

Book notices

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Gideon Shelach-Lavi. *The Archaeology of Early China: From Pre-History to the Han Dynasty*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xviii + 373 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-19689-5 (hardback); 978-0-521-14525-1 (Pb).

There is a real danger that when a non-expert reviews a book by a distinguished specialist, the reviewer gets it wrong. I trust that in the case of Professor Shelach-Lavi's book, my enthusiasm is not misplaced. The holder of an endowed chair at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, he has published widely on archaeology in China, where he has participated in significant excavations over some two decades. Here he has taken on the daunting task of compressing in a readable way a vast amount of material, recognizing that the pace of new discoveries might force some revision even before the book, which is quite up to date in its references, could reach the market. As he notes, the pioneering and once standard such survey by K. C. Chang (its most recent edition 1986) has been eclipsed by the abundant new scholarship and shifts in interpretation. Shelach-Lavi's book is not the only recent one surveying a large chunk of the archaeology devoted to early China, but one can imagine its merits may make it an essential first stop for anyone wishing an introduction not just to the archaeology, but more generally to the history that antedates the Han Dynasty.

The attraction of the book lies in part in the clarity of its organization and writing, where each chapter focuses first on largely descriptive sections for specific sites before the author then transitions to often far-reaching analytical generalization. This is history told through material culture and its artefacts, which is, of course, how even non-archaeologists have to approach the subject for the period covered. But, unlike in the work of many trained primarily in history, here we get the archaeologist's perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence for drawing from the material record a picture of social, economic, political and cultural developments. At every step, the author is careful to provide chronologies, maps, and explanations of terms and method. He readily admits that some of his emphases and interpretations are at odds with the views of many others, but he does a good job of justifying his own views.

The guiding threads here are an emphasis on regional and local developments along with an emphasis on wider interconnections and exchange. This then leads him to question assertions that have been common especially in Chinese scholarship concerning the chronology and features of the emergence of any kind of unified "China." On the contrary, Shelach-Lavi asserts, regional variation and complexity are what the archaeological record often document, and the processes by which some kind of uniformity and unity emerged tended to be quite gradual. Not the least of the problems in

traditional approaches has been an inclination to read back anachronistically from the later historical records (which often transmitted as "history" what is arguably unverifiable myth). Conventional designations of particular pre-historic "cultures" also come under scrutiny, since, as it turns out, their boundaries are less clearly to be delineated than often is believed. We are continually alerted to the fact that there are significant gaps in the archaeological record, some areas or "cultures" being much more extensively explored than others.

Among the many interesting subjects here is the evidence regarding the development of agriculture, where conventional wisdom about the boundaries between the "steppe and the sown" now clearly need to be re-considered, and certain of the cultures which supposedly had become largely the domain of domesticated agriculture turn out in fact still to have relied very heavily on hunting and gathering. The archaeological record tells us a great deal about the development of stratification and social complexity, even if it may be impossible (or unwise, as it turns out), to try to associate changes with a particular ethnic group or polity. For those not familiar with China's early history, the dramatic evidence about the size of settlements and tombs, the emergence of writing, and the sophisticated and specialized crafts in the Shang period (roughly 1600-1050 BCE) will be of particular interest. The author provides compact introductions to such subjects as the oracle bone inscriptions (which have the earliest Chinese writing) and the techniques of bronze casting.

This is a story which could not be told without lots of images, 234 numbered figures, to be exact. Apart from the maps, there are numerous site plans, line drawings of artefacts, and gray-scale photos. The decision to rely very heavily on line drawings is a good one, since that makes it easy to see relevant detail, whereas, even if the original photos must have been of good quality, their reproduction here occasionally muddies the detail. The images have been carefully chosen to illustrate points in the text, although one drawback, where a good number of artefacts may be in a single drawing, is that their exact meaning or function may not be clear. A general reader will see, say, a lot of different metal objects, but not necessarily take away from the image anything more than a kind of general sense that yes, there were lots of those things in that particular grave and that then tells us something about bronze or iron manufacture. For a work of this scope, there may have been no reasonable alternative, other than long captioning or a lot of notes. Ideally, there might have been at least a few color plates. Smallish b/w photos of some of the terracotta soldiers of the Qin emperor's buried army, chosen to illustrate how in a few instances, they preserve their original bright paint, certainly fail in

that goal, as do b/w images intended to illustrate the effects produced by the extensive use of inlays on bronze objects.

In sum, I came away from reading this book with a much enhanced sense of the history of very early “China” in the era before much of it was really Chinese. And, most importantly, even though I came into this with some acquaintance with archaeological method, I now have a much better idea of what a lot of the key issues are in trying to write that early history. I hope that other general readers of this volume will experience the same and will be inspired to move from this introduction into some of the very rich literature which is listed in the bibliography.

E[l'ga] B[orisovna] Vadetskaia, A[ndrei] V[ladimirovich] Poliakov, N[adezhda] F[edorovna] Stepanova. *Svod pamiatnikov Afanas'evskoi kul'tury. Monografiia*. [A compendium of the monuments of the Afans'ev Culture. A monograph]. Barnaul: AZBUKA, 2014. 380 pp. ISBN 978-5-93957-752-6.

