both the region's importance and the millennial history of Iran and its culture.

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Notes

1. Mr. Mahdoudi's photographs, which are copyrighted by the Azerbaijan Museum, have been supplemented, as noted, by those taken by Daniel Waugh.

2. [*Editor's note:*] See Misugi 1981. Although he apparently examined all of them, Misugi describes only half a dozen of the Ardabil

porcelains now in Tabriz, including the ones depicted here in Figs. 25 and 27. There are two very similar vases to the former (his A 265) in the Ardabil collection (his Nos. A.69, A.70). For another example of an almost identical one, with a full bibliography, see <<http://elopedelart.canalblog.com/tag/15th%20century/p30-0.html>>. Misugi notes regarding the Ming bowl shown here (Fig. 27; his Cat. No. A.263) that it has an "apocryphal Hsüan-te basemark."

Museums in Afghanistan – A Roadmap into the Future

Alessandro Califano

CRDAV, Rome

A place for memory

Writing just after the fall of the Taliban government, Jean-Pierre Perrin lamented (2002, pp. 21-22):

Memory suffers most at Kabul's museum. It used to be one of Asia's most beautiful and rich. But behind its façade, riddled by bullets, galleries do not have more than five artefacts on show. "The destruction of the museum by the Taliban lasted over five months, from February to June 2001. What could be saved was saved by its employees, who hid whatever they could. The museum owned one hundred thousand pieces. Now we could recover about thirty thousand of them," explains Omara Khan Massudi, its new director. What was spared is hoarded topsy-turvy in boxes, kept in the twenty two rooms of the upper floor.

But things have changed. Though Afghanistan has by no means recovered from its thirty-something past years of turmoil and conflict, and still has to be considered unsafe for tourism, conditions have improved incredibly. The

Fig. 1. A Gandhara head being restored at the National Museum of Afghanistan lab (Kabul).



Framework for the Rehabilitation of the National Museum and Provincial Museums of Afghanistan (hereafter, *Framework*), jointly issued in Summer 2008 by the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture, and the UNESCO office in Kabul, stated that over 41,000 artefacts of the National Museum were already described in the inventory database of the museum in both English and Dari – the Afghan version of Persian, pretty similar to Tajik. Today, the database is even more comprehensive, and most artefacts' data are accompanied by pictures [Figs. 1, 2]. Moreover, in 2004 some of the most important collections of the National Museum were rediscovered in the vaults of the Presidential Palace in Kabul. Both the Bactrian Gold and the Ai Khanoum collections have since been documented, reordered, and organized for the great exhibition still touring the world. Not only do these collections strongly contribute to disseminate a positive image of Afghanistan to

Fig. 2. Non-Islamic ethnographic artefacts from Nuristan at the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul. This exhibition has been substantially changed in the last two years.



foreign countries, but the role of the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul has been recognized, together with its potential as a successful export earner.

Nonetheless, the same *Framework* stressed that “most significant pieces are stored separately at different locations throughout the city and are thus more or less inaccessible as required for regular inspection.” Moreover, “locations in which these objects/collections are stored are ... neither well organized nor safe in terms of meeting minimum conservation standards” (UNESCO 2008, p. 5). Given this fact, it is more than reasonable that cultural heritage management activities in Afghanistan should have Kabul’s National Museum as their keystone. Improving conditions there, and step by step introduction of a curator-based structure in the museum’s organization, have been considered – by the Afghan Government, UNESCO, and international partners alike – as the prerequisite to reform the museum sector in the whole country. “Ideally,” wrote the *Framework*, “the National Museum should function as a hub for the sector; training provincial managers, conservators etc., and using its capacity to send experts from the centre to address issues in provincial museums and perform regular assessments of standards and needs at that level” (UNESCO 2008, p. 13). This explains why most capacity building workshops organized by UNESCO in the last few years took place in Kabul, some calling together professionals coming from far off provincial institutions.

At the International Conference for the Safeguarding of Afghanistan’s Cultural Heritage, which took place in Kabul 18 - 20 October 2010, Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi, UNESCO Representative

to Afghanistan, stressed that the conference was to be a turning point for the re-commitment of all stakeholders to join efforts for the safeguarding of the Afghan cultural heritage. And in fact, UNESCO’s pleading for funds has been very effective, if we consider that at the beginning of the year 2011 a large budget – USD\$5 million, in fact, as I was told in March at UNESCO’s Headquarter in Paris – had been set aside by the US to finance the further development of Kabul’s National Museum of Afghanistan and the construction of its annex.

The broader picture

Though the lion’s share of all funding, and most national as well as international activity, has been strategically set aside for the National Museum in Kabul, Afghanistan’s cultural heritage counts many more players. Without considering institutions taking care of smaller or very specialized museums – like the Land

Mines Museum set up by the Organisation for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR), or the private Sultani Museum – Kabul hosts also the National Gallery of Fine Arts, a small museum and an art gallery at Babur’s Garden, and the National Archives. Other, even smaller, but by far not less interesting sites are only waiting for a little more attention and some infrastructure, and could then very well contribute significantly to focusing attention on important archaeological areas. An example is the Tepe Naranj site museum, on a steep hill where Buddhist stupas and Graeco-Buddhist sculpted groups are still being brought to light [Figs. 3, 4].



Figs. 3, 4. Buddhist remains at Tepe Naranj archaeological site in Kabul.

This notwithstanding, the *Framework* stated in 2008: “Afghanistan currently has 4 Museums in 3 different Provinces (Kabul: National Museum of Afghanistan; Herat: Herat Museum; Ghazni: Ghazni Museum, Rawza Museum of Islamic Art). Only two of these museums are actually functioning, the National Museum and the Herat Museum...” (UNESCO 2008, p. 13). In fact, the museum in Herat is a rather recent one. Nancy Hatch Dupree, whose *Historical Guide to Afghanistan* (1977) still is about the best companion one may choose to get around in the country, does not mention it. The area it was established in was donated to the Ministry of Information and Culture by the Army only in 2005, and it was first opened only two years later. Further renovation is still underway, and it should finally reopen this autumn. However, Dupree does mention (*ibid.*, pp. 287–88) the Kandahar Museum and what she declares is its “most outstanding object,” “a large metal receptacle consisting of two bronze coffins, possibly of Achaemenid style, joined into one large receptacle at a later period [...] accidentally discovered in 1934 on the western edge of the Shahr-i-Naw,” the new part of town.

As so often happens, many an Afghan oasis developing into an extremely civilized town could well be considered a museum in itself. “Under the civilized reign of its last important ruler, Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqarah,” writes Jean-Pierre Perrin about Herat, quoting Mike Barry, “this oasis of Khorasan was transformed, by a destiny peculiarly similar to that of Italy during the same time, into something like The Florence of Asian Islam: with a forever dwindling political relevance, but still representing a most brilliant lighthouse in that civilization” (Perrin 2002, p. 67). In fact, when Muhammad Babur, the founder of the Moghul dynasty in India, visited Herat – or Heri, as it was known at his time – he listed 69 sites and buildings he had seen: “During the twenty days that I stayed in Heri, I every day rode out to visit some new place that I had not seen

before. My guide and provider in these visits was Yusef Ali Gokultash, who always got ready a sort of collation, in some suitable place where we stopped. In the course of these twenty days, I saw perhaps everything worthy of notice, except the Khanekah (or monastery) of Sultan Hussain Mirza...” (King 1993, vol. II, p. 14). However, much of it is lost now, not only due to the civil war, the Soviet-Afghan war, or the latest fights. In 1885, Herat’s Musalla Complex, defined by Byron as “the most beautiful example in colour in architecture ever devised by man to the glory of his God and himself,” was to a great extent destroyed under the direction of British officers to clear a good line of fire for their artillery, as they feared a Russian attack that, however, never came (Dupree 1977, p. 250–51).

Ghazni

Ghazni shares with Kandahar the distant presence of Alexander the Great and his troops. Either city could be Alexandria in Arachosia – a town in the Achaemenid satrapy located at the eastern end of the Iranian plateau – repopulated

Fig. 5. This little mosque from Ghazni has been re-mounted at the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul, but due to space constraints its mihrab (the niche pointing to the direction Muslims should face when praying) is in the wrong direction. Since the function of this space has been kept even in the museum, prayer rugs have been turned in the proper direction, regardless of the ancient mihrab.



and kept as one of the Macedonian strongholds along the main road leading further north and east towards the Hindu Kush. But at the same time, it is certainly the area of Ghazni that can boast a continuity of human presence through a remarkably long time: though in Ghazni itself no proof of human presence is attested before the Iron Age, in Dasht-e Nawar, about 55 km to the NW, were found the first Lower Palaeolithic tools to be identified in Afghanistan, dated maybe 100,000 years ago. In that important archaeological site, exhibiting intact stratigraphic sequences, several mounds representing early dwellings have been discovered with accompanying artefacts, which suggest occupation from Palaeolithic to Buddhist times (Shank and Rodenburg, 1977).

Located on the main route connecting East and West, the region of Ghazni was used to mobility and dialogue between civilizations even before Alexander the Great (Alexander III of Macedon) brought Graeco-Macedonian culture to that area. When the region of Ghazni came under the influence of the Mauryan dynasty (321–185 BCE), Buddhism and Hinduism came into the area. They were to stay well after the Sakas and Kushans had come and gone, until the 7th century and the dawn of Islam (683 CE). Located between the Persian plateau and the Indus River valley at an elevation of 2200 m above sea level, the city of Ghazni itself has witnessed civilizations and cultures intermingle (and sometimes coexist) over a time span of 30 centuries.



Fig. 6. A 1:10 scale reproduction of the Ghaznevid arch in Lashkar Gah (Bost), prepared for the Ghazni exhibition at the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul (September 2010).

Ghazni's layout shows a certain continuity through the ages. Both the pre-Islamic and the Islamic urban centers were built on a hill, located east of the river and not far away from it. The old one was south, the new one is north of the route still leading from Kabul to Kandahar. From 683 on, the region of Ghazni was a key stronghold – sometimes even a kingmaker – facing the Indian subcontinent. The famous scholar from Central Asia, Al-Biruni, wrote that no Muslim conqueror passed beyond the frontier of Kabul until the days when the Turks seized the power in Ghazni, under the Samanid dynasty, and the supreme power fell to Sabuktigin (Sachau 1978). Sacked by the Ghurids in 1151, Ghazni was hit again by Chingis Khan's armies in 1221. Ibn Battuta, who visited it about 110 years later, writes: "...we left for Ghaznah, capital of the famous Mahmud, the fighting Sultan who was a son of Sabuktigin... The vast majority of [it] is destroyed and only a small part still exists; it used nevertheless to be a noticeable city" (Battuta 1997, p. 319). Even in the 16th century, Ghazni – still of significant strategic value in the region – had not returned to the old splendour, as we can read in Babur's *Memoirs* (King 1993). However, some of its most beautiful monuments survive – though some of them severely damaged.

Starting from 1957, the Italian orientalist Giuseppe Tucci, head of the Italian archaeological mission of IsMEO (named IsIAO after 1995) in Afghanistan, had been active in archaeological sites in Ghazni. The mission's present head, Anna Filigenzi, strongly advocates both excavation and restoration projects, in cooperation with other partners, among which are DAFA – the French Archaeological Mission in Afghanistan – and the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul [Figs. 5, 6]. The Timurid

Mausoleum of Sultan Abdul Razaq (15th century) was restored by IsMEO in 1966 and has been adapted to host a small museum. Long before the Soviet-Afghan war broke out, to use Nancy Hatch Dupree's words (Dupree 1977, p. 188), it was already "highly recommended to all visitors to Ghazni," who would wish to see the peculiar animal ornamentation of Ghazni, under strong influence of Central Asian and Sasanian art styles. Though presently still closed to visitors, Abdul Razaq's Mausoleum and Rawza's Museum of Islamic Art are undergoing renovation, while UNESCO has fostered focused training in Kabul for museum personnel from Ghazni, in order to get ready for their new opening. Designated by ISESCO (the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, based in Morocco) the Capital of Islamic Civilization for the year 2013, Ghazni could thus become in the next years – should conflict conditions be eased – an important cultural pole, a little over 100 miles from the capital of Afghanistan.

To be AND not to be

Khost, Jalalabad, Panjsher – and then, again, Samangan, Tashkurgan, Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh. Or Bamiyan, and Jam. And then Kapisa, and Logar. From most of them people have come during these last few years to the workshops that UNESCO has been organizing in Kabul

Fig. 7. Afghan museum professionals and archaeologists sipping tea under a tent at Tepe Naranj archaeological site in Kabul (author in green, centre-left).



at the National Museum of Afghanistan for museum professionals and archaeologists alike [Fig. 7]. From 2009 onwards, participants in the workshops I have been giving have included elderly men – among them the longest serving collaborator of the Italian archaeological mission in Ghazni – or very young men, only recently involved in managing, or at least starting to consider their own national cultural heritage.

Workshops organized in Kabul by UNESCO are not only meant to transfer know-how and knowledge. They are also meant to obtain first-hand information about the situation of cultural institutions far back in the provinces, and to allow some professional networking to all participants. Showing to younger members of the company how Jahangir's Mosque at Babur Gardens in Kabul has been restored, letting a senior member of that restoration team, now fellow member of the workshop, point out how some of its marble panels were restored, dated, and numbered, provides practical knowledge which never could be conveyed in the classroom. "I am old now", one of them told me, "and it is becoming increasingly difficult for me to sit in the trenches, to stand for hours a day... That is why I would like these young men here, that came along with me, to learn, in order that there be someone to go on working as I did, when I will no longer be able to do so..." "When I was a child," another one told me, "we used to dig out artefacts from graves, and other archaeological areas, selling them to visitors... Only when I became an adult I understood that this wasn't well done...".

Foreign visitors? Not necessarily so. As Rory Stewart (2006) describes, Jam and nearby Firoz Koh were being plundered just as he was traveling through on the difficult central route that emperor Babur used to reach Kabul from Herat – passing near the wonderful Band-e Amir lakes in the heart of Hazarajat's highlands and then through the valley of Bamiyan. The locals had already damaged the area to such an extent that the site will probably never reveal much



Photo courtesy and © Habib Mohammad Mandozai, 2009 or 2010.

of its history. Though this area has not directly been an area of military operations of the Western Coalition, utter lack of control has made much easier this pillage and transportation of artefacts down to Herat, and out of Afghanistan. Shortly after, writes Stewart (see particularly the book's Part 4), these artefacts could be found on the art market of London – marked as Seljuk or Persian artefacts, to disguise their real origin – while requests and funds for purchases primarily came from a rather limited customer niche of mostly American, British, and Japanese collectors and marketeers.

Nevertheless, artefacts have been preserved and stored, even in locations where no museum is open on a regular basis, or where there might be no official museum at all, yet. In Khost, in a mountainous region locked between the Afghan province of Paktia and the Pakistan border, where turmoil is still a daily occurrence, the director of the local museum succeeded in organizing a small but nice exhibition of some traditional artefacts and ethnic dresses [Fig. 8]. In Khulm, on the contrary, a small, new museum in the seriously damaged royal summer seat [Fig. 9], though obtaining an award at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montréal this year, is not open to the public and has no artefacts to display.

Balkh, a city not far away from Mazar-e Sharif almost at the northern border of Afghanistan



Fig. 8 (left). An exhibition space at Khost Museum, with its director Habib Mohammad Mandozai.

Fig. 9 (above). Tashkurgan (now Khulm), royal summer seat.

near the Amu Darya river, was already very old when Zoroastrianism emerged from it in the 6th century BCE. Conquered by Alexander the Great, and changing its name to Bactra, it became the main seat of the Indo-Greek Bactria region, then an important Buddhist centre, and subsequently the location of the Noh Gonbad Masjid (Nine Domes Mosque), perhaps the oldest Islamic building in the country to survive to our day [Fig. 10]. Since the city was utterly destroyed by Chingis Khan in 1220, and again, two centuries later, by Amir Timur (Tamerlane) [Fig. 11, next page], the vastness of its extent but sketchily emerges from a view of the ancient city walls, a discontinuous line of about 7 miles length. What

Fig. 10. Nine Domes Mosque at Balkh.





Fig. 11. The Green Mosque [the Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa Shrine] at Balkh, built in the late Timurid period when the city revived after Tamerlane's conquest.

could make it a pleasant day's excursion from the main urban centre, local conditions appear to mitigate against it.

As for Mazar-e Sharif itself – where the shrine of Hazrat Ali, in the large central square, is considered perhaps “the most beautiful building in Afghanistan” (Dupree 1977, p. 392) [Fig. 12] – there is a small museum in the shrine complex near the mosque, with specimens of different calligraphy styles on documents and books. However, It is not acknowledged either by Dupree nor, much more recently, by the Ministry for Information and Culture and UNESCO's *Framework*. Probably, being located in the Sanctuary itself, it might fall under control of local religious institutions, or of the Ministry for Hajj and Religious Affairs, and is not considered strictly speaking as a proper museum. It is, nevertheless, interesting, and would deserve being more widely promoted.

used to be the Mother of All Towns, as the Arabs defined it, is now a vast expanse of fields and grazing land, between the steppe on the northern edge and a cannabis plantation on the south. The local museum, which could boast artefacts of Achaemenid, Greek, Buddhist, and Islamic origin, is closed. Though its proximity to Mazar

The area of Bamiyan, of course, is deserving of similar interest [Fig. 13]. Though famous primarily for what is now missing – the two giant Buddha statues destroyed under the Taliban government in March 2001 – and for what is still to be found (a third, reclining giant Buddha statue supposedly buried somewhere at the foot of the sandstone cliff hosting the previous two), Bamiyan's older part also shows interesting examples of earthen architecture [Fig. 14]. The caves themselves [Fig. 15] and some of the nearby sites show archaeological evidence of pre-13th century buildings. Many fragments of the Buddhas, as well as from wall paintings, and some artefacts could be extremely interesting to visit, once a proper museum is built. Though the first ten years of activity in the area



Fig. 12. Hazrat Ali Shrine and Mosque at sunset in Mazar-e Sharif.



Fig. 13. Sunrise in Bamiyan.

have been dedicated primarily to consolidate the caves where the Buddhas stood, to safeguard the fragments of the statues – some weighing as much as a few tons – and to de-mine the whole area, it seems that now new sponsors could facilitate the process of making local cultural

heritage both more secure and more visible. This, in turn, could boost a region that, already relatively safe, could only benefit from a certain degree of sustainable cultural and alpine tourism.

Blueprints for further development

Drawing a detailed map of provincial and national museums, of their collections, and of their potential to attract tourism and a certain degree of related economic growth is certainly a priority the country and many foreign institutions and individuals interested in its revival should have, both to disseminate knowledge about Afghan cultural heritage and to protect it. This, however, would hardly exhaust the possibilities. Scattered among the hills and high valleys, many vast structures – forts [Fig. 16], mosques,



Fig. 14 (upper left). The Qala (earthen fort) in Bamiyan.



Fig. 15 (lower left). Buddhist caves re-used in Bamiyan.

Fig. 16 (below). The Bala Hissar Fort in Kabul.





Fig. 17. Buddhist monastery near Samangan.

and other buildings – some of them nominally controlled by the Ministry of Defence as possible strongholds and sensitive military areas, would deserve attention.

Samangan’s hills, along the main Mazar-e Sharif to Kabul route, boast a gigantic Buddhist stupa, and the remains of a Buddhist monastery dug into the rock [Fig. 17; appendix below]. The valley of Bamiyan hosts the impressive Shahr-e Gholghola citadel – the City of Screams, which dominates the now empty Buddha’s niches across the valley [Fig. 18] – that Chingis Khan sacked and burned in 1221, and also the much larger Shahr-e Zohak, the “Red City,” still used as an observation post and air defense installation as recently as ten years ago. In many provinces, even some of the older city districts, built in the old vernacular architecture, using carved wood, mud, and plaster, urgently deserve conservation work and protection, as has been done, for

Fig. 18. The City of Screams citadel in Bamiyan.



instance, in the case of Murad Khane district in Kabul [Figs. 19, 20]. Part of this process involves also dissemination of knowledge about building techniques, handicrafts, and iconographic style [Fig. 21]. That is to say, they would need at least

Fig. 19 (top). Peacock House, Murad Khane district.

Fig. 20 (middle). Restoration work in a traditional building, Murad Khane district.

Fig. 21 (bottom). Modern artefact in a traditional style, Peacock House.



a minimal program of preparing the artistic heritage for museum display.

No blueprint for fostering the further development of cultural heritage in Afghanistan would be complete if, apart from archaeological areas, most of which have been already known and mapped since long before the Soviet-Afghan war, it didn't consider at least other two elements.

On one hand, there is a wealth of sanctuaries old and new alike. Some of them are of only local relevance, while others, mostly tied into the local Islamic tradition of *pirs* – the Sufi leaders and teachers, to whom the Taliban government used to be strongly adverse – are widely renowned and honored. More recently, many other graves have acquired or are in the process of acquiring a particularly significant status: over thirty years of war meant that particularly famous commanders or fighters were honored as *shaheeds*, martyrs and witnesses. Of these, some have received greater attention – this is the case of Ahmad Shah Massoud in Panjsher, whose great mausoleum is visible from far away in the valley [Figs. 22, 23] – and some are marked only by a green flag, over a humble earthen grave. All

of them, however, have the potential to serve as memory, model, and education to a vast array of audiences. To transform these into museum sites would probably be going too far, but they do certainly represent a complex ideal map of events and historical actors that is already well rooted in the local consciousness and that would merit at least some of them being located on geographical maps.

On the other hand, there seems to be an almost complete lack of a kind of museum that has been very widely adopted, for instance, in nearby Uzbekistan. In Chékéba Hachemi and Marie-Francoise Colombani's *Pour l'amour de Massoud*, Ahmad Shah Massoud's widow, Sediqua, speaks of her desire to establish a museum in the house she had been living in, with her husband and family, during the Soviet-Afghan war and later on, while fighting the Taliban government (Hachemi and Colombani 2005). There, she said, one could see how the famous Tajik commander had lived, by looking at his books, at the maps he had used, at documents and pictures, and at some of the artefacts and tools that had been of common use at that time. It is a sound perspective.

House-museums, dedicated to writers or artists, scientists or commanders, are likely to be strongly rooted in a local community and thus to be more easily recognized as one's "own" place. They are also the occasion to preserve and document a way of living and building, the *civilization matérielle*, as Braudel would have named it (Braudel 1979), and to hand down to younger generations a tradition of both material and immaterial cultural heritage, safeguarding it for the future. Last but not least, they are a means of disseminating a deeper knowledge built on already more or less existing awareness, attracting visitors who would possibly never have the thought (or the opportunity) to step into a "regular" museum in the first place. This might prepare them, through things more or less well known to them, to experience the distinct koine proper of a museum's environment.



Fig. 22 (top left). Ahmed Shah Massoudi's mausoleum complex being built in Panjsher (October 2008).

Fig. 23 (bottom left). Panjsher, Ahmed Shah Massoudi's tomb.

Exactly this – connecting knowledge and places, making communities aware of continuity, change, and cultural wealth, enabling storytelling on one’s own lore and traditions, and learning from those less closely related to one’s own – is a strong tool not only to disseminate local knowledge and culture to potential foreign visitors, but also, and maybe even more, to facilitate coexistence and harmony in a given community [Fig. 24]. In a war ravaged country like Afghanistan, this could not but be a very desirable outcome of the museum profession.

About the author

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Fig. 24. Restored by Turquoise Mountain, the Peacock House now hosts also an arts centre for children in Murad Khane (Kabul).

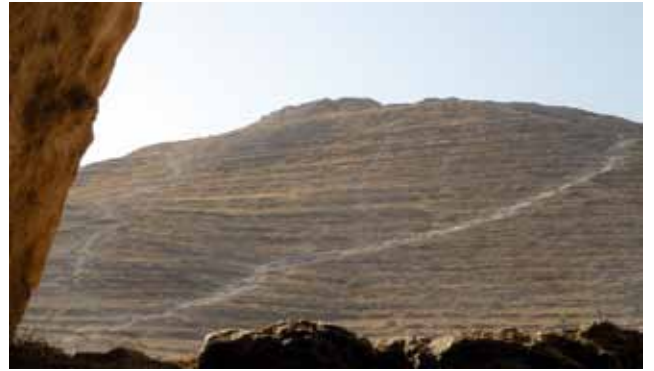
Samangan / Takht-e Rostam

A dirt road leading uphill from Samangan, an ancient provincial city in northeastern Afghanistan called Aybak at the time of the caravans traveling along the Silk Road, brings one in a couple of miles to the Buddhist archaeological area known as Takht-e Rostam. This name ("Throne of Rostam") – linked as it is to Persian mythology – was perhaps one of the reasons why the Buddhist monastery dug into the hill, and the great stupa carved in the mountain rock on a slightly higher hill nearby, were spared in subsequent times. Another misbelief, claiming that the meditation cells of the monks were vendors' stalls in an ancient covered bazaar, has also greatly helped in the survival to our day of this impressive 4th to 5th century archaeological site. This erroneous belief must have been confirmed by a hoard of Ghaznavid coins (11th to 12th century) found in one of the caves.

When I visited it in autumn 2008, the general conditions of the area were pretty good, although some rocks seemed to have slid down from the top of the hill without hindering access to the monastery's many caves. However, the situation has changed more recently, as difficult conditions in at least two refugee camps located nearby – one further up north, the second one near Pul-e Khumri, the capital of Baghlan Province – have made the security in the whole area more precarious. Also, a strong earthquake in April 2010 could have affected the caves.

The stupa itself – surrounded by a few caves up the slope, and by a circumambulation path at its base that is accessible from the outer side of the hill through a corridor – is surmounted by a square *harmika*. The monastery has a large assembly hall on its left, decorated by lotus leaves, two other smaller halls, and a long row of cells, raised above the level of two corridors bordering them (one in front with a few openings towards the higher stupa-hill, the other in back). Some other halls open on the side of the hill on a higher level, but access to them seemed rather difficult. At the other end of the monastery, there is a bathroom with a small pool. Just a little over a dozen yards away, a rivulet flows under low trees along the base of the slope, and an earthen wall beyond borders some cultivated fields.





Above: the road to Takht-e Rostam. Right and below, the hill with its stupa, seen from the monastery, and the circumambulation path.





Views of the monastery complex, its architecture and decoration.





The rivulet at the base of the monastery hill.

The Frontier Fortification of the Liao Empire in Eastern Transbaikalia

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An imposing earthen edifice, the “Wall of Chingis Khan,” extends through the territory of three countries – Mongolia, the Russian Federation [hereafter Russia] and the People’s Republic of China [China] – cutting across the steppe from west to east. It is not the only such wall of large size of that name on the territory of Inner Asia. There are three such walls on the territory of Mongolia, all of them called the “Walls of Chingis Khan.” The first is located in the southwestern part of Mongolia; the second extends approximately along the northeastern border between Mongolia and China, and the third cuts across the eastern part of Mongolia, then enters Russian Transbaikalia and then China (Baasan 2006). It makes sense to designate them by their geographical location as the western, southeastern and northern walls.

The fortification features and date of the building of the southwestern wall have been discussed in a separate publication (Kovalev 2008). The southeastern wall was partially studied in 2001 by one of the authors of the present article. As far as we know, no archaeological investigation of that wall on the territory of Mongolia has been undertaken. Chinese scholars connect its building with the Jurchen Jin Dynasty (1115–1234). The present article systematizes the preliminary results of the study of the northern wall using GIS methods and the results of the study of the small forts which lie alongside it.

Apparently the first work to mention the wall and its forts was the article by Gerhard Friedrich Müller “Concerning the ancient monuments in Selenga and Nerchinsk districts” published in the “Historical observations” he sent to the Russian Academy of Sciences on 24 May 1736

(Miller 1937). In his article Müller described in some detail not only the wall but the forts which he examined near the town of Tsurukhaitui and in the Karaganatu, Kailassutu and Urtui valleys along the western bank of the River Argun. Müller considered that the wall was a border between peoples and that the small forts were temporary field camps used during some kind of military actions or preparations for them.

There is fragmentary information concerning the “Wall of Chingis Khan” in the notes of Peter Simon Pallas, who, apparently on the basis of the name of the wall, ventured the hypothesis that it was built to defend against “wild Siberian peoples” during the Yuan Dynasty (Pozdnev 1897). Probably its dating was based on the firm opinion of the local population that the wall was connected with the lifetime of Chingis Khan. The great Russian revolutionary, the anarchist Petr A. Kropotkin (1876) provided a short description of the wall in his famous book about the Ice Age, written while incarcerated in the Peter and Paul Fortress. He had traveled along it during his journey to Manchuria in 1864.

During his journey along the Bol’shoi Khingan River at the end of the 19th century, the well-known explorer Grigorii N. Potanin made some observations about the wall and its adjacent forts (1898). A description of the part of the wall lying in Russia is also known from the early 20th century: “Now the wall is rather low, in places a completely ruined ridge not much more than two arshins high. In some places alongside the wall are the remains of forts. Thus, some 6 versta from the mouth of the Gan is a fort where the local inhabitants have found tiles, stone slabs and sculptures which they used to decorate

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the church in the village of Novyi Tsurukhaitui (Shirokogorov 1919: 114–16).

In the mid-1920s the “Wall of Chingis Khan” and its adjacent forts on the Gan River (Gen He) was examined by Vladimir A. Kormazov (see Alkin 2001). The eastern end of the wall was studied more closely by Vladimir V. Ponosov in 1934. He also studied forts adjoining the wall – two in the region of Shankuli and one near the village of Labudalin. Ponosov (1941) was the first to date the wall to the Liao era and determined that these structures marked the border of the Khitan Empire.

In the 1950s, the archaeologist Sergei V. Kiselev began studying the Transbaikal part of the wall and its adjoining forts. He examined the round Koktui fort located 175 m from the “Wall of Chingis Khan.” In his opinion, the fragments of gray tile and brick found there were evidence that the fort had some kind of buildings. Possibly these were wooden-framed houses roofed with tiles. Kiselev wrote that limited time prevented him from undertaking an excavation of Koktui fort. The surface scatters collected there largely consisted of sherds of gray pottery dishes with stamped ornament in the shape of small square indentations with inscribed lines, made by a rotating punch. These ceramics have been dated by scholars by analogy to Mongolian materials of the 11th–12th centuries and come from the Khitan period (Kiselev 1958: 108–09).

In the 1970s, Chinese archaeologists studied the “Wall of Chingis Khan” in the section along the river Gen He in China. They collected fragments of Khitan ceramic dishes and thus dated the construction to the Liao period. Referring to the data in narrative sources, the Chinese scholars, also suggested that the given wall was erected in order to defend the territory of the empire from the Shiwei, Yüchüeh, and northern Tszubu approximately during the reigns of Shengzong and Xingzong (983–1055) (Sun et al. 1991). So far on Chinese territory a dozen or more forts which were part of the defensive system that included the wall have been studied (Alkin 2001).

In 1989 the Mongolian section of the wall was studied by a Soviet-Mongolian expedition led by Valerii P. Chichagov. Several cross-sections were

taken on the wall. Two of them were obtained near the Sino-Mongolian border at the lake Har nuur, where the wall had not been subjected to modern human activity. Another four cross-sections were obtained on the western part of the wall at its intersection with the road from Choibalsan to Ul’han-Maihan. There the wall had been affected by human activity – the pasturing of livestock and road diversion. It turned out that within northeastern Mongolia the “Wall of Chingis Khan” has, according to radiocarbon data, a range of dates. In the eastern part it amounts to 1380 BP, the western, 1080 BP. Certain indirect evidence led the authors of the article to think that the “Wall of Chingis Khan” possibly was repaired and rebuilt in a later period. They suggested that the wall was built by the Khitans in order to establish a long-lasting state boundary (Chichagov et al. 1995).

In 2002 the western end of the Mongolian section of the wall was examined by an international expedition of UNESCO, one member of which was Nikolai N. Kradin. Four km NNE of the *sum* center of Norovlin the expedition discovered a square fort measuring almost 50 x 50 m. Its walls were oriented in the cardinal directions of the compass. The width of the upper part of the walls was 3.5–4 m and at the base, 11.5–12 m. The external height was 1.5 m and internal up to 1 m. In the southern wall of the fort had a low area, apparently a gate measuring 5 m. No evidence was found of an exterior ditch, nor was there any evidence of structures inside the walls.

The “Wall of Chingis Khan” is 40 m northwest of the fort. About 25 m NNE of the point on the wall nearest the fort was a gate 8.5 m wide. In the given section, the upper width of the wall was 5.5–6 m and the width at the base 11–12 m. There was a ditch northeast of the wall 2.5 m wide. The exterior height of the wall was 0.6–0.7 m and interior 0.4 m. The wall was constructed of clay and gravel. Some 600 m NNE of the gate there was a tower-like projection from the wall 7 m long. It extended from within the wall (that is on the SE side) and 4 m beyond the outer edge of the wall.

The Mongolian researcher Baasan published (2006) a brochure in which he described in detail this and other walls on Mongolia. To date this is

indeed the most complete description of the wall. The author laid out the various ideas of scholars concerning the date when the wall was built.

