

Michael Shenkar. *Intangible Spirits and Graven Images. The Iconography of Deities in the Pre-Islamic Iranian World*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014. xxii + 392 pp., 189 figures, 32 color plates. ISBN13: 9789004281486; E-ISBN: 9789004281493.

Michael Shenkar's book, based on his doctoral dissertation, is a much-needed survey of Iranian pre-Islamic divine iconographies. It is the most complete publication about Mazdean (or Zoroastrian) divinities, which he considers from the point of view of both the written sources and, primarily, the figurative arts. The book can be divided into three main parts. The opening section discusses in general terms the aim of the book and the traces of Iranian (Zoroastrian or Mazdean) deities in written sources (pp. 1-45). The latter section is particularly interesting and exhaustive since the author includes the Chinese sources that are rich in information especially for Sogdian pre-Islamic religion. The core of the book is the second part, on the "iconographical pantheon" of Iranian deities (pp. 47-174). In this clearly organized treatment, he takes up every deity in alphabetical order according to his/her presence in a western or eastern Iranian context, the emphasis being on the depictions in the figurative arts. The third and concluding part mainly focuses on the presumed "Sasanian iconoclastic attitude" that has been connected with "Iranian anthropomorphism" but, as he convincingly explains, has been based on wrong premises (pp. 175-90).

Shenkar's book will be a standard reference work for every student of Iranian iconographies on account of its completeness and the range of its bibliographical references, including work on Mesopotamian parallels and the often neglected publications in Russian, a language many scholars who work on Iranian materials do not read.

As Shenkar himself recognizes, there is much still needing to be done on this material. I expect to propose some additional considerations eventually in a separate treatment.

—Matteo Compareti
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[The following are all written/compiled by Daniel C. Waugh.]

Alii I[vanovich] Kolesnikov. *Sasanidskii Iran. Istoriia i kul'tura / Sasanian Iran. History and Culture*. Sankt-Peterburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2012. 520 pp. ISBN 978-5-90598-710-6.

This book has been out for some years now, but, prodded by Matteo Compareti's commendation of Michael Shenkar for using the "often neglected publications in Russian," I decided to see to what extent anyone has paid attention to the work of Kolesnikov, arguably one of the most accomplished and prolific of those contributing to that Russian-language scholarship. The results of this admittedly quick search turned up little. Two libraries in the U.S. are recorded as owning this book; I came across no reviews of it outside Russia. Three recent volumes on Sasanian history published in English by prominent scholars do not cite any of his work, at least some of which arguably might have been relevant

to their own studies. Granted, these impressions are but superficial, and, not being an expert on Sasanian history, I may not be the best judge as to the merits of Kolesnikov's work.

In any event, what we have in this volume is the substantially reworked re-publication of two sizeable Russian-language monographs by the author, *Iran at the Beginning of the 7th Century* (first published in 1970) and *The Conquest of Iran by the Arabs* (first published in 1982), plus a number of shorter pieces, some first published in very small editions and possibly obscure places. Nicely printed, the book has a bibliography and indexes of personal names, toponyms and ethnonyms. Only a second title page and a Table of Contents are in English.

Igor' V[asil'evich] P'iankov. *Sredniaia Aziia i Evraziiskaia step' v drevnosti / Middle Asia and the Eurasian Steppes in Antiquity*. Sankt-Peterburg: Peterburgskoe lingvisticheskoe obshchestvo, 2013. 736 pp. ISBN 978-5-4318-0014-6.

Despite its different imprint, this volume in all appearances is a companion one to the collection of Kolesnikov's scholarship noted above. Here we have the major works of P'iankov, whose argument about the location of Ptolemy's "Stone Tower" on the silk roads will be familiar to readers of the previous volume of this journal. His monographs and various articles, some of which have appeared outside of Russia in other languages, constitute one of the most important bodies of scholarship on the evidence in Classical texts about Central Asia. To have them here in one place is certainly useful; the work that had appeared in other languages has all been translated into Russian. The long appendix, which contains one of his most recent separate publications that is not even listed as such in the bibliography of his work contained in this volume will be of particular interest: his detailed study of "The Great Silk Road: The Itinerary of Maes Titianus." Supplementing his detailed analysis of the texts here are a dozen nicely produced maps, copying the originals published in separate works by Bernard and Baumann, but with P'iankov's version of the routes overlaid on them. The volume has indexes of personal names, toponyms and ethnonyms as given in the ancient texts, a brief summary in English, and the bonus of a short tribute to P'iankov originally published in *Vestnik drevnei istorii* in 1996 on the occasion of his 60th birthday. Of particular interest to me was the longer, warm and personal essay on him by his daughter, Tat'iana, recounting, inter alia, how after establishing his career in Tajikistan, the family managed to escape the civil strife that began there on the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and move to Novgorod, where he is a distinguished professor at the university.