The archaeological discovery of what came to be called the Afanas'ev Culture (after a key site in the Enisei River basin) was one of the defining moments for the study of the Eneolithic and early Bronze Age in Eurasia and continues to provide an important reference point for ongoing research. While there had been some earlier work on what came to be understood as Afanas'ev sites, the first serious determination of the features and chronology was in the work of S. A. Teploukhov published in 1929, only a few years before he was arrested and committed suicide while under interrogation during Stalin's purges. Over the century since Teploukhov's work, there has been a huge amount of new scholarship on Afanas'ev sites, though, as with all too much archaeology, it has not all been published or at least published well. The authors of this book have been among the leading contributors to the field, not only in their own excavations but in publishing parts of that earlier legacy from the archives. The current volume is aimed at bringing together a summary of what has been done at the major sites, thus providing a basis for future work.

After a brief introduction on the history of the study of the Afans'ev Culture, the book contains several chapters organized by region: The Mountain Altai, The Enisei Valley and especially the Minusinsk Basin, the periphery of the Minusinsk Basin, and then the Upper Enisei, Mongolia, China and Central Asia. For each archaeological site there is an essay (some a short paragraph, others extending over several pages) describing what has been done and the main conclusions from the finds and providing bibliographic references. The book is richly illustrated with line drawings: maps, stratigraphy, burials, and their artefacts. The fifth chapter (by Vadetskaia) is devoted to burial rituals in the Enisei region, and the sixth chapter (by Stepanova) to those in the Mountain Altai. Three appendices, by other authors, focus on a particularly important cemetery, Letnik VI in southern Khakassia, on Afanas'ev-type monuments in Eastern Kazakhstan, and on evidence of traumas in the remains from burials found in the Mountain Altai. There is an index list of

all the sites covered in the book. A short English summary paragraph is on the reverse of the title page.

The sponsoring institutions—Altai State University, the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Academy's Institute of the History of Material Culture—are to be commended for endorsing the publication of this valuable volume.

N[ikolai] N[ikolaevich] Seregin and E[lena] V[ladimirovna] Shelepova. *Tiurkskie ritual'nye komplekisy Altaia (2-ia polovina I tys. n.e.): sistematizatsiia, analiz, interpretatsiia. Monografiia* [Turkic ritual complexes of the Altai (2nd half of the first millennium CE): systematization, analysis, interpretation. A monograph]. Barnaul: AZBUKA, 2015. 168 pp. ISBN 978-5-93957-777-9.

Another of the welcome compendia of information on an important group of archaeological monuments in Eurasia, this volume should, as the authors hope, contribute to the further study of sites that may eventually tell us a lot more about the early Turks. The subject here is ritual complexes generally considered to have been created for commemorative purposes but not containing burials, which are to be found in many places in northern Central Eurasia. The Altai Republic, which is the specific region encompassed in this volume (see the map on p. 139), has what is arguably the largest concentration of them. The authors indicate that to date more than 300 have been identified; the focus of this volume is on 62 sites that have actually been excavated.

The sites involve enclosures (*ogradki*) marked by lines of stones, which in many cases now have been covered by a “pavement” over the entire surface and the immediately surrounding area. Many of these sites are isolated, but others are found in groups and/or adjacent to other features that may include burials. The enclosures may contain some artefacts (some in small “boxes” inside). Some have indications that probably a stele or post had been erected in the center. Among the most interesting are ones where, generally alongside the enclosure, there is an anthropomorphic carving on a slab (*izvaianie*), with in many cases a straight line of small vertically erected stones (*balabaly*) extending outward.

The book reviews the history of the discovery and study of these sites, then explains with the help of many clear diagrams the classification system adopted for them (following one devised by S. S. Matrenin and D. E. Sarafanov). Subsequent chapters then discuss the various interpretations of what exactly the sites represent, where there is diversity of opinion and the authors have some arguments of their own. It is still difficult to determine what rituals may have been performed at the sites and the degree to which such observances continued over an extended period of time. There is some reason to think that these sites may be analogous to structures that were erected as cenotaphs but which likewise contain no human burials.

The discussion posits a chronology of the development of particular features, starting in the so-called Kizil-Tash era

(2nd half of the 5th and first half of the 6th centuries). What is somewhat unclear to this reader is how that chronology has been established, other than by analogy and proximity with other sites that may be datable from their remains. Hence, one may be left to wonder whether features such as shape, presence or absence of *izvaianiia* and *balabaly*, etc. then are sufficient basis for chronological groupings.

The alphabetically organized descriptive catalog of the excavated sites contains for each a brief description of the history of its excavation and what was found and a bibliographical reference to published reports. Suggested datings (where they exist) are cited, though in some instances the authors indicate their own, alternative datings.