Beginning in the 1970s the Transbaikal section of the wall and its nearby forts have been visited on numerous occasions by the Chita archaeologists Igor I. Kirillov and Evgenii V. Kovychev. In 1994–95, they dug exploratory stratigraphic trenches both on the wall and in the forts which showed that these structures all form a unified complex (Kirillov and Kovychev 2002). Five trenches were dug through the wall near the town of Zabaikalsk. In ruined sections of the wall and in the trenches the researchers found fragments of gray ceramics decorated with dashed lines, animal teeth and bones, and in Trench No. 3 an iron spike. Similar, but more numerous artifacts (ceramics, bone fragments of fish and animals, fragments of shells and flint, separate metal objects) were discovered in the nearby forts. The typical Khitan ceramics found during these excavations were the basis for concluding that the structures formed a single defensive system built by the Khitans in the time of the Liao Empire. This was a genuine state boundary, defending the northern borders of the Liao state from incursions by the northern nomadic tribes of Mongolia and Transbaikalia. The forts served as guard posts, placed along the southern side of the wall 1–1.6 km from it (the Kuladzha fort was 6 km to the south) and blocked the exits from the wider stream valleys every 15–20 km.

The Wall of Chingis Khan

The northern “Wall of Chingis Khan” and the majority of the forts are clearly visible on satellite photos and generally quite accurately plotted on the large scale military General Staff maps of the former USSR. We were able to combine the satellite and cartographic material to render more precise certain data and to correlate topographic and optometric data. Moreover, the satellite data revealed some

previously unknown sites, whose existence was confirmed during field work. Using this refined data set, we now describe the northern “Wall of Chingis Khan” and the forts which were part of its system.

The northern “Wall of Chingis Khan” is a practically unbroken earthen embankment clearly visible on the ground. The preserved construction extends 745.8 km. The small breaks in the wall, in the first instance connected with natural and modern human factors, have little impact on the integrity of our perception of it.

The wall begins in the Saykhany River valley on the territory of Mongolia 13.5 km NW by W of Hangayn mountain at a point with coordinates $111^{\circ} 22' 19.1172''$ E and $48^{\circ} 23' 13.1892''$ N [Fig. 1]. The wall then continues 78.5 km NE along the valley of the Ulden Gol, passing the city of Norovlin, and at a point with coordinates $112^{\circ} 9' 28.4868''$ E, $48^{\circ} 50' 29.2416''$ N changes its direction to the east. It then continues 153 km in an eastern direction to the point $114^{\circ} 8' 55.2948''$ E, $48^{\circ} 45' 21.3948''$ N not far from the lake Bayan Erhet nuur at the foot of the Bayan Erhet nuur range, where it smoothly changes its direction to the NE. Then the wall, continuing in a NE direction, intersects the railroad line connecting Solov'evsk in Russia to Choibalsan in Mongolia some 15 km south of the station named “Wall of Chingis Khan.” It then bends around the north side of the lake Har nuur and intersects the state border between Mongolia and China at border post No. 635. For 60 km the



Fig. 1. Map showing the location of the northern “Wall of Chingis Khan”.

wall extends through the territory of China and at the border marker No. 60 (117° 16' 15.7332" E; 49° 37' 48.7092" N), which is located right on the wall, enters the Russian Federation.

There is a small break in the wall on Russian territory near the city of Zabaikalsk. It continues in an eastern and northeastern direction along the left bank of the River Argun. Near the village of Kailastui the wall debouches on the bank of the Argun, along which it then proceeds right up to the village of Kaptsegaitui, where it breaks at a point with the coordinates 118°35'11.7024" E and 49°56'31.7616" N, crossing over to the right bank of the River Argun within the territory of China. The wall continues in a NE direction along the right bank of the river to the city of Heishantu, China, located 14 km SE of the mouth of the river Gen He, where the direction now changes to the east, following along the left bank of the Gen He. It goes on through the city of Labudalin and comes to an end on the left bank of the river Kulik He (a left tributary of the Gen He) not far from the city of Shankuli at a point with coordinates 120° 26' 1.1904" E and 50° 15' 1.2024"N [Fig. 1].

The current height of the Russian section of the "Wall of Chingis Khan" is 1.0–1.5 m and width 9–15 m. Along its northern side is an earth-filled ditch. The wall itself has likewise collapsed, so that along its southern edge it imperceptibly merges into the current ground level, whereas on the north, due to the ditch, it is more sharply defined. At definite intervals (10–15 m) on the embankment of the wall are small elevated areas which give its profile a wavy appearance. From above they resemble the collapsed contours of some kind of platforms or bases, possibly used for the emplacement and strengthening of additional above-ground constructions. They may be supporting columns connected by cross struts or beams.

20 km. NE of the town of Zabaikalsk in a silage pit cut was a stone foundation which resembled the base or facing of a hole dug for the erection of a vertical post, and in other places around the mound was significant compacting of the earth. Possibly related to that is a discovery in Trench No. 3 dug by Transbaikalian archaeologists in 1994 near the town of Zabaikalsk. In a layer of light brown soil at a depth of 50 cm they found a large

iron spike, with a sizeable head and a bent tip (Kirillov and Kovychev 2002).

The stratigraphy of the wall looks like this:

1. upper part – turf (15-20 cm);
2. layer of light-colored, fine-grained, yellowish sandy soil;
3. light gray sandy loam deposits;
4. excavated earth on which, apparently, the wall had been erected.

This layer ends at the edge of the wall. The sides of the ditch were cut down into the ground; it had a width of as much as 3 m and a depth of 65–70 cm. It was filled with a mass of dark-colored sandy soil consisting of that which had sloughed off the side of the wall. The layers in the structure of the wall had a marked tendency to blend together on its southern side, but the lower layers of soil were well packed. It is possible that the builders of the wall made a special effort to pack the lower part of the wall, especially next to the ditch, in order to prevent it from collapsing right away.

The system of forts of the "Wall of Chingis Khan"

The forts on Russian territory.

The other artificial constructions which in our opinion bear a direct relationship to the wall are the forts located in direct proximity to it. They are all located on the southern side of the wall and with rare exceptions not far from it or even directly "inserted" in the wall itself. So far along the wall of Chingis Khan on the territory of the Russian Federation are known and adequately studied eight structures. The study of satellite photos revealed one previously unknown fort, which was named Bugutur [Figs. 2, next page; 4, p. 110]. The names of some Transbaikalian forts include the word *gorodok* (lit. "small town"), in usage common to the local population of southeastern Transbaikalia. In systematizing of all the evidence concerning fortifications in the region, we have not changed the original names of these archaeological objects.

The forts located along the "Wall of Chingis Khan" are built on flat ground like all Khitan forts and towns (Ivliev 1983). The shape of the area formed by the walls of the fort enables them to

be classified by type (Table 1). Two Transbaikalian forts are round, four rectangular and three round with an interior rectangle. This variety of the shapes of Transbaikalian fortifications distinguishes them from other Khitan forts which usually are rectangular or square (Perlee 1961; Ivliev 1983; Ochir et al. 2005, etc.). The walls of the forts are earthen. On their outside is a ditch whose earth was used to construct the wall.

The description of these Transbaikalian forts located along the “Wall of Chingis Khan” will proceed from west to east [Figs. 2 and 3].

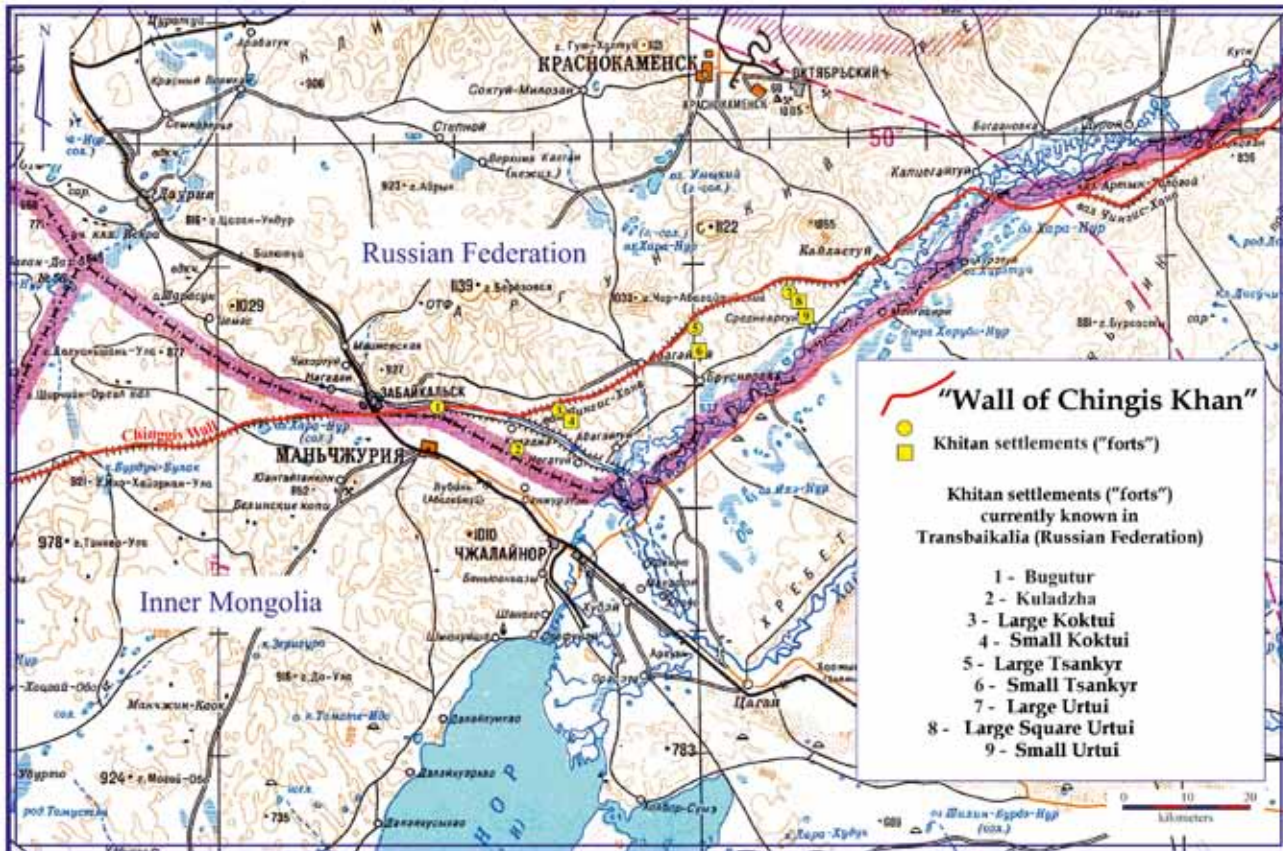
All the rectangular forts, including those inside round ones, preserve semicircular mounds at the corners rising above the walls and extending beyond them – the remains of corner towers. Only in the case of the Bugutur fort are we left to guess about the existence of towers. That fort has been substantially destroyed, and the proportions of the interior fortification system in it can be

Table 1. Classification of Khitan forts in Transbaikalia.

Round	Rectangular	Round with interior rectangle
Kuladzha	Small (<i>mal'yi</i>) Koktui fort (<i>gorodok</i>)	Bugutur
Large Round (<i>bol'shoi kruglyi</i>) Urtui fort	Small Tsankyr fort	Large Koktui fort
	Large Square (<i>kvadratnyi</i>) Urtui fort	Large Tsankyr fort
	Small Square Urtui fort	

traced only with difficulty [Fig. 4, p. 110]. In the large square Urtui fort, in addition to corner towers there are frontal towers on the western, northern and eastern walls. Ivliev considers (1983) that the frontal towers became the norm only in late Khitan forts of the 12th century.

Fig. 2. The “Wall of Chingis Khan” and Khitan settlements (“forts”) in Transbaikalia (Russian Federation).



At all of the forts except for Kuladzha, there is an entrance from the southeastern side. In the large square Urtui fort, the entrance is on the south. A distinction of that fort also is the presence of a semicircular defensive wall in front of the gates. Such defensive constructions are found usually in front of the gates of Jurchen forts. In Khitan forts the wall in front of the gate usually had the shape of a Π or Γ (Ivliev 1983).

The Bugutur fort

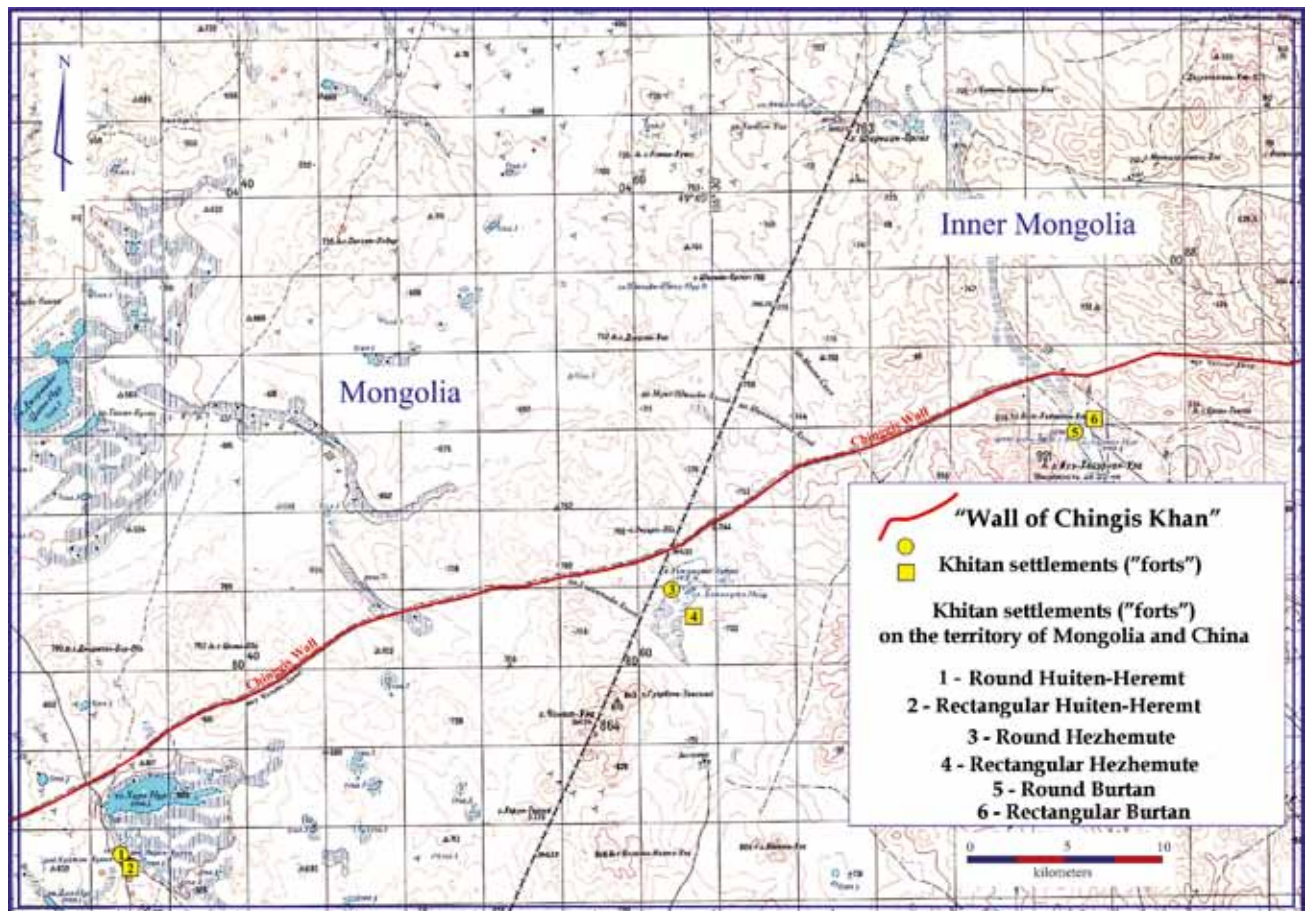
It is located 8.8 km east of the town of Zabaikal'sk (Zabaikal'sk raion, Chita oblast' of the Russian Federation) and 2.33 km NNE of border marker No. 61 on the state border between Russia and China in the Bugutur vally, on the right bank of an unnamed stream [Fig. 2]. A. V. Lunkov discovered the fort in 2009 when examining satellite photos. In June of that same year it was examined by the authors of the present article, who drew a topographic map of the site and collected surface artifacts.

40 m north of the fort is a rural road which crosses the valley from west to east. A road

which passes 80 m south of the fort also is oriented in that direction. Northeast of the fort is a watering station surrounded by a reinforced concrete wall. During the construction of the station the northeastern part of the fortification system of site was destroyed. Adjoining the south side of the watering station is a wooden fence used as a corral for pigs. The southern part of the fortification system was destroyed by the water channel extending from the southwest to northeast and the watering station. A little used rural road cuts through the fort from the south to the north, and from SW to NE and from NW to SE are two electrical power lines.

The fort has a double fortification system, the external one round and the internal square. The external one is an earthen wall with a ditch around its exterior. It encircles the territory of the fort [Fig. 4]. The exterior diameter of the fort measured at the outer edge of the ditch is 176 m

Fig. 3. The "Wall of Chingis Khan" and Khitan settlements ("forts") on the territory of Mongolia and China.



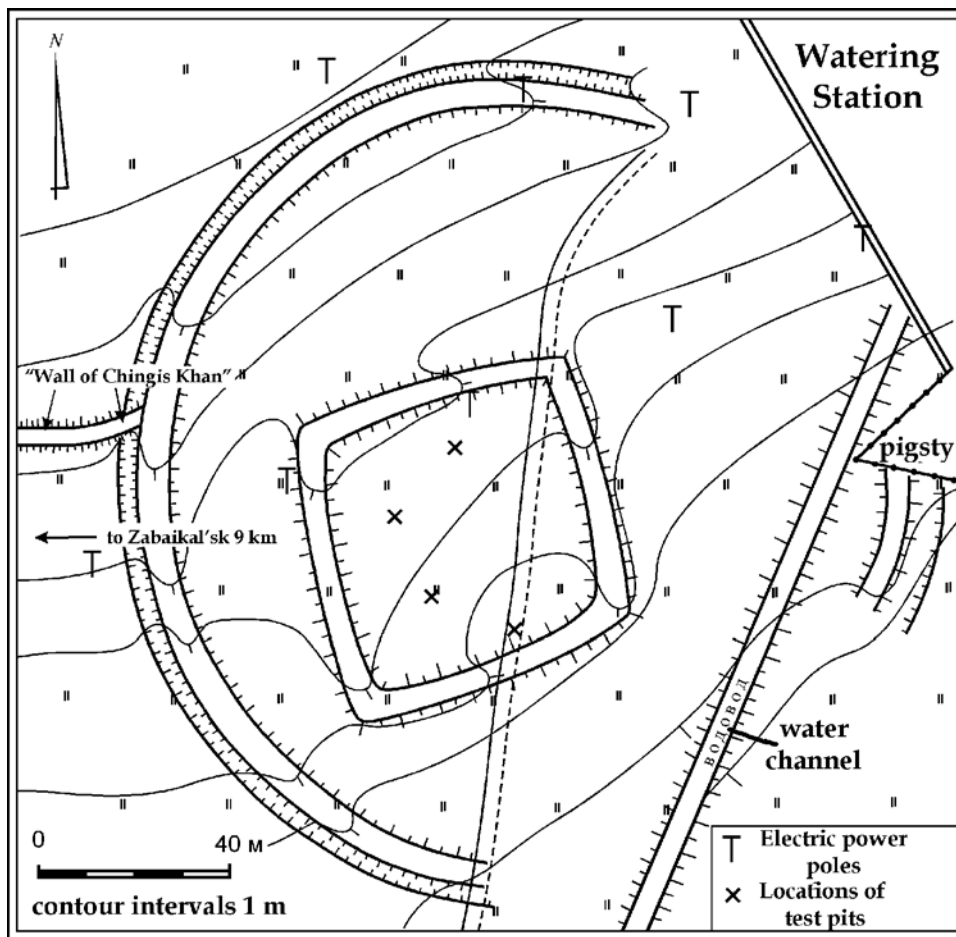
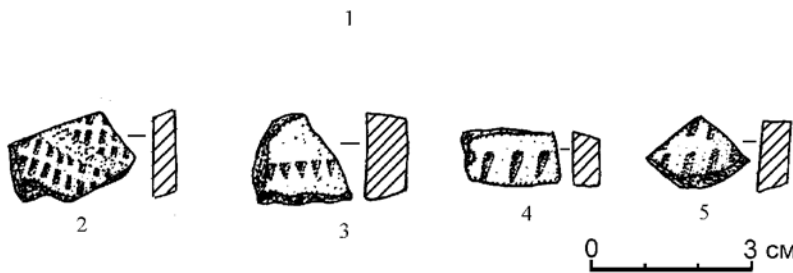


Fig. 4. Plan of Bugutur fort and samples of the Khitan pottery found there.

higher than the rest of the fort, on a base obviously formed by piling up dirt. This interior structure of the fort measures 35 x 35 m. Its walls are slightly bent outward. The western and eastern sides have an orientation of 346°, the northern side 77° and the southern side 67°. The central structure is offset from the center of the fort in the southwestern direction. Its southwestern corner is 12 m from the inside edge of the exterior wall of the fort; its northeastern corner 43 m. It is difficult to say whether there were towers at the corners of the rectangular structure as in the majority of the Transbaikal forts. The fort has been substantially destroyed, and the proportions of the exterior fortifications can be determined only with difficulty. It is also



and at the exterior of the wall itself 170 m. The wall rises 25–30 cm above current ground level and is 9 m wide at its base. The exterior ditch is 30–35 cm below current ground level and 3–4 m wide. The largest height differential between the top of the wall and the bottom of the ditch (1.3 m) is in the southeastern part of the fort.

The interior fortification has a rectangular shape and is formed by a wall 10 m wide. On the southern side the distance from the top of the wall to its base is 1.0–1.3 m. Inside the wall that distance is 35 cm. On the northern side of the fort, these measurements are, respectively, 55 cm and 20 cm. The central rectangular construction is

uncertain whether there is an entrance on the south side of the rectangular structure.

The "Chingis Khan Wall" comes up to the exterior wall of the fort from the west and has a width of about 6 m. The end of the wall, which abuts with the fort, bends to the north. Where the "Wall of Chingis Khan" joins the fort there is no ditch.

Test pits dug in the central rectangular part of the fort produced 14 fragments of Khitan ceramics [Fig. 4.2-5]

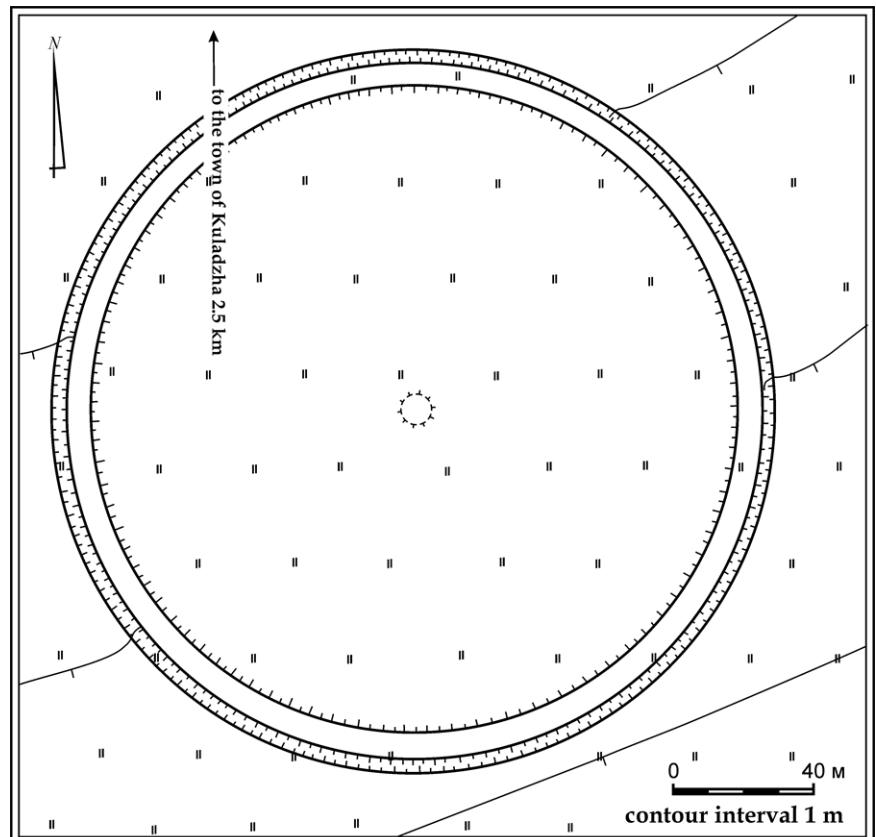


Fig. 5. Satellite image of the Kuladzha fort.

The Kuladzha fort

It is located in the Kuladzha Valley 2.5 km south of the village of Kuladzha and 3 km. NNW of boundary marker No. 63 on the Russo-Chinese border [Fig. 2]. It is 4.8 km south of the “Wall of Chingis Khan” and 12.5 km east of Bugutur fort. The fort is round [Fig. 5]. It has a single fortification system consisting of an earthen wall and an exterior ditch. The interior space of the fort is flat, apparently having been deliberately leveled. Its diameter to the external edge of the ditch is 207 m and to the external edge of the wall 200 m. [Fig. 6]. At its base the wall is 8 m wide, and the width of the ditch is 3 m. The distance from the top of the wall to the bottom of the ditch is 80–90 cm and from the edge of the ditch to its bottom about 10 cm. In the center of the structure is a small but clearly distinguishable round mound 9 m in diameter and 40 cm high. One can suppose that it was the point around which the wall of the fort was laid out during its construction, where a horseman could have ridden in a circle attached by a rope to a central stake. As in the case of the preceding one, the fort is located in direct proximity to running water, a stream that

Fig. 6. Plan of the Kuladzha fort.



likely in an earlier time was fuller and would have been a source of water for filling the ditch. A fresh water well with a constant water supply is located not far from the fort.

The large Koktui fort

The large Koktui fort closes off the Koktui Valley. It is south of the “Wall of Chingis Khan,” 6.89 km. northeast of the village of Kuladzha and 11.1 km northwest of the village of Abagaitui [Fig. 2]. The straight-line distance from the fort to the wall is 255 m and to the preceding Kuladzha fort 6.3 m along the wall. The plan of the fort is identical with that of Bugutur — a perfect circle with an inscribed rectangle. The exterior dimension of the wall has a diameter of 155 m, its width at the base is 4–5 m. and its height up to 1.5 m, while the exterior ditch is 4 m wide and up to 1 m deep. The interior structure on an artificially constructed foundation is surrounded on four sides by walls up to 1.5 m high. At the corners tower-like structures are clearly visible, extending out more than 4.5 m. The interior structure of the fort measures 64 x 64 m along the outside of its walls. Like the exterior wall of the fort, it is surrounded

by a ditch. Both in the southeastern sector of the round wall and the southeastern side of the interior structure are breaks where in all probability there were entrances. An unnamed fresh water stream which flows near the fort was the source for filling the ditch.

The small Koktui fort

It is located 7.23 km northeast of the town of Kuladzha and 10.69 km northwest of the town of Abagaitui [Fig. 2]. The fort is located 398 m southwest of the large Koktui fort along the same valley close to the stream bank. The distance from the fort to the “Wall of Chingis Khan” is 689 m. The rectangular structure consisting of earthen walls with corner towers is surrounded by a ditch that now is 4–6 m wide and up to 1 m deep. The walls are up to 2 m high with a width at the base of 3–5 m; the towers are 2.5 m high. The exterior dimension of the fort is 30 x 40 m. The fort is on a built-up foundation whose interior then was dug out and leveled.

The large Tsankyr fort

The large Tsankyr fort is completely analogous to the large Bugutur and Koktui. It is located 8.8 km NE of the Abagaitui mine and 8.6 km NNW of the village of Brusilovka in the Tsankyr Valley [Figs. 2 and 7]. The exterior wall of the fort is a perfect circle 153 m in diameter measured to its outer edge. In its current state, it is up to 1 m high and its base 3–4 m wide. The wall is surrounded by a now largely filled in ditch up to 0.5 m deep. The interior square structure is offset to the northwest

Fig. 7. Satellite image of the large Tsankyr fort.



sector of the surrounding enclosure. It measures 47 x 47 m. The construction consists of earthen walls up to 2 m high and 3.5 m wide at the base with corner towers 2.4–2.6 m high in their current state. The structure is surrounded by a wide ditch.

The fort is 216 m from the “Wall of Chingis Khan” and 24.6 km along the wall (24 km as the crow flies) from the large Koktui fort. The source of water for filling the ditch apparently is the nearby Brusilovka stream.

The small Tsankyr fort

It is located in the Tsankyr Valley 3.9 km SSE of the large Tsankyr fort [Fig. 2]. In its plan and construction it is identical with the small Koktui fort. The square structure was erected on a built-up foundation, which was then dug out inside. The walls are 2.1–2.3 m high and 4–5 m wide at the base. The corner towers are clearly defined, extending 2.3–2.5 m beyond the wall, and are 2.6 m high. Around the outside of the walls is a thoroughly filled in ditch. The straight-line distance of the fort to the “Wall of Chingis Khan” is 3.5 km.

The large round Urtui fort

It is located in the Urtui Valley 5 km NNW of the town of Sredneargunsk and 13.8 km SW of the town of Kailastui [Fig. 2]. Its straight-line distance from the “Wall of Chingis Khan” is 2.2 km. Its type is identical with that of the large Kuladzha fort, with a perfectly circular shape. There are no interior structures. The exterior diameter of the wall is 158 m, its width at the base 3.5–4 m and height up to 1 m. The ditch around the outside is 2.0–2.5 m wide and up to 0.5 m deep. A break in the southeastern section of the wall some 5 m wide may have been an entrance. The distance between the large round Urtui fort and the large Tsankyr fort described just above is 15.8 km along the “Wall of Chingis Khan” and 15.2 km in a straight line. The River Urtui flows right next to the fort and undoubtedly was the source of water to fill the ditch around it.

The large rectangular Urtui fort

It is located 1.5 km SSW of the large round Urtui fort, 4 km from the “Wall of Chingis Khan” [Fig.

2]. The large rectangular Urtui gorodok is the largest known of the rectangular forts along the “Wall of Chingis Khan.” It has a rhombic shape, the western and eastern walls of which have an orientation of 1° and the northern and southern 284° [Fig. 8]. The exterior measurement of the fort is 110 x 115 m.

Into its wall are built four corner and three frontal towers, the latter in the middle of the western, eastern and northern walls. They project out from the wall 5 m; the horizontal section of the towers is round. The diameter of the corner towers at their base is 15 m and in the upper part 10 m. The diameter of the frontal towers at the base is 15–17 m and in the upper part 12–14 m. Taking the towers into account, the length of the wall is 122–125 m.

The height of the walls is 1.1–2.0 m and width at the base 9.5–10 m and 1.5–2 m at the top. The southern part of the fort is the highest, where the distance between the base and top of the towers is 2 m. The lowest part of the fort is the northeastern, where that distance is only 1.1 m. Measured on the inside of the fort, the distance from the top of the towers and the base is significantly less – from 55 cm in the northeastern corner to 1.4 m at the western tower. The fort was erected on a specially prepared foundation. The interior of the fort is from 44 cm (the NE corner) to 95 cm (the SW corner) higher than the surface of the ground outside. The largest difference in height between the top of the wall and the ground level inside the fort is 60 cm (between the northwestern and southeastern corners).

In the central part of the southern wall is a passage 3 m wide aligned at an angle of 14° . Outside the wall the entrance

has a supplementary fortification in the form of an arc-shaped wall, in the middle of which is a passage 2 m wide. Between the passage in the main wall and that in the supplementary wall is a ditch 4 m wide, across which in all probability was a bridge in ancient times. The width of the supplementary wall at the passage is 5 m and at its ends 2 m. Between its ends and the main wall the width of the ditch is 2 m. Around the outside of that wall is an approximatedly 4 m wide ditch.

Outside the main wall is a ditch 3–4 m wide. South of the fort its width achieves 15 m. The ditch surrounding the structure apparently was filled by water from the nearby River Urtui.