WorldCat indicates that a good many libraries own this book, as well as several of the author's other monographs. One can only hope they are being used.

Marianne Vedeler. *Silk for the Vikings*. Ancient Textiles Series, Vol. 15. Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow books, 2014 (reprinted 2015). x + 125 pp. ISBN 978-1-78297-215-0.

This elegantly printed volume by a textile expert at the University of Oslo will open the eyes of those who may think the silk roads terminated somewhere on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. The author's strengths are evident in her careful exposition of what we know from Viking burials in Scandinavia, starting with the important collection of silk fragments found in the famous Oseberg Ship burial. One of the virtues of this treatment is her use (and reproduction of examples) of the color drawings made by Sofie Krafft at the time of the discovery, important now that the colors of the original silks have faded often to the point where the designs are almost invisible to the naked eye. Ultra-violet photography has confirmed the accuracy of Krafft's work. The book provides technical details of weaves, information (still only partial) about the dyes, and includes nicely drawn maps showing the locations of the Viking burials with silk scattered across Scandinavia, one notably near the Arctic circle in Norway at Ness; a major group found in the graveyards at Birka in Lake Mälaren in Sweden.

Vedeler raises interesting questions about how the silks may have been perceived by those who acquired them in Scandinavia, in contrast to how they may have been perceived by those who made them at their places of origin. Importantly, what we have here are primarily fragments cut from larger pieces and then sewn as decorative strips onto garments made of different textiles, with no regard for preservation of woven designs intact, and even in some cases, where the silks had suffered from wear on their obverse, shinier side, reversed so that the duller side was visible. Her speculative answer to the question of perception and significance involves the use of such silks as expressions of elite status, where in fact, one might imagine, there could be some overlap in the way the producing and recipient cultures employed the fabrics.

There are some things which might have been done better here. For one, the book might have been organized more logically for the non-specialist in textiles, who probably should want to turn to Chapter 3 on techniques first, and supplement it with the explanatory drawings on p. 85 toward the end of the book, in order to understand better the terminology. While the author does pay attention to archaeological context, her strengths lie in the region of Scandinavia. As she pursues the routes which may have brought the silk there (most likely through what is now Russia), she tends to conflate what may be a more distinguishable shift of trade patterns over time in the way that many do who buy too readily into the problematic stories in the Russian *Primary Chronicle* about the rise of Kiev. While she explicitly and correctly admits that sorting out the information in Arabic and Persian sources is difficult, given the way one author borrows from another, she nonetheless stops short of providing the kind of critique which would enable us to see why we might in fact prefer one account over another. And, despite the fact that she recognizes how one of the key sources referring to the fabric known as *zandaniji* specifies that it was cotton, not silk, she nonetheless accepts without question ideas about

a flourishing silk industry in Sogdiana. Of course in saying this, I may be slightly unfair, having in mind Zvezdana Dode's article in the current volume of *The Silk Road*, but Vedeler's citations suggest she knows some of the evidence that might have given her pause.

In general, while she is cautious at every step to recognize there are uncertainties concerning the provenience of silks that may, if ever, be established only by much more extensive technical analyses than have been done to date, she also has a tendency not to risk taking sides when confronted with opposing interpretations. An example of this is in her paragraph (p. 59) juxtaposing the view of Agnes Geijer, who asserted the Birka silks most likely came from Byzantium, with the more recent reassessment by Annika Larsson, who argues for an Eastern origin via the Volga route.

Such criticisms aside, there is much here to stimulate and inform. The bibliography contains many leads to important sources for further information on a subject that merits our attention.

Patrick Wertmann. *Sogdians in China. Archaeological and art historical analyses of tombs and texts from the 3rd to the 10th century AD*. Archaeology in China and East Asia, Vol. 5. Darmstadt: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2015. xiv + 336 pp. ISBN978-3-8053-4985-7.

