

dynasty, as opposed to those of the Shang, were “secular” (pp. 42–43), although it is well established that these ritual utensils continued to be used for offerings to the spirits of deceased ancestors, as well as gaining additional social functions. She also repeats the thoroughly discredited view that Buddhism declined after the Tang dynasty (pp. 110, 302) and seems not to recognize that rulers and other individuals might engage in significant interactions with more than one “religion.” Frequently she resorts to statements that suggest a timeless China, with continuous traditions originating in the Neolithic era, rather than acknowledging changes and contingencies over the several millennia covered in her book.

While it is understandable that Karetzky may not have fully absorbed the latest research findings in Chinese history and religious studies, an art historian should be better informed about current scholarship on Chinese art. Plenty of recent articles and books examine artistic production in light of the interaction of the Buddhist and Daoist establishments with various kinds of patrons, such as members of the imperial clan, officials, commoners, community groups, and monastics, as well as considering the roles of artists, artisans, and workshops. But instead of presenting objects and architectural structures in the social contexts of their creation, ritual functions, and later reception, Karetzky offers just superficial visual descriptions. She also seems unaware that scholars have moved away from the naïve understanding of literati painting as the pure self-expression of a learned amateur (pp. 120–23), and of Chan painting as “images spontaneously executed, without preconception or plan” (p. 314), just two of the areas in which her characterizations are outdated. Some of her descriptions are idiosyncratic, such as her reading of a well-known scene in the British Museum’s painting *Admonitions of the Instructress* as depicting a grandfather with his family (p. 102, not reproduced). Others are simply incorrect, such as the misidentification of Confucius in his meeting with Laozi, from an album of hagiographical paintings that are not copies of murals (p. 125); Confucius is the unassuming figure in plain, dark robes, seated behind the nobleman with whom he had traveled to the capital. The reader’s confidence is also diminished by clearly erroneous assertions such as that Gu Kaizhi was “a prominent artist at the Qin court” (p. 175).

Although Karetzky’s subject makes her study a timely contribution to a rapidly developing area of scholarship, it is not clear to whom this book is addressed. The general reader will find its discussions tedious and obscure, while the specialist will note many obvious errors concerning well-known material, leading him or her to wonder whether to trust statements about unfamiliar works and sites. The text is very poorly edited, with innumerable mistakes not only in *pinyin* romanization, but also with many misspelled names of modern Western scholars as well as Chinese artists, emperors, gods, and places. Finally, no book on art and architecture should have illustrations of such abysmal quality.

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The Hunter, the Stag, and the Mother of Animals: Image, Monument, and Landscape in Ancient North Asia. By ESTHER JACOBSON-TEPPER. Oxford: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015. Pp. xxxiii + 413. \$85.

Rock art began to appear in South Siberia sometime in the third or early second millennium B.C.E., initially in the form of pecked-out images on cliffs, and later pecked or engraved into boulders and freestanding monoliths or slabs. Although organized religion did not exist in North Asia prior to the end of the Bronze Age, traces of ancient beliefs shared across a broad geographical area and timespan can be detected in these ancient artworks. In *The Hunter, the Stag, and the Mother of Animals*, Esther Jacobson-Tepfer unearths those early layers of belief—focusing particularly on the roles of women and animals—and examines how they were shaped by the harsh physical environment in which they were produced.

The systematic study of rock art has historically been hindered by a variety of factors, chief among them the fact that it is rarely associated with datable burials. Fortunately, as the author reveals in her helpful appendix, “The Dating of Rock Art,” much can be inferred about dates and chronology by

observing differences in style, patination, and technique, as well as the subjects depicted and their placement in relation to one another. Previous studies have also often recorded rock art in line drawings rather than photographs, obscuring important information about its material, positioning, and directional orientation. In order to rectify this situation, the author has undertaken extensive fieldwork to document South Siberian materials over a period of approximately 12,000 years, with color photographs taken by her husband, Gary Tepfer. The author supplements these visuals with much-needed descriptions, which train the eye of the uninitiated reader to discern the at times unclear images.

In her earlier book, *The Deer Goddess of Ancient Siberia: A Study in the Ecology of Belief* (Brill, 1993), Jacobson-Tepfer discovered that the predecessor of the stag image popular in the art of the early nomads of the first millennium B.C.E. was in fact a cervid or bovid (antlered or horned) *female* power. In this volume, the author expands her study of the bovid Animal Mother, beginning with examples seen on the Minusinsk Basin stone monoliths decorated with horned masks bearing female features, as well as more ferocious faces carved on slabs associated with a precursor to the Okunev culture.

The Animal Mother, she notes, was eventually replaced by images related to fertility, including hybrid bird-women, ithyphallic men, pregnant animals, and women giving birth; these motifs and their accompanying beliefs seem to have been transmitted from the Minusinsk Basin to the Sayan and Altai uplifts during the Bronze Age. By the second half of the Bronze Age, couples in sexual embrace and birthing women began to be paired with hunting motifs, indicating a desire to replenish the world with animals following the completion of a hunt.

By the mid-second millennium B.C.E., one can recognize the appearance of pictorial narrative, which the author defines as “a composition that created within its precincts or frame the conviction of a tale being told and in which there is a measure of time and space and a perceivable sense of psychological interaction” (p. 168). Frequently, these depict hunting scenes, animals in combat, families with caravans of animals, and possibly early heroic myths. In general, men (hunters) take center stage in this period, while women recede, appearing only in dwellings or on the periphery of other scenes. At the same time, wheeled vehicles materialize rather suddenly, presaging a shift to a horse-based economy at the beginning of the Iron Age.