The small Urtui fort

The structure is located in the Urtui Valley 2 km northeast of the town of Sredneargunsk [Fig. 2]. The fort is of type 2 by our classification and identical with the small Koktui and Tsankyr forts. Its walls are 2.1–2.3 m high, the corner towers

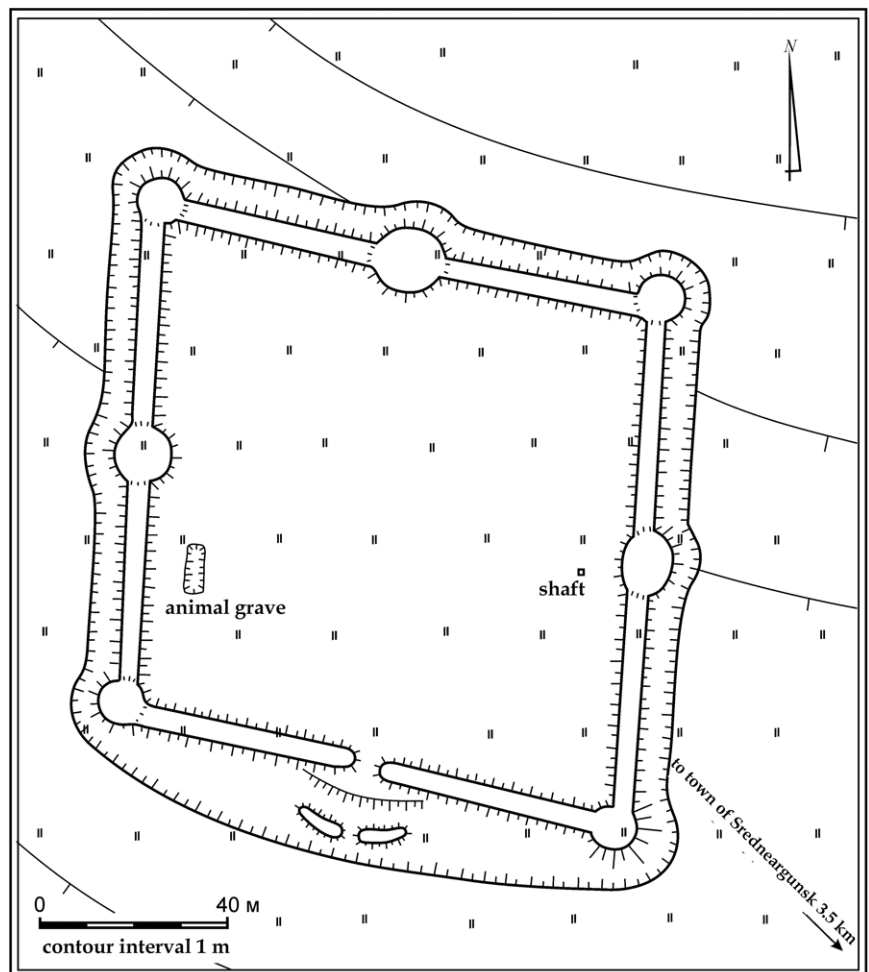


Fig. 8. Plan of the large rectangular Urtui fort.

are clearly defined and are 2.5–2.6 m high. The exterior measurement of the walls is 27 x 26 m. The walls around the perimeter are surrounded by a poorly defined filled-in ditch. The fort is 5.4 km from the “Wall of Chingis Khan.”

Forts in Mongolia and China

Unfortunately we have only incomplete information about forts located along the wall in Mongolia and China. Our data are limited to those obtained by studying satellite photos. Nonetheless, we feel it useful to present that information here, the more so because it is significant for the examination of the entire system of walls and forts and confirms the regularity of their topology.

Below we provide a description of the forts which we discovered from satellite imagery and its correlation with data on topographic maps of Mongolia and China, moving along the “Wall of Chingis Khan” from west to east. We are unaware whether these structures have been studied by Mongolian and Chinese scholars and, in the event of that, what names they would have been given, although for our purposes here – to confirm the regularity in the system of walls and forts – that is neither here nor there. Therefore in the description we will stick to our own scheme, that is, provisionally naming each site by a nearby toponym.

The round Norovlin fort

Located practically at the very beginning of the “Wall of Chingis Khan,” it is 3.8 km southwest of the *sum* center Norovlin in Mongolia along the automobile road connecting Bayan-Uul with Ondorhaan. The fort has been partially destroyed by the road but nonetheless can be seen in satellite images and located on a topographic map. Its type is that of the large Tsankyr, large Bugutur and large Koktui forts and has the shape of a perfect circle of about 150 m exterior diameter, inside of which is a square structure measuring about 40 x 40 m.

The fort is located about 250 m from the “Wall of Chingis Khan” and closes off the Shavart valley, which leads to the river Onon Gol. The source of fresh water and water for filling the ditch was apparently the river Ulz Gol.

The rectangular Norovlin fort

It is 4 km NNE of the *sum* center Norovlin and is not visible either in satellite images or on topographic maps. It was discovered in 2002 by the International UNESCO expedition. The fort is rectangular and is located 40 m from the “Wall of Chingis Khan.” Its detailed description is in the introduction to this article.

Further to the east 320 km along the “Wall of Chingis Khan” we have no reliable data about the existence and location of forts, on account of the absence of satellite photos of that territory with a resolution which would permit the identification of structures with 100% certainty. On topographic maps there are markings which correspond to the objects we seek and which have been confirmed directly *de visu* and from surface photographs. Nonetheless, we refrain from premature submission of unconfirmed information for that part of the wall. We will say a few words below about the possibility and locations of forts in that section.

The round Huiten-Heremt fort

This structure is 36.8 km southeast of the town of Mandal-Ovoo (Mongolia) and 2.3 km south of the lake Har nuur. The fort blocks the Huiten-Heremt valley 4 km from the “Wall of Chingis Khan” [Fig. 3]. Its type is identical with that of the round Norovlin fort and like it has the shape of a perfect circle with an inscribed rectangle. The exterior diameter of the wall is approximately 160 m. Its source of fresh water is the directly adjacent spring, Huiten bulag.

The rectangular Huiten-Heremt fort

The fort is located 37 km southeast of the town of Mandal-Ovoo (Mongolia) and 2.1 km south of the lake Har nuur [Fig. 3] and is part of a single complex paired with the round Huiten-Heremt fort. The structure is rectangular and of the same type as the small Urtui, Koktui and Tsankyr forts. Its straight-line distance from the “Wall of Chingis Khan” is 4.2 km. Right next to it is the permanent spring Huiten bulag.

The round Hezhemute fort

It is located 31.3 km NE in a direct line and 32.2 km along the “Chingis Khan Wall” from the round Huiten-Heremt fort. It blocks the valley Heremt-Holoi valley 5.7 km northeast of Mt. Gurban-Taolegai (China) and 1.9 km south of marker No. 635 on the Sino-Mongolian border [Fig. 3]. It is a perfect circle with an inscribed rectangle, a type that is identical with the structures already described. The exterior diameter is 168 m and the interior structure measures 53 x 52 m. The interior fortification is offset significantly into the southwestern sector of the surrounding wall and has a regular rhomboid shape. The straight-line distance of the fort from the “Wall of Chingis Khan” is 1.9 km. Close by is the freshwater well Hezhemute hudege (?= Ho-je-mu-t’ing hao-lai) which has a permanent water source.

The rectangular Hezhemute fort

The fort is 1.7 km southeast of the round Hezhemute fort and 5.1 km northeast of the peak of Gurban-Taolegai (China). The distance from the fort to the “Wall of Chingis Khan” is 3.6 km [Fig. 3]. The fort is identical to the previously described rectangular structures, measuring 45 x 45 m and square in shape.

The round Burtan fort

It is located in China 2.5 km. northeast of the peak of Ikhe-Haierkan uul and 3.4 km SE by E from the peak Baga-Haierkan uul [Fig. 3]. Its plan is a perfect circle with an inscribed rectangle. The exterior diameter of the structure is 150 m, and the interior structure is 45 x 45 m. At the corners of the interior fortification towers are clearly visible. The fort is 2.8 km from the “Wall of Chingis Khan,” and from the preceding Hezhemute fort is 21.9 km in a direct line and 23.1 km along the wall. Not far from the fort is the lake Burtan nuur and a freshwater well.

The rectangular Burtan fort

This square fortification is in China, 0.9 km northeast of the round Burtan fort or 3.4 km northeast of the peak of Ikhe-Haierkan uul and 4.1 km northeast of the peak of Baga-Haierkan uul [Fig. 3]. The structure measures 58 x 58 m

and its straight-line distance from the “Wall of Chingis Khan” is 2.4 km.

The round Odinokaia Fort

This fort is the easternmost structure discovered by us on the basis of cartographic material and satellite images. It is located in China 5.3 km west of the town of Odinokaia and 0.8 km. southwest of the peak of Ostraia on the right bank of the river Gen He. The fort, like the previously described Bugutur is situated directly on the “Wall of Chingis Khan” and is part of its structure. Its plan is that of a regular circle 110 m in diameter with an inscribed rectangle. It is identical with the similar structures which have been described above. The fort closes off the valley of the River Gen He, a right tributary of the River Argun.

Discussion

From the careful study of maps it is clear that the “Wall of Chingis Khan” encompasses a steppe region located between the upper reaches of the Rivers Onon and Argun extending from the end of one zone of the taiga to the beginning of another. This circumstance suggests that the wall was built to control the movement of nomads who lived in southern Transbaikalia.

The “Wall of Chingis Khan” is a truly grandiose structure, comparable to such prominent fortifications as Hadrian’s Wall or the Great Wall of China. Huge resources were expended in its construction. It is not difficult to calculate that to construct one meter of such a wall would have required on the average (as a minimal approximation) around 10 m³ of earth. Hence, the construction of an earthen embankment 746 km long would have required moving 7,460,000 m³ of far from light steppe soil. If one takes into account that for a person in contemporary conditions using again contemporary tools, the physical norm is considered the movement of 7–8 m³ a day, then to build the “Wall of Chingis Khan,” apart from the construction of the ditch and strengthening (packing) of the wall, would have required 932,500 man-days of labor. It is clear that the to erect such structures would have taken an upper maximum of several decades. Hence the time for its construction should have been as short as possible. And this required

the marshalling of a huge amount of human resources and, what is especially important, large organizational and material expenditures to support and manage that “working army.”

As indicated above, we have insufficiently complete information about the location of the forts along the wall on Mongolian and Chinese territory. Nonetheless, we can draw some conclusion about their purpose already. The research so far completed makes it possible to specify the basic regularities in the system of the relationship of the two types of fortification – the wall and the forts.

First of all, is the absolute identity of the structures, which reinforces the conclusion about the near simultaneous construction of them following a “single plan.” The exception here is the large square Urtui fort, which possibly was not part of the wall and fort system.

Secondly, the absolute majority of the forts located along the “Wall of Chingis Khan” are in pairs – one round and the other rectangular. Possibly the rectangular and round forts had different functions. The round forts are nearer the wall or directly on it, the rectangular ones located at a distance from it. At present, part of the forts, especially the small rectangular ones, has been lost as a result of economic activity of the modern population. The information of Müller confirms this. He mentions (1937) the presence of forts not far from the village of Tsurukhaitui and in the valleys of the Karaganatu (the Bol’shoi Karganatu Valley) and in Kailassutu (the Kailastui Valley) in the vicinity of Kailastui village in Transbaikalia. The search for them in 2008-2009 came up empty-handed. One can then only conclude that they have been lost forever. The paired positioning of the forts noted in Transbaikalia is also observed in China and Mongolia, which bears witness to the regularity of their distribution (Table 2, pp. 120-21).

Thirdly, all the forts close off fairly sizeable valleys and are located in places suitable for long-term habitation. A criterion for them was the presence nearby of sources of water both for consumption and to fill the defensive ditches.

Fourthly, all the forts are located from between 6 and 30 km from each other, a fact which ensures

effective communication in a time of necessity. This regular feature can be seen in connection with all the forts we have described. Taken together with such features as the presence of an enclosable valley, the proximity of running water and a fresh-water spring, one has the basis for predicting the location of paired forts along the “Wall of Chingis Khan” in the section of it we have not studied on the territory of Mongolia. Moreover, as noted above, we have some indirect data obtained from topographic sources.

In the course of studying the wall and the forts located along it we found gray ceramics stamped with comb-patterned decoration (by means of a cog-wheel with teeth which as a rule were wedge-shaped) [Fig. 4.2-5]. Similar ceramics are well known from Khitan sites in China (Ivliev 1986; Eisenhofer-Halim 1996; Lu 2008). This indicates that the fortifications in question were built under the Liao Empire (907-1125). Unfortunately, so far we have not been able to find in written sources any precise data about the date and reasons for the erection of the wall. The only mention relates to the final stage of the existence of the Liao Empire. The 7th book of the “Dailao guruni suduri” (a Manchu translation of the *Liao shi* [History of the Liao Dynasty]) says, “In the second year (of the reign of) Tianzuo (1112 CE), in the second moon, emperor Tianzuo set out to the river Huntuntszian to fish, after which, according to ancient custom, all the leaders of the wild Nüchih people came there to render obeisance: that is, those who lived about a thousand *li* from the line of the border” (Tiuriumina 2007, p. 118). In all probability the given passage is speaking about the wall we are studying. However, the task remains to date the construction and determine the purpose of the wall, and, as well, establish the considerations of foreign policy which might have governed the completion of such a huge undertaking.

Conclusion

Insofar as the wheel-made ceramics with a cog-wheel stamp are a marker of the period of the Liao Empire, it is logical to suppose that the wall and forts discussed here date from Khitan times. However, it is not quite so simple, since studies at the fort of Chintolgoi balgas in Bulgan aimak

in Mongolia have shown that despite the uniform appearance of Khitan ceramic decoration, there, in addition to Khitans, were other ethnic groups – Bohai and possibly Jurchen and Chinese (Kradin and Ivliev 2008; 2009).

On Russian territory, the area of distribution of the given ceramics is limited to southeastern Transbaikalia. Finds of these ceramics are co-terminous with the “Wall of Chingis Khan” and its adjacent forts. It is logical to suppose that the area along the Argun River was the northwestern border of the Khitan state. Logically, the fortifications including the earthen border wall and the forts along its southern side would have been intended to guarantee control over that part of Inner Asia. However, to date there is still insufficient material to support a single interpretation of these large-scale structures. Excavations on a significant scale have yet to be undertaken either on the wall or in the forts.

Even among the authors of this article there is no single opinion at present concerning the purpose of the grandiose structure. Undoubtedly the wall could fulfill defensive purposes: the function of first-line defense and mobile intelligence about the movements of large groups of nomads. However the wall also marked the borders of the empire. In that case, the function of the series of forts built along the southern side of the “Wall of Chingis Khan” might have been different. They could be the border pickets called upon not to defend but to control the state boundary. The construction along the northeastern part of the Great Steppe of a system involving a wall as a boundary marker and fort-pickets could have been connected with the development of new political conceptions about the strengthening of the territory under state control by means of fortifications which had more of a symbolic than a defensive character.

– translated from Russian by Daniel Waugh

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Table 2. Topographic and site plan characteristics of forts located along the "Wall of Chingis Khan"

Name	Location	Plan of site	Exterior measurements of wall	Distance from the "Wall of Chingis Khan"	Straight-line distance to next fort	Distance along the wall to next fort	Presence of nearby water source	Fresh water	Presence of a valley blocked by the fort	Country
Round Norovlin	3.8 km SW of soncenter Norovlin, Mongolia, along Bayan-utul to Uder-Hian road		D 150 m	250 m	?	?	R. Uldza-gol, 600 m	R. Uldza-gol	Shavart valley (where enters Onon gol)	Mongolia
Round Huiten-Herent	36.8 km SW of town of Mandal-Ovo, Mongolia, 2.1 km S of lake Har nuur		D 160 m	4 km	Hezhernute, 31.3 km NE	Hezhernute, 32.2 km	L. Har nuur, 2100 m	Huiten bulag spring	Huiten-Herent valley	Mongolia
Rectangular Huiten-Herent	37 km SW of town of Mandal-Ovo, Mongolia, 2.2 km S of lake Har nuur		45 x 45 m	4.2 km	Hezhernute, 33 km NE	Hezhernute, 32.2 km	L. Har nuur, 2200 m	Huiten bulag spring	Huiten-Herent valley	Mongolia
Round Hezhernute	5.7 km SE of peak Gurban-Taolegai (China), 1.9 km S of Sino-Mongolian border marker No. 636		D 168 m	1.9 km	Burtan, 21.9 km NE	Burtan, 23.1 km	L. Hezhernute nuur, 630 m	Hezhernute-hudage well	Herent-Holoi valley	China
Rectangular Hezhernute	5.1 km SE of peak Gurban-Taolegai (China), 3.5 km S of Sino-Mongolian border marker No. 636		45 x 45 m	3.59 km	Burtan, 21.5 km NE	Burtan, 22 km	L. Hezhernute nuur, 900 m	Hezhernute-hudage well	Herent-Holoi valley	China
Round Burtan	2.5 km SE of peak Ikhe-Haerkan ul (China), 3.4 km SE by E of peak Baga-Haerkan ul (China)		D 150 m; interior 40 x 40 m.	2.8 km	Bugutur, 51 km NE	Bugutur, 51.3 km	L. Burtan nuur, 310 m	well 300 m	valley	China
Rectangular Burtan	3.4 km SE of peak Ikhe-Haerkan ul (China), 4.1 km E of peak Baga-Haerkan ul (China)		58 x 58 m	2.3 km	Bugutur, 50 km NE	Bugutur, 50.8 km	L. Burtan nuur, 250 m	well 13 km	valley	China
Bugutur	8.8 km E of town of Zabakal'sk, in Bugutur Valley, 2.3 km NNE of Sino-Russian border beacon No. 61, alongside a pumping station		D 170 m	0 (on the wall)	Kuladzha, 13.7 km SE	Kuladzha, 12.5 km SE	unnamed stream	well?	Bugutur valley	Russia

Kuladzha	Kuladzha valley, 2.5 km S of town of Kuladzha, 3 km NNW of Sino-Russian border beacon No. 63		D 200 m	4.8 km	Koktui forts, 8.8 km NE	Koktui forts, 6.3 km	stream	well 9 km SE	Kuladzha valley	Russia
Large Koktui	Koktui valley, 69 km NE of town of Kuladzha, 11.1 km SW of town of Abagatui		D 155 m	225 m	Round Tsankyr, 24 km NE	Round Tsankyr, 24.6 km	unnamed stream	unnamed stream	Koktui valley	Russia
Small Koktui	Koktui valley, 72 km NE of town of Kuladzha, 10.7 km SW of town of Abagatui		45 x 46 m	600 m	Round Tsankyr, 23.7 km NE	Round Tsankyr, 23.9 km	unnamed stream	unnamed stream	Koktui valley	Russia
Large Tsankyr	Tsankyr valley, 8.8 km NE of Abagatui spring, 8.6 km NNW of town of Brusilovka		D 153 m	216 m	Round Urtui, 15.8 km NW by W	Round Urtui, 15.2 km	Brusilovka stream	springs, brooks	Tsankyr valley	Russia
Small Tsankyr	Tsankyr valley, 8.1 km NE by E of Abagatui spring, 4.6 km N of town of Brusilovka		45 x 46 m	3.5 km	Round Urtui, 16.1 km NW	Round Urtui, 16.2 km	Brusilovka stream	springs, brooks	Tsankyr valley	Russia
Large Urtui	Urtui valley, 5 km NNW of town of Sredneargursk, 13.8 km SW of town of Kailastui		D 158 m	2.2 km	fort in Karagantui valley (now lost), 15.5 km NW	?	stream	springs, brooks	Urtui valley	Russia
Large Square Urtui	Urtui valley, 3.5 km NW of town of Sredneargursk, 14 km SW of town of Kailastui		110 x 110 m	4 km	fort in Karagantui valley (now lost), 15.5 km NW	?	stream	springs, brooks	Urtui valley	Russia
Small Urtui	Urtui valley, 2 km NW of town of Sredneargursk, 15 km SW of town of Kailastui		27 x 26 m	5.4 km	fort in Karagantui valley (now lost), 15.5 km NW	?	spring	springs, brooks	Urtui valley	Russia
Odinokaisa	5.3 km W of town of Odinokaisa (China), 0.8 km from peak Ostmaia (China), right bank of river Gen He		D 110 m	0 (on the wall)	?	?	R. Gen He, 180 m	R. Gen He	Gen He river valley	China

Early Contacts between Scandinavia and the Orient

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I

“Between East and West”: A Research Program on Contacts between Scandinavia and the Caucasus

Contacts between Scandinavia, the Orient and the Silk Route varied in importance over time, with one of the most intense periods of exchange occurring from the late Vendel period into the Viking Age (especially the 8th – 10th centuries CE). After that, the contacts almost ceased, with the exception of minor journeys, of which that by the Swedish Viking chieftain Ingvar the Far-Traveller in the 11th century to the Caucasus became the most famous. These contacts have left a substantial archaeological record in Scandinavia: coins, silk, colour pigments, textiles and many other artefacts. The contacts also brought cultural influences resulting in the spread of new technology and ideas. The presence of Scandinavian artefacts and burials along the Silk Route branch through the Caucasus has not previously been studied, largely because of the political barriers to research exchange before the 1990s.

The catalyst for pursuing this research was the recent discussion about the journey of Ingvar the Far-Traveller (1036–41). His route was reconstructed by Mats G. Larsson, and in 2004 “Expedition Vittfarne,” an experimental journey, was undertaken, following the Neva, Lovat and Dnieper rivers to the Black Sea, and then through the Caucasus by the rivers Rioni, Kvirila, Tscheremila and Mktvari to the Caspian Sea. The expedition stimulated contacts between Swedish and Georgian colleagues and provided an opportunity to examine museum collections. Research seminars were held in connection with the expedition, laying the basis for the further contacts. In subsequent years, there have been several seminars, workshops and expeditions. This has resulted in new knowledge about the



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Fig. 1. Uppland runestone U 654, Varpsund, Övergrans sn., raised by the sons of “Gunnleifr, their father, who was killed in the east with Ingvar... He could steer a cargo-ship well.”

extent of contacts and trade and the development of an ambitious research plan outlined here. The second part of this article will provide details of the historical background to Ingvar’s journey.

The initial research focussed upon problems related to Ingvar’s journey, which is attested in both archaeological and historical sources. It is remarkable that almost one-fourth of all runic inscriptions in Sweden which deal with journeys abroad are ones dedicated to the memory of men who died during Ingvar’s expedition [Fig. 1].

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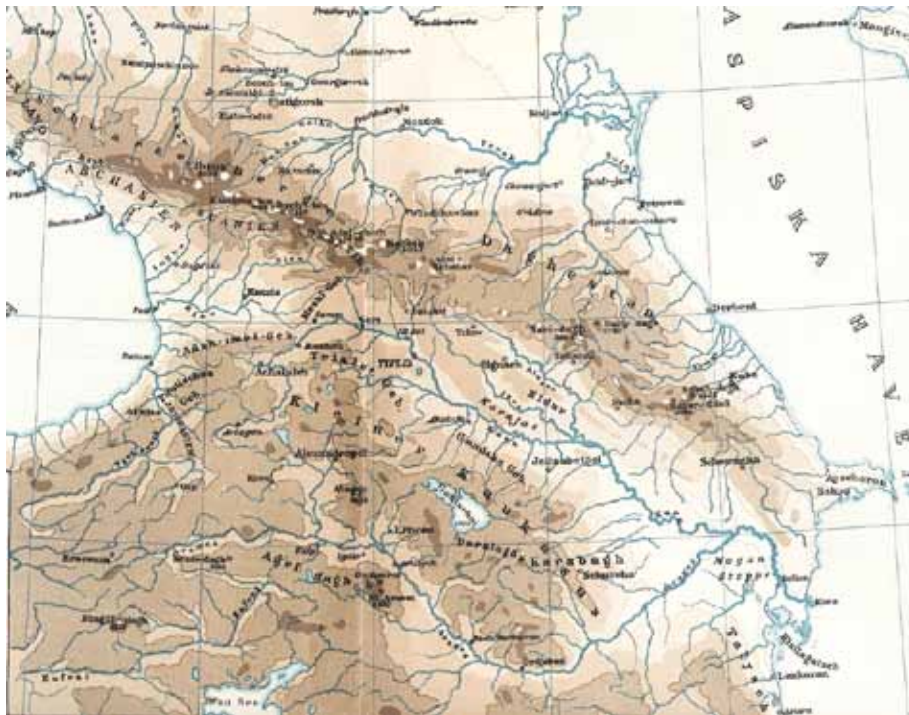


Fig. 2. Map of the Caucasus.

range and then follows the Mktvari/Kura to the Caspian Sea [Figs. 2, 3]. Larger ships could navigate from the Black Sea up to Samtredia. Further upstream, smaller vessels could use the Kvirila and Tschermila. The trade route follows a wide valley between the north and south Caucasus mountain ridges, both of which include peaks over 5000 m high. The Likhi range connecting those ridges is lower, separating eastern and western Georgia. On the west are the humid areas of the Kolchida lowlands; on the east the

The journey also was described in an Icelandic saga, the only saga devoted to a Swedish Viking chieftain, and in contemporary Georgian chronicles. On their journey back through the Caucasus the members of Ingvar's expedition became involved in Georgian political wars; the written sources indicate the crew died of some disease and was buried along the water route. Several Swedish-type burials were discovered by "Expedition Vittfarne" and two of them excavated in 2005.

dryer Kura-Aras lowland which continues through present-day Azerbaijan to the Caspian.

The trade route through the Caucasus

The contacts and trade between Scandinavia and the Caucasus is the focus of the project. Ingvar's route followed part of an ancient trade route mentioned already by Pliny and Tacitus and a branch of the so called "Silk Route." From time to time, in periods when other branches of the Silk Route were blocked for political, economic or military reasons, this became one of the most important trade routes between East and West, between Europe and Asia.

The Likhi range has sometimes constituted a natural border. In the Classical period, the ancient Kingdom of Colchis lay in what is today western Georgia. Here the river Rioni, the ancient Phasis, was the main channel for communication with the town of Phasis beside the river mouth on the Black Sea. Upstream was the town of Vani, where archaeological excavations led by Otar Lordkipanidze and Nino Khoshtaria have demonstrated that it was an important center for trade and religion in the area. Further upstream we also find Kutaisi (antique Aia), the capital of

The Georgian scholar Tamaz Beradze rediscovered the ancient road across the Likhi mountains, which was the one followed by the Vikings. Used already in Classical times, the trade route from the Black Sea follows the rivers Rioni, Kvirila and Tcheremila, crosses the Likhi



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Fig. 3. The eroded old route across the Likhi range.

Colchis, and in the Viking age the capital of the Kingdom of Georgia.

East of the Likhi mountain range from the 3rd century BCE to the 5th century CE was the ancient Georgian kingdom of Kartli, which Greek and Roman authors called Iberia. Kartli sometimes served as the political center for the Georgian people, the Kartvelians. The capital was for a long period at Mtskheta and then in the the 5th century moved to Tbilisi, just to the east. Beginning in the 6th century it became the focus of rivalry between different foreign powers: Persia, the Byzantine empire, the Khazars and the Arabs. Finally in 738 Arab troops conquered the town and established an Islamic emirate here with Tbilisi as its center. This lasted for three centuries and was the political entity the Viking travellers encountered.

Just as Kolchis and the trading centers lay along the river Rioni in the west, so the towns in Iberia/Kartli centered around the Mktvari (Kura) in the east. To counter the threats from outside powers wishing to control the route, hillforts and fortified castles were built in various periods along the route through the Likhi range. In 2005 our Swedish-Georgian expedition discovered a large settlement along this route, where erosion had uncovered finds such as clay pipes and ceramics dating to the 7th century [Figs. 4, 5] (Beradze 2004; G. Larsson in press). Evidence for the direct contacts between Scandinavia and the Caucasus will be explored in Part II below. Scandinavian trading expeditions, which reached the Caspian Sea and continued either east along the Silk Route or south to Baghdad, were already a regular occurrence by the 9th century. The route through the Caucasus was an important link in this trading network.



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Goals of the project

The aim of the project is to study the contacts between Caucasia and Europe in a long-term perspective, with a focus on cultural relations mirrored in ideology and material culture. The extensive information in written sources – such as annals, geographic accounts, runic inscriptions, and sagas; the languages including Arabic, Georgian, Armenian, Greek, Latin, Russian and old Scandinavian – will be juxtaposed to the evidence from material remains. The archaeological evidence is of particular importance here, since it has never been closely examined. The project team involves specialists in a number of disciplines and regions: technology, metal production, art, architecture, early medieval thought and mentality, religion, textile production, communication, ancient monuments and material culture in Caucasia, the Mediterranean, the Orient, Russia and Scandinavia.

The study of material evidence will include new archaeological survey and excavation and analysis of artefacts already in museum collections.

According to Georgian royal chronicles, in the 1040s the Varangians came to Georgia and took part in domestic struggles between King Bagrat of Georgia and his rebellious vassal Liparit Baghvashi. The best described battle was the one at Sasireti in present west Georgia. To date though, there is no archaeological proof

Fig. 4 (left). Terraces for settlement discovered at Nunisi, Georgia, beside the main trade route across the Likhi mountains.

Fig. 5 (below). Clay pipe from the 7th century found at Nunisi.



of Viking participation in these events. A first step in obtaining evidence will be to survey systematically the route from Bashi (where where the Viking contingent was supposed to have stayed in the 1040s) to Sasireti. The survey work will use data from aerial and satellite photography in order to create a digital map with GIS coordinates on which the archaeological sites and routes of travel can be plotted. Test excavations at Bashi and Sasireti will be undertaken to see whether there are Viking artefacts and other evidence that would merit more systematic archaeological excavation.

A related aspect of the study of communications will be to compare the evidence about early Scandinavian and Georgian boat building technologies, since it is reasonable to posit that the need to construct boats during expeditions would have resulted in some exchange of techniques. Among other things, this study will involve comparative analysis of nautical terminology.

Among the objects in museum collections of particular interest are beads. At many sites in Georgia such as Mtskheta, amber beads have been found. Since there is a strong possibility that the amber came from the Baltic it would be possible to test this hypothesis by laboratory analyses in Scandinavia. In the same way, the origin of the Scandinavian Viking age finds of carnelian beads may be traced. Carnelian beads were produced on a large scale in Georgia. This investigation may shed new light to Baltic-Caucasian contacts in the Iron Age and medieval period. There is supporting evidence about the Georgian connection in the finds of Georgian coins which have been made in Sweden.

In the realm of technological innovation, an important aspect of the project will be to study the transmission of knowledge about iron manufacture. According to contemporary research, iron technology arrived in Sweden from the Volga River area, where one finds similar furnaces and artefacts. Georgia is considered one of the areas where iron technology was first introduced and accepted. A hypothesis about possible connections between Georgian iron manufacture and that in Sweden can be tested by examining material remains in Georgian

museums and analyzing the archaeological evidence at manufacturing sites. It is possible then that connections can be made between the techniques, qualities of the products, and the like. This empirical study will then be related to current theories on the concepts of innovation and technological choices.

Material culture and belief systems intersect in clothing and textiles. Annika Larsson has already demonstrated that textile fragments found at Viking-age Birka in Sweden originate in the "East" and have close analogies with those from the Caucasus. Further study of this material in juxtaposition with ethnographic documentation may suggest similarities in dress between the two cultures. Of particular interest here will be careful technical analysis of the dyes, for example, *Rubia Tinctoria*, which was produced in and exported from Georgia. Pigments derived from substances traded along the routes connecting Asia and Europe also may be analyzed from their traces on wooden objects. There is a great deal to be learned here about color symbolism and its relationship to societal norms where particular colors were markers of position and wealth.

An important part of the project will be to attempt a comparative analysis of societal norms and belief systems in Viking-age Scandinavia and in medieval Georgia. One aspect of this study concerns religious belief and its manifestation in material objects and religious texts. It will be based, first of all, on Georgian and Swedish hagiographic works, the cycles of both "Martyrdoms" and "Lives," and also other kinds of written sources such as annals and sagas. The written evidence can be supplemented with rich archaeological, ethnographic and artistic material. Epigraphic and architectural monuments, specimens of mural painting, miniatures, icon-painting, goldsmiths' work and other branches of art will be used. An examination of architectural remains and icon painting may shed new light on possible cross-cultural borrowing, going beyond iconographic themes and involving material components and techniques. To the extent that one can reconstruct the thought world of the two societies, it may be possible then to learn more than we have to date from the evidence of the written sources they produced – that is,

to understand the characterizations of different ethnic or cultural groups and read not only what is written about them but read from the silences of that which was left unsaid.

II

The Background to Ingvar the Far-Traveller's Journey: the Textual, Archaeological and Artistic Evidence

The famous expedition of Ingvar the Far-Traveller through the Caucasus in the Late Viking Age, an event commemorated in many Swedish rune-stones and an Icelandic saga, followed upon a long period of Scandinavian involvement in the south and east which brought the Vikings to the Caspian Sea and beyond. While much of this earlier history concerning the journeys to Byzantium and to some degree Russia has been well documented, the ongoing work of our project is providing a new research field related to the journeys to the Caucasus, with some of the most interesting evidence coming from analysis of textiles in Swedish collections and in Georgia. New analysis of archaeological material has enhanced our understanding of how the travel to the East became possible. We are only at the beginning of archaeological work in the Caucasus, where we can expect to learn a

Fig. 6. Reconstruction of a part of Viking-age Birka, model in Birka Museum.



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great deal more. In this essay, I shall review the source evidence regarding the “pre-history” of Ingvar’s expedition. In a following article the archaeological and historical material related to the expedition itself will be discussed.

The presence of Sasanian coins in Sweden shows that commercial contacts with the Orient were initiated already in the 7th century. The big expansion of the Eastern trade came in the mid-8th century and resulted simultaneously in the establishment of the Viking Age towns Birka in Sweden [Fig. 6] and Staraja Ladoga in Russia along the Eastern trade route. According to the latest dendrochronological datings, both of these were established in the 750s.

There were fundamental changes in the Swedish contacts with the East in the Viking Age that also affected the contacts with the areas along the Silk Route. Ingmar Jansson (2005, p. 39) has made the important observation that the material culture related to the Eastern journeys can be divided into an “older phase” beginning in the 8th century and enduring until the late 10th century, and a “younger phase” that started in the late 10th century and lasted to the mid-12th century. The transition in the late 10th century is associated with political and religious changes, as well as with changes in trade and towns. In Scandinavia, in the “older phase,” the Islamic silver coins dominate as payment in both Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. One of the most obvious expressions of the changes is their

disappearance and replacement by German and English silver coins in the late 10th century. At the same time, Birka is replaced by Sigtuna; and in Russia the oldest Novgorod, Riurikovo gorodishche, disappears, and the present Novgorod is established about 2 km away. Most of the Scandinavian finds in the East belong, according to Jansson, to the “older phase.” [Fig. 7] That they are few in the “younger phase” may be explained by a change in dress, where the typical Scandinavian style is no longer as obvious.

