

Transfers and Transformations along the Silk Road: Examples from Pazyryk and Tillya Tepe
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Abstract

This lecture will look at the material remains from two archaeological sites, one in the Russian Altai Mountains (Pazyryk) and the other in what is today northern Afghanistan (Tillya Tepe). Neither group of people left a written history; rather, their histories are revealed through the contents of their graves. Imported objects and local objects that are artistic and technical responses to those imports tell the stories of their cultural encounters.

1. Introduction
 - a. Transfer and Transformation - definitions
 - b. The natures of contact and interaction
 - c. The roles of art history and archaeology in illuminating cultural contact
 - d. Why Pazyryk and Tillya Tepe

2. Pazyryk 4th – 3rd century BCE
 - a. Site overview
 - b. Characteristics of the local culture and art
 - c. How did foreign objects reach the Altai Mountains?
 - d. Imported objects from West, Central, and South Asia and their transformations
Relevant places and dates:
Achaemenid Empire (550 – 330 BCE)
Capitols at Susa and Persepolis (both in today's Iran)
Destroyed by Alexander the Great and his armies
Alexander the Great (July 356 BCE – 10/11 June 323 BCE)
Easternmost extent of his empire Bactria (today Afghanistan and Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan) and India
 - e. Imported objects from China and their transformations
Relevant places and dates:
Warring States Period (475–221 BCE)
King Wuling of Zhao (r. 325-299 BCE), military reforms 307 BCE

3. Tillya Tepe 1st century CE
 - a. Site overview
 - b. Historical context
Greco-Bactrian Kingdom (256–125 BCE)
Indo-Greek Kingdom (180 BCE–10 CE)
Kushan Empire (early 1st century CE-375 CE)
Yuezhi (written about by Chinese historian Sima Qian in the *Shiji*)
Kangju (written about by Chinese historian Sima Qian in the *Shiji*)
 - c. Imported goods and their uses (glass, coins, Chinese mirrors, silk, lacquer, intaglios)
 - d. Goods brought with them from their homeland and their transformations

- e. Borrowed imagery – from the inherited Hellenic traditions
 - f. Borrowed imagery – from the “silk roads”
 - g. Technology transfer
4. How much art and archaeology can tell us – and what it can’t.

Selected Bibliography

Francfort, Henri-Paul, Giancarlo Ligabue and Zainullah Samashev, 2006. “The Gold of the Griffins: Recent Excavation of a Frozen tomb in Kazakhstan,” *The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Perspectives on the Steppe Nomads of the Ancient World*, Joan Aruz, Ann Farkas, and Elisabetta Valtz Fino, eds., pp. 114-127. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and New Haven: Yale University Press. (Although about a different Pazyryk Culture site, there is a good discussion of imagery borrowed from elsewhere adapted on the felts and wooden objects).

Hickman, Jane, 2012. “Bactrian gold: Jewelry Workshop Traditions at Tillya Tepe,” *Afghanistan: Forging Civilizations along the Silk Road*, Joan Aruz and Elisabetta Valtz Fino, eds., pp. 78-87. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Hiebert, Fredrik and Pierre Cambon, eds., 2008. *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*. Washington, DC: National Geographic. Section on Tillya Tepe (various authors).

Rubinson, Karen S., 2008. “Tillya Tepe: Aspects of Gender and Cultural Identity,” *Are All Warriors Male? Gender Roles on the Ancient Eurasian Steppe*, Kathryn M. Linduff and Karen S. Rubinson, eds., pp. 51-63. Lanham, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press.

Rudenko, Sergei I., 1970. *Frozen Tombs of Siberia: The Pazyryk Burials of Iron Age Horsemen*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. (A translation of the final report of the excavations).

Sarianidi, Victor, 1985. *The Golden Hoard of Bactria: From the Tillya-tepe Excavations in Northern Afghanistan*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. and Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers. (An English translation of a catalogue of finds from the burials by the excavator, with large-format color photographs of many of the most spectacular objects.)

Simpson, St John and Svetlana Pankova, eds., 2017. *Scythians: Warriors of Ancient Siberia*. London: Trustees of the British Museum and Thames & Hudson. (Pazyryk Culture materials are in several sections of the catalogue. The entries contain much up-to-date results of scientific testing.)

Stark, Sören, 2012. “Nomads and Networks: Elites and Their Connections to the Outside World,” *Nomads and Networks: The Ancient Art and Culture of Kazakhstan*, Sören Stark and Karen S. Rubinson with Zainolla S. Samashev and Jennifer Y. Chi, eds., pp. 106-138. New York: Institute for the Study of the Ancient World and Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. (Although about a different Pazyryk Culture site, a good discussion about why goods moved through Eurasia at this time).

UNESCO, 2008. *Preservation of the Frozen Tombs of the Altai Mountains*. whc.unesco.org/document/100814 (this link will download a pdf of the publication). (Although the focus is on the Pazyryk Culture sites and predecessors in Siberia, there is also a chapter on the place of Tillya Tepe in the world of the nomads).