

THE HEPHTHALITES: ICONOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS

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1. Introduction

Across Central Asia in the Early Medieval time (4th-6th centuries AD), appeared mysterious new peoples: the Hephthalites, Kidarites and Chionites, among others. Their origin is still debated. Some scholars suggest that they were a part of a Hunnic confederation, while others propose that each of them had different origin.

On the Central Asian history of the new peoples the biggest impact was made by Hephthalites (also known in Byzantine sources as *White Huns* – the name they used themselves is unknown). They are important in the development of the Turkic and later Islamic character of the Central

Asia – though primary sources are lacking. In the 5th-6th centuries AD, the Hephthalites founded a great empire in the territories of the modern states of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and China. They dominated that region and political history for two centuries (fig. 1). The Hephthalites repeatedly defeated the Sasanian Iran, a most powerful empire of the period. Besides that, they overthrew the Gupta Empire in India, and conquered a large part of that area. A true study of the Hephthalites must include both archaeology and historical analysis of written sources. Such a study, incorporating modern data on the archae-

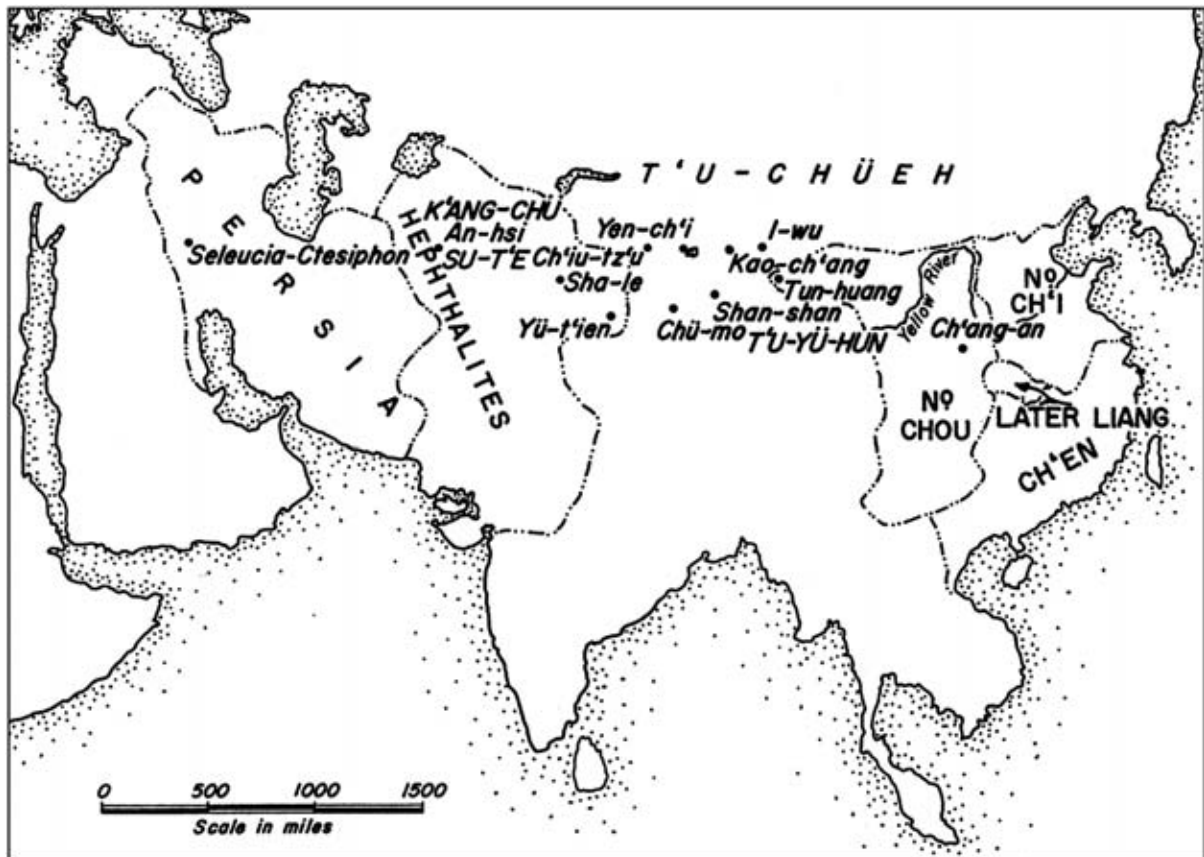


Fig. 1. The Hephthalites and their neighbours around in the middle of 6th century AD (after Miller 1959).

ology of the Hephthalite sites from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Central Asian republics with the historical data from written sources, has not been done. This work is intended as a contribution to historical understanding of that aspect in the specific character of the modern Central Asia.

2. Research history

It is uncertain whether Hephthalites, Kidarites, and Chionites had a common or different origin – that is, are they three branches of the same ethnic group or are they culturally, linguistically, or genetically distinct from one another? This is explained by the fact that the written sources referring to that period are very scanty and fragmentary in nature. The archaeological material is also very limited and the dating is often approximate and inexact. The numismatic discoveries in some measure reveal interesting aspects of the history, particularly about monetary circulation. But, in spite of the aforesaid, the collection of available facts allows reconstruction of a more or less clear picture of the political and socio-economic life of that region. This is primarily due to the limited number of sources, which are sometimes too contradictory to be harmonized. The literary evidence is not decisive, since reports by the Chinese pilgrims and records by Indian authors are at times ambiguous; and the statements of the Roman and Greek historians, who hardly knew how to deal with the various Hunnic people of the remote eastern lands, are vague. In the absence of authentic evidence, the coins issued by the leaders of those people constitute one of the most reliable primary sources for the history of the Hephthalites. It must be emphasized that our knowledge of these Central Asian nomads is, to a certain extent, still vague; and the hypotheses on their history remains controversial.

The medieval sources have served as the main base for multiple judgments on the ethnic history of the Hephthalites. Some researchers see in the Hephthalites the descendants of the Yuezhi (V. de Saint-Martin, V. Bartold, N. Veselovsky, G. Grum-Grzhimailo), others derive them from the ancient Mongols (J. Marquart, R. Grousset) or Huns assimilated by Central Asian people (S. Tolstov, A. Bernshtam). Yet another theory advocated an Eastern Iranian language of the Hephthalites and their Iranian origin (A. Mandelshtam, M. Dyako-

nov, B. Gafurov). V. Bartold, K. Enoki, L. Gumilev and B. Gafurov think the Hephthalites were quite different peoples than the Chionites; others (R. Ghirshman, S. Tolstov, A. Bernshtam, A. Mandelshtam, and V. Masson) try to prove their identity or consider that the Hephthalites were the name of the dominating class of the Chionites. The various authors listed above are only more prominent scientists that have grappled with the question who were the Hephthalites. Many others argued that Hephthalites were Mongols or Turks or Huns or a number of other ethnicities. This shows how fragmentary and confused the historical sources are, and that they must be combined with other evidentiary lines for understanding Hephthalite history.