Fig. 7. *Burial of a Viking-age woman, 10th century CE, display in Gotlands Museum. Her accoutrements included typical Gotlandic jewelry, a box-shaped brooch, two animal-shaped brooches, a key, knife and tweezers attached to chains. The brooches in female burials are among the most important “ethnic” identifiers.*



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However, another explanation may be that the burial practice changed as a result of Christian influences (Jansson 2005, p. 43). True Scandinavian finds from the “younger phase” are detectable along the Dnieper route [Fig. 8] all the way down to the Black Sea, such as the runic grave-stone from the island Berezan outside the mouth of the Dnieper.

The eastern artefacts in Scandinavia in the “older phase” are, as Jansson has observed, from the eastern Caliphate (Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan), from the Khazar Empire between the lower Dnieper and lower Volga, and from the

Bulgar area in the middle Volga. Comparatively few finds are of Byzantine origin – approximately 600 coins, pendant-crosses and reliquaries, and a few others, and the majority of them are from the ‘younger phase’ (Jansson 2005, p. 44). This is in line with the recent results by Annika Larsson (2005), who has argued that the clothing styles, materials and decoration found in Birka (that is, in the “older phase”) are “Oriental,” not Byzantine. For details see below.

The written sources, such as the Russian Primary Chronicle, tell of predominantly hostile relations with Byzantium in the “older phase,” including repeated attacks from Rus until the 10th century when the first peace treaties and trade agreements were made. Later, in the “younger phase,” the Rus also enter Byzantine military service, and the Rus ruler converts to Christianity in order to marry a Byzantine princess [Fig. 9].



Fig. 8 (left). *The Pilgård stone, now in the Gotlands Museum, found next to a Viking-age market and harbor at Bogeiviken, commemorates Raon, who apparently drowned in the Dnieper rapids called Aifur.*

Fig. 9. *Late 10th-early 12th-century runic inscription in the Cathedral of Haghia Sophia in Istanbul was left by a Viking-age Scandinavian named Halfdan.*



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The Islamic sources in the “older phase” talk about “Rus” and the journeys to the areas around the Caspian Sea, whereas they talk about *warank* in the “younger phase.” And finally, in the Old Russian and Old West Norse early medieval literature the contacts with the Caliphate seem forgotten, and the Byzantine connection stands out as the most important (Jansson 2005, p. 44). The later term *warank* is associated with the Scandinavians in Byzantine military service, which in Russia are called *variag*, in Greece *varangos*, and in Scandinavia *våring*. These Scandinavian warriors are first mentioned (in the Primary Chronicle) as being employed in Byzantium in the second peace treaty between Rus and Byzantium in 944. There we learn that, besides a trade agreement, the Rus ruler should send warriors to the Byzantine emperor to fight against his enemies in the number that the latter requested. This started a new era in the Eastern relations: the contacts and the communication network had begun to change. Further evidence is the work *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae* by Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos, where, in connection with the Rus princess Olga’s visit in 957, the emperor complains that Rus had not sent people to him to the extent they had agreed. The Byzantine Empire had replaced the Orient as the target for the Scandinavian journeys and commercial contacts.

The necessary prerequisite for the contacts: the ships

Changes in boatbuilding technology were the main factor behind the expansion of contacts and trading networks in the Viking Age (G. Larsson 2007). The resulting improvement in the ships made possible long distance journeys from



Fig. 10. The Viks boat rebuilt at the National Maritime Museum Stockholm.

Scandinavia to the areas south of the Aral Sea in the east and “Vinland” America in the west, the northern African coast in the south and Baffin Island in Canada as well as the Arctic Sea in the north.

The well preserved 11th-century Viks boat [Fig. 10], which has been documented, reconstructed and rebuilt by the author, is the only Viking-age ship find in Sweden with almost all of the wooden hull

preserved and thus with a unique potential to inform about Viking-age shipbuilding and the qualities of the ships (G. Larsson 1997, 2000, 2007). The planking in the ship was made from radially split oak, a method that, according to the analysis of wooden fragments attached to rivets in burials, was introduced in the 7th century, the earliest example being the burial boat from Valsgårde grave No. 7, excavated near Uppsala (Arwidsson 1977; G. Larsson 2007) [Fig. 11]. The method enabled the fibres in the wood to remain intact, and, thanks to the strength and pliability of the fibres, the planking could be made much thinner than if it was sawn, in which case the fibres were cut. 10–20 mm is a common thickness of planks in Swedish Viking boats: they have the thinnest planking among the Scandinavian ships and therefore are the lightest ones. Embla, the

Fig. 11. A reconstruction drawing of the boat burial of Valsgårde grave No. 7, Museum Gustavianum, Uppsala.

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reconstruction of a 7.2 m-long burial boat, weighs only 250 kg, and the 9,6 m-long Viks boat replica, 500 kg (G. Larsson 1998, 2006). By contrast, the 8,5 m-long replica boat Krampmacken that was built with modern methods weighs more than 850 kg (Edberg 1993; 1995 a, b; 1996). The light boats were the most important factor behind the success of the Viking raids, where the ships could land anywhere with shallow waters. Since the boats could land anywhere, it was impossible to anticipate where the next attack might fall.

The light boats were the main factor that made possible the far-reaching Eastern trade. As I have shown earlier, analysis of Viking-age Scandinavian boat remains in Russia shows that it was almost exclusively the very light Swedish boats which could be and were used on these trade routes. Shallow rivers, many portages beside the rapids and between the different river systems, made it necessary to have very light boats. In experiments I have shown that boats built with radial splitting of the planks were so light that children and teenagers can pull them on land on rollers placed on portages without difficulty. The replica of the Viks boat was pulled almost one kilometer in one hour by these young people, and the burial boat took only fifteen minutes. By contrast, the experimental boat "Krampmacken," built in the modern way with thicker sawn planks, and thus much heavier, though smaller than the Viks boat, could be pulled on portages only by adult men and with great effort, necessitating the construction of a wheeled carriage for the boat. The portaging of ships by Rus merchant travellers was described already in the 10th century by Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos in his *De Administrando Imperio*, a book instructing his son how to rule the empire and how to deal with the many different peoples living in and around it.

The discouraging results by some experimental archaeologists using modern methods to build the replica boats has caused these scholars to wonder whether the Rus even could travel such distances in Eastern Europe (Edberg 1997, 1998, 1999). My experience with replica boats built with original methods, and similar experiences in Denmark, give completely different results and show that it is possible without effort to use ships of this type on communication routes that

involves many portages. Moreover, these results are also supported by contemporary historical sources that are good evidence about these long-distance journeys. Several contemporaneous Arab authors emphasise that the Rus, who are ethnically different from Slavs, also differ from them in that they come by ships, and that the ships are central in warfare, and raids, as well as trade. One of these authors Ibn Rustah (fl. CE 903–913) writes:

...They have a king who is called khaqan Rus... they make raids against Saqalaba, sailing in ships in order to go out to them, and they take them prisoner and carry them off to Khazar and Bulgar and trade with them there...They have no cultivated lands; they eat only what they can carry off from the land of Saqalaba... their only occupation is trading with sables and grey squirrel and other furs, and in these they trade and they take as price gold and silver and secure it in their belts (or saddle-bags). [transl. by Macartney 1930]

A few decades later, around 950, Constantine Porphyrogenitos described the recently organized trade network between Rus and the Byzantine Empire, which included journeys by boat. The Rus merchants from Novgorod and Kiev travelled north in winter to purchase furs, and returned in spring and bought local boats on which they travelled down the Dnieper to sell their merchandise in Constantinople. The description resembles that of the later, medieval trade journeys from Novgorod to the northern Sámi markets, described by Olaus Magnus (*Historia* 20:2). In Olaus Magnus' time, the 16th century, it was the heirs of the Rus in the East who continued to use the old communication routes and means of travel in lands without roads in northern Scandinavia. Olaus Magnus reported that the Russians on their way to the Torneå market with furs 'sometimes carry their boats on their shoulders over the strips of land that separate the water routes' [Fig. 12, next page] (*Historia* 20:2 my transl.). Both among the Sámi and the local peasant population of north Sweden, there is much evidence that travelling in areas without roads meant journeys with light boats over communication networks that included combined water and land transport. The analogies with ethnographically and historically known ways of travelling in this area shed light on the



After Olaus Magnus 1476/1555.

Fig. 12. Russians carrying their boats to the market in Torneå.

probable solutions in prehistoric and medieval times in central Sweden. Like the Swedes in the Iron Age, the Russians and Karelians in the 16th century used *light, portable boats* as the necessary prerequisite for this widespread trade along the northern river systems.

Trade and traded goods

In the earliest phase, trade dominated the relations between Scandinavia, the Orient and the areas around the Silk Routes. The exported goods seem to have been light; primarily furs, but also, honey, wax, amber and slaves were products that were appreciated in the East. They returned with silk and other textiles, colour pigments, silver coins, slaves, and exotics such as spices. The Arabic sources provide contemporary information about the trade of Rus with the Caliphate and the central areas around the Silk Route. The earliest source is the Arab writer Ibn Khordadbeh, who was a director of Posts and Intelligence in the Baghdad Caliphate. In the book *Kitab al masalik wa 'l-mamalik'* (The Book of Roads and Kingdoms), which probably was written in the 840s, he gives information on Rus:

...a tribe from among the as-Saqaliba. They bring furs of beavers and of black foxes and swords from the most distant parts of the Saqaliba [land] to the sea of Rum, [where] the ruler of ar-Rum levies tithes on them. If they want, they travel on the Itil, the river of the as-Saqaliba and pass through Khamlij, town of the Khazars, [where] the ruler of it levies tithes on them. Then they arrive to the Sea of Gurjan and they land on the shore of it which they choose. On occasion they bring merchandise on camels from Gurjan to Baghdad [where] as-Saqaliba eunuchs serve them as interpreters. They claim to be Christians and pay [only] head tax. [transl. by Boba 1967, p. 27].

What is important to note here is that he also says they do not travel on land on their way to the Caspian Sea, but instead “they travel on the Itil, the river of the as-Saqaliba.” Furs and swords were light wares that were possible to transport on the small and light boats that were necessary for these journeys. The squirrels are of major importance; they were used as money of a fixed value. Furs were attractive to the Caliphate and were a much appreciated and highly valued commodity from the North already in the Early Iron Age in the Mediterranean, where Roman authors also speak of the black foxes.

As is also clear from this quotation, the first known journeys by Scandinavians to the Muslim states surrounding the Caspian Sea were *peaceful trading expeditions*. Ibn Khordadbeh says that these journeys were *waterborne*, that Scandinavians were arriving to the Black Sea from the distant parts of the Saqaliba, and then travelling on the Don and through the Khazar Empire further to the Caspian Sea. Here they landed on any shore, and sometimes they also left their ships and travelled on camels to Baghdad to sell swords as well as furs from beaver and black fox. The Swedish merchants continued their journeys east of the Caspian Sea as well, to the areas rich in silver, valuable pigments and spices. Whether they used boats part of the distance or changed to camels, is not known.

Annika Larsson (2005) has recently shown that the areas of origin for the silk found in Birka must be between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and further eastwards along the Silk Route. Earlier the kaftan of Byzantium was seen as the source of influence for the kaftan finds in Birka (Hägg 1974). But as Larsson has shown, the use of the kaftan in Constantinople instead was introduced in connection with the medieval cultural and religious changes caused by the Ottoman conquests; the change in dress namely marked the religious change from Christianity to Islam and the demand that the arms should be covered. Instead of being typical of Byzantium, the kaftan in the Late Iron Age is, according to Larsson, characteristic of nomadic riding peoples as well as of the Persian clothing in the Islamic Caliphate. Another important observation by Larsson is that the trade agreement with Constantinople, which included a limited amount of silk, dates to the late 10th century when



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Fig. 13. Silver dirhams displayed in the Birka Museum. Birka ceased to exist. Larsson argues that the silk earlier arrived by the northern Silk Route (that is, via the Caspian from the Middle East and Central Asia) and not from Byzantium. The precious silk was easily transported on the light vessels of the type we find in the boat burials and did not need to be transported in heavier cargo-ships.

Furs were one of the most important trade goods from Scandinavia eastwards. Furs as merchants' goods are mentioned in the runic inscription G 207, which commemorates a person who *sunarla sat miþ skinum*, "in the south sat with skins," i.e., traded furs. In Sigvatr's *lausavisa* there are *feldar*, "sheepskins," trade goods from Iceland to Norway (Sigvatr XIII 4).

The coin evidence concerning eastern trade

The Islamic coins on Swedish soil are the most concrete remains of the contacts with the areas around the Silk Route. More than 80,000 coins have been found from ca. CE 700 to ca. 1013 with the majority minted in the 9th and beginning of the 10th century [Fig. 13]. In the beginning the coins are ones minted in the south, in the areas around Baghdad, but later the eastern parts of the Caliphate come to be the dominant source. The majority are silver coins. The finds follow the water communication routes through



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Fig. 14. Part of the Spillings hoard, which includes coins and much other silver. Display in the Gotlands Museum.

Eastern Europe. Important studies on Islamic coins as evidence for trade and the development of relations between the Caliphate and Europe have been done by Thomas Noonan and Roman Kovalev (Noonan 1984; Kovalev 2001, 2003, 2007). In recent years many additional hoards have been discovered and analysis has started which will shed new light on these relations.

The coins document the trade connections with the Caucasus. The only one which received attention in the discussion about evidence concerning Ingvar's journey was the Swedish find of a Georgian coin printed for David Kuropalates (r. 990–1001) (M. G. Larsson 1983, p. 103). However, there are several other places in the Caucasus under control of the Caliphate which minted coins (von Zambaur 1968; Sears 2004). The Swedish expert on Islamic coins, Gert Rispling, has analysed thousands of Swedish finds of Islamic coins, among which he has also found Khazar copies of Islamic coins (Rispling 2004). His present work is to analyze the big hoard from the Spillings farm on Gotland found in 1999, which with 14,000 coins constitutes the biggest Viking Age silver treasure hoard in the world [Fig. 14]. Most are Islamic and several are Khazar copies [Figs. 15a, b]. In connection with



Fig. 15 a) Khazar imitations of Islamic dirhams. b) The "Moses coin," ca. 837/8 CE, on which the name of Moses replaces that of Muhammad. The Khazar elite adopted Judaism in the 9th century.

Fig. 16. Islamic dirhams minted at Arminiya (Armenia), from the Spillings hoard.

our project he has surveyed the known coin finds in Sweden of Caucasian origin (unpublished manuscript). He has determined that 11 Islamic coins found in Sweden were minted in "Tiflis," which for four centuries was under Islamic rule. The biggest share of Islamic coins minted in the Caucasus and found on Swedish soil (377 examples) is from "Arminiya" (Armenia) [Fig. 16], but none are known from the other Armenian mint at "Dabil" (today Dwin).

In Rispling's survey there are also places that may be related to the 10th-century raids. 70 of the Swedish finds are from "Arran" (Partaw, present-day Azerbaijan), 31 from Bardha'a (Partaw), but none from the third Azerbaijani mint, "Janza" (today Ganja). A single coin comes from "al-Bab" (Derbend, Russia). A number of other Swedish finds of Oriental coins come from adjoining regions that can be connected with the journeys of the Rus: In Iran, the mint at "Adharbayjan" (Ardabil) produced 13 of the coins, "Ardabil" 4, "Urmiiya" (Urumia) 2. None, however, came from "al-Maragha." 12 of the finds are from "Ma'din Bajunays" in eastern Turkey.

The pair of birds associated with oriental art is also found on the so-called Birka/Hedeby coins



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from the 9th century [Fig. 17] (Malmer 1966). The provenance of these coins has provoked much discussion, with the focus to date always being on their European connections. The motifs on the reverse of some of the coins include a man, a house, two cocks, and two different deer, the second resembling a backward-looking horse. While Malmer has shown that the face with rays and the deer image may have been borrowed from the Frisian area of northern Europe, no attention has been given to possible eastern origins for some of the imagery. The majority of the coins found in Swedish soil during the Birka/Hedeby period were struck in the Caliphate, often in the former Persian provinces east of the Caspian Sea. There the cock was a special and frequently used motif on the silk textiles and on carpets attested by more modern examples [Fig. 18]; likewise the deer is a common motif on textiles (Porada 1962). Indeed the birds on the coins clearly are cocks, and the coins depicting them have on their other side a ship of central Swedish type, with a small sail that is raised on top of the yard, a feature that boat constructors and sailors connect with river traffic to catch the wind high above the shore of the river. Experiments have shown that



After Malmer 1966.

Fig. 17. Coin found in Birka with the pair of birds.

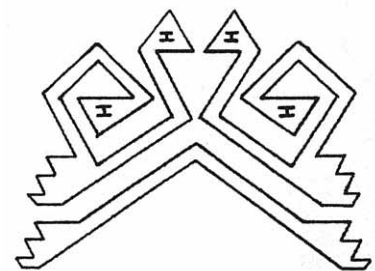


Fig. 18. Pair of birds, one of the most common motifs on kilims in Anatolia and the Caucasus.

After Özkahraman 2005.

the low and light ships of central Sweden cannot take larger sails.¹ Such were the kind of ships which my analysis has shown were probably used by the Svear of central Sweden to control communication and trade eastward in the Birka period (G. Larsson 2007).

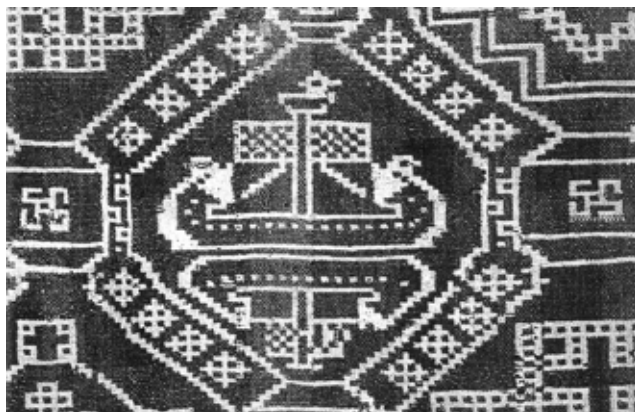
Silk, textiles and clothes

Textiles are an important source of information about contacts with the East. Silk from China, Sogdiana and also the Caucasus appear in Swedish Viking-age burials. We have earlier discussed the results by Annika Larsson (2005), who argues for the Eastern origin of those silks rather than a Byzantine provenance.

During the last decade many other textiles have been ¹⁴C analysed, and several have turned out to be of Viking-age date (Nockert and Possnert 2002). In the earliest phase, from the 9th to the 12th century, ships occur as important motifs. Often the composition of motifs and ornament are similar to those on coins and carved picture stones. In techniques and motifs they show strong influences from some areas around the Silk Route, especially the Caucasus region and the Caliphate,

The Kyrkås tapestry, used as an antependium in Kyrkås old church in Jämtland and recently ¹⁴C dated to CE 990–1160, shows a ship and other images within octagons and in a strongly geometrical pattern [Fig. 19]. The ship resembles the Norwegian Viking ships. The choice of motifs in the octagons here – the pair of birds and the backward-looking animal – is also found on

Fig. 19. Detail of ship motif in the tapestry from the Kyrkås Church in Jämtland.



After Nockert and Possnert 2002.

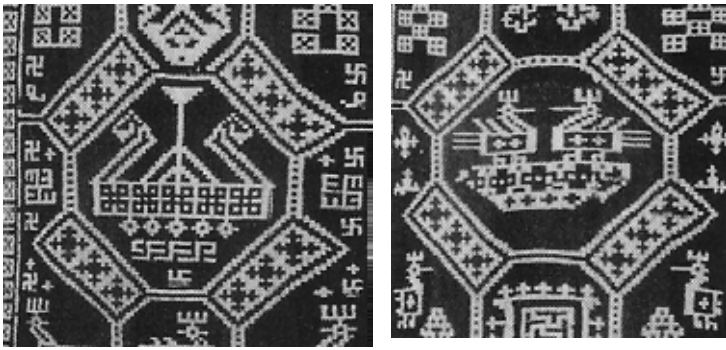


Photo copyright © 2011 Daniel C. Waugh

Fig. 20. A picture stone, dating from the 8th–9th centuries showing a valkyre, a rider in “Oriental dress” and a ship. Found at Broa, Halla sn., Island of Gotland; now in the Gotlands Museum.

the Birka coins. These motifs are influences from Islamic art, as also are the single big bird, the tree, and the geometrical pattern. The octagons and these kinds of geometrical patterns are still used in traditional textile art in the Caucasus and in Anatolia among the the Kurds. The equal-armed crosses and the crossed crosses that fill the frames are Orthodox, representing influences from the Eastern church.

While most of the elements in the patterns are the result of influences from the long-distance journeys, the ship is the Nordic addition to the variety of images displayed on the textile. It was probably made when the ship still had a central ideological meaning and value, i.e., in the late 10th or beginning of the 11th century. As we know from the picture stones, by the late 11th century the ship had lost its role as a central motif (Franzén and Nockert 1992, pp. 66ff; Nockert and Possnert 2002, Nordic Museum nr. 10038). [Fig. 20]

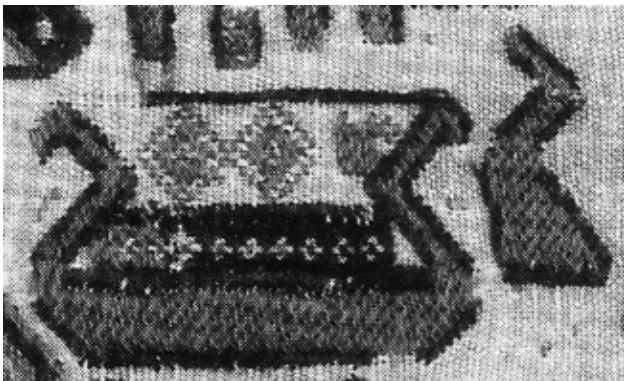


Figs. 21a, b. Details of the design on the tapestry found in the Överhogdals Church in Jämtland, fragment IV.

One of five pieces (fragment IV) comprising the tapestry found in a building beside Överhogdals Church in Jämtland has a similar pattern to that on the Kyrkås tapestry. Dated between CE 900 and 1100, it has octagonal fields with a decoration of geometrical ornaments such as crossed crosses, ships, and birds [Figs. 21 a, b] (Nockert and Possnert 2002, p. 77). The Överhogdal tapestries include two in *soumak* technique (Ia and Ib), which fall within the same date range or

Fig. 22 (top). Pair of birds on an Anatolian carpet from the Marby Church.

Fig. 23 (bottom). The ship and a female figure on Överhogdal fragment 1a.



After Nockert and Possnert 2002.

After Nockert and Possnert 2002.



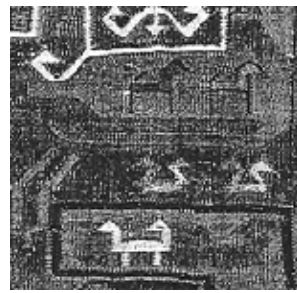
Fig. 24. The ship depicted on Överhogdal fragment III.

are slightly earlier, on which the designs include horses, ships (without sails), people, deer, elk, birds and a central tree [Fig. 22].² One depicts part of a procession that includes a “valkyrie”-like female figure [Fig. 23], larger in size than the other people depicted. The central tree has one bird at the tip and one below, recalling the myth about the peacock that sits on top of Yggdrasil, the world tree, and that crows to wake the fallen warriors in Valhalla.

Fragment III [Fig. 24] has similar imagery, the ship with high stems and a small sail.³ But the last of the fragments, whose depictions of churches

suggest it is of later date, has no ship and thus probably dates to the period when ship imagery was no longer used.

In these Swedish Viking-age textile finds, both techniques and motifs seem to reveal influences from certain areas around the Silk Route. The *soumak* technique and motifs including octagons, the pair of birds and the different types of geometrical and other patterns, which are seen on the Swedish Viking-age textiles, are all found in the area of the kilim carpets around the Caspian and Black Seas and especially in the Caucasus. On the kilims of Dagestan (Ramsey 1996, p. 78) there is also a ship-like motif [Fig. 25] that greatly resembles the Scandinavian ships with curved stems and animal- or bird-like stem decorations. Some symbols resemble cut-out stems, that *pars pro toto* may represent whole ships [Fig. 26].



After Ramsey 1996, p. 78, fig. 4

Fig. 25 (left). Ship motifs on flatweave in Dagestan, NE Caucasus.

Fig. 26 (right). Ship stems (?) on flatweave in Dagestan.

In the few regional depictions within Sasanian art east of the Caspian Sea, the ships differ from these. Especially interesting on these flatweaves from Dagestan is the shape of the ship's hull. It is often box-shaped, as on the Birka/Hedeby coins. Here, the character of the river systems requires light ships to be used, which means that these ships must have a completely different hull than the cog, which is commonly associated with the box-like hull shape. On the Dagestan kilims, the dragon motif is also central in more or less stylised form (Ramsey 1996) and often appears as a dragon-snake. This is well known from Scandinavian Viking-age art. It has been assumed that this motif was introduced in the Caucasus with Mongol expansion in the 13th century and originated in China, but Western sources have shown that it appears earlier (Ramsey 1996). The similarity in ship types may indicate early contacts between Scandinavia and the Caucasus.

The obvious parallels between the ship types and other motifs on the earliest Swedish textiles from Överhogdal, and the ship types and symbolic language in the Caucasus and the Orient, must be seen in relation to the journeys to these areas in the 8th - 10th centuries. The intense commercial contacts have resulted in an exchange of ideas as well as cultural influences in both directions. As was observed on a research expedition in Khevsureti in 2009, not only the motifs but also the textile techniques used are the same. Where the Birka fragments, as Annika Larsson has shown, point to their origin in the East, not Byzantium, as others had assumed (A. Larsson 2007; cf. Hägg 1974), the increasing

contacts with the latter starting in the late 10th century are reflected in the mixture of Islamic and Byzantine influences seen on the later Kyrkås tapestry. Foreign material found in Sigtuna from the early 11th century (the probable date of the Kyrkås tapestry) shows that cultural impulses from Byzantium had to a large extent replaced the earlier Oriental influences that were strong in the Birka material. This is visible, for instance, in recently published analyses of glass from Sigtuna, where the Byzantine influences are strong from the 11th to the 14th century (Henricson 2006). This reflects the change in the communication pattern and seafaring, which corresponds to the transition in the late 10th century between the periods that Jansson has identified as the "older phase" and the "younger phase" (2005, p. 39).

Contacts with the Khazar empire

In the 9th and 10th century an important route between Scandinavia and the Orient passed through the Khazar empire where it joined what constituted a northern branch of the Silk Route. Located north of the Caucasus, the Khazars since the 7th century had a flourishing multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire reaching from the Don in the west, to the lower Volga, and to the steppes in the east. The Rus came on ships along the Don and through the Khazar empire (via channel or portage) to the Volga, or from the north on the Volga to the Caspian Sea, and they needed good relations with the Khazars. As cited earlier, the Arab geographer Ibn Khordadbeh tells how Scandinavian merchants already in the 840s were travelling from the Don to the Caspian Sea, and thus through the Khazar realm on their way to Baghdad for trade. The Rus merchants are described by Ibn Khordadbeh as "a kind of *saqaliba*." He calls the Don "the *Saqaliba* River." The 12th-century Arab geographer al-Idrisi knew the Don as the *nahr al-Rusiya*.

The relations with the Khazars were peaceful at first, and the Rus were present in their country as traders. Al-Masudi knows them as a numerous nation with many subdivisions, who "for trading purposes constantly visit the countries of Andalus, Rome, Constantinople and Khazar...." (§ 8 after transl. by Minorsky 1958, annex III). He also describes the multi-ethnic people of the

Khazar empire, and says that in Atil (Itil), where the Khazar king resided, there were Muslims, Christians, Jews and pagans. The latter included Rus, one of the groups residing in the town who had a special part of the town that was situated on one side of it together with the Saqaliba (Slavs)" (Al Masudi § 4, Ibid.). Al-Masudi also notes that here, like in Byzantium, "The Rus and Saqaliba ... serve in the king's army and are his servants..." (Ibid., p.147).

From trade to raids

In the late 9th century the character of the voyages to the Caspian Sea and surrounding areas seems to change dramatically. As in their relations with the Byzantine Empire, the Rus raids spread and they came in ships. The earliest Muslim report on the devastation by Rus on the Caspian coast is recorded during the reign of 'Alid Hasan b. Zayd (864–884). According to Ibn Isfandiyar, the Rus on this occasion went to attack Abaskun in Tabaristan by the southeast shore of the Caspian Sea, a Muslim area. This time the Khazar ruler stopped them, and his troops killed all of them (Minorsky 1958, p.111).

In 909, says Ibn Isfandiyar, the Rus arrived by sea with 16 ships, raided the same coast and launched another attack on Abaskun, with plundering and murder. The commander of the area was, as earlier, quick to launch a counterattack on the Rus one night. The Rus were taken by surprise, many were killed, and several were taken away as slaves. In ca. 910 the Sari and Gilan coasts in the southwestern Caspian Sea became the target of Rus maritime expeditions (M. G. Larsson 1997, pp. 25–26). They were said to have come "in great numbers" and raided the Sari, but in Gilan the Khazar ruler attacked them at night when they had pulled their boats ashore. He had all the Rus ships set on fire, and killed everyone that was on the shore. Only the more cautious participants who had spent the night at sea survived. This may or may not be the same expedition that al-Masudi has described in great detail and of which he has forgotten the date, though he says it was "after 300" (AH), i.e., after CE 912.

The largest attack on the shores of the Caspian Sea was in AH 300/CE 912. Here al-Masudi has a detailed description of both the route and the

events. The Rus came with a large fleet of 500 ships from the Black Sea, entered the Sea of Azov, and were stopped by the Khazars, probably at the fortified town of Sarkel part way up the Don. After negotiating with the Khazar emperor they got free passage through his country to the Volga and the Caspian Sea; in return the Rus had to share the booty from the raids with the emperor. Al-Masudi writes:

The ships of the Rus scattered over the sea and carried out raids in Gilan, Tabaristan, Abaskun (which stand on the coast of Jurjan), the oil-bearing areas and (the lands lying) in the direction of Azarbaijan, for from this territory of Ardabil in Azarbayjan to this sea there is a three days' distance. The Rus shed blood, captured women and children and seized the property (of the people). They sent out raiding parties and burnt (villages). The nations around the sea were in an uproar, because in olden times they had not witnessed any enemy marching on them from the sea, as only boats of merchants and fishermen had been plying on it. The Rus fought with the Gil and Daylam and with one of the generals of Ibn al-Saj. Then they came to the oil-bearing coast of the kingdom of Sharvan known as Bakuh (Baku)... [Al-Masudi § 8 transl. by Minorsky 1958 annex III]

The inhabitants around the Caspian Sea were taken by surprise by this sea-borne enemy. Initially, they were powerless to resist, but on their return, despite the prior arrangement the Rus had with the Khazar ruler, "laden with booty" they were attacked by the local Muslim population and many of them slaughtered. Writing in 943 CE, al-Masudi noted that, after the defeat in 912, the Rus seemed to have been pacified (al-Masudi § 8, transl. by Minorsky 1958, annex III). Yet, in the same year, another naval expedition from Rus entered the Caspian Sea.

The Persian philosopher Ibn Miskawayh (932–1030) tells that, in 943 or 944, a fleet from the people called Rus came sailing on the Caspian Sea toward Azerbaijan (Ibn Miskawayh 1920–21, II, 62–67). He cites an eyewitness report of the events. From the Caspian Sea the Rus sailed up the Kura River to the province of Arran and then continued up the side River Terter to the town of Berda, where the town's governor and an army of more than 5,000 men met them. They made the mistake of thinking that the

Rus were like Byzantine people or Armenians. Many volunteers had joined to fight the holy war against the intruders, but the Rus made a sudden attack and killed or drove away all but 300; these were killed except for those mounted on horses. The Rus seized the town. In the beginning the inhabitants were treated well. When the Muslims attacked and threw stones at the backs of the Rus, the latter lost patience and gave them three days to leave town. When many refused to go, the Rus used their swords on them and took many as prisoners. Men were gathered in a mosque, women and children in the fortress, and all were given the chance to buy their freedom. Those men who did not were killed, and women and youngsters were turned into sex slaves. The ruler in Azerbaijan, al-Marzuban Ibn Muhammed, tried to attack them with 30,000 men, but he and his troops were continually defeated. Then Allah heard his prayers. The Scandinavians were struck by a disease. When they were decimated, they were ambushed, and more than 700 killed. In the city the disease hit them hard, and finally one night they gave up, fled to their ships with women and jewellery, and sailed away.

The threat from the Rus became an increasing source of worry for the Khazars. In 960, the Khazar king Josef expressed his concern in a letter to Hasday Ibn Shaprut, an eminent official of the caliph of Cordoba:

Know and understand that I live by the mouth of the river. By the help of the Almighty I guard the mouth of the river and do not prevent the Rus, who come in their ships, to come out on the Caspian Sea to go against the Arabs, and not either any enemy on land towards Bab al-Abwab. I fight them. If I would let them for an hour (to sail down to the Caspian Sea), they should raid the whole Arab country all the way down to Baghdad... [After Arbman 1955, p. 61, my transl.]