D[enis] V[aler'evich] Zhuravlev, E[lena] Iu[r'evna] Novikova, M[arina] S[ergeevna] Shemakhanskaia. *Iuvelirnye izdeliia iz kurgana Kul'-Oba v sobranii Istoricheskogo Muzeia. Istoriko-tekhnologicheskoe issledovanie* [Objects of the jeweler's art from the Kul-Oba Barrow in the collection of the Historical Museum: A historical and technological study]. Pri uchastii Evraziiskogo otdela Germanskogo arkheologicheskogo instituta. Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo muzeia, Vyp. 200. Moskva: Istoricheskii muzei, 2014. 352 pp. ISBN 978-589076-236-8.

The discovery and opening in September 1830 of a Scythian barrow at Kul-Oba on the Kerch peninsula in the Crimea had momentous consequences for archaeology in Russia and more broadly for studies of the ancient world. The royal burials yielded striking artefacts, notable among them a vase whose depiction of what we assume are the Scythians has shaped subsequent perceptions about them.¹ Fortunately, that and a good many of the other treasures were safely removed (the most striking pieces now in the Hermitage Museum), even though the excavation of the barrow by Paul Dubrux hardly would meet any modern standard of archaeology. Unfortunately, as soon as the news spread, the still incompletely excavated burials were robbed, a great many other remarkable objects destroyed (presumably melted down), and some of the lesser finds such as appliquéés dispersed on the antiquities market. As a result, the material from Kul-Oba is scattered in a good many museums (some perhaps still in private hands?), among them the Historical Museum in Moscow.² On one level, the magnificent volume under review here is intended as a catalyst for the long-needed detailed study and publication of all the Kul-Oba material. Frustrated, it seems, by their inability to prod the Hermitage to work on the larger project, the authors here have gone ahead and produced an exemplary study of the Historical Museum's collection.

The book opens with a brief essay on the history of the Kul-Oba discovery and the dispersal of what the barrow contained. The article is illustrated both with reproductions of some of the 19th-century album plates and with computerized recent topographic models of the remains of the barrow. As the authors make clear, the exact provenance of some of the pieces in the Historical Museum cannot always

be determined, even if they were catalogued as coming from Kul-Oba. For each and every piece, they then provide a careful, richly illustrated description and analysis. There is a separate essay on the results of the technical metallurgical analysis, another essay on the techniques employed by the craftsmen (here, in part, experiments to replicate those processes inform the analysis), and then a formal descriptive catalog, illustrated with photos and drawings. Some 50 pages of plates include microphotography of the objects. Lastly, there is an extensive bibliography and a long summary in German, appropriate for a book whose publication was facilitated by the Eurasian Division of the German Archaeological Institute. The photography here is stunning, all in color, and including both the obverse and reverse of all the appliquéés, which were created from sheet gold.

One can hope that this book will inspire a series of volumes that will move us beyond the frequent exhibit catalogs and coffee-table presentations of Scythian treasures.

Notes:

1. For an English-language overview of the Kul-Oba barrow, see *Greeks on the Black Sea: Ancient Art from the Hermitage*, ed. Anna F. Trofimova (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007), pp. 236–49, with excellent color photography of the famous vase and a number of the other striking objects. For more, detailed photographs of the vase, see A. Iu. Alekseev. *Zoloto skifskikh tsarei v sobranii Ermitzha* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo. Gos. Ermitazha, 2012), pp. 190–93.

2. Some of the Historical Museum's objects were displayed in the German exhibition of Scythian artefacts in 2007–2008. See *Im Zeichen des goldenen Greifen: Königsgraber der Skythen* (München etc.: Prestel, 2007), esp. pp. 282–83, in an essay by Kirill Firsov and Denis Zhuravlev.

R[afael'] S[ergeevich] Minasian / Rafael Minasyan. *Metallobrabotka v drevnosti i srednevekove / Metalworking in Ancient Times and the Middle Ages*. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, 2014. 472 pp. ISBN 978-5-93752-578-5.

The author's publications on archaeology and, primarily, on the subject of this book have been appearing at least since 1980. However, since most are in Russian, they undoubtedly have not attracted the attention they deserve. He is a sector head in the Hermitage and the president of a commission on the restoration of archaeological metal.

This substantial and abundantly illustrated volume is an encyclopedic dictionary of terminology and techniques of metalworking. The material is grouped into thematic chapters (casting, modeling, casting molds, cold metalworking, ... tools, etc.), each containing entries of terms arranged in alphabetical order. For each term, he provides an etymology, and where such exists, descriptive material in a Classical (or in important cases, later primary) text relating to it. One of his important points is that too much of the analysis and description of archaeological metals has been careless in its use of terminology. Since his book in the first instance is addressed to a Russian audience, he insists that if there is a perfectly good Slavic term, it should be used in preference to a foreign calque. However, much of the terminology here

is borrowed, a lot of it from French. It is too bad that he did not provide, at least as an appendix, a glossary which would also give the modern equivalents in other common scholarly languages, since this then would greatly help those of us who read and translate Russian work.