3. Iconographical materials

As could be shown, a major problem in the study of the Hephthalites is their archaeological identification. So far there are no monuments which can be directly connected with them. The materials are very limited, and even the dating is often approximate and inexact. Nevertheless here we would like to discuss iconographical materials that might be connected with the Hephthalites.

3.1. Seals and sealings

Examining the collection of seals from the Peshawar and the British Museums, P. Callieri notes that some of the images are very close to the Hephthalite images (fig. 2/1-4). According to his study, 11 seals can be related to the Hephthalites, of which 8 represent a bust of a man with beard and moustache, two busts of a woman with diadem, and one of a couple. In the images the body is shown in three-quarters (all have head in full profile and upper body in three-quarters view). All seals have inscriptions. Most of them are in the Brahmi (Kumara, Rostama, Devada, Jivila, Vaśvasaka, Dharmadāsa, Patmaśrī), one is printed, and there are inscriptions in Bactrian and Brahmi (Sāni - Brāhmī, Śanēo - Bactrian), two in Bactrian (Mozdako, Tiroado). The seal depicting a pair does not contain any inscriptions. The seals are made of garnet, lapis lazuli, and rock crystal, and are dated to the 5th-7th centuries AD (Callieri 1999, 282-284). Callieri writes: "The prevalence of Brāhmī inscriptions, if not statistically completely fortuitous, perhaps indicates a North Indian provenance, and Indian names in the inscriptions, if they refer to Hūna rather than local



Fig. 2. Seals: 1 - seal of Khingila. Impression; 2 - seal and impression with male bust and Bactrian inscription; 3 - seal and impression with male bust and Bactrian inscription; 4 - seal and impression with female bust and a devotee; 5 - seal impression with male bust and Bactrian inscription; 6 - seal impression with male bust and Bactrian inscription (adapted from Ставиский 1961; Lerner 1999; Callieri 2002).

individuals, provide an interesting indication of cultural assimilation” (Callieri 1999, 285).

Callieri also notes a seal of Khingila from the private collection of Mr. A. Saedi (London). The garnet cabochon gem has oval shape with convex engraved surface, is 22,8 mm high, 19,4 mm wide, 5,9 mm thick. A Bactrian inscription runs round the circumference of the seal, attributing

the seal to a sovereign by the name of Khingila. It is dated to the first half of the 5th century AD. The Khingila in this seal is the first known person to bear the name or title Khingila (Callieri 2002, 121, 131). The legend on the seal was read by N. Sims-Williams as *eškiggilo (r) ōkano xoēo* – Eškingil rōkān xudēw (lord). The full reading was possibly “Eshkingil, lord of (the people)

such-and-such” or “Eshkingil, son of so-and-so, the lord” (Sims-Williams 2002, 143-144)¹.

A garnet seal in the Peshawar museum is similar, there a Bactrian inscription *Bando* is associated with a Hephthalite tamgha; and 3 more seals in the British museum include two garnet seals showing a male bust, and another from the collection of A. Cunningham may be added, showing the bust of a female personage (deity or queen) to whom a genuflecting devotee is offering a flower. Lastly, an amethyst seal in the same museum with the frontal busts of crowned male and female couple also belongs to this group. There are also a number of other seals, which seem to be closely associated with this class:

1. A cornelian in the British museum, showing two facing busts with an inscription written in Ancient Sogdian of the period AD 300-350 and which was the seal of Indamič, Queen of Začanta;
2. A garnet displaying a male bust in the British museum, acquired by M. Stein in Xinjiang;
3. An amethyst in the Hermitage showing the bust of a crowned male figure with a Bactrian inscription;
4. A seal in the Kevorkian Foundation, New York with a similar crowned bust with Bactrian inscription;
5. A chalcedony in the British museum, also showing a crowned male bust with Bactrian inscription;
6. A seal in the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris, with a crowned bust of a (Kidarite?) prince or princess;
7. A seal in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, showing a diademed male bust with Bactrian inscription;
8. An impression with a diademed frontal bust and Bactrian (?) inscription from the collection of Prof. R. Frye.

These entire busts are almost frontal, and although they belong to different iconographic types, they all display the same characteristic treatment of the facial features with long straight

noses and large prominent eyes with eyelids in reliefs, the shoulders and chest have soft rounded outlines (Callieri 2002, 122-123)².

Beside the Sasanian influence, an important chronological clue is provided by archaeology: three impressions of a single seal with a frontal bust, which, judging from the published illustrations presumably belong to the same Class V (according to Callieri, the seals representing “Hunnish” busts) as the seals of Bando and of Kxingila, are found on a ceramic jar from Shahr-e Zahak, belonging to a ceramic ware which has been dated to the 5th century. The iconographic affinity is close with some types of Kidarite coins (Callieri 2002, 122-123).

Other new samples which can be added to Class V are three clay sealings from collection of Aman ur Rahman, which were found in the territory of the Kashmir Smast range. One of the sealing (30 mm thick and 60 mm in diameter) depicts a bust of a ruler in crown turned three-quarters to the left. The face has no beard and moustache. There is an earring with attached pearl in the right ear (in the left ear may also be an earring, but only one side is shown) and a pearl necklace on the neck. The sealing also has Bactrian inscription: “...Lord Ularg, the king of the Huns, the great Kushan-shah, the Samarkandian, of the Afrigan (?) family” and it is related to the Kidarites. Other two sealings have the same portrait and inscription (Aman ur Rahman et al. 2006, 125-131).

As J. Lerner has remarked, the Rosen Collection (New York) has a seal dated by 5th centuries AD that shows a profile bust of a male with a moustache and curly hair (fig. 2/5). Above the bust is an ornamental spray of leaves. He also has a torque or garment secured at the neck by ribbons. On his right is a Bactrian inscription *alχono*. So, the owner could have belonged to the Hephthalites, specifically to the group described as Alxon and Kxingila (Lerner 1999, 268).

During excavations in the site Kafir-kala (near Samarkand) was recovered more than 400 sealings. Among them one shows a beardless man, with long face, where “due to the particular rendering of the facial features in an almost frontal view,

¹ The name Eshkingil is explained by E. de la Vaissière that *Eš-* can be the Turkic prefix and means “comrade, companion of” and *kenglu* has a link to the name of the sacred sword worshipped by the Xiongnu, compared with Turkish *qıyırmaq* “double-blade knife”. So Eškingil is a Hunnic name or title – “companion of the sword”: Vaissière 2003, 129.