The concern of the Khazar king was justified. Within a few years, the attack he feared came. In 965, the Rus prince Sviatoslav launched a devastating expedition. He took the fortress Belaia Vezha ("white city"), probably Sarkel on the Don (Minorsky 1958, p. 115). The route to the Khazar realm and the Caspian Sea lay open. Ibn Hawqal tells how the Rus thoroughly destroyed the Khazar towns of Atil, Samandar

and Khazaran. In Samandar there had been 40,000 vineyards. When speaking with a man in Djordan, who had recently returned from there, the man said that "there was nothing left even for charity to the poor in any vineyard or garden, if it even is a leaf left on a branch. Because the Rus came, and not one cluster, not a single grape remained..." (my transl. after Arbman 1955, p. 62). The people who lived there – who were Muslims, of other faiths, or heathens – all emigrated. This event marked the beginning of the fall of the Khazar empire.

In his studies of Caucasian history, Vladimir Minorsky (1953, 1958) provides several examples of subsequent Rus actions in the area. In the area around al-Bab (Derbend), the ruling amir Maymun sought help from Rus against his rivals. The Rus arrived in 987 in 18 ships, but when the crew of one ship went to town they were attacked by inhabitants and all were killed. The other ships then proceeded to Sharvan and Mukan and *nahr al-atiq*, "the old river." It seems that here they entered the same region as in 943–44, but *nahr al-atiq*, "the old river," could either mean one of the two estuaries of the lower Kura or, as Minorsky argues, the river Kuhan-rud ("the Old River") further south in Persian Talish.

The most important source used by Minorsky, the *Ta'rikh al-bab* (dating from the 4th/11th century), suggests that the amir Maymun was apparently relying heavily on the Rus despite the events of 987. He had several of them around him as *ghulams*, which Minorsky interprets as a kind of *druzhina* / "comitatus" (1958, p. 114). In 989 the history relates how a fanatical preacher arrived from Gilan and demanded that he surrender his Russian *ghulams* so that they could be either converted or killed. Naturally, this may have been spurred by the memory of their earlier attacks on the Gilan coasts and a fear that the Rus would use al-Bab as a harbour for further raids along the coasts.

In the year 1030 the Rus arrived once again to the Caspian Sea, now with 38 ships. The *Ta'rikh al-bab* describes how they arrived in Sharvan again, where the shah met them near Bakuya (Baku). On this occasion most of the Sharvanians were killed, and the Rus could continue up the river Kurr (Kura). The shah Minuchihr tried to

close the al-Rass (Araxes) in order to stop their progress, but instead they drowned many of the Muslims. The Rus were not eager to leave their boats, but it is told that later the lord of Janza (the town Ganja by the Kura) made them disembark and gave them money to assist him for his own purposes. He took them to Baylaqan, north of the Araxes, whose inhabitants had revolted against him, and with their help he captured the town and seized and killed his brother Askariya. The Rus then left Arran for Rum, the western parts of the Caucasus that were controlled by the Byzantines, and continued to their own country (*Ta'rikh al-bab* §15, after Minorsky 1958, pp. 31ff).

Thus, in 432/1032 the Rus returned for more raids, encouraged by the earlier victories. They ravaged and plundered the territories of Sharvan and took many captives. In response, the amir Mansur of al-Bab (Derbend), together with other Islamic leaders, led a great expedition against the Rus. When the Rus returned loaded with booty and captives, most of them were put to the sword. Allied with Alans, the Rus returned to the area for revenge in 1033, but were beaten back by the combined military effort of the different local groups (*Ta'rikh al-bab* §38, after Minorsky 1958, pp. 45–47).

The *Ta'rikh al-bab*, which is usually informative about important foreign visits, has no information on Rus having entered the region during Ingvar's expedition. This silence has led to scepticism as to whether that expedition really reached the Caspian Sea. Conceivably, the local residents, on their guard from previous raids, would have blocked their passage. However, we can be quite confident that the route taken by Ingvar the Far-Traveller through Caucasus followed the ancient trade route mentioned already by Pliny and Tacitus and was one familiar to earlier generations of Scandinavians as a branch of the so-called "Silk Route." From time to time, in periods when the other branches of the "Silk Route" were blocked for political, economical or military reasons, this became one of the most important trade routes between East and West, between Europe and Asia. Ingvar's journey will be discussed in a forthcoming article in the journal.

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Notes

1. A too-large sail on the replica Embla, of the type used in northern Norway on the fishing boats of the Atlantic Ocean (the Nordland boats), was borrowed and used in 1997 for this smaller boat (based on Prästgården 3, Gamla Uppsala) in Foteviken, Scania. In the hard wind the boat capsized and filled with water.

2. According to Nockert, fragments Ia and Ib were woven on the same warp but by different weavers, perhaps a mother and daughter (Nockert and Possnert 2002, p. 69). What is probably the older tapestry has a ¹⁴C cal. date between CE 656 and 852, 1 σ (Ua-1942), while Ia has two dates: ¹⁴C cal. 772-950, 1 σ (Ua-1940), and 965-1170, 1 σ (Ua-1941).

The Weaving Art Museum and Research Institute defines "soumak technique" as follows: "[It] produces a patterned weaving with a flat surface of discontinuous horizontal threads known as weft. The variously colored weft threads are wrapped around the warp threads, the primary structural component. In kelims, they are passed over and under adjacent warps. But unlike kelim weaving there are no slits at each color join and there is a supplementary weft thread which, along with the pattern weft, provides the second component necessary to create a structurally sound woven object" (<http://www.weavingartmuseum.org/ex2_main.htm>, accessed October 4, 2011).

3. Fragment III has been ¹⁴C dated to CE 900-1160 1 σ (Ua-1944). It is interesting to note that, the "later" imagery notwithstanding, Fragment V has an early ¹⁴C date, cal. CE 794-963, 1 σ (Ua-1943).

Maps of the Xiongnu Cemetery at *Tamiryn Ulaan Khoshuu*, Ogii nuur, Arkhangai Aimag, Mongolia

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During the 2005 Silkroad Arkhangai Excavation Project (Purcell and Spurr 2006), students of the field school used handheld GPS units to map three enigmatic earthen structures (Tamir 2 Site) and an extensive Xiongnu cemetery (Tamir 1 Site). The project excavated five graves in the cemetery, and 18 small test excavation units were opened at Tamir 2. Maps of the Tamir 2 site were drawn in the field, and two drafted versions were published in *The Silk Road* journal (Purcell and Spurr 2006, pp. 27, 29). Two maps of the cemetery were drawn in the field: a plan map of the entire cemetery, and a more detailed map of the portion of the site with the greatest concentration of visible graves. The detail map was intended to show the ring-shaped grave mounds to scale, with the overall map showing just center points to indicate grave location. While preparing our report summarizing the field season for *The Silk Road*, I discovered discrepancies between the depicted dimensions of the detail map graves, and a log of their UTM locations and dimensions. This resulted from having had many students logging information and drawing the map. Although necessary as a means of instructing our students in field methodology, this approach unfortunately introduced error into the map. Pressed for time during the preparation of our field season report in 2006, I was unable to revise the Tamir 1 maps in time to resolve these discrepancies. Furthermore, in subsequent discussions with Dr. Jan Bemann of the University of Bonn, we learned that Tamir 1 is the only Xiongnu cemetery in Mongolia that has been completely mapped to scale. Therefore, at the request of Dr. Daniel Waugh and Dr. Bemann, I redrafted the Tamir 1 maps from the GPS data logs to create an overall site plan with all of the graves shown to scale, and a revised detail map with all graves shown to the documented size and in the correct location. These have just been published (along with republication of the Tamir 2 maps) by Dr. Bemann to accompany his discussion of Xiongnu occupation of the Orkhon valley (Bemann 2011, Fig. 2). At the request of Dr. Waugh, we have reproduced these maps for *The Silk Road*.

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David E. Purcell and Kimberly C. Spurr. "Archaeological Investigations of Xiongnu Sites in the Tamir River Valley: Results of the 2005 Joint American-Mongolian Expedition to *Tamiryn Ulaan Khoshuu*, Ogii nuur, Arkhangai Aimag, Mongolia." *The Silk Road* 4/1 (2006): 20-32.

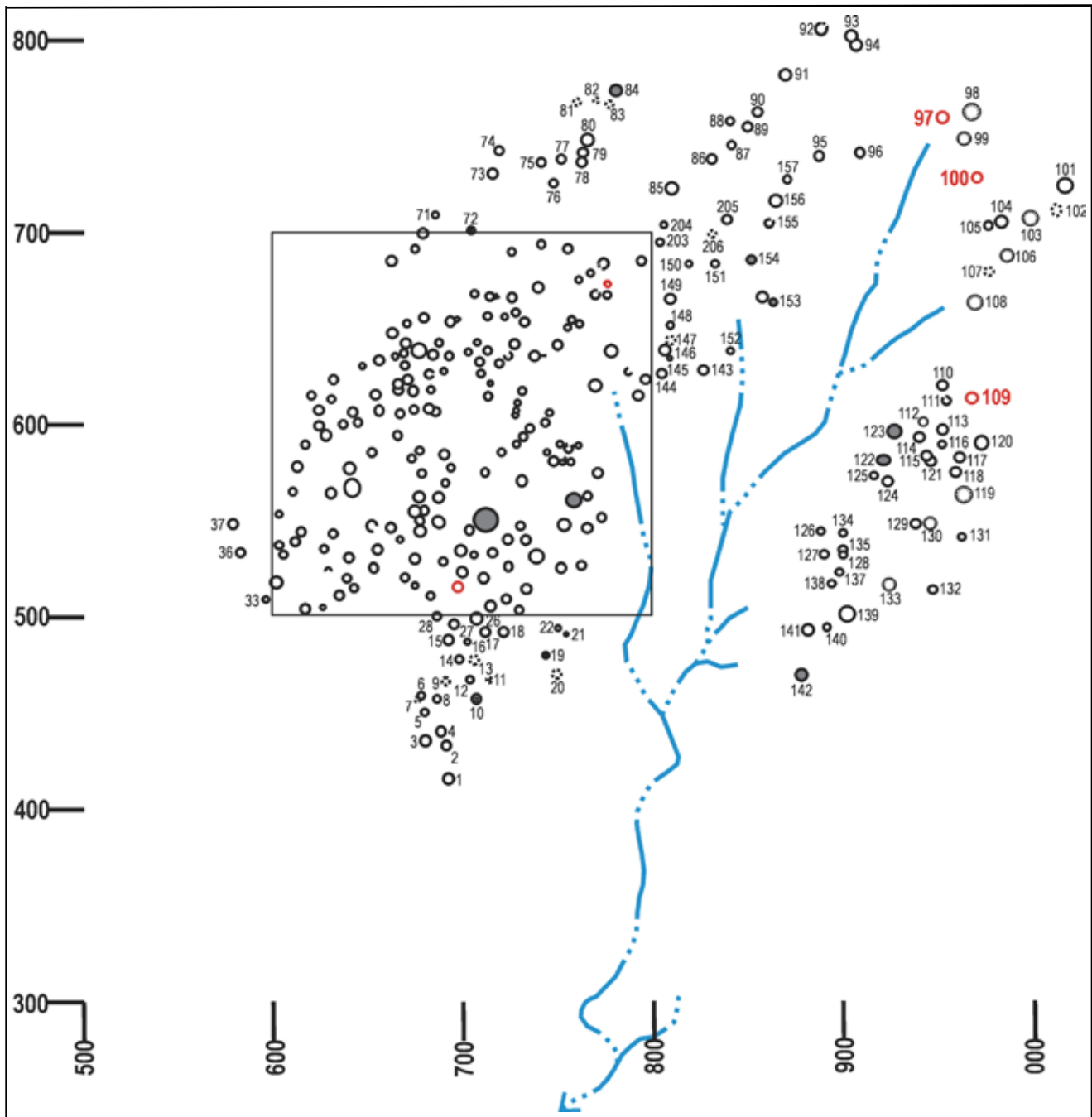


Fig. 1. Plan of the cemetery at Tamiryn Ulaan Khoshuu (drawn by David E. Purcell).

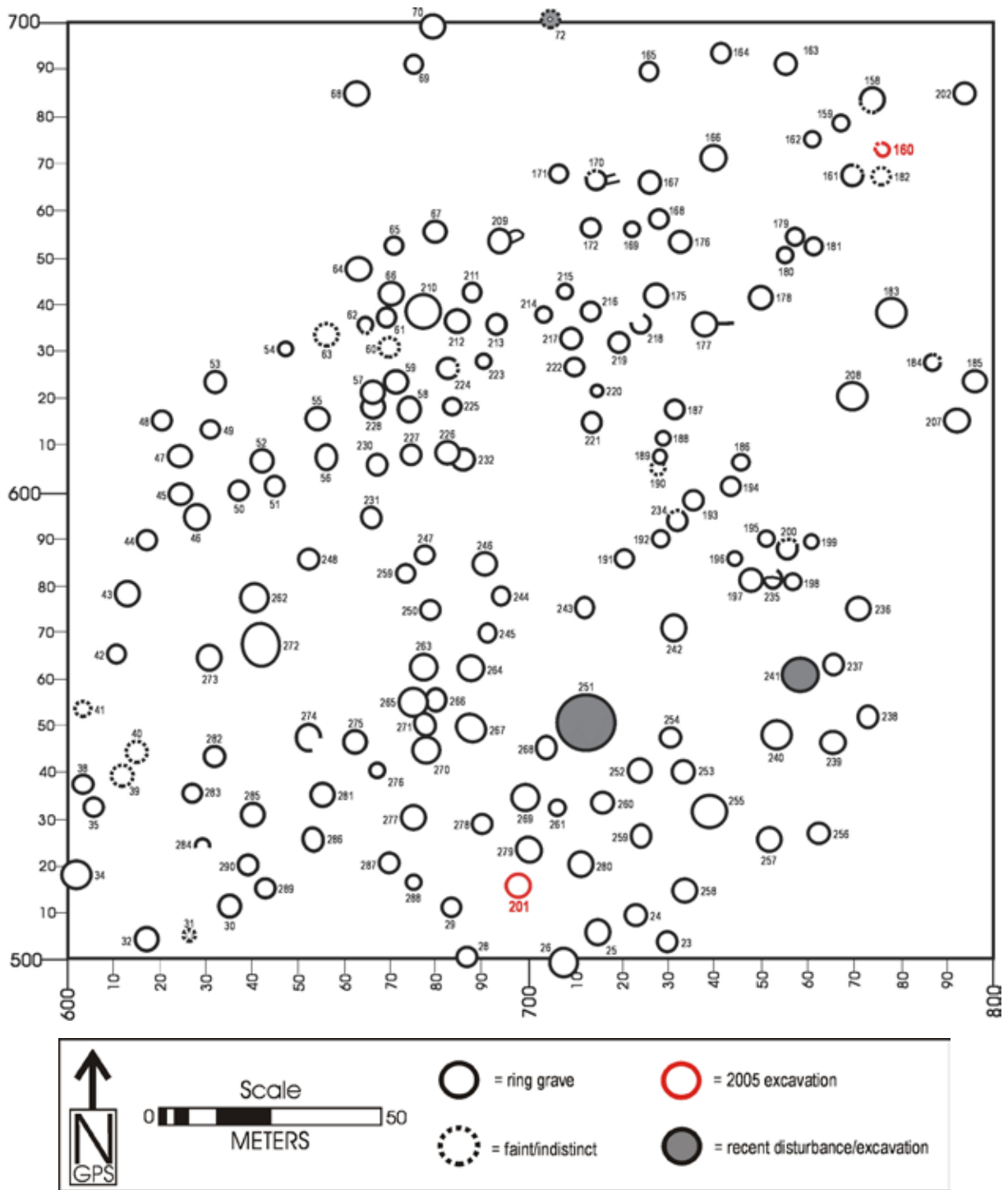


Fig. 2. Detail of the area of the cemetery with the highest density of graves (drawn by David E. Purcell). The graves excavated in 2005 were nos. 97, 100, 109 (on the map in Fig. 1) and 160 and 201 shown here.

Up from the Ice – a Look at Dress in the Iron Age Altai

Liudmilla L. Barkova and Natal'ia V. Polos'mak. *Kostium i tekstil' pazyryktsev Altaia (IV–III vv. do n.e.)* [Costume and Textiles of the Altai Pazyryks (4th–3rd centuries BCE). Novosibirsk: InFolio, 2005. 232 pp. ISBN 5-89590-051-8.

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Archaeological textiles hold a unique place in the study of material culture. They are highly iterative – a record of forms that require frequent replacement in life. They communicate style, which is a dynamic process, and they are made from highly ephemeral materials. Thus, the chance finds of several fully-outfitted sets of complete garment from the frozen tombs of the Altai represent an extremely valuable record of past human existence. It is befitting that these remains have a dedicated and accessible volume of high-level scholarship.

The study of archaeological textiles requires a great deal of technical prowess and background in several simultaneously specialist fields. However, through this dauntingly trained specialization we can reconstruct past textile production and use. Because textiles and dress are natural vehicles for generating (and reinventing) genre, aesthetic, and valuation, they are a finely tuned record of critical social processes – offering an intimate understanding of important social phenomena-cultural demarcation, regionalization, the expression of social boundaries.

Since the publication of the famous tombs at Pazyryk (Rudenko 1953, 1970), scholarly debate has centered around the cultural provenance of objects in the kurgans and dating (e. g., Lerner 1991; Rubinson 1990; Böhmer and Thompson 1991). The focus of this study is different. This volume examines the textiles, the complete male and female dress and accoutrement of the interred as well as horse dressage including a variety of decorated felts. The approach here is not only technical but also encompasses a kind of formal analysis, offering the reader a

way of understanding identity and place in Pazyryk culture. By investigating this unique body of artifacts in such a manner, it allows us to explore notions of social space within the worldview of the Pazyryk Altai. This is done by differentiating specific aspects of inherently local Iron Age material culture from more universal, pan-Eurasian aspects of style as expressed in felt objects, and in garment form, design and decorative details. These important details are now more fully evident thanks, in no small part, to the faithful and painstaking (decades-long) work of textile and conservation specialists, whose research is described and recorded with ample photographs and drawings now made available to us through this important volume.

The authors walk the reader through a careful documentation of the textiles, from whole garments to small objects of felt or fur. Some of these objects are well known to us; others have never before been seen, or at least in this new light. What makes this volume strong in particular, is how well the reconstructions are reasoned and rendered, through new analyses, and re-study. The text offers functional as well as artistic perspectives.¹ Thus, groundwork has been laid out for a closer understanding of how dress was used as markers of social and cultural identity, boundary and memory, and imbued with cosmologically and spiritually symbolic content.

The book discusses textiles preserved from both the Ukok 'Ice Princess', Ak-Alakha 3 (Polosmak 1991a, 1993) and related, earlier-discovered materials from the famous Pazyryk tombs first published by Rudenko (1953, 1970). This book

is highly valuable in its technical detail, its high quality images and well-rendered drawings, and also in its interpretive discussions of the clothing. This a welcome departure from much of the earlier archaeological literature from Russia and the former Soviet Union, where thin paper and black-and-white line drawings, often without any scale, accompanied the vast majority of archaeological publications.

The book is organized into three main sections. The first is an introduction to the material (pp. 5–10) and a discussion of the historical and ethnographic parallels in this important collection of archaeologically recovered textiles.² This section is divided into three subsequent chapters. Ch. II is on Pazyryk costume (p. 21–104), Ch. III is on the felts and horsegear (pp. 105–38) and Ch. IV a detailed review of the pile carpet and large felt *suzani* and several other materials from barrow V (139–64). The next section is an ethnobotanical and materials science-based section on dyes, colorants and dyestuffs (pp. 165–75). The last section is a series of appendices on technical and scientific studies carried out on the textiles by individual collaborators of their team.³ The book has a brief summary in English (pp. 228–9)

Dress of the Pazyryk in the Altai

There are several more-or-less fully reconstructed garments; fur-lined coats and jackets from Barrow II at Pazyryk, and from nearby Verkh-Kaldzhin 2. In addition there are numerous textile fragments from related tombs. Male and female dress elements are discussed; even child's garments are documented. Among the garments discussed in this book are several sets of female clothing: skirts, shirts; outer garments, and pairs of felt and leather leggings, shoes and boots. Barkova and Polosmak offer variant possible reconstructions (p. 44, figs. 2.15–2.17).

One of the nearly complete shirts from Pazyryk barrow II, for example, was re-studied and

discussed in detail. Rudenko had described it as a man's shirt, sewn from hemp fiber or *kendyr*, of a light color (Rudenko 1953, p. 104; 1970, p. 83 and pl. 63). According to the authors' recent re-testing, the fabric was woven from *cotton* (p. 44) and had been dyed a fugitive red which had faded. Re-evaluation based in part on *comparanda* from Ak-Alakha 3 led the authors to propose it was in fact a woman's chemise.

Skirts from barrow II were made from woolen fabric (Rudenko 1953, pp. 246–247, tab. XCVIII). One was reconstructed from a fragment based on parallels observed in the skirt from barrow I at Ak-Alakha 3, and from the discoveries in Xinjiang tombs at Subashi, Chärchän, and Djamboulak Khoum (Keriya). One must meet some of these reconstructions with a note of caution, however. By relying on clothing from other more distant sites as proxy, especially when contemporaneity is uncertain, we may blur important subtle distinctions in dress between similar groups.

Some of the most intriguing finds have related to headdress and hair, especially the female headgear. An almost complete set of elements – including wooden figurines of birds and deer, red wool knitted *nakosniki* – was found in Pazyryk Barrow II. Because of the more recent and better-preserved headdress from Ukok, a more complete reconstruction was possible [Fig. 1]. The cap is made from thick, dark brown felt, its fields decorated with round leather patches covered with gold foil. It was restored from fragments to the headdress in 2003. The headdresses of Pazyryk noblewomen were worn with coiffed hair built in, and placed on a clean-shaven head.

Stunning examples of felt and deerskin leggings are described and portrayed on pp.92–97. These leggings have parallels seen in the Apadana at Persepolis, and some have slippers built in whose designed toe area matches the design of the caftan. From Pazyryk barrow II is a pair of leather



Fig. 1. Headdress reconstructed from Pazyryk barrow no. II



Photo © 2005 Daniel C. Waugh

Fig. 2. Reconstructed boot from Pazyryk barrow no. II. Collection of the State Hermitage Museum

boots, whose soles are completely embroidered with beads and pyrite crystals [Fig. 2].⁴

Outer garments

According to the authors, the outer garment is of primary significance to the Pazyryk people. While this is certainly understandable from a survival point of view, it also can be thought of in terms of public vs. private display of identity. In the fluid interactions of nomadic tribes, where affinities and alliances can change in different contexts, the way in which a person most effectively codifies affiliation and rank, particularly of noble or leadership rank, is seen through the coat. There are several types of outer garment discussed, with particular interest and attention brought to two distinct Iranian forms: the *kandys*, or tailored jacket, often with lapel and vestigial sleeves, and the caudate jacket, or tailed coat. Both of these forms are direct ancestors to modern dress in the West.

An outstanding example of a sable coat was found in Pazyryk Barrow II: with a bilaterally symmetrical leather appliqué on

After Barkova and Polos'mak 2005



Photo © 2005 Daniel C. Waugh

Fig. 3. Section of sleeve showing detail of decorative leatherwork on outer garment from Pazyryk barrow II.

the back that had the image of a fantastic deer, a remarkable feat of skill in leathercraft. The authors note analogues found at Philippova barrow. On a technical level, remarkable skill in stitching pieces of leather together is discussed – where seams have nearly 20 stitches per centimeter (no doubt to insure windproofing). Another coat shows similar technique and workmanship with an abstract geometric design (pp. 44–45)[Fig. 3]. The skin of a black foal was used for trim décor on the sable, decorated with lozenge-shaped leather appliqué and covered with gold foil.

The authors address the topic of the caudate jacket, with historical counterparts and analogues within the Scytho-Siberian arena and beyond, looking at its development in the context of horse riding. They suggest that another outer garment form, the *kandys*, stems from Achaemenid Iranian origins, a theme shared by other scholars (see Thompson 1965). However it is equally possible that both of these forms, this garment *genre*, developed specifically out of the Altai and were custom-made for the complex landscape – both social and physical – of early Iron Age inner Eurasia and that these forms were brought to Hamadan from the steppes. Indeed it is very significant that the tailored forms take hold within the craft of leatherworking and horse riding, and according to current evidence only later become transferred over to woven cloth; first as sewn tailoring, and later as cut-cloth tailoring [Fig. 4].

The authors link important material details of the garments with associated mythological,

Fig. 4. Detail of tailored shaping in woven jacket from Chärchän.

ethnographic, linguistic and folk knowledge. For example, in their discussion of a unique red and blue painted ermine *kandys* from Katandin's Barrow at Pazyryk, (excavated in 1865 by Radlov), the authors suggest the use of ermine had symbolic value: as in Iranian mythology, the ermine was considered a mediator between the three planes of the world-axis (Chunakova 2004, p. 87, as cited in Barkova and Polos'mak, pp. 58–61).



A formal analysis of style

Formal analysis, as a practice, is a systematic dismantling of visual components in order to objectify what is being studied. By looking at composition, motif, and form on an elemental level, comparative study can be facilitated. Such an idiom thus brings us closer to an archaeological understanding of the language of a particular style. Style functions as a vehicle of social mediation – a series of varied interpretations. The effects of stylistic interpretation are social. Style plays on dominant areas of concern within a cultural context; thus an object has style, which is simultaneously socially animated and *animating*. Archaeologically, an object (such as cloth) embodies style, which was generated through its particular social context, which is now inanimate and less visible. Although the object is at present socially animating, it is as an artifact having temporal disconnection. Of interest to us is to recognize traces of information on the animating aspect that the object once had, within the social context of its origin. Wobst (1977) explored the idea of style as being a way of maintaining social boundaries. Pollock (1983) developed a set of theoretical constructs to look at diachronic changes in style in relation to sociopolitical organization. In the present study, style is looked at synchronically, within a relatively narrow culture area, and within a narrow medium – textiles and dress. Such a focus may facilitate closer examination of content and stylistic variation.

Animal Style

Animal Style can perhaps be described as a play between abstract and representational visual elements. Overall graphic composition is sometimes formalized (i.e. inside borders, tiered repetitive patterns and the use of bilateral symmetry), and sometimes it is not (for example in tattooing). Abstract (geometric) forms are represented, and representational forms are abstracted. There is a prominent use of contrasts; in solid colors, in space/void, in combatant animals, and in composite animals. Although Animal Style is best known from goldwork,⁵ it is found in other media as well, including carved wood, cut leather, and appliqué felt. In fact, it is possible that the hallmark elements of what we recognize as Animal Style, particularly the use of void and solid, and the prominence of flat work and low relief, were derivative of the crafts of cut leather and appliqué felting.

Barkova and Polos'mak discuss a small selection of well-known, roughly contemporaneous (ca. 500–400 BCE), decorated felts from Pazyryk barrows I, II and V. These felts have been given less attention than perhaps deserved in the past, eclipsed by the famous pile carpet. Along with the Pazyryk felts, the authors include the more recently excavated felt materials from Ak-Alakhsa, about 250 km SW of Pazyryk in the Ukok Valley (excavated by Polos'mak) and also of a contemporaneous kurgan at the Chinese/Kazakh/Mongolian border, in the vicinity of the related Berel Mounds, the site of the now famous 'Siberian Ice-maiden', excavated by Polos'mak. Each of these burials contained decorated felts.

Some felts were used as floor coverings, some were meant as wall hangings, some were part of chariot outfitting or saddlery, and some were decorative elements of dress or accessory.

Placement of textiles in the actual barrows at Pazyryk, particularly barrows I, II and V, is immediately informative. Floor felts and wall hangings covered the inner timber-lined burial chambers, reinforcing the defined interior walled space, as analogous to domestic interior space. This idea is also borne out by the placement of grave goods: tables and 'hexapods' with vessels containing meals, helped to define an interior space, separate from the room with horse burials and chariots (exterior). Floor felts were of dark wool and undecorated. Wall hangings were of light coloured wool and were decorated. Wall felts contained repetitive designs, but of representational images, within a border, for example from barrow V, the seated deity holding a 'branch' facing the horseman (Rudenko 1970, pl. 154). From the same wall hanging is the composite human/lion sphinx figure; and a fragment of a bird with elaborate tail. By contrast, saddle blankets, or *shabraks* tended to have repeated abstract designs (Ibid., pls. 160–162) [Fig. 5]. One particular *shabrak* had a very similar element to that found in the border of the large wall hanging mentioned earlier. Abstract repeats are evident in the detailed view of *shabraks* from the Pazyryk carpet as well. Border designs from felts in barrow II are distinct from one from barrow I; and a familiar treatment of the lion head is found in a saddle cover also from barrow I. The basic differences in overall composition between wall felts and saddle blankets are significant in that they are objects with different exposure: the interior wall imagery was private and hidden, whereas the dressage for horses and chariots were publicly displayed and were also highly mobile.

At the site of the 'ice-maiden' near the Chinese-Kazakh border, a decorated felt saddle was found showing a mythical winged animal, one of many composite animals found in Pazyryk culture. Jacobson (1994) has worked on the cosmological meaning of composite animals as sacred motif in her study of the deer in Eurasian art. Griffin-like creatures are a common subject in felts, and also in gold foil-covered leather and also wooden

fittings for horse harnesses. In the Ukok Valley, Ak-Alakhsa kurgan contained many such griffin-like elements in harness decoration. It is tempting to speculate on the meaning of the griffin motif, especially in light of later mythology, describing griffins as guardians of treasure, of gold in particular. Perhaps the representation of the griffin on objects in the Pazyryk world offered some kind of apotropaic power. These small objects are somewhat unique in that they are constructed of two intersecting planes, and are thus three-dimensional, a quality almost foreign to what we think of as typically *animal style*.

Old Avestan (old Iranian) texts (*Gathas*) on the creation myth may also offer some insight into the relationship between these entombed decorated felts and sacred space. Current scholarship regarding the imagery in certain ritual texts⁶ of the creation myth point to the idea of a 'cosmic hut,' where the sky is tied down during the day and rolled up at night. Several texts relate to the story of creation through architectural metaphor, which is also attested in Greek and Old Indic myths (Kellens 1989; Christol 1987; Skjaervø n. d.). Skjaervø argues for the possibility of there



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Fig. 5. Felt *shabrak* from Pazyryk barrow no. V. Collection of the State Hermitage Museum.

being another, overarching metaphor of weaving for the creation of order.

It is possible the imagery has to do with not a 'cosmic hut,' but of a yurt,⁷ which is made of woven bands, and covered with felts, and also decorated on the interior with felts. In metaphoric imagery in the *Rgveda*, Christol (1987, p. 12) found the following processes: 1. raising an armature of wood; 2. stretching a cover over it; 3. making an opening; 4. spreading a floor carpet inside and attaching it to the walls. This list of processes describes precisely the method of building a yurt, which is taken down and put up again, as a reiteration of night passing into day. Furthermore, the dual house forms of summer (yurt) and winter (timber hut), as witnessed in contemporary Kazakh dwellings, are integrated into one in the timber-lined chambered burial tombs of the Pazyryk culture. The significance of the yurt imagery in the Avestan creation texts may well be seen as *à propos* for the rite of burial in Pazyryk culture as well, as a marking out of ordered space in preparation for the afterlife.

It is hypothesized here that in one way, the decorated felts functioned as markers of social space, as a way of distinguishing interior from exterior, public and private domestic areas, as well as distinguishing sacred vs. secular space. These objects also played an important role as vehicles of the iconographic communication of cultural boundaries in the multi-ethnic, multicultural, wide open spaces of the Eurasian steppes in the later first millennium BCE. Although today these boundaries are blurred because we recognize Animal Style as a more or less coherent category, in the mid-first millennium BCE the creators and users of these felt objects must have differentiated various semantic visual components within what was to them an iconographic language. Representational images illustrated a Pazyryk understanding of the supernatural world, through a socially animated style. We can begin to read the animating aspect of this style by looking at how these felts were used to convey this world to the world at large.

Summary

One of the most valuable aspects of this volume is in the discussion of garment form. The comparative survey of different forms of outer

garment in the Altai, Siberia, Mongolia, and the Syr Darya regions is fascinating and informative, particularly because they interject *comparanda* with folk symbolism and myth.

In this volume, however, there is often a blur between what is scientific observation and what is (nuanced) interpretation. This is problematic, as many readers will be interested, but not expert in, the culture history of the Altai, or of neighbouring regions such as the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang, Semirechye or the Mongolian Steppes. The main audience, therefore, would be unable to cast a critical eye on certain details.

That said, however, this is a beautiful and generously colour-illustrated volume (119 figures and plates). It is most decidedly not a 'coffee-table,' magazine-depth level of documentation. It is a scholarly reference of the first order. This book is an invaluable reference even for those without knowledge of Russian, as the graphics are informative, ample and detailed. Textile historians in general, and of Eurasia in particular, will fully appreciate the technical discussions and clear disclosure of the clothing and its materials from these remarkable archaeological finds, rescued and restored from a remarkable part of the world.

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Notes

1. Hodder (1990) strictly rejects dichotomizing the 'utilitarian function' of an object from its style, noting that objects have social and ideological as well as utilitarian functions, and that style involves, but does not solely consist of, those functions. I maintain that, heuristically, it is imperative for archaeologists to be able to distinguish, on a very fundamental level, *functional* (utilitarian) constraints from artistic style as variable aspects of an object's form. Only in so doing can we move away from using style as a strictly typological tool, and move towards its counterpoint, that of using style as interpretation, i. e., *reading an object*.