Many of these entries are very short, a few are somewhat quirky (e.g., *oshibka issledovatel'skaia* – mistakes in analysis). However, in many important cases, the entries are long and detailed, generally starting with a review of what has been written about a particular object, class of objects or technique, and then going on to his own analysis based on either his direct observation or what he can discern from photographs. It is rare that he agrees with much of anything others have written either in monographic studies or in annotations to exhibit catalogs. However, he is even-handed in the sense that he criticizes mistakes in some of his own earlier publications as well. His main point in all this is that one must acquire a deep and broad understanding of the techniques of metalworking in the ancient world, and in the first instance this has to be done by what he terms “traceology,” the examination of the physical evidence by looking closely at the objects themselves. The various processes by which an object would be produced do leave their traces if one looks closely—information that can reveal a lot about casting, molds, hammering, soldering, etc. Too often scholars have reached the wrong conclusions by focusing on the surviving (or imagined) molds and tools, rather than the finished products. Good photos can tell us a lot. Some of his closeups are very revealing even for the untrained eye; in other cases though, it was difficult for this reader at least to discern what he found to be important evidence. While he is not the first to appreciate the importance of this, he insists that catalogs and analytical treatises should always include photos of all sides of the object in question, not just the obverse.

Appendices include essays on metalworking in the Eneolithic and early Bronze Age, on the Siberian Collection of Peter the Great, and on metalworking among the early East Slavs. There is also an appendix on measuring systems and a brief dictionary listing of the names of documented ancient craftsmen.

If Minasian is right, one comes away rather unsettled to think that so many of the experts over the decades have gotten so much wrong. At very least here, scholars who work with early metal will find specific sections of his book of great interest, as he expounds on Viking-era brooches (he does have an earlier article in German on them), “Greek” gold from Scythian burials, Siberian belt plaques, Chinese bronzes (relying on his observations made when an exhibit from Shanghai was in Russia a few years ago), and much more. Clearly specialists in this field are going to need to take a close look at the book. Whether or not they end up agreeing with him, the odds are they will come away looking at their material with new eyes. Of course it is too bad that only a second title page, table of contents and a longish summary are available here in English for those who cannot read the Russian.

John E. Hill. *Through the Jade Gate to Rome. A Study of the Silk Routes during the Later Han Dynasty 1st to 2nd Centuries CE. An annotated translation from the Hou Hanshu ‘The Chronicle on the Western Regions’ Updated and Expanded.* 2 vols. Vol. I. Text, Translation and Notes; Vol. II, Appendices and Bibliography. N.p., 2015. ISBN-13: 978-1500696702; 978-1503384620.

A draft version of John Hill’s colossal study of this seminal document for the early history of the silk roads first appeared in electronic form on “Silk Road Seattle” over a decade ago and went through a second electronic version before appearing in print in 2009. The current edition, much expanded, had to be printed in two volumes. At least for the foreseeable future (Hill is now revising for print publication his draft, annotated translation of the relevant parts of the *Weilue*), this will remain the authoritative analysis of the text. Those who wish to use Hill’s work should ignore the on-line version, which will, one hopes, soon be replaced by his current translation, but without all the extensive and now dated notes which languish on the website. Given their size and substance, these two volumes are remarkably inexpensive and can be easily be ordered from on-line book dealers.

Apart from tweaking the translation, he has substantially expanded the annotation here, right down to very recent publications and has incorporated valuable suggestions he has received from experts around the globe. Hill’s approach is to quote others’ work in extenso, which makes these volumes very valuable as reference works for those who cannot access earlier scholarship. His notes and appendices in some cases are full-fledged monographs in their own right, on the locations described in the original source, on products, on the chronologies and identification of rulers, on the history of early exploration, and much more. We are all in his debt.

Martin Jacobs. *Reorienting the East. Jewish Travelers to the Medieval Muslim World.* Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Pr., 2014. xii + 331 pp. ISBN 978-0-8122-4622-3.

It would be a shame if this book, which I can but briefly note here, were to escape the attention of those interested more generally in the history of the Silk Roads and in the travel narratives which so often draw our attention as “primary sources.” With the exception of Benjamin of Tudela, who is treated here in some detail, few Jewish travel narratives get much attention from those interested in that broader history, something which is understandable given the relatively narrow focus of their authors’ concerns and the fact that so few of the authors ventured beyond the Holy Land. What Jacobs has to offer though consciously moves beyond the standard approach to “using” travel literature, which has tended to focus on whether or not it contains factual content that then can be used as a source. His concern is to understand the context for each and every account, which often involves in the first instance very specific religious motiva-

tions. If the earlier travelers seem to have been surprisingly open-minded in their dealings with Muslims (much less so Christians), by the Renaissance, attitudes toward Islam had hardened, the accounts thereby becoming much less charitable. An important element here is that the authors tended to write for a domestic audience about matters central to its concerns where descriptions of foreign settings and experiences served largely as rhetorical devices. What we get then is insightful examples of how we might analyze travel narratives, examples in which the Jacobs explicitly eschews the simplistic “post-colonial” approaches to such narratives which are largely anachronistic applications of modern dicta to a time and materials about which they have little to say. Said’s *Orientalism* and his acolytes are largely irrelevant. If we are going to understand the emphases (yea, biases) of such sources, we can do so only by developing a clear sense of how they were conditioned by their time, place and audience.