Published in a series under the auspices of the German Archaeological Institute's Eurasian Division office in Beijing, this is a revision of the author's Ph.D. dissertation defended in 2013 at the Institute of East Asian History in the Free University of Berlin. It will be the starting point for any who wish to learn about Sogdian remains in China, more of which keep coming to light. The book is especially valuable for those who cannot read the original Chinese excavation reports and sources, since it provides both translations of excerpts from historical texts (epitaph inscriptions are summarized in detail but not translated) and extensive inventories and descriptions of both the excavated and unprovenanced Sogdian finds from China. In some cases there still is no full excavation report available. He has records here for 29 tombs, four osuary burials and four objects in foreign collections assumed to have come from China. As the author indicates, his descriptions of the tombs and their contents follow closely what is in the Chinese reports that we have, although he also stands back in each case and draws conclusions about the significance of the finds. He has a particular interest in what the tombs reveal about religious belief and mortuary ritual, but also assesses the material from the art historical standpoint, placing it in a comparative framework of Sogdian materials from Central Asia in a substantial syncretic discussion on pp. 127-66. The book contains tabular summaries of tomb measurements and contents which make for easy comparison. There are 116 high quality plates with drawings of tombs and their inventories and photographs that include tomb inscriptions, the images on the slabs of funeral couches, murals, etc. With only the rarest exceptions where the images are somewhat small or lacking in contrast, will there be any difficulty in deciphering the iconography or inscriptions. The broad coverage of the material enables him to posit regional variation and change over time; in general he supports the

conclusions of others about the multi-ethnicity and multicultural character of the areas in northern China where most of the Sogdians and other non-Han settled and worked. I look forward to reading this book closely and will keep it close at hand for future reference.

A[leksandr] A[bakarovich] Kudriavtsev and E[vgenii] A[leksandrovich] Kudriavtsev. *Feodal'nyi gorod Severnogo Kavkaza (srednevekovyi Derbent v VI-XIII vv.)* [A feudal city of the North Caucasus (medieval Derbent in the 6th-13th centuries)]. Stavropol': Izd-vo. Severo-kavkazskogo federal'nogo universiteta, 2015. 307 pp. ISBN 978-5-9296-0719-6.

One opens this nicely printed volume, with its substantial section of color photos, historic pictures and archaeological drawings of artifacts, with some anticipation. Ostensibly the work of father and son archaeologists, in fact, the author seems to be mainly the senior Kudriavtsev, who headed archaeological work on the hugely important city of Derbent starting back in the 1970s and has published extensively on the history of the town and the region. Derbent, located on the Caspian shore of the Eastern Caucasus, controlled north-south movement along that narrow strip between the water and the mountains. On closer examination, what we find here seems to be largely a condensation, cutting and splicing, from that earlier work, with, it seems nothing really new past the early 1980s, despite the fact that the excavations in which A. A. Kudriavtsev was involved continued into the mid-1990s. The conceptual framework here is redolent of old Soviet Marxist approaches regarding feudalism, class struggle, etc.; in one section there are even citations to the wisdom of Engels and Lenin.

This is not to say the book has no value, since presumably a lot of the early publications by Kudriavtsev *père* are not easy to come by, and it does seem that in that earlier work he did a serious job of trying to mine the often rich evidence of medieval texts to complement the archaeology. The book provides a chronological overview of the political history, and, preserving the same chronological divisions starting with the Sasanian period and coming down to the Mongol invasion, discusses changes in the fortifications and topography of urban development before moving on to an extended treatment of various crafts: architecture and its decoration, ceramics, metalwork, glass. There is a brief section summarizing information on trade routes. Readers interested in the impact of the Mongols will note that there is little evidence in the archaeological record that they destroyed the city, even if then, we are told, it began to decline subsequently as a result of the wars between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanids.

Unfortunately, there is no bibliography – one must comb back through the notes in the hope of finding full citations, not all of which seem to be there. And the plates at the back are not cross-referenced in any way in the text.

The history of Derbent certainly merits the attention of any student of the silk roads; in fact the fortress and older remains have been awarded World Heritage listing by UNESCO, given how well preserved they are.

E[vgenii] P[avlovich] Mys'kov. *Kochevniki Volgo-Donskoi stepi v epokhu Zolotoi Ordy* [Nomads of the Volga-Don Steppes in the Golden Horde Period]. Volgograd: Izd-vo. Volgogradskogo filiala FGBOU VO RANXiGC, 2015. 484 pp. ISBN 978-5-7786-0581-7.