2. Notable in particular as many rare ancient textiles come to us through illicit and undocumented excavation.

3. L. S. Dovlumova, E. A. Koroliuk, I. L. Krevskaia, L. P. Kundo, B. B. Malakhov, B. N. Mamashev, B. T. Vasiliev, A. A. Vlasov, and T. T. Vialakina.

4. Rudenko, 1953, pp. 118–20; tab. XCVI, 1; XCII, 1; XXIV, 2; 1970, pp. 93, 95 and pl. 64a; reconstruction completed by D.V. Pozdniakov.

5. Most notably from the collections of Peter the Great in the Hermitage Museum.

6. Most notably the 13th *vasht* in the myth of the Fravashis. This is mainly the work of P. Oktor Skjaervø, with ideas of Jean Kellens (1989) and Alain Christol (1987).

7. "Yurt" is a Turkic word meaning "place." The felt tent is an *alaçekh*.

New Turns on the Silk Road

Peter B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xii, 178 pp. ISBN-10: 0195338197; ISBN-13: 978-0195338195.

Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road in World History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. xii, 154 pp. ISBN-10: 0195338103; ISBN-13: 978-0195338102.

Xinru Liu and Lynda Norene Shaffer, *Connections Across Eurasia: Transportation, Communication, and Cultural Exchange on the Silk Roads*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007. x, 252 pp. ISBN-10: 0072843519; ISBN-13: 978-0072843514.

Whether you are new to the study of the “Silk Roads” and Central Asia and wanting a general introduction or are an instructor looking for updated and comprehensive teaching resources, all three of the books under review here have a lot to offer. Both the *Silk Road in World History* and *Central Asia in World History* hail from Oxford University Press’s series the New Oxford World History which promises “an informed, lively, and up-to-date history of the world” and to present “local histories in a global context” telling events “through the eyes of ordinary people.” Seemingly, the lives of “ordinary people” described in these histories of the Silk Roads and Central Asia are anything but ordinary. Xinru Liu and Peter Golden draw their readers into the complex worlds of their respective topics making the Silk Roads and Central Asia accessible even to an unfamiliar reader. Both Golden and Liu are noted specialists, the former having written extensively especially on the early Turkic peoples and the latter having published several earlier volumes on the Silk Roads. The volumes of the Oxford series on world history are also available in electronic format.

These books are appropriate for introductory undergraduate history courses because of their readability and chronological format. Peter Golden’s volume on Central Asia works particularly well as an introduction to Central Asia, but it also would fit neatly into a course on the Silk Roads as a means of highlighting the

peoples who existed in the central regions of Eurasia and who often were responsible for the success or failure of routes. Golden notes that the region of Central Asia is not one of historical delineation, and is better defined based on the ecological zones of the steppe and deserts with their oases where peoples of varied linguistic and religious backgrounds interacted and blended over the centuries. One of the key distinctions he makes is between nomadic peoples of the steppe and agrarian groups of the oases. This distinction as well as the one between Persianate and Turkic linguistic groups are fairly typical in the literature on Central Asia and give students a basic framework for understanding the region that can then be problematized. If an instructor would like to extend the chronology of a course beyond the Mongol conquest, Golden’s volume is useful because it shows the continuities between the Mongols and the Timurids, alliances between political and religious leaders, and the faltering of nomadic supremacy with the advance of the Russian and Qing empires. The book closes by providing insight into the imperial struggle that laid the foundation for the Great Game and the contemporary situations that renew and reinvent our fascination with the bygone days when nomads ruled the steppe.

Some of the features that stand out in the Oxford volumes are the suggested further readings, websites, and chronology provided at the end of the text which are useful to those who want to explore certain topics in greater detail. Likewise, the images featured in the volumes were carefully selected to reinforce some of the major themes being discussed (such as items made from silk in Liu’s volume and images related to pastoral life in Golden’s volume), thus allowing readers to get a sense of the diversity of art and architecture associated with the Silk Roads and Central Asia.

Liu’s 2011 publication and her 2007 collaboration with Shaffer cover much the same ground, however with more detail in the earlier and longer book. In that volume, they begin with an exposition of the ecological zones and geography that affected the development and often determined the location of the routes of exchange. This allows them to take a more detailed look at some of the empires that flourished along the Silk Roads, explore in depth the exchange of other

commodities in addition to silk, such as ceramics, spices, and horses, clearly map out the diversity of trade routes (including the maritime routes) that appeared in Eurasia down through the Mongol conquest, and understand the intricate sharing and co-opting of ideas from religion to governance. If one's primary interest is in silk as a commodity or in a concise narrative of the Silk Roads then the 2011 Oxford volume would fulfill those needs. Both Liu and Shaffer have specialties in Chinese history as well as world history; so they are careful to include different perspectives. Even in the 2011 volume, Liu titles her first chapters "China looks West" and "Rome looks East." Having a specialty in the early history of South Asia, she follows these with a detailed focus on the Kushan Empire and its adoption of Buddhism.

As a teaching resource *Connections Across Eurasia* remains the better option. Rather than having one long chronology at the end of the text, *Connections Across Eurasia* opens each chapter with a detailed chronology that allows the reader have an easy reference for dates and important events within the topical chapters. Likewise the maps offered in this volume are more frequent and better suited to understanding the geographical complexity of the routes of the Silk Roads. *Connections Across Eurasia* also provides suggestions for further readings, but these follow each chapter making it very simple to see which readings would be appropriate for specific topics.

I recently taught a lower division undergraduate lecture course on the Silk Roads, and opted to assign chapters from *Connections Across Eurasia* and *Central Asia in World History* along

with excerpts from relevant primary source documents. The balance between the two books worked well for giving the students a general background on the geography and ecological zones of the regions of the Silk Roads, as well as the religious, linguistic, and cultural composition of the populations. Topically the chapters could be a good basis from which to expand on in the lectures. The books themselves were good resources for the students to refer to when studying for exams. Nearly all of the primary sources (e.g. selections from Zhang Qian, Marco Polo, Rashid al-Din) that my students read for the course were described in the text of these books, thus opening up discussion of how we reconstruct the past. Based on feedback from my students, I would definitely use both of these books again in the future. Likewise, I would consider assigning Liu's 2011 publication, especially if I was teaching a seminar where students needed to gain a quick knowledge of the Silk Roads before moving into a more in-depth study.

– Jennifer Webster

About the author

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“...Full of Sound and Fury...”

V. S. Flërov. “*Goroda*” i “*zamki*” *Khazarskogo kaganata. Arkheologicheskaja real’nost’* [“*Cities*” and “*Castles*” of the Khazarian Kaganate. The Archaeological Reality]. Moskva: Mosty kul’ tury; Jerusalem: Gersharim, 2011. 264 p. ISBN 978-5-93273-333-0.

Shakespeare’s words (*Macbeth*, Act V) are an apt characterization for this provocative book by one of the leading archaeologists working on the Khazars, even if the rest of *Macbeth*’s gloomy reaction to the news of his wife’s death and his own impending doom (“signifying nothing”) certainly does not apply here. The book expands on an article the author published in 2005, which, in the view of one critic, was “too pessimistic” in its conclusions. In what is largely a review of the existing scholarship, not an attempt to flesh out alternative interpretations, Valerii Sergeevich Flërov states his main point bluntly: “There were no cities in the Khazar kaganate” (p. 10). The reality of archaeological evidence to date simply does not support assertions that there were. He is unsparing in his criticism of any who would argue otherwise; at times the veneer of civility we might hope for in academic discourse wears rather thin.

He is careful to indicate that in its original meaning, “*gorod*” in Russian (which in English may be rendered “city” or “town”) referred merely to a settlement surrounded by some kind of wall irrespective of what the structures or planning were within or the occupation of the inhabitants. His understanding of the way the term is now used incorporates socio-economic factors and attention to the nature of the architecture, even if he shies away from a clear definition of his own. That is, the concept of city is connected with some understanding that the urban environment is different from that of an encampment or village. If to apply this term to certain Khazar settlement sites is inappropriate, so also are some of the other terms used for them by scholars and popularizers: “*zamok*” (castle) has connotations specific to the medieval West; “*proto-gorod*” is an obfuscation that is meaningless, and so on. Eventually Flërov finds acceptable a term used by Boris Nikolaevich

Zakhoder in his admirable study of the “Caspian compendium” of early Islamic sources on Eastern Europe — “sizeable inhabited place” (*krupnoe naselënnoe mesto*) — as a descriptive term for the *gorodishche* (“hillforts”; more generally “tells” or mounds) of Khazaria, many of which are distinguished by stone or brick defensive walls.

If the book were only about terminology, it would perhaps signify very little, but as Flërov correctly insists, descriptive terms carry meaning which may reflect particular interpretive stances and thus may have a substantial impact on the formulation of research questions and on an objective understanding of the results. What he is asking us to do here is re-consider what we “thought we knew” about Khazaria in order that we may arrive at a clearer understanding of its socio-economic and political realities. If readers of this journal may wonder why they should pay attention to this subject, they should remember that between the 7th and 10th centuries, the Khazar polity occupied areas of western Eurasia that were linked in important ways to the “Silk Road.” Whether the Khazars played as important a role in the Silk Road trade as many have argued is one of the questions Flërov addresses.

Some background here on the archaeology of Khazaria is necessary for an appreciation of the book. As a field of study, Khazar archaeology really began with Mikhail Ivanovich Artamonov’s excavations in the Don River basin in the 1930s, the most prominent of which came to focus on Sarkel, in a salvage operation to study it before it was inundated by the rising water of the Tsimliansk reservoir. Sarkel is of particular interest since the construction of its brick fort is documented and dated in Byzantine sources (the work was supervised by a Byzantine military engineer at the behest of the Khazar ruler in the 830s), and its destruction by the Rus’ in 965 is documented in the earliest Russian annals. Thus, we have written proof that it is a Khazar site and can correlate archaeological evidence with specific historical events.

More broadly in the Don basin, archaeological survey and excavation, notably by one of Artamonov’s most capable students, Ivan Ivanovich Liapushkin, revealed that Sarkel was only one of several sites from the Khazar period with masonry fortifications and specific artifacts

(especially certain kinds of pottery) which defined the “Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture,” named after two of the most prominent sites. Several of these sites were located on the forest-steppe boundary at points where there could have been significant north-south communication along the river routes. In the absence of other archaeological evidence which can be specifically defined as coming from inhabitants of the broader Khazar polity, the Saltovo-Maiatskaia cultural complex, even if it seems to have been specific to only one group within multi-ethnic Khazaria, remains the generally accepted indicator of “Khazarian” occupation.

Another of Artamonov’s students, Svetlana Aleksandrovna Pletnëva, added substantially to the evidence about the Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture, in part by carrying out extensive survey archaeology and excavation along various tributaries of the Don, and in part through her detailed analysis of the ceramic finds from Sarkel which she determined were characteristic of that culture. She summarized this work in an important monograph, *From Nomadic Camps to Cities: The Saltovo-Maiatskaia Culture (Ot kochevii k gorodam: Saltovo-Maiatskaia kul'tura)*, published in 1967 in the distinguished series *Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR*. When Artamonov died, he left the yet unpublished parts of the Sarkel excavation archive in her care; when she eventually organized the material, she produced what remains the best summary of what we know about that site in her 1996 book, *Sarkel and the “Silk” Road (Sarkel i “Shelkovyi” put’)*. Until her death in 2008 at age 82, she was the doyenne of Khazar archaeology and a figure to be reckoned with.

While Flërov explicitly states his respect for Pletnëva’s many contributions to the field, to a considerable degree his philippics are directed against her, to the point that one suspects a certain personal animosity. All in all, his book ends up being a kind of *damnatio memoriae*. His concerns are much deeper than whether or not (as seems to have been the case) she used the term “city” loosely in her work and, if anything, seemed to invest it with greater significance as time went on. That is, she moved from a somewhat cautious application of the term to an insistence that it defined prominent Khazar settlements.

Her treatment of Sarkel is a case in point. In her 1967 book it was listed as one of the few Khazar “cities”; in her 1996 book curiously she used the term sparingly and in fact seemed little concerned about trying to convince the reader the site had all the characteristics one might associate with urbanization from any modern definition. Yet only a few years later, in a paper (which I have not seen) intended to promote discussion of urbanization in Khazaria, she seems to have come down firmly on the side of designating Sarkel and several other Khazar settlements by that term.

The more substantial questions here include the fact that her *From Nomadic Camps to Cities* frames the discussion of historical development in Khazaria in a scheme (in part derived from Marxist dogma about historical stages) that posits an inexorable “progress” from “pure nomadism” to “semi-nomadism” to “sedentarism.” Thus she argued that in the Khazar case one could see all three stages beautifully illustrated by the artifacts of the Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture. Cities had to be there at the end of the line; of course this then might mean discerning formal architectural features one might associate with cities, finding evidence of “planning,” and arguing that evidence about craft production — notably pottery kilns and smitheries — indicated the existence of specialized socio-economic features we would associate with an urban center. One important conclusion in her book on Sarkel was her identification of two structures adjoining the citadel within the fortress as caravan-sarais. Given the paucity of other archaeological evidence about long-distance trade (there is some), this hypothesis (and it is little more than that) was important in her argument the fortress was intended to serve as a customs post along key trade routes. Pletnëva was not alone in arguing that there was evidence of the Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture in Alan sites in the northern Caucasus; indeed, the movement of the Alans through the Don basin is one of the main explanations for that culture’s emergence. And she includes at least peripherally in her overview of cities in Khazaria, the Byzantine towns of the Crimea — even if they did not owe their origins to the Khazars, their architecture to some degree may have been influenced by their Khazar overlords.

Flërov seems to accept the premise that at least for now the Saltovo-Maiatskaia culture is “Khazar,” but he casts doubt on whether Pletnëva has proven either its connection with the fortress culture of the Alans in Dagestan or its presence in the Byzantine towns of the Crimea (whose designation as “goroda” he does not question). The critical issue then is whether any of the *gorodishcha* such as Sarkel qualify to be called towns. To Flërov, beyond the forts themselves — mere refuges — there is nothing about the settlements to suggest they were any different from agricultural villages — same kind of architecture, same absence of urban planning, same minimal presence of crafts which might be found anywhere. Pletnëva’s “caravan-sarais” were probably merely storage areas for the fort (an assertion for which Flërov has no evidence whatsoever). Quite simply, there is nothing in the archaeological record to date to support an argument about urbanization. Only to a limited degree here does Flërov introduce any new material from his or others’ excavations; his is primarily a reinterpretation of what Pletnëva and others have already uncovered and described. While he has some specific excurses — for example on whether “herringbone” masonry (*opus spicatum*) is evidence for her assertions — his modus operandi often is merely selective quotation: from those he criticizes, passages that condemn them in their own words, and, from those he approves, their statements that one or another site is not a city.

If then these small settlements or hillforts can be so readily dismissed, what about the Khazar capital, Itil, which is described in some detail in several written sources as being large and impressive? Flërov has reservations about the written evidence, but by no means simply discards it. His main point (and one with which Pletnëva at least in her earlier work would not have disagreed) is that to date the remains of Itil have not been securely identified. Thus there is no archaeological material whatsoever to test whether the picture of the written sources is accurate. In recent years, E. D. Zilivinskaia has been the main proponent of the view that the very large site of Samosdel’skaia in the Volga River delta is the location of Itil, but the excavations to date have not reached a “Khazar layer” and

may not be able to (even if there is one), given the high water table. Skepticism about Zilivinskaia’s conclusions is widespread.

It is perhaps ironic that Pletnëva began her path-breaking 1967 monograph by indicating that even Artamonov had brought to bear little archaeological evidence for broader interpretations of Khazar history (she later said the opposite in her 1996 book). The crux of Flërov’s critique of existing work on the Khazars is exactly this. That is, interpretations now often widely accepted bear no relationship to archaeologically documented facts, even if in the intervening decades a lot more archaeological evidence has accumulated. The task then is to eschew pre-conceived interpretive schemes and avoid misleading terminology at the same time that much more and more careful archaeological work must be undertaken. Who could disagree? As to what that work might involve, he is both sensibly concrete and fanciful. On the fanciful end, while anyone might agree it is desirable that more work be done at an important site such as Sarkel, it seems a little unlikely that any time in the foreseeable future the silting of the reservoir in which it sits will proceed to the point that the dam will be removed and excavations be resumed once the layers of accumulated silt have been peeled away. He is more sensible in his call for further survey work, pointing out that we need to know much more about the areas around some of the “sizeable inhabited places.” Here he throws in another dig at Pletnëva, mentioning that in one area she surveyed supposedly intensively, a local enthusiast has identified at least twenty additional sites she missed. Flërov is undoubtedly right that many excavations even today are not always carried out with precision — he cites as an example the treatment of ceramics evidence, where Artamonov’s laudatory documenting of the exact position of each sherd has not always been emulated. Moreover (and this is hardly a new phenomenon in archaeology worldwide), analysis of finds has lagged behind their discovery. Yes, he points out, not only were the finds properly recorded, but Pletnëva published a pioneering analysis of the Sarkel ceramics. Should we be satisfied with her results? Predictably, Flërov’s answer is no — the work probably should be re-done.

Insofar as Flërov has developed his own larger interpretive scheme of Khazar history, its important points are these. The originally “nomadic” Khazars very quickly settled when they occupied the territories of the lower Volga, Don and north Caucasus. The main characteristic of the Khazar socio-economic order then was settled agriculture, and those “sizeable inhabited places” were agricultural settlements no different from small villages in any agricultural society. Trade there was, but it did not occupy a more important place for the Khazars than in many other such societies; in fact it may have been less important for them than amongst some of their neighbors (Byzantium, the Abbasid Caliphate). Quite simply, given the limited nature of its socio-economic development, the absence of cities in Khazaria can be explained by the fact there was no need for them. Flërov does introduce into his discussion at least one important comparative example – that of the early Bulgarian royal residence sites – but his point in doing so is simply to reinforce his interpretation about the “non-city” nature of even the Khazar capital Itil. A seasonal royal camp, perhaps, but little more.

Flërov has carefully positioned himself so that he does not feel compelled to prove any of

this – that is, by his lights he is merely doing a historiographical review. According to the current guru of Khazar studies, V. Ia. Petrukhin, whose imprimatur on the book is in his laudatory afterword, Flërov is not only the pre-eminent authority today on Khazar settlements but also the coordinator of a collective project to document them. That said, Flërov is casually dismissive of arguments about trade in Khazaria, happy to leave to numismatists and others examination of such issues. He has found no reason to cite (even if he as read it) any of the non-Russian literature on Khazaria, including the important recent work by Thomas Noonan and Roman Kovalev dealing with the Khazar economy, work which makes a very strong case for the importance of trade (at the same time that it admits the importance of other aspects of economic activity). Clearly to insist that we look only at the hard evidence of archaeological digs within Khazaria itself will perforce limit our understanding of its history. That said, if Flërov’s book stimulates more and better archaeology in Khazaria, it will have served a valuable purpose.

– Daniel C. Waugh

L. F. Nedashkovskii. *Zolotoordynskie goroda nizhnego Povolzh'ia i ikh okrug* [Cities of the Golden Horde in the Lower Volga River Region and Their Periphery]. Moskva: Izdatel'skaia firma “Vostochnoi literatury” RAN, 2010. 351 pp. + illustrations. ISBN 978-5-02-036352-6.

Leonard Fedorovich Nedashkovskii, on the faculty of the Department of Archaeology and Ethnography of the State University of Kazan, has published extensively on the archaeology of the Golden Horde (Ulus Jöchi). A particular focus of his work has been the excavations in and around Uvekskoe, one of the four largest cities of the Horde in the lower Volga region, the territory which is the subject of the book under review. As a detailed compendium of information on the excavations, concerning which much of the material has yet to be published, the book will be an invaluable guide for future research. As a pioneering effort to study not so much the

four main cities themselves but their immediate hinterlands, the book is methodologically important even if, for this reader, the results of the analysis are not likely to change the basic picture of the Horde’s history which can be derived from a reading of published materials based on the extensive archaeological work of recent decades. Of course it is another matter whether that work has yet reached the awareness of those who write more general histories of the Mongols in the West, where the literature has too often been skewed by a selective use of often biased written sources. The archaeological material is an essential complement to the written evidence; taken together they support the conclusion emphasized here by Nedashkovskii that the common perception of a “nomadic economy” is very misleading. Agriculture, urban industries, and local trade were all very important for a polity that played a key role in fostering international trade in Western Asia.

After a compact review of the interpretive and archaeological literature on the Golden Horde (Ch. 1), the author devotes the next 120 pages to a cataloguing of archaeological sites and their finds. While Uvekskoe (in Golden Horde times, Ukek) is treated equally with the other sites in his comparative analysis, he refers to his previously published work for details. Thus, the next 120 pages here focus on three cities and their peripheries: Tsarevskoe, Selitrennoe, and Sharenyi Bugor. Since the evidence from them has been well published, the cities themselves receive only summary treatment (one should consult here in particular the work by G. A. Fëdorov-Davydov). Each section opens with a detailed map of sites (the primary city may be located just off the map), which include settlements of various sizes, "locations" (where there have been small concentrations of finds), burials of various sizes and construction, and coin finds. For each of these categories, there is a summary description, including a list of artifacts. Nedashkovskii groups the burials in systematic categories, the first organizing principle being the orientation of the body; the subcategories relating to grave structure. Since some of the cemeteries were used over long periods of time, the burials may date as far back as the Bronze Age and extend beyond the end of the Mongol Empire. There are summary statistics (where available) for osteological material: different animal species; for human remains, determination of europoid or mongoloid origin. Percentages of burials which follow Islamic practice are specified. Information on the coin finds includes at least the youngest date, and at various points in the later discussion, he mentions specific issues and their provenance. Since the book contains an extensive bibliography both of published reports and specifically listed unpublished excavation records, it would be possible to locate more detailed information for any given site.

Readers with general interests probably would want to begin with Chapter 5 which offers a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the economy of the Golden Horde, albeit one too often reduced to lists of products and crafts. One of the virtues of this chapter is to pull together (and often quote from) a wide range of information on the economy in well-known written sources, which

then provides a framework in which supporting archaeological evidence can be placed. Of particular interest is his extensive citation of Kipchak vocabulary contained in the early 14th-century *Codex Cumanicus*. The archaeological material, illustrated in the first instance by line drawings of objects and tabulations of osteological remains from the author's work at Uvekskoe, is somewhat unevenly correlated with the written material and if anything seems underutilized. There is little in it which really alters our understanding of the economy derived from the written sources alone. Many objects of trade (for example, a great many of the specialized fabrics imported from East and West) have left no trace in the archaeological record, although for other objects, such as ceramics, only the archaeological material can flesh out a detailed picture.

His chronological framework for diachronic comparisons of the various regions is an amalgam of dates based on changes in coinage and on periods of political history. Among the more interesting points in his discussion are: his indication that the wars between Ulus Jöchi and Ilkhanid Iran in the late 14th century did little to interrupt north-south trade; his emphasis on the importance of the monetary reform of Khan Tokhta at the beginning of the 14th century, which unified the monetary system of the Horde and clearly must have contributed to the subsequent decades of prosperity; his reminder in passing that the significant finds of copper coinage point to a monetarized economy (this in contrast to the situation in earlier centuries, where Islamic silver coinage was valued for its weight in precious metal); his evidence for at least a short-term revival of the economy in the reign of Tokhtamysh in the 1380s, following two decades of civil war.

The methodologically innovative part of the book is really confined to what he labels a conclusion, even if in fact it more resembles the introduction to a different book, whose writing may be a long way in the future. Here, relying heavily on maps and various statistical bar and pie graphs, he attempts to say something about the relationship between the few large cities and their peripheries. The elegantly drawn maps highlight "catchment areas" encircling settlements; one can compare the distribution and density of them for different periods. Lacking here is a

clear indication of how certain sites end up being centers of economic zones and others do not, although size of settlement and some perhaps arbitrary definition of how far pre-modern man might range in his local economic activity seem to figure in the calculation. The visual impression of the maps is vivid enough – Uvekskoe in the Saratov region up the Volga is the center of a dense cluster, whereas in the sprawling Volga delta with its countless channels, the centers with significant peripheries were few and separated. The data summarized in the pie charts reinforce this picture, showing a corresponding density (or paucity) of peripheral settlements of any size around the major towns. The bar graphs showing chronological distribution of artifacts largely merely confirm what we know in a more general way about the rise and fall of the Golden Horde, though clearly there is some differentiation from city to city and region to region. The author argues that the different quantities of artifacts are evidence of different degrees of economic importance of particular regions.

Perhaps of greater interest is evidence that may tell us something about social status and ethnic composition of the population, although there really are no surprises here. There seems to have been a high concentration of Golden Horde “aristocracy” in and around Tsarevskoe (arguably the “new Sarai” or Sarai Berke, though this identification and disputes over the location of “Sarai” are not mentioned by the author). The majority of crafts were probably practiced only in the larger towns; smaller locations on the periphery may well be associated with nomadic population that was less sedentarized (the evidence of burials supports this). Craft products of the towns did make it into their peripheries, suggesting that local trade was important. In return, the rural population supplied raw materials. Uvekskoe, the farthest north of

the cities studied here, was the one with the highest concentration of Slavs (“Russians”) and Mordvinians, who may well have been primarily farmers in the area. The considerable emphasis in the book on agricultural activity is important; it would seem that the farmers for the most part in the lower Volga region were the indigenous steppe peoples, who increasingly had converted to Islam by the last half of the 14th century.

The book concludes with a substantial appendix by A. S. Aleshinskaia and E. A. Spiridonova laying out the results of spore and pollen analysis undertaken at several excavations in the Saratov region in 2001 and 2002. In each case, samples were taken from several levels, allowing for comparison of possible changes over time in the vegetation and climate of the site. While these data are as yet slim, there seems to be a correlation with a significant rise the levels of the Caspian Sea which resulted in a damper climate in the adjoining steppe region. At very least here, this material opens the possibility that in the future we may develop a database for the analysis of micro-climates and their change over time.

Where the emphasis on peripheries and catchment areas around major settlements may lead in future research is an open question. Such an approach is, of course, increasingly popular in archaeology today, whether the subject be early nomad sites in Inner Asia or Greek settlements on the Black Sea littoral. It may be, of course, that the lasting value of Nedashkovskii’s book will be in his data summaries and references. Ideally, of course, all that material would be digitized in a GIS-based system, and linked to digital full-text versions of both the published and unpublished excavation reports. Such projects are underway for other parts of the Silk Road, as reported several years ago in this journal.

– Daniel C. Waugh

The Gray Eminence of Kashgar Speaks

N. F. Petrovskii. *Turkestan'skie pis'ma* [Turkestan Letters]. Otv. red. V. S. Miasnikov. Sost. V. G. Bukhert. Moskva: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2010. 358 pp. [Available in pdf format at <http://www.piminfo.ru/catfile/bbook_Pdf_small_266.pdf>, accessed July 18, 2010.]

As the first Russian consul in Kashgar from 1882–1903, Nikolai Fedorovich Petrovskii earned the reputation (at least in British eyes) of the *éminence grise* who really governed Kashgaria. This valuable collection of his *Turkestan Letters*, the majority of them previously unpublished, should stimulate interest in a still much-needed full-scale biography of this important figure in the history of the “Great Game” rivalry between Britain and Russia. Not the least of Petrovskii’s accomplishments while in Kashgar was his pioneering acquisition of a significant collection of Central Asian antiquities.

The book opens with a short essay by Vladimir S. Miasnikov, a distinguished specialist on Russo-Chinese relations. His focus, curiously, is on Petrovskii as seen by the British, as told principally through reference to Clarmont P. Skrine and Pamela Nightingale’s book on the British consul George Macartney. The more substantial of the introductory essays is by the compiler and real editor of the letters, V. G. Bukhert. Here we find biographical details and a serious, archivally based effort to place Petrovskii’s career on a broader canvas of Russian activity in Central Asia. While Petrovskii may be best known for his two decades in Kashgar, his early career and his concerns after “retiring” to Tashkent involved Russian financial administration in Turkestan, a subject to which he frequently returned in his letters from Xinjiang. One gets the impression that his superiors may well have been happy to keep Petrovskii at a safe distance across the mountains, since he was rather outspoken in his criticism of Russian administration and rarely minced words in characterizing those whom he disliked. He repeatedly voiced concerns that the mountains on the southern borders of Russian Turkestan would turn into another Caucasus for

the Empire — that is, would require costly, long-term military pacification.

Life at the distant outposts of empire cannot have been easy. Petrovskii left his family behind in Tashkent — his wife, two daughters and a son — and visited them perhaps once a year. However, no letters to his family are included in the selection here. Travel over the high passes between Kashgar and Tashkent, often in winter conditions, took its toll. Petrovskii came to be nearly incapacitated with rheumatism and, due to his own carelessness in not taking dark glasses on one of the early trips, suffered long-term effects from snow blindness. He had not been in Kashgar very long before he began fishing for reassignment elsewhere, aiming for another consular job (Trabzon in Turkey would have suited nicely, but it had no Russian consulate) or a minor provincial governorship somewhere in Siberia.

While he recognized that his temperament was best suited to a post where he would have some autonomy and could be his own man, he continually complained of the isolation in Kashgar and the lack of support from his government. Given the emphasis of anglo-centric historiography of the Great Game in which Russian machinations for control of ever larger parts of Asia dominate the narrative, this may seem somewhat surprising. For many years he had to handle all the paperwork of the job with only one assistant and a couple of scribes, and he continually pushed to have the Cossack guard at the consulate increased, as insurance in the face of possible local unrest. When his capable long-time consular secretary Iakov Ia. Liutsch decided to move on, the position was vacant for two years. Liutsch’s eventual replacement, Sergei A. Kolokolov, was ill-prepared, although he would later succeed Petrovskii himself. Of course it is difficult to know whether such complaints are generic for anyone posted in a distant consulate: the British consuls in Kashgar likewise felt underappreciated and ill-served by their governments.

Without the additional evidence from Petrovskii’s intelligence reports and other documentation (he mentions, for example, keeping a diary of events, rumors, news, etc.), the letters here provide little sense of his real influence in Xinjiang. His initial impressions of

Chinese officialdom were positive (in fact he declared [p. 122] the Russians needed to learn from their example), but he rather quickly shifted to a litany of complaints about the faults of the Chinese administration. At the same time, he claimed to be on excellent terms with the local head of the Qing civil administration, even if we learn few details of what this may have meant in policy decisions. When he arrived in Kashgar, he had little guidance about norms of consular jurisdiction and had to request copies of consular statutes for various countries be sent to use as examples. Petrovskii reiterated his impatience with having to deal with the routine of consular paper involving travel by Russian citizens, defending them in the local courts, trying to determine the validity of the claims of spouses left behind by their husbands, and so on. This left him little time for travel outside of Kashgar. He seems not to have had much of a budget to pay political agents and informants, but obviously seized opportunities, such as the time when he obtained a letter of instructions Francis Younghusband had sent to his hapless traveling companion Lieutenant Davison. Petrovskii promptly forwarded it to St. Petersburg (p. 222). He clearly was an advocate of a forward Russian position in the Pamirs, even if he did not always agree with specific actions such as Colonel Bronislav L. Grombchevskii's incursion which led to his famous faceoff with Younghusband and, in Petrovskii's eyes, provoked the British to extend their control in Kashmir.

Petrovskii was intellectually curious, especially, it seems, about religion and history of Inner and South Asia. His reading included: Kalhana's medieval Kashmiri *Rajatarangini*; Monier Monier-Williams on Buddhism; Albert Réville's *Prolégomènes de l'histoire des religions*; James Fergusson on Indian chronology. He read about Manichaeism and on more than one occasion expressed an interest in learning about Nestorianism, given its possible earlier presence in Kashgar. He seems to have been proficient in Central Asian Turkic languages, a knowledge of which he considered essential to the functioning of the consulate. Apparently he also knew some Persian, and at least had use for an Arabic dictionary. It is not clear how the consulate handled dealings in Chinese (the language of the

local Qing administration, which, according to Petrovskii, did not use Manchu). While he turned down a request from Ármin Vámbéry that he record for him local oral literature, Petrovskii did record costume and customs in drawings, with extensive annotations in both Russian and "Kashgarian" (Uighur?). One wonders, have these drawings survived? It would also be of interest if the records have survived from the meteorological station which Petrovskii established by the mid-1880s (with instruments ordered from London). He was proud of having introduced turkeys and American cotton to the local farmers (p. 197).

Petrovskii's letters to the orientalist Sergei F. Ol'denburg and Viktor R. Rozen document his frequent acquisition of antiquities (including early Buddhist manuscripts as well as later Islamic texts), although without much detail regarding specific provenance or the names of his suppliers. If such detail exists, it has to be in any notes he may have appended when mailing the material off to St. Petersburg. Perhaps the most interesting of all his comments on antiquities is in a letter to Rozen dated 27 January 1892. There he laments that his consular duties left him no time to visit ancient sites. Referring to the famous "Bower manuscript" which helped fuel the interest in Central Asian antiquities, Petrovskii writes: "I was truly and deeply incensed that [Lieutenant Hamilton] Bower anticipated my discovery. This was purely by accident, but nonetheless the involuntary thought occurs that I, not a mere tourist, should have been the one so fortunate" (p. 223). Petrovskii indeed aspired to some of the fame that came with discovery: on another occasion, he expressed to Ol'denburg his dissatisfaction with articles (written by the latter?) in which Antoine Jomini and Albert Grünwedel were praised but there was nary a word about Petrovskii's own activity in the collection of antiquities (p. 269). Petrovskii declared himself "deeply touched" (p. 292) by Ol'denburg's later article specifically devoted to the importance of the steady stream of antiquities the consul had been sending in the face of growing competition from Macartney. In a letter to Ol'denburg of 1 August 1894, he writes, "I am awaiting from Kucha a complete manuscript which has already been acquired for me; but I now have competition — the English agent here (in essence

a spy, Macartney), who is attempting to purchase manuscripts for Hoernle" (p. 248). On another occasion he noted having trained his *aksakal* (the native head of the local Russian merchant community) in photography and sending him to photograph some of the ruins beyond Artush and the tower (stupa?) at Khan-Ui (pp. 265–66).

