Review


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This is volume 4 edited by Boris Litvinsky since 1988 in the series Eastern Turkestan during Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. It affords a detailed commentary of previous and current research with an exhaustive bibliography (40 pp.) on the aforementioned themes of eastern Turkestan or Xinjiang studies. The previous volumes have just as ambitiously surveyed regional history [vol. 1, 1988]; ethnography, languages, and religions [vol. 2, 1992]; and economy and material culture [vol. 3, 1995].

Litvinsky has authored the opening section on “Architecture and Building Construction” (pp. 13–218). A brief sketch of past excavations by explorers of the oases ruins of Xinjiang precedes

the salient characteristics of extant structures, mostly Buddhist caves and grottoes. This is elaborated with an architectural classification. A detailed study of their composition ensues wherein is an analysis plus comparison of their features (cupolas, vaults, colonnades) with stupas, monasteries, sanctuaries, and fortified structures in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and India. The chronology of these sites remains unresolved due to several complicated reasons. Litvinsky justifies this new and systematic survey, for hitherto studies [including valuable ones by S. Duda and M. Maillard], he contends, were incomplete because explorers or archaeologists had compiled pioneering site reports, which contain inadequate or inaccurate architectural data. This Russian essay—Chinese researches of the last half-century remain unlisted—is the latest exhaustive survey of the subject given scant coverage of architecture in volume 3 of the UNESCO-sponsored History of Civilizations of Central Asia (Paris, 1996); a far more substantial study is now available s.v. “Central Asia,” in The Dictionary of Art, ed. J. Turner (New York, 1996).

N. V. Dyakonova has contributed the next chapter on “Fine Arts” (pp. 218–56). Since the last three decades she has studied and authoritatively published about the Hermitage’s impressive Ol’denburg and Petrovsky collections of murals, terracotta artefacts, sculptures, and reliefs in stucco and wood. She discusses the Khotoanese terracottas followed by separate analyses of excavated objects from Karakhshahr, Kucha, Miran, Turfan, and Yotkan. Now only the Stein collection of the National Museum, New Delhi, remains unpublished, but this, it seems, is about to be remedied, as the Indians are [finally?] serious about preparing a comprehensive catalogue. It may be noted that Dr. Lilla Russell-Smith’s SOAS doctoral thesis on Uyghur artistic patronage in Dunhuang during the tenth and eleventh centuries will also be published shortly.

S. A. Yatsenko’s exhaustive history of Central Asian fashion (pp. 296–384) from the late Bronze period to the thirteenth century constitutes the next chapter. Extrapolating from unevenly attested periods through a millennium and a half of costumes, hairstyles, and sartorial features perforce leads to an incomplete synthesis; nevertheless we are provided more than insightful glimpses, as for example, that the Kuchans and
Khotanese did create indigenous decorative patterns and their esthetic style was not merely derivative of prevalent foreign fads. It is proposed that the two-lapelled kaftan encountered in Khotanese images may well be the prototype of our European suit jacket (p. 360f.). If so, this westward transmission reveals that not all “high” influences travelled in the opposite direction from sedentary, Western civilizations into the Tarim Basin.

The concluding chapter on “Musical Culture” (pp. 385–537) by the Uyghur musicologist S. Kibirova informs us of a lesser-studied aspect of Central Asian life. Like Yatsenko, Kibirova too confronts a topic for which there is a palpable gripe in sources redeemed somewhat by examining Chinese texts and realia. The paucity of Western literature on this topic notwithstanding, one can now add a study to the bibliography that was published at the same time as this volume: B. Lawergren, “Music in the Buddhist and pre-Buddhist worlds,” in History of Civilizations of Central Asia, vol. 4, pt. 2, ed. C. E. Bosworth and M. S. Asimov (Paris, 2000), pp. 585–93.

Burzine K. Waghmar


This hefty volume of petroglyphs and inscriptions from Shing Nala and Gichi Nala in the Upper Indus region of northern Pakistan is an excellent successor to the previous three volumes on Oshibat, Shatial, and Hodar in the series Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans, edited by Harald Hauptmann. Although Shing Nala and Gichi Nala are about 40 km apart, both “Felsbildstationen” feature Buddhist images of stupas and graffiti written primarily in the Brāhmī script belonging to the period from approximately 400–600 C.E. Earlier petroglyphs at Gichi Nala are documented, along with later drawings at both stations. Following the format of previous volumes of MANP, this volume includes thorough descriptions, analytical essays, and a very well-illustrated catalog. The valuable documentation of almost 1,200 petroglyphs and inscriptions from Shing Nala and Gichi Nala significantly enhances the published corpus of rock art and graffiti in the Upper Indus region.

Shing Nala, located approximately thirty km upstream from Chilas on the right bank of the Indus River, is remarkable for its concentration of Buddhist petroglyphs. Most of the Buddhist images and inscriptions are clustered around a large geological formation at the center of the station called a “glacier mill” (Gletschermühle) (p. 57). This natural feature periodically fills with water and serves as a place to rest in the shade of overhanging rocks. Buddhist images and inscriptions predominate among 420 engravings at Shing Nala, with between 150 and 160 drawings classified as stūpas. Five stūpa images are unusually large drawings over two meters in height (nos. 14:8, 20:4, 35:1, 39:2, 59:1), and more than thirty are larger than a meter (p. 34). In addition to the characteristic dome (ardh), stūpas at Shing Nala generally have several rectangular foundations (medhi) and rows of discs (chattravali). More ornate drawings include additional architectural and decorative features, such as pillars with animal capitals, pilasters, niches, bells, banners, and various types of crowning elements (pp. 33–43). Renderings of vases and lotus blossoms are distinctive at Shing Nala, perhaps because lotuses (which are not native to the Upper Indus but could have been cultivated in the pool of the glacier mill) may have been used to adorn the stūpa drawings (pp. 25–27). Adorants, including one figure who seems to be dressed as a Buddhist monk (no. 58:2), are sometimes portrayed paying homage to stūpas (nos. 39:3, 40:2). Ditte Bandini-König suggests that two very large Buddha figures (nos. 38:13 and 47:2) may have been drawn by a professional artist (p. 58), but individual devotees created the majority of Buddhist images at Shing Nala. Non-Buddhist petroglyphs of discs, tAMAGs, riders, animals, and axes are generally found outside of the central area around the glacier mill and usually belong to later periods.

Sixty Brāhmī inscriptions typically record the names of visitors responsible for Buddhist images at Shing Nala. Oskar von Hinüber observes that about half of the legible inscriptions are ded-