N[ikolai] N[ikolaevich] Kradin. *Nomads of Inner Asia in Transition / Kochevniki Vnutrennei Azii v razvitii*. Moscow: URSS, 2014. 302 pp. ISBN 978-5-396-00632-4.

This is a welcome collection of 16 essays, most previously published, some unpublished conference papers. Nikolai Kradin is one of the most accomplished Russian scholars working on Inner Asia, the author of over 400 scholarly works including several books. One of his concerns is to write for a broad audience of those who would learn about the history of Inner Asia. His interests as represented here include theories of state building and nomadic society, archaeology, and anthropology. In recent years, he has been involved on a regular basis in collaborative archaeological projects in Mongolia; several reports on that work have appeared in this journal, including one in the current volume.

The essays here are grouped under the following headings: I. Theoretical Foundation; II. Archaeological Retrospective; III. Historical Dynamics; IV. Anthropology of Transition. The Xiongnu and Liao are of particular interest for Kradin; his anthropological studies focus on the transitions of the modern era.

While at least some of the essays, all published here in English, appeared originally in that language, some apparently have been translated from Russian for this occasion. A lot of important Russian scholarship deserves to reach a wider audience, which makes volumes such as this one particularly valuable.

N[ikolai] N[ikolaevich] Kradin; A[leksandr] L[‘vovich] Ivliev. *Istoriia Kidan’skoi imperii Liao (907–1125)* [A History of the Khitan/Liao Empire (907–1125)]. Moskva: Nauka – Vostochnaia literatura, 2014. 351 pp. + 17 color plates. ISBN 978-5-02-036566-7.

This volume and a promised second one merit serious consideration for translation, given the scope of their coverage. As the authors point out, even though there is a lot of scholarship on the Khitan/Liao, generalizing works are few.

They recognize the continuing huge importance of Wittfogel and Feng’s massive treatment, with its careful analysis of the written sources, but well over half a century has passed since it appeared. Whether or not one would agree with Kradin and Ivliev that the written sources have been pretty thoroughly mined by now, in that interim, there have been huge advances in the archaeology and art historical research on the Khitan/Liao. To have a broadly conceived treatment that makes full use of the archaeological record is something we very much need. Both Kradin and Ivliev have themselves been contributing in significant ways to that archaeological investigation.

After a brief chapter on the origins of the Khitans and a review of their political history, the volume takes up cities and settlement sites, burials and mortuary rituals, the economy, crafts and in a final substantive chapter treats more generally society and state. The conclusion is also the text of the several-page English summary. The very substantial chapters on mortuary rituals and crafts are by Ivliev, while the rest is indicated as being jointly authored. In the consideration of state and society though, one can clearly see the hand of Kradin, who has long been interested in theories of state building and approaches to studying nomadic and semi-nomadic polities in Inner Asia and is widely knowledgeable in that literature.

While the citations of primary source texts are generally from standard Russian translations of them, the authors have used a wide range of scholarship in other languages. Readers not familiar with the Russian system of phonetic transcription of East Asian names will struggle here in trying to recognize, for example, the authors and titles of the many works of Chinese archaeology which are cited. It is not the Russian practice to provide the Chinese characters, and there is no reason to expect that they would use pinyin. In a work of this scope, it is inevitable that some works we might expect would be missing—for example Naomi Standen’s important book published in 2007. Lu Jing’s valuable dissertation on Liao ceramics makes it into the bibliography, but I did not notice any citation of it in the text.

The book contains several appendices: tabulations of information on Khitan settlement sites; on early burials, their orientation and one particular Liao cemetery in Jilin province; a chronological chart of the plans of Liao tombs; a chart of the dimensions of bricks in Liao tombs; tabulations of the sites known as sources for Liao metallurgy and of metalwork found at various Liao sites; two illustrated charts showing the evolution of ceramic shapes; and a table with information on known Liao kiln sites and their production. Much of the book is generously illustrated with good line drawings, maps and some photos; the color plate insert is of good quality. There is a bibliography but no index.

The promised second volume will take up a number of important topics: religion and spiritual culture, ethnic history, relations with other peoples, architecture, art, and more. Were there to be an interest in translation of this major work on the Khitan/Liao, it would involve significant editorial labor: among other things, the citations would need to be re-cast to bring them in line with normal non-Russian practice, with references to both the original texts and to other translations of them. It will be interesting to see what the

reaction of specialists is to this work as it stands, though my guess is that few of those who might want to read it can do so in Russian.

Igor' Vladimirovich Antonov. *Srednevekovye bashkiry* [The medieval Bashkirs]. Ufa: Kitap, 2013. 192 pp. ISBN 978-5-295-05716-8.