² Seal with name of Toramana was found in Kaushimbi: Melzer 2006, 260; In R. Göbl’s catalogue gems from G 18 to G 65 in accordance with its characteristics are related to “Hunnisch” group: Göbl 1967-I, 232-255.

with long straight nose and large prominent eyes, the seal resembles those which represent 'Hunnic' busts and can be dated around the 5th century AD" (Cazzoli, Cereti 2005, 143).

In 2004 three 'Huna' fired clay bullae were found in Pakistan, and now are in a private collection. Two of them show a typical male bust representing a Hunnic nobleman, while the third depicts a sun wheel (chakra). The inscriptions in Brahmi tell us the name of the owners of seals:

1. *śri bha-gumdi* (Lord Bhagundi) – dated to the 5th - early 6th century AD. Dimensions: 49×38, th. 20 mm. Bust of a man facing right, plain hairstyle, combed outwards from the crown with an encircling braid of hair, moustache, recognisable remains of an earring, round raised tunic neckline. Below the bust the remains of an ornamental spray of leaves or pair of wings. As noted by Alram, the ornamental spray of leaves or pair of wings remain a characteristic component of 'Huna' coin typology in northwest India and was used by Toramana, Mihirakula and Nezak kings in the area of Gazi and Kabul.
2. *śri sudāsa* (Lord Sudāsa) – dated to the middle of 5th century / first half of the 6th century. Dimensions: 24×18, th. 21 mm. Bust of a man, plain, short hairstyle combed outwards from crown, moustache, earrings. Tunic with low, circular neckline, draped in linear folds. According to Alram, this type of portrait is close to the images on the coins of Sahi Javukha/Jaukha, dated to the time of Kxingila (430/440-490).
3. *jihah* (Jina) dated to the end of the 5th/6th century. Dimensions: 21×23, th. 16 mm. Sun wheel with eleven curving spokes, surrounded by 15 spheres. On its own the name would be quite unusual, possible it was the abbreviation for the formula *jitam bhagavata*. The sun wheel is first attested on drachmas of Kxingila. It was also found on copper coins of Toramana. Narana-Narendra (ca. 540 - ca. 580), one of the last 'Huna' kings in India, also used this symbol on the reverse of his copper coins (Alram 2003, 177-182).

In Jumalyk-tepe were also discovered clay reliefs and carved trees. The scenes of the people, holding a flower or bouquet in the bent hand are also interesting. They are found on Gandhara reliefs, and precisely such scenes are often encountered

on carved gem-seals connected to the Hephthalites (Ставиский 1969b, 149; Callieri, 1997).

The Eastern Department of the State Hermitage keeps a gem-seal (fig. 2/6). It is oval and made from almandine, with a flat bottom and a convex top. At the top, there is the bust of a man, the Bactrian inscription and a peculiar tribal mark – a tamgha (according to R. Göbl tamgha S 1). At the centre of the seal is a portrait of a middle-aged man. His head is depicted in three-quarters profile. The face is elongated, beardless with long pendulous mustache, forked at the end. The nose is long, and straight lines stress the nostrils. On the head is a small cap with a sheaf of three feathers. From left to right are words in italic read as *Aspurabah*, probably the name of the owner of the seal. According to Stavisky, the tamgha placed behind the man's head is "the Hephthalite character" (Ставиский 1961, 55)³. However, Stavisky suggests this seal is related to the Chionites not to the Hephthalites, because this sign does not appear on the Hephthalite coins, but only on those where we find the word "Hion", the self-name of the Chionites, which dates to the 4th century AD (Ставиский 1961, 56). В. Marshak and Y. Krikis thought that the date should be somewhat later and according to him the sign is also found on the later coins (Маршак, Крикис 1969, 79)⁴.

The gem from Hermitage is analogous with lapis lazuli gem with Bactrian inscription *Yozino* from E.T. Newell's collection. R. Göbl dates it by the middle of the 5th century AD (Göbl 1967-I, 237). A lapis lazuli gem was found near the Bezmyannyi (Nameless) city-site in Kobadian. On the lapis lazuli was engraved a sign, consisting of a crescent moon resting on a base, which the authors compare with a symbol found on a copper seal from the Kurkat vault. The sign on the Kobadian gem look like tamghas on the coin issues 287, 287A, 288 and 289, which Göbl links with the Hephthalites (Ilyasov 2003, 143).

3.2. Wall paintings

We know some wall paintings from the early medieval period, which in the opinion of Gulyamov reached their highest degree of development in

³ In his later work B. Stavisky (1974, 160-162) gives an explanation for *Aspurabah* (or new reading *Asparobido*) as a chief of the cavalry.

⁴ R. Göbl (1967-I, 235-236) dates this gem by the first half of 5th century AD.



Fig. 3. Balalyk-tepe. Wall paintings (adapted from Брыкина 1999).

the 6th-8th centuries AD in respect to the mural size, wealth of the scenes, and realistic and rich colors of images (Альбаум 1975, 3).

Such paintings were discovered in Dilberjin (near Balkh), Balalyk-tepe (fig. 3), Adzhina-tepe (a Buddhist monastery of the 7th century AD, 12,5 kilometers east of Kurgan-Tube), Kafyr-kala (Kurgan-Tube district in Tajikistan), Kalai Kafirnigan (80 km south-west of Dushanbe), Kalai Shodmon, and several others. The subjects of the images are essentially religious in nature, excluding the image of Balalyk-tepe with secular scenes.

Art historians have identified a number of painter's schools for the period. The Tokharistan school was represented by Balalyk-tepe, Adzhina-tepe, Kafyr-kala; the northern Tokharistan school was found in the Buddhist Temples of Kuva and in Jetti-su; the School of the "western edge" was found

in the monuments in Sogd, Khorezm, castles in Varakhsha, Afrasiab (Samarkand) (fig. 4), in the Ihshids palace in Kalai Kakhkakh I (Ustrushana), and on the paintings on ossuaria from Tok-kala (Пугаченкова, Ремпель 1982, 108).

As noted Albaum, the paintings of Balalyk-tepe belong to the 6th century AD and portray a feasting scene (Альбаум 1960, 174, 196). Solovyov, after analysis of ceramics from the site, thinks that Balalyk-tepe's paintings should be dated to the end of the 6th - first half of the 7th century AD (Соловьев 1997, 120). In another of his studies Solovyov dates the paintings from Balalyk-tepe to the middle or the second half of the 7th century AD (Соловьев 2004, 91). A. Belenitsky and B. Marshak date them broadly to the 5th - 7th century AD and the paintings of Kalai Kafirnigan by the end of the 7th century AD (Беленицкий, Маршак 1979, 35).



Fig. 4. Samarkand (Afrasiab). 1-4 - Wall paintings (adapted from Брыкина 1999).