Analysis of this imposing, large-format study of more than 1000 burials in the Volga-Don steppes dating from the 13th into the 15th centuries will take some time. I can but indicate that, if the author is right, his work will force us to abandon ideas well established in the literature (and originally most forcefully argued by the distinguished archaeologist G. A. Fedorov-Davydov) about the impact of the Mongols on the composition of the population in the region. The conventional wisdom is that ethnic Mongols in the Golden Horde were few, and the local Polovtsian population remained the dominant one, even if significantly conscripted and absorbed into the urban culture of the Golden Horde cities. Some have doubted that it is in fact possible to distinguish ethnicity of the population based on burials (a significant question that can be raised about many other regions and periods). Mys'kov argues that careful analysis of all aspects of the burials does allow one to come up with meaningful statistics and distinguish several groups among them. Comparative analysis then permits one to identify what must be Polovtsian ones and what are Mongol ones, in the first instance no more than 15 % and in the second some 20% of the total. The rest are "Turkic" and probably are evidence of other ethnic groups that came into the region with the Mongols from Central Asia.

Obviously the author's methodological assumptions will need to be tested. He provides here descriptions of the burials, 96 plates with drawings of the graves and their inventories, and separate analysis, with an additional 42 plates, of artifact types, including mirrors, coins, textiles, etc.

Krisztina Teleki. *Introduction to the Study of Uрга's Heritage*. Ulaanbaatar: "Admon-Print", 2015, 496 pp. ISBN 978-99973-0-748-4.

Readers of *The Silk Road* may recall the reports by Krisztina Teleki and her colleague Zsuzsa Majer on their important work to preserve and recover as much as possible of Mongolia's Buddhist heritage (Vols. 7 [2009]; 10 [2013]). This book by Teleki, following upon several other substantial publications by her, is hugely important. Even from a cursory acquaintance with it, the reader has to be impressed by the depth of her work in providing what will be an essential guide for any future study of the history of Uрга (today's Ulaanbaatar) and in particular its Buddhist heritage. Her introduction summarizes the history; she then moves on to the specific history of its monasteries and includes a section summarizing the interviews she and her colleague did with the few old monks who survived the Communist persecution and destruction of much of that heritage. The largest part of the book is a careful inventory and description of holdings of major cultural institutions – the art, collections of sutras, other documents. The illustrations of important art works are small but excellent photographs, which sample the riches that in most cases may be more fully viewed in other books. Of particular interest here for me is the section of the book

analyzing and describing in detail what is on the numerous “birds-eye” views of the town and its environs produced by artists in the early 20th century. There also are translations of some of the important monastic rules. Teleki brings to the task serious training in Buddhism and an excellent knowledge of both Tibetan and Mongolian, without which work on this material would be impossible. Titles and captions for various objects and texts then are given in proper transcription as well as translated. As she indicates, there is still much to be done, not only in studying the works she so carefully has catalogued and described here but also in various archival collections that include documentation for the political history of Mongolia when the Communist regime undertook to extirpate the Buddhism that was so central to the country’s history starting centuries earlier. What we have from Urga to reconstruct that history and culture is richer than for locations in the provinces. Now, at least, thanks to Teleki’s prodigious labor, we have a guide to be able to access everything relevant to such an enterprise. Anyone interested in Mongolia and the history of Buddhism in Asia will long be in her debt.

Zsuzsa Majer and Krisztina Teleki. *Reviving the Cam Dance Tradition in Mongolia*. Traditional Mongolian Culture II. Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University, Department of Inner Asian Studies, 2014. ISBN 978-963-284-512-8. DVD (functions on Windows XP/Vista/7/8/10).

This remarkable disc has its roots in Zsuzsa Majer’s doctoral dissertation, defended in 2008, in which she provided a survey of Mongolian Cam (Tsam) based on her research there in 2004 and 2005. She continued the work in 2009, when she made the 76-min. video of the ceremony in Ulaanbaatar which is included here. The work was further supplemented by Krisztina Teleki in subsequent years, including filming the ceremony in 2010 at a monastery in Selenge aimag, that 65 min. video also included here. The disk contains text and captioning in both English and Hungarian, with a clear narrative about the history and importance of the dance ceremony and individual paragraphs on its component parts and participants. The essays are all provided with references to any existing scholarship. There are numerous photographs, and, in addition to the full videos, short clips attached to each separate descriptive section to illustrate the individual parts and actors. For visitors to Buddhist sites whose rituals embody the Tibetan Tantric traditions, the Cam Dance is perhaps the most vivid of all the ritual practices. Even if not present for such ceremonies, one always has to be struck by the exquisitely crafted masks and costumes (for example, those exhibited in the Choijin Lama Museum in Ulaanbaatar). Here now we have an excellent guide to what they mean and how they are used.

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