The author offers a view of medieval Bashkirs from within the territory of Bashkiriya, an undertaking which, of course, might run the danger of reading the past too heavily through the lens of modern ideas of nation and ethnicity. I must leave it to others to decide whether his interpretations are sound. He repeatedly cites the work of R. G. Kuzeev, whose substantial *Origins of the Bashkir People* [*Proiskhozhdenie bashkirskogo naroda*] appeared in 1974, tainted, as Antonov admits, by prevailing Soviet orthodoxy. Here Antonov deliberately avoids Kuzeev's approach, which was to try to push the story of "origins" far earlier than any written sources would allow, perforce relying heavily on archaeological material. Rather, even though Antonov cites some archaeology, his focus is on the period between about the 9th and 17th centuries where in the first instance he can rely on written texts. Much of the exposition is a text-by-text summary and analysis, where a lot of attention is devoted to the names various authors used which arguably (if not always obviously) referred to the Bashkirs. Among the issues that concern him is the relations between the Bashkirs on the one hand and the Pechenegs, Kipchaks, Magyars, and Mongols of Ulus Jochi on the other. The question of the degree to which the Bashkirs in the period of Mongol rule might have enjoyed autonomy is an important one here. Very usefully, all his main "primary source" text passages are included in an appendix, compiled from standard Russian translations and, in a few instances, reproducing the texts of Muscovite Russian sources. Antonov has published previously on this subject; this recent book of his should be worth a close look.

Rossiiskie ekspeditsii v Tsentral'nuiu Aziyu. Organizatsiia, polevye issleovaniia, kolleksii 1870-1920-e gg. Sbornik statei / Russian Expeditions to Inner Asia. Their organization, observations and collections (1870-1920s). Collection of Articles. Pod redaktsiei A. I. Andreeva. Sankt-Peterburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2013. 332 pp. + 16 pp. plates. ISBN 978-5-4469-0057-2.

Aleksandr I. Andreev, the editor of this volume, is also the principal author, though there are chapters written by T. Iu. Gnatiuk and M. N. Kozhevnikova. The focus here is 16 expeditions to Inner Asia co-sponsored by the Russian Geographical Society: five headed by G. N. Potanin, four by N. M. Przheval'skii, three each by M. V. Pevtsov and P. K. Kozlov, two each by G. E. and M. E. Grumm-Grzhimailo and by B. L. Grombchevskii and one each by V. I. Rorobovskii and V. A. Obruchev. Andreev is somewhat defensive about the purpose of the exploration, which outside of Russia has tended to be treated more as geopolitical to support Russian expansionist policies rather than scientific. While he readily

admits most of the organizers were military men and the General Staff or other government agencies had a role, he insists that in the first instance the goals were scientific. We get here information on organization and financing (some of this drawn from archival material), survey chapters on transport and life on the expeditions, and then in greater detail information about the instruments and cartographic survey methods and on the collections of zoological, botanical, geological and ethnographic materials. To a considerable degree the source for the information is the voluminous published expedition reports, some of which were translated into other European languages. A number of the reports have been reprinted; most are accessible in a good academic library. It would have been nice had there been a section on the degree to which all the new information became known to the wider scholarly community through what was impressively rapid communication of results and sharing. But that is undoubtedly a subject for another book.

The approach here is somewhat mechanical, expedition by expedition, delighting in telling the reader exactly how many altitude readings were taken or how many botanical specimens brought back. It is very useful to know which institutions then served as the repositories for the material. One can see how, following on the pioneering work of Przheval'skii, who was largely self-taught in some of the disciplines needed, there was continual progress in the scientific substance and results. The book deliberately avoids saying much about archaeology and the study of historic sites, since those subjects have been treated elsewhere. The book is useful in its systematization of the material, which can then help considerably those who might wish to compare the Russian undertakings with those by non-Russians. It is reasonable to conclude with Andreev that the scientific contributions of these explorers were immense, since many of the regions visited had not previously been explored by Europeans. The collections of material they brought back substantially broadened knowledge of the natural history of Inner Asia.

There is but a brief preface and table of contents in English; the book includes several good quality black-and-white plates and indexes of personal and geographic names.

Wei-Cheng Lin. *Building a Sacred Mountain: The Buddhist Architecture of China's Mount Wutai*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2014. xiv + 321 pp. ISBN 978-0-295-99352-2.

Based on the author's Ph.D. dissertation supervised by Wu Hung, this book should be of interest to a broad audience. Its subject is the way in which Mt. Wutai in Shanxi Province became a Buddhist sacred mountain (the abode of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī). This development "involved a complex historical process that domesticated and localized the sacred presence of the foreign deity in ways that show how Buddhism was realized, practiced, and expressed in the religious landscape of medieval China" (p. 2).