In another study, Albaum added the feast to a wedding scene. This is reflected on the south wall, where a man gives a woman a cup with a drink, the woman is holding her right hand at her chest. These figures represent a pair. The complete scenes of Balalyk-tepe produce a wedding feasting scene (Альбаум 1975, 95). This point of view was supported by V. Solovyov (СОЛОВЬЕВ 2006, 153). The paintings of Afrasiab are dated from the end of the 7th century - the first quarter of the 8th

century AD, and show the arrival to the palace of embassies from various countries and their reception by the governor of Samarkand (Альбаум 1975, 19)⁵.

The paintings of Bamiyan and most early paintings of Pendzhikent date from the 5th-6th centuries AD (Альбаум 1975, 93). The spread of the In-

⁵Stavisky and Yatsenko (2002, 313) date the paintings of Afrasiab to the 7th century AD.

dian culture and its reflection in the paintings of Varakhsha and Pendzhikent become specifically observable during that period, which is also characterized by the Hephthalite-specific markers (Толстов 1964, 140). We may presume that the wall paintings of Pendzhikent, due to their realistic character, can be used as source for reconstruction of the ethnic composition of the population. Belenitsky, in these paintings, sees depictions of representatives of three ethnic groups – Sogdian, Turkic, and Kushan-Hephthalite (Брыкина 1982, 127).

It is possible that the Sogdian aristocratic culture of that time preserved some memory of the glorious days of Khingila, the first Hephthalite conqueror of India. The profile of Rustam, shown on different paintings at Pendzhikent, is very distinct from the other depictions in the Sogdian art, and resembles the Hephthalite prototypes. The portraits feature narrow skulls, V-shaped eyebrows, hooked noses and heavy jaws, and thus closely resemble some portraits of Khingila on the coins (Grenet 2002, 218-219).

Several murals at Dilberjin date from the 5th to the 7th century. A comparison between some of the Dilberjin paintings and those at Kyzyl (“the cave of the 16 swordsmen” and “the cave with picture of Maya”) demonstrates a link between them (Litvinsky 1996, 151).

A bust of a man (in a graffiti drawing) on one of the walls of the Buddhistic monument of Karatepe is dated to the 4th-5th centuries AD and, in the opinion of researchers, looks like the scenes depicted on the Hephthalite gems and coins (Ставиский 1969а, 22-23).

According to E. Kageyama, in a painting of ambassadors attributed to the fourth Liang emperor Xiao Yi, represents an ambassador of the Hephthalite kingdom. At same time Kageyama suggests that the Hephthalite ambassador is not necessarily of Hephthalite origin, because nomadic tribes often sent foreigners, like Sogdians, as their emissaries (Kageyama 2007, 14, 16).

In the opinion of A. Bivar, the painting of the destroyed smaller Buddha (35 m) from Bamiyan illustrated a conference between Shapur II (AD 309-379), together with his prince-governor of the Kushan province Warahran I Kushanshah, and a Chionite king (probably predecessor of

Grumbat), with whom they had been engaged in internecine warfare. Bivar writes: “At such a meeting, attested by Ammianus, was concluded an armistice between the Persians and the Chionite Huns, with an understanding that they should conclude peace, cease mutual hostilities, and turn their combined forces against the Romans. Such a conference could well have been held at the Bamiyan monastery, situated probably near the *de facto* border at the time, and in a community naturally predisposed to favour a peaceful settlement. I am inclined to place this event around AD 358, or at any rate not long before the siege of Amida in AD 361. A similar date would thus be ascribed to the paintings. Their Sasanianizing style would be in accordance with such a conclusion” (Bivar 2005, 320).

Towards the north-east, and north-west corners of the niche of the destroyed greater, 53 m Buddha, are relatively well-preserved areas with paintings. These are more in Gupta style than Sasanian and are later than those of the smaller Buddha. The paintings show human figures, some of them wearing brown monastic robes, in canonical forms typical of a Buddhist art, seated within large coloured haloes. Others, adorned with jewelry, have bare torsos, and may be supporters of the community, conceived as Bodhisattvas. In the opinion of Bivar, some figures of the supporters can be real people, for example, one of these partly damaged figures is wearing a dress with rounded decoration, a long necklace of pearls, and a regal crown of gold with three crescents, each topped with a central bud, above a diadem decorated with golden pellets. The canonical crowns of the Hephthalite kings are less well known than those of their Sasanian predecessors, but some indication of their identities can be derived by a comparison with the coins (Bivar 2005, 320)⁶. Bivar suggests a hypothesis that the mural paintings of the 53 m Buddha originated from the reign of the Hephthalite king Khingila, and that he is depicted there (Bivar 2005, 324).

⁶ According to G. Pugachenkova (1963, 75-76) an image of kneeling donator in the niche of the greater Buddha can be ascribed to the Hephthalites. The donator is depicted in a caftan, with a dagger on a belt, and holding above his head a large tray with donations. His profile looks like the profiles of Hephthalite kings on the coins.

3.3. Images on the funeral couches and sarcophaguses from China

Further information about the Hephthalites can be gathered from the reliefs of funerary monuments of Central Asians, mostly Sogdians, found in northern China.

The Northern Ch'i gate shrine, founded near Anyang in Henan province, was dispersed in various museums (in Washington, Boston, Paris, and Cologne) that hold individual parts of the monument dated to the 6th century AD. The Anyang reliefs are carved in dark gray limestone. According to Scaglia, it was created under the influence of Central Asia, presumably of the Hephthalites, who were in power at that period (Scaglia 1958, 9-28). A stone funerary couch, which consist eleven separate white marble panels and two gate towers, is kept in the Miho Museum in Shiga, Japan. The couch dates the second part of 6th - early 7th century AD. The panels depict in relief various scenes of hunting, a marriage feast with dancers and musicians, hunts and processions, and Zoroastrian ritual of different people who lived along Great Silk road (Juliano, Lerner 1997, 72; Juliano 2006, 296). On the one panel depicted a hunting scene of horsemen accompanied by dogs and pursued animals. The hunters, identified by headgear, hairstyles and facial characteristics are different Central Asian peoples: the Hephthalites, Turks and Sogdians (Juliano, Lerner 2001, 57).

Also should be noted other stone funeral monuments of the Sogdians that were found during excavations in North-Western China (fig. 5/1). A white marble sarcophagus was found near Taiyuan (Shanxi province) in 1999. Another find was made in the northern suburbs of Xi'an, formerly Chang'an, capital of the Northern Zhou dynasty (557-581) in Shaanxi (2,2 km west from An Qie's couch found earlier in 2000) in 2003, where was excavated a tomb with dark limestone sarcophagus, covered with gilded and painted reliefs. An interesting detail is that the sarcophagus bore a slate with bilingual Sino-Sogdian inscription. The text was an epitaph dedicated to the buried man – Shi Jun (AD 493-579) (Fuxi 2005, 47, 53-54). It is noted that all these tombs contain Sogdian-style stone funeral items with relief carvings, paintings, and gilding (Junkai 2005, 34).