Unfortunately, some monuments of the Bronze and early Iron Ages have been irreversibly degraded by exposure to the elements (e.g., flooding) or—more dangerously—by overeager tourists and scholars who have cleaned or embellished their surfaces over the last century. For this reason, the book at times veers out of South Siberia and into neighboring Mongolia. While this detour does seem justified in order to follow the evolution of beliefs, it also reminds the reader of the quantity of information excluded from this study. Art historian Paola Demattè has remarked on the continuity between the petroglyphs of South Siberia and Mongolia and of sites in the Chinese provinces of Inner Mongolia and Ningxia (“Beyond Shamanism: Landscape and Self-Expression in the Petroglyphs of Inner Mongolia and Ningxia [China],” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 14 [2004]: 16), and one wonders why Jacobson-Tepfer treats the border with Mongolia as porous and those with China as impermeable. It may be, as the author herself laments in regard to earlier scholars, a result of “the failure of archaeologists to learn foreign languages so that communication with non-Russian thinkers and practitioners would be possible” (p. 71).

Returning to Siberia in the late Bronze Age (c. 1300–800 B.C.E.), the author observes a movement away from interest in rock art, toward burial goods that convey wealth and social status. The mortuary precincts at Arzhan I (ninth to eighth century B.C.E.) and Arzhan II (seventh century B.C.E.) in Russia’s Tuva Republic include horse burials, stone ritual structures, and gold ornaments with images of caprids, felines, and other animals. According to Jacobson-Tepfer, the change in burial customs and imagery in the Arzhan burials parallels the disappearance from both burials and rock art of the use of a woman as a symbol of the boundary between life and death, and her replacement by chariots, horses, and scenes of predation.

Concurrent with the emergence of riders and wheeled vehicles is the advent in the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age of deer stones, free-standing stones found across Mongolia into the Transbaikal that may be an outgrowth of the earlier Minusinsk monoliths with horned masks. The deer stones are thought to represent a human male figure, and they vary according to region—the east-facing stones decorated with

jewelry, a belt, and three slashes representing a face are found in the Altai region, while the more famous examples wrapped in highly stylized stag images are found in Mongolia. In the early Iron Age, rock art appears to be strongly influenced by the schematic, unrealistic style of carvings in bone and wood. Depictions of stags become larger and less naturalistic, sometimes taking on the physical characteristics of the wolf—and, in becoming hybrid animals, they also assume an identity as liminal beings.

By the period of the early nomads—also called the Scythian period—in the first millennium B.C.E., the boundary between worlds is marked by scenes of a predator (usually a feline, wolf, or bird) attacking its prey (often a stag), resulting in a transformation. At the fourth- to third-century B.C.E. site of Pazyryk in the Altai Republic, horses were interred wearing antlered masks that transformed them into stags. Through the intentional grouping and conflating of animals, the author argues, “the horse became in effect the vehicle for the expression of an axis as a pivot of life and death, the point around which life was transformed by a series of processes: the predation symbolized by the feline or wolf, the transmutation of the flesh symbolized by the raptor, and the appearance of new life, symbolized by the stag, the ibex, or the argali” (p. 296). This imagery laid the basis for the so-called “Animal Style” that became pervasive throughout China, North Asia, and Central Asia in the early Iron Age.

Toward the end of the book, the author takes an unexpected sidestep to discuss ethnography as a means of reinforcing her observations about the diminution of the female role in beliefs about life and death in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age. Specifically, she examines the male and female figures in the pre-Shamanic mythology of the Ket (Paleo-Siberian peoples who live in the Yenisei Basin) and the Evenk (Tungusic peoples who originated west of Lake Baikal and spread across Siberia), remarking that in the earliest preserved tales, “the deer women are the center of a life-giving universe and the source of life itself,” while in later periods, the shaman takes on the power previously assigned to deities—many of them female (p. 341). Although this chapter is compelling in its presentation of a different methodological approach, it ultimately feels somewhat out of step with the rest of the book.

Jacobson-Tepfer concludes her investigation with a brief foray into later developments including the unprovenanced Siberian Treasure of Peter the Great and the belt plaques of Xiongnu burials in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia. The latter show an interest in predation scenes and often preserve stylistic details of earlier Siberian materials, such as the flipped hindquarters of a hybrid animal tattooed on the male occupant of Burial 2 at Pazyryk. Among the varied works in the Siberian Treasure, a pair of plaques picturing a woman with a blocky headdress seated beneath a tree, cradling the head of a fallen warrior holds special interest. Jacobson-Tepfer notes the parallels between this scene and one that is repeated on the felt hanging from Burial 5 at Pazyryk, which shows a rider before a woman who holds a tree and wears a similar headdress. The resemblance leads the author to speculate that this woman is the final form of the Animal Mother from the earliest South Siberian rock art, and that in this context she serves a related function as the guardian of the road to the land of the dead.

Jacobson-Tepfer suggests that by the first millennium C.E., many motifs and animal images stagnated and became stylized to the point that they were stripped of their earlier meaning. I am less inclined to view the Xiongnu and later Siberian works as representative of decline—for me, they are indicative of a moment in which animal and tree imagery takes on new life, often in the form of metal-work ornaments placed on the body at the time of burial. Regardless of our different frames of reference though, Jacobson-Tepfer’s meticulous and compelling book has offered me a fresh new perspective on the sources of the beliefs that are embodied in the archaeology of North Asia.

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Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion. By GUOLONG LAI. Seattle: UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS, 2015. Pp. xi + 297. \$65.

In his highly anticipated book *Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion*, Lai Guolong aims to “provide a synthetic account of the changing religious beliefs and ritual practices