Naturally Petrovskii took an interest in Central Asian exploration. Early in his stay in Kashgar, he expended some effort to have a monument raised to commemorate in Kashgar the murdered Austrian explorer Adolph Schlagintweit. He initiated a correspondence with Nikolai M. Przhevalskii, in part because they seem to have shared the same views on Russian administration in Central Asia. Explorers who came through Kashgar invariably visited the Russian consulate. The Swede Sven Hedin stayed there and received valuable support from Petrovskii. While the Russian seems to have liked him personally, at least at first, he perceptively voiced his skepticism about Hedin's preparation for his adventures and raised serious doubts about the scientific value of some of what Hedin proposed to do, considering it to be little other than "tourism" (p. 273). At the same time though, he could appreciate the corrective to previous knowledge provided by Hedin's exploration of the lower Tarim River region, about which he learned when Hedin shared with Petrovskii the letter he had written to Ferdinand von Richthofen regarding his discoveries (p. 277). On the receipt of Hedin's book in 1899 (presumably *Through Asia*), Petrovskii insisted that the author had in fact praised him to excess at the same time that he had ignored Petrovskii's many corrections regarding such matters as local place names. As a result, the book was full of mistakes (p. 284). When Hedin was back in Kashgar in 1899, he was "worse than ever, gave himself airs, and could talk only about his triumphs" (p. 287).

In 1895, Petrovskii (whose skepticism, he reported, was shared by Hedin) raised serious

questions about the story Fernand Grenard told concerning the murder of his fellow explorer Jules-Léon Dutreuil de Rhins by bandits. Evidence, which Macartney refused to investigate, pointed the finger at members of Dutreuil's own party (notably Muhammad Isa, who would go on to serve Hedin in his explorations of Tibet). Since Dutreuil's own papers perished with him, Petrovskii recognized the potential significance of the apparently extensive correspondence he had had with the French explorer; so he sent the papers on to his superior in St. Petersburg in order that they be deposited in an appropriate archive. Petrovskii groused about the French who came through never having thanked him for his hospitality; the English were beyond mention, since they treated him as a mere supply agent who was (to them) little more than a barbarian (p. 271).

Appendices to the book include a very critical assessment Petrovskii wrote in 1876 regarding a proposed expedition to China by N. A. Maev, instructions Petrovskii compiled to guide agents and spies in obtaining information while in the field, and several letters to Petrovskii. The most interesting are part of an exchange he had with the later famous geographer and zoologist Grigorii E. Grum-Grzhimailo, whose hot-headed intrusion at the border had threatened to create a major incident with the Chinese authorities. There are useful lists of all the Russian consuls in Kashgar, the military officers posted there and the commanders of the Pamir garrison. Bibliographies include Petrovskii's own publications and works about him. There are indexes of personal and geographic names. The annotation to the letters primarily is identification of the individuals to whom they are addressed or who are mentioned in them.

— Daniel C. Waugh

The Spillings Hoard in the Gotlands Museum

The Spillings Hoard – Gotland's Role in Viking Age World Trade. Visby: Gotlands Museum, 2009. 205 pp. ISBN 978-91-88036-71-1.

July 26, 1999, was a day to remember, for the discovery on the Spillings farm in Othem parish, northeastern Gotland, of the largest Viking Age silver hoard in the world. Gotland, an island in the Baltic, was immensely important in the trading networks of northern Europe both in the Viking Age and later in the Hanseatic period. The silver alone in the Spillings Hoard weighed 67 kg, and in addition some 20 kg of bronze objects were found on the site where they had been buried under the floor of a dwelling some time after 870/871 CE (the latest date of one of the 14,300 coins, most of them Arab dirhams). The discovery became a media sensation; the public was invited to watch the excavation; Crown Princess Victoria, the heir to the Swedish throne, opened the exhibit of the material in the Gotland Museum in 2007.

This nicely illustrated, multi-authored volume is a tantalizing introduction to the Spillings Hoard and its significance. We learn about the history of the discovery and the farm where it was found. For the farm, Per Widerström lays out the archaeological evidence from excavations that still are not complete, and Dan Carlsson draws upon archival survey maps to flesh out a picture of the local economy and its changes over time. Students of the Silk Road will find of greatest interest Gun Westholm's chapter on "Gotland and the Surrounding World," which pulls together a largely well-known picture of the extent of Viking-era trade, and Nils Bolmkvist's essay "Traces of a Global Economic Boom that Came and Went," which sets the history in the context of well-known interpretations by Pirenne, Bolin, Hodges, Whitehouse and others.

Oddly, perhaps, where the book disappoints is in its analysis of the Spillings Hoard itself, perhaps because that analysis is still far from complete, given the huge amount of material that was found. We find here nice illustrations of objects and some of the most interesting coins,

a few pages of general description, but no real analytical detail. Enough, I suppose, for the general audience for which this book is intended, but leaving this reader wanting much more.

Undoubtedly my observation here has been conditioned by the opportunity I had in June of this year to view the exhibits in the Gotlands Museum, where the Spillings Hoard occupies pride of place amongst the many such hoards which have been discovered on that island. As my accompanying pictures may suggest, the potential to learn from this material is immense, for it informs us about objects of daily life, a complex economy, and farflung international contacts. Of particular interest are the displays of the coins grouped according to the regions in which they originated and accompanied by maps showing the locations of the various mints. The coins range in date from the 6th century (a few Sasanian examples) down to 870/871. Most of them come from the central lands of the Arab Caliphate (but from dozens of different mints), with isolated examples from as far away as the Maghrib. Although few in number, among the most interesting coins were ones minted in Khazaria in imitation of the Arab dirhams. Most famously, here we find the "Moses coin" on which we read "Moses is God's Messenger," instead of the expected naming of Muhammad, reflecting the fact that the Khazar elite had converted to Judaism.

It would have been nice had the book included a listing of mints and coin dates and an indication of the relative percentages of the coins from each location or at least region. The analysis (of at least some 5000 of the coins) has been done, but it is not clear whether it has yet been fully published. How many more of the coins might be dated is, of course, a good question, since one of the two containers of the silver survived in poor condition, apparently because the sack in which they had been placed had been impregnated with salt from some other prior use. Moreover, as is the case with such hoards, often the coins have been chopped up, since the important thing back then was not face value but the weight of the silver. There is ample evidence of that fact in the large quantity of silver rings, bracelets, ingots, and various kinds of scrap which were buried with the coins, some of the material in bundles of

standard weight. Many of the coins themselves have cuts, made presumably when they were tested for purity.

In its room devoted to the Spillings Hoard [for illustrations, see below], the museum has a very well designed projection of an interactive computerized description of the material, where one can view the reconstruction drawings of the original farm, see details of the various artifacts, even rotating some of them on screen, see highlighted the most interesting parts of the imagery and inscriptions on examples of the coins and read an accompanying descriptive text. Would that a disk with this presentation had been available to purchase along with the book under review here, since the electronic presentation adds another dimension to what we have here in print.

The Spillings Hoard then is hugely important, if for no reason other than its size and the fact that it

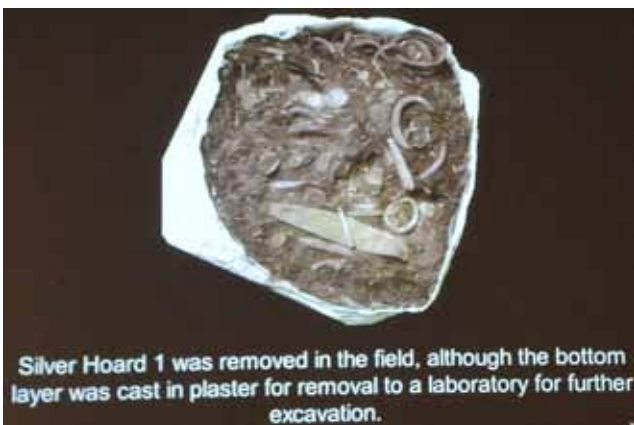
has stimulated so much research into the context in which it was deposited. If one could have only one of the Viking-age hoards found all over Eastern and Northern Europe, this is probably the one to choose. Granted, in most ways it does not change the picture we have known for some time about the extent of Viking-age trade and the role of Scandinavia in it. What we can hope is that historians of the “Silk Roads” will pay more attention to this material in the future, since it all helps document in important ways what was going on in Western Eurasia and reminds us vividly of how important were the Islamic lands and the northern Europeans who traded with them in the early centuries of the Caliphate. “Silk Road” exhibitions almost without exception have always highlighted East and, to a lesser degree, Central Asia. That, however, is only part of the story.

— Daniel C. Waugh

The Spillings Hoard Displayed and Explained



Photos copyright © 2011 Daniel C. Waugh

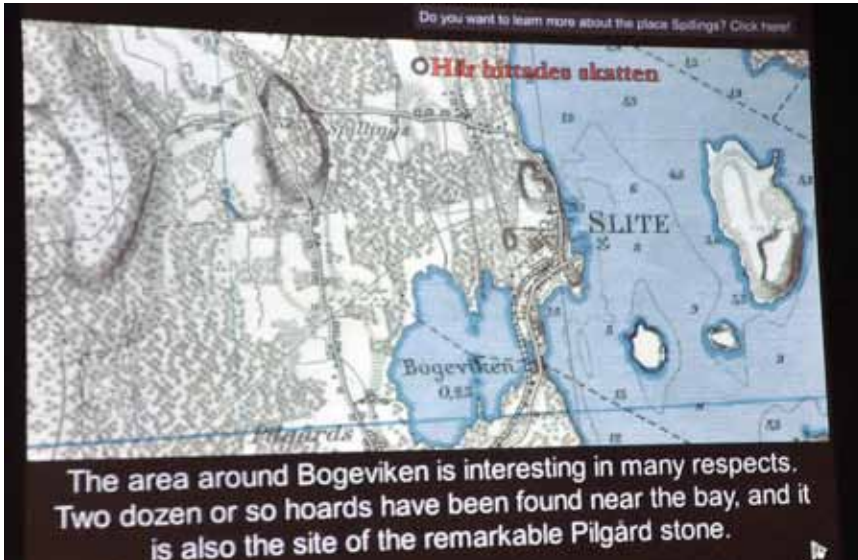


Upper left: part of silver hoard no. 1, whose total weight was 27 kg. Lower left: a screen shot from the video, showing the block-lifted bottom layer of hoard no. 1.

Right: part of silver hoard no. 2, weighing 40 kg. and containing 312 armlets, 20 bars, 30 arm rings, 20 finger rings and over 10,000 coins, most of them Arab dirhams.



The silver was obviously valued for its weight: bundles of arm bands matched multiples of standard Gotland weights. Significant amounts of the silver were in the form of bars or scrap.



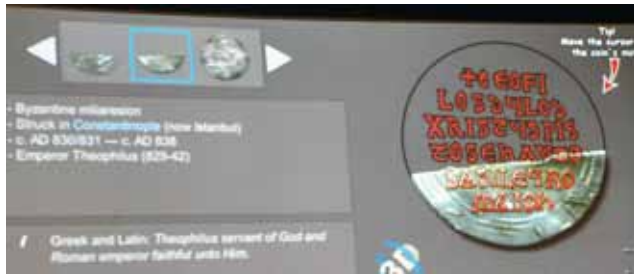
The video display shows the location of the Spillings Farm and the find spot of the hoard in the upper center. The harbor at Bogevisken was probably the most important one on Gotland in the period when the hoard was buried in the late 9th century; the hoard is one of many found in the area. Also found nearby was the famous Pilgård runestone, commemorating a Viking who perished in the rapids on the Dnieper River below Kiev.



The displays include a computerized reconstruction of the Viking house showing the locations of the three main hoards in it. Probably the site was that of a metalsmith's shop. The hoard containing bronze scrap was possibly deemed as valuable as that with the silver. A good many other bronze and iron objects have been found in excavations in the surrounding territory of the farm.



Examples of the coins from different regions are displayed in separate windows below wall maps indicating the location of their mints; here, the window with coins from Iran – each example accompanied by the date of the coin. One is impressed by the geographic and chronological range of the mints represented. While most coins are from the central lands of the Caliphate, some come from as far west as the Maghrib (northwest Africa) and as far south as Yemen. The earliest coins are a few Sasanian examples from the 6th century; the latest coin is an Arab dirham dated 870/71. A few of the coins are of non-Arab origin -- Byzantine or north European. Since some coins have been pierced and/or have hangers attached to them, they must have been used as jewelry or sewn to garments as decoration. Many coins have slashes in them, probably made when the purity of the metal was tested; many are fragmentary.



The interactive video display is very helpful to lead beginners through the basics of understanding images and inscriptions on the coins. In the example above, it even provides a reconstruction of the complete inscription on a fragmentary Byzantine coin and its translation. In the example to the right, it explains the Sasanian royal imagery on a dirham but, unfortunately, garbles the date conversion.



The video display explaining the design of the famous "Moses" coin issued by the Khazars probably in 837/8 CE. While its design imitates that of earlier, genuine Arab dirhams, in the declaration of faith, the Khazars, recent converts to Judaism, replaced the name of Muhammad with that of Moses.



The youngest of the coins in the Spillings Hoard, minted in 870/71, but of indeterminate provenance due to its fragmentary nature. Generally coin hoards are dated from the youngest coin they contain, which provides the terminus post quem for the burial of the hoard, here estimated to have occurred sometime around 880. The range of the coin dates in this hoard though is very broad, covering some three centuries.

Book notices

Lev Rafailovich Kontsevich. *Khronologiia stran Vostochnoi i Tsentral'noi Azii* [Chronology of Far Eastern and Central Asian Countries]. Moskva: Izdatel'skaia firma "Vostochnaia literatura" RAN, 2010. 806 pp. ISBN 978-5-02-036350-2.

This impressive volume belongs on every reference shelf. The book is remarkable for its coverage, from earliest recorded times down to the 21st century. To the best of my knowledge, there is no equivalent with the same chronological and geographical scope in any language. It is divided into these major sections:

- I. China (pp. 27–384)
- II. Non-Han states which existed on the territory of China and adjacent countries in the Middle Ages and used the Chinese calendar (pp. 385–434).
- III. Vietnam (pp. 435–530)
- IV. Mongolia (pp. 531–92)
- V. Korea (pp. 593–694)
- VI. Japan (pp. 695–802).

While the book is intended in the first instance for Russian users, the detailed table of contents includes both original language and English renderings of all the headings. The chronological tables of rulers likewise provide Romanized transcription and the original characters along with the Cyrillic phonetic renderings of proper names. There is a short summary in English at the end. So the book can be used by those who know no Russian, even if the extensive notes will not be accessible to them.

The section on China begins with a discussion of calendrical systems and includes tables of the various cycles and their correspondences. There is a section on historical onomastics and other aspects of naming practices and titulature. Then the ruler tables start with what can be established about the period of the legendary five emperors and move down through to the People's Republic and Taiwan. Apart from listing the leaders, the modern section includes the chronology of the main Communist Party congresses and plenums. Each table has, where appropriate, Russian transcription of the name, Pinyin and Wade-Giles transcription, Chinese characters, reign

name in Russian transcription and in the original characters, reign dates according to cyclical years and modern calendrical equivalent. Since the sources for such data are often in disagreement, the extensive notes explain the choices and alternatives.

In Section II, the tables include the Joujan, the rulers of Gaochang, Nanzhao (and various subdivisions), Bohai, the Khitan/Liao, Kara-Khitai, Xi Xia, Jurchen/Jin, Manchu/Qing. Under Mongolia, we have the rulers for the Yuan and in Mongolia proper, both before and after the Yuan period, but not for the western and Central Asian parts of the empire. One is reminded here that the specific Russian "Tsentral'naia Aziia" of the title, often rendered as "Inner Asia," is not the same as "Sredniaia Aziia," which we would normally translate "Central Asia" and might be understood to have a narrower, more "western" locus. Apart from the ruler chronologies, there is a detailed chronological table for the Mongolian calendar from 1912–30.

The other sections of the book, which I shall not comment on here, are similar in structure and content.

A second volume has been promised, with addenda and what one imagines will be a huge bibliography of the sources. While Kontsevich obviously deserves the lion's share of the accolades for this book, he acknowledges the help of a great many colleagues, some of whom undertook editorial responsibility for the sections falling within their particular areas of expertise.

In the past, Russian translations of important Western reference works have been produced, often with valuable additions of material from Russian sources. One thinks, for example, of Stanley Lane-Poole's *Muslim Dynasties*, translated and supplemented by none other than V. V. Bartol'd in 1899 (reprinted in 2004); Walther Hinz's *Islamische Masse und Gewichte* (1955), which in its Russian version (1970) was supplemented by a separate set of materials for Central Asia compiled by the noted numismatist E. A. Davidovich; and Charles Storey's multi-volume bibliography of Persian literature (begun in 1927), which in Russian was much expanded thanks to the work especially of Iurii Bregel' and Iurii Borshchevskii (1972). Western scholars who

do not know Russian should hope that these examples be reciprocated, with a translation of Lev Kontsevich's book, even if, as I would guess, there may be few stones unturned whose evidence might supplement the colossal work he and his colleagues have already done.

– DCW

Steven E. Sidebotham. *Berenike and the Ancient Maritime Spice Route*. The California World History Library, 18. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2011. xviii, 434 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-24430-6.

This sizeable volume pulls together the results of nearly a decade of archaeological work in the Eastern Desert of Egypt and principally at Berenike, an important port on the west coast of the Red Sea. A specialist on Roman economic policy, Professor Sidebotham headed the excavations and field work. Here he draws on an impressively wide range of reading to contextualize the Berenike material. Even though the meticulous work there so far has excavated only some two percent of the surface area and has yet to reach the bottom level of habitation, the results are significant. For the most part the remains have lain undisturbed by medieval or modern habitation or looting, a fact which, in combination with the dry climate, has preserved a unique record of life in the port and its extensive trade. While much has been published on Indian Ocean trade in antiquity, the Berenike excavations considerably deepen our understanding of it. The author emphasizes that the Maritime Spice Route was one of several significant trade routes in antiquity, another being the largely overland Silk Route. Since all these routes overlap or intersect, any history of the others will perforce have to take into account the material presented here.

There are chapters with a chronological treatment of the history of the port and its hinterlands in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. It flourished especially in the first and second centuries CE after the Roman conquest of Egypt, and, after a hiatus, revived in the fourth and fifth centuries. As the introductory chapter on geography and the later one on water emphasize,

the location had the major advantage of enabling ships to unload about half way up the Red Sea before they encountered the adverse northern winds that prevailed in its upper reaches. From Berenike the trade then ran overland to the Nile. The disadvantage of Berenike was the dry climate, which meant that many products needed for subsistence had to be brought in from a distance, and the management of water resources was critical to the viability of the port.

Thematic chapters include a very illuminating one on roads, another on other emporia, a discussion of the ships, and, of particular interest for readers of this journal, a discussion of commercial networks, trade costs and the various products which were traded. In the early Roman period, the source of goods coming into Berenike from the north ranged all across the Mediterranean; but in the later period, the emphasis was more on products from the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, the population in the town, which in the early period probably was continually renewed by short-term residents from other parts of the Roman Empire, in the later period seems to have been more fixed, with the inhabitants relying primarily on local resources for their sustenance. There is evidence of residents in Berenike coming from various important trading centers with which it connected: Nabataeans, Palmyrans, and Indians.

There is a good discussion here regarding the written and material evidence about long-distance trade down the African coast, to Arabia and to India. Previous scholarship has mined the writers of antiquity, whose evidence is also frequently invoked here – among others, Strabo, Pliny the Elder and the anonymous author of the *Periplus* of the Erythraean Sea (describing the route all the way to India) provide a great deal of information. The Berenike excavations supplement such material from notes written on potsherds (*ostraca*), which were a readily available writing material. Of course much of this is fragmentary, but taken together it does provide at least episodic insights into how trade was conducted, the people and the costs involved, and much more.

The material evidence includes huge numbers of amphoras from around the Mediterranean, in

which in the first instance wine was conveyed. There are also ceramics from various other areas, including some from India probably brought by the Indian merchants who took up residence in the town. The occasional pieces of wood (some of it probably recycled from ship timbers) include teak from southeast Asia and cedar from Lebanon. There are large quantities of beads made in Sri Lanka or India, cotton textiles from India and very prominently, Indian black pepper. A cache of 7.5 kg of peppercorns was found buried in a pot in a temple courtyard at Berenike; pepper is found in almost every other site that has been investigated in the region.

Of particular interest is Prof. Sidebotham's discussion of the larger interpretive issues of whether the trade was primarily that in luxury goods and whether we find here evidence for the view promoted by moralizing Roman authors such as Pliny that the Eastern trade was a drain on the Empire's wealth. As he suggests, certain key imports – pepper and aromatics such as frankincense – were really considered essentials, especially insofar as they were used in ritual contexts, and the quantities imported were so large the prices were within reach of ordinary people. In examining the question of balance of trade, he concludes especially from the coin evidence that there is little reason to think the trade drained Rome of its wealth. In fact, the eastern trade, important as it was, probably represented only a fraction of the larger Roman economy.

By setting Berenike in the immediate context of its hinterland and in the broad context of the international routes and distant emporia, the author provides an excellent example of the kind of analysis which can profitably be extended to other seaports but also to emporia located along the overland routes. That is, it is important to think not simply in terms of a kind of "global economy" but also to look at more specific local contexts, even if for other places and times we do not always have the richness of written material which can be brought to bear here.

The book is largely accessible for general readers, though some may find the author's tendency to catalogue each and every illustrative bit of evidence a bit tiresome. Furthermore, given

his approach of examining the material first from one vantage point or topic and then from another, he inevitably (though not necessarily unavoidably) repeats information cited in other places. Probably a more careful editing could have avoided some of this repetition. Readers wishing a more general treatment of the spice trade may wish to start not with Sidebotham's book but rather with John Keay's recent, careful *The Spice Route: A History* (Univ. of California Pr., 2008), which burnishes his reputation as one of the best distillers of often complex historical subjects.

Sidebotham's book has a number of well-chosen black-and-white photos taken by the author and, blessedly, a number of excellent maps. The bibliography is huge, and full of interesting leads which go well beyond the immediate subject of the maritime spice trade. Indexing is less than thorough; it would have been nice had there been a glossary or at least explanatory identifications in the index.

The book is immensely stimulating as a clear summary of an important area of trade in antiquity. Moreover, it demonstrates the value of very careful archaeology – even if, in a sense, it has only scratched the surface of an important site. We can be thankful for an effort to make preliminary conclusions widely known even as the latest results have only barely arrived from the field. The author is the first to admit we do not have answers to a lot of important questions, but at least we can learn from him what they are and what the range of interpretations may be at this state of our knowledge.

– DCW

Anālayo. *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal*. Hamburg Buddhist Studies 1. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, Verlag der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, 2010. 178 pp. ISBN 978-3-937816-62-3. Available online free (open access) at <http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/purl/HamburgUP_HBS01_Analayo>.

Bhikku Anālayo's deceptively slender monograph is an auspicious beginning for a new

series, edited by Michael Zimmermann, and published by the University of Hamburg Center for Buddhist Studies. The author defended a Ph.D. thesis in 2000 on the *Satipatthāna-sutta* and subsequently completed habilitation research on the *Majjhima-nikāya* discourses. General readers should not be put off by the fact that half or more of most pages is occupied by detailed footnotes and the bibliography occupies another 40 pages, since the main text is very clearly written and can be understood by the non-specialist. Here I quote the summary of the book from the back cover:

In this book, Bhikku Anālayo investigates the genesis of the bodhisattva ideal, one of the most important concepts in the history of Buddhist thought. He brings together material from the corpus of the early discourses preserved mainly in Pāli and Chinese that appear to have influenced the arising of the bodhisattva ideal. Anālayo convincingly shows that the early sources do not present compassionate concern for others as a motivating force for the Buddha's quest for awakening. He further offers an analysis of the only reference to Maitreya in the Pāli canon, showing that this reference is most likely a later addition. In sum Bhikku Anālayo is able to delineate a gradual genesis of central aspects of the bodhisattva ideal by documenting (1) an evolution in the bodhisattva concept reflected in the early discourses, (2) the emergence of the notion of a vow to pursue the path to buddhahood, and (3) the possible background for the idea of a prediction an aspirant to buddhahood receives from a former buddha.

Iu. I. Elikhina. *Kul'ty osnovnykh bodkhisatto i ikh zemnykh voploshenii v istorii i iskusstve buddizma* [The cults of the main bodhisattvas and their terrestrial reincarnations in the history and art of Buddhism]. St. Petersburg: Filologicheskii fakul'tet Sankt-Peterburgskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta; Nestor-Istoriia, 2010. 292 pp. + illustrations. ISBN 978-5-8465-1027-2.

This is a perplexing book. As curator of the Tibetan, Mongolian and Khotanese collections in the State Hermitage Museum, Iuliia Igorevna

Elikhina brings to the subject substantial expertise and the great advantage of familiarity with material in the museum which to date has not been widely known. The focus of her *kandidat* dissertation on the veneration of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and its relationship to the Tibetan state system (*gosudarstvennost'*) explains the emphasis here. Yet her attempt to broaden the subject to include Manjushri and Vajrapani and survey the veneration of these three bodhisattvas across a broad swath of East and South Asia is at best uneven. While the blurb on the back of the title page indicates that "the publication is intended for orientalists and anyone interested in history, culture and art of Buddhist Asia," one comes away with the sense that the author was caught between writing for a general audience and providing material for specialists, a challenge which is almost impossible to meet successfully. Neither the general nor the more knowledgeable audience is likely to be satisfied with the result. (My comments here, while extensive and often critical, should not be taken as the judgment of an informed specialist.) There is a helpful glossary, and for those who do not know Russian, a two-and-a-half page summary in English..

The opening chapter outlines Buddhist beliefs, in particular with regard to bodhisattvas. Subsequent chapters deal with the veneration (and to some degree the iconography) of bodhisattvas in various geographical regions: India, East Turkestan, China, Japan, Tibet, Nepal and Mongolia. The section on Tibet occupies about two-thirds of the narrative and includes a lengthy excursus on Tibetan history. There are capsule histories of the Dalai Lamas, and a particular focus on the activity of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The other sections are thin at best and rather mechanical, and the references in them to iconographic representations arbitrary. The Buddhist grottoes in western China certainly are under-represented. Ladakh might well have figured significantly here as a sub-section for India, but appears only fleetingly. It is impossible from all this to discern a chronologically coherent explication of the evolution of the iconography either within a given region or across regions. While Elikhina uses to a limited degree some unpublished Tibetan manuscript material in the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg,

for the most part she is summarizing existing scholarship.

She commands several languages (inter alia, she has excellent English), which enables her to draw on a wide range of publication, at the same time that she relies heavily on Russian work (some of it rather general and dated) which may not be accessible to most Western readers. While her bibliography is perforce selective, one suspects that some of the obvious gaps (e.g., Beckwith's monograph on early Tibetan history, Petech's important book on Sino-Tibetan relations in the early 18th century, Elverskog's study of Buddhism in Mongolia in the Qing period, Eugene Wang's study of the Lotus Sutra illustrations in the Mogao Caves) reflect simply her inability to obtain the books, a challenge that often confronts serious scholars in Russia. The bibliography is divided into "[Primary] sources in Tibetan," and then secondary literature in Russian, in European languages, and in Mongolian. Odd that Russian is not a "European language." It is curious that her own article, published in this journal, is listed by title, with no indication she is the author, even though it is cited as "Elikhina 2008."

The greatest value of the book for those who do not read Russian will be the numerous illustrations, almost entirely drawn from the extensive collection of Buddhist art in the Hermitage Museum. There are 17 full-page color plates and, scattered throughout the text, more than 100 black-and-white photographs, the latter for the most part rather small size, though, at least for the sculptures, sufficiently clear to be of some use. To a considerable degree, the selection is 18th and 19th century Chinese or "Sino-Tibetan" representations, in the first instance the bodhisattvas themselves, but in a number of cases their terrestrial reincarnations. Each illustration is accompanied by a descriptive caption with a short paragraph highlighting the iconographic features. (One notes that the caption to color plate No. 4 is wrong, though the item depicted is correctly described elsewhere in the text.) The odd thing here is that while the main text explicitly refers to the color plates, only occasionally does it refer to the black-and-white illustrations, whose placement on the pages more often than not has nothing to do with the adjoining narrative. It is as though one aim of the book was to provide

a substitute for a yet-to-be-published (but much needed) catalogue of the Hermitage's Buddhist collection. A great many of the objects are from the collection of Esper Esperovich Ukhtomskii, about which a reader might like to know more.

Several of the objects are from the collection of the explorer Pëtr Kuz'mich Kozlov, best known for his re-discovery of Khara-Khoto and for his excavations which uncovered there a trove of manuscripts and Buddhist art now housed in St. Petersburg. It is puzzling that Khara-Khoto is mentioned, I believe, only once in the text, and then in passing. Elikhina says nothing about Buddhism amongst the Tanguts (Xi Xia), nor does she cite the recent substantial catalogue of the Buddhist paintings from Khara-Khoto by her colleague in the Hermitage, Kira Samosiuk. Even if the Xi Xia rulers did not consider themselves re-incarnations of the bodhisattvas, surely their propagation of Buddhism as a state religion deserves some consideration in a book concerned with the relationship between that faith and "state systems." And, as Elikhina is well aware, some of the most striking images of the bodhisattvas she is studying are on the banners recovered at Khara-Khoto.

Another desideratum reflects a personal wish of this reader. A few years ago, I viewed in Beijing in a gallery of the Forbidden City a very interesting display of the Buddhist statuary presented to Chinese emperors and a selection of the impressively extensive production of "Sino-Tibetan" statuary in the 18th century, especially under the Qianlong Emperor. Given that a significant portion of the Hermitage collection seems to be such statuary, it would have been nice to find here a discussion of the context in which the enterprise of producing it was deemed so important. In curious ways, Qing relations with Tibetan (and Mongolian) Buddhism seem underdeveloped here, probably because of the chronological focus on the 17th-century Fifth Dalai Lama.

One is puzzled by the absence of systematic analysis of iconography in the narrative text – discussion of it is episodic and generally not well integrated with the rest of the material. The appendices in the book seem to be intended to compensate for this. The first appendix opens

with a brief overview of the iconography of Avalokiteshvara, followed by summary listings of basic categories established by earlier scholars, notably Antoinette K. Gordon and Benoytosh Bhattacharyya. The largest part of the appendix is a descriptive listing and line drawings of the 108 forms of Avalokiteshvara from the Machhendra Bahal in Kathmandu. While not explicitly stated, this is apparently drawn from Bhattacharyya's work, first published in 1924. Even though some emendations to the earlier schemes are suggested, there is no attempt here to provide an integrated new classification scheme. In the other, shorter appendices, Elikhina provides verbal descriptions of the iconographic representations of the Dalai Lamas, of Manjushri, of Vajrapani, and of the early Tibetan kings. All this would have been the more useful if cross-referenced with the illustrations scattered throughout the book, even if those by no means constitute a comprehensive corpus.

– DCW

Christoph Baumer. *China's Holy Mountain. An Illustrated Journey into the Heart of Buddhism*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2011. 384 pp. ISBN – 9781848857001.

The author is well known for his books such as *Southern Silk Road: In the Footsteps of Sir Aurel Stein and Sven Hedin* (2000) and *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity* (2006), one virtue of which is the professional quality of his photographs with which he illustrates them. His new book is based on three extended trips to Wutai Shan between 1993 and 2007. Here is the publisher's description:

Rising from Shanxi Province like a three-dimensional mandala, the soaring peaks of Wutai Shan ('Five-terrace Mountain') have inspired pilgrims and travellers for almost two millennia. A striking terrain of towering emerald forests, wraith-like mists and crenellated ridges, this consecrated and secluded site is said to be the spiritual home of Wenshu Pusa, Bodhisattva of Wisdom. It is one of the most venerable and important Buddhist sanctuaries in China, yet still remains relatively little known in the West. Christoph Baumer

has travelled extensively in the Wutai Shan region, and here offers the first comprehensive account of the cradle of Chinese Buddhism. In his remarkable new travelogue, 300 luminous photographs capture the unique spirituality of the 60 monasteries which straddle the complex. Charting festivals, rituals, pilgrimages and the daily life of the monks, abbots and abbesses, *China's Holy Mountain* is both a splendid introduction to the history of Buddhism in East Asia and an evocative and lavishly-illustrated gazetteer of the monasteries and sacred artefacts themselves. It will be an indispensable resource for students of Asian religion and philosophy, with further appeal to general readers.

The National Museum of China. [Ed. Lu Zhangshen]. Hong Kong: London Editions, 2011. 255 pp. ISBN 978-1-85759-654-0. Distributed outside China by Scala Publishers, London.