The Taiyuan sarcophagus contained remains of Yu Hong and his wife. Yu Hong died in AD 593 at an age of fifty-eight. He served as a *sabao*, an

official Chinese title given to the administrators of foreign communities, inherited from Sogdian *s'rtp'w* (sartpāw) meaning “caravan leader” (Grenet et al. 2004, 274)⁷ during the Northern Zhou, Northern Qi and Sui dynasties. Yu Hong had also served as an ambassador to Iran and to the Tuyuhun Kingdom in Qinghai (Juliano 2006, 295). His tomb contained a funerary bed in the shape of a Chinese house, adorned by fifty-three marble carved panels, originally painted and gilded. From the funerary epitaphs, we know that he became *sabao* in AD 580. On the panels, Yu Hong is depicted hunting with nomads on horses, and on an Indian elephant, and banqueting with his wife. Zoroastrian symbols are clearly displayed: two priests half-bird, half-human wearing the traditional *padam*, and Mithra and his sacrificial horse facing each other on each side of the entry.

The second sarcophagus belongs to a Sogdian Shi Jun and his wife (fig. 5/2). According to an epitaph carved in Chinese and Sogdian, Shi Jun was buried in AD 580, and during the Northern Zhou dynasty he had served as a *sabao* in the Liangzhou Prefecture (the modern- area from Wuwei to Pingliang) in Gansu. The stone reliefs were decorated with color paintings. The four walls of the outer coffin are constructed of 12 pieces of stone and have reliefs with themes of four-armed protector gods, Zoroastrian gods, hunts, banquets, travel scenes, caravans, ceremonies, and the ascension to heavens (Junkai 2005, 21-22).

His native name, given in the Sogdian version, was Wirkak. He passed away at the age 86 in the year AD 579, and was married to Kang. Shi and Kang were names indicating a Central Asian origin, since these Chinese characters imply that their owner's family originated, respectively, from Kesh and from Samarkand. As an influential member of the foreign aristocracy, he was promoted to *sabao* by the Northern Zhou ruler (Grenet et al. 2004, 274). These panels form a continuous narrative pertaining to Shi Jun's life and social ascent, and indicate that his travels took place during the last decades of the Hephthalite rule in Central Asia (Grenet, Riboud 2003, 134). The walls of the sarcophagus are decorated with painted and gilded reliefs depicting scenes of banquets, hunting, travels, caravans, as well as various deities, which all show a close contact

⁷ According to S. Fuxi (2005, 52) title *sabao* also referred to Sogdian religious leader.

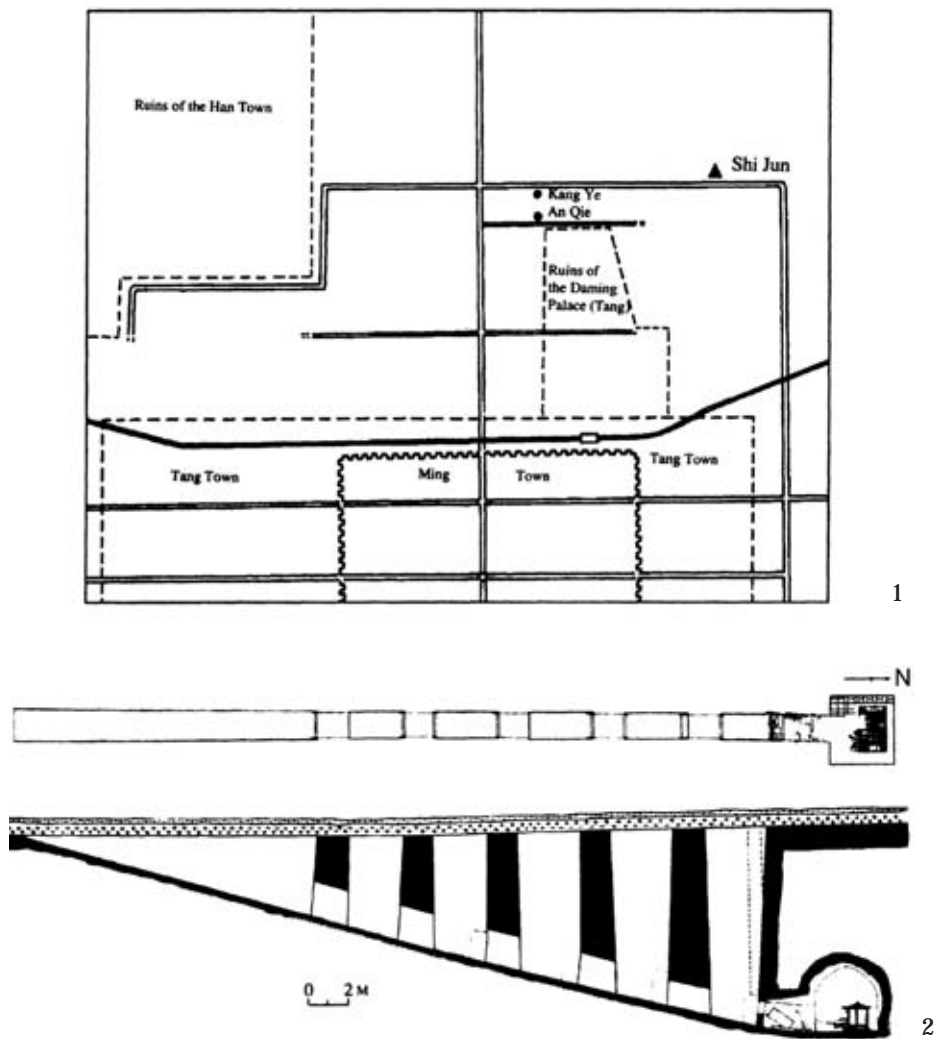


Fig. 5. 1 - Map of ancient limits of Chang'an (Xi'an) with indication of discovered Sogdian tombs;
2 - plan of Shi Jun's tomb (after Junkai 2005).

with the Central Asian world. These images have similarities with the paintings in Afrasiab and Pendzhikent (Аржанцева, Иневаткина 2005, 120). On the lintel above the door of the southern side of the sarcophagus, were written two inscriptions, one in Sogdian and the other in Chinese.

The Xi'an funerary couch, dated by its epitaph to AD 579 (time of the Northern Zhou dynasty), belonged to An Qie, a Sogdian aristocrat, who came from the city Guzang (present-day Wuwei in Gansu) and settled in Xi'an, also serving as a *sabao* (Juliano, Lerner 2001, 55-56; Juliano 2006, 295).