There are many threads here, not just a study of the development of sacred geography. An important contributor to

the transformation of the site was the Empress Wu Zeitan (624-705); by the 8th century, veneration of Mañjuśrī was an imperial cult, and Mt. Wutai had become a major pilgrimage destination. This is a story not just of the shaping of the physical environment, in which the building of monasteries, their internal architecture and iconography were important. The process also involved the creation of a “virtual” space, associated with visions and the practices of esoteric Buddhism. Lin places the history of Wutai in a context of the interest in and translation of particular sutras, and then in the final chapter discusses how the veneration associated with the sacred mountain was transferred and transformed in remote locations. The key examples to illustrate this are the murals in the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, painted in the 9th and 10th centuries, the most famous being in Cave 61, where the panorama of the entire mountain and its monasteries extends across all of the west wall. Having had the privilege of seeing these paintings a good many years ago, I was, nonetheless, puzzled by the question of how they were to have been viewed. Lin’s analysis, supported by good photos and some very helpful schematic drawings, makes sense of how the worshipper in the cave would have experienced this virtual recreation of Mt. Wutai, where the screen at the back of the altar platform (on which would have rested a statue of the bodhisattva) blocks the key central portion of the mural.

Lin invokes comparative material on sacred geographies elsewhere, whose study should in turn be enriched by his material. For such a complex topic, the book is remarkably clearly written; there are numerous photographs (including a color insert), clearly drawn maps, and line drawings. The back matter includes transcriptions and translations of key texts and a lengthy glossary.

И. И. Елихина. “*Obitel’ miloserdiia*”. *Iskusstvo tibetsko-go buddizma: katalog vystavki / “Abode of Charity”*. *Tibetan Buddhist Art. Exhibition Catalog*. [With additional essays and descriptive entries by K. F. Samosiuk]. Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo. Gos Ermitazha, 2015. 512 pp. ISBN 978-5-93572-617-1.

This catalog of an exhibition at the Hermitage from 9 October 2015–17 January 2016 is in the first instance the work of Julia Elikhina, the curator of the museum’s Tibetan and Mongolian collections who put together the exhibition and has special expertise on Tibetan Buddhist iconography. Kira Samosiuk’s contributions focus on the material from Khara-Khoto, whose paintings she previously had catalogued. This is a significant collection, all told 347 objects, including a good many works previously not displayed or published. Among them are sculptures and thangkas from the important collections assembled by E. E. Ukhtomskii, Iu. N. Rerikh (Roerich), P. K. Kozlov and others. The catalog has excellent color illustrations, including a lot of close-up details, and generous descriptive/analytical essays for each item. The material is organized by the categories of depictions in the Buddhist pantheon, which facilitates comparisons of the iconography. There is a glossary, a bibliography and a page summary in English. Every library which serves a community of those interested in Buddhist art should have this book.

Karl E. Ryavec. *A Historical Atlas of Tibet*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015. xviii + 202 pp. ISBN13: 978-0-226-73244-2 (cloth); 978-0-226-24394-8 (e-book).

Having just received this book on the eve of going to press, I can but offer a few general observations. It is a pioneering work, underlying which is a huge GIS database which the author felt could not be made readily accessible in the near future. Hence the decision to publish a conventional print historical atlas, in elegant large format with carefully thought out color maps interspersed with short essays (perforce some of them repetitive) organized largely chronologically. Taken by themselves, the essays can serve as a kind of short course introduction to the history of Tibet.

As with any mapping project, there are many difficult choices about scale and conventions for captioning, which mean that the result is perforce something of an overgeneralization from data that might in digital form be very precise. To a considerable degree, apart from physical geography, the data here come from cryptic sources which may reveal something about political interconnections, administrative divisions and, above all the founding and importance of monasteries as focal points of power and settlement. So the fixed points on the maps are overwhelmingly derived from what we know about the locations of important, and, except for recent survey work, many lesser known monasteries and sacred sites. The chronological span of what is contained in any given map often is quite broad, which means that readers should not assume the data reflect the situation at one particular date. In many cases, the maps contain historical notes about important events, and are supplemented by small but sharp photos of key locations or iconography based on the historical imagination. Since establishing the exact boundaries of administrative divisions or other affiliations is usually impossible, to a considerable degree their names can be found here written across a somewhat vaguely defined territory or simply connected with a key monastic center or town. Among the more intriguing maps of a different kind is one that shows the approximate travel times/distances to Lhasa. In addition to the smaller scale maps of larger portions of Tibet, there are larger scale regional ones, some of which, as appropriate, encompass areas in what today is Nepal and Ladakh when those were under Tibetan control.

My one concern about this valuable book is with the indexing, which seems based in the first instance on the narrative texts but does not begin to provide a guide to all the places captioned on the maps. Of course for that to have been possible would have required a different kind of reference grid (not just latitude/longitude). So, if one is reading about Tibetan history in a particular period and wants to locate a place that crops up, one simply has to search over the particular map that encompasses the same period. Not exactly a huge burden though, since every time one opens this atlas, one is likely to find something new and interesting.

The author acknowledges a huge debt to many individuals and institutions (to read his acknowledgement essay underscores the magnitude of the project and also charts an interesting course of the development of his scholarly inter-

ests). Apart from printed sources, he has done a substantial amount of on-the-ground survey and has tapped into such surveys done by others in the often still little known areas of Tibet. He readily admits limitations where data are not yet available, and can be commended for deciding not to wait forever to publish a work he would deem more perfect.