After several years of reconstruction and no little controversy even up to the last minute, the National Museum of China on Tienanmen Square in Beijing re-opened this year. The news stories in the West focussed on political issues. What this volume, issued for the occasion of the re-opening, blessedly emphasizes is the treasures in the museum pertaining to the earlier history of China. Many of them are well known from earlier catalogues and their having been on loan in international exhibitions. The book is in large format with superb color illustrations, including closeups of inscriptions, and limited but informative descriptive text in good English.

As the Director of the museum, Lu Zhangshen, emphasizes in his introduction, one of the prides of the museum is its collection of early bronzes, which are well represented here. The aesthetics of the huge 833 kg Houmuwu *ding* (square cauldron) (cat. no. 3) leave me cold, compared to some of the other objects. Its impressive casting (being so large) and its inscription and likely provenance, associated with Fu Hao, the consort of Shang king Wu Ding, make it of particular interest though. Several other bronzes (cat. nos. 4-8) shown here come from her well preserved tomb. Indeed, for a great many of the objects depicted in the catalogue, there is the virtue that

their provenance can be documented; we are told when and where they were excavated.

Much else in the catalogue is familiar, at least by analogy, but the examples in the National Museum collection are particularly fine ones and occasionally really distinctive. A lot of museums have polychrome glazed ceramic Heavenly King guardian *mingqi* from the Tang period, but how many have a gilded bronze example (cat. no. 66)? There are not many examples around, are there, of a whole orchestra riding on the back of a polychrome glazed camel, but here we have the one originally excavated in Xi'an (cat. no. 100), which, if I am not mistaken, was on display in the Shaanxi Museum there back in 1998 and has traveled all the way to New York. Also among the ceramics which struck me are the Yuan Dynasty Jun ware vase (cat. no. 132) and a 16th-century Ming enameled *wucui* pot with a bright design of fish and aquatic plants (cat. no. 142).

The jades shown here begin with an exquisite dragon excavated from a Hongshan Culture (6000–5000 BCE) site (cat. no. 154). Cat. nos. 157–164 are all late Shang period (1300–1046 BCE), from Fu Hao's tomb. Among the items I found to be striking is a silver belt buckle with inlaid jade from the Warring States period (375–256 BCE) (cat. no. 172), the simple, small bowl with a gilded rim (cat. no. 177) from Li Jingxun's early 7th-century tomb (most famous for its intricate necklace that probably came from Central Asia), and the chime stones with a dragon and cloud design outlined in gold (cat. no. 189) dating from the reign of that great connoisseur, the Qianlong Emperor (1736–95).

There are some striking gold pieces here, currency, pictorial bricks with scenes of everyday life, and a few paintings. Among the latter, for Silk Road enthusiasts, the Song period scroll depicting emissaries offering tribute (cat. no. 259) will be of particular interest. I do not recall seeing before the Tang gilded stone sculpture (cat. no. 298) of a soldier with all his battle equipment. There is, surprisingly, only one lacquerware object, a Ming gold-inlaid medicine chest (cat. no. 300).

We get little sense from the catalogue of what may be in the museum's presumably extensive exhibits about China's modern history. What

we do learn though is that one can see the movie camera Edgar Snow borrowed to use in Bao'an in 1938 (cat. no. 316) and an excess of kitsch that tells us more about American than Chinese culture, the crystal bald eagle given to Deng Xiaoping by Ronald Reagan (cat. no. 323). Such items notwithstanding, on perusing this elegant book, I can hardly wait for my next visit to Beijing, when I may finally have a chance to see the National Museum's collection.

– DCW

Matteo Compareti. *Samarconda Centro del Mondo. Proposte di Lettura del Ciclo Pittorico di Afrāsiyāb* [Samarkand the Center of the World. A Proposed Reading of the Pictorial Cycle of Afrasiab]. Milano: Mimesis, 2009. 265 pp. ISBN 978-88-5750-018-8.

Some subjects are so interesting and important that, in our age when publication is not yet only digital, whole forests continue to be sacrificed to the ongoing scholarly controversies they stimulate. Such is the case with the wall paintings discovered at Afrasiab, the pre-islamic center of what we now know as Samarkand, whose fragmentary nature opens the doors to a range of interpretation. Matteo Compareti has written extensively on the subject and helped organize a conference devoted to it, whose proceedings he co-edited with Étienne de La Vaissière. Compareti's substantial monograph cannot be expected to convince those who hold firmly to alternative views, but it will have to weigh heavily in any future arguments. A full review of the book is needed, perhaps even a translation into English. Apart from the study of the paintings with reference to a broad range of artistic analogies, it includes a section with translations of the most relevant written sources in Chinese, Arabic, Persian and Middle Iranian. There is an extensive bibliography and an 8-page summary in English.

– DCW

Rus' i Vostok v IX - XVI vekakh. Novye arkhelogicheskie issledovaniia / Rus and the Peoples of the East in the 9th-16th Centuries: New Archaeological Research. Editors-in-Chief N. A. Makarov, V. Iu. Koval'; Compiled by V. Iu. Koval'. Moskva: Nauka, 2010. 265 pp. (large format). ISBN 978-5-02-037569-7.

The papers of a conference held in 2007 in Kazan' on the interactions between medieval Russia, Volga Bulgaria and the northern Black Sea littoral, this well-illustrated volume contains much of interest for students of the Silk Road who can look beyond its East and Central Asian parts. The essays include some very useful overviews of large topics, a few stimulating suggestions about new methodological approaches, and a number of rather specialized treatments of smaller subjects. Most of the volume is in Russian with English summaries, some of respectable length, and one article (unfortunately not very comprehensible) in English. I discuss here only the (for me) most interesting of the contributions.

N. A. Makarov's opening essay on "Rus' and Volga Bulgaria in the North" shows how the archaeological evidence defines specific regions of interaction and moves us away from a too generalized narrative covering larger territories within which often there are large lacunae in the evidence. Artifacts that may be confidently connected with Volga Bulgaria specify particular areas of the Russian north which were of interest for their supply of fur-bearing animals. Penetration of settlers from the Russian principalities into the region around the upper Kama river occurred somewhat later than commonly believed. The relationship between traders from Bulgaria and from Rus shifted over time, of course, but it was not always one of direct competition.

The article by S. L. Zakharov and I. N. Kuzina on Rus' trade with Volga Bulgaria extends very fruitfully some of the considerations raised by Makarov, in that it details how certain objects found in Rus' settlements may be definitely attributed as having come from Volga Bulgaria. Certain ceramics, some metal work, and especially glass beads provide fairly convincing evidence to delineate changes in trading patterns over time. One no longer has to rely in the first instance

on general statements primarily about trade in furs derived from the cryptic information in written sources. The assortment of valuable trade objects seems to have been rather broad, with their distribution and chronology allowing for much more precision in determination of trade patterns. In an analogous fashion, F. Sh. Khuzin emphasizes the importance of the archaeological evidence as a corrective to the picture of largely hostile relations between the Rus' and Volga Bulgaria.

Iu. Iu. Morgunov likewise begins his long and useful review of evidence about the relations between Rus principalities and nomads of the Black Sea littoral with a discussion of the picture in the written sources which chronicle raids and counter-raids in the period between the late 10th and end of the 12th century. The article then maps in interesting ways the defensive works along the southern borders of Kievan Rus' and concludes with a discussion of the way in which certain of the nomad groups were in fact allied with the Rus' princes and an integral part of the border defenses. While much of this is not new, the article has a salutary emphasis on the fact that "aggression" was not a one-sided thing coming only from the steppe. It might be of interest to compare this evidence with ideas put forth by Nicola DiCosmo and others reinterpreting the purpose of the Great Wall with an emphasis on Chinese expansion into the northern steppes rather than the more traditional narrative that the wall was built mainly to keep out hostile nomads..

V. Iu. Koval's "Men of the Golden Horde in Rus'" raises the very important question of how one can document the presence of Mongol officials and others in the medieval Russian principalities, a presence that for the most part has been known only from written sources and toponyms. He adduces examples (granted, the total number of the objects is quite small) of items which might well be associated with steppe dwellers but not with sedentary Slavs (and probably not imported by the latter). These include mirror fragments, finger rings for archers, stone and iron kettles of a particular form, and some other types of vessels. In general it seems that there is much less evidence for the presence of Golden Horde Mongols in Russia than there is for the presence

of Russians in the cities of the Golden Horde. That said, the material evidence can with some confidence be used to identify settlements of the Mongols in Rus'.

Several other articles expand our understanding of relations between Rus' and the Mongols of the Golden Horde. L. F. Nedashkovskii provides statistics on what archaeology seems to reveal about the ethnic composition of various settlements within the territory of the Golden Horde. His article also has some value as a catalogue summary of various products of trade, which, stripped of the long parenthetical citations of authors, would make a useful short encyclopedia essay. M. E. Rodina, in discussing the trade between Vladimir-Suzdal' Rus' and the East in the 10th-14th centuries, provides a much more detailed and useful examination of various products, though on a level of generalization that is insufficiently attentive to diachronic change. A very specific (but unique) example of an Eastern import is an intact glazed ceramic pitcher from Iran (specified as being of the type of "Sultanabad ware" that was manufactured under the Mongol Ilkhanids). V. Iu. Koval' provides details of this find from Suzdal', where it was in the company of some other ceramics likely of Volga Bulgar origin. He argues (not entirely convincingly) that this group of ceramics attests to the presence of Golden Horde Mongols at the site and should not be considered imported ware belonging to the local elite of the Rus'. Recent archaeological evidence about Rus' contacts with the Golden Horde and its successors includes a good many discoveries of Jochid coins, described in A. V. Pachkalov's article. Some of these new finds are in areas where previously no Jochid coins were known, thus suggesting broader involvement with the eastern trade than had been assumed.

Future studies of Eastern metalwork should find much of value in I. E. Zaitseva's compendia of spectral analysis for the composition of non-ferrous objects found in Volga Bulgar sites. Likewise, the long, if somewhat diffuse discussion by I. L. Kyzlasov regarding the spread and impact of the "Askiz" metalwork of Khakassia in the 13th and 14th centuries may be valuable in classifying new finds from as far west as the Carpathians.

A good example of a settlement site from the 15th century with a broad range of economic activity is Toretskoe, just north of the major town of Bilyar. S. I. Valiutina's article provides an overview of the local economy — metallurgy was important — and the range of evidence about far-flung international trade in this multi-ethnic center that developed in the period of the early Kazan' khanate. There are Baltic amber, Central Asian ceramics, Chinese celadons, and much more. A. G. Sidikov's survey of trade in the Kazan' Khanate from the 15th-17th centuries is a useful summary which raises interesting questions about the impact of the Muscovite conquest in 1552. The evidence cited points to a sharp decline in the subsequent century, with a revival of the international trade through Kazan' along the Volga coming only in the middle of the 17th century. I remain to be convinced that the negative impact of the conquest was as long-lasting.

While a real conclusion must await the further accumulation of data, of some interest is the "experimental archaeology" project carried out in conjunction with excavations of the Samosdel'skoe site near the mouth of the Volga as part of a larger investigation of Khazar settlements. D. V. Vasil'ev describes the discovery of the remains of "yurt-shaped" dwellings in the historical layers and the subsequent effort to reconstruct such dwellings using the same techniques and see what kind of evidence would remain after the reconstructed dwellings were burned and allowed to decay under natural conditions in the open air for a period of years. The point here, of course, is to try to establish possible new ways to interpret evidence left from perishable dwellings constructed of materials that largely disappear in the archaeological record. The construction techniques here involved use primarily of locally available wood (willow branches) and mud plastering.

Finally, I would mention L. A. Beliaev's article, which asks the reader to reassess broad questions about whether we should be speaking of "Eastern influence" in medieval Russia instead of (as he argues) a kind of more general Western "orientalism." His purpose is to open discussion, not provide final proof; in fact, his examples are not very persuasive. He suggests that there

was relatively little demand in Russia for direct imports from the East. When Eastern motifs in the arts broadly speaking become important in the Muscovite period, it is less because of direct imports and more a reflection of a kind of Renaissance fascination with the exotic that filters in from the West. One might well ask where the Ottoman Empire fits into this scheme, especially since we know there were significant imports (and booty) coming from it. Also, one should not minimize the importance of the development of the Volga trade with Safavid Persia in the late 16th and 17th centuries.

The book is one of a series published in the past decade summarizing new evidence from Russian archaeology. One of the more interesting earlier volumes was devoted to evidence relating to the impact of Mongol rule in Russia. The production values are excellent – good quality color plates, a great many maps and artifact drawings. There is much here to interest students of the Silk Roads, providing, of course, that they do not have an unduly narrow view of what that study may mean.

– DCW

Vladimir Iur'evich Koval'. *Keramika Vostoka na Rusi IX–XVII veka* [Oriental Ceramics in Rus' 9th–17th Centuries]. Moskva: Nauka, 2010. 269 pp. ISBN 978-5-02-037583-3.

A reworking and expansion of the author's *kandidat* dissertation, this is a systematic catalogue of "oriental" ceramics found on the territories of "early Russia, Ukraine and Belarus" (Rus') for the indicated centuries. It has many virtues: an effort (within the limits described below) to be comprehensive and include a great deal of material from yet unpublished collections, serious technical analysis, good illustrations (presented in large format), and an attempt to devise a much more precise scheme of classification of such material than we have previously had. His database includes some 2000 examples of glazed and 20,000 examples of unglazed ceramics.

One of the challenges here which is immediately apparent concerns definitions: what is an "oriental" ceramic, and what constitutes "Rus'"? Both are moving targets, especially when such a long time span is encompassed. For his purposes,

the "Orient" includes Byzantium, Volga Bulgaria, the Near East and Central Asia, China, the Mongol Empire in "Inner Asia," the "Golden Horde" and its successor states, the Ottoman Empire. "Rus'" seems to be more problematic. As I understand it, material from territories that were at one time part of "Rus'" are included, but then if that same territory ceased to be part of Rus' by virtue of its inclusion in another polity, ceramics from that period are not included. In the case of the Golden Horde (Ulus Jöchi), material from its territories that were not part of Rus' but which have been abundantly excavated, are not included (see the illustration below); whereas the same ceramics, if they found their way into the "Russian principalities," are. If we confined ourselves to this catalogue and its illustrations, we would have only a rather limited sampling of Golden Horde ceramics against which to compare new finds. What we are talking about then is imports into territories controlled by "Russian" princes, even if the author has obviously looked much more widely to establish his classification scheme.



Photo copyright © 2006 Daniel C. Waugh

An example of a ceramic bowl from the Golden Horde analogous to Koval' Ill. 37.1; the type described pp. 100-101. Collection of the State Historical Museum, Moscow.

It will be interesting to learn the response of ceramics specialists to this classification scheme, which is a bold attempt to establish a more precise typology than others have done. I personally

can appreciate the potential value of this, since, indeed, descriptive captions for ceramics often are frustratingly opaque and vague. His typology (diagrammed on p. 17) has six main divisions, moving hierarchically from general (functional) to specific (material, decoration). He goes on to explain what all these mean in technical terms, and then lays out the results of his chemical analysis of glazes. The numerical results of that analysis, broken down by chemical compound, are included in a large table in Appendix 1. A second appendix classifies the finds of amphoras in Rus'.

The main part of the book is the catalogue. This is a tour-de-force of classification, if complexity is our criterion for assessment. We have series, groups, sub-groups, types, variants (*vidy*), sub-variants (*varianty*). All in all, it seems, dozens if not hundreds of specific categories if one takes it to the finest level of detail. While Koval' states that one of his (laudable) goals is to provide a reference work for future classification of finds, one has to wonder whether a provincial museum worker or archaeologist is really going to have the technical knowledge to determine where what he or she has in hand fits in this complex scheme, especially since, as the author admits, not all types can be illustrated from examples found in Rus'. A good many of the subcategories which can be so illustrated reference only a couple of sherds discovered to date. Here is typical example of his scheme in practice: *Polumaiolika* [semi-majolica]: Series 1. Semi-majolica without additional decoration: Group 1. Non-engobed semi-majolica: Subgroup A. Semi-majolica with colorless (or pale green) glaze: Variant 1. Ceramic of non-ferrous (lightly colored) clay without visible temper; Variant 9. Ceramic of strongly ferrous (red-colored) coarse clay with inclusions of "fire-clay" and small hollows due to the burning of (organic?) matter. Each of these two variants is illustrated with reference to a very small number of fragments.

Since there are some good sections of the book discussing the history of the importation of various types of ceramics into Rus', readers interested in this category of evidence concerning medieval trade and interactions will find here valuable material. Koval' is an archaeologist with extensive experience and an

impressive publication record. This volume is the culmination of a decade and a half of serious study of the subject and undoubtedly will indeed become a standard reference work. I suspect that his typology may not really come to be used widely until it is placed on the Internet along with the underlying data in retrievable form, and programming and technologies devised that can automate a lot of the analytical comparisons. He may be ahead of his time here, but if so, that is all to the good.

– DCW

Finbarr B. Flood. *Objects of Translation. Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009. xviii + 366 pp. ISBN 978-0-691-12594-7.

This densely argued and challenging book should be required reading for anyone who would venture to write about the history of the "Silk Roads," be their subject economic, artistic or other aspects of cultural exchange. Flood, who is a specialist on Islamic art and has previously written on the Umayyad Great Mosque of Damascus, argues here "the need for a reconfiguration of premodern cultural geography, moving beyond the linear boundaries of the modern nation-state and the static taxonomies of modern scholarship... to a more dynamic emphasis on networks of encounter and exchange" (p. 2). The road to this reconfiguration rests in part on a foundation of modern and post-modern linguistic and cultural theory, a fact which will deter the general reader and require re-reading on the part even of some specialists. For the book goes well beyond the invocation of fashionable academics and thinkers such as James Clifford, Sheldon Pollock, Benedict Anderson, Pierre Bordieu, the sometimes unfathomable Bruno Latour, the intimidating Homi Bhabha, and others who often decorate modern scholarship but may contribute little to its substance. Flood actually uses their ideas, periodically (overenthusiastically?) quoting them for interpretive emphasis to develop his subtle analysis of cultural exchange. He admits it may seem somewhat paradoxical to be "adopting

linguistic models for a book that champions the value of material culture” (p. 11). Indeed, unlike in older studies which have tended in the first instance to be text-based, here he is concerned with objects, modes of dress, architecture, though not to the neglect of texts, manuscripts, titlature, ritual practice, and much else. My summary here can barely begin to explicate the richness and nuance of his analysis.

His focus is on the eastern frontiers of the Abbasid Caliphate between the 9th and 13th centuries CE, an area which encompasses the permeable and shifting boundaries between Islamic and Hindu or Buddhist polities. Their history is commonly treated in terms of conquest and cultural subjugation, motivated in part by irreconcilable religious differences. By exploring such topics as gift exchange, Flood shows how the cultural objects were treated by all parties often in complex symbolic ways, their significance translated into idioms that might be meaningful in their new context. Of particular interest in this are robes and textiles and related modes of dress. Coins are also an important part of the evidence, in some cases combining both script and imagery from the Islamic and Hindu worlds. Flood’s purview is a broad one, for he introduces comparative examples from other areas of the Islamic world (notably Seljuk Anatolia).

The cultural history of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids, who rose to power in the eastern Iranian lands, receives here long overdue attention. By looking closely at them, it then becomes possible to reinterpret the cultural policies of the early rulers of the Delhi Sultanate. Not surprisingly, some of his most detailed treatments of the evidence concerns their architectural monuments. Here we find new analysis of the imposing Ghurid minaret at Jam in Afghanistan, with particular attention being given to the choice of Quranic quotations. For me, perhaps since I had the privilege of visiting it briefly a decade ago, his treatment of the important Qutb mosque complex in Delhi is of special interest. Here, for the first time, one can understand the ways in which the new Islamic rulers of Delhi in the early 13th century appropriated and transformed existing cultural objects. The re-use of Hindu carved relief, the inscriptions, the details of decoration, and the famous iron pillar all make sense not



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The Qutb Minar in Delhi.

merely as a statement of Islamic conquest, but as a conscious attempt to incorporate local political and cultural traditions to shape a new kind of historical memory and make a statement about the centrality of Delhi in the Islamic world.

Flood concludes with the bold thought (for which he gives credit to earlier scholars) that cultural borderlands, such as those he is discussing, may be the places where we can best expect to find innovation. It is in such regions that the process of translation is an essential part of the cultural landscape; new ideas and new combinations emerge. What this then means is that the traditional historic focus on centers and peripheries, in which the former are privileged, needs to be jettisoned if we are to understand cross-cultural interactions. Students of the Silk Roads can appreciate how this kind of approach might help to sharpen our understanding of the cultural interactions in borderlands between northern China and the steppes, the spread of Buddhism in the oasis cultures of the Tarim basin in the early centuries of the Common Era, the multi-ethnic history of Khazaria’s northern frontier....and much more.

– DCW

Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi. *The History of Beyhaqi: The History of Sultan Mas'ud of Ghazna, 1030-1041*, 3 vols.: Vol. I: Introduction and Translation of Years 421-423 A.H. (1030-1032 A.D.); Vol. II: Translation of Years 424-432 A.H. (1032-1041 A.D.) and the History of Khwarazm; Vol. III: Commentary, Bibliography, and Index. Translated with commentary by C. E. Bosworth; Commentaries by Mohsen Ashtiany. Cambridge, MA. and London: Harvard University Press, 2011. In PB: ISBN 9780674062344, 9780674062368, 9780674062399; in hardcover: ISBN 9780674062337, 9780674062351, 9780674062382.

The *History of Beyhaqi* project was sponsored by the Center for Iranian Studies, Columbia University through National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant funding. It is published by the Ilex Foundation, Boston, Mass. and the Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University.

Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeritus Professor of Arabic at the University of Manchester, wrote the standard treatment of the Ghaznavids in English, published in two volumes in 1963 and 1977. Mohsen Ashtiany, who revised Bosworth's translation of Beyhaqi, is a research scholar at Columbia University.

From the publisher's website:

Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi, a secretary at the court of a number of Ghaznavid rulers in eastern Iran and Afghanistan in the early Middle Ages, is a most perceptive, as well as intriguing, commentator on the history of the Islamic Near East. The surviving volumes of his massive project, dealing in depth with the years 1030-1041, combine astute criticism and wry humor with an unobtrusive display of mastery of the learned literature of the time, both in Arabic and Persian. Through a skillful manipulation of different styles, and timely introduction of the authorial voice as a framing device to bring a sense of heightened drama, the historian comments on mankind's individual frailties and the many lost opportunities that hasten a mighty dynasty's decline. Although there are already a number of articles and monographs in English and other Western languages on aspects of his style and historical approach, this

is the first complete translation of the extant volumes with a detailed commentary.

Xiongnu Archaeology. Multidisciplinary Perspectives of the First Steppe Empire in Inner Asia. Ed. Ursula Brosseder and Bryan K. Miller. Bonn Contributions to Asian Archaeology, Vol. 5. Bonn: Vor- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 2011. 653 pp. ISBN 978-3-936490-14-7.

This lavishly illustrated, large format volume contains the proceedings of the International Conference on Xiongnu Archaeology held in Ulaanbaatar, 16-18 October 2008, supplemented by additional invited articles. Planning for the conference involved the Institute of Archaeology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, the National Museum of Mongolia, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Bonn. The American Center for Mongolian Studies was the local organizer, and financial support came from the Silkroad Foundation. The Foundation and the Gerda Henkel Stiftung supported publication of this book.

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Iulia Elikhina. "The Most Interesting Artefacts from Karakorum in the Collection of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg."

Ulambayar Erdenebat, Melanie Janssen-Kim, Ernst Pohl. "Two Ceramic Deposits from the Territory of Karakorum."

Ernst Pohl. "The Excavations in the Craftsman-Quarter of Karakorum (KAR-2) between 2000 and 2005 – Stratigraphy and Architecture."

Ernst Pohl. "KAR-2, Catalogue of Artefacts I: Processed Bones (with Faunal Analysis by Angela von den Driesch and Joris Peters)."

Ernst Pohl. "KAR-2. Catalogue of Artefacts II: Spindle Whorls and other Clay Objects."

Gonchigsüren Nomguunsüren. "Preliminary Study of Cart Wheel-Bushings from Karakorum, Mongolia."

Christine Lee. "Human Skeletal Remains from the Excavations in the Craftsmen-Quarter of Karakorum (KAR-2)."

Manfred Rösch, Elske Fischer, Tanja Märkle, Batbold Oyuntuya. "Medieval Plant Remains from Karakorum, Mongolia."

Angela von den Driesch, Joris Peters, Lkhagvadorzh Delgermaa. "Animal Economy in the Ancient Mongolian Town of Karakorum. Preliminary Report on the Faunal Remains."

Klemens Kelm. "Chemical Investigations on some Archaeological Findings from Karakorum."

Dovdoin Bayar, Vladimir E. Voitov. "Excavation in the Islamic Cemetery of Karakorum."

Jan Bemann, Ernst Pohl, Brigitta Schütt, Wolfgang Schwanghart. "Archaeological Findings in the Upper and Middle Orkhon Valley and their Geographical Setup."

Udo B. Barkmann. "Die Geschichte des Klosters Erdeni Joo oder das Prinzip der Verflechtung von Staat und Religion" [The History of the Erdeni Joo Monastery, or the Principle of the Interrelationship of State and Religion].

The book is superbly produced in large format, with many illustrations, diagrams, and maps. A great many readers will be thankful for the decision to publish most of the essays in English, even though that meant adding to the editorial burdens.

Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology, 4 (2009), ed. Judith A. Lerner, Lilla Russell-Smith. Brepols Publishers, Produced under the aegis of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University. 202 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-53042-0.

Contents:

Vadim N. Yagodin, Alison V.G. Betts, Fiona Kidd, et al. "Preliminary Report on the 'Portrait' Gallery at Kazakly-yatkan (Choresmia)."

Ciro Lo Muzio. "The Archaeology of the Bukhara Oasis."

Frantz Grenet and Mutalib Khasanov. "The Ossuary from Sangyr-tepe (Southern Sogdiana): Evidence of the Chionite Invasions."

Khau Ming Rubin. "Early Tarim Basin Buddhist Sculptures from Yanqi (Karashahr): A New Dating."

Katherine R. Tsiang. "Reconsidering Early Buddhist Cave-making of the Northern Wei in Terms of Artistic Interactions with Gansu and the

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Sören Stark. “Some Remarks on the Headgear of the Royal Turks.”

Gábor Kósa. “Peacocks under the Jewel-tree – New Hypotheses on the Manichaean Painting of Bezeklik (Cave 38).”

Philip Denwood. “The Tibetans in the West. Part II.”

Justin Jacobs. “Central Asian Manuscripts ‘Are Not Worth Much To Us’: The Thousand-Buddha Caves in Early Twentieth-Century China.”

Review articles:

Seth M. N. Priestman. “A Statistical vs. a Sensory Approach: Sasanian Ceramic Studies in the Light of *Ceramics of the Merv Oasis*. Book Review and Commentary.”

Ken Parry: Tjalling H. F. Halbertsma. *Early Christian Remains of Inner Mongolia: Discovery, Reconstruction and Appropriation*.

Reviews:

Richard N. Frye: Étienne de LaVaissière. *Samarcande et Samarra. Élités d’Asie central dans l’empire Abbasside*.

Ron Sela: Philippe Forêt and Andreas Kaplony, eds. *The Journey of Maps and Images on the Silk Road*.

As we have come to expect from this important series, the articles are extremely well illustrated, including a section of color plates.

新疆师范大学西域文史研究中心. The Center for Studies of Literature and History on the Western Regions, Xinjiang Normal University. 西域文史. *Literature and History of the Western Regions*. Vol. 5 (2011). Ed. 朱玉麒 Zhu Yuqi. ISBN 978-7-03-030424-7. For further information, contact the editor at: serindia@263.net.

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Zhang Defang. “The Historical Position of Kuča in the Western Han Dynasty and the XinMang Period and the Relationship between Kuča and Han.”

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G. Pinault (tr. Geng Shimin). “The Tokharian Manuscripts and the Buddhist Literature of Xinjiang.”

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Hironaka Tomoyuki. “Legends and Truths: the Introduction of Buddhism to Khotan.”

Li Yinping. “The Stone Inscriptions of the Northern Song Dynasty Unearthed from the Underground Palace of Xinlong Pagoda of Yanzhou in Shandong Province and the Khotanese Buddhist Fazang.”

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Zhang Tieshan. “W.W. Radloff and his Turkic Studies.”

Zhang Tieshan. Translation and Introduction of

Contents *Tyurkologicheskiiy sbornik* (1951-2009)."

I. Yu. Tugusheva (tr. Yang Fuxue and Zhang Haijuan). "Expedition to Central Asia and the Discovery of Early Medieval Turkic Manuscripts."

Anatoly M. Khazanov (tr. T. Jarken). "Introduction to the Second Edition of *Nomads and the Outside World*."

Unpublished dissertations

Youn-mi Kim. "Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos: The Chaoyang North Pagoda (1043-1044)." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2010. xxvii + 469 pp., including 119 pp. of illustrations.

The author is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of Art History at The Ohio State University.

Her own abstract (pp. iii-iv, quoted with her permission):

This dissertation examines the relationship among space, ritual, and cosmology in medieval Buddhism by means of a comprehensive analysis of the pagoda, the most representative architectural typology of East Asian Buddhism throughout its two-thousand-year history. The Chaoyang North Pagoda (1043-44), a Liao-dynasty (907-1125) structure in northeast China whose excavation was completed only in the 1990s, provides an excellent focus for such a study.

After Buddhism was transmitted from India to East Asia, a cosmological scheme of unprecedented sophistication, which consists of an infinitely expanding multiverse framed by a fractal-like structure, was developed in the seventh century by the Huayan school, a uniquely East Asian Buddhist sect. Examination of the Chaoyang North Pagoda reveals that it was designed to be an architectural epitome of the trichilocosm described in the literature of the Huayan school. It conceptually transforms physically finite architectural space into an infinitely expanding cosmic space. Thus, examination of this space allows us to see how an Indian architectural prototype – namely, the stupa, which was envisioned to be the

center of the cosmos – later developed in China. More importantly, however, it suggests that Buddhist architectural structures should be viewed as embodiments of vision rather than understood only in terms of their physical shape.

Further examination of the inner space of the pagoda reveals that its relic crypt simulated a miniaturized version of the altar for chanting the Buddhist incantation known as the *Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī*. This suggests that the pagoda was designed not simply as static reliquary on an architectural scale but was intended to be a dynamic space wherein the benefits of ritual could be extended infinitely and eternally. The discovery of this ritual altar inside a permanently sealed space raises further questions regarding our present notions of ritual and ritual space.

Lastly, my comparison of the ritual altar configuration from this Liao pagoda with documents concerning a twelfth-century Japanese ritual brings this study into transnational dialogue. It reveals hitherto unknown connections between continental ritual practices and the purportedly indigenous Japanese esoteric ritual known as the *Nyohō Sonshō Ritual*, practiced by the Shingon school since 1109. This discovery testifies to the importance of the Liao dynasty, which is drawing increasing academic attention due to recent archaeological excavations, in completing our understanding of the landscape of medieval East Asian politics and religion.

Lu Jing. "Liao Ceramics between 907 AD and 1125 AD in Northern China." Dissertation zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades Doktor der Philosophie der Fakultät für Kulturwissenschaften der Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, 2008. xliii + 1005 pp. The dissertation may be downloaded free of charge in pdf format at <http://tobias-lib.uni-tuebingen.de/volltexte/2008/3483/pdf/Dissertation_Jing.pdf>.

Written in excellent English, this is a major contribution to the study of the culture of the Liao Empire (907-1125) and will be a valuable

reference work both for curators of museum collections and archaeologists working at Liao sites. One of the distinctions of the study is the author's extensive field examination of Liao kilns, few of which have previously been systematically investigated. The 255 pages of analytical text of the dissertation are followed by summary tables, maps, an illustrated systematic catalogue (pp. 516-871), a lavishly illustrated section of plates (pp. 872-970) showing kiln sites, unpublished shards, details of decoration and makers' marks, etc. Pp. 971-91 are an illustrated chronological table of Liao ceramics. The work concludes with summary statistical charts. Eberhard Karls Universität is to be commended for making a valuable work such as this freely available on the Internet.

– DCW

Catrin Kost. "Auf der Suche nach Identität. Bildpraxis im nordchinesischen Steppenraum vom 5. Jahrhundert vor Christus bis zur Zeitenwende" [In search of Identity. Pictorial Praxis in the Northern Chinese Steppe Region from the 5th century BCE to the beginning of the Common Era]. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie an der Ludwigs-Maximilian-Universität München. 4 vols.

The author is currently a research associate at the British Museum, cataloguing the three-dimensional objects in the Stein Collection and coordinating their digitization for the International Dunhuang Project.

The focus of this study is belt plaques which have loosely been characterized in the past as "Ordos bronzes," and which, as the author explains, embody a pictorial language which may be decoded and contribute to our understanding of the history of the peoples of the steppe region of northern China. She places the material in the context of what is known about different regions and archaeologically determined cultures, taking into account evidence about climate change which might help explain particular images of fauna. Of particular importance is that, where possible, she discusses the plaques with reference to their archaeological context in the various burial sites. She provides a detailed classification of the different types and images. The several volumes of this impressive dissertation contain numerous excellent maps illustrating among other things the regional distribution of specific types, 175 plates illustrating the objects, many of the grave sites and their artefacts, and much more. The dissertation certainly deserves to be published and translated.

– DCW