These funeral monuments present a great interest. According to some opinions, the Yu Hong's sarcophagus depicts a man on an elephant, who may be a Hephthalite (Kageyama 2007, 14). It is suggested that a person outside the kaghan's

yurt on one of the An Qie reliefs is a Hephthalite ruler/vassal (Grenet, Riboud 2003, 141). On the Miho reliefs they are depicted at least on two panels. On one panel the Hephthalite horsemen are shown hunting, on another panel a physically similar to the Hephthalites ruler rides an elephant (Маршак 2000, 47). Supposedly, the figures on the four scenes of Shi Jun's sarcophagus, with winged crowns and a central element with varying detail depict a Hephthalite ruler. Two scenes are depicted on the western, and two on the northern walls of the sarcophagus (Grenet, Riboud 2003, 136-139)⁸.

⁸ According to A. Dien (2009, 45-46), there are no depictions of Hephthalite crowned figures and therefore he suggests that this is a depiction of the *sabao* wearing a crown, and that would confirm the importance of his office and the high esteem afforded to the office by the Sogdian community.

According to other opinions, only one figure pictures a Hephthalite. He is depicted on the right scene, where Shi Jun with his caravan visits a king seated in a domed tent (or yurt) of the northern wall is Hephthalite ruler. The ruler in the yurt has a winged crown instead of long hair, typical for depiction of a Turkic origin, like the images on the funerary couches of An Qie and in the Miho Museum. He is not a Sasanian king, because he is shown in the nomadic yurt. Yoshida identifies the figure as a ruler of the nomadic Hephthalites, who had close contacts with the Sogdians (Yoshida 2005, 63).

The winged crown is a late type of Peroz's crown depicted on Peroz coins, which were common because of his tribute to the Hephthalites. Supposedly, this Peroz's crown served as a model for the winged crown of the Hephthalite kings. After Peroz, the winged crown was not used for over 100 years by any Sasanian kings until Khusrow II in AD 590, about ten years after Shi Jun's burial. Kageyama suggests that the triple-crescent crown, together with the winged crown, was introduced into Sogd during the Hephthalite period, and it continued to be used until the 8th century AD, though less frequently than the winged crown. So, the Hephthalite influence is responsible for the popularity of the winged crown and the triple-crescent crown in China (Kageyama 2007, 12-14)⁹.

Two couples are depicted on the northern wall of the Shi Jun's sarcophagus (fig. 6). On a man's head is a winged crown with a solar symbol, and the woman's crown is wrapped in a large cloak. According to Grenet and Riboud, these couples are Hephthalites. This suggestion is also supported by a "Liangshu" description of one of the Hephthalite customs, that the guests were received by the rulers and their wives. This depiction has an analogy in the image of seated couples on "Stroganov" silver bowl in Hermitage museum (5th century AD). The theme of the seated aristocratic couple sharing a drink is clearly attested in the 7th century at Balalyk-tepe, in a Northern Tokharistan context still strongly influenced by the Hephthalite culture, while at the same time it disappears from the Sogdian art (Grenet, Riboud 2003, 138-141)¹⁰.



Fig. 6. Shi Jun's tomb. Image of the Hephthalite ruler (?) on the Northern side of the outer coffin. (after Grenet, Riboud 2003).

3.4. Toreutics

Toreutics are mainly represented by bowls, amongst which special interest must be directed to two examples found in Pakistan (British museum) and Uzbekistan. The bowl from the British museum is semi-spherical with raised scenes on the outer face, showing four riders hunting wild boars, lions, a tiger, and wild goats or ibexes. On the base of the bowl is a bust of a beardless man, much resembling men on gem-seals.

In 1961 a bowl was found in the village Chilek 31 kilometers north-north-west from Samarkand (fig. 7). It is dated to the 5th century AD, weighing 1003 g. and 18,5 cm in diameter (Brentjes 1971, 77). It is smooth on the inside, and its exterior is richly decorated by hammering. The picture shows six women standing under arcades. The arcades are decorated with bust images of winged geniuses. On the base of the bowl is a bust of a beardless man facing left, with a rounded cap on his head and a lotus in his hand. Based on the similarity of the images with the profiles of the Hephthalite rulers on the coins, the cup's provenance was defined as a Hephthalite (Brentjes 1971, 77-78; Пугаченкова 1986, 273-275; Lerner 1996, 24-25). The portrait on the Chilek bowl may be that of a sovereign, because the cone with the rounded-top, the hairstyle, and the ribbons on the

⁹ J. Ilyasov (2001, 196) offers the idea that the diffusion of winged crowns in Tokharistan and especially in Sogd is associated not so much with Sasanian influence, as with the Hephthalite expansion.

¹⁰ Although E. Kageyama (2007, 12-13, 19) thinks this person is Shi Jun.



Fig. 7. Chilek bowl. Detail. Uzbekistan (adapted from Cultural 1985).

back are the distinct attributes found only in the costumes of the rulers in a number of coins. This portrait may reflect a Hephthalite ideal of beauty (Маршак, Крикис 1969, 67-68). The Hephthalites, under the influence of the Sasanian official portrait style, created their own iconography; judging from the images on the coins, seals and vessels, it was well established and standardized. In the opinion of Marshak and Krikis, the Chilek bowl's composition can be understood as a scene of the king's feast (Маршак, Крикис 1969, 69).

The Chilek silver bowl has an analogy in the silver bowl from the British Museum found at the beginning of the 20th century in Swat (Pakistan). It shows in the central medallion a man in profile, surrounded by four hunters, of whom the one to the left is clearly the man depicted in the medallion.

The form of bowl from British Museum, and the subject of its ornamentation are associated with Sasanian art. It is 16,8 cm in diameter, 5,7 cm high, and 190 g in weight (Göbl 1967-II, 262). The central medallion is obviously of no relevance to the whole scene (fig. 8). Therefore, a character with bared head is shown not only in the centre of the cup bottom, but also in the main composition, as a hunter shooting at two tigers. The portrait might be of the owner of the dish, a Hephthalite noble. Next the head of one horseman are five unclear Brahmi characters. The other riders



Fig. 8. Swat bowl (British Museum). Details (adapted from Göbl 1967).

with three different hats are portraits of rulers, possibly associates of the cup owner. One of the characters, a king killing a lion with a sword, has a crown distinct from the rest. This rider, judging from the crown and typical hairstyle around forehead, can be identified as a Kidarite. However, the ball in the crown has not survived. Another rider is shown with a spear, his crown is different from the Kidarite one only in the form of the side wings. The horseman with a spear is probably also a Kidarite, though unknown to us from the coins. Characteristically, the Hephthalites are shown in profile, and the Kidarites are shown frontally, that is, in accordance with the monetary iconography of the Hephthalites and the late period of Kidara. The swords of riders are similar to the swords of the Hun empire of the 4th-5th centuries AD (Marschak 1986, 32-33).