Complexity of Interaction along the Eurasian Steppe Zone in the First Millennium CE. Ed. Jan Bemann, Michael Schmauder; [co-edited by Ursula Brosseder, Susanne Reichert and Timo Stickler]. Bonn Contributions to Asian Archaeology, Vol. 7. Bonn: Vor- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 2015. 708 pp. ISBN 978-3-936490-14-7.

Since I had some involvement (translating one of the articles and a bit of editing) in this magnificent volume, and since only a full review (beyond my capability) could do justice to its content, I will confine myself to a few summary remarks and a listing of the contents. The book is based on a conference held in Bonn in 2012, but the articles here go well beyond what was presented there, and a number of the essays were solicited after the fact to cover important topics. The result is, arguably, one of the most important contributions to our understanding of Inner Asian history to have appeared in recent years. Among the highlights are essays arguing for significant re-thinking of analytical approaches to our understanding of Inner Asian politics and the dynamics of broader exchanges.

Of particular value are some of the contributions by archaeologists, rich in concrete data but standing back from it to place it in meaningful interpretive contexts. While it is somewhat unfair to single out only two of the essays, I cannot but highlight those by Bryan Miller and Ursula Brosseder. The former mines the archaeological evidence to raise questions about the nature of the societies in “North China” where the Southern Xiongnu did not necessarily simply preserve their nomadic ways nor assimilate Chinese ones. Brosseder’s purview is much of Eurasia in her book-length monograph, which will be essential reading for those of us who have tended glibly to cite finds of, e.g., Chinese artefacts in various places as evidence of long-distance exchange. In both of these essays, “complexity” of interactions is the byword; unraveling it makes all the evidence much more meaningful than we may have thought.

Readers interested in “Silk Road trade” will find Michal Biran’s essay to be particularly stimulating, since it reminds us that periods of supposed decline in that trade may in fact need to be re-considered.

As with the previous volumes in this series, the production values are impressive – abundant sharp photography, drawings and maps; careful and extensive bibliographies. The commitment to publishing all this latest scholarship in English is admirable; clearly a lot of effort has gone into the editing of the texts.

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Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change. The Mongols and Their Eurasian Predecessors. Edited by Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran. Perspectives on the Global Past. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press: 2015. x + 345 pp. ISBN 978-0-8248-3978-9.

Were I not worn down by editing and now facing a publication deadline, I would attempt a longer review such as this very valuable volume deserves. As it is, a few general comments and a listing of the contents will have to suffice.

Based on a conference held nearly a decade earlier, but following which the essays were expanded and carefully coordinated into a thematically linked set (with a 45-page bibliography), the collection addresses the broad and important subject of how nomads and nomadic polities (there is an emphasis here on political institutions and ideas) contributed in important ways to cultural interchange across Eurasia. The time span is suitably broad, beginning back in the Bronze Age and coming down through the Mongol and immediate post-Mongol period. I think István Vásáry's cautionary preference for the term "factor" instead of the potentially misunderstood "influence" is worth keeping in mind here, as the approach of all the authors is to avoid glibly talking about influences and borrowings in the way such matters have tended to be treated in the past. Cultural change is a complex process.

In any event, we certainly have moved beyond the old stereotypes of bad nomads simply destroying everything in their path (even David Morgan, who is not wont to understate the destructive nature of the Mongol invasions, admits as much). To re-shape our understanding of the history though is going to require a lot of new research and reinterpretation. On the one hand, the essays here are excellent for laying the foundations for that future research, in that several of them systematically assemble the evidence and review the historiography. The degree to which the authors then move on to visionary projections of where we might go from here varies. Pulling together the evidence in the way William Honeychurch does in his review of the imported artefacts in Xiongnu graves or Thomas Allsen does in his treatment of population movements for which the Mongols were responsible creates a powerful impression of how significant the agency of the respective nomadic polities must have been. Among the more speculative of the essays, with continual reminders that one or another subject still needs to be studied, is that by Reuven Amitai on Syria. That the Mongols opened the way for the Mamluks to replace the Ayubids is indisputable, but the ramifications of that change

need to be worked out. As a Muscovy specialist, I would have liked more in István Vásáry's essay about the existing political culture and institutions if we are really to be able to assess the, granted, likely impacts of long-term Mongol rule in Russia. David Morgan's conversational concluding essay is a rather introspective reminder to the reader that his "authoritative" (and for the time, excellent) book first published in the 1980s had a much longer life than even he would have wished and still badly needs to be replaced by a work that would incorporate newer insights, especially in the realm of cultural history. I would certainly concur with him that the most important recent scholarship on the Mongols includes Allsen's *Culture and Conquest*, de Rachewiltz's annotated translation of the *Secret History* and Jackson's *Mongols and the West*. Might one now add to that list *Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change*? Maybe not, but certainly it is a book that merits close attention.

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