In the image of the women on the Chilek bowl is felt an influence of the Gupta tradition. The Chilek bowl is thus closer to the art of India. Lush hairs of heavy figures in the tympanum of arches resemble monuments in Gupta style. The bowl in

the British Museum is dated to the 450's - 460's, and the Chilek bowl should be synchronous, or somewhat later, but the bowls are so similar that the date of the two can hardly pass beyond the 3rd quarter of the 5th century AD (Маршак, Крикис 1969, 70-71; Marschak 1986, 34)¹¹. The final conquest of Samarkandian Sogd dates by AD 510, which date is established by the cessation of presents brought by the Samarkand embassies to China, and the beginning of regular Hephthalite embassies to China (Маршак, Крикис 1969, 77, 80). According to Pugachenkova, the bowl should be attributed to the Punjab school, it has no tradition in Bactria (Пугаченкова 1987, 81-82; Пугаченкова 1990, 29). Solov'ov does not agree with that opinion, noting that in spite of Indian features present on the Chilek bowl that is not enough to detach it from the Bactrian tradition, because Indian features were also typical for some other finds in Central Asia. For example, the Lyakhsh bowl, where again are found images of women identical to the scenes of women in Indian art (СОЛОВЬЕВ 1997, 68).

The "Stroganov" silver bowl in the State Hermitage museum (St. Petersburg), supposedly found in the Perm region of Russia, shows a cross-legged seated couple in Central Asian dress. In shape and composition the bowl is similar to the bowls from Chilek and Punjab. The "Stroganov" silver bowl is dated to the 5th century AD (Callieri 2002, 126-127). Some researchers suggest that the depicted couples are Hephthalites. They cite the description one of the Hephthalite customs in "Liangshu", that rulers were receiving their guests jointly with their wives. This depiction is analogous with the image of seated couples on the northern wall of the Shi Jun's funerary coach (Grenet, Riboud 2003, 134-141).

Another bronze bowl was found in Kashmir Smast. Its size is 8 cm in diameter. The outer surface of the bowl is decorated with incised human and bird figures, floral and geometrical designs. In six circles we see depicted heads, one inside each circle. The space between the circles has images made in geometrical and floral style. At the base of the bowl we find a duck or goose with opened wings facing to the right. On its back is a

solar symbol. According to Nasim Khan, in two circles the shaven heads are depicted in a style close to the heads of the Hephthalite rulers on their coins: elongated heads, long narrow hooked moustaches, almond shaped eyes, and solar symbols. Nasim Khan thinks that the bowl is a royal object made at the Hephthalite time in the 4th/5th centuries AD (Nasim Khan 2006, 76-85).

3.5. Terracotta

The term "the Hephthalite terracotta" defines a small group of terracottas dated to the 5th-7th century AD and found on the territory of Chaganian (fig. 9). These terracotta statuettes express a personage, probably a Bodhisattva with headdresses in the manner of a crown with three crescents. Such crescents are also encountered on a ceramic bar found in the Buddhist temple in Merv, showing Bodhisattva with similar headdress, and in the Buddhist paintings in Bamiyan, Kakrak in Afghanistan (Ильясов 1997, 30-32). Later, J. Ilyasov changed his opinion on identification of the crown with three crescents with Bodhisattvas. He writes: "However, presently we think this attempt was unsuccessful, though we have no doubts about the fact that it was the Hephthalites under whose influence were created images with crowns with three crescents, developed Sasanian iconographic patterns for the rulers" (Ильясов 2001, 192).

The above mentioned group of the figurines includes some artifacts found in the Dalverzin-tepe citadel, in Budrach, in one artifact from an unknown archaeological site in the Surkhandarya province (Uzbekistan), and a terracotta figurine from the Hissar valley (Tajikistan). According to Ilyasov, the figure wearing a crown with three crescents and a garment with a right side triangular lapel is a Hephthalite. Similar garments are depicted on the murals of Balalyk-tepe, Kyzyl, and on the Kucha reliquary. All these artifacts are dated within the period from the 5th to the 7th centuries AD. The clothes with a right side lapel, dated to the 7th century AD and earlier times can be linked either to the Hephthalites themselves, or to the Hephthalite clothing style (Ильясов 2001, 188, 190).

Terracotta plaquettes with images, usually of warriors and goddesses, were found in the Dalverzin-tepe citadel, and were dated to the 6th-8th centuries AD. The warriors wear a short coat with plates,

¹¹ F. Grenet (2002, 211-212) dates this bowl slightly later, to the 460s or 470s, between the first Hephthalite conquest in Gandhara and the last embassy sent to China by the Indian Kidarites.



Fig. 9. Terracottas: 1, 8 - Dalverzin-tepe; 2, 5-7 - Budrach; 3 - Surkhandarya valley; 4 - Hissar valley (after Il'yasov 2001).

hold a spear in the right hand and a sword in the left hand. The goddesses, who are identified as "Athena-Rishto" have a helmet, a shield in the left hand and a spear in the right hand. They were possibly used as individual icons. T. Mkrtychev and J. Ilyasov note that similar plaquettes were found in Sogd. In 6th century AD these territories were united by the Hephthalite empire. These researchers suggest that the terracotta plaquettes represent gods of the unknown Hephthalite pantheon (Мкртычев, Ильясов 2005, 497-523). V.

Meshkeris also notes that there are some similarities between the terracotta figures from Sogd and the images of the Hephthalite kings on coins. In particular, elements of the crowns (wings on both sides and crescent in front) are seen on some terracotta figures of the 5th-8th centuries AD, and have good analogies in the crowns of the Hephthalite kings on their coins. But at the same time she notes that this kind of the crown was also on the coins of Sasanian kings, in particular of Peroz (Мешкерис 1977, 86-88; Мешкерис 1989, 184-193, 293-296).

3.6. Stone statuettes

A dark-green soapstone statuette-plaque of a sitting woman playing a harp, in the Peshawar Museum is attributed by a number of iconographic features to the Hephthalites (Callieri 1996, 391). While some iconographic features, particularly the peculiar, huge ear-rings, resemble terracotta tiles from the Kashmiri monastery of Harvan, attributed to the Huna period at the end of the 5th century AD, the style and material of the Peshawar statuette, as well as technical features such as the use of shallow engraved lines for rendering of decorative details, are common with the other sculptures of the group, and seem to provide a strong evidence for dating the statuette to the early 6th century AD (Callieri 1996, 391).

In this connection is interesting a marble image of the Hindu deity Ganesha (7th century AD) from the Kabul Museum (found in Gardez). On its base is mentioned the name Shahi Khingila, written in the north-Indian alphabet¹². According to Bivar this marble image links to the painting of a Hephthalite king at the cave of the 53-meter Buddha in Bamiyan. In the painting, the adjoining figure of a prince wears a jewel in the form of a bull's head, also seen on marble sculptures related to the Ganesha image (Bivar 2003, 200).

3.7. Rhyton

Another object is silver rhyton (in the form of the head of the ancient Iranian goddess Drvaspa, attached to a spout in the form of a buffalo's head) acquired by Cleveland Museum of Art in 1964. The rhyton have been found in the Dailaman re-

gion of Iran near the Caspian Sea and was dated to the 5th or 6th centuries AD. A Pahlavi inscription on the back of the female's neck gives the weight according to a standard used in Iran until around 700 AD (Carter 1979, 309).

Göbl compared buffalo's head of the Cleveland silver rhyton to buffalo heads appearing on the crowns of the Nezak coins (Göbl 1967-II, 325-326). L. Carter suggests that the Cleveland silver rhyton was fabricated south of the Hindukush, in the Kabul Valley or around Ghazni (Carter 1979, 318).

4. Conclusion

It will only be new discoveries which can tell us about ancient homelands and migrations of the Hephthalites, who conquered a large part of Central Asia in the 5th-6th centuries AD. At present it has been attempted here to collect the materials known so far, being aware of the difficulties, to connect archaeological material, information from coins and written sources in order to outline the history of the Hephthalites. Lastly no specific monument, arms, jewelry or pottery can be securely attributed to them. However, we know of their existence in a specific region of Central Asia, even as a state formation, and at a given time, and thus archaeological research needs to take account of this data too. After all, archaeology too is only a method used to reconstruct history. Therefore I have here tried to interpret the available data from various sources on the Hephthalites, even if several major questions continue to be open for discussion and will probably remain so for some time in the future.

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¹²Sircar 1963, 44-46, D. Stadtner (2000, 42) calls this inscription proto-Sharada.

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Eftaliții. Materiale iconografice

Rezumat

Articolul este rezervat materialelor iconografice referitoare la eftaliți, care au locuit în Asia Centrală și în teritoriile învecinate în sec. IV-VI p. Chr., având în sec. V-VI p. Chr. posibilitatea de a crea un mare imperiu. Materialele iconografice care se referă la această perioadă apar într-un număr destul de redus, iar datarea lor, de multe ori, este aproximativă sau chiar inexactă. În pofida celor menționate, autorul a întreprins unele încercări de a interpreta informația disponibilă despre eftaliți, provenită din diverse surse, chiar dacă unele probleme vor rămâne discutabile și în viitor.

Lista ilustrațiilor:

Fig. 1. Eftaliții și vecinii lor la mijlocul sec. VI p. Chr. (după Miller 1959).

Fig. 2. Sigilii: 1 - sigiliul lui Khingila. Imprimat; 2 - sigiliul și imprimat al unui bust de bărbat și al unei inscripții bactriene; 3 - sigiliul și imprimat al unui bust de bărbat și al unei inscripții bactriene; 4 - sigiliul și imprimat al unui bust de femeie; 5 - sigiliul și imprimat al unui bust de bărbat și al unei inscripții bactriene; 6 - sigiliul și imprimat al unui bust de bărbat și al unei inscripții bactriene (adaptat din Ставиский 1961; Lerner 1999; Callieri 2002).

Fig. 3. Balalyk-tepe. Pictură murală (adaptat din Брыкина 1999).

Fig. 4. Samarkand (Afrasiab). 1-4 - Picturi murale (adaptat din Брыкина 1999).

Fig. 5. 1 - Harta frontierelor Chang'an (Xi'an) cu indicarea locului înmormântărilor sogdiene; 2 - planul mormântului lui Shi Jun (după Junkai 2005).

Fig. 6. Mormântul lui Shi Jun. Imaginea unei căpetenii eftalite (?) pe partea de nord a sarcofagului (după Grenet, Riboud 2003).

Fig. 7. Bolul de la Chilek. Detaliu. Uzbekistan (adaptat din Cultural 1985).

Fig. 8. Bolul de la Swat (Muzeul Britanic). Detalii (adaptat din Göbl 1967).

Fig. 9. Teracote: 1, 8 - Dalverzin-tepe; 2, 5-7 - Budrach; 3 - Valea Surkhandary; 4 - Valea Hissarului (după Il'yasov 2001).

Эфталиты. Иконографические материалы

Резюме

Статья посвящена иконографическим материалам, которые могут иметь отношение к эфталитам, жившим на территории Центральной Азии и соседних стран в IV-VI веках нашей эры. В V-VI веках эфталитам удалось создать великую империю. Следует отметить, что материалы эти очень скудны, и даже датировка часто приблизительна и неточна. Тем не менее, автор попытался интерпретировать имеющиеся данные из различных источников, относящихся к эфталитам, несмотря на то, что некоторые крупные вопросы по-прежнему открыты для обсуждения и, вероятно, в ближайшее время останутся таковыми.

Список иллюстраций:

Рис. 1. Эфталиты и их соседи в середине VI века н.э. (по Miller 1959).

Рис. 2. Печати: 1 - печать Хингилы. Оттиск; 2 - печать и оттиск мужского бюста и бактрийской надписи; 3 - печать и оттиск мужского бюста и бактрийской надписи; 4 - печать и оттиск женского бюста и богомольца; 5 - печать и оттиск мужского бюста и бактрийской надписи; 6 - печать и оттиск мужского бюста и бактрийской надписи (адаптировано из Ставиский 1961; Lerner 1999; Callieri 2002).

Рис. 3. Балалык-тепе. Настенная роспись (адаптировано из Брыкина 1999).

Рис. 4. Самарканд (Афрасиаб). 1-4 - Настенные росписи (адаптировано из Брыкина 1999).

Рис. 5. 1 - Карта древних границ Чанъана с нанесением найденных согдийских могил; 2 - план могилы Ши Джуна (по Junkai 2005).

Рис. 6. Могила Ши Джуна. Изображение эфталитского правителя (?) на северной внешней стороне саркофага (по Grenet, Riboud 2003).

Рис. 7. Чилекская чаша. Детали. Узбекистан (адаптировано из Cultural 1985).

Рис. 8. Чаша из Свата (Британский музей). Детали (адаптировано из Göbl 1967).

Рис. 9. Терракоты: 1, 8 - Дальверзин-тепе; 2, 5-7 - Будрач; 3 - Долина Сурхандарьи; 4 - Гиссарская долина (по Il'yasov 